



Music by Prudence's Mabhena with the film's director, Roger Ross Williams.

TIVO THIS

## A Star Is Born

Subject of an Oscar-winning documentary, singer Prudence Mabhena shows that "disability does not mean inability."

Prudence Mabhena has a voice as sparkling as the bluest ocean, with a little sob of an undertow burbling beneath it. That voice pours out of **Music by Prudence** (now airing on HBO2), a moving portrait of the 23-year-old Zimbabwe native, lead singer of the Afro-fusion band Liyana.

Born with arthrogryposis, which causes severe deformation of the joints (doctors amputated her legs when she was a child), Mabhena weighs about 50 pounds and uses a 600-pound wheelchair. "When I see myself singing in the film," Mabhena says, "I don't know how I do it."

As painfully recounted in *Music by Prudence*, which received this year's Oscar for short-subject documentary, most of Mabhena's family abandoned or abused her—not an unusual fate in Zimbabwe, where disability is often attributed to

witchcraft. Her fortunes began to turn at age 9, when she enrolled in the King George VI School in Bulawayo (one of the few learning centers for the disabled in the country) and formed Liyana with fellow students.



Oprah meets Mabhena at the Oscars.

Coming home in March from the Academy Awards ceremony, Mabhena was thronged by well-wishers at the airport. "With the Oscar, she is now the most famous woman in Zimbabwe, celebrated by the society that once shunned her," says *Music by Prudence* director Roger Ross Williams. Currently, Mabhena is preparing for Liyana's U.S. tour later this year (check out their peppery, marimbaticked songs at [musicbyprudence.com](http://musicbyprudence.com)). "I want to show the world that disability does not mean inability," she says. "And I want someday to write a Broadway musical."

—JESSICA WINTER

LOCAL HERO

## Good Guy Wins

Jack Johnson is helping save the planet, one tour stop at a time.

No one knows balance like a surfer. Former big-wave pro Jack Johnson strikes an equilibrium between music superstardom (more than 18 million records sold to date), family life (the tour for his latest album, *To the Sea*, out this month, is planned around his kids' school breaks), and the needs of the Earth (his touring profits go to his Johnson Ohana Charitable Foundation for environmental and social initiatives). "No matter how down you get about the world," the 35-year-old Hawaiian says, "you have to jump in and joyfully participate." Here's how he does it.

**HE FINDS LYRICS IN THE DARNEST PLACES.** "When my little boy was 3, he put a quarter in his mouth; I grabbed it away and made him promise never to do that again," Johnson recalls. "That day, I wrote the line 'Don't put your money where your mouth is, baby—we don't want to see you choke.' It wound up in the new song 'At or with Me.'"

**HE GIVES CREDIT WHERE CREDIT IS DUE.** "My name is on the foundation and green initiatives, but my wife, Kim, is the driving force. She jokes that her job is to take the spotlight shining on me and turn it toward more important things."

**HE'S MAKING ROCK 'N' ROLL GO GREEN...** While other touring acts demand Dom Pérignon or no brown M&M's, Johnson's concert

rider includes requests for compact fluorescent bulbs and recycling bins. "We want to lessen the negative impact of touring and leave towns in slightly better shape than when we showed up," says Johnson, whose bus runs on biodiesel fuel.

**...AND HE'S KICKING HIS PLASTIC HABIT.** "The Hawaiian Islands are like a filter for floating debris in the Pacific—the east side is just a wall of plastic bottles and bags and junk," he says. "So I feel embarrassed if I walk out of a store with a plastic water bottle in one hand and a single-use bag in the other. Right now a lot of people are thinking about the little changes they can make—there's a subtle shift happening in our social consciousness."

—SCOTT FRAMPTON



Johnson unwinding in Oahu this year.



**If you have only...an hour:** Become a part of **World Blood Donor Day** on June 14 (summer is when hospitals most frequently run short on blood supplies). Visit [aabb.org](http://aabb.org) to find a donation center near you—and bring a friend or two.