

Going green has become top of mind for artists big and small in the past few years, via everything from carbon offsets to philanthropy. Below, Billboard spotlights 10 acts that, through their actions in the past 12 months, are making a major difference with environmental issues and inspiring their peers to do the same.

JACK JOHNSON

"In this new eco-green world, every issue is a green issue," says Jack Johnson, who's taken steps to reflect that reality in his recording and touring choices. At the Los Angeles headquarters of his Brushfire Records—a cozy single-family home on warm-and-fuzzy Larchmont Boulevard—this Live Earth veteran and his business partners recently oversaw construction of a new recording studio insulated with used denim and powered in part by solar panels located on the roof. "It was an investment for sure, which will take a good number of years to get a return on financially," Brush-



JOHNSON'S Brushfire studio is partly powered by solar panels.

fire managing director Josh Nicotra says. "But in terms of environmental impact, the returns are immediate, so we were happy to do it." (Recent bookings at the studio include Neil Halstead, Mason Jennings and Vampire Weekend.) Johnson, a lifelong surfer who splits his time between homes in Oahu and Santa Barbara, Calif., says that he inherited much of his ecological awareness from his dad, who viewed recycling, reusing and repairing as simple facts of life. Johnson also describes his activism as the natural outgrowth of spending his downtime in two of the world's most gorgeous locations. He will continue giving back to Hawaii with his April 19-20 Kokua Festival, at which he will perform with Dave Matthews. Proceeds benefit the Kokua Hawaii Foundation, a nonprofit organization that supports environmental education in the state's schools and communities. And for his 2008 tour in support of "Sleep Through the Static," Johnson has updated his so-called "EnviroRider," requiring venues to reduce waste and recycle. In addition, the tour's trucks and coaches will run on biodiesel, while catering will emphasize locally grown and organic foods. This guy means business: "You will be required to notify the Jack Johnson organization no later than 60 days prior to the event if there is any possibility of noncompliance with these requirements," the rider reads, before threatening to withhold 5% of payment from venues that fail to produce documentation of cooperation by 10 days after Johnson's concert. Just call him the jolly green giant.

—Mikael Wood



THE GREEN ISSUE

The Billboard Green 10



Pumps loaded with WILLIE NELSON'S BioWillie fuel will be the centerpiece of a new Texas truck stop.

WILLIE NELSON

Willie Nelson's BioWillie biodiesel fuel, which is already sold in Texas, Oklahoma, Mississippi, Louisiana, California and Tennessee, will add a key location when Willie's Place at Carl's Corner, Texas, opens this summer. The truck stop, built on the site of the first outlet to carry BioWillie, is located just off busy truck route I-35, which runs from the Mexican to the Canadian border. Billed as the biggest green truck stop in the United States, the facility will include 13 islands and 26 pumps, and all fuel sold there will have some percentage of biofuel, ranging from 5% to 85%. The facility will feature two restaurants, a saloon, gift shop, a 750-seat performance hall and an XM Satellite Radio studio. Nelson, who does an XM radio show every Wednesday with legendary trucking DJ Bill Mack, says biodiesel is catching on with truckers. "I talk to all the truckers going up and down the highway, and they tell me they use it, they like it, it's good for the engines and they get good gas mileage," he says. "Truckers have been the ones who have spread the word about biodiesel as much as anybody."

—Ken Tucker



MANÁ, here accepting an award for its green initiatives, is behind an environmental curriculum plan in Mexico.

MANÁ

In 1993, Mexican rock quartet Maná released "Vivir Sin Ajire," a song that likened not having a loved one to living without air. It was a deliberate parallel that few people got, even when the song became a nationwide hit. "We were already talking about global warming, but no one understood," frontman Fher Olvera says. "Now they understand perfectly." Long before being green was cool, Maná was a tireless advocate for environmental causes through its nonprofit Selva Negra foundation, launched in 1994. Selva Negra's projects range from saving endangered species like the sea turtle to massive reforestation efforts, in tandem with programs that seek to change the way entire communities live and use their land. But the group's most ambitious and potentially far-reaching endeavor is a proposal to make environmental and ethics classes part of the curriculum for all of Mexico's schoolchildren. The project, developed with government officials and Mexico's Universidad Autónoma, was put before Congress last year, and included the development of textbooks and special teacher training. This March, it launched in 5,000 schools with plans to go nationwide by year's end. "This is what's needed to raise a generation that sees things different. That understands that one thing leads to another," Olvera says.

