

# Spencer Proffer



By [Martin Myers](#)

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In an exclusive interview with Bizcommunity, we speak to an extraordinary man and talent, international music and media producer, Spencer Proffer. Spencer is visiting South Africa this week to produce a groundbreaking new way to expose a film. He is exhibiting the highly acclaimed *Chasing Trane, The John Coltrane documentary*, on SA's iconic Blue Train with intimate concerts led by music director Don Laka at The Delaire Graff Wine Estate in Stellenbosch and The Kaleidoscope jazz club in Cape Town.



Read the fascinating story of how this all came about below.

## ***What does this project mean to you?***

Chasing Trane means a lot to me on so many levels. John Coltrane's life and extraordinary body of work transcends all barriers of musical styles, race, geography, age and time. As a student of pop culture and music in all genres, which I am proud to be a part of, Coltrane's bold approach to creating fresh and daring music, while transcending and resonating with all walks of life, was a tremendous inspiration for me to get involved and build a team to share his remarkable life journey with the world.

Coltrane's adventurous spirit is a reflection of my own approach and philosophy of life – *'Don't be afraid to take chances, go with your heart and hope you can make a difference with whatever it is that we do while we are on the planet.'*

## ***What are the critical lessons from the film that Coltrane speaks about?***

John Coltrane's inspiration was to create music that was unique unto himself and to the journey that he was on. He was inspired by civil rights and created music that reflected the spirit of what was going on in America.

His classic piece *Alabama* was very much influenced by the bombing of the [16th St. Baptist Church](#) in Birmingham, Alabama in 1963 and the death of the four little girls there. 'These children – unoffending, innocent, and beautiful, - were victims of the most vicious and tragic crimes ever perpetrated against humanity, " Dr. Martin Luther King said in his eulogy to them. Coltrane was searching around for the best way to articulate these words musically. When he heard them from Dr. King, Coltrane took the rhythm of the speech and created a beautiful piece of music that expressed his inner feelings about that event. Our director, John Scheinfeld, brilliantly highlighted that marriage of current events and musical interpretation, as one example of how Coltrane's music captured the spirit of his times.

The lesson learned here is that music can be and often is, a reflection of what is going on at any given time – benchmarks of what is happening on our planet. Many great artists of popular music such as John Lennon, Bob Dylan and Bruce Springsteen have done that wonderfully. John Coltrane personified that approach in his jazz lane. It teaches any fan that the art form can reflect and highlight key occurrences and events that will live beyond the moment, through the music.

## ***Why should people see the film?***

*Chasing Trane* breaks down the jazz barrier by telling the story of a musical innovator. What our director did is give us a look inside the soul and life of a man who overcame obstacles.

In many ways, that makes watching the film an inspirational experience to a rich, textured and compelling narrative. When people see *Chasing Trane*, it brings a timeless artist alive as a three-dimensional human being as well as taking us to unexpected places.

The potential impact on viewers' spirit and life could well be propelled by the lesson of not being afraid to take risks (here musical). Coltrane cared about doing good as he pursued his dreams, living an artistic life, artistically. A great lesson for us all.

#### ■ ***How did you meet Don Laka?***

I was introduced to Don, whose music I absolutely enjoy, through one of the most visionary and passionate music professionals I have ever worked with, Tracy Fraser, the managing director of Warner Music and S.A. Interaction with Don took place mostly over the phone, and it was animated, colourful and reflective of his unique approach to all he has done professionally.

#### ■ ***How did you meet Papi Molotsane?***

I had heard about Papi as a top business leader with a deep cultural sensibility and love of music, when I spent some time in Johannesburg 20 years ago. I came to South Africa to produce the authentic music for the Sidney Poitier/Michael Caine Showtime film, *Mandela and de Klerk* with local, talented composer Cedric Gradus Samson.

One of Coltrane's most esteemed works is called *Blue Train*. Six months ago, a mutual friend introduced Papi and I when I learned that the Blue Train was a real and illustrious, high end train that has been transporting visitors from all over the world for decades. I thought it would be a fantastic platform to exhibit our *Chasing Trane* film for the first time in South Africa. What a cosmic coincidence. Papi has been a fantastic partner and co-executive producer for me to deal with on a regular basis (God Bless the Skype platform). He has been invaluable in helping me organise this exciting initiative, producing on The Blue Train documentary with one of my producing partners, Dave Harding (who was also a producer on *Chasing Trane*).

#### ■ ***Why South Africa and the Blue Train - could you not stage it in Hollywood?***

It would be impossible to ever dream of such a real and unique platform to share a film on, coupled with and married to some live, Coltrane inspired jazz concerts (led by Don Laka at stops on our journey). Highlights will take place at the beautiful Delaire Graff Estate winery in Stellenbosch and the Kaleidoscope jazz club in Cape Town.

## Now for some fun questions about who you are as a person...

### ■ ***When are you happiest?***

When I am with my wife Judy and my sons, Morgan and Sterling – dreaming, travelling and drinking in the time we have on the planet.

### ■ ***Which living person do you admire most and why?***

Richard Branson, for his heart and consistent desire to do good for the world while making money and a difference.

### ■ ***What is your most treasured possession?***

Photos of my parents. They were both Auschwitz survivors and moved to Germany after the war, where I was born.

There were pictures of my childhood growing up in Munich that we lost in a fire over 40 years ago. I fortunately had a very sacred box of snaps that I always kept with me and they did not burn. To this day, when I look at those shots, I feel so warm inside since I loved my parents more than words can ever express.

### ■ ***It's your round, what are you drinking?***

Saki (hot or cold)

### ■ ***Is there such a thing as a perfect film?***

*The Godfather (part II)*, *Casablanca* and *It's A Wonderful Life* sure come close.

### ■ ***Pick five words to describe yourself?***

Passionate, inspiring, motivated, bold and caring.

### ■ ***What would your five desert island movies be?***

*Double Indemnity*, *Citizen Kane*, *Godfather Part II*, *It's A Wonderful Life*, *Casablanca*

### ■ ***What do you complain about most often?***

Not having enough time left on the planet.

## 📍 *Where would you like to be right now?*

Right where I am – in South Africa, about to board the Blue Train accompanied by my wife, my friend Papi Molotsane and the new colleagues from your country I am meeting on this unique experience. Then drinking in Cape Town and Stellenbosch for the first time and planning to come back soon.

*Visit Spencer Proffer's and his teams' company website [www.meteor17.com](http://www.meteor17.com) and take a look at their current projects, as well as highlights and bios of the team that works with him on a regular basis.*

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