

FOK INTERESSANT!

In which the author interviews her mum about South African shock crew **Die Antwoord**, who return to Cuthbert July 14



DIE ANTWOORD PLAYING THE CUTHBERT IN 2015

PHOTO BY TODD COOPER

Last week I called up my 69-year-old white mum in Minnesota with a special request: Listen to Die Antwoord's new mixtape *Suck On This* and let me interview you about it.

Die Antwoord would probably top the list of music you shouldn't listen to with your mother, or vice versa, but, like a boss, my mum accepted the challenge.

First, let's be clear here: Mum is no music critic, or musician, but she did grow up in South Africa from ages 4 to 25, and Die Antwoord is one of South Africa's biggest cultural exports, ever (don't even think about it Nelson Mandela, Charlize Theron, Trevor Noah, Elon Musk).

Made up of the indefinable Afrikaans rapping duo consisting of Ninja and Yo-landi Vi\$\$er (and, hidden in the background, DJ Hi-Tek), Die Antwoord has been described as "shock rap-rave," "electro-rap" and "savage rap."

I think they're aliens — art-house aliens spitting some of the weirdest, most graphic and innovative rhymes of the new millennium, while crafting an intoxicating image, equal parts beautiful and downright icky, with a healthy dose of satire.

They introduced the outside world to *zef*, a South African counterculture whose American cultural equivalent would be somewhere at the crossroads of trailer trash, punk rock, kitsch and grindhouse schlock (she sports a peroxide mullet and fake nails for days; his go-to is boxer shorts, a chest-full of tattoos and a grill — they both frequently wear terrifying inky black contact lenses).

Die Antwoord was last in Eugene in May 2014. I've never walked away from a show in this town with more bruises or more of a contact high. It was well worth it. They return to the Cuthbert July 14, or Bastille Day, the same day a crowd stormed the Bastille prison in Paris and freed the inmates — the date seems apt somehow.

OK, back to Mum, who grew up around Cape Town, South Africa's second largest city, where Die Antwoord formed in 2008.

What was your first reaction, Mum?

"It's very flat. No one I know speaks Afrikaans or English that way," she says, comparing their accent to American "hillbillies."

"Asides from that, even though it's not my kind of music, I think they've done something amazing — even though everything is 'fuck this' or 'fuck that.'"

My mum points out that two of the songs are old lullabies she knew as a kid. "Siembaba," which Vi\$\$er sings in her evil pixie purr, means "We Catch Him" in Xhosa, the language of an ethnic group of the same name in South Africa and one of the country's 11 official languages; Afrikaans and English (more like British English than American) are two others.

It's about killing a snake, my mom explains. "It's kind of gross when you follow it word by word."

The other is "Jan Pierewiet," which she instantly starts singing from memory over the phone.

I had also asked my mum while listening to *Suck On This* to take notes on references or Afrikaans terms that would fly over the heads of American fans.

"In number four: 'Where's My Fukn Cup Cake,'" my mum points out matter-of-factly. "Yo-Landi says 'poes,' which is like 'pussy.'"

Then she explains the meaning of the song title for track 10, "Fok Julle Naaiers."

"People who listen to this probably have no idea it means 'Fuck You Fuckers.'"

Oh Mum, I think they probably have *some* idea. This is the band with song titles like "Gucci Coochie," "Happy Go Sucky Fucky" and "Girl I Want 2 Eat U." But yes, good to know.

Next example — my mum, obviously tickled by this assignment, has a lot of examples — is for track 13, an "Enter Da Ninja" remix.

If you've been reading this to your kids, you weirdos, now would be the time to send them to bed.

"There is a couple lines in Afrikaans." She translates the lyrics roughly: "Goat is my little friend and goat likes my hole."

OK. Wow. The goat neighing in the background on that track makes a lot of sense now. Yikes.

"Honestly, not only is this all about having sex with everybody in every possible orifice, but also with goats," mum says of the mixtape. "Oh my god, indeed. I don't even want to tell anyone I listened to this."

Die Antwoord is all about artful yet explicit and boorish shock value — traits South Africa was not necessarily known for before the group burst onto the international stage in 2010. Even though my mum left South Africa in 1972, in the thick of white supremacist Apartheid, I wondered if she had any ideas about what kind of proto-culture gave birth to these wacko geniuses.

"If this group had existed in South Africa then, it would have been banned," she says. "We weren't allowed to read *Black Beauty* because it had the word 'black' in it."

She continues: "There's not much about this couple's background, but it was so repressed in South Africa. On a Sunday, you weren't allowed to read anything but the Bible. Maybe this was a generation that rebelled against their very Calvinist upbringing."

South Africa, in fact, was the last country on the continent to get TV in 1976 — about three decades after the U.S. "It wasn't allowed," she recalls. "It would corrupt people," or that's the spin the Apartheid government gave, she says.

Mum also says she picks up on a lot of class anger in Die Antwoord's music.

"I'm no expert, but my thoughts when I was listening were, oh my god, this is another symptom of the anger that's all around — ISIS, voters in the U.K., Trump supporters," she says.

She adds: "A lot of working classes have never gone up the economic rungs," and resentment is growing worldwide. Groups like Die Antwoord speak to this, "because you feel things so strongly and then it finally bursts out."

So would Mum attend a Die Antwoord show if given a ticket?

"I think now I would, yes," she says. "I don't know if I could last the whole show." She says that listening to the mixtape was a "learning experience."

And if she had to write a one-line review of *Suck On This*?

"I would say: 'Fok interessant!,' which means 'Fucking interesting!'" she laughs.

Thanks, Mum. ■

Die Antwoord returns 7 pm Thursday, July 14, at Cuthbert Amphitheatre; \$37.50 adv., \$43 door. And believe it or not, the show is open to all ages. To listen to the Suck On This mixtape for free, find it on SoundCloud.com.