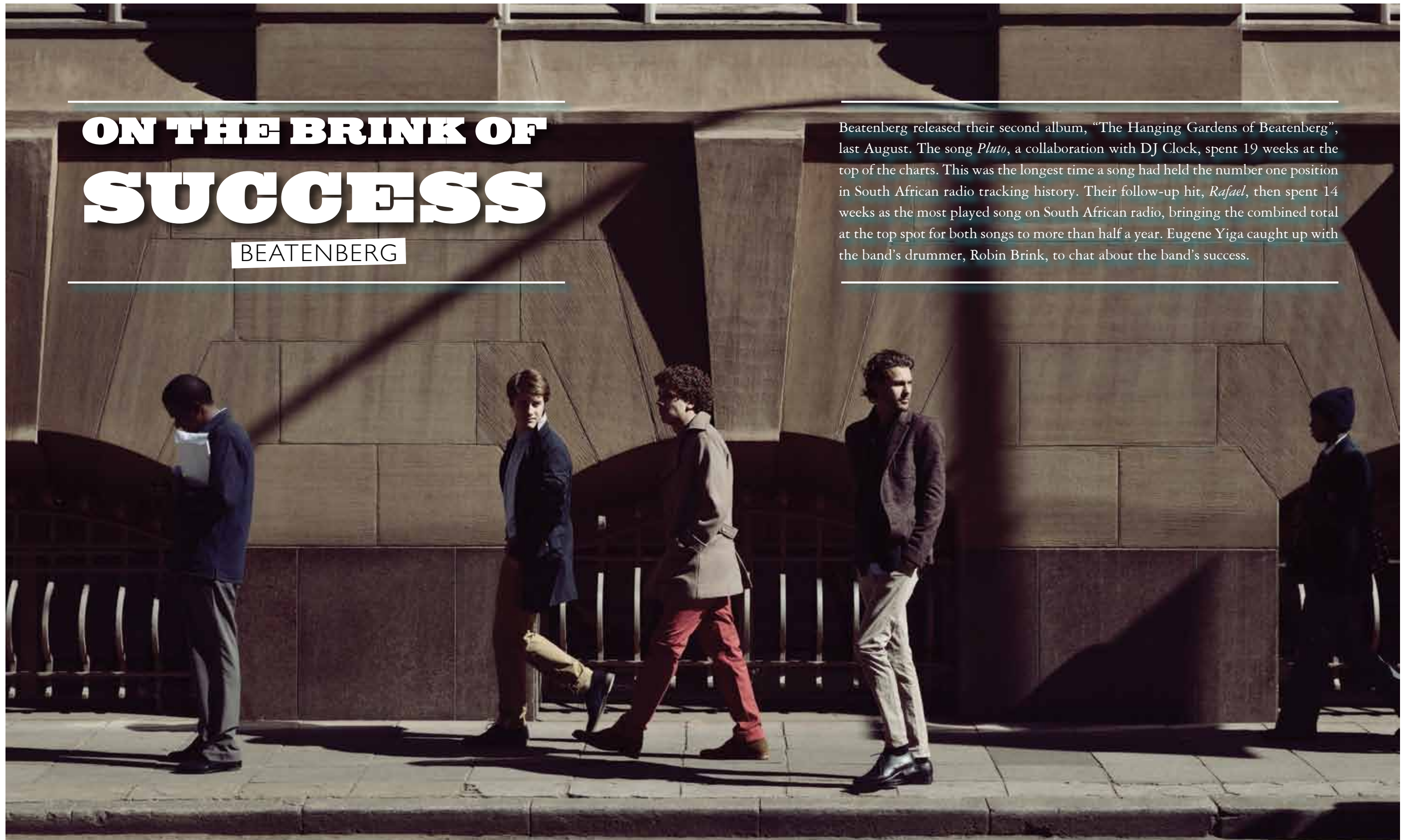


ON THE BRINK OF SUCCESS

BEATENBERG

Beatenberg released their second album, “The Hanging Gardens of Beatenberg”, last August. The song *Pluto*, a collaboration with DJ Clock, spent 19 weeks at the top of the charts. This was the longest time a song had held the number one position in South African radio tracking history. Their follow-up hit, *Rafael*, then spent 14 weeks as the most played song on South African radio, bringing the combined total at the top spot for both songs to more than half a year. Eugene Yiga caught up with the band’s drummer, Robin Brink, to chat about the band’s success.



