

Massai Meets Andre3000

The overland truck I'm on is big and yellow; 15 feet high and almost 40 feet long, a cheese-box on wheels. The windows are sheets of 6mil plastic with canvas edging that can be rolled up to let the sounds and smells of Africa in.

On the second day, we figured out how to wire in our I-tunes to the sound system, giving our "lorry" a soundtrack. Having familiar songs serenade us as we rumble and bumble our way thru some fairly remote locations has been a nice addition.

We've passed thru countless small towns and villages along our way. The African children apparently being taught the same English greeting as we thunder past. "Hello! How are YOU!" uttered with a wide smile and fervent wave of one or both hands is repeated hundreds of times each day.

I wonder what our rolling entourage must seem like to these kids. Here comes this big yellow crate with open sides, all these odd fair-skinned people in Rayban sunglasses, with the sweet smell of SPF-30 clattering by. But then they hear the music. In every other country I've been to, there is music playing somewhere; a taxi's radio, the bar or the boom box on the corner. Here in Africa, there is the sound of commerce and the sound of the wild, but nothing with a beat to it; until our Cheese-Box hits town.

Coming off the Massai Mara reserve, we were making our way past some pretty remote outposts with a scattering of people going about their day. The I-Pod was cycling thru an immense variety of songs and hit "Hey Yeah" written by a guy with the stage name "Andre3000", a great anthem with a very addictive back-beat. We're all swaying, both to the music and the "African Thunder" pot holes when we notice the people outside. The school-children run towards us waving hands, "Hello, how are YOU!" but they too are moved by the rhythms of Andre3000 and THEY begin to shake and dance along with us. So there we both are we in the bus, they on the ground, shaking it like a Polaroid picture.

We can't help but be impacted by the great beauty and diversity scrolling past us and I'm sure in some small way we too are impacting those we pass. Sure, we may be seen as financial resources, the yellow trucks definitely mean money is coming to town, but music seems to transcend commerce. I'm sure the Massai are quite unaware of Andre3000, or most things in the western world, but if it's got a good beat, the world knows what to do.

Far from the maddening crowds when the wind is right; above the rumble of the big yellow truck, there will be music. Whether it's Frank Sinatra, the Beatles or even Andre3000, for a brief moment in time we will share a syncopated moment.....and we will dance.