

Matthew McConaughey

The Actor's Retooled Airstream
Trailer Takes the Comforts of Home on the Road





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Photography by Jim McHugh

HE MAY BE KNOWN FOR his easygoing brand of beach living, but Matthew McConaughey, the star of *A Time to Kill* (1996) and *The Wedding Planner* (2001), is equally passionate about life on the open road. And if his house can travel with him, well, so much the better. "There's an old African proverb," offers McConaughey, apropos of his affinity for wheeled domiciles. "Architecture is a verb."

"I've always loved drivin'," he proclaims in his Texas twang. "Drivin' is, number one, where I get some time with myself. Number two, it's the main place I catch up on music. And number three, it's the best way to see the country. In 1996 I got a big GMC van—it's called Cosmo—and gutted it and put in a bed in the back, a refrigerator and a VCR so I could watch dailies or whatever. But still it was a pretty cramped style. So I started looking at Airstreams."

Airstreams, for the uninitiated, are aluminum-clad recreational vehicles that were originally marketed in the 1930s by Wally Byam, a Los Angeles publisher who devoted much of his time to leading Airstream expeditions around the world. The Airstream's rounded body "is a beautiful piece of art and aerodynamically very functional," notes McConaughey,

LEFT: Actor Matthew McConaughey customized his 2004 Airstream International CCD 28 with a practical mind-set. "If it looks good but it's not functional, then it's not worth anything," he says. **OPPOSITE:** The trailer is parked in Malibu, with "surfing right down the street."

Matthew McConaughey



ABOVE: A poster for McConaughey's upcoming movie, *Surfer, Dude*, hangs above his banquette in the living area. FAR RIGHT AND RIGHT: A journal and a photo album document his mid-1990s African trip to meet Ali Farka Toure, a musician known as the "bluesman of Africa."



who four years ago fell hard for a 2004 Airstream International CCD 28.

Those 28 feet encompass a living area with a banquette and a dining table/desk; a streamlined kitchen; a toilet and shower; and a snug bedroom that the actor refers to as the Honeycomb on account of its rounded ceiling and golden hues. "It's got a great window right above your pillow,

so when you wake up in the morning, you're looking right at the ocean or wherever your backyard is that day," he says.

McConaughey, who has a penchant for pet names, pulls the Airstream behind a 2005 Ford King Ranch pickup that he calls the Eagle. A sojourn on the Squamish Nation reservation in Vancouver, Canada, inspired the Airstream's moniker: "When I left, they brought me

a handcrafted oar that's one of the symbols of the tribe. The oar guides the canoe, guides you through life—so I named the Airstream the Canoe. I mean, the highways are like riverways, they're just concrete." Over the years he's personalized the Canoe with a satellite dish on the roof; a barbecue in back; book racks and ceiling netting to hold travel literature, journals and scripts; and a custom

banquette and table to accommodate his six-foot frame.

Home base for the Canoe is a recreational-vehicle park in Malibu adjacent to a prime surfing spot, but the trailer has served McConaughey as everything from his digs to his office. For two years he managed his production company, j.k. livin', from the Airstream, picking up colleagues at airports across the



country and taking meetings in the trailer. And he spent a month on the road promoting his movie *Sabara* (2005) from the Canoe. More recently the trailer inspired a new mode of film production for his latest comedy, *Surfer, Dude* (the saga of a soul-searching wave chaser): "Instead of putting the crew in hotels, we ended up renting a bunch of RVs and putting everyone in 14 trailers in the RV park in Malibu. It was a really great communal environment, like the circus."

McConaughey and his girlfriend, Camila Alves, recently had a child, a boy they named Levi. The couple are renting a house in Malibu until they finish redoing another residence in the area. For now he regards the RV park as "a little vacation spot." "As soon as we get all



Top: McConaughey removed a picnic-style table and had a craftsman in Louisiana build him a more traditional model. Low stools that slide under it free additional space in the living area. "An immobile seat takes up precious square footage," he says. Above: "It's two seconds from making your bed to putting your coffee on the stove," McConaughey remarks.

Matthew McConaughey



LEFT: "It's just a really cozy place to sleep," he says of his bedroom, which he nicknamed the Honeycomb because of its rounded ceiling. BELOW: The actor, who keeps a number of journals, also uses the Airstream as office space for j.k. livin, his music, production and clothing company.

BOTTOM: "The thing about small spaces is that they're relaxing," says McConaughey. "You're limited in your options." He is now customizing two more Airstreams.



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stable here and the baby gets a little older, our next trip's probably going to see some friends of ours in Louisiana. The best education I ever had was via travel, and I definitely want to get Levi on the road."

Meanwhile, McConaughey has ordered two new Airstreams—a 34-footer and a 25-foot "Tepee." In fact, the actor envisions owning an entire fleet of the trailers. "Then one day I'll have either an Airstream hotel or an Airstream compound. I don't know where it'll be yet, but the thing about Airstreams is you feel a little bad for 'em if you got 'em parked too long and the axles aren't spinning, you know, because they're built for the road." □