—Leila Cobo



DAVE MATTHEWS BAND

Dave Matthews Band doesn't want to go green alone: It is willing to go green for everyone else, too. The band, through environmental nonprofit Reverb, has calculated the CO2 emissions from every stop on its upcoming extensive summer tour and has purchased the renewable energy credits through NativeEnergy to make up for the footprint left by each venue, hotel, flight, tour vehicle and even fan travel. But DMB devotees can make their own contributions by signing up to a carpool service online. Tour buses and trucks this summer will run on biodiesel and, backstage, the band plans to feast on local and organic foods on their reusable catering products. The five-piece plans to continue erecting an "eco-village" at each show to inform concertgoers of ways they can help save the environment. Bassist Stephan Lessard also told Billboard recently that the band wants to integrate issues of water conservation into the mix. His interest extends from his contributions to scoring the recent IMAX documentary "Grand Canyon Adventure: River at Risk," which brings to light water economy and ecology in the United States.

—Katie Hasty

'This is what's needed to raise a generation that sees things different.'

—FHER OLVERA, MANÁ

KT TUNSTALL



Last September, KT Tunstall partnered with her record label, Virgin, to create a 100% post-consumer waste recycled and chlorine-free booklet for her sophomore CD, "Drastic Fantastic." This followed closely on the heels of the Scottish singer/songwriter's July 2007 Live Earth performance, during which she greeted the crowd at New Jersey's Giants Stadium in a T-shirt imploring "Save the Future." Tunstall, who has taken steps to reduce the impact of her own success on the environment since the production of her debut album, told Billboard last year that getting the opportunity to take part in Live Earth "meant so much. I would have been ashamed not to have been part of it, really, because environmental issues are so important to me and that's something I really want to share." 2007 also saw Tunstall beginning work on the greening of her London home, as well as completing a carbon-neutral U.K. tour. Currently Tunstall is planning an environmentally friendly U.S. outing for May. Although details are still being hammered out, it's likely the singer will travel on a biodiesel-fueled tour bus, something she did in 2006 while touring the States.

—Susan Visakowitz

PEARL JAM



Long one of the more green-conscious acts in music, Pearl Jam spent the past year donating to local causes with an environmental slant and further honing the greening of its touring and overall business.

Dovetailing with the more than \$120,000 the band has donated to organizations devoted to climate change and renewable energy since 2005, drummer Matt Cameron played a January benefit for flood victims in Central Washington, while guitarist Stone Gossard, in tandem with Green Seattle Partnerships, planted vegetation in a Seattle park ravaged by English Ivy. Pearl Jam is also poring over ways to make its Seattle-based office/warehouse more environmentally friendly and is already taking steps to reduce the carbon footprint its 2008 concerts will leave. "We like the idea of philanthropy being part of our normal business day. We're not going to make a huge impact on any particular issue, but by being involved in numerous things, the broader network of businesses will have a big impact on what's going on in the world," Gossard says. —Jonathan Cohen



SERJ TANKIAN For This Veteran Rocker, Making An Environmental Impact Is A Way Of Life by Cortney Harding

A few days before the fifth anniversary of the Iraq War, Serj Tankian is sitting in an Austin hotel room and ruminating on the costs of the endless battle. But Tankian isn't talking about dead soldiers or civilians; he's talking about the cost to the Middle East's environment, an issue that few people have raised. "The topsoil there has been destroyed," he says, "and who knows what kind of damage all those bombs have caused to the ecosystems in the Middle East?"

Many bands these days are claiming the "green" label, but their concern often starts at the merch table and ends at the recycling bin. Not so for the System of a Down front-man-turned-solo artist, who sees beyond silos and realizes that issues like electoral reform, recognition of the Armenian genocide, poverty and the environment are all related. As the four-day industry party that is South by Southwest rages below him, Tankian is serious but not humorless; clad in jeans and a T-shirt, he fiddles with his iPhone and shows off pictures of his dog before settling in to ponder weightier issues. Later that night, he brings the seething, schmoozing Stubb's crowd to a halt when he plays three haunting acoustic tracks at a show to celebrate the release of the "Body of War" documentary.