EY: What do you remember most from your early days as a band?

RB: It was quite acoustic and low-key. We were sincere and polite with what we were doing.

EY: How have things changed?

RB: I think what's happened over the years is that we've become a little more confident and a little more self-assured, which is a good thing.

EY: Who is your greatest musical inspiration?

RB: My lifelong thing's been (jazz trumpeter) Miles Davis. Throughout his career, recording from the early 1950s to the late 1980s, he was evolving. Not every decade, but almost every year. He was so progressive that he had as many critics as fans. He was constantly breaking new ground because he wouldn't stick to one thing. He's such a great musician and a role model for us.

EY: Speaking of jazz, what was it like to perform at the Cape Town International Jazz Festival earlier this year?

RB: We gave all the songs a lot of new life. We've been playing them for months, and got to work with some brass players, some horns, a pianist and a percussionist, as well as backing singers. So we really opened up the world of the music.

EY: Last year, you opened for Bastille, John Newman, and 30 Seconds to Mars (in between showcase events in New York at the CMJ Music Marathon). Who are some of the people you'd most like to collaborate with in the future?

RB: It would be cool to do something with Black Coffee, who I really look up to and who we're lucky to get to hang out with every now and then. Looking abroad, there's an African musician called Richard Bona. He's so good that I don't think we'd get the chance to collaborate with him. But just to hang out with him and learn about his music would be something else.

EY: Your sound draws on a lot of influences. How would you describe it?

RB: We were too interested in jazz to be part of the folk thing and too soft to be part of the rock thing. So at first we didn't fit in anywhere. But for now, we like to call it South African pop.

We've kind of stuck to the pop thing for a long time because it's music without restrictions or any kind of exclusivity. It's for teenagers and kids and grownups and our family and our friends. Just anybody. It doesn't matter what language you speak. Our music gets played everywhere and we're really grateful for that. And the South African thing? That's the flavour that's



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in the music. That's part of our style. It's just naturally come about and we're happy with that.

EY: What do you think makes people connect to your music?

RB: I think it's the song-writing. The harmonies are so beautiful and the melodies are so catchy, but in a sincere way. They're not throwaway hooks. And in terms of the groove, everybody can relate to the rhythm and how it makes you want to dance because it has a local flavour. I think that's why it's been so successful. And we've been really lucky. It's a cool thing. So it's going to be interesting to see how it works when we start going abroad.

EY: Speaking of plans abroad, any gigs lined up?

RB: We're just holding thumbs for international plans, which I can't mention in case they fall through. But we're really keen. Obviously here in South Africa, as in many countries, we import a lot of music and that kind of dominates what we listen to. But it would be so cool to share what we do by taking it abroad and representing what's going on and what's fresh from

South Africa. That would be really cool.

