

SA bands + 65-piece orchestra = "KILLER" show

 By [Sindy Peters](#)

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If you're in Cape Town or Joburg this October, and you love music, I suggest you get your grubby paws on some tickets to Symphonic Rocks 2011. I was at last year's event, and it was truly worth the hype. Dubbed a "MACSTANLEY and friends type show" by Andy Mac, founder and producer of the show, this year features a cross-genre mix of artists including the likes of Loyiso, CrashCarBurn as well as Flat Stanley.



BizLounge: Performing at Symphonic Rocks is a big opportunity for SA bands, how are the bands selected?

Andy Mac: "It's really a MACSTANLEY and friends type show in that I invite fellow artists and bands that we've come to know and respect over the years and whom I feel will work well with the orchestra. So I approach artists, rather than the other way around, and then once I've got my preferred list together I bounce it off Heineken and 5FM to get their feedback on who I plan to put on the bill. Both brands have been incredibly supportive

and always backed my decisions on line-up. Since conceptualising this event last year, I am unable to listen to new songs and artists these days without hearing those songs replayed in my mind's ear with lush orchestral arrangements layered over the top. CrashCarBurn is one such example; every time I heard songs such as "Twisted" or "Serenade" play on the radio, I would get goose-bumps thinking about how massive they would sound at Symphonic Rocks, so this year they were an obvious choice and I know that they are going to blow people away!"

No strangers to huge audiences, [CrashCarBurn](#) have played at My Coke Fest 2008 (which sadly hasn't made a comeback this year) as well as joined the [Vans Warped Tour](#) in 2008 playing across the US and Canada.

BizLounge: Playing with a full-piece orchestra must be a very exciting opportunity for the band, what can we expect from your set?

CrashCarBurn: "Yeah, it's very exciting, we're super-amped! These are some of the best musicians in the country so it's actually pretty intimidating for a bunch of guys like us who can't even read music. The set is pretty short so you can expect us to play the tracks that did the best for us on radio. Beyond that, we're just gonna play our hearts out and do our best to enjoy this once in a lifetime opportunity!"

BizLounge: Your pop/rock sound clashes strongly with the symphony of an orchestra; how will the sounds merge?

CrashCarBurn: "Your guess is as good as mine! *hahaha* We actually do use some string arrangements on the album in one or two of the tracks so we're not too worried about it working. We're more excited than worried, it's going to be like CrashCarBurn Squared!"

Equally "super-amped" for the show is R&B star [Loyiso](#). Loyiso was approached to perform at the inaugural Symphonic Rocks, but had to decline due to other commitments. Adapted for the orchestra, Loyiso expects his set to be "bigger, better and visually grand".

"It's going to be like an unplugged show with many more instrumentalists on stage," says Loyiso.

[Andy Mac](#), who's already shared the stage with the orchestra at last year's show, describes the experience as surreal.



For an original SA pop artist to be joined by 65 burning hot, classically trained orchestra musos on stage behind you, playing the most beautiful, powerful arrangements of songs which you yourself wrote, is without doubt one of the most emotional experiences you can have on stage. Without fail last year, each and every artist had goose-flesh when they heard their songs performed in that manner for the first time; some even shed a tear...it's very special," says Andy.

While the jury is still out for Andy Mac, on who he'd like to see at Symphonic Rocks 2012, he does emphasise that the deciding factor is always the artist's repertoire of songs.

"This is a song-driven event. Because so much time and expense is given to writing the orchestral arrangements for each song, they each have to merit that attention. So provided an artist has a handful of big hit songs, they are in for a chance of making it onto the bill," says Andy.

CrashCarBurn think Cape Town's [Irvine](#) and [Newtown Knife Gang](#) would be interesting to see as part of the line-up, while Loyiso would like to see [The Arrows](#), [Chiano Sky](#) and [The Graeme Watkins Project](#) playing Symphonic Rocks 2012. Personally, after listening to [Six Winters](#), I'd like to see [Laurie Levine](#) take to this stage, as well as [KONGOS](#), who'll be making their way to [SA come November / December 2011](#).

While it was, in some respects, easier putting together this year's show, "the addition of the Jhb leg of the tour has made the organisation 100 times more complicated," says Andy, "because we are travelling the entire cast and crew from CT up to Jhb for the Jhb show."

"That means 9 bands, a 65-piece orchestra and loads of technical and production crew, 226 seats on 27 flights over 10 days, 90 hotel rooms + several trucks containing many, many tons of technical gear = logistical beast of a production! Fortunately we have a great logistical partner in kulula, and so they have been very understanding in letting 80+ musos take over a couple of their flights. If you happen to be on one of those Kulula flights, you're in for a joll!

"From a creative side, the orchestral arrangements start being written 6-8 months before the shows because that's how long it takes to write the arrangements for all 9 bands for a full orchestra! Then rehearsal with all bands and the full orchestra, backing singers and house band takes place in the week leading up to the CT show; so I've literally been living this production for the last six months and I can't wait to share it with the public!" says Andy.



With original SA bands performing their biggest hits, backed by a full Symphony Orchestra, other highlights for the shows, according to Andy, include an even bigger sound, stage, lighting and AV experience than last year, as well as the fact that there are also more artists performing than last year, plus the added show in Jhb.

"I'm personally very excited to see some of the less obvious band and orchestral collaborations such as Tumi & the Volume and Locnville etc. It's going to be a KILLER show!" says Andy.

[Symphonic Rocks 2011](#) will be held in Cape Town on Saturday, 1 October, at the Grand West Grand Arena and for the first time in Joburg on Friday, 7 October, 2011, at the Carnival City Big Top Arena, Brakpan.

This year's Symphonic Rocks features Arno Carstens, Loyiso, Ard Matthews of Just Jinjer, CrashCarBurn and Zebra & Giraffe, Tumi & The Volume, and Flat Stanley. Locnville will be part of the Symphonic Rocks Joburg line-up, as will Freshlyground's vocalist, Zolani Mahola.

Tickets cost R225 in Cape Town and range from R225 - R275 in Joburg, and booking is open at Computicket. The starting time is 8pm for both concerts.

[Click here to stand the chance to win two tickets](#)

Go to www.symphonicrocks.co.za for more information.

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