



SONGBIRD . . . Port Elizabeth-born Zolani Mahola and her band Freshlyground put on a sizzling performance during the Opening of the Season at Hobie Beach last night.
Picture: FREDLIN ADRIAAN

More than 100 000 dazzled by fireworks display on beachfront

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MORE than 100 000 jubilant Nelson Mandela Bay residents and tourists watched a jaw-dropping, colourful spectacle of fireworks at Hobie Beach during the Opening of the Season last night.

All routes leading to the beachfront were jammed with traffic as revellers slowly negotiated their way to vantage points near or overlooking Shark Rock Pier.

This year's fireworks display and other entertainment – which was outsourced by the municipality to an events management company – proved to be a successful affair, with visitors saying it was a brilliantly organised event.

The display, which lasted for 30 minutes, had people clicking away with their camera phones to capture the sky as it was transformed into a dazzling, colourful canvas.

Others who could not come closer to the pier opted to stand on balconies and on the back of bakkies to view the spectacle.

"The organising team has done a sterling job because this year's event definitely surpassed that of last year," said mayor Nondumiso Maphazi. "From now on, our mission is to improve every year to ensure we continue to pull a large crowd by staging a powerful event."

Excited Summerstrand resident Timothy King, who had brought his wife and two boys, said the event was excellently organised and the weather complemented everything.

From the fireworks display to the

behaviour of the crowds, King said, this year's Opening of the Season event outstripped that of last year.

"One must give credit where it's due. My entire family, especially the kids, were very impressed.

"This should be a norm every year so that visitors can witness what the Friendly City is capable of."

Freshlyground also entertained the huge crowd at Hobie Beach.

The group performed a selection of songs from all of their albums just after the dazzling fireworks display.

"We love coming to perform in

Port Elizabeth as it's a great place to swim, people are friendly and it's my home town" said Zolani Mahola, the group's

lead singer, who hails from New Brighton in Port Elizabeth.

"We performed at the Opening of the Season last year, but we missed the fireworks display.

"At least this year we performed after the display, so it was awesome" said fellow band member Kyla Rose.

The day's festivities included a car exhibition, non-stop entertainment by Sizwe "Slyso" Saliso, a performance by local group Unit 12 and Somisi Mhlongo among other top acts for the night.

Although Freshlyground will not be holidaying in the Bay, they recommended it as a holiday destination to others.

"If I were holidaying in the Eastern Cape, I would have gone to the peaceful beaches in the Transkei," Rose said.

Mahola said: "Being from here, I have people to be relaxed with and family-orientated during holidays, and that's fantastic. It's a great place for family reunions."

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