

# Travel **Essence** MAGAZINE

ISSUE 15 • MARCH - APRIL 2022

*Anahinda  
Lodge:*

INSIDE THE ULTIMATE  
GRANITE SANCTUARY

SAY "I LOVE YOU" IN  
PARADISE AT STORY  
SEYCHELLES

*The All Africa  
Bucketlist:*  
10 MUST-SEE NATURAL  
WONDERS IN AFRICA

TRANQUILITY AND  
CONSERVATION STRENGTH  
IN MALAWI'S TONGOLE  
WILDERNESS RETREAT

# JAH PRAYZAH

BRINGING THE HEARTBEAT OF ZIMBABWE'S  
SOUND TO DUBAI EXPO 2020

# The heartbeat of Africa at Dubai Expo 2020: Spotlight On Jah Prayzah

By Mucha Nyandoro

World Expos have been running for 170 years, with the recently ended Dubai edition being the first time that every African country, and the African Union, has had a physical presence by way of individual pavilions. Investment and trade forums as well as national day celebrations were the order of the day, reflecting the unwavering commitment from the UAE leadership to strengthen the Africa trade corridor.

In the space of six months, I actively participated in numerous conferences, events, and interviews, at the heart of which has been the incredibly dynamic continent of Africa. Naturally, with 54 spotlights cast on Africa alone, the parade was competitive. Attracting investors and tourists, negotiating trade, showcasing the diversity of resources, heritage, and culture, amongst other strategic priorities, required vision, planning and execution fitting of the high standards on-site.

As low-hanging fruit, it was therefore no surprise that tourism and the creatives industries were showcased extensively by African countries. Simply walking through most African pavilions, one quickly encountered an array of vibrant images and crafts. Some more progressive countries were showcasing developments in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) related sectors.

Feeding into African arts and culture, renowned music artists such as Nigerian Davido, Fally Ipupa from Democratic Republic of Congo, South African Mafikizolo and Zimbabwean Jah Prayzah delighted large audiences with the infectious sounds of the Motherland. The heartbeat of Africa.

**ZIMBABWEAN JAH PRAYZAH TAKES TO THE STAGE IN DUBAI**  
I took Jah Prayzah on a VIP tour of the iconic Views on Palm

Jumeirah. I wanted to understand what performing at Dubai Expo meant for him in the context of his upbringing, career aspirations and national pride.

## WHO IS JAH PRAYZAH?

Born on 4 July 1987 and formally known as Mukudzeyi Mukombe, Jah Prayzah 'JP', is a talented musician, recording artist and entertainer. He describes himself as a village boy from Uzumba Maramba Pfungwe in Murehwa, a Mashonaland East district of Zimbabwe. JP was educated initially in his hometown, Murehwa, and then went on to complete his A-Levels in Kambuzuma, Harare. He grew up singing in church and loved playing the Mbira (thumb piano), a traditional Zimbabwe instrument. In 2007, he started recording his music professionally. It is from this backdrop that a musical star was crafted. Fast-forward to 2022, where today he has:

- 11 recorded albums under his belt,
- performed in various countries across the world
- amassed massive international fan base
- won several music awards.

## WHAT ARE HIS FAMILY DYNAMICS?

JP is one of five children, two of whom sadly passed away. His face lit up whenever he spoke of his parents. He was quick to express a heartfelt gratitude that they remain alive and a part of his journey, a fact he does not take for granted.

JP, the family man, talked of his beautiful wife and five children. I asked if his children are musically inclined, and he stated his first born has a song and video that has c.2 million views on YouTube. He also has an eight-year-old daughter who plays the violin. Genetics clearly demonstrating that the apple doesn't fall far from the tree.



### WHERE DID HE LEARN TO BE LIKE THAT?

JP's love for his vernacular, Shona, is evident both through his music and to-camera pieces on his social media platforms. With his passion for Shona, I was relieved that we conducted our interviews in English, as this article would have otherwise been a very short article!

Put into context, he sings in Shona. His sound is Zimbabwean. His music is laced with traditional instruments such as mbira, marimba, hosho and ngoma. Listen closely enough and you may pick up slight stylistic hints of artists who inspire him, namely Oliver Mtukudzi, Thomas Mapfumo and Marshall Munhumumwe.

### HOW HAS HE RISEN TO FAME?

JP spoke of his humble beginnings with a clear sense of unapologetic pride. His humility came through as he described his career perspectives. He states that he never imagined he would reach the heights that he has. His prayers some years ago, were simply that his music would one day be played on local radio.

JP then reflected on the release of his album Mudhara Vachauya, which he believes cemented his credibility as an artist, evidenced by a meteoric rise in his social media numbers and fans attending his live shows.

