



Clement Manyathela and Amanda Dambuza during the inaugural Vastly Sage Gentlemen's Brunch at Signature Restaurant in Morningside.



Mzamo Masito and Kopano Ratele, speakers at the inaugural Vastly Sage Gentlemen's Brunch.

No matter the minor inconvenience of a cold snap, Joburg's Beautiful Young Things came out to play on Thursday afternoon to toast the youth issue of possibly the coolest glossy in the land.

But then, who needs to raise the thermostat when the covers in celebration of Youth Month – four in total – feature some of the hottest names in the game.

First a little disclosure – I hadn't heard of half these young 'uns when I got the invite to the cover party of SMag, our sister newspaper Sowetan's quarterly insert.

Thankfully, the mag's editor-in-chief (and



THE A-LISTERS
with Craig Jacobs

Glossy cover stars and a safe space for the gents

arbiter of cool), Emmanuel Tjiya, was at hand to school me.

"This is Shalate," says Emmanuel, introducing me to a cute, pocket-sized young woman in a distressed denim whisper of a dress teamed with sky-high white boots and covered up with a camel coat on account of the cold.

I learn that the 1.5m-tall *House of Zwide* and *Go!* actress, who is one of this month's cover stars, comes from a theatrical family.

"They are your people," says the larger-than-life editor, referring to Shalate Sekhabi's father, Aubrey Sekhabi, the playwright and artistic director of the State Theatre in Pretoria, and mom Nontutuzelo Sekhabi, a former actress who is now a director at the department of sports, arts & culture.

We are in the conference wing of the Radisson Blu Sandton, perched on the hotel's 12th floor, which I know very well (I once inadvertently made headlines when I let the cat out of the bag many moons ago when Malusi Gigaba's surprise birthday was held there).

I pick up a flute of Zardetto prosecco and head out onto the terrace, where I catch sight of another cover star, lithe Luyanda Zuma, who appears in the newly released second season of *Shaka iLembe*.



Ponahalo Mojabelo during the SMag Youth Month cover reveal held at Radisson Blu Hotel.



Tshiamo Modisane at the SMag Youth Month cover reveal. Left, Shalate Sekhabi and Wanda Zuma.

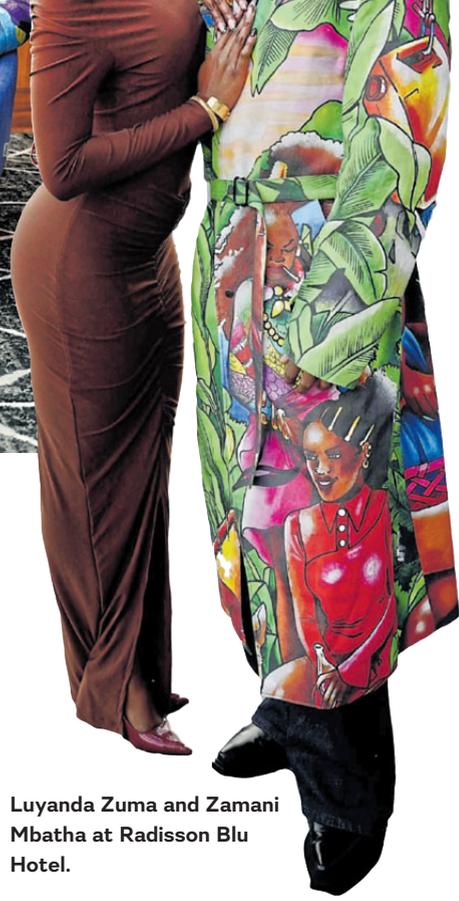
Rounding off the trio of individual covers is actor Zamani Mbatha, who also appears in the season, and who arrives much later dressed almost head to toe in Rich Mnisi.

With Emmanuel at the helm, SMag has been a torchbearer for representation and inclusion, also reflected in its other June cover featuring a trio of models who are gaining recognition for their turntable prowess – Ponahalo Mojabelo, Nkuley Masemola and Mordecai Ngubane.

I asked 20-something Ponahalo – who has toured in Europe with Moonchild Sanelly and graced the cover of Brit indie cool mag *Dazed* – what she's been up to these days.

"My bones are creaking. I need to rest," admitted the model du jour, who is favoured by designers such as Thebe Magugu and Nao Serati.

We tucked into snacks – including mini roasted pepper and goat cheese quiches,



Luyanda Zuma and Zamani Mbatha at Radisson Blu Hotel.

Pictures: Masi Losi

panko fish cakes with sriracha mayo and smoked springbok carpaccio on mini corn scones – while Ponahalo had to postpone catching those z's to hit the deck with her cover co-stars later on.

On to a weekend gathering of blokes.

But this wasn't a case of bros downing beers, watching a game and shooting the breeze.

Rather, the Vastly Sage Gentlemen's Brunch – held last Saturday at Desmond Mabuza's landmark fine-dining institution Signature in Morningside shopping centre – was a safe space for men to let down their guard, be vulnerable and connect on matters often pushed aside.

Arranged by businesswoman and author Amanda Dambuza and compered by radio man Clement Manyathela, it was a day of food for thought, starting with Stellenbosch Prof Kopano Ratele diving into the state of fathers and fatherhood as he encouraged us to redefine how we view masculinity.

Flanked between Kopano and Muzi Mthabela – who looked at the role of spirituality – was Google Africa's former marketing head Mzamo Masito, who kicked off his talk on a lighter note, offering us some "free medical advice" now that he's crossed over into the 50-something club.

A clever ploy to take off the edge before sharing deeply moving personal stories from his life, including the suicide of his brother, which laid bare the weight of societal pressure and expectations on the shoulders of men.

While I couldn't spend the rest of the day attending the rest of the talks – lensman Masi Losi tells me self-care and grief were addressed, while therapy was the day's buzzword – before I slipped out, I did manage to grab some lunch.

I'm glad I did, because this was a buffet of fine-dining delectables which makes bellies dance, including a creamy burrata salad, a deliciously light fig, parma ham and rocket salad drizzled with balsamic glaze and a healthy assortment of proteins including harissa marinated chicken, roasted prawns with lemon butter aioli, pickled ox tongue and succulent lamb chops.