

**EXCLUSIVE:**

# The Jay Kay interview



Jay Kay is best known as the frontman of Grammy award-winning band Jamiroquai. In this exclusive interview, CAPS' Development Director **Garry Sheen** and volunteer **Jo McLeish** speak to the pop star who prefers to talk about the wildlife in his garden than the fast cars in his garage and about why he became a patron of CAPS.

**Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to talk with us today.**

You're welcome

**As a band, Jamiroquai is known for holding views on the state of the planet and the effect that humans have. As an individual, how did you become concerned about environmental issues?**

I was about fifteen or sixteen and there was a programme on TV about the culling of elephants in South Africa. They killed 30 or 40 elephants at a time and were just leaving the young elephants behind. It was really shocking and

had a lasting impact on me. Then, when I was seventeen, I wrote *When you gonna learn?*

**You have even used images of animal experimentation and whaling in your videos. Can a band make a difference, or is it just an effective outlet for you to get across your personal views?**

It's not that easy to make a difference. The video to *When you gonna learn?* was actually banned in America. It contains lots of footage that I got from Greenpeace. I made that video out of choice, but people think that you are just jumping on the bandwagon.

**It's almost become the 'in thing' for bands to be concerned about green issues. Do you find it amusing that you were singing about these same issues over a decade ago?**

Well, even if they are making a small difference I suppose it all counts. For me though, I go one step further. I have created a wildflower garden to attract butterflies and insects. I look at the wildlife I have here in my own back garden - badgers, foxes, owls... When I first got this place, the local fox hunt came through my land. I wasn't having that and soon put a stop to it. It's not just about making a difference through music, you can make a difference in your own home too.

**You are currently working on new material. Will we see a return to some of these subjects in your music, or are you taking the band in a new direction?**

There is always pressure to change your style, to try something new. *Virtual Insanity* was a song that got across a clear message, but now I have to find new ways and adapt my music.

**Does it annoy you that the media still associate you with fast cars and hats over some of the more serious issues that you are interested in, and have been for years?**

I've actually stopped interviews before when I get the "how many hats do you have" question. I've got a half-decent education behind me. Ask me something else; Ask me about the situation in Palestine. It annoys me when journalists don't do their homework. They come and say to me "You're a guy into the environment, but you drive fast sports cars." Yeah I do, but then I say to them: "Are you going on holiday this year?" They say they're going to Spain or somewhere and then I ask them if they're flying...

**You are in a very enviable position of owning property that has a huge amount of space, a lake, trees, organic vegetable garden. You really do have nature at your back door. But where are you happiest: here or on tour with the band?**

I find touring quite stressful. It's that whole thing about time difference too. You can come off stage at midnight, be on the bus for one o'clock and be travelling to the next venue. The constant travelling and lack of sleep, it gets to me. But then, when I've been in the recording studio for a long time, I just want to get on the road again. I miss the buzz of touring and playing to 20,000 fans. But I don't do the whole over exposure thing. I don't want to be seen in every magazine posing in my front room, saying "this is my new girlfriend". That whole celebrity thing has got out of control. I've had a couple of girlfriends like that, they like the idea of the fast cars and the famous boyfriend, but then I get them out here, tell them to put a pair of hiking boots on and get walking over a couple of hills.

**Animals in zoos are under the constant gaze of the public and often want to hide away from the crowds - can you relate to this?**

Good question and yeah, I can definitely relate to that. I've been in clubs where they put you

in the VIP area which is roped off. You sit there with loads of people taking photos of you. They don't even look you in the eye, they just stand there with their phones taking your picture. I've said before that when I've been in that situation I feel like a monkey in a cage.

**CAPS is really pleased that you agreed to become a patron. What helped you make that decision?**

Well, I'm not a patron of any other charity. I like the idea that CAPS is a small grass-roots organisation. I find it really offensive to see animals in cages and dippy tourists having their photos taken with baby elephants in Thailand or monkeys in Russia. So any organisation that campaigns to stop this sort of thing is good as far as I'm concerned, as well as the stuff you do in the UK.

**Jamiroquai fans are really supportive of your being a patron. What does it mean for you to have fans behind you on things that you do other than your music?**

Most of my fans really get the whole thing that Jamiroquai is about and has always been about.

**Lots of your fans have said that you can make a difference. Do you think you can? If so, how?**

Well, I'm having a quiet year, just working on tunes for my new album. Next year I will be touring with the new album and I am happy to support CAPS in anyway I can. You see lots on tour in other countries, you know, animal transportation, things like that. It really gets to me.

**You are quite outspoken about your love for your pets - what's your view on the exotic pet trade?**

I don't agree with keeping exotic pets. I thought that the Brooke Bond monkey days were over. I remember being in Russia and seeing these little monkeys dressed up. If you want to play at dressing something up, dress up your child. I don't understand people keeping birds in cages either. Big cats cannot be kept as pets without having them chained up, the minute they are free they'll have your hand off and quite rightly so!

**Were you taken to the zoo or circus as a child?**

No, my mum wasn't in to it. I was taken to places like Hampton Court Palace. As a child I learned to love the nature that was already around me.

**What is it about zoos and animal circuses that concerns you?**

Why do human beings feel that they have the right to control other species? About five years ago I took myself off to London Zoo, just to see what it was all about. There were these kids banging on the glass at the gorilla enclosure. The gorilla was just looking at them with really sad eyes. You can always tell how an animal is feeling just by looking at their eyes. As for circuses, I would much rather see a charging bull elephant in the wild where he is meant to be, than being made to stand up on two legs in a circus. What's wrong with going to a human-only circus like Cirque de Soleil?

