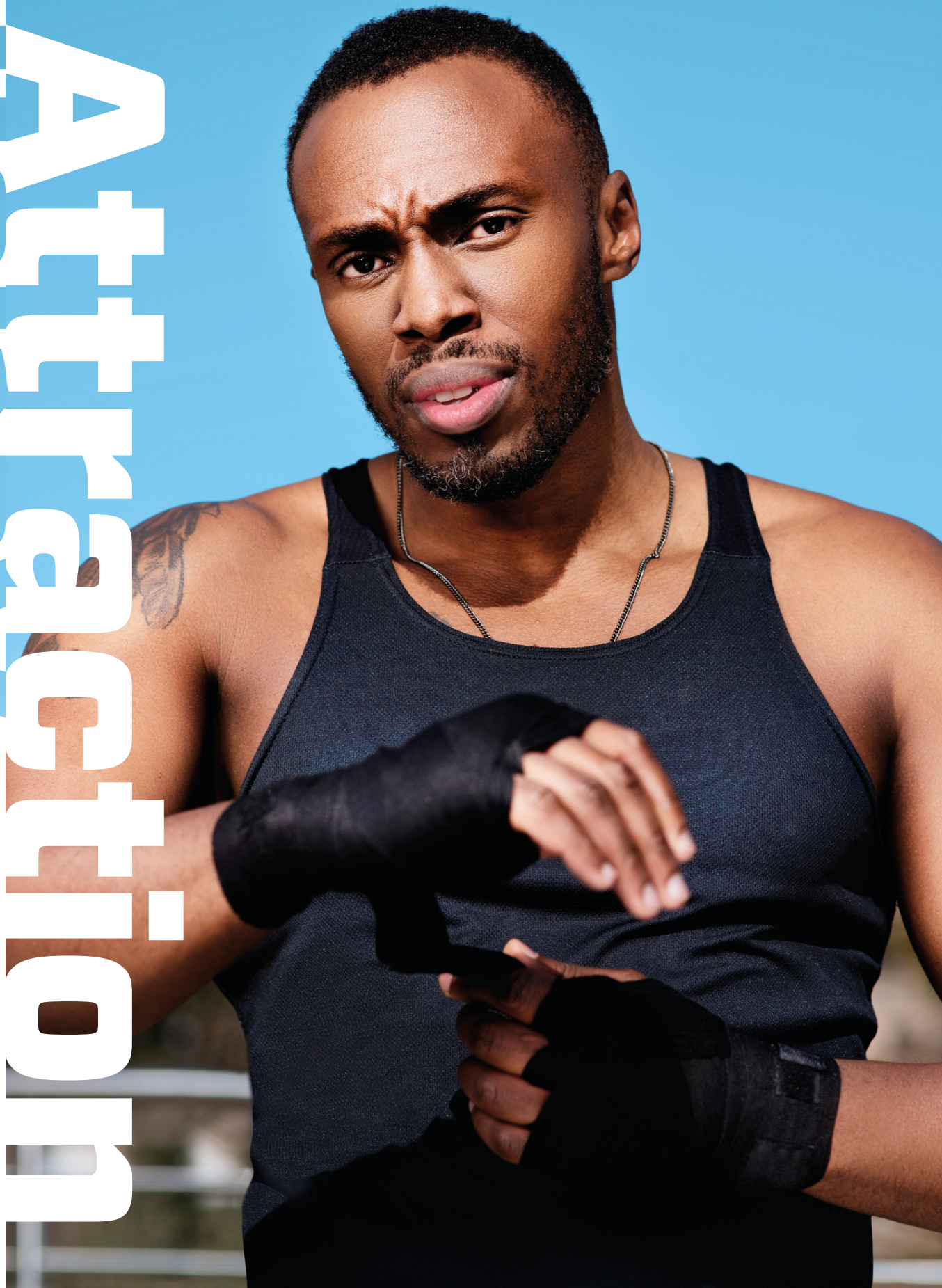


Action

Actor, writer, producer and director Sisanda Henna seems permanently poised for action, whether it's pumping a shotgun on screen with A-listers or empowering South Africa's youth in the film industry

By
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Photography
OLUWATOSIN AWOSUSI



GOING ROGUE

Sisanda is starring alongside Megan Fox in the 2020 action release *Rogue*. Sisanda plays Pata, a Kenyan/Masai al-Shabaab mercenary who joins forces with Megan's character, Samantha O'Hara, to exact revenge for his daughter's murder.

