A sitcom bridging the divide between academia and industry
What is Songololo?

• *Songololo* is run-down commune that houses an assortment of odd-ball characters, trying desperately to make a living.

• The lead characters are two down-and-out brothers, Ashwell and Jermaine Boontjies, who come up with elaborate schemes in order to fulfil a promise they made to their late grandfather - to become millionaires.

• Other characters include:
  • Their overly-optimistic side-kick, the eccentric herbalist Mthunzi AND
  • Their nemesis, Goodman

• The dialogue is in English, Afrikaans and isiXhosa.

• The 13-part sitcom was broadcast on eTV’s eKasi Plus channel in 2014.

• Songololo (or Shongololo) is an Nguni word for a millipede with strong exterior armour which rolls into a ball if alarmed – a metaphor for the characters in the series.
What makes Songololo special?

• **Unique:**
  - The series was written, produced, directed, filmed and edited by a core unit of five interns at The Media Workshop (a Seta-accredited film and television production training provider based in Port Elizabeth)
  - None of the cast or crew had prior industry experience
  - Songololo was the first televised sitcom series to be produced entirely in the Eastern Cape, using only local talent

• **Groundbreaking:**
  - Capacity building initiative for South Africa’s television production industry
  - Contribution towards the development of a sustainable industry in the Eastern Cape
  - Skills transfer model, especially in areas without an established television and film production industry
  - A model for developing low-budget broadcast-ready content
Songololo highlights

www.themediaworkshop.co.za
It takes a village…

The Accredited Skills Training Provider, Production Company and Incubator

The Interns

The Industry Mentor

The Internship Discretionary Grant

The Training Support

The Broadcaster

The students and volunteers

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Success stories post Songololo

• Tom and James Collins — Worked as part of the production crew on “Vikings” and currently work for Rooftop Productions, creating content for Unicef (among others) around the globe

• Benito Carelsen — Produced an online television mini-series which went live at the start of this month. Also secured a lead role in a sitcom which will be broadcast on SABC 2 shortly

• Gqabi Njokweni — Travels the world as a news and documentary cameraman for the SABC

• Siya Seya — Making waves on the comedy circuit, touring with the likes of David Kau

• Earl Swartz — Acted in the SABC 2 sitcom and was recently signed by Universal Records. He regularly shares the stage with rap artists like Hemel Besem and Jack Parow

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Hindsight is 20/20
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Lessons learnt

• Employers cannot afford to train inexperienced crew while on big-budget productions

• Without work experience, unemployed graduates struggle to enter the film and television industries

• With the correct support and training, it is possible for inexperienced graduates to produce broadcast-quality content

• The contributions from the MICT Seta, the NFVF, the broadcaster (eKasi+) were vital to ensure the project’s success, with The Media Workshop team driving the process.