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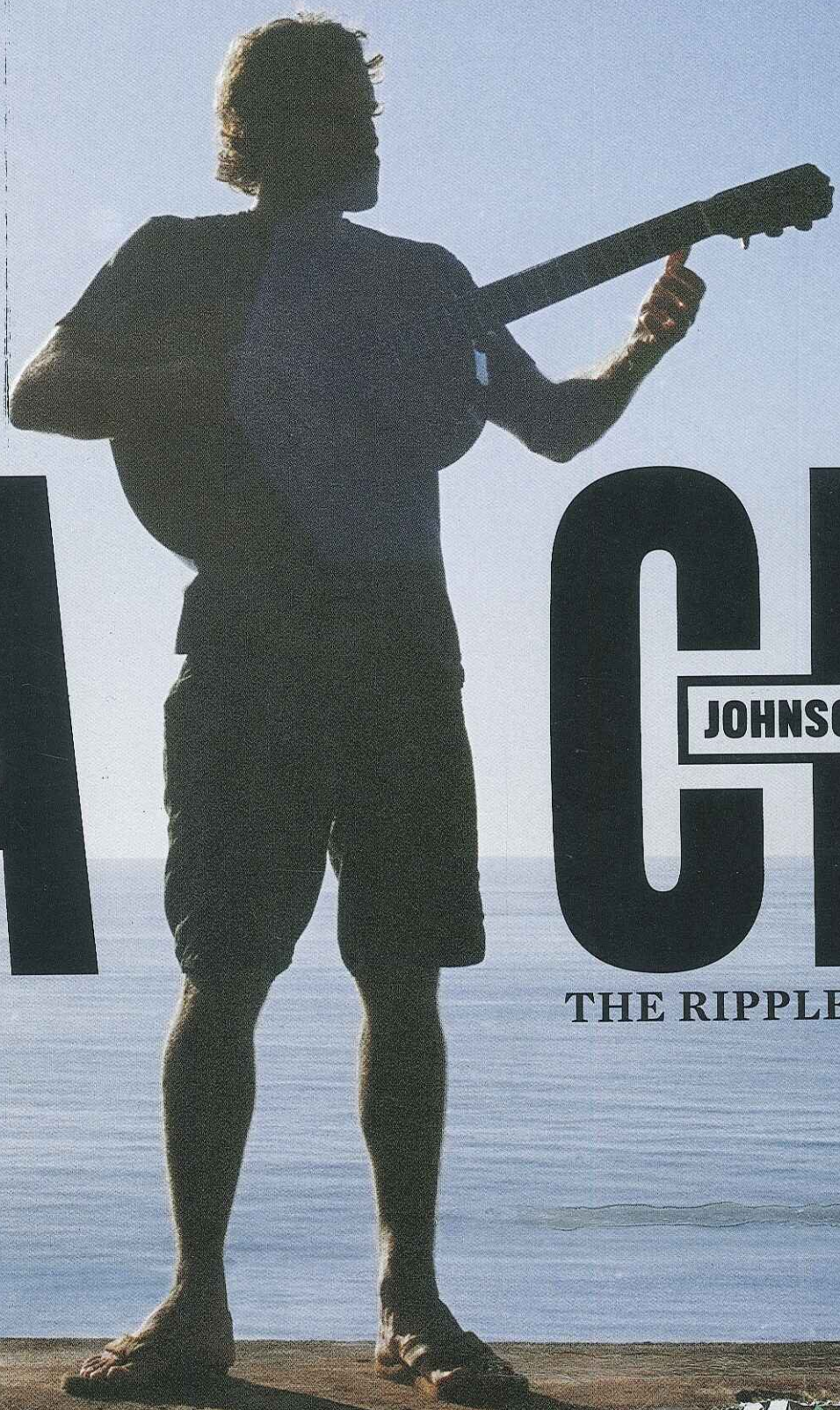
**SLY AND  
THE FAMILY  
STONE**  
FUNK  
REVOLUTIONARIES

**DEER TICK**  
THE GOOD TIMES  
ARE KILLING ME

**ROBERT  
HUNTER**  
KNOCKIN' ON  
HEAVEN'S DOOR

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**JACK**

**JOHNSON**

**THE RIPPLE EFFECT**

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OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 2013

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## FEATURES

### 42 | Jack Johnson: The Ripple Effect

Though he never intended on becoming a household name—to the degree that *Saturday Night Live* spoofed his laidback nature in good fun—**Jack Johnson** might be the most unassuming guy to ever sell 19 million records. And once Johnson found himself on an unimaginable trajectory of commercial success, he decided to harness that popularity to help catalyze environmental change on a wide scale, unlike any artist before him. While he still thinks of music as a hobby, he's transformed the way that legions of music fans engage with the world around them. Editor **Josh Baron** speaks with Johnson, his wife Kim and others to get insight into what makes this unassuming rock star tick.

### 38 | Sly and The Family Stone: Funk Revolutionaries

**Sly Stone** may be the most innovative rock and soul artist in the history of American music. As more than one historian has remarked, "There are two kinds of soul music—before Sly and after Sly." These days, the music of Sly and The Family Stone, the band that Sly put together in 1966, is often overshadowed by their leader's reclusive nature and eccentric antics, yet the ensemble's volatile mixture of funk, rock, soul, R&B, jazz, gospel and psychedelia has been the foundation of African-American music since they cracked the charts in 1968. With the release of the new four-CD Sly retrospective *Higher!*, J.Poet and some of Sly's closest collaborators look back on why **The Family Stone's** music remains vital.