For Tankian, preaching about taking action is not enough. Rather than simply paying lip service to green issues, he founded a Web site, skyisover.net, to connect his fans to environmental and social justice organizations. He also fuses the message to his music and the accompanying visuals; the video for "Sky Is Over" shows him literally erasing the sky, a comment on the growing deterioration of the ozone layer.

He also founded a nonprofit, Axis of Justice, with former Rage Against the Machine guitarist Tom Morello. "Serj and Tom are really committed to getting music fans to get involved with local organizations and be active on a grassroots level," A.O.J. media director Jake Sexton says. "Serj is extremely informed about how the way we live our lives impacts others and the need to a change in consciousness."

"The organization has grown and morphed, and we really see the environment as being tied to social justice and human rights causes," Morello says. "We both realize that while people can do things on a person-by-person basis to make the world more green, massive levers need to be thrown to cause any real change."

Tankian is spreading his green message on the road and working with environmental nonprofit Reverb to make sure that his current tour leaves as small a carbon footprint as possible. With the organization, he ensures all the food served backstage is organic and locally grown, that recycling bins are available throughout the venues and that fans can buy energy credits to offset their travel to the show. Still, Tankian recognizes that it's not enough. "This is all great," he says, "but it's not going to stop the destruction. Right now the Earth has a fever, and based on the accelerated rate of population growth, the way we live now is completely unsustainable."

Many artists are becoming more active in promoting green issues, but you seem to be one of the few who actually go a step beyond and connect environmental issues to issues of poverty and war. How do you see the relationships between these causes?

For me, it all stems from the need to promote justice. I called my organization Axis of Justice because I didn't want to focus on only one issue. The connections can be drawn because they are present in so many places; for instance, poor urban neighborhoods have higher asthma rates. When a city wants to build a dump or get rid of radioactive waste, they don't put it in the nice part of town. Even materials that are supposed to be environmentally friendly can be harmful to poor communities. Biodiesel, for example, uses up farmland that could otherwise be used to grow food for starving people.

How did you first get involved in green issues?
I've been a supporter of Greenpeace and the Sierra Club

for years. I have a place in New Zealand, and I was really impressed with a Greenpeace action that took place down there recently. Greenpeace folks boarded a Japanese whaling ship to try to shut it down, and in the midst of the conflict, both ships ran out of fuel. When a rescue ship came, the Greenpeace people tried to disconnect the fuel lines to the whaling ship, even though it meant they'd be stuck as well. It was kind of crazy, but sometimes you have to be ballsy and put yourself out.

Do you ever worry that you are just preaching to the choir and the people who are driving around in Hummers and living in McMansions are just ignoring the message?

I sat next to an oil executive on the flight to Austin, and he started talking to me about how absurd it was that every day when he drives to work, the highways are full but trams and buses are empty. I think people are starting to hear what environmentalists are saying. "An Inconvenient Truth" was a huge wake-up call for a lot of people.

Have you ever been confronted with having to eat costs to be greener? Have you paid extra upfront for organic merch or greener touring? If so, how much?

Absolutely. Awareness always has a built-in economic cost, though in some cases green materials have become more competitive as far as pricing. We pay more for our merch items so that we can be sure that they are made with equitable labor and ecological practices. As far as investments [go], going green means that the return on your investment is less than investing in the corporate world, at least for now. This does not mean that you can't be profitable and conscious. It just means that there is a real-life cost to being more aware; hybrid cars cost more than non-hybrid cars of the same make, for example. It would be great to encourage large industries to reverse this policy. For example, if car companies made hybrids the same price as regular cars, more hybrids would be sold and that would have a positive effect on pollution.

What is the dynamic of those business decisions? Do you see a payoff further down the road or just eat the cost because being good to the planet matters more?

The payoff for those decisions is not somewhere in the future, it's now. I feel better about the way I live now and that's my payoff. I do things because it's the right thing to do now. I don't know what the future brings. In reality, the future never really exists. It's a design of the logical mind.

