

Synergies in Sound

At Coke Studio Africa the MOST TALENTED names from across the continent come together to take their music to a whole NEW LEVEL of COOL. Meet five of our continent's mash-up music stars.

text Eva de Vries photos Coke Studio Africa

Reggae & Dancehall Star

Stonebwoy

Name:

Livingstone Etse Satekla

Born:

5 March 1988, Ghana

Hometown:

Ashaiman, Ghana

Music genre:

Reggae, dancehall

Popular songs:

"Go Higher", "People Dey"

Coke Studio collaboration:

with Haile Roots (Ethiopia)

Follow him:

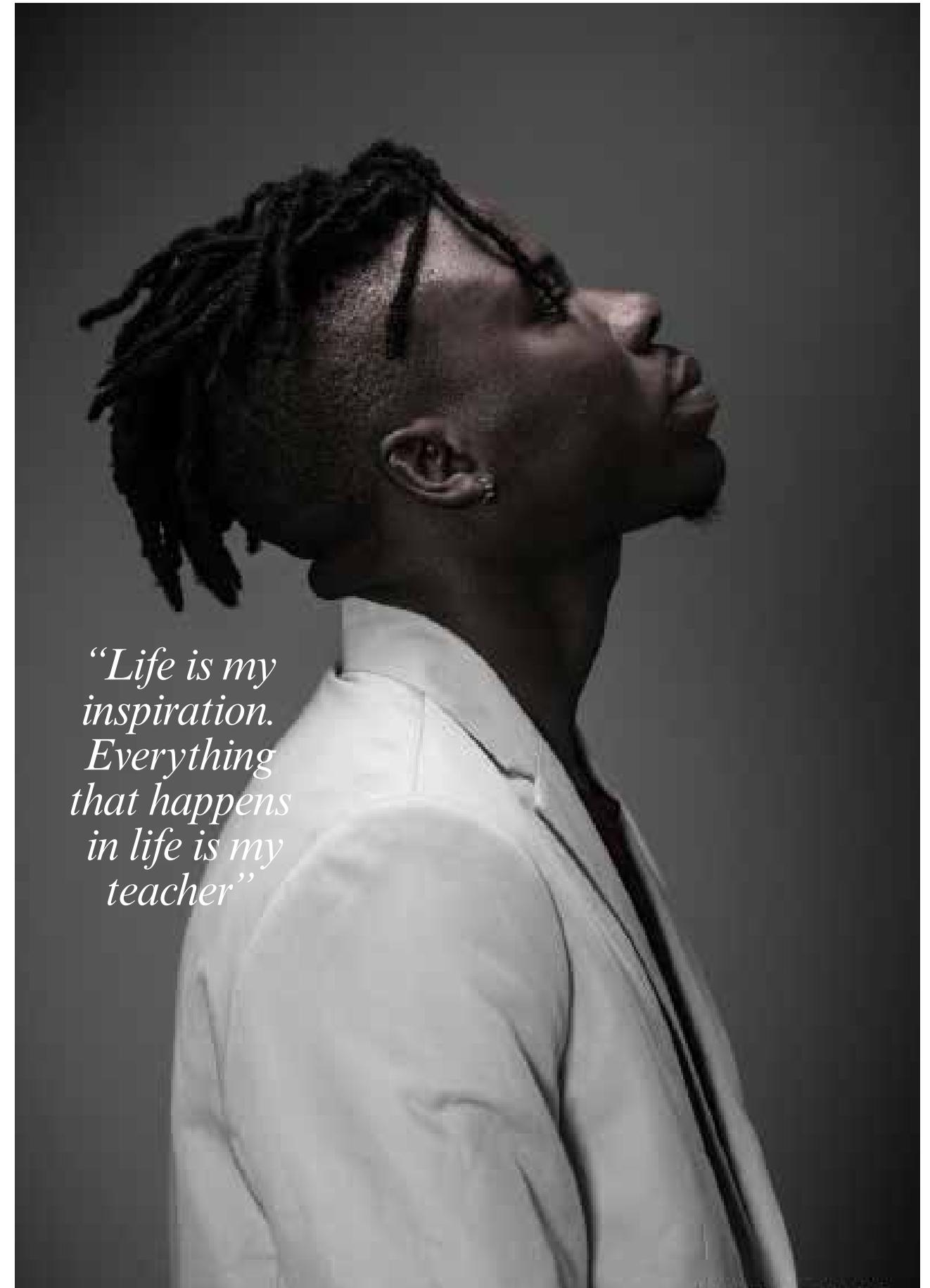
@stonebwoyb (Twitter, Instagram)

HIS FULL NAME is Livingstone Etse Satekla, but as a boy, his father used to call him Stone. During his first radio performance, the presenter announced him with the words: "We have one Stone Boy here." The name stuck, although the spelling changed. Stonebwoy is a man of many talents. He is a multi-faceted rapper who raps in many languages, but he is most famous for burning up the music charts and clubs with his reggae and dancehall music.