### 34 | Deer Tick: The Good Times Are Killing Me

Recorded earlier this year in Portland, Ore., with legendary producer/musician **Steve Berlin**, *Negativity* finds **Deer Tick** moving from punk to blues to country and whatever collides in between, to deliver an album that only they could write. For Deer Tick's fifth full-length, band leader **John McCauley** channeled a failed wedding engagement, alcohol and drug abuse, his father's imprisonment and, yes, love, into his strongest collection of material yet. **Jeff Miller** checks in with the band to see if these self-aggrandizing, alt-country, bad boys can still deliver the goods with a cleaned-up act.



# "I can still honestly tell

you that if this was the last record I got to make, it wouldn't trip me out that much," says Jack Johnson. It's late June in New York City and we're sitting outside on a balcony at the Bowery Hotel where he's holed up doing press for his new record, *From Here to Now to You*. Despite temperatures in the high 80s with plenty of humidity, we've opted to sit outdoors for a bit of quiet, given the revolving door of media outlets coming through to snatch a few minutes of his time inside the boutique hotel room.

"I wasn't sure I even wanted to ramp the whole thing up again," says the 38-year-old father of three. "I had this group of songs and it sounded like fun to get in the studio with my friends. And then, also the touring—it sounded fun. But a lot of times..." he pauses and, with a mildly sheepish look, continues, "you almost don't think of all the press and stuff that goes along with it."

While Johnson is genuinely accommodating with his thoughtful answers in the first of our two, hour-long conversations, being interviewed is not high on his list of fun activities. Since I began interviewing him in 2002, he's proven to be an open, if reserved, interview subject. He's a private person that's found himself in a very public role as record sales of 19 million and massive summer tours attest. Moreover, he's never thought of playing music as a career. Anyone close to him will tell you the same thing—notably his wife Kim and filmmaker Emmett Malloy, who serve as his managers. To the

consternation of some, Johnson continues to define his music-making as—in his words—a "hobby." "Music will always be something I do," he says. "It's more the choice of whether I want to always be sharing it with the whole world."

While he's a quintessential laidback "dude"—he's sporting a T-shirt, shorts and flip-flops, despite the hotel's cooler-than-thou atmosphere—his nonchalance belies a determination that appeared early on.

As a teenager growing up on Oahu's North Shore with world-renowned surf breaks abutting his backyard, Johnson quickly became a rising star whose trajectory would've placed him alongside such household names as Kelly Slater and Rob Machado. At 17, he became the youngest surfer to ever make it to the finals of the hallowed Pipeline Masters competition. However, a week later, a life-changing surfing accident realigned his priorities. (One hundred fifty stitches to your forehead and a set of new front teeth can do that.)





If his decision to attend college on the mainland at the University of California, Santa Barbara seems like a natural one, then you're unaware of the insular nature of growing up in Hawaii. Realize, too, that Johnson's father Jeff left California in the 1960s to escape the crowds as he set sail for Hawaii alone and later sent for his wife Patty.

"The last thing he said to me when I was leaving for college was, 'Are you sure you want to go? There are a lot of people over there,'" Johnson recalls of his father. "I was like, 'Dad, don't tell me that now. I'm leaving this morning. What are you talking about? You're tripping me out.'"

There's a well-known photo of Johnson that circulated early on in his career that embodies the existence that his father was indirectly referencing. He's a little boy with blonde hair, probably about three years old, standing on top of an upside down, single-fin surfboard that's

laying on some grass. He's holding a ukulele and strumming next to his uncle, who's playing guitar and encouraging the youngster on.

Jeff Johnson's concern wasn't about whether or not his son would succeed at college. He wasn't even being over-protective in the way that parents often are when their kids are leaving the nest. Rather, he was being pragmatic about the potential impact the move would have on the daily rituals his son had become accustomed to since he was a kid.

\* \* \* \* \*

**J**ACK JOHNSON BEGAN playing music as a young teenager as the autobiographical "Tape Deck" off *From Here to Now to You* relates: "Luke's mom said that after school/ We could rehearse in the living room/ But that sure didn't last too long/ Guess she didn't know we played Fugazi songs." Limber Chicken, his first

band, also covered Minor Threat and Bad Religion.

While attending surf-friendly UCSB, Johnson formed the group Soil. "We were in the dorms together and we had rival bands for a second," recalls Zach Gill, who now serves as something of a comedic foil and multi-instrumentalist in Johnson's band when he's not touring with his own longtime outfit ALO, which formed during its members' junior high days. "[My] band had a nice garage on the corner where all sorts of musicians could store their gear and there'd always be jam sessions going on. Jack would be somebody who would come by a lot."

Johnson graduated with a degree in film studies in 1997. Kim, whom he'd started dating his freshman year, graduated with degrees in mathematics and studio art. The two headed to Europe for a year, vagabonding around the continent until their funds were depleted. Toward the end of their trip, preparing

to sell their van and making a plan of action for their future together, they had epiphany as Johnson tells it in the new album's first song and single, "I Got You." He sings, "We went walking through the hills/ Trying to pretend that we both know/ Maybe if we could save up/ We could build a little home/ But then the hail storm came/ It yelled 'you need to let go/ You've got no control.'"

"We were talking about, 'OK, once we get back, you'll take that job and I'm going to do this and maybe I'll get some assistant camera work for that guy,'" Johnson recalls of their mindset at the time, as he and Kim are doing some errands while at home on Oahu. "We were trying to figure it all out and, all of a sudden, it started hailing on us. It was like out of a cheesy romantic comedy where we're running back to our van laughing so hard, but at the same time, almost crying because these golf balls landing our heads were hurting us. We were

Johnson performing at London's Hyde Park in 2008. He returned to the famed concert location this past September.