This is all great, but I'm wondering how you justify being part of an industry that produces so much waste every year. You've sold more than 10 million CDs, and many of those were in plastic containers that had to be shipped to stores.

Basically, we're all hypocrites unless we go out and live off the land. That way of living is a model for me, because I think those people are clued in about climate change and the way we're going to have to alter our lives. I spend a lot of the record talking about the end of civilization, and I don't mean an apocalypse. I think that we are going to have to come to terms with the fact that the way we live now will not exist in 50 years, period.

Along those same lines, you have been touring for this record, and while you have carbon offset programs in place, you are still using a lot of resources and putting a lot of goods out there. How do you reconcile that with your belief system?

Again, I realize I am a hypocrite by going on the road and doing this. I've had an idea for a long time, which might sound a little crazy, but I really want to look into holographic touring. I think we could reduce our need to travel if we could project ourselves into meetings and concerts. We have the technology, and we're not using it right now.

For instance, I have a studio next to my house and a live performance room in the studio. I could broadcast a show in real time and could interact with the audience as if we were in the same room. After all, it's not like the audience can touch me, anyway [laughs]. It would open up a whole new world for touring—shows wouldn't have to be limited to bars or clubs. There would be no travel costs, so bands with very little money could play shows, and tickets would cost less.

Well, even though that is still in the future, at least bands right now are starting to become more conscious. Do you worry, though, that being green might just be another trend for musicians and will be forgotten in a few years? After all, how many people do you hear still talking about Tibet?

I'm not a big trend follower, so I don't know if this is just another blip. I think that with the ice caps melting and everything changing, bands and everyone else on the planet won't have much of a choice about becoming green.

'I want to look into holographic touring. We could reduce our need to travel.'

I look at a place like New Zealand, which is ecologically one of the most progressive places on earth. People down there are unconsciously conscious—they don't get self-congratulatory when they recycle, they just do it as a way of life. I think we need more education to get us to that place.

While bands are also becoming greener, they seem to be less interested in other issues, like electoral politics. Would you agree with that?

I think a lot of bands are coming out for this election, many more than the previous few. Howard Dean had some good support and momentum in 2004, but it collapsed quickly. I'm an Obama fan, but I have to say I was disappointed when I found out he wanted to expand the defense budget. Still, he has done a good job getting younger people invested in the process and teaching them about the way party politics work.

You just performed at a concert for the anti-war movie "Body of War" and have a song on the soundtrack. What other musical plans do you have for the near future?

I'm going to continue touring behind the new record, and I'm also working on some music for film. I might be working on a score for a theatrical production, too. My next record will be a jazz orchestral record; I want it to have a whole different vibe than the last one. I want to be able to play Carnegie Hall with the new one. I'm planning on releasing it in 2009. I never studied music; I ran a software company before I did any of this. I've been lucky that I've done so well and been able to make the music I want to make.

You've used your position as a popular musician to spread the word about a number of causes. Have you gotten any backlash or flack from your fans?

I wrote an essay called "Understanding Oil" after 9-11 that led to me being called a traitor and stations dropping our songs. The sad thing is, now that the war has been on for five years, people are coming up to me and telling me I was right.

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THE GREEN ISSUE

The Billboard Q&A

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Radiohead's THOM YORKE, left, with European Environment Commissioner STAVROS DIMAS, spoke at a recent environmental conference in Brussels.



RADIOHEAD

Radiohead's most meaningful environmental contribution last year might've been something it didn't do: release "In Rainbows" in a conventional manner. Though hard figures are practically impossible to come by, delivering the album as a price-optional digital download two months before putting a physical product in stores no doubt prevented the manufacture (and eventual disposal) of tens of thousands of CDs. And the band's unwillingness to travel kept tens of thousands of miles' worth of airplane exhaust out of the atmosphere. "What they won't do—and haven't done for a while—is fly around the world and do promotion," says Bryce Edge, one of the band's managers. "Thom [Yorke] just won't do that." When they do leave home, Yorke and his bandmates take steps to offset their impact. They've partnered with Best Foot Forward, an Oxford-based consulting firm dedicated to helping organizations reduce their carbon footprints. BFF recently analyzed two Radiohead tours to find out which sort of show makes a bigger ecological impact: large ones held on the outskirts of cities or smaller ones held in urban areas. The goal? No fake plastic trees. —MW

