

Loyiso Gola Live and very, very direct

The opening night of the Loyiso Gola Live show saw Cape Town's iconic Baxter Theatre become the grounds for a comedic clash of cosmic proportions. Emmy-nominated stand-up comedian, Loyiso Gola, took on a throng of heavily girded funny bones. Armed only with his sense of open frank, observational humour, he emerged triumphant after inflicting heavy damage that left the audience in 'stitches'.

 By [Brandon Williams](#) 21 Nov 2013



Performing in a country like South Africa can be very tricky. With such an eclectic collection of ethnicities and cultures, crafting a comedy routine for a South African audience is nothing short of forging a ring in the fire of Mount Doom. It's a balancing act on the grandest scale... inside a minefield. With so many viewpoints and ideals to consider, it takes a tremendous amount of calculation, consideration, contemplation and probably a few days of constipation to stitch together a routine in the least offensive fashion.

However, Loyiso's approach to this conundrum, and also what I think makes his show so successful, is simply this, and I quote... "F*#k it! I don't care."

A bellowing bounty of LMFAOs

Nothing was left unscathed as the stand-up comedian relished every moment poking fun at anything and everything that moves - no ethnic group left out of the equation, no custom spared from critique. Throw in some social commentary on general subject matters of government, obesity, apartheid, poverty and celebrities, and you have an explosive assault of hair-raising hilarity that's guaranteed to extract from the audience a bellowing bounty of LMFAOs... Or at least bare minimum, a boat load of LOKLs. No matter who you are, no matter what you do, you're almost certain to say, "OH MY WORD! That's so true!" Not even the West could escape the blast radius of Gola's intercontinental salvo.

I particularly admired the manner in which he justifies several of his points by skilfully interweaving them into tales of personal experiences while growing up in apartheid South Africa and his travels abroad. This is not to say that his arguments and reasoning are sound. I mean, he probably won't be winning any Nobel prizes for his findings, but what makes it so vivid and a lot less offensive is the incredible sense of childlike

astonishment with which he tells his stories. It really lends an insightful air of truth and innocence to the subject matter - especially the segment about peanut butter sandwiches. There's a BIG chance some people, like the hardcore reviewers, could perceive his points as ill-informed, generalisations, stereotypical and without substantial factual backing. BUT, for those who take life a little less seriously, it actually comes across as hilariously charming!

The picture I've painted probably sounds rather punishing. Quite the contrary, the entire show was really chilled and intimate. It could even be considered a fat session. No special effects, backup dancers or pyrotechnics, it's just Loyiso Gola on stage speaking about his life. A significant portion of his delivery was even done with a reserved demeanour and seriously fixed face. I suppose this heightened the element of sarcasm and satire. But you have to recognise the comedian's captivating capability to keep such a racially diverse, multicultural crowd entertained; despite speaking predominantly about himself.

Not for the fainthearted

It's at this point that it should definitely be noted that the Loyiso Gola Live show is not and I repeat, is not for the fainthearted. If you're easily offended, I advise you to see Disney on Ice instead. The South African justice system is already in shambles; best not bog it down even further with trivial lawsuits of defamation. There are people out there with 'real' problems, just saying. But nonetheless, there are points in the show where the air was certainly laden with a general sense of unease. Gola does tend to cross the line, most notably during the adopted children segment. His routine is also plagued with profanity, but he manages to save himself nicely before spiralling over the threshold of no return.

Apart from that, the only other negatives stem from issues of technicality. By this I mean minor distortions and static noise emanating from the microphone. I gotta admit, I really thought the Baxter was beyond such things, but let's hope it was just some inconsiderate a*#hole's phone causing the problem. I also found myself being somewhat annoyed by Gola's several water breaks, oh, and the audibility of his voice and diction of his act could have been a bit clearer. But being the talented comedian that he is, he used his wait time to make direct conversation with the audience members. In doing so he used their replies to create what appeared to be on the spot improvised jokes, and that was a real treat. It's moments like those when you realise this guy is actually just naturally funny! No script needed, and that's what makes a real stand-up comedian.

All in all I'll say that the show was fantastic. I don't laugh easily, probably because in my head I'm quite fantastic too, but I certainly had some good laughs. Loyiso Gola really did an outstanding job. I thoroughly enjoyed it, despite several uneasy and hair-raising moments. If you do catch one of the remaining shows, sure to take lots of salt with you, but for the most part you might actually find it refreshing to see someone get real for a change, instead of pandering to the lowest common denominator.

Loyiso Gola Live is at the [Baxter Theatre](#) till 23 November.

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