"One thing that always impressed me about Jack is his incredible confidence. From the beginning, he knew what he was setting out to do when he walked on the stage and always had command of that from the beginning. You don't grow up in surfing the waves of the North Shore of Hawaii and lack confidence in anything." **BEN HARPER**





cracking up. It felt to us, right then and there. We thought, 'We can't plan. It doesn't matter—at least we have each other. All the craziness won't matter as long as we stay together through it.'"

Broke but profoundly happy, Kim and Jack moved in with his parents at their home on Oahu following the Europe trip. Soon after, they moved back to Santa Barbara where Kim completed

her master's degree in education and began teaching math at a local high school for a salary of "30-something thousand" dollars per year. In their minds, they had it made.

"I was supporting Jack," she says fondly. "He was traveling around making his surf films and not making any money."

"She was paying rent," Jack lovingly concedes but counters, "I was contributing a little bit."

"Yeah, he would bring some money in once in a while," Kim says, seamlessly revising her previous statement, as married couples do when discussing their collective history together and acknowledging a small oversight. "Jack just played music for fun. He never thought that it could be a career path. He was never trying to make it a career path—he just stumbled into it."

If he did stumble into it, then once he was involved, he developed an approach with a duality that was defined by a determination (let's try our best in whatever we decide to do) and a laissez-faire attitude (whatever modicum of success we're experiencing is likely ephemeral).

The idea echoes Johnson's European epiphany and a tangentially similar theme he relayed on his 2005 album *In Between Dreams* on the song "Breakdown," which wishes the speed of life were slower so as to better appreciate the world around you. "But you can't stop

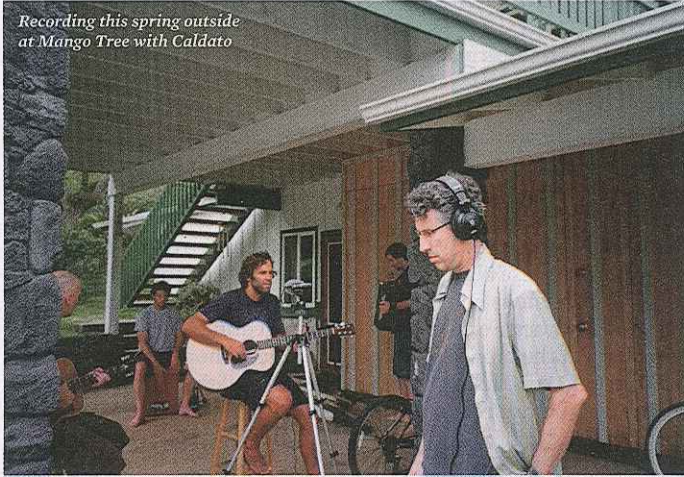
nothing/ If you got no control/ Of the thoughts in your mind/ That you kept in, you know," he sings. While the sentiments are slightly different, the ultimate takeaway is the same: Be here now. Don't try to plan for the future; appreciate the moments as they happen.

If his general happiness and worldwide success are any indication, then the no-pressure plan is working.

\* \* \* \* \*

**J**ACK JOHNSON'S DEBUT *Brushfire Fairytales* was quietly released in 2001 on Enjoy! Records, an upstart labeled headed by Andy Factor and J.P. Plunier, the latter of whom also produced the record. (The label changed its name to Everloving shortly after for legal reasons.) Plunier managed Ben Harper at the time and had met Johnson through the *Thicker Than Water* soundtrack that featured some of Harper's music. Through that relationship,

Recording this spring outside at Mango Tree with Caldato



With bassist Merlo Podlewski and drummer Adam Topol in the unfinished Mango Tree studio during the On and On sessions which Caldato also produced



Harper appeared on the track "Flake" and invited Johnson to open for him. For the surfer-cum-filmmaker-cum-musician who held Harper's *Welcome to the Cruel World* and *Fight for Your Mind* on a very high mantle, it was a dream come true.

"Once we started the first tour with Ben Harper, it still didn't seem like I was going to have a music career to me," Johnson reflects. "I felt like an outsider [thinking], 'I can't believe I get to open for Ben Harper. There are so many people who are way more worthy of this position. Here I am. Ben dug me enough to invite me out on tour, [and] this is going to be one summer of getting to do this.' Getting to for open for those guys was the highlight of my music career [up to that point] and, in certain ways, it still is. It was an exciting time—to be on the road with one of your biggest heroes."

While the tours were fun for

Johnson, they were also stressful. "I'd be so nervous about the show coming up, it was hard for me to enjoy myself during the day," he says. "Everything was about that show. I was putting so much emphasis on it, and rightfully so—it was all new to me and it was crazy."

Harper, who has remained close with Johnson since that first tour and guests on the new record, says, "One thing that always impressed me about Jack is his incredible confidence. From the beginning, he knew what he was setting out to do when he walked on the stage and always had command of that from the beginning. You don't grow up surfing the waves of the North Shore of Hawaii and lack confidence in anything."

A label bidding war broke out for what would become Johnson's anticipated sophomore effort, *On And On*, after *Brushfire* went platinum. "No one knew what anyone wanted—especially

us," says Malloy. "We were excited to meet these people who were parts of big records. It was a formative thing for me, and especially Jack, to see and it helped us understand what we wanted to do."

"Emmett and I kept saying no to these record deals and probably said no one too many times," says Johnson. "We got lucky where Universal Records came back and said, 'What do you guys want? Like what is it, exactly?'"

The answer, it turned out, was rather simple.

