

FRIDAY WRAP

#2.41.1

'A Glimpse of Humour'

14 October 2011



X

Wrap

- ~ Rap -- to talk., *conversation*.
- ~ a piece of thin, flat bread *that can contain anything* eaten as a sandwich.
- ~ Signaling the end (*ie of a week*)
- ~ Under wraps – *secret*.

On the Train

Train Ride (Cape Town)

Train travel is something I really enjoy and just when I thought I have possibly written everything about trains, Metrorail throws a spanner in the works.

Answering the Question

In the Sunday Times Review every week they have an interview with somebody interesting and one of the questions

they ask is, 'What is your favourite building (in the city you live)?' And I realise one of my favourite building in Cape Town is none other than the Cape Town Station. There are famous posters of New York Station with the sunlight streaming through the windows and Cape Town Station has that quality as well, especially in the early morning and late afternoon. Awesome!

Empty handed

If a survey should be done about all the passengers on all the trains you would find that 10% sleep, 30% read, 10% do nothing but train watch, and the most 60% fiddle with their phones. These days a phone can be almost anything; radio, music player, games, web, chat, email, TV, movies, anything. Just this morning I saw a school 'laaitie' playing cricket on his phone.

All in time

Metrorail has put new Digital Signboard up in the Cape Town Station and both are switched on. Which is moerse confusing as both have different times. According to the old board I am early and according to the new board I missed the train. Then you run (the only running I do) to the platform to find the clock on the platform has another time completely and your train is gone while the new Digital Signboard is saying the train is boarding.



All cut up

The train carriages these days has new villains and most probably school kids as most of the graffiti has the spelling mistakes of a high school kid doing badly at school. These day they tend to rip the seats to shreds with a sharp instrument. And Metrorail, due to budget constraints, does not have money to fix seats so it will just deteriorate further. I would love to witness this act of vandalism just to see if I will have some restraint. They mustn't just be a lot of big boys.

Last Carriage

A story was related to me now the other day about the trains on Mitchells Plain line - Nobody wants to sit in the last carriage, or rather, no decent person want to sit in the last carriage. Everybody tries to sit from the second last carriage onwards.

And do you know why?

Because in the last carriage the guys smoke dagga; in the morning and in the evenings. Only in Mitchell's Plain.

The people complain they smell like dagga when they get out of the train. At the end of the week and at the end

of the month there is a lot of drinking going on as well. Though many believe you are not being PC when you say the people from Mitchells Plain is different I beg to differ.

If it's so common knowledge, why does Metrorail not do something about it? Oh yes, budget constraints.

Let there be light

A new trend of Metrorail is not to replace the broken light bulbs in the train carriages. So if you take the train on a dark day you would be unable to read. I wonder what would happen if all the lights fuses in a carriage, will Metrorail replace it then.

Or they just don't switch on the lights. So sitting down on a seat that you thought was empty may just be full of surprises.

Menage Trois

The older trains have luxury seats for First Class/Metroplus. This consists of seat at right angles to the side of the train. On the one side there are rows of double seats and on the other rows of triple seats. I always try to sit at end of the first row of three seats so that I can have a lot of space for my legs, bag and when I am reading my newspaper. But inevitably a 'big' person comes sit in the middle of the triple seats thus squashing me like toothpaste and I end up sitting with only a quarter of a bum on the seat. When the train is full you get squashed from the other side as well and you end up breathing through only one lung; And if there is a Merciful Lord the squashers actually smell nice. Needless to say, I try not to sit there anymore.

Smelling like roses

In the newer trains with the long seats I use to sit in the first seat next to the door so that I can have that a bit more space. Until, more than once, someone comes and stand in the doorway next to you and raise their arm to hang onto the rail. And if there is a Merciful Lord the hangers-on use deodorant. Otherwise you have to breathe through your ears as your nose and olfactory senses just shut down. I avoid that seat like the plague now.



Makkasan Station, Bangkok, Thailand

Taxi Ride

What has taxis to do with trains you might ask? Well. The Upper Deck at Cape Town Station has huge taxi rank. So when the train is in Cape Town Station sometimes you can hear the music from the taxis and sometimes it makes the windows of the train rattle. If it is that loud and it makes the train's windows rattle what does it do to the brains of the passengers in the taxi?

