

Trailer alert: first look at Tarryn Wyngaard and Thapelo Mokoena in the Showmax Original survival horror *Pulse*

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Showmax has just dropped the intense first trailer for the Showmax Original horror series, *Pulse*, picked by *The Hollywood Reporter* as one of the 25 buzziest series at this year's MIPTV, a leading global TV market in Cannes, France.



Shot in South Africa and Mauritius, *Pulse* is about an international group of game creators who discover that survival is no longer just a game when an electromagnetic pulse bomb fries every electrical circuit in their office high-rise – and people's heads.

"*Pulse* is unique in so many ways," says SAFTA winner Tarryn Wyngaard (*Stam*, *DAM*, *Dwaalster*). She plays Jaz, creator of a hit indie game that's getting a mainstream reboot, for better or worse. "Stephen Clarke's scripts were so incredibly out of this world and like nothing I've ever read before."

SAFTA winner Thapelo Mokoena (*Trackers*, *Bulletproof*, *Wild at Heart*) is playing against type as her ex, the reboot's narcissistic producer. "There isn't anything like this show," he says. "No offence to every other amazing series I've made, but *Pulse* is really one of the most, if not the most, amazing project I've ever made in my 20-year career."

Pulse also stars the likes of Sven Ruygrok (*Spud's Rambo*) and two-time Silwerskerm winner Carel Nel (*Gaia*, *Rage*, *Raised by Wolves*), with cameos from multi-award-winners Albert Pretorius (*Nêrens*, *Noord-Kaap*, *Johnny Is Nie Dood Nie*) and Laré Birk (*Dominee Tienie*, *Vir Altyd*), as well as stage and screen legend Frank Opperman (*Dominee Tienie*, *Nêrens*, *Noord-Kaap*).

The six-episode survival horror series is directed by multi-award-winner Sallas de Jager (*Dominee Tienie*, *Free State*), also known as frontman of SAMA-nominated Afrikaans folk-rock band Klopjag. Speaking about his move into horror, Sallas says, "On the surface it looks like a big shift, but for my period films we created worlds that don't exist anymore, so this didn't feel that different," says Sallas. "My films have always been about the emotional survival of my characters, and with

Pulse I've focused on making everyone feel like real people, not just mechanisms to get to the next gory thing."

Produced by Emmy winner Steve Lanning (*Secret Garden*), *Pulse* is set in a familiar office high-rise, which becomes steadily freakier thanks to SAFTA-winning production designer Waldemar Coetsee (*Toorbos*, *Meerkat Maantuig*) and the visionary VFX team of Laurent-Paul Robert (*Harry Potter*, *The Dark Knight Rises*) and Hilton Treves (*Tomb Raider*, *Blood Psalms*). "It starts out as a very relatable office block, with everyone working late," says Sallas. "We want the audience to feel like, 'This can happen to me.'"

In many instances, the fear you see on screen is real. "We'd be filming something, crawling through vents, and they wouldn't tell me but they'd put the camera on me and they'd do a bang or explosion and I'd get an actual fright," says Tarryn. "It would take a while to calm down afterwards. There were a lot of pranks on set; it got quite funny behind the scenes with how people tried to spook each other. That was a definite highlight."

Pulse is the latest in a string of internationally acclaimed horrors emerging from South Africa, like the multi-award-winning *Fried Barry* and *Gaia*, and the critically acclaimed *Glasshouse*. "Given the circumstances we all find ourselves in with Covid, I think there is general fear and anxiety," says Sven. "Horror films give you the opportunity to really let go and release a little bit of that anxiety in company, where it's deemed okay. When you watch horror you almost have an excuse to let that go; there is a form of catharsis there."

The Showmax Original is the result of an international collaboration between global production and finance company Media Musketeers, UK-based ForLan Films and SA's Red Mirror, co-produced with CANAL+ and The MediaPro Studio.

Pulse is the third co-production between Showmax and CANAL+, building on the success of the first two seasons of *Crime and Justice*, which earned Sarah Hassan the Best Lead Actress in a Drama prize at the 2021 Kalasha Awards in Kenya, and the upcoming epic *Blood Psalms*.

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