

Howard music goes back to roots with MTN

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When Paul Warner, co-founder and partner at Metropolitan Republic, strolled into the Howard Music studio not armed with the unusually comprehensive brief as usual, but this time a beautiful true story, Adam had no idea how close to home this project would really hit...



On the last day of shooting in Uganda, a marching brass band, made up mostly of children, appeared from nowhere. Instead of yelling, "Cut!", as directors and the like are rumoured to do, Paul recognised the gospel melodies and realised it was a church group from one of the nearby rural villages.

He asked the kids to play along to the ska/reggae guide track the crew had been using to shoot the visuals and to everybody's surprise the group threw down bass drums, trumpets and brass melodies, like they were on a last episode of *Idols*. In classic Metropolitan style, one take and ten minutes later the sound was recorded and it was a wrap.

Meanwhile back at the Ministry of Illusion...

The brief required Howard Music to marry the brass melodies and reggae beats of the guide track into a lively soundtrack that would not only complement the stunning visuals, but also showcase the authentic sound of the church band rising into a crescendo at the end.

Even without Paul's colourful narrative, Adam could see and hear that most of the rickety instruments were held together by nothing but wires and masking tape. Sadly, the combination of outdoor setting, background noise and cacophony of wild untuned instruments made the original track unusable. With only 24 hours to campaign launch and no viable audio, a thick gloom enveloped the studio and whispers of a reshoot began circulating.

But then, Adam had a brain movement...

Instead of chucking the original recording, he decided to go back to his brass band roots and emulate the sound of every individual instrument by hand (or should that be by lips). Those carefree days of playing the bugle, cornet and trumpet in marching brass bands at Chethams School Of Music in the UK came speeding back. Like shiny vines on fast forward, musical instruments started growing from Adam's limbs until he finally shape-shifted into a species of "Humanus OrchestraLIPicus", or "one-man brass band".

To recreate the raw energy of the original recording, Adam had to purposely play out of tune and overblow the notes, which

then had to be multi-tracked another eight times. The fever blister he was nursing came in surprisingly handy! To match the sound of the trombones (without using the quality sound of the real thing in studio), he used the low notes from a flugel horn and once the brass was locked and the percussion loaded, put it all on a rinse cycle through a grungy street reverb filter. There, in a soundproof booth in the middle of Johannesburg, suddenly appeared a 20-piece Ugandan marching band!

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