MISSY HIGGINS

No stranger to keeping things eco-friendly while on tour, Australian singer/songwriter Missy Higgins is looking to further her green efforts on her current U.S. jaunt. Leading up to the Feb. 26 release of her latest album, "On a Clear Night," Higgins spent two weeks traveling across the country in a hybrid Prius and posted Web documentaries of her stops at various forward-thinking locations, such as the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, Colo., and the Mountain View Montessori School, a green elementary school in Reno, Nev. "It was very inspirational; such great life lessons to be learning at that age," she says. While the current leg of her tour is kept carbon-neutral by offsetting CO2 emissions with buying wind power credits, her upcoming run in May alongside Brett Dennen and Mason Jennings will be powered by biodiesel-fueled buses. Clif Bar's GreenNotes program will aid in greening their touring initiatives, and among the things Higgins plans to implement is allowing fans the option to offset their ticket purchases, which the singer has done for previous Australian gigs. "I try to do everything I can without quitting altogether," she says. "I want to try and make my career as environmentally friendly as possible and try and influence other people along the way." —Jill Menze

'I want to try and make my career as environmentally friendly as possible and influence other people along the way.'

—MISSY HIGGINS

THE ROOTS

Musicians have been known to scrawl their names on just about anything fans shove in their faces, but the Roots have taken autographing to a new level: At this year's edition of their annual pre-Grammy Awards all-star jam session (dubbed the Green Carpet Bash), the Philadelphia-based hip-hop crew gave away signed compost bins in an effort to promote the practice. Devoted animal lovers, the band members have also worked frequently with PETA, most recently on the "Stop the Violence: Go Veg!" campaign. And their activism has caught on among Roots fans. Check out Okayplayer.com, an online community led in part by drummer Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson, where recent discussion-board topics included "Should horticulture replace agriculture?" and "Anyone know any recipes that are rich in vitamin B17?" —MW

Pete Seeger clearly hoped to open a few eyes about how polluted the Hudson River had become when he released "My Dirty Stream" in 1966, but little did he know he'd be helping spawn a movement in environmentally conscious songwriting that's now in its third wave.

Recent years have seen the beginning of a watershed moment, as such acts as Arcade Fire and Jack Johnson are not only championing the environment but also writing songs about it. And artists across the timeline agree that there is no issue more universally important.

"It comes down to the simple fact that we all live on the same planet," Pearl Jam guitarist Stone Gossard says. "There's always a liberal or conservative view of any particular issue. It's really about how you frame it and navigate it."

THE AGE OF AQUARIUS

Seeger, now 88 and still an activist, figures into any discussion of the grass roots of environmental concern in music. "I was an early nature nut," he says. "When I got to prep school in my teens, [I] started reading Thoreau and took him as my guidance." As part of his efforts to preserve New York's Hudson River, he released "My Dirty Stream (The Hudson River Song)" as the focal point of an entire album of green songs in 1966. By 1969, he had formed anti-pollution organization Clearwater and was sailing the river in a sloop of the same name, pulling over for concerts to raise awareness of the issue.

"Part of a folk singer's role is to go out and write songs about topical issues," says the Byrds' Roger McGuinn, who cites Seeger as a friend and continual influence. The Byrds' 1970 song "Hungry Planet" talks about "people . . . poisoning my oxygen, digging into my skin; taking more out of my good earth than they'll ever put back in." Like Seeger, "the environment has long been one of my concerns," McGuinn says. He released a song called "The Trees Are Gone" in 1991 when the second generation of earth-conscious artists were at the fore, and is currently an advocate of solar power. He was glad to see the issue come up in R.E.M.'s music at the time, and "Generation Y is there now."

The turbulent, fertile late-'60s/early-'70s moment is best represented by such classics as Marvin Gaye's 1971 "Mercy Mercy Me (The Ecology)," Joni Mitchell's "Big Yellow Taxi" and Neil Young's "After the Gold Rush," which had a major impact on the songwriters of tomorrow.

