

Connecting cultures: Amapiano, from South Africa to the world...

By [Vanashree Govender](#), issued by [Irvine Partners](#)

27 Sep 2023

Over the past few years, the global music landscape has witnessed a transformative cultural exchange, thanks to the rise of Amapiano, a uniquely South African sound, that has captivated audiences worldwide. Born on the streets of Johannesburg and Pretoria's townships in the late 2010s, Amapiano, characterised by its blend of various musical elements, including house music, jazz, kwaito, and other African influences, has become nothing short of a global phenomenon.



South African artists, like DJ Maphorisa, Kabza De Small, Focalistic, Young Stunna, and DBN Gogo have been credited with taking Amapiano from the streets of South African townships and popularising the genre on the international stage. Garnering global recognition has seen artists as big as Beyonce incorporate elements of Amapiano's sound into their recent songs and albums, while high-profile celebrities such as [Jamie Foxx](#) have also spoken about being fans of the genre.

This wave of South African talent has not only reshaped the global music scene but has also broken down cultural barriers and increased access for local talent, as seen in the number of South African artists featured in the *Black Panther II: Wakanda Forever* soundtrack, which showcases the likes of Young Stunna and Busiswa, Sino Msolo, and Kamo Mphela on songs produced by DBN Gogo.

As South Africa celebrates Heritage Month, it's worth looking at the elements that have propelled Amapiano to its rapid ascent on the global stage. This genre, rooted in the nation's rich cultural heritage, not only draws from its past but also contributes to the shaping of a future cultural legacy.

While a number of factors, such as the growing global curiosity about African culture (as seen in the rise of AfroBeats), have played a part, there's no denying that technology has played a significant role in its amplification.

Rising connectivity and falling costs help take Amapiano to the world

Two of the most obvious ways that technology has helped amplify Amapiano's global profile are through social media and streaming platforms.

The former has allowed artists around the world, including those within the broader Amapiano genre, to build profiles for themselves and connect with artists around the world. But it goes beyond that too. As [Billboard notes](#), the first Amapiano songs (frequently recorded in home studios using free software) were spread through instant messaging and social media.

Streaming platforms, meanwhile, allowed artists to upload their music for a global audience and generate income without the backing of a major label. A good example of how Amapiano artists have leveraged technology this way came during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns. With clubs closed, DJs started putting out Amapiano sets on video streaming platforms, further amplifying the genre's global presence. This technology-first approach has worked too. According to Spotify, streams of Amapiano songs outside of sub-Saharan Africa have [grown 563%](#) in the past two years alone.

That kind of growth would, however, have been much more difficult if South Africa hadn't seen a significant rise in internet connectivity coupled with increased affordability. [World Bank data](#) shows that 72% of South Africans now have access to the internet, compared with just 24% in 2010. In the same period, [mobile data prices plummeted](#) (and [continue to fall](#)). High-speed fixed-line broadband costs have also fallen, with more and more township users now able to [access uncapped fibre](#).

As a result, previously marginalised people are able to access global communities and share their cultural heritages with those communities.

5G and the future of digital cultural exchanges

As connective technologies continue to evolve, that ability to facilitate digital cultural exchanges will only grow. It's something close to our hearts at Huawei and is one of the reasons why we've invested so heavily in connectivity in South Africa.

The growth of 5G is particularly relevant on this front. With its high speeds and low latencies, 5G has the potential to transform the way South Africans use the internet. While there's still significant room for growth in 5G penetration, it's on an [accelerated growth trajectory](#). Once it becomes truly widespread, there is no doubt that artists, producers, and other cultural practitioners will use the technologies it enables in new and innovative ways.

Imagine, for instance, being able to experience the country's top Amapiano clubs in virtual reality (VR). Alternatively, imagine the tourism opportunities that could come from augmented reality (AR) tours of Amapiano hotspots. And that's just one musical genre. Imagine the cumulative difference that could come from a broad range of cultural stakeholders leveraging connectivity to its full potential. Imagine how these innovations could deepen our connection with cultural diversity.

The confluence of culture and connectivity

Ultimately, it should be clear that technology has played a significant role in Amapiano's rise to global prominence. This underlines the role that tech plays in disseminating and preserving cultural heritage. And as connective technology, in particular continues to evolve, it's easy to envision a future where the fusion of technology and cultural sharing results in a more interconnected and culturally rich global community. At Huawei, we are committed to playing as big a role as possible in elevating the country's influence in global spheres, fostering a sense of national pride, and building that future.

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