

Jack Johnson: Saint of surf

By Paula Yeoman

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Singer-songwriter Jack Johnson is heading back to our shores soon.

Jack Johnson is at home in Hawaii relaxing after the US leg of his world tour and preparing to bring the show to New Zealand. He is excited to be returning to our shores but is not feeling his best. Just the day before we spoke he received news that his close friend, fellow Hawaiian and three-times world champion surfer Andy Irons, 32, had died.



"It's a really sad time, especially as he had a new baby on the way. Everyone you run into can't believe it happened," he says.

Thirty-five-year-old Johnson grew up in the thick of Hawaii's tight-knit surf community. He began riding waves when he was just 5 and started his musical career making soundtracks for surfing movies before being taken under the wing of Ben Harper.

Since then, the unassuming singer-songwriter has steadily amassed a loyal fan base throughout the world. His latest album, *To The Sea*, sold more than 250,000 copies in its first week.

Sales and profits are clearly topics of conversation Johnson feels uncomfortable with. You'd expect no less from the family man who records his albums in solar-powered studios and is donating 100 per cent of the profits of his world tour to charity.

But surely he must have some bad habits? "Let's see, um. If you ask my wife she'll tell you I surf too much. I'm trying to think of something," he says. "I don't want to be Mr Perfect."

After much contemplation, Johnson arrives at an answer: "I definitely see the oxymoron in raising awareness about environmental issues when we're flying around the world.

"I had to decide what's better – to stop touring and wipe out the negative impact we're having or if I'm going to go back out and do it, I'm going to donate 100 per cent of the proceeds."

So there you have it. It's hardly tabloid gossip but it keeps Johnson awake at night. Luckily for his fans it's not enough to keep him from the skies.

He'll be winging his way to New Zealand soon to play three gigs, including at Auckland's Vector Arena early next month.

Jack Johnson's new album, *To The Sea*, is out now. He plays Bowl Of Brooklands, New Plymouth, November 28, Westpac Trust, Christchurch, on November 30, and Vector Arena, Auckland, on December 2.

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