

“CRAZY ABOUT KENYA”

Art And Happening Hip Hop – Putting A Positive Vibe Back Into Kenya

At the beginning of 2008 Kenya's travel industry was hit by political turmoil, however one specialist African tour operator is now looking to change the fortunes of Kenya with a campaign that spans both the virtual and the real world.

Acacia Adventure Holidays is launching “Crazy About Kenya,” a new Facebook campaign, destined to get people talking about the famed wildlife capital of Africa. The project, however, shows there's much more to Kenya than the Big Five, as the tour operator is hooking up with the M2 Art Studio in Nairobi, which features among others, Solo 7, his “paint for peace” slogans already catching the attention of International media. T-skweyad, a Hip Hop collective, including Francis X Kamotho, producer at Kenya based BOMA Records; and DJ Wave, a member of the Nairobi based Hip Hop band, Paramedikz are also involved in the project.

Artwork and music have been volunteered for the campaign, which hopes to generate a positive vibe for Kenya through online communities and in the real world. Facebook members will be able to spread the word using highly stylized artwork featuring graffiti and more traditional images, all inspired by real life in Africa. Virtual stickers displaying the strap line “Crazy About Kenya,” (accessible from the Acacia Adventure Holidays and Crazy About Kenya Facebook page) will be available to download onto members' Facebook profiles, allowing them to show their support for the destination. Hip Hop sounds will also bring the page to life, as the latest tracks from the tour operator's partners are to be posted in the online community.

Moving the project out of the virtual sphere, Acacia Adventure Holidays will be spinning the decks out on tour, with recent albums from some of their Kenyan Hip Hop partners carried on many of their overland itineraries. In June 2008, as the tour operator's trucks cross the border into Kenya, adventurers will have the chance to hear the latest sounds direct from the streets of Nairobi; and since the musical genre has its roots in Africa it will certainly connect travellers with the destination.

The tour operator is also in talks with T-skweyad in the hope of adding dates for Hip Hop events, held at the British Council in Nairobi, to their scheduled tours. However, until the party plans are finalised adventurers can enjoy the capital's vibes on the mathrees (local buses), which can often be found pumping out Kenyan and International Hip Hop sounds. As much a visual attraction as they are a music lover's dream, some even feature 50” LCD screens broadcasting the latest videos and expressive graffiti artwork associated with the popular music genre.

Acacia Adventure Holidays reinstated its Lake Nakuru and Lake Naivasha itineraries in April after the FCO advisories were lifted, “but the destination still needs our support,” claims Kate Plummer, Sales and Marketing Co-ordinator for the specialist African operator. “While reduced fares from airlines and discounted trips are all helpful, they will never really make up the margin, in terms of the recent losses, so with the help of our Kenyan partners we are creating a positive vibe. Facebook is an ideal mechanism to engage travellers, as the virtual world has no borders, allowing members to hook up with some of the artists and musicians working with us online. Essentially, “Crazy About Kenya” is about giving the Kenyan people a voice – in real time, and on a platform that will last for far longer than a media blitz.”

This makes the project a unique departure from most forms of responsible tourism as people can choose to connect and share interests with the Kenyan artists and Hip Hop producers on an individual rather than tour operator led basis – an approach that might even ask people to question whether ethical travel starts on the holiday or in virtual communities.

Plummer continues: “What happened in Kenya in the first few months of 2008 was unthinkable, but the people are resilient and thinking of the future. It’s time to focus on the positive side (and vibe) of this exciting destination and push our campaign to show that Kenya is alive and kicking!”

Telephone Acacia Adventure Holidays on 020 7706 4700, email info@acacia-africa.com or visit www.acacia-africa.com. ATOL No.6499 and ABTA No.W4093 PROTECTED.

