

The Material's World

*The Material is a young rock band with a lot of heart, both on and off the stage. As the band members tour the U.S. in support of their debut full-length album *What We Are*, they are showing that what they are is caring people who want to make a difference in the world. Guitarist Roi Elam and singer Colleen D'Agostino talked with Action for Animals about their compassion for animals and spreading that message.*

Roi

Q. What led you to become vegan? An activist?

A. These go hand in hand for me. I decided to make the switch to vegan from vegetarian when I moved to San Diego and started working with an animal rights group named the Animal Protection and Rescue League. We focused on educating the public about factory farming (where the majority of the meat supply comes from) as well as protecting the seals in La Jolla Cove and getting foie gras removed from all the menus in California. If you don't know what foie gras is, it's the fattened liver of ducks and geese that is considered a delicacy. The liver is fattened by shoving a metal tube down the throats of the birds and force feeding them grain well beyond what they would normally eat. It's incredibly cruel and disgusting.

Just the thought of eating meat or consuming any animal products makes me physically sick. I think of all the pain and suffering that goes into turning animals into a "product" and it makes my heart sink. The general attitude is that no one wants to know where their food comes from, but I think if more people were aware they would change their eating habits to a plant-based diet.

Q. Do you have any advice for someone thinking about becoming vegan?

A. It's not as hard as most people think. It is a total lifestyle change from the average American diet, but it is one you will never regret. I suggest reading *Diet for a New America* and watching the documentaries *Earthlings* and *Food, Inc.* for some good info. Also, talk to the wonderful people at Action for Animals for vegan starter kits, amazing recipes, and other useful info.



Q. What one thing do you want to tell the world about animals?

A. There is a great quote by Thomas Edison that states, "Non-violence leads to the highest ethics, which is the goal of all evolution. Until we stop harming all other living beings, we are still savages." Another is by Gandhi that says, "The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated."

I don't see a disconnect between my wonderful little dogs and a pig, cow, chicken, or any other living, breathing animal. There is a general misconception that there are animals for pets and animals for food that boggles my mind. All animals feel pain the same way that your household pet does and even the same way a human does. The same goes for animals that are used for entertainment purposes. It is not natural for a majestic elephant to be paraded around in the circus, for a tiger to jump through rings of fire, or for any animals to live in the confinement of a zoo. Animals desire to live a fulfilling life just the way we as humans do.

Colleen

Q. Do you have any advice for someone thinking about becoming vegetarian or vegan?

A. Keep an open mind, and do your research! I used to be afraid of things like tofu and different kinds of vegetables. I used to think, "I don't like them," but I hadn't really ever given them a chance. Being a vegetarian has opened me up to a whole variety of different kinds of foods and ways to be socially responsible in my food choices and where I shop.

Q. How do you want to use your voice to make a difference?

A. By being an advocate for vegetarianism, I feel that I can use our band's success as a medium to spread the word about animal rights. A lot of our fans have asked me questions about where to start and I love being able to offer advice on how to help. It is cool that just by doing simple things like posting on my social networks about being a vegetarian, it is causing our fans to question what they eat and where it comes from. I hope to instill a passion for animals in others and hopefully together we can start changing the way this country thinks about food.

Q. What one thing do you want to tell the world about animals?

A. Animals have the same right to be here as we do. When you grab that pretty pink package of ground beef at the grocery store, remember that at one time it was a cow who suffered and died for you. Whether or not you have made a commitment to helping animals yet, remember how much waste and pollution is created from factory farming. This is something that affects everyone.

Q. Why is supporting Action for Animals important to you?

A. Supporting Action for Animals means supporting a movement of passionate animal rights activists who are working to end the suffering and exploitation of animals. By supporting Action for Animals I feel like I am taking that first step in helping to spread the word about animal rights and shedding light on the issues while encouraging others to do the same.

Visit the Action for Animals YouTube page for a special "Join Us" video featuring the song "Before This Ship Goes Down" by The Material.