"We didn't want to be in debt to anyone—for anything," says Kim, who left her teaching job and began co-managing Jack around the time *On And On* came out. "When they were throwing out these big numbers, we realized that we could write our own contract. For us, it wasn't about the money—it was the freedom. For Jack, it was about the creative freedom."

The solution was forming *Brushfire Records* and striking a distribution deal with Universal. For *On And On* and the following album, *In Between Dreams*, Johnson turned to Brazilian producer Mario Caldato Jr. He'd met Caldato in 2002 while re-cutting the song "Posters" from *Brushfire Fairytales* for the *Out Cold* soundtrack, an *Animal House*-like ski movie directed by Malloy and his brother Brendan, starring Zach Galifianakis.

While Caldato is known for his work with the Beastie Boys and co-produced *Check Your Head*, *Ill Communication* and *Hello Nasty*, his résumé contains everyone from Björk to Bebel Gilberto.

"He came over and was like, 'Wow, this is cool. You record at home?'" recalls Caldato of his first meeting with Johnson. The producer showed Johnson how he utilized the whole house to help isolate the instruments

Johnson surprised Bonnaroo fans this year when he joined longtime friends ALO for a late night set. In addition, with Mumford & Sons having to cancel last minute, Johnson provided his services as a pinch performer and headlined in their stead with his band who barely had time to rehearse





properly—drums in the living room, guitar and vocals in the bedroom, bass in the hallway, percussion in the kitchen. “I didn’t know you could make records like this at home. This is better than going to [a traditional] studio,” Johnson told the producer. The low-key, familial vibe resonated with Johnson. Several months after he’d gotten Caldato’s help designing a home studio on his North Shore property, he called him to see if he’d be interested in producing *On And On*.

“Jack has a good idea of what he wants,” says Caldato of working with Johnson in the studio. And while Johnson’s open to ideas and sonic experimentation, “the focus is definitely to keep things simple and not overproduced.”

The folk-rock vibe that enamored fans with *Brushfire Fairytales*—an acoustic-guitar-led medley of endearing love songs, thoughtful reflections on life’s big issues and snapshot moments of fun, if bittersweet, times—remained front and center for *On And On* and *In Between Dreams*. The formula, which seems to have foreshadowed the unexpected popularity of Mumford & Sons, The Lumineers and The Avett Brothers in certain ways, proved that the debut album’s success wasn’t a fluke: Both albums went platinum and live audiences continued to get bigger.

“It became emotionally taxing after a while,” says Johnson. “It was a lot of fun but for *In Between Dreams*, especially when everything lined and up, we got songs on the radio and I was doing a record store and radio station [visit] almost every day. That work load—it was nice to be working that hard—but [it was] pretty psychologically taxing to be on that much of the day.”

For a guy whose priorities in life up to that point were his family and the ocean, it was a lot to handle. The Johnsons had felt somewhat secure with Kim’s high school teacher’s salary, but suddenly, millions of dollars were pouring in. If they were proud of their success and

the hard work they’d put in to achieve it, then they were also increasingly uncomfortable with the amount of money at their disposal.

As Johnson sings on “Gone” from *On And On*: “Cars and phones and diamond rings, bling bling/ Those are only removable things/ What about your mind, does it shine?/ Or are there things that concern you more than your time?”

“Once there was a surplus of money,” says Kim, “it was like, ‘How can we better our community and places around us?’”

\* \* \* \* \*

**I**N THE FALL OF 2002, Johnson was invited to play Neil Young’s Bridge School Benefit. “At the event, you felt such a part of the mission for them,” Kim recalls of the annual concerts, which raise funds for the school dedicated to helping physically challenged children overcome their impairments through the use of technology. “It was a special gathering—you felt like part of a family. We thought, ‘We want to do something similar.’”

This spawned the idea for the Kokua Festival, which the Johnsons founded in 2003 to fund the nonprofit Kokua Hawaii Foundation supporting environmental education in the schools and communities of Hawaii.

While music is the primary draw—Johnson always headlines and has called on friends ranging from Eddie Vedder and Dave Matthews to Willie Nelson and Taj Mahal to come play—the primary feature of the Kokua Festival is its aim to educate attendees through the environmental organizations and eco-friendly businesses present. (More than 60 were at the last one.) In addition, they highlight key elements of how they produce the event—the use of bio-diesel for generators, a bike valet, climate-neutral certification, sustainable foodware, zero waste stations and more—for patrons as examples of easy

“It became emotionally taxing after a while.

It was a lot of fun but for *In Between Dreams*, especially when everything lined and up, we got songs on the radio and I was doing a record store and radio station [visit] almost every day. That work load—it was nice to be working that hard—but [it was] pretty psychologically taxing to be on that much of the day.”

choices they can make in their daily lives.

“We realized we have this platform of the tour—we’re going around the world—let’s bring a little of the Kokua Festival with us,” says Kim of the impetus to start changing how and why Jack toured. For the *In Between Dreams* tour in 2005, with the help of music-based eco consultants MusicMatters (now called Effect Partners) and others, the Johnsons developed an “enviro rider,” which provided eco-friendly options for artists with regard to tour production. This translated to all of the buses running on bio-diesel fuel (inspired by Willie Nelson) and a portion of individual ticket sales going toward making the shows carbon-neutral.

As they ramped up to tour again in 2008 in support of *Sleep Through the Static*, the Johnsons were ready to amplify the Kokua model even further. Jessica Gill—band member Zach’s wife—who graduated from UCSB with a degree in environmental studies and had already worked in a variety of areas including sustainable transportation, outreach related to water quality and organic farming research, led the charge.

