

WENDYL MARTIN

tgw saturday

**B**URNI Aman raps like a boxer with her punchy rhymes. She is inspired by the sweet science of boxing – a one-time pursuit. So much so that this Steenberg rapper/MC/spoken word artist has named her album *Sweet Science*.

You may remember her from the last decade as part of the local hip-hop trio, Godessa. Their breakthrough track *Mindz Ablaze* set them apart as a playlisted female hip hop crew.

Now, over a decade later, Burni, real name Bernadette Amansure, is releasing a 20-track album full of musician-and-vocalist collaborations. It's also quite a genre-buster; crossing *goema* rhythms with funky jazz, soul and a core of solid rap.

Burni tells *The Good Weekend* that Godessa did not actively decide to split – they all just became involved in other projects.

"I was finding my voice outside Godessa, and thinking about what I like," she says.

Sadly, she still stands virtually alone in female rap.

"There are few recording and performing female MCs.

"There are a few who record... We always have to work twice as hard as our male counterparts. Females in hip-hop become organisers, not DJs or MCs.

"They don't always feel the need to express themselves."

A tracklist of 20 may be seen as big but it could also give her a longer time to get singles playlisted.

"Recording it was a long process. I was left with 20 tracks and I wanted to include everything. It was a growing process."

Her original plan in 2012 was to have the album crowd-funded but that did not work out to well.

"It was a new thing for South Africa. The campaign was not good. I sourced private funding and I got to use nice mastering guys."

The album moves between English and Afrikaans lyrics with a natural flow. The Afrikaans on the first single *Die Kaa* (featuring The Faranas) sounds so appropriate it could not have worked any other way. The track was recorded at Shanti Sound Studio in Switzerland.

"I go where the music takes me. *Die Kaa* is a crazy band song. I tried writing English to the beats and it sounded bad. I went to Afrikaans



**LISTEN UP:** Burni Aman launches her debut solo album *Sweet Science* tonight at the Imperial on Long Street.

PICTURE: LIA WAGNER

and it was done in a day. I wrote *Gee Vir My* by chance in Afrikaans. It is my first language."

Burni works in Switzerland, too, where she is a member of the crew Greater Goodz. She is also a founder of the SA-Swiss hip-hop collective Rogue State Alliance.

She chose *Die Kaa* as her first single as it is about Cape Town and thus

an appropriate way to launch her album here.

She says the track will be playlisted on Good Hope FM soon.

*Darknessbright* is the next single and it will have a video release soon that she had shot in a boxing gym.

Although *Sweet Science* is a studio album, it feels very live at times, perhaps due to Burni's command-

ing vocal presence.

She attributes some of this to live sounds like horns and guitars.

While recording vocals, she would try out three or four mics until she found the one that suited her voice for that day.

Listening closer, I found her lyrics more like beat poetry than songwriting.

"I started out doing a lot of poetry.

"People often tell me that although I'm rapping it sounds like it's in a spoken word way."

*Sweet Science* is available online at iTunes, Amazon and Bandcamp. The album launches at The Imperial on Long Street tonight. Entrance is R50.

## How did John Travolta get so creepy?

EMILY YAHR

**LOS ANGELES:** It started as a moment of glory for John Travolta. Then things got weird.

But that often seems to be the case, doesn't it? We all remember last year when Travolta got up on the Oscars stage in front of the world and proudly introduced Idina Menzel as the "wickedly talented Adele Dazeem".

You can't plan for a meme like that. Producers tried to strike gold again on Sunday night as they invited Travolta and Menzel to reunite to present best original song. Menzel appeared first. "Please welcome to the stage my very dear friend, Glom Gazingo," she announced. Wild applause as an appropriately bashful Travolta walked out and wrapped Menzel in a big hug.

"I deserve that," Travolta said, arm still tightly around her waist.

Then he grabbed her chin with his hand and pulled her face close, cooing. "But you, you, my darling, my beautiful, my wickedly talented Idina Menzel," he cooed, stroking her chin.

"You got it, yayyy," Menzel trailed off uncomfortably as Travolta's hand still lingered on the chin.

Naturally, Twitter blew up as viewers were suddenly really weirded out. And just like that, Travolta became the joke of the Oscars. Also not helping? His touchy-feely picture with an unamused Scarlett Johansson (his former *Love Song for Bobby Long* co-star) on the red carpet.

So John Travolta – what's going on? How did you become the "creepy uncle" of the award show circuit?

Part of the reason may be his utter cluelessness that what he's doing is bizarre. Take his explana-

tion of the face-touching incident after the ceremony on Jimmy Kimmel's Oscar post-mortem.

"Apparently, I played with her chin too much," Travolta joked with Jimmy Kimmel of the incident, in apparent disbelief that there could be too much chin-playing.

In the same appearance, he tried to explain how the "Adele Dazeem" flub happened in the first place – he was distracted by the "sexy, beautiful" Goldie Hawn.

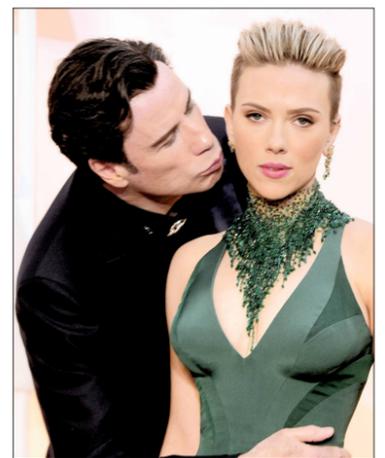
"As I get backstage I run into Goldie Hawn," Travolta said, explaining his flustered behaviour: "Now Goldie Hawn is charismatic, sexy, beautiful – got the amazing thing – and I was star-struck. I'm star-struck, hugging and loving her up, and forgetting I have to go and do this bit."

Note: when everyone already thinks you're too handsy, probably don't talk about "hugging and lov-

ing her up". But again, Travolta doesn't seem to get it, which makes him seem even more out of touch. He also took credit for Menzel's dynamite 2014.

"She's had one of the best years of her life, and she gives me credit," he said. That was probably meant as a joke on Menzel's part... unless she really thinks he's responsible for *Frozen*.

That leads to the other problem. Travolta, who shot to fame in 1970s with *Welcome Back Kotter* and *Saturday Night Fever* and continued with 1990s hits like *Pulp Fiction*, has been out of the spotlight for a while. His last big movie was *Hairspray* in 2007. Though faded A-listers do elicit excitement and nostalgia, Travolta hasn't been gone quite long enough to really make us miss him. He hasn't earned his "wacky celebrity" stripes yet, though his goofy attitude suggests that he thinks he has.



**STRANGE:** John Travolta kisses Scarlett Johansson as they arrive for the Academy Awards ceremony.

PICTURE: EPA

Either way, his misguided attempts to be kooky aren't exactly working out – and by next year, he should really have some self-awareness of how his goofiness comes across on-screen. – Washington Post.