I'VE ALWAYS LOVED the idea of embodying your fullest potential,' says Sisanda Henna. We're chatting about fitness goals, but from where I'm standing, it looks like this statement could apply to the rest of Sisanda's life, too...

Since scooping up the Duku Duku Best Actor award for his first role (as Andile in *Tsha Tsha*), Sisanda's career appears to be the stuff that showbiz dreams are made of.

You'll most likely recognise him as the brutal yet charismatic Inkunzi Shabangu from M-Net's *Trackers*. The show was the channel's most-viewed series for 2019, outperforming not only every other local production, but international smash hits such as *Game of Thrones* and *Big Little Lies* too. This year, you can also catch him on the big screen opposite Megan Fox in the action-thriller *Rogue*; playing a spoilt footballer in Netflix's *Agent*; and trying to keep everyone happy on M-Net's new

female-led drama *Inconceivable*. When he's not in front of the camera, you'll find Sisanda writing and producing.

'I Want To Move The Needle Forward For Humanity'

It's clearly all things film, all the time, but Sisanda's dedication to the industry isn't motivated by a lust for fame and fortune. 'What do I envision for my career in the long run? I want to use everything I do – whether I'm producing, writing, directing or acting – to move the needle forward for humanity. What I mean by that is I want to have an impact. I want to entertain people and inspire them, yes, but I also want to take humanity to the next level by showing them through cinema who we are and what we can become. I think that film can also provide insight into the complexity of our nature, and help people understand their partners, their parents, their children and their bosses.'

'It's just about living life to the fullest. Feeling the strength in your body, in your muscles. Your stamina. Your power'

'This Is Our Time'

Sisanda believes in the power not just of film in general, but of South African film in particular. 'Our industry has already been succeeding again within this period of global pandemic. *Blood & Water* on Netflix, for example, has done really well globally. This is our time. We are a unique filmmaking destination and I think we are finding our voice more and more as a country. And it's not a homogenous voice. There is complexity in it, because there's so much diversity in South Africa. I feel we are taking a step forward in terms of creativity and being able to offer the world amazing motion pictures.'

Potential: Within Range

So, which came first: The abs or the action roles? 'Like I said, I've always enjoyed the idea of reaching your fullest potential, and for me, fitness is one way to express that.



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Ts&Cs on p72

Work Out Like Sisanda

> RESISTANCE TRAINING
3 x days

'I break up these workouts at Planet Fitness into legs and abs, arms and back, and then maybe chest and shoulders.'

> CARDIO
1 x day

'I'll usually do a five-kay run and then swim for 30 minutes.'

> ACTIVE RECOVERY
1 x day

'An hour of yoga, or something like that.'

> REST
2 x days

INDUSTRY INSIDER

Want to follow in Sisanda's filmmaking footsteps? He has a few pieces of advice for you...



1. DREAM

'Dreaming is important, on a couple of levels. **Filmmaking is basically creating a make-believe world.** For example, my children love Marvel movies and DC comics. And yes, that end product costs millions of dollars to create, but it's still a make-believe world. So make-believe in your head first. Dream the next year of your life – the next three years, the next five years, the next 10. **Be very clear in that vision.** I feel like the cosmos (or God, or whatever your spiritual beliefs are) has a lot of power. And I feel like dreaming is the first place people must start. Plus by learning to dream, you can also begin to imagine the work you want to put out one day.'



2. STRATEGISE

'Write down your dream in detail, and **decide what strategies you need to put in place** to achieve it. What skills do you need? Now take those steps and apply the 80/20 principle. What's just one thing you can do that will make achieving your goal simple? The rest of the steps may even be unnecessary. **There are probably 10 or 15 things you can do that will help you reach your goal** of becoming an actor or filmmaker, but whittle them down to just one or two that will give you the most momentum and the biggest return on your time.'