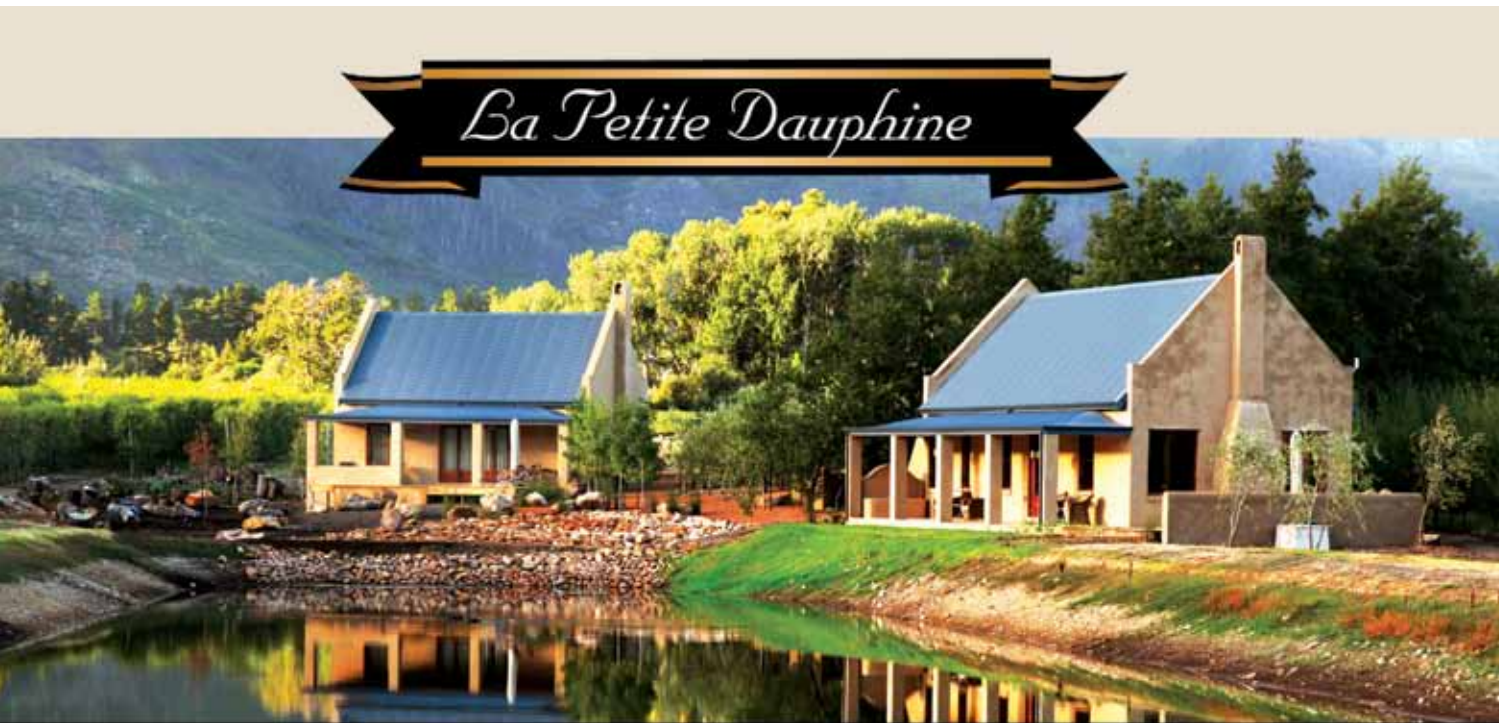
EY: What's your ultimate dream as a band?

RB: I guess it's to play to everybody and share our music all around the world. I think that would be really cool. And maybe to inspire people and show them that there's value in learning music theory, and what it is to play an instrument. I don't want to bash music; I prefer to keep it on an upbeat note. But a lot of music is just automatic and so it's good to learn the real thing.

To learn more about Beatenberg visit www.beatenberg.net. ✕

WINNING BIG

Beatenberg were the big winners at this year's SAMA Awards which took place on 19th April. The group took home a slew of awards including Duo or Group of the Year, Best Pop Album for their album *The Hanging Gardens of Beatenberg*, as well as the coveted award for Album of the Year.



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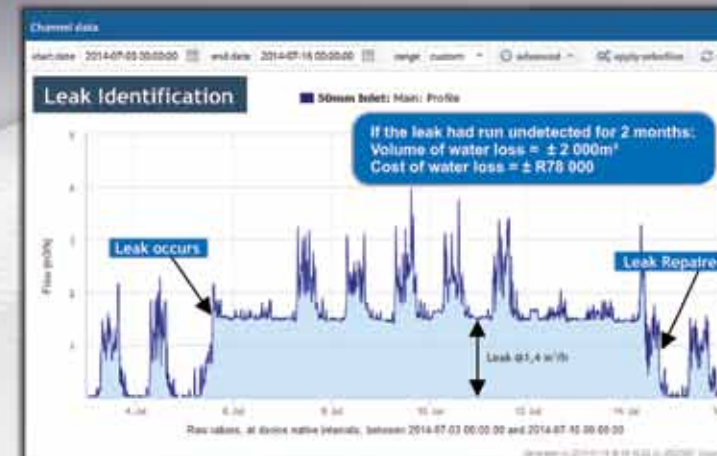
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