“Jack and Kim wanted to create [the Kokua Festival model] on the touring scale, so [in] each city that we were traveling to, we reached out to nonprofits to invite them to partner, come out to the show, interact with fans, and then, offer direct and matching donations to support their program,” says Gill. “We’ve built on that platform and been able to grow a strong network of hundreds of nonprofits.” (They also launched the All At Once online social action network to keep fans engaged.)

The most dramatic development, however, came with the creation of the Johnson Ohana Charitable Foundation in 2008, a nonprofit charity aiming “to promote positive and lasting change within communities by supporting organizations that focus on environmental, art, and music education.” Gill serves as its executive director and oversees the foundation’s endowment fund.

Here, the endowments are able to provide grants on a perpetual basis versus one-time offerings and it’s funded by Johnson’s touring profits. And, with the way that it’s structured, Johnson doesn’t ever touch the money and it goes straight into the endowment tax-free.

So to be clear: *Jack Johnson doesn’t make any money from touring.* (He makes the majority of his money from album sales.)

“The Johnson Ohana Charitable Foundation is actually a public charity, which means that it’s created through the donations of many individuals,” notes Kim proudly. “Anyone who’s gone to Jack’s tours—they’re creating that foundation. It might have our name on it, but it took all those people to create it.”

The model was so effective that the Johnsons restructured the Kokua Foundation around the same concept. So though the festival is on indefinite hiatus—Kim wants to focus on their youngest child until she starts elementary school and analogizes the preparation for Kokua like “planning a wedding for 8,000 people”—its mission can continue.

As of press time, the Johnsons have contributed more than

*Continued on page 70*





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\$25 million between their two foundations and other nonprofits.

All of Johnson's 2008 tour profits went into the JOCF; all of his 2010 *To The Sea* tour profits went into the Kokua Foundation. Each currently operates with approximately \$11 million. (The difference is made up from the Johnsons' personal donations.) Profits from his forthcoming tours in support of *From Here to Now to You* will be divided between the two.

Recently, both foundations have begun focusing on program-related and mission-related investments with their principal funds. "An overall way to describe it is impact investing," says Gill. "It doesn't just have a financial return but you're actually having social and environmental return on your investment as well. It's a new way of thinking for foundations and it's exciting for us to start learning about ways to align our mission with our investment dollars."

Prior to the JOCF's creation, Johnson often found himself wondering whether or not he wanted to continue touring. "What made it sound worth doing was when it was reframed," he says of the foundation's aim to help fund the local nonprofits that participate on his tours. "Rather than thinking about it as, 'We're going to collect all this money and donate it,' each show [has] fans coming to support their own community and the ideas we're putting out there. It made it a lot more fun for me." To date, the JOCF has made more than \$2 million in donations to nonprofits.

Gill believes that the Johnsons' actions are having a ripple effect in the industry. "What Kim and Jack are doing is at the forefront of greening, trying to engage fans, taking positive actions and getting involved locally," she says. "It's something that other artists are paying attention to."

Artists aren't the only ones taking notice: The White House invited Johnson and his

team to discuss what they've learned about greening the music industry when they were in town on his recent theater tour this September.

\* \* \* \* \*

**W**HEN I SPOKE TO JOHNSON in 2008, he joked that he almost named his fourth album *Music for the Middle Ages*. "The reality is that I'm not trying to write songs that will be popular," he said. "The reality is that I'm 32 and have two kids—I hope the songs start to mature."

*Sleep Through the Static* and its 2010 successor, *To The Sea*, were departures for Johnson—both lyrically and sonically. The music wasn't all warm and fuzzy. The cover of *Static*, featuring a photo of Johnson perched atop a stool holding an electric guitar, indicated that something different was happening. The happy-go-lucky guy had become disillusioned. The title song was meant "in a judgmental way about how our culture is able to push the power button—their remote control—[and] turn off the war whenever they want," Johnson said. "You're allowed to sleep through the static of it all—everything that's going on."

The album's opening song, "All At Once," includes the line, "Sometimes it feels like a heart is no place to be singing from at all" while, a couple tunes later, on "Hope," he sings, "It will defeat you then teach you to get back up/ After it takes away all that you've learned to love."

At the time, his father was battling cancer, eventually passing away at the age of 65 in August 2009. (And two years earlier, Kim's cousin Danny Riley passed away from brain cancer at the age of 19.)

The electric guitar, always melodic, provided more of an edge than the typical acoustic did. For *Static*, Johnson brought

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Johnson at home  
with his chickens



Plunier back into the fold as a producer. For *To The Sea*, which continued the electric and more angular direction, Johnson and his steady band—Zach Gill had been an official member since the end of the *On And On* sessions alongside the longtime rhythm section of drummer Adam Topol and bassist Merlo Podlewski—produced it themselves with the assistance of Caldato's engineer Robert Carranza.

Lyrical, the album focused on ideas about losing a father and that guidance and, conversely, ideas about becoming a father and feeling lost. Recorded live in three weeks, it's a loose record with instruments' sounds bleeding into one another.

After the subsequent tour, Johnson and his family retreated back to Hawaii—they live in a modest hillside home with an ocean view and without cable—and disappeared from the national consciousness.

"I'm able, after a few months, to forget about all the cameras and the audiences and feel back to normal," Johnson says now of the extended periods of time off that he needs in order to feel balanced. So it was with some trepidation that he began to acknowledge an album's worth of demos squirreled away on his iPhone this past winter.

"My ambition is make it special enough that it's somebody's favorite record," says Johnson of how he challenges himself when entering the studio. "If it's more than one person, that's even better."