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For further information and images, please email media@tionlondon.co.uk, Telephone: 05601 567 476 (VoIP) or 020 8180 1585 (VoIP)

Notes to Editors’:

Otieno Gomba, who is mostly self-taught and **Otieno Kota**, a high school graduate in Art and Design, developed the **M2 Art Studio** in 2002. Since 2004, the studio has been located in Kianda, part of the Kibera Slums, in Nairobi. M2 refers to ‘Masaai-Mbili’, meaning ‘the two masaai’, but today there are ten active artists involved in the project. Living and working in the ghetto, the artists’ dynamic pieces are inspired by real life. Other M2 artists featured in the “Crazy About Kenya” campaign include:

Solo7 (Solomon Muyundo): who paints for peace. Thousands of his slogans are visible across Kibera, his home and Nairobi’s biggest slum. His latest works include, "Let peace prevail," "Tribal war can't solve the problem" and Keep peace fellow Kenyans."

Edcard Muteshi Khabuchi: was born in Kakamega District in 1975. He graduated in art studies from Combori Polytechnic in 2003.

Kevin Irungu: was born in Nairobi in 1987 and was raised by a single mother and two brothers. He has no formal education. Kevin met Gomba and Kota of M2 in 2005 and since that date he has studied at the art studio.

Please contact **Turid Orange Ovnerud** for further information on the M2 Art Studios by email: turid@twoinone.no telephone: + 47 67 53 42 13 mobile: +47 995 55 276 Facebook: Turid Ovnerud web: www.art4peace.org www.ghetto-art.com

The Nairobi based “**T-skweyad**” Hip Hop collective, which refers to ‘tukuze talanta’ meaning nurturing talent, is formed of several creative players whose work covers music production, graphic art and design.

Francis X Kamotho: is Producer and Co-Director at BOMA Records. BOMA, Swahili for homestead, aims to make a positive impact on society. The musical artists in their stable including, Misheni, Real G, and Sazo, are a regular feature at the monthly WAPI (words and pictures events) held at the British Council in Nairobi. BOMA's latest offering is the highly emotive "Inferno Album." In the hope of spreading their music to distant lands they are looking to collaborate with international artists from various genres, as well as homegrown talent. Contact: +254 727 271 451

Victor Job Obura: is a Hip Hop, Crunk and Rock music producer for JME Radio in Kenya, and a creative graffiti artist. Hip Hop is linked to real life according to Victor, his latest work entitled "Jam," devised to lift the spirit of motorists caught in the morning traffic jam. Contact: +254 722 175 629 or email victorblu5@yahoo.com

Robert Limoli W.: is an artist, designer and event organiser, Robert runs Red Hillz Deez – a one-stop design house. In 2007, he organised a talent show for up and coming artists. According to Robert, Hip Hop is everywhere. Contact: +254 721 963 947 / +254 738 253 886 Facebook: Robert Limoli or email robertviravu@yahoo.com sniperobz@gmail.com

Tim Kiarie: is a student of media arts at Nairobi College. Tim also runs Kiash Creative, an outfit showcasing his graphic design work including graffiti art and cartoons. According to Tim, Kenya is rich in culture and cutting edge entertainment, especially Hip Hop. Contact: +254 722 175 629 Facebook: Tim Kiarie or email tzziarie@yahoo.com

Martin Kahang'I Kaigwa: runs Hit Wave Media Productions, a media arts related business, where he works on brand development with up and coming artists. He also writes and produces Hip Hop and Rock. Martin will be releasing his new album "The Shock Wave", a mixture of the two genres, at the end of 2008. Contact: +254 721 963 947 or email: martinkaiqua@yahoo.com

DJ Wave: of the hit Nairobi based band Paramedikz, cites some of his influences, as Eminem, KJ 52, and T-Bone. He has launched various hit singles in conjunction with the Paramedikz, including the famous Rosslyn Banquet, Candle Light and The 50 Bob Anthem. His latest solo project tracks will be available on Acacia Adventure Holidays Facebook page. Contact Facebook: Rich Mutua