

Elvis Blue discusses Optics



By [Pasqua Heard](#)

28 Jul 2016

With a name like Elvis, he must be destined for greatness and having just won his fourth SAMA award for the Best Contemporary Music Album, Elvis Blue continues on the path to success. The 2010 M-Net SA Idols winner talks to us about his latest single 'The Tide', his recent album 'Optics' and his plans brewing for 2017.

Currently on tour, Blue has produced a number of English and Afrikaans albums – two of which have reached platinum selling status. He was also the first Idols winner worldwide to release an album within 30 days. However, as you will see, it wasn't all easy-sailing for Blue and he faced a challenging start to his career.



■ **Who wrote the songs for the album, 'Optics'?**

I've been lucky enough to work with quite a few songwriters on the album, namely, Jeff Franzel, Andy Marvel and Dave Katz.

■ **Explain what inspired the lyrics of your newest single 'The Tide'.**

When I wrote that song, I was spending a lot of time with someone quite close to me battling something big in his life. We all have challenges in our lives – big and small – and sometimes they feel as big as pushing against the ocean.

I think every song should have a story behind it. My hope is that people can relate to my songs and find their own stories in them.

■ ***How does 'Optics' differ to your previous albums?***

Working with different producers means that each person hears a song differently. It was so much fun working with Ewald Jansen van Rensburg to find a balance between his style and mine.

This album is more adventurous. I made my last English album three years ago and my previous music was quite stripped down with real instruments. This album explored many different sounds – such as the use of African instruments. It was so much fun making 'Shine', which felt more south African to me.

■ ***Your albums seem to be either in English or Afrikaans. Have you considered an album that has both languages on it?***

My mother always told me, "Moenie jou taal meng nie." [Don't mix your languages]. I quite like not putting the two together on one album. I find it's better for the bigger picture of the entire album.

■ ***Comment on your win of the 'Best Contemporary Music Album' award at SAMA 2016***

I really like it – you should probably be blasé about it, but it's so wonderful and winning any SAMA is so great. All of us – my musicians and I – celebrate it.

■ ***Who's influencing you at the moment? What singers are you listening to?***

I'm a dad to a two-year-old and four-year-old, so it's currently between Barney the Dinosaur and Dora the Explorer! But when I get a chance to listen to my own music, I like singer-songwriters such as Bruce Springsteen, Paul Simon and Bob Dylan. I think these influence my music the most.

In terms of new music, I enjoy Cold Play, Mango Groove, Joshua Na Die Reen, Beatenberg and Faraway George. I try to be open to a lot of different music.

■ ***What would you say are the positives and negatives about being a musician today?***

It's difficult to say anything negative, because positives so far outweigh the negative. I spent a lot of time in my life just trying to be heard. Then in the last six years, this has happened for me, so everything is massively positive. I'm having the time of life and I want to continue doing that.

However, like any job, it has its difficulties. If you are not lucky enough to be successful – if you're playing for no one – it's the hardest thing you could ever do. If you're playing for someone, it's the best thing you could ever do.



■ ***What tips would you give new artists wanting to make it in the SA music scene?***

I think opportunities don't come by so often. The moment an opportunity comes, it's so important to be ready for it. While

you're waiting for that opportunity, work your backside off by making sure you're ready for when that opportunity comes. In trying to achieve something you will become better and better, so keep trying.

This is coming from someone who made five albums early on in my career which no one bought!

■ ***When you aren't making music or performing, what are you doing?***

I live in George, so I love surfing. I love hanging out with my kids and wife at home. We really like watching TV, I know it's not good, but we really do. I enjoy having a meal and good wine.

■ ***Tell us about your Cookiejar movement.***

The idea behind the Cookiejar movement is to simplify charitable giving, identify real needs that can be directly influenced for good via a financial contribution and to harness the positive power that comes with people working together towards a single cause.

It works in the way that a jar is put out at my concerts and people donate if they wish. It's a way to make every show a fundraiser, rather than only one every four months. The funds are then donated to a project that I am involved in at the time.

At the moment, our target is to raise R72,000 in order to educate 10 children at The Kings Children's Home for one year, as it costs the home R600 per month to educate those in their care. Funds raised at each show will go directly into the Home's account. We're almost half way to our target!



■ ***What are your upcoming plans?***

You know what's so cool about South Africa? It's small enough for us to be on tour permanently. We tour every year in July. This month I'm doing 24 shows and I try to do no less than 130 shows a year.

I'm always writing and working on new stuff. I'll be launching a show in Pretoria in September called Elvis Blue Kaal. This will then play at festivals countrywide in 2017.

Fans may access Elvis Blue's full gig guide via his [facebook page](#).

In the aim to share his talent, Blue provides online tutorials under the tab '[Play Like Elvis](#)' on his interactive website to anyone interested in learning his songs. "I learnt how to play music online. I hope people enjoy coming for a quick lesson,"

concludes Blue.

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