He and Malloy began talking about potential producers. "What always happens to me, [is that I think], I don't know that guy—what if we get in the studio and we don't even like each other?" says Johnson of why he called upon Caldato to produce *From Here to You to Now*. "It seems like putting art in front of friendships or putting that art of what we're doing first. It sounds silly—because of course art should be a big part of it—but it's always been a hobby for

me." Since he began recording, Johnson has continued to work with a small, select group of people.

"I keep making records with the same formula but I enjoy it a lot," acknowledges Johnson. "For me, it's more about sharing these stories than it is staying relevant with sonic choices and things."

To that end, fans and critics alike are calling the new album a return to form, which has just the right amount of polish. The wedding-ready love songs are back like the quiet, front-porch strum and whistle of "I Got You" and the lilting ukulele-tinged "Never Fade." The story songs are here too, such as the mid-tempo, boy-wants-to-be-a-man tale of "Washing Dishes" and the autobiographical account of Johnson's early band days on "Tape Deck," which also nods to his own children's emerging musical proclivities. The slow pulse of "Ones And Zeros" fills the slot for transcendental reflections about man, nature and technology.

As a musician, Johnson's resisted the inclination to change his sound or direction in viewing himself as being in the lineage of folk music. "[Merlo] was always sweet about saying, 'Man, let's just make smooth music that feels good to people's ears,'" he says of his bassist. "[Let's] make choices that bring it back to a really comfortable thing to listen to."

"We basically went back to square one," confirms Caldato of *From Here to You to Now*. "[Johnson] knows, sonically, how to translate [his ideas] without too many guitars...It sounds simple—oh, it's just folk chords—but it's a little tricky [with] some of

those pickings and styles when you get into it. It's not as easy as it seems."

The sentiment could easily be applied to what Johnson's achieved over the last 13 years since he recorded *Brushfire Fairytales*. While he can appear to have a whatever-way-the-wind-may-blow attitude, don't be fooled: Johnson's a determined individual and his unflappable but subtle sense of confidence has made him an unlikely leader in environmental consciousness.

With the endowments now in place and effecting change, the prospect of "ramping the whole thing up again" doesn't seem quite as daunting as it once did. Though this fall will see Johnson play theaters across the country, plans are already underway for another eco-minded summer tour. And, as always, he's adamant about bringing his family on the road as much as possible and never spending too much time away from the ocean. After a few years of feeling overwhelmed, he's found a balance between his career and the idyllic island life that his father cherished.

"It's also one of those things that I know won't last forever so it's fun to take advantage of it while it's here," Johnson told me more than a decade ago regarding his rising popularity following *Brushfire Fairytales*. "Soon as it starts to fade, it's not going to worry me. The funny part is that it's not like this saved me from some miserable life and this is my whole chance for happiness. I won't mind when I'll have time to kick back and have more time to surf again. I'll start making surf movies or do something like that again."

Some day, Jack. Some day. **1**

**GYPSY ROSE**  
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## Jack Johnson

From Here to Now to You

ISLAND/REPUBLIC



Jack Johnson's music has always had a righteous vibe and *From Here to Now to You*, produced by

Mario Caldato Jr. (Johnson's *On and On* and *In Between Dreams*, Super Furry Animals, Beastie Boys) isn't an exception. Recorded at Johnson's Mango Tree studio in Hawaii, it's organic, laidback and chilled to perfection—mildly memorable ditties, built on unassuming acoustic-electric guitar textures and ambling grooves as hypnotic as the sound of the waves lapping against the beach on the surfer's native Oahu. This time, the songs focus on domestic bliss—more or less—starting with “I Got You,” a love song for his wife, mother to their three children. “I don't need nothing more than you, I got everything,” he sings over soft-rock rhythms, sliding guitars peeking through and whistling thrown in with no extra charge. Birds chirp in the background on closer “Home,” as its narrator yearns to get back to tend to his garden, err, family. In between are similarly tinted tunes, including the wordplay-laden “Shot Reverse Shot,” inspired in part by Johnson's filmmaking work; the nostalgia-spiked “Tape Deck” (“we sounded folk but we wanted to be punk”); and “You Remind Me of You,” for his daughter. **Phillip Booth**

## Trombone Shorty

Say That to Say This VERVE



Troy “Trombone Shorty” Andrews and Orleans Avenue are back with more of a rhythm and blues flair

on their latest album, *Say That to Say This*. This doesn't mean they've abandoned their signature funk-rock sound either, but it shouldn't come as a surprise given that the record's co-producer is none other than modern R&B legend **Raphael Saadiq**. While many of the album's songs find Andrews taking advantage of his vocal chops, the group is still at their best when jamming out, especially on the title track and instrumental tunes like “Vieux Carre” and “Shortyville.” Did we mention that *Say That to Say This* features **The Meters'** first studio recording since 1977? Well, it's a reimagining of their ballad “Be My Lady” with **Cyril Neville**, and it's pretty great. **Sam D'Arcangelo**

## Moon Taxi

Mountains Beaches Cities

BMG/12TH SOUTH



After breaking into the national spotlight last year with their album *Cabaret*, **Moon Taxi** offer a follow-up that aims even higher. The band's third studio album *Mountains Beaches Cities* has full-scale ambitions and an appetite for adventure, with songs that dive boldly into unexpected time signatures,

surprising moments of intimacy or bombast, cross-genre experimentation and the band's own twisted visions of pop conventionality. The biggest surprise of all, though, is how polished and professional it all sounds. Meticulously produced in-house by guitarist **Spencer Thomson** and keyboardist **Wes Bailey**, the recordings boast the intricate detail and sheen that you'd expect from a band with far more experience (and resources) than the young Tennessee quartet. Pairing accessibility with endless replay value, *Moon Taxi* make it clear that they're not a name to forget. **Jack Manus**

