

Mason Jennings Back On Indie Track

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July 07, 2008

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[Singer-songwriter Mason Jennings](#) is a lover of many religions, a theme that heavily influenced his recent release "In the Ever" (Brushfire). The 33-year-old, whose parents weren't religious, says it wasn't until his first son was born five years ago that he became open to the idea of some sort of spiritual presence. He says his change in mindset is much of what makes "In the Ever" different from

his first six albums.

"It just feels like instead of struggling with [religion], I think this record's the first one I've definitely worked with it," he says. "I feel like I've made this record with a higher power."

His newfound spirituality hasn't brought a big change in his record sales, but has given him some staying power on the charts. "In The Ever" sold 5,000 copies in its first week and debuted at No. 4 on Billboard's Top Heatseekers chart. To date, it's sold 16,000. His last record, 2006's "Boneclouds" (Epic), sold 6,000 copies in its first week (27,000 to date) and peaked at No. 3 on the Top Heatseekers chart, but dropped off the chart the following week.

In the album's third track, "I Love You and Buddha Too," Jennings innocently professes that everyone is a part of God, and God can only be explained through metaphors -- sort of like his relationship with music. Amid playful shouts of "all right" and "oh yeah," he sings, "Why do some people say / That there is just one way / To love you, God, and come to you / We are all a part of you."

The childlike simplicity of the song sums up the bulk of the album, most of which Jennings recorded alone in the woods in rural Minnesota. With the exception of a couple of songs, his only recording equipment was a laptop and two microphones. Each day he would wake up with a goal of starting a song in the morning and finishing it by the evening.

"(I wanted to) write something that felt right at that moment instead of trying to think about the future or trying to write a song and edit it a ton," he says. "I thought it'd be more fun to just write it, record it and kinda leave it alone -- let that simple, childlike gesture stand, just let it sit like a drawing, like a kid's drawing almost, but somebody that's 33 years old."

He said being secluded during the recording process helped him to be less concerned about what other people would think about his work.

"If I'm outside in the woods, I kind of just worry about what rhythms feel good to me and what lyrics feel good to me, and I kind of trust my inner voice more that way," he says. "When I'm in a city I often start to get the vibrations of all the people around me, which can make you wonder if people are gonna like the record."

Jennings released his first five LPs on his own Architect label, three of which were co-released by Bar-None Records. He took a leap to the majors for "Boneclouds," out on Epic Records imprint Glacial Pace, run by Modest Mouse frontman Isaac

Brock. For "In the Ever," Jennings went back to the indie route and signed with Jack Johnson's [Brushfire Records](#), a transition Jennings said had a positive effect on the album.

"[Epic] just felt pretty big," he says. "Then Jack Johnson and [Brushfire co-founder] Emmett Malloy had been asking me to come over to Brushfire for a few years now, and it just seemed like a good twist to go to something a lot smaller and more friend-based." He says the closeness with the small staff makes it feel "more like a family."

This summer Jennings will stay in his label's family as he tours with Jack Johnson through mid-July. He also will hit Lollapalooza in August. He also is working with the Shins' James Mercer on a soundtrack to a documentary about the founders of Patagonia and the North Face, which will be released next year.