

Good Vibes All Around: Q&A with Justin Ratowsky

THE HB-BASED MUSICIAN AND HIS BAND, CALI CONSCIOUS, INSPIRE OTHERS THROUGH THEIR UPLIFTING GROOVES BY BETH FHANER



JUSTIN RATOWSKY, FOUNDER and lead singer of the Huntington Beach-based surf reggae rock band Cali Conscious, is all about spreading good vibes through his feel-good music and positive, environmentally-conscious lyrics. We recently asked Justin about what inspires him to make music, his plans for the band, and what he loves about performing in HB.



What is your background in music and how did you start Cali Conscious?

I grew up in Huntington Beach, where I started playing guitar and writing songs in high school. While attending the University of California, Santa Barbara, I started riding my bike while simultaneously playing the guitar and riding all around campus and Isla Vista. I would also perform at the farmers markets and local restaurants on a weekly basis.

I returned to HB in 2010 and was invited to perform at the Huntington Beach High School Surf team banquet at the Quiksilver headquarters, and that's really when things started to take off for us. That turned into a bi-weekly residency at Sandy's Beach Grill, which gave us the confidence to seek out other venues, and we've been performing ever since.

What inspires you to create music?

Creating music is a way for me to express myself and connect with others. I'm inspired by the natural beauty of California and the ocean, as well as by bands like Steel Pulse and Jack Johnson. I love writing songs with positive themes and conscious messages that encourage people to come together and make a difference in the world.

We're a reggae fusion band with a full three-piece horn section, and we love incorporating positive, conscious themes into our music. We've played as a full band at weddings, community events, corporate events, and music festivals, and we're proud to be a part of the local music scene in Southern California.



What are your current and future plans for Cali Conscious?

We're focusing on writing and recording new music and expanding our reach through social media. We're also working on new merchandise designs for our online store at caliconscious.com. In the future, we hope to continue spreading our message of love and unity and touring more extensively in support of new music.

Do you have any favorite local spots?

We love performing at Duke's Restaurant at the Huntington Beach Pier, Sandbar Reggae Wednesdays, and Sealegs at the Beach for Reggae Sundays. We also enjoy surfing and spending time at the beach with our family and friends.

What do you love about performing in Huntington Beach?

Performing in Huntington Beach is special to us because it's our hometown and the community is so supportive of local artists. The reggae community in HB is also a one-



of-a-kind, close-knit group, and we've made many friends through our music. We love performing with the ocean as our backdrop and the beach vibes all around us.