## The Mother Hips

Behind Beyond ATO

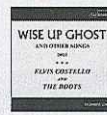


**The Mother Hips** have matured into a band that delves into the psychedelic while also picking apart other genres for a well-rounded sound. *Behind Beyond* features a plethora of stingy guitars, hot breaks, cool jams and rich vocal harmonies that tap CSNY and The Beach Boys. Tighter, more defined, focused and articulate, this album reaches closer to that spiritual musical realm that primary songwriter **Tim Bluhm** seeks to inhabit. “Isle Not of Man” introduces the trademark breezy NorCal style that filters into almost every track before the darker-toned “Jefferson Army” builds into a psychedelic guitar fury channeling Soundgarden and Buffalo Springfield

equally. “Best Friend in Town” is a foot-stomping jam-rocker, while “Shape The Bell” floats in the interplay of layered harmonies, swirling guitars and a deep bottom end. “Song for JB,” Bluhm's lament for Jay Bennett, takes the appropriately alt-country approach, a sweet ending to a seriously realized album. **Glenn BurnSilver**

## Elvis Costello and The Roots

Wise Up Ghost BLUE NOTE



After **Elvis Costello's** standout performance at a fabled Prince tribute at Carnegie Hall (where **The Roots** were the house band) and at least a half-dozen appearances together on *Late Night with Jimmy Fallon*, this one had to happen. Costello's music has always bristled with a backbeat—The Roots' stock-in-trade, thanks to drummer **Ahmir “Questlove” Thompson**—and cuts like “Walk Us Uptown” and the steamy “Refuse to Be Saved” come closer to streetwise funk than anything he's ever made with The Attractions. That might knock his *Trust*-era fans for a loop (even as it tests Roots heads with the absence of frontman Tariq Trotter, who's working on his solo debut), but the anti-war “Tripwire,” a soulfully sweet morning ballad that belies its lurid poetic sting, gets to the real nitty-gritty: These are likeminded artists throwing their best cards on the table. Even if they don't always click, half of the fun is in hearing them give it a shot. **Bill Murphy**

## Mickey Hart Band

Superorganism SELF-RELEASED



**Mickey Hart** continues to be inspired by the rhythms of the universe around him, including the vast cerebral brain, letting it inform his work with a timeless and modern appeal. His band's second album, co-produced and engineered by **Ben Yonas**, brings together an impressive array of ethereal and groove-centric sounds. The fine vocal contributions of **Crystal Monee Hall** anchor *Superorganism*, while Hart offers typically mind-blowing percussion elements. Hart has help, spanning several sublime bandmates and guests who extend further sonic support, including lyricist **Robert Hunter**, bassists **Dave Schools** and **Reed Mathis**, guitarist **Steve Kimock**, and percussionists **Sikiru Adepoju**, **Giovanni Hidalgo**, **Zakir Hussain** and **African Showboyz**. Hart is in his fifth decade of exploring Earth-bound motifs, while



Elvis Costello and Questlove



## OCTOBER\_NOVEMBER 2013 RELIX CD SAMPLER

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## 1 Jack Johnson

"Radiate"

From the album *From Here To Now To You*  
Universal Record Group /Brushfire

Recorded in Hawaii at Johnson's own Mango Tree Studio, *From Here to Now to You* marks a reunion with Mario Caldato, Jr. (the producer of Johnson's biggest-selling release, 2005's *In Between Dreams*, as well as albums by the Beastie Boys, Super Furry Animals, and Seu Jorge) and Ben Harper (the singer/songwriter/multi-instrumentalist who played slide guitar on Johnson's first-ever single "Flake"). Also featuring Johnson's longtime band members Adam Topol, Merlo Podlewski and Zach Gill, *From Here to Now to You* channels the warm intimacy of those collaborations into songs whose seeming simplicity continually unfolds into rich layers of emotion.

[www.brushfirerecords.com](http://www.brushfirerecords.com)

## 2 The Dream Logic

"The Dream Logic"

From the album *The Dream Logic*  
Chaos Dream Logic

The Dream Logic has ushered forth an album that seemingly says, "Genres, styles and classifications be damned!" It effortlessly blends nuances of jazz, rock, soul and funk into an amalgam of sound where the sum of the parts far surpasses any singular "type" of music. This liberating CD gives credence to what can be accomplished when the pursuit of music goes unhindered by restraint.

[www.thedreamlogic.com](http://www.thedreamlogic.com)

## 3 Matt Tarka

"Indigo Bunting"

From the EP *Motorcycle Breakfast*  
Self-Released

Matt Tarka's songs accentuate his earnest voice and surround you in a technology-free world that is perpetually dusky and full of the tension of change. Tarka's debut EP, *Motorcycle Breakfast* is a collection of songs with introspective and poignant lyrics drawing comparisons to Neil Young, Bob Dylan, and Gene Clark.

[www.matttarkamusic.com](http://www.matttarkamusic.com)

## 4 The Short Straw Pickers

"Troubadour"

From the album *Upon That Hill*  
Self-Released

The Short Straw Pickers are an interesting mix of traditional bluegrass, fresh writing and Americana that can take the most casual listener into a whole new world. Based out of South Florida, these accomplished musicians have taken up real estate in the hearts and minds of thousands of festivalgoers and live music aficionados.

[www.theshortstrawpickers.com](http://www.theshortstrawpickers.com)

## 5 Lily and the Parlour Tricks

"Little Angel"

From the album *Little Angel*  
Self-Released

Lily & The Parlour Tricks dive deep into the well of musical Americana and resurface with a wild stylistic brew. Lily's songwriting influences range from The Andrews Sisters to Nine Inch Nails to Johnny Cash, with roots planted firmly in the smoky back room of early rock and roll. Their first EP was recorded live to tape at the legendary Daptone Studios in Brooklyn and they are hard at work on a follow-up with an altogether different kind of sound.