Stonebwoy is the first son in a family of seven and grew up singing. Ghana fell in love with his crisp sound and catchy songs. He saw his invitation to be part of Coke Studio Africa as a great opportunity to work together with Haile Roots, and to travel. "The project brought me to Kenya for the first time," Stonebwoy says with a smile. "I hope to be able to visit the game parks."

One of his major achievements is winning the Black Entertainment Television (BET) Award for Best International Act in 2015. "I couldn't believe it when I heard my name," Stonebwoy recalls. "But apparently, things went rather well. Many people voted for me, so they really wanted me to win." That same year, his second album, *Necessary Evil*, was the recipient of three Ghana Music Awards.

Like many songwriters, Stonebwoy uses his own life and experiences as his major inspiration for his lyrics. "I want every song to tell a story, even when it is just a fun song," he says. "Good lyrics 'tickle' the mind. Writing song lyrics keeps me sharp and helps me grow. We singers are literally the voice of the people. I will keep making good music and addressing important issues."



*"Life is my
inspiration.
Everything
that happens
in life is my
teacher"*

Queen of Afro-Soul

Dela**Name:**

Adeline Maranga

Born:

20 February 1989, Kenya

Home town:

Nairobi, Kenya

Music genre:

Afro-soul

Popular songs:

"Mafeelings", "Weche Tek"

Coke Studio collaboration:

with Patoranking (Nigeria) and Vanessa Mdee (Tanzania)

Follow her:

@delamuziki (Twitter)



*"I want to do what I love:
sing and perform"*

"HELLO NI MIMI", Dela's Swahili cover of Adele's international hit "Hello" is goosebump-inducing. This beautiful singer's irresistible voice and expressive vocals are made to be played on repeat. Dela, who has been compared to American singer Alicia Keys, sings Afro-soul creatively infused with reggae, funk and techno. Not only has her music taken her all over Africa, she has also toured Europe with sold-out concerts in Stockholm, Amsterdam and London.

Dela has been moving to the rhythm of music her whole life. "It all started when I was very young," she says. "My sister and I used to sing songs for visitors, and afterwards my uncles gave us money to buy candy."

After joining church choirs and school bands, she decided to go solo. "Music is my life," she says. "It gives me joy, happiness and so much fulfillment." Her song lyrics are

inspired by everyday experiences from her own life and from the lives of people she knows. "Love, social issues, the good and the bad, basically what I see going on around me," she says. But her number-one inspiration is her mother: "She is the strongest woman I know. She can literally do anything."

Performing with Coke Studio brought Dela's music to a higher level and she enjoys working with artists from other African countries. "This platform brings Africa together through music," she says. "It is an excellent way to explore the continent's different sounds and share them with the rest of the world."

Through her music, Dela hopes to inspire young people. "I want to encourage the youth to follow their dreams," she says. "If you really want something in life, you need to do your best and go for it."

King of Rap

E.L.**Name:**

Elom Adablah

Born:

28 June 1983, Ghana

Hometown:

New Jersey, US

Music genre:

Rap

Popular songs:

"Shelele", "Koko", "One Ghana"

Coke Studio collaboration:

with Jaguar (Kenya) and DJ Maphorisa (South Africa)

Follow him:

@ELrepGH (Twitter, Instagram)



*"I don't look up to anyone. Instead,
I have people who challenge me"*

WITH HIS BACKWARDS BASEBALL CAP, sunglasses and bling, Elom Adablah, also known as E.L, looks every inch the typical rap star. But this multiple award-winning rapper is more substance than style: he is also a music producer (known for tunes like "Shelele" and "One Ghana"), a sound engineer, a writer of movie scores and president of the record label to which he is signed, BBnZ Live.

Since earning a name for himself in Ghana as the "King of Rap," he has been determined to take the international stage, and he has already performed in Nigeria, South Africa, the US and Britain.

As a young boy, E.L had other dreams. "I wanted to be a pilot. Flying was what I desperately wanted to do," he says. But one day, his father brought home a piano and he decided he wanted to become a musician. "Hearing the magical sound that

came out of that instrument was life changing." He went to university to study political science, but he couldn't forget his true passion. "I just had to follow my heart," he says.