3. BEGIN

'**Take massive action.** Go to the class. Shoot that thing on your phone. Download the editing software. Register for that part-time course. Join the community theatre and audition for that stage play. Get the thing done.'



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RETOUCHING: ADRI PAPA/KONSTANTINOU

Quick-Fire Qs

SCARIEST THING YOU'VE EVER DONE?
I once jumped off a cliff for a movie!

ONE BAD HABIT YOU'RE TRYING TO QUIT?
Self-doubt

AN ACTOR/DIRECTOR/PRODUCER YOU'D LOVE TO WORK WITH?
Will Smith, Ryan Coogler and Oprah Winfrey

ONE CHARACTER YOU'D LOVE TO PLAY?
Steve Biko

SINGLE OR OFF THE MARKET?
Single

GUILTY PLEASURE?
Pot-still brandy

WORDS TO LIVE BY?
You decide

It's never been for a particular role – it's a lifestyle. I just love being at my best and nothing feels better than your body itself being a manifestation of that idea. Whether I'm running or swimming or lifting weights or doing calisthenics, it's just about living life to the fullest. Feeling the strength in your body, in your muscles. Your stamina. Your power. That's why I'm so committed to exercise. It's a commitment to living life to the full.'

The Future Of Film

You can spot an on-screen hero by how they swoop in to help others, and Sisanda brings this quality into his daily life. 'I am passionate about developing under-privileged youth in the film industry,' he says. As a co-chair for the Independent Producers Organisation (IPO), Sisanda has a hand in facilitating transformation and development in the industry, thus empowering a new generation of South African filmmakers.

'What motivates me is that when I was younger, I didn't have the privilege of access, even access just to the necessary education – for example, a filmmaking degree. So I started working as an intern, volunteering on different productions, and that's how I began to learn. And I was able to do that because so many people gave me opportunities to shadow them, to learn from them. They gave me their time and they taught me things. I see so much of our youth in South Africa wanting to create not just a living for themselves, but a path all the way up to self-actualisation – to fulfil the dreams they have for themselves. I want to be a conduit for those who have chosen motion pictures as their means to do that; to help them rise up towards reaching those goals.' **FL**

A DAY IN THE LIFE

When you're moving and shaking like Sisanda, no two days are the same. Still, he gave us a brief glimpse into the routine of an action-star-producer-super-dad.

MORNINGS

'Every other day, my morning starts with meditation and stretching. I'll squeeze half a lemon into some hot water and drink that while engaging in this kind of spiritual practice. On these mornings I also like to journal – get in touch with where I'm at, what I need to do, what's working, what isn't, and how I feel about everything. On alternate mornings, I'm in the gym at Planet Fitness.'

NINE-TO-FIVE

'This varies greatly – it's different every day. I could be producing, working on a pitch, finalising a budget, in meetings about script notes, switching my phone off to read a script, being fitted for wardrobe, on set filming, or having meetings with the Independent Producers Organisation...'

EVENINGS

'I have been spending a lot of time with the kids since they're homeschooling during lockdown (thankfully we've got a really good au pair too). Then I'll come home in the evenings and we'll have dinner together and catch up.'

Sisanda is currently following a keto diet, which he supplements with good nutrition and shakes

'As a keto person, I eat a lot of good fats, plenty of eggs, and loads of green veggies. So my diet is high in protein and very low in carbs. I have to make sure to communicate with

production companies, to ensure that the kitchen can prepare something for me on set. But it is not difficult. For snacks, I'll have salami sticks, avo, some biltong. I don't do dairy, so I've had to leave

cheese behind!' Because of the strict nature of keto eating, Sisanda makes sure his body gets all the nutrients it needs with a regimen of Evox supplements. 'Evox is fuel for my journey,'

he says. 'It gives you all the energy, focus and strength, through pre- and intra-workout drinks and, of course, the protein your muscles need after training.'