

MUSICAL GENIUS AND MAGICIAN OF RECYCLING

Humble with a strong opinion, the singer and songwriter Danny Saucedo has lived the meaning of eco-friendly since childhood, inspired by his mother. He believes that if we are all willing to make some changes, if ever so small, in the way we live and act – it will emerge into a significant game changer for our planet’s future.

By Marie Kjellsdotter Photo: Morgan Norman / Private

“Now days it can be seen as opportunistic when artists join the discussion and make statements about the hot topic – climate change. But to live and act ‘environmentally friendly’ has always been a core value in my life, I grew up with that mindset, it was passed down from my mother,” states the Swedish artist Danny Saucedo, and kicks off our conversation about choices for a more sustainable future.

“I was brought up in a catholic family and every Sunday at 11am, whether you wanted to or not, you were expected to attend morning service. And in the same way, every Sunday, we would stop at the recycling centre on the way to church with the recyclables we had gathered during the week. Recycling was part of our Sunday family ritual, and it is something that has stayed with me, it is still important to me... the commitment of doing right on a personal level.”

Have you continued the family tradition of recycling?

“Yes, I can even say it has gone a bit overboard sometimes when I have been so meticulous with my recycling that I have cut out the plastic attachment from paper drink cartons with plastic

caps, just to make sure that I have separated the paper and plastic recyclables correctly... and at the same time swearing over how ridiculously hard the manufacturers sometimes make it for us consumers to recycle.”

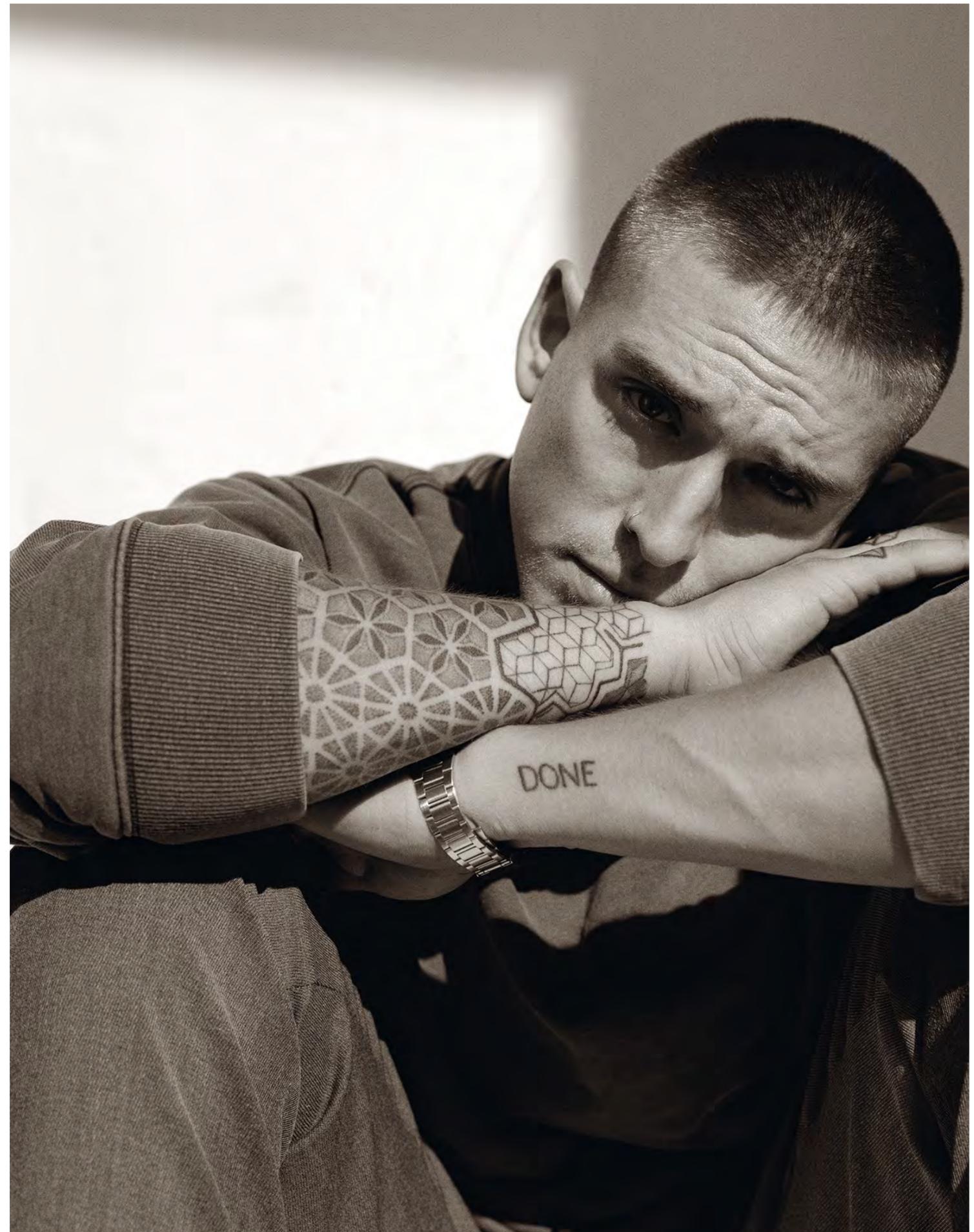
Is there anything else from your childhood that has shaped the person you are today?