That Smile

A train ride can be defined as a journey with strangers, but often there is a lot of inter-action between these strangers. Which brings me to the story of the one morning, on my way work, in the train, a gorgeous young thing, all smiles and sunshine, got in two stops down from mine. As she approached me, (and I remember; all this happened in very slow motion to me), she looked deeply into my face almost as if she knew me. As she got closer her face lit up in the most brilliant smile. I, of course was taken aback, as women don't come on to me like they use to in the old days. (Okay, okay, I'm exaggerating just a little but who is telling the story here?).

That smile really made my day.

Until two stops further down I remembered by wife telling me when I woke up that I probably was sleeping too long on the one side of my face because and I had a deep crease running across my face, all the way from my forehead to my chin, like a scar on a bad guy in those old western movie.

Bummer.

My day came down to earth with a bump and my ego bounced around like a dog in heat with no place to go or to some whatever. It took me days to recover my damaged self-esteem.

Soundly Sleeping

And another day my ego got sorely bruised was the one day in summer where I fell asleep on the train.

I woke up at Athlone Station, the stop before mine, with all the passengers around me looking me on; watching me intently. I don't know if I was snoring or dreaming or making funny noise or pulling faces.

Or worse talking in my sleep. But the intense looks I got from all the passengers around me meant that I



Ratchaprarop Station, Bangkok, Thailand

actually was doing something strange.

And I wasn't going to actually ask them why they were looking at me. Nowaise.

Bitch Fight

Just when you thought Metrorail won't give you anything to write about, they pull another one. They probably don't want to don't disappoint all their paying customers. They probably like having this 'captive' audience.

They have two announcers, a automated, sophisticated one and a other, uh, more down to earth one. Sometimes they confuse the shirt out of you by their conflicting announcements. The one says the train on Platform 15 is going to Fish Hoek via Wynberg and the other says the train on Platform 15 is going to Retreat via Cape Flats. So you sort of stand on the platform with one foot in the train until they get it right. They probably have a bitch fight in the Control Room for control of the trains. Until, finally, the un-erudite un-automate says, in a more urgent voice, says the train on Platform 15 is going to Retreat via Cape Flats. Yay!! Everybody rush back in and the Fish Hoek people all jump off, literally.

They don't want to end up on the Cape Flats. At night. On a train. There might be ~~vampires~~, ~~werewolves~~ brown people on the train!! I lie, according to the DA there is no racists in Cape Town, according to the ANC everybody who do not vote for the ANC and some who do vote ANC may or may not be racist. The ANC like to vary it.

Anyway.

Exasperated and Amused

Sometimes Metrorail gets you exasperated and amused at the same time. The 1714 is running late and the 1726 arrives. It is almost 1726. There are no announcements. Which train will leave first?

Passengers disperse almost equally between the two trains.

I'm in the 1714 because that is supposed to leave first.

Whistle.

The doors close and 1726 starts leaving and at the same time there is an announcement that the 1714 has been cancelled.

Aghhh!! But you do see the funny side afterwards.



Suvarnabhumi Airport Rail Link

I think the Metrorail Staff has a moerse big laugh at our expense sometimes. I'm surprise that the Metrorail Staff does not get beaten up on a regularl basis. We can always blame it on the racists.

Train Ride (Bangkok, Thailand)

I had the privilege of witnessing the Railway System in Bangkok first hand. With a population of almost 9million they have four railway systems. Each interlinked with each other and with different bus routes to provide maximum coverage within the city.

And their trains is very much unlike ours.

I use to take early morning walks and found Makkasan Station right around the corner from our hotel. Makkasan Station looks like a very rural station but it is in the city with the Skytrain right above it.

The railway line crosses main roads and there are many footpaths crossing it. There's a red light and the train rumbles across six lanes of traffic.

Easy Peasy. Everybody waits for the train to cross. No hooting, no rushing. The trains are old stock, antique almost with all the windows turned down and no air-conditioning. These trains are mostly used by the local and are dirt cheap. I had a ball of a time taking photos of this station and the trains. I did not want to risk riding on these trains as I did not know where we would end up and if we could find our way back t the hotel.

I did take a ride in the **Suvarnabhumi Airport Rail Link** as I knew the name of the next station. I got on at Ratchaprarop and got off by the very next station Makkasan City Air Terminal. These trains are elevated 20 metres above the road with escalators up from the street. You buy a ticket which you put into the turnstile to allow you through. The platform is all civilized too.

There were many tourists on the platform on their way to the airport with their trolley bags. The train stops in the airport terminal.