### THEY SAY NUMBERS DON'T LIE, SO HOW IS THIS AS A MEASURE OF JP'S SUCCESS?

#### Followers

Facebook | 1.1million followers

Instagram | 760k

Twitter | 248k

YouTube | 470k

TikTok | 103k

#### Top Viewership (YouTube)

Watora Mari ft Diamond Platnumz | 16 million

Nziyo Yerudo ft Yemi Alade | 9.8 million

Dzamutsana | 9.4 million

Mukwasha | 8.6 million

My Lilly ft. Davido | 6.8 million

We can safely agree that JP has exceeded his initial expectations by a long shot, with much more to come, I am sure.







### WHAT ROLE HAVE COLLABORATIONS PLAYED IN JP'S SUCCESS?

JP's music collaborations with big names in the African music scene, have been instrumental to his positioning as a star. He recalls his first big collaboration with Tanzanian award-winning recording artist, Diamond Platnumz, currently featured on the Netflix reality series, *Young, Famous and African*. JP messaged Diamond Platnumz and introduced himself, with a request to collaborate on a song. He was pleasantly surprised to receive a quick and positive

response, and the rest is history. This collaboration catapulted other joint music ventures with artists such as Davido and Yemi Alade. I was unable to convince Jah to disclose which Jamaican group he is currently working with, but from the glint in his eyes, I could tell the output is going to be epic.

I asked JP who he would like to work with in the future and he declared Alicia Keys. He explained that he admires her musicality and can picture singing along with her, so Alicia, if you see this, please collaborate with our Jah Prayzah, and thank me afterwards for it?





Mucha H Nyandoro | Chief of Tribe, Professional Tribes

f : <https://bit.ly/ProTribesFacebook>

@ : [https://bit.ly/ProTribes\\_Instagram](https://bit.ly/ProTribes_Instagram)

in : <https://www.linkedin.com/company/professionaltribes>

▶ : <https://bit.ly/ProTribesYouTube>

Mucha Nyandoro

@ : [http://bit.ly/MuchaNyandoro\\_Instagram](http://bit.ly/MuchaNyandoro_Instagram)



### HOW IMPORTANT ARE PARTNERSHIPS AND ENDORSEMENTS?

Almost every musician I have held court with, will often reference the challenges of being a creative and needing to be robust with the business aspects of their industry. Financing music and video production, studio time, and day-to-day living often create pain points in the absence of reliable and sustainable income streams. For JP, this is where West Property Zimbabwe (Westprop) comes in. Westprop is a leading property development company in Zimbabwe led by Chairman and CEO, Ken Sharpe. JP is a

brand ambassador for Westprop.

We discussed how this relationship worked and put simply, he helps to get eyeballs onto the Westprop brand, driving property sales. His agreement with the developer has enabled JP to secure properties on favourable terms and currently lives in one of their developments, in an affluent area of Harare. From the village to the suburbs, we joked, using the expression ‘takaenda, takaenda’, which loosely translates to upward mobility.

As I observed the dynamic between the Westprop leadership team and JP, it became apparent that there is a deep



investment in JP's career that transcends business transactions. Mentorship and a familial bond come with the package to the extent that JP refers Ken Sharpe as his 'mukoma' (big brother).

Unlike a previous trip to Dubai, where JP performed at an Africa music festival, thanks to the sponsorship of Westprop, he was able to travel this time with his full band, complete with vocalists and dancers, and boy, did they all set the Millennium Amphitheater at Dubai Expo 2020 on fire!

#### WHAT ARE JP'S TOURISM TIPS?

JP's favourite holiday destination in Zimbabwe is Victoria Falls because the falls and wildlife are breathtaking. He suggests for anyone wanting to 'almost walk in the sky', Nyanga would be the place to visit. Mutarazi Falls and Kariba are also on his list of hotspots. Like me, I trust you are picking up the water theme here.

He contrasted the look and feel of Dubai to Zimbabwe and was impressed, as one would expect, by the infrastructure and beautiful architecture. He gave off a sense of awe talking to him about the history of Dubai, the idea that from a vision, a city such as this has been created in the desert. When all is said and done though, he circles back to there being no place like home, Zimbabwe.

#### WAS JP'S ZIMBABWE DAY CONCERT SUCCESSFUL?

Absolutely! The Millennium Amphitheater at the Dubai Expo 2020 site was full. There was an electric and infectious atmosphere as his voice belted off the stage. Non Zimbabweans joined in as we all danced and some sang along to his songs. JP and his band delivered an unforgettable performance.

#### BACK TO DUBAI EXPO 2020

If I was to summarise the unprecedented and delightful platform that Dubai Expo 2020 has been, I would say it has made the world accessible to its 20 million plus visitors in new and unexpected ways. We have listened to the rhythmic heartbeat of Africa – its music from Zimbabwe, DRC, South Africa, Nigeria, but to name a few countries. We have discovered how croton nuts create energy in Kenya. We have tasted Ethiopia's next big super-grain. We have sampled chocolate from Ivory Coast. We have been exposed to Gabon's aerospace ambitions. We have learnt about Ylang Ylang in the Comoros and its perfume industry. We evidenced the ancient custom of sand drawings in Angola.

What we will likely remember most is how Expo made us feel. It gave Africa dignity, for which we will always be grateful. 🙏