“I grew up on vegetarian food, and even as young, having a plant based diet makes you more aware of the animal cruelty of the meat industry, and now we also know that this industry is responsible for a huge part of the CO2 emissions.”

I did stay vegetarian until I was 14, and became a rebellious teenager, about the same time as I quit classical music and tucked my violin away. But when I was 25 or 26 I returned to being a vegetarian, and this time with much stronger conviction – it was now my own active choice and not inherited.”

Is what you eat still important to you?

“Yes it is, I’m still a vegetarian, but I’m really not fond of labels. I prefer to not eat anything from the animal kingdom, but if I





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or bus. And of course, would I like to see future solutions for battery-powered airplanes. But this inflation in finger pointing ‘flight shame’ is misdirected focus, in my opinion and according to the UN scientists, the meat industry has the biggest impact on climate change.”

Besides recycling, is there anything else you do in your everyday life to contribute to a more sustainable future?

“What I eat, I have to return to my choice of diet again. It is here so many act without ‘impact thinking’. Together we can do so much for our planet and fight climate change, if people only were prepared to cut down on their meat consumption. And on top of that, it is not even that healthy for us.” says Danny and elaborates further,

“I get this shameful feeling when I do my grocery shopping. Food from all over the world has been gathered within a few square feet of a store, where I can walk around and pick up whatever I want. I don’t have to hunt, gather or harvest, I just grab what I need... and pay at the check out. Walking out with a bag full of groceries that I have done nothing to ‘deserve’, except paid for.

come to a dinner party and fish soup is what is on the menu, I will eat fish soup. It will be my conscious choice. And that’s what I meant about labels, it is more important that people are conscious of what choices they are making. If you want to eat beef tartar, sure you can do that, but you should know where the beef has been produced, how it affects your health, and understand the consequences of that choice.” Danny says and continues,

“I think the overall challenge is to find a way to educate people about the impact of our actions. As with climate change, how can we inspire people to listen and absorb some knowledge, and un-

derstand the impact of our accumulated actions – it is about all of us, and it will affect all of us. I try to influence people, not to convince them to become vegetarians or vegans, that realization has to be your own, but by talking about why I made the decision to become vegetarian I hope to inspire others to do the same.”

Do you see yourself as an influencer?

“When I became a recognized artist, with the responsibility as role model that comes along with being a person in the public eye, it made me take responsibility more seriously – I grew as a person and I became more aware. Travelling around the world as

an artist also made it possible for me to see and understand the situation with, among other things, plastic pollution in other parts of the world as well.”

Air travel does in fact contribute to the CO2 emissions, but also adds value to the tourist industry, which for some countries is crucial for their national economy. Do you have any thought around your own flying?

“No, I do not. I’m pretty harsh in my opinion on this issue. For me to be able to do my job I need to be able to travel and fly, though with all my domestic travels I’m happy to go by train

DID YOU KNOW THAT IF 10 MILLION PEOPLE

(only 0.13 percent of the global population) swapped meat in only one of their meals for a plant based protein, for just one day, it would...

... reduce enough CO2 emissions to drive around the world 2,438 times.

... save 885 million calories. And 48 tonnes of saturated fat – the weight of 3.5 Big Bens.

... save up to 5,700 acres of land, the equivalent of 89,000 tennis courts.

... reduce water usage by 13 million tonnes, equivalent to 5,000 Olympic swimming pools.

Most of us don't know where our foods come from, how much forest has been destroyed, how much water, pesticides and fertilizers have been used to produce them – completely ignorant of the 'cost' they have had on our planet's resources. Realizing the real 'cost' of the foods in my grocery bag is in some way embarrassing to me, it's like carrying a bag of anxiety."

The words on everyone's lips – climate anxiety, do you experience it?

"It comes and goes. Sometimes the feeling is intense and sometimes, I'm just 'human' and push it away. I live by the belief of having a clear conscious, as clear as I possibly can, and I try to influence others to think and act the same way. It is about making people listen, but it is hard because everyone is so buzzy with their own life."

Can you recognize the problems with plastic pollution in global perspective?

"Absolutely. I recently travelled to Cameroon, in Central Africa, together with a friend who hadn't been back to his home country for over 15 years, to visit his mother and family. Clearly noticeable throughout my stay in Cameroon was how people just threw away their plastic waste in the streets. It gave me an overwhelming feeling of hopelessness – at home I'm cutting out the plastic

cap attachments from paper drink cartons, and here I witnessed streets and beaches full, and I mean really full, of plastic debris. It made me extremely sad but it also got me, and my friend Kevin, talking about how to spread awareness and influence people to act differently." Danny replies, and tells me more about his trip.

"During our stay we also joined a Cameroon pastor, he's about my age, 30-something, and one day walking around together he had a plastic bottle of water and when empty he just threw it on the ground, and kept walking, talking about the importance of spreading the word of God. The contradiction blew my mind, and I asked him 'What are you doing, why did you just throw the bottle away like that? Pick it up!'. He didn't understand my reaction, and responded, 'Why? I'm not going to pick it up, there are plenty of rubbish here, it will not make any difference', and I said 'It doesn't make sense to talk about the importance of God's word, while polluting our planet, our home. It starts with you, in a hundred years the bottle will still be here, and you will not'. My persistence eventually made him pick up the bottle, but more importantly it opened up for a heartfelt discussion about what would be the incitement for changing the behaviour of throwing waste everywhere, and to learn from each other cross borders, take responsibility as role models for our future generations, and care for the wellbeing of our planet." ■



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