Makkasan City Air Terminal

There is a security guard on each platform who, when the train approaches, blows his whistle to let everyone know to move away from the edge.

The two carriage train stops and people get on board. The doors ding and closes and the train moves off. All civilized, no people running and hanging on to the outside of the train. No standing between carriages.

When the train reaches the next station a ladies voice announces the next station. And the procedure is repeated. You insert your ticket into the turnstile and you are allowed through but your ticket is not returned to you. All's cool and safe.

Makkasan City Air Terminal is almost as big a Durban King Shaka Airport Terminal. It's huge. With undercover parking provided for commuters. All modern concrete and glass and lots of security and rail employees present. It is suitably impressive.

Only after I walked the 1.5km back to the hotel did I realise I should've taken the train back. Damn. Stupid.

South Africa has much to learn from the modern city railways in other countries. But we have a very long way to go.

The Suvarnabhumi Airport Rail Link

(Thai: รถไฟฟ้าเชื่อมท่าอากาศยานสุวรรณภูมิ, แอร์พอร์ตลิงก์ *Airport Link*) or **SARL**, is a rapid transit line in Bangkok, Thailand. The line provides as an airport rail link from Suvarnabhumi Airport, via **Makkasan city air terminal**, to Phaya Thai station in central Bangkok. Most of the line is on a viaduct over the main eastern railway. It is owned by State Railway of Thailand (SRT) and operated by SRT subsidiary **SRT Electrified Train** (SRET). Opened on August 23, 2010^[1], the 28.6-km route is the fourth rapid transit line in Bangkok, after 2 **BTS** and 1 **MRT** line. Services consists of the Express Line, a 15-minute non-stop service between the Makkasan city air terminal and the airport, and the City Line, a **commuter rail** service with 8 stations. Runs from 0600 until 2400 each day.



Bukit Bintang Monorail station

KL Monorail

The Monorail Line fka KL Monorail is an urban monorail system (previously known as Peplemover Rapid Transit - PRT) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. It opened on 31 August 2003, and serves 11 stations running 8.6 km (5 mi) with two parallel elevated tracks. It connects the Kuala Lumpur Sentral transport hub with the "Golden Triangle". It was completed at a cost of MYR 1.18 billion by the KL Infrastructure Group (KL Infra). According to Ministry of Transport statistics, the annual ridership for the Monorail Line in 2008 was 21,765,233. [1]

Train Ride (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia)

In KL we rode the length of the KL Monorail in both directions; from Bukit Bintang to Titiwangsa (I love these names) then and then all the way to KL

Central, the last stop at the other side, the we took the train back to our station at Petaling Street.

This Monorail has eight stations but it still stays with in the precinct of the city. It connects all the other railways and bus services together. This is one very large city with as lot of people relying on public transport.

You use your ticket to get through the turnstiles and all tickets have a magnetic strip. If you insert your ticket at your destination it allows you through and you don't get your ticket back. And it's cheap.

The two carriage trains are modern and clean and there is a train approximately every eight minutes from 0600 until 2400 at night, seven days a week. And very safe; there is security guards at all the stations. So-oo unlike Slaap City - Cape Town where the train runs every hour on a Sunday and



View from Monorail of Jalan Bukit Bintang

only until 2030 at night. Then you better beware of the vampires.

The Monorail system is not only modern but also aesthetic to the eye, almost a work of art. It is all modern concrete and glass. The new Athlone Station was built in the same design for the 2010 World Cup, but like everything Metrorail, it must still be opened.

So. My heart is talked out. But wait, there's more...

Back in Cape Town...

Strange

There is a couple that get off at our station who I find very strange. Because the man sits in third class and the wife, or I think it is his wife, sits in first class. They both get off but they cross the railway line by different subways. He goes to the car and then drives down to pick up his wife. I can just hear the conversation in their house, 'You can sit in third class but nowise will I sit there'.

All Cut Up Part II

The vandals are really having a ball on the trains. They are really fracking it up. They first use to cut slits into the seats. Then they cut squares in to the seat. Now they are pulling out the lining and the foam underneath. On some seats they have removed all the vinyl covering. One day there will only be frames left. If anything is not looked after here in Cape Town the vandals, druggies and bergies will completely take it apart and destroy it.

Let there be light II

There are a couple of new carriages on our line these days and everything is new. All the lights work and you can read your newspaper without a torch and you can actually see the person opposite you. But it won't last long; The seat are vandalized already.

So with Metrorail there is always new tales to tell.

Watch this space.