[www.lilyandtheparlourtricks.com](http://www.lilyandtheparlourtricks.com)

## 6 DIRTY RICE

"Roots, Rock, Reggae"

From the album *Dirty Rice*  
Self-Released

Formed in 2010, Dirty Rice is a seven-piece reggae band from South Oxnard, Calif., comprised of a group of local friends and a mix of family. The soulful island-vibe sound of Dirty Rice is a mix of roots, rock, reggae and hints of ragga combined with never-ending drum grooves, acoustic guitar, wholesome keys, soothing vocal harmonies and rocking bass riffs.

[www.reverbnation.com/dirtyrice805](http://www.reverbnation.com/dirtyrice805)

## 7 Troubadour North

"Lonely Stretch of Road"

From the album *Lonely Stretch of Road*  
Self-Released

Incredible lyrics, powerful vocals, perfect harmonies, and talented musicians are all characteristic of the band, Troubadour North. Part of the group's distinctive sound comes from blending different genres, a characteristic that has been enthusiastically embraced by their fans. Ultimately, the band is looking forward to sharing their love of music with the world, releasing more hits, and entertaining fans with their unique sound and memorable songs.

[www.troubadournorth.com](http://www.troubadournorth.com)

## 8 Boukou Groove

"I'll Take You There"

From the album *A Lil Boukou In Your Cup*  
Self-Released

Founded on the stage of Tipitina's - New Orleans in 2010 by Derwin "Big D" Perkins and Donnie Sundal, Boukou Groove provides a genre bending blend of NOLA Funk and Roots Southern Soul. With the momentum of the bands debut release of *A Lil Boukou In Your Cup* and tour schedule, 2014 looks to be an unprecedented year.

[www.boukougroove.com](http://www.boukougroove.com)

## 9 The Interlopers

"Sun Drenched"

From the album *Sun Drenched*  
Self-Released

The Interlopers create music that draws on many different musical flavors and genres such as R&B/ Soul, Jazz, Funk, and Rock, while maintaining a pop sensibility, executed with the boundless mindset of a jam band. Their main goal is to create music that will both move your soul and dazzle your senses through songs that will leave the crowd smiling, no matter the cost.

[www.theinterlopersmusic.com](http://www.theinterlopersmusic.com)

## 10 The Silver Threads

"Little Bit Of Me"

From the album *Last Witness*  
Self-Released

The Silver Threads are a roots based band from San Francisco performing original music that reflects a wide range of influences including the Stones, the Dead, Zevon, Young and Dylan. Coupled with honest and intense lyrics, their eponymous debut chronicles life and loss in a transitioning American landscape. The Silver Threads deliver their songs with a power packed punch that is refreshing, rocking and real.

[www.thesilverthreads.com](http://www.thesilverthreads.com)

## 11 Sugar Cane

"Calm Water"

From the album *Life at 4 Peaks*  
Self-Released

"Sugarcane is a Soulful, Americana rock band from Portland, Oregon that has created a loyal following in the Pacific North West over the past few years. After this year's captivating performance at the Northwest String Summit, the band has burst onto the national scene.

[www.sugarcanemusic.com](http://www.sugarcanemusic.com)

## 12 Ten Foot Polecats

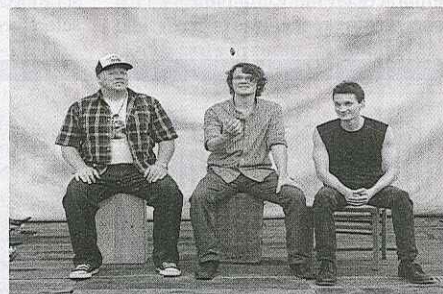
"Moonshine And Mud"

From the album *Undertow*  
Hillgrass Blueberry Records

Playing super charged gutbucket tunes with a strong North Mississippi Hill Country groove, Ten Foot Polecats have been barnstorming around the country for the past five years playing every corner of the continental United States. This unique sounding trio (comprised of vocals, harmonica, 5 stringed open-tuned wood box guitar and drums) is back with their second full length album, *Undertow*, which features up-tempo raunch and mesmerizing, hypnotic jams with an underlying theme of catastrophe and rebirth.

[www.tenfootpolecats.com](http://www.tenfootpolecats.com)

## EDITOR'S PICK



## 13 North Mississippi Allstars

"Rollin' N Tumblin'"

From the album *World Boogie Is Coming*  
Songs Of The South Records

*World Boogie Is Coming* is the new career-defining record for North Mississippi Allstars. The release marks a return to NMA's blues-infused rock & roll roots and pays homage to hill country legends and songwriters like RL Burnside and Junior Kimbrough. *World Boogie Is Coming* was produced at their own Zebra Ranch Studios in Hernando, MS and includes special guest appearances by Robert Plant, Steve Selvidge, Lightnin' Malcolm and others.

[www.northmississippiallstars.com](http://www.northmississippiallstars.com)

## JAMOFF! WINNER

## 14 The New Englanders

"The Joan Song"

From the album *Shotgun Hill*  
Self-Released

The New Englanders are a country/folk band hailing from Southern New Hampshire. This six piece acoustic band has been performing regularly for the past eight years throughout New England where they bring their sound to local county fairs, festivals, coffee houses and other venues and offer a variety of originals and popular cover tunes ranging from Johnny Cash to the Grateful Dead to Bob Dylan and many more.

[www.thenewenglanders.com](http://www.thenewenglanders.com)