



**ON THE BOARDWALK**  
Johnson played a free show at the Santa Monica Pier to 10,000 fans.

## Jack Johnson's L.A. Beach Party

**Singer celebrates new LP with free Santa Monica gig; preps massive summer tour**

**J**ACK JOHNSON WASN'T planning to release an album this year, and with good reason. His father died of cancer last August and just a month later, Johnson, 35, and his wife, Kim, had their third child (a girl). "But all these songs just came out," Johnson says. "It felt like it was time."

Johnson's sixth album, *To the Sea*, is a tribute to his dad, surfer Jeff Johnson, from the grief-stricken cut "No Good With Faces" to the title track, about a father and son heading to the ocean to say goodbye. "That song's a meditation about going back to where I put my dad after he passed, by the water," says Johnson. "It's the closest thing I have to a church, and it's where I go to visit him." Even the album cover is a photograph of Jeff, building a sculpture of a wave when he was 20. "He was on my mind pretty much every song," Johnson says.

On a stage wedged in between the roller coaster and the vintage carousel, Johnson and his band celebrated the release of his new record with a free concert at the Santa Monica Pier on May 24th, drawing a crowd of 10,000 peo-

ple. Despite the cold weather that made Johnson's hands feel like "two blocks of ice," the show nimbly covered new and old material, plus Steve Miller Band's "The Joker."

It was a typically generous move from Johnson, who has used his multiplatinum success to support causes he cares about. "Joseph Campbell talks about the notion of joyful participation," Johnson says. "It's easy to get overwhelmed to the point of depression about the state

**"It's easy to get overwhelmed about the world – but you have to find solutions."**

of the world, but you have to wake up every morning and work toward solutions." As with his 2008 tour, Johnson is donating his personal profits from this summer's outing – the U.S. leg kicks off in Hartford, Connecticut, on July 9th – to a wide range of charities, through his Johnson Ohana Charitable Foundation (the nonprofit focuses on environmental, arts and music education, and has given away more than \$750,000 in the past two years). "It's rewarding to know that the music's doing tangible things,"

### Artists Who Give Back



#### MY MORNING JACKET

Donating \$1 from every ticket to anti-poverty programs and other charities.



#### ROB THOMAS

Proceeds from his solo tour will go toward pet sanctuaries and aiding homeless families.



#### CAROLE KING AND JAMES TAYLOR

VIP-ticket profits will go to the NRDC and the Alliance for Wild Rockies.

Johnson says. "We have a meeting once a year and go over all the grants, and see that 60 instruments got bought for this school district, and there's a new community garden being funded."

At a time when many superstar acts are having trouble selling concert tickets, Johnson is becoming a huge draw on the road. His last tour grossed \$22 million; he's now big enough to play Madison Square Garden on July 14th. What really makes him enthusiastic about this run, though, is that he's cut the soundcheck out of his schedule. Adopting his dad's just-go-surfing philosophy, he plans to spend each day with his family – maybe visiting a local museum – and then show up for the concert.

*To the Sea*, made in three weeks of solar-powered recording in Hawaii and Los Angeles, has more energy than Johnson's 2008 *Sleep Through the Static*, but it doesn't stray far from his island-troubadour formula. "People who don't like my music put it down by saying, 'It's background music,'" Johnson says. "I always thought of that as a positive thing. I like music you can put on during a barbecue, like Bob Marley." He chuckles. "I hope to continue in the realm of barbecue music." **GAVIN EDWARDS**