Faced with a competitive and often harsh music scene, it wasn't easy for E.L to get to where he is today. He is very proud of his accomplishments so far.

"The road I have taken – the lessons, the prizes, but also the scars – have made me the man I am today," he says. Now E.L would like to become a mentor for other African artists. "I want to help them to get international audiences, as well as the recognition and appreciation that they deserve," he says. As for the rapper himself, he has an interest in fashion and broadcasting, but will continue doing what he loves most. "I can't say I'll be jumping on stage when I'm 60, but I'll still be creative and will keep developing my skills as a musician."

Rising Voice

Lydia Jazmine

Name:

Lydia Jazmine

Born:

27 July 1991, Uganda

Hometown:

Kampala, Uganda

Music genre:

Dancehall

Popular songs:

"Guno Omukwano", "Tondekangawo"

Coke Studio collaboration:

with Kiss Daniel (Nigeria) and Bahati (Kenya)

Follow her:

@lydiajazmine (Instagram)



"I want to carry African music to all corners of the world"

HER NAME IS LYDIA JAZMINE and she is being hailed as "the finest dancehall musician in Uganda". This sparkling gem from the Pearl of Africa clearly loves making music. From calm love songs to wild, danceable records, she sings from the heart in Luganda as well as in English. With her colourful dresses, sporty short haircuts and big earrings, she stands out from a crowd.

When Jazmine was in primary school, she was part of a girl band. "We used to imitate the Spice Girls and TLC during talent shows," she says. She already knew that this was what she wanted to do. "Music is a talent I am blessed with," she says confidently, but with reason. She grew up leading a church choir, participating in school music competitions around the country and watching lots of music videos.

"I will be representing Uganda on Coke Studio, along with

the biggest talents on the continent. It is my first international gig. A dream will come true," she wrote on her Facebook page. She didn't have to think twice about accepting the offer. "No serious artist can turn down such an opportunity."

As a young musician trying to make her way to the top, Jazmine also faces challenges, particularly finding ways to overcome the cost of producing music. Recording, shooting videos, promotion: it all costs money. Another challenge of a career in the spotlight is the rumours that are sometimes spread by the media.

"These stories weaken our fan base because some people believe everything they read," she says. But the strong and persistent Jazmine is no quitter. She stays devoted to her passion and is determined to achieve her dreams, "I want to carry African music to all corners of the world," she says.

Dancehall Duo

Navy Kenzo

Names:

Aika Marealle & Emmanuel Mkono (Nahreel)

Born:

Aika: 19 February (year not given), Tanzania

Nahreel: 12 December 1989, Tanzania

Hometown:

Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Music genre:

Rap, hip-hop, dancehall

Popular songs:

"Kamatia", "Chelewa"

Coke Studio collaboration:

with Dama do Bling (Mozambique)

Follow them:

@NavyKenzo (Twitter),

@navykenzoofficial (Instagram)



"Music is happiness, expression and freedom. A language that connects"

"Local bongo-style hip-hop is especially popular in Tanzania, but we wanted to try something unique," says Emmanuel Mkono, who goes by the stage name Nahreel, and is one half of the dancehall duo Navy Kenzo. "Nobody had ever done this type of music before, so we decided to jump in." Making dancehall music with song lyrics fusing Swahili and English has proved to be a hit combination in both Tanzania and neighbouring countries. The music video for their club hit "Kamatia" has had two-and-a-half million views, and is officially the biggest song in East Africa to date.

After meeting in India as students in 2008, Nahreel and Aika Marealle returned to their homeland in 2011 and joined the hip-hop group Pah One (of the popular single "I Wanna Get Paid"), but they left and formed Navy Kenzo two years later. Marealle says that her earliest inspiration came from Beyoncé, even though she didn't always understand her English lyrics. "I used to sing her

songs and try out her dance moves at school talent shows," she says. Nahreel's introduction to music came from his father, who brought home a piano one day, surprising his ecstatic son. "Music means happiness and freedom to me," he says. "It's a powerful language that connects people all over the world."

Navy Kenzo participated in the Coke Studio Africa shows because they said "the world needs to hear the African beats". "It was great to compose new songs with artists from other countries," says Nahreel. "It reminded me how creative we are as people and that there really are no limits to music."

Watch Coke Studio Africa's mash-ups on www.coca-cola.co.ke/cokestudio, YouTube or download the mobile app. Kenya Airways actively supports cultural exchange within the African continent and beyond, especially for the youth. Kenya Airways has supported Coke Studio since 2015, and flew all artists to their Coke Studio performance in Nairobi.