



ON THE **COVER**

HOST *with the* MOST

BETWEEN STEPPING INTO THE 9-12 SLOT ON KFM AND HOSTING KYKNET'S EXCITING NEW TALK SHOW, TUSSEN ONS, TRACEY LANGE'S SCHEDULE IS PACKED SEVEN DAYS A WEEK AS **SHE BRINGS THE COUNTRY THE ENTERTAINMENT IT LOVES.** WE CAUGHT UP WITH HER TO FIND OUT HOW SHE DOES IT ALL

BY JADE TAYLOR COOKE **PHOTOGRAPHY** SAMANTHA PINTO

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‘WHETHER IT’S on radio or TV, I’m just the girl in the corner, wanting to make you smile,’ reads Tracey Lange’s Instagram bio. Well, that’s only partly true... Tracey makes us smile, alright, but nobody puts this baby in the corner. Over the past decade, she’s forged a successful career in radio and TV, and her warmth and sense of humour have endeared her to listeners and viewers across the country. Whether she’s chatting about community issues on air, keeping us up to date with lifestyle trends on kykNET’s *Bravo!* or donning a red-carpet-worthy gown to host *Dancing with the Stars SA*, Tracey is a firm favourite. This month, she takes on two new projects – the 9–12 slot on Cape Town’s KFM radio station, and hosting kykNET & Kie’s exciting new talk show, *Tussen Ons*.

Tracey’s impressive career may seem like an overnight success, but it was shaped by the signature qualities she brings to each of her projects – a good work ethic, an even better attitude and an innate ability to create her own opportunities. Case in point: her start in radio. In 2006, while working for a property developer,

Tracey felt the need for a little outside-the-box excitement over weekends. ‘My mom suggested I offer to help out – free of charge – at a community radio station in my home town of Somerset West,’ she says. ‘I was only planning to do it for fun...’ Within a year of those ‘just for fun’ beginnings, Tracey was snapped up by Good Hope FM. ‘Less than six months later, I had a full-time job on air,’ she says. She would go on to host primetime shows on Smile FM and Heart 104.9.

Her first foothold in the television industry was the result of a similarly gutsy move. In 2007, while enjoying her new career in radio, she decided to take another shot in the dark. ‘I emailed *Pasella*. I told them that I’m an Afrikaans-speaking lady and I would like to offer them help in any way I could – at no charge again, as per my mother!’ she says. ‘They called me in to do an audition, and I ended up presenting for them for a while.’ Tracey’s heart was still in radio, however, and she wasn’t quite ready to sacrifice it for the small screen. ‘Fast-forward a few years, and a production manager working on a new show for kykNET remembered having seen me on *Pasella*. They contacted me, and the rest is history. *Bravo!* is still one of the most popular lifestyle shows, and has opened so many doors for me.’

One of those doors led Tracey to a coveted gig: presenting the South



African version of *Dancing with the Stars*. The high-energy dance competition aired on M-Net from February through April, earlier this year, ending in a glittering finale that saw singer-songwriter Connell Cruise, and his professional dance partner Marcella Solimeo, take first place. ‘It was crazy long hours and very nerve-racking, but the whole experience was just mind-blowing because of the production value. No stone was left unturned

in making sure this was a production that could rival anything internationally,’ she says.

Chatting to Tracey, you get the sense that here is a woman who loves being in front of the camera or microphone, not because she necessarily enjoys being the focus of attention, but because she loves speaking to her audience – to you, to your neighbours, to anyone participating in their community. Indeed, when she (temporarily)

hung up her radio headset in March this year to focus on her TV career, her official farewell statement read, ‘Being a part of the Heart FM family has been everything I’d hoped it would be and has allowed me to do what I set out to when I decided to pursue a career in broadcasting – giving people the platform to share their stories.’

It’s been a bumper first half of 2018 for Tracey, and the future looks even rosier. ‘I have two exciting new projects launching,’

she says. ‘I’ll be starting at KFM, and on a new TV show! *Tussen Ons* on kykNET & Kie is a talk show that can only be described as a mix between *Ellen* and *The Talk*. We’ll have a panel of strong women who will share their thoughts and opinions. These women are all amazing in their fields of expertise, and come from such diverse backgrounds that it’ll make for exceptional TV. It’s a first in South Africa. The set it currently being built,

and we’ll have a live studio audience.’

A show about strong women, featuring strong women, presented by a strong woman? We’re setting recordings on our PVRs already. In a year of Time’s Up, #metoo and T-shirts claiming that ‘The future is female’, I ask Tracey what feminism means to her. ‘The option to choose, without caring about what others think – that’s feminism,’ she says. ‘Many “feminists” judge women who decide to be stay-at-home moms, but feminism is a woman’s right to choose to lead her life the way she would like to. Feminism is living your life in a way that makes you, as a woman, happy, without hurting anyone else. It’s not forcing the strength and independence of some women down others’ throats, but embodying it, owning it and showing the strength in vulnerability.’

We definitely wouldn’t judge Tracey for wanting to spend more time at home, especially when you get an eyeful of her man, marketing genius Avukile Mabombo. The pair are nothing if not adorable together, even documenting their travel adventures on their blog, *Travul* (get it?) *Diary*. When it comes to relationships, Tracey’s combination of a level head and a big heart is evident again. She recently posted a photo on Instagram celebrating one of Avukile’s achievements, including in the caption the words, ‘A partner with a full life that is totally

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A DAY IN THE LIFE

We asked Tracey to let us in on what a 'typical' day looks like for a radio host and TV presenter...

8:30 AM

'I arrive at the studio, and I'm on air at 9 am.'

10 AM

'Kyra Loubser, my hair stylist and make-up artist, arrives. I'll be interviewing people and doing the show all while getting my hair and make-up done.'

12 NOON

The crew collect me for my first shoot. In-between shooting and learning lines, I'll be producing my radio show and setting up guests for the next day's show.'

4 PM

'Kyra joins us to change my hair, make-up and styling for the second shoot of the day.'

6 PM

'Sometimes, I'll head off to MC an event.'

separate to yours is priceless.' She elaborates saying, 'I would feel completely suffocated if my boyfriend didn't have a life that didn't include me. He has a job that has nothing to do with me - he tells me about it and I know the challenges he faces, but the job itself doesn't include me. He has friends who I know well, but they're not my friends. He has projects that keep him busy while I'm away at work - and he never makes me feel guilty. I think it's a nurturing thing; as women, we feel guilty when our partners wait at home for us, but with him, I don't, because I know he has a full life. I've had the opposite before and never realised how guilty I felt about working, until I got out of that relationship. Because both of our schedules can be crazy, we truly value the time we spend together, and chilling at home is one of our favourite things to do. It's our sanctuary.'

With an outlook like that, you can't help but root for Tracey. She's also risen to the top in an industry that can be cut-throat, sordid and just plain nasty, but has kept her head - and her values - high. 'From the moment I started, I said I wanted to be known as the person who didn't buy into all that, who gave this industry a better name,' she says. 'It's disheartening to feel as though those who are nasty always get the great opportunities, but I feel like the tide is turning. I'm glad I've never lost my smile or my integrity.' **EL**