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SAGMJ Unveils Jury for 2027 Car of the Year Sponsored by Bridgestone

The South African Guild of Mobility Journalists (SAGMJ) is proud to announce its 33-member jury for the 2027 South African Car of the Year (COTY) competition, marking another milestone in the evolution of one of the country's longest-running automotive awards programmes.

With Bridgestone joining as the new title sponsor, the competition enters its next chapter with a renewed emphasis on independent evaluation, journalistic credibility, industry transformation and recognising automotive excellence in an increasingly competitive South African vehicle market.

For each annual COTY competition, jurors are elected by their peers through a dedicated voting platform, with additional appointments made by the COTY Committee. This process ensures a diverse, experienced jury while nurturing emerging talent and ensuring continuity for the competition's future.

While Bridgestone's sponsorship provides commercial support for the competition, SAGMJ retains responsibility for its administration and independent judging processes. Vehicle assessments and the selection of winners remain the responsibility of the appointed jury, guided by the competition's established criteria.

The 33-member COTY jury comprises a diverse group of journalists, including a veteran involved in the competition for more than 40 years, as well as multi-media content creators, writers and broadcasters. Collectively, the jury brings more than 500 years' experience to the competition. One of the fundamental aspects considered by the COTY Committee in selecting jurors was the competition's relevance to diverse car buyers in South Africa. With more than 600 000 new car units expected to be sold in South Africa in 2026, the new car market is proving robust; as such, it is critical that the jury aligns with buyer demographics. The jury's first task is to select the semi-finalists for next year's competition, followed by selecting the finalists in January 2027.

"The local automotive landscape is evolving rapidly, with new manufacturers entering the market, electrification gaining momentum and vehicle technologies becoming increasingly sophisticated. It is therefore important that the competition continues to evolve while

maintaining the independence, credibility and rigorous evaluation standards that have defined it for more than four decades," says Thami Masemola, Chairperson of the 2027 COTY Committee and Vice-Chairperson of the SAGMJ.

"Our 2027 jury combines extensive industry experience with emerging automotive journalism talent, ensuring that the competition remains relevant to the industry while providing meaningful insights to South African motorists," Masemola added.

The 33-member 2027 COTY jury includes six associates who are entering the COTY training programme and will be mentored by experienced jurors. The members are listed below in alphabetical order.

1. Alan Rosenmeyer
2. Aurelia Mbokazi
3. Azim Omar
4. Bernard Hellberg Jr
5. Brandon Jacobs
6. Brendon Staniforth
7. Charles Molefe
8. Colin Windell
9. Edward Makwana
10. Fanele Bengu
11. Ferdi de Vos
12. Francisco Nwamba
13. Gugulethu Masuku
14. Janine van der Post
15. Jason Woosey
16. Jeanette Kok-Kritzinger
17. Kumbi Mtshakazi
18. Liana Reiners
19. Mabuyane Mabuza
20. Marnus Hattingh
21. Nicky Furniss
22. Sean Nurse
23. Sheryl Goldstuck
24. Sibonelo Myeni
25. Thami Masemola
26. Wezile Bonani
27. Ziphorah Masethe
28. Aphiwe Nzimande (associate/reserve)
29. Bongani Mtolo (associate)
30. Mohau Vuma (associate)
31. Mpho Maboi (associate)

32. Reuben van Niekerk (associate)
33. Zandile Tembe (associate)

"We are delighted with the 2027 COTY jury and congratulate its members on being selected for this prestigious competition, which has a proud history spanning more than 40 years," says Jacques Rikhotso, Regional Vice President of Bridgestone, Africa and Middle East. "Their collective journalistic expertise and experience will further strengthen the competition, raising automotive benchmarks in line with Bridgestone's values of quality, innovation and safety, ultimately benefiting vehicle owners."

The 2027 COTY Committee includes Thami Masemola (Chairperson), Jason Woosey, Sibonelo Myeni, Edward Makwana and Ziphorah Masethe, with the latter two being newly appointed committee members. Their collective industry experience, diverse perspectives and enthusiasm will help take the competition to new heights, strengthen its partnership with Bridgestone and embrace the automotive industry's future.

Following the selection of the semi-finalists in early December and the finalists in January 2027, the competition will culminate in a two-day on-site evaluation of the contenders in March. The overall 2027 COTY winner and category winners will be announced in May 2027.

"I would like to thank the COTY Committee, our EXCO and sponsors for their commitment and hard work in preparing for next year's competition. Their contributions will help build on the success of this prestigious event, which has spanned more than four decades. Our priority remains safeguarding the credibility and independence of COTY," says Brendon Staniforth, Chairman of SAGMJ. "We look forward to another successful competition that informs the motoring public about the excellence and innovation driving the automotive industry."

Ends

The official hashtags for this year's COTY competition are #SACOTY2027 and #COTY2027

Contact Michelle York at the South African Guild of Mobility Journalists / SA Car of the Year for further details:
Email: sagmj@iafrica.com or follow our SA Car of the Year - COTY Facebook Page or visit www.sagmj.co.za.

About Bridgestone:

Bridgestone in Europe, the Middle East and Africa (Bridgestone EMEA) is the regional Strategic Business Unit of Bridgestone Corporation, a global leader in tyres and sustainable mobility solutions.

Headquartered in Zaventem (Belgium), Bridgestone EMEA employs more than 14,000 people and conducts business in 35 countries across the region.



Bridgestone offers a diverse portfolio of premium tyres, tyre technologies and advanced mobility solutions. The company's vision is to provide social and customer value as a sustainable solutions company. The Bridgestone E8 Commitment is a broad, global corporate commitment that clearly defines the value the company is promising to deliver to society, our customers and future generations in eight focus areas: Energy, Ecology, Efficiency, Extension, Economy, Emotion, Ease and Empowerment. These provide a compass to guide strategic priorities, decision making and actions throughout every area of the business.

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