

How You Feelin'?

An interview with Michael Franti of Spearhead

Poet, lyricist and composer Michael Franti has been at the forefront of family-friendly conscious reggae-fusion music for the last 25 years. *EW* caught up with Spearhead's iconic frontman for a few quick questions before his arrival to Eugene and the Cuthbert Amphitheater on Thursday, Aug. 23.

You pride yourself on being a conscious musician. Can you talk a little bit about what the means to you?

Well, I think that consciousness means something different to everyone. For me, practicing yoga keeps me in tune with my body, mind and heart. My outward extension of that to the world is my music. I think that being aware of all of those things is being conscious.

Can you tell us more about the connection you feel between yoga and music?

When I first started touring I was 19 years old. I'd go out, do a show and party all night. And there came a point where I realized that if I wanted to do this for the rest of my life I was going to have to take care of myself. The philosophy of yoga, the non-judgment of others, it affected my life in a big way. I mean, I love it so much that I opened a little yoga hotel in Bali. It's a part of me.

We heard a rumor that Homeland Security agents visited your parents shortly after the 9-11 attacks. Did that actually happen?

Yeah, my parents got a call. They asked my mom questions about me. It was pretty far out. That was right before I went to tour Iraq, to speak out against the war.

You often talk about "staying human." Can you elaborate on what you mean when you say that?

Staying human means to hold on to your dignity, your compassion and your humanity – even when things in the world seem to only judge you on what you do, how much you make or what you spend. It means allowing the person that you are to be present, every day of your life.

Any thoughts on gigging Eugene and the Cuthbert?

We love playing there, especially at the amphitheater. I live in San Francisco and the mindset of Northern California and Oregon are very similar. We really feel a connection to the people there. It's a different belief system than other parts of the country. We love that people are conscious and figuring out how to make a difference.

Michael Franti & Spearhead play 6:30 pm Thursday, Aug. 23, at the Cuthbert, www.thecuthbert.com; \$40 adv., \$45 day of.



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