



The allure of 'Africa's Greatest Horse Racing Event'



A RECORD-breaking R10-million stake is the main attraction for the equine athletes at the 130th running of "Africa's Greatest Horse Racing Event", but is just one of the many reasons the Hollywoodbets Durban July will once again be South Africa's ultimate social occasion on July 4.

With 50 days to go, anticipation continues to build for an event that promises spectacle on every level.

"Country Allure" has been unveiled as the vibrant theme for 2026, setting the stage for a celebration where the country's leading fashion creators, world-class musical entertainment

and South Africa's finest racehorses come together for an unforgettable experience.

While trainers, owners and jockeys fine-tune preparations to ensure the nation's top equine stars peak for the prestigious R10-million, 2 200m contest, the fashion and entertainment industries are equally hard at work preparing to captivate audiences at Hollywoodbets Greyville Racecourse.

The announcement of the Country Allure theme earlier this year sparked a wave of creativity among fashion houses, designers, young creatives and hospitality specialists. Drawing inspiration from South Africa's dramatic rural landscapes and the timeless elegance of equestrian culture, racegoers will transform Hollywoodbets Greyville Racecourse into a vibrant celebration of the Rainbow Nation on raceday.

The first of the six Invited Designers has now been revealed, with Thula Sindi's elegant creations showcased on this page and across the event's social media platforms. The remaining five Invited Designers will be announced over the coming days, with their designs featured weekly in The Mercury.

Meanwhile, the DFF Rising Stars presented by Durban Fashion Fair – who will also showcase their work on raceday – are putting the finishing touches to their collections, set to be unveiled later this month.

Alongside the established names, emerging talent is preparing for one of the most demanding and rewarding opportunities in South African fashion. In early June, students from fashion design colleges and technikons across KwaZulu-Natal will compete in the Hollywoodbets Durban July Young Designer Award presented by Metro FM.

Entries will be narrowed to 25 semi-finalists before a final selection of the top 10 young designers is made. These rising stars will enjoy a career-defining opportunity to present their Country Allure creations alongside the Invited Designers and Durban Fashion Fair Rising Stars at the Gala Preview Show, before showcasing again on raceday in front of more than 50 000 spectators.

Beyond providing a platform for industry leaders, the pre-race fashion showcases also inspire amateur fashion enthusiasts and socialites – ensuring Hollywoodbets Greyville Racecourse becomes a dazzling display of colour, creativity and individual expression when the big day arrives.

Racecourse entrance tickets at R280 are available via Ticketpro at www.ticketpro.co.za, as well as at from Hollywoodbets Greyville Racecourse on weekdays and race days in the lead-up to the event. While tickets will be sold at the gates on raceday, advance purchase is recommended to avoid queues. On-site parking will be available at R170 per vehicle.

A central pillar of the raceday experience remains the event's renowned hospitality offerings, with luxurious infield and grandstand packages catering for a wide range of tastes and budgets. Racegoers seeking a premium day of food, fashion and music can explore available hospitality options at www.hollywoodbetsdurbanjuly.co.za.

All indications are that the 2026 Hollywoodbets Durban July will deliver a true celebration of Country Allure – appealing equally to fashion lovers, socialites and dedicated racing enthusiasts.



COUNTRY ALLURE: Models (from left) Muntuwenkosi Mathe, Kristina Louw and Nomfundo Ndlovu show off Thula Sindi's interpretation of the Country Allure theme for this year's Hollywoodbets Durban July. Sindi is (second from right) one of the Invited Designers who will showcase his creations on raceday on July 4 at Hollywoodbets Greyville Racecourse. | Sean Laurenz



LABEL: THULA SINDI

Thula Sindi is one of South Africa's most celebrated fashion designers, renowned for his sophisticated use of colour, texture and proportion.

Born in Klerksdorp in the North West province, Sindi discovered his passion for fine arts at a young age before pursuing fashion studies at the National School of the Arts in Johannesburg and later at the London International School of Fashion (LISOF).

He launched his career as head designer for Dutch textile company Visco immediately after graduating and debuted his own label at South African Fashion Week in 2006. Since then, the Thula Sindi brand has dressed influential women including Dr Precious Moloi-Motsepe, Terry Pheto and Azania Mosaka, while also attracting international acclaim.

In 2013, he was listed in the Mail & Guardian as one of the top 200 young South Africans who are making a mark in their respective field and industries. Forbes also named Sindi in its "30 under 30: Africa's best young entrepreneurs" list in May 2013.

Thula Sindi has showcased collections in fashion capitals across the world including



Paris, New York and Hong Kong.

My Country Allure inspiration:

"Country Allure immediately transported me to a hyper-romanticised version of country living; more Mills and Boone than hard ranch life. We all want to get away from the hustle and bustle of the city, and what could be more alluring than frolicking and riding on horseback through idyllic lush landscapes while draped in all white lace, brocade and sheer cotton. A dream worthy of a romance-novel cover."

Instagram: @ThulaSindi

TikTok: Thula Sindi

Facebook: Thula Sindi

