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MIRAZ

A Health-Inspired,
Eco-Friendly SINGER-
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Photo: Emily Shir

Jason Mraz

Leading with His Heart

by Kim Henderson

Caught up with Grammy Award-winning singer-songwriter Jason Mraz on a cool and windy December day. It was just hours before he and his band and crew would hop aboard a jet and make their way to Myanmar to play for a crowd of 50,000 to raise awareness about human trafficking. Starting nearly five years ago with his chart-topping, reggae-themed track “I’m Yours” and now with his latest album *Love Is a Four Letter Word*, Jason has become an international star who travels the globe singing songs of hope, love, happiness and healing. He is well known for his healthy lifestyle of yoga and veganism and commitment to social and ecological issues, and that’s what brings him to the pages of *Healthy Living*.



Resources
www.jasonmraz.com

A PIVOTAL MOMENT

When you see Jason Mraz today, it’s hard to believe that he wasn’t always such a healthy guy. Truth be told, he was a typical smoking, junk and room service food-eating traveling musician for nearly a decade. That was, until he began surfing in San Diego at age 28, which marked a turning point in his life. “When I first started surfing, I noticed when I got out of the water that it would be helpful for me to be a little stronger and to have a better lung capacity and smoking just didn’t really fit that lifestyle. I also really wanted to be transformed when I turned 30, so I quit smoking cigarettes,” he reflects. It had a profound effect on his life. He started surfing more

and picked up running and hiking too. By 29, he could really feel a shift in his energy and strength.

A transformation in Jason’s diet soon followed. After years of fast food and room service on the road, Jason tells me that he had a longing to get into a grocery store to see what he’d do. “I began cooking for myself. Mostly vegetarian meals—stir fried or steamed veggies, rice, quinoa—things that I found easy to prepare,” he says. Before long, Jason discovered an entire community of people who valued holistic health by frequenting Café Gratitude, a vegan restaurant, first in San Francisco and later in Los Angeles. The holistic approach encompassed more than diet—it also made Jason look at what he was feeding his mind. “I found that my thoughts started transforming as well. Just as I became conscious of what food I was putting in my body, I looked at putting healthier thoughts into my mind too,” he explains.

Jason relies on his diet regimen to provide him with the strength and energy to meet the challenges of his job. “I found making sure that I’m healthy for the show is my number one priority. I need to be able to sing, to be awake and alert. And the diet that I have found that best works for that is the vegan diet,” he says. Eliminating dairy and processed foods helped to resolve health issues with his ears, nose and throat.

It didn’t take long for him to become totally addicted to his new, healthier lifestyle because it made him feel so darn good. “I wanted to see what it would be like to be healthier and I just couldn’t turn back,” he says.

TREE IS A FOUR-LETTER WORD

Jason is also a nature lover. Perhaps that’s why Al Gore invited him along with a team of scientists, researchers and entrepreneurs on a trip to Antarctica to learn about the climate crisis. The trip challenged him to look at his own carbon footprint. “I felt conflicted that I was then flying home and that I would again fly perhaps 100 times or more that year,” Jason explains. So he hatched an idea to partner with an organization called Reverb to plant trees and beautify communities while touring. Together, they founded the Tree is a Four Letter Word project. Now the band is no longer like a circus act traveling through; they actually stop and interact with the communities where they perform. At a local park, school yard or boys and girls club, they join with fans and locals to mulch, remove trash, plant trees, prune, fertilize—whatever a particular region re-

quires. “Thanks to our fans and what they donated, we’ve planted thousands of trees already, and our band has planted at least 100 with our own hands and volunteers,” he says.

THE ROAD CASE

While some rock and roll bands have a hearty supply of drugs and alcohol, Jason and his band have something called the “road case.” A hard-shelled suitcase filled with superfoods, immune boosters and nutritional supplements and even a knowledgeable nutritionist on staff to dispense the goods, these musicians are making “healthy” very, very cool. The band has taken to a blue-green algae supplement called E3Live. “In rock ‘n’ roll you’d think bands would take shots of whiskey before they go on stage. But there we are, 8 to 10 of us all standing around with shots of blue-green algae ready to rock,” Jason tells me. It’s a great image. And if you’ve had the chance to see Jason and his band play live, you know, they have an infectious positive energy and sound that lifts you to your feet. You could say the audience gets “Mrazamatazzed.”