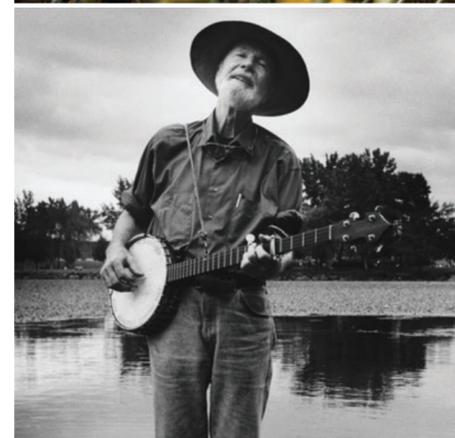
"Certainly Neil Young is enormous," Pearl Jam's Gossard says of artists who have influenced singer Eddie Vedder and the group in general to incorporate green issues into their music. "All of our favorite artists sing about how the personal and the political blend in the world to some degree. It's such an important way for people to create art but also have an impact on the planet at large; by telling stories about the realities some people don't necessarily hear about or see."

SELL THE SKY

Between R.E.M.'s litany of global ills on 1987's "It's the End of the World as We Know It" ("slash and burn return"), Talking Heads' wry 1988 song "Nothing but Flowers" and the B-52s' 1990 track "Channel Z" ("market crash! polar shift!"), several bands of the second Reagan and Bush Sr. terms blended the political and the personal into their environmental storytelling.

"In the '80s, I was starting to write about political topics and the environment was one of the things that really needed to be addressed and discussed," R.E.M. frontman Michael Stipe says. "I think a lot of that had to do with basically recognizing that the Reagan administration may well turn into the Bush administration."

Stipe cites a science class in the early '70s for helping spark his lifelong attention to the issue, but says 10,000 Maniacs singer Natalie Merchant was "a huge influence on [me] on how socially relevant topics, in the hands of a good writer, can go hand in hand with music and writing lyrics."



JONI MITCHELL, top, and PETE SEEGER, left, were among the inspirations for later acts like R.E.M. to talk about the environment in their music.

THE GREEN ISSUE

Three Generations Of Green

How Artists, And Their Audiences, Have Warmed To An Environmental Message By Jessica Letkemann

But listeners still weren't quite sure what to make of the message, as evidenced by a 1991 Earth Day show in Boston featuring Jackson Browne, Queen Latifah and Bruce Hornsby, among others. The crowd of 37,000-plus cheered the musicians, but loudly jeered the political speakers, among them Jesse Jackson and Sen. John Kerry.

"They're booing the speakers and applauding the musicians," Indigo Girls' Amy Ray told Billboard in 1991. "But many of us have the same views and the same message."

NO CARS GO

As this first decade of the millennium draws to a close, the political nature of the crisis has become far more accepted. Indeed, Al Gore's environmental documentary "An Inconvenient Truth" enjoyed nonpartisan support, and spawned a best song Academy Award for its closing track, Melissa Etheridge's "I Need to Wake Up."

Now, Arcade Fire and Jack Johnson are among the current crop of acts writing to fit the times. "No Cars Go," from the former's 2007 album "Neon Bible," says, "We know a place where no planes go. We know a place where no ships go. No cars go and then 'Let's go!'"

Just as Seeger wrote a ditty called "Garbage" and sang it on

a "Sesame Street" album with Oscar the Grouch in 1974, Johnson put his voice and acoustic guitar to use in a children's song. "The Three Rs (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle)" appeared on the 2005 soundtrack to "Curious George."

Guster guitarist Adam Gardner, whose company Reverb oversees the greening of major tours, says Johnson "is truly combining [it all into] an environmental campaign . . . It's an environmental campaign simultaneous with a Jack Johnson rock tour. That's just who he is."

But is it an issue for blue state bands? Red state bands? "It has to be nonpartisan. I think we need to be green states; I'm pushing for that," McGuinn says. He believes music "is becoming like a little plant coming through the crack in the sidewalk now; the green things are breaking through the cracks. I would love to see it get greener and less paved over, like the Joni Mitchell song."

"It may be the rising of the oceans [that is] the wake-up call the whole human race needs," Seeger says. "The harder you bounce a ball down on the sidewalk, the higher it bounces. Whether a Republican or a Democrat gets in, I think some of the best things are going to happen in the next few years."

Additional reporting by Jonathan Cohen and Gary Graff.

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