Personally, Jason has some choice nutritional supplement favorites that keep his body humming like, excuse the pun, a finely tuned instrument. “I take a lot of these concentrated herbs or powders from HealthForce Nutritionals: Vitamineral Green, a potent vitamin C called Truly Natural Vitamin C and a wonderful hemp protein product called Warrior Food,” Jason tells me. They are raw, vegan products. Jason adds the Warrior Food to his oatmeal and shakes. He has been using them all daily for several years. As he explains, particularly when performing, he needs his muscles to be “on” and his nutritional supplement regimen is designed to do just that. Healthy fats are another important necessity. “I take coconut oil, flax oil and hemp oil and try to get them from sources that are as local to us as possible. Obviously, the coconut oil is a little more challenging, but we love the oils because we can definitely feel the support in our knee joints, in all of our joints and in our digestion as well. We try to keep up on those healthy fats as much as possible and put a good dose of each into our morning smoothies. We use ground flax seed as well,” he shares enthusiastically.

Jason’s adoption of a healthier lifestyle has deeply influenced his music. As he explains it, the consciousness about his diet and thoughts started to change his experience of the world. “That love you are giving yourself on the inside clearly chang-

es the way the world shows up for you. Many songs on the new album are the mantras and affirmation that have showed up in my life over the past four years—songs like ‘Living in the Moment,’ ‘The World as I See It,’ and ‘93 Million Miles.’ They are a direct result of my wanting to improve my health and sustain that healthy lifestyle,” Jason says.

MATTERS OF THE HEART

While Jason didn’t share about his love life (sorry, I didn’t ask), he did share about love in general—the theme of his new cleverly titled album *Love Is a Four Letter Word*—and caring for the heart.

When it comes to literally caring for his heart, Jason has it covered with plenty of aerobic exercise that he loves—running, cycling, hiking, yoga and surfing. He’s a huge fan of a series of yoga poses called heart openers.

Caring for the heart is not just physical practice for him, but a conscious spiritual one too. “I do my best to lead with my heart and I notice a difference in my day when I do the heart openers,” he says. That might include saying a prayer or taking a moment to speak to his heart to give it the attention it desires. One of his favorite ways to “listen to his heart” is through listening to music and writing poetry. He finds that when he writes poetry, it helps turn off his brain and allows the feeling in his chest to spill forward onto the page. “You’d be surprised at what hearts have to say!” he says. For Jason, caring for the heart also includes extending his energy and attention outward to others. He likes to acknowledge people and share what he sees in them. He enjoys giving a gift or donating to a charity or project that will have a direct result in the world. Jason is really talking about love. Most would agree that expressing love is indeed good for our hearts. “That act of giving; that’s the best definition of love that I was able to find in my research for this album. Love is simply sharing. Sharing your time or attention or your resources. Listening to someone. It’s really being there for someone. It fills up that space between two beings—that space that would otherwise be empty or afraid or full of questions. It’s like a push of energy given to something else. That’s an extraordinary feeling. That is love,” he says.

I agree. ■

The Green Shake

Tricia Huffman, Jason’s on-the-road nutritionist, prepares all of Jason’s meals and manages the road case—a hard-shelled suitcase filled with nutritional supplements, elixirs and natural remedies to keep the band vibrant and well. Each morning she blends a green shake for Jason and the band with the following ingredients in varying amounts:

- + Coconut water
- + Raw vegan green powder
- + Hemp-, chia- or pea-based protein powder
- + Vitamin B
- + Cacao Nibs
- + Calcium
- + Blend of ground flax and chia seed
- + Bee pollen
- + Goji berries
- + Maca
- + Coconut oil

Sometimes she’ll add an ingredient or two like echinacea or ashwagandha, if the band needs immune support. This power-packed nutritional boost sends them grooving into their day!



Photo: Eric Morgensen