



THE YOGA EFFECT ON THIS SINGER SONGWRITER

How Yoga helped me write and
produce 3 Full-Length albums
in 4 years on Music Row in Nashville



WHY THIS SINGER/SONGWRITER SPENDS 4-6 DAYS A WEEK PRACTICING HOT YOGA!

Are you a Singer, Songwriter, Musician, or Human being?

If you don't have a physical jam, let me share mine with you, and perhaps this will inspire and motivate you.

Right around 2004 I was into boxing, (but just the training part of it) I rarely got into the ring to spar as I was interested in of all the physical training that went with boxing.

- **Heavy Bag**
- **Speed bag (loved this one!)**
- **Jump rope**
- **Work out in the ring with gloves and trainer holding up pads**
- **Running**
- **Medicine ball for stomachs**
- **Dozen of other goodies to put you in fabulous shape.....BUT!**

My shoulders were getting killed, especially the left one, as a right-hander you throw 3 to 4 left-hand punches for every right. Eventually, I had to S T O P!.....

One day I was driving past this sign that said "Bikram College of India Yoga studio" I don't know what possessed me to pull over, but in I went, and 10 minutes later I had my first experience of "Bikram" Hot Yoga. I did that for nearly 6 years. I don't recommend it for everyone, as it is 90 minutes, very hot, rigid rules, no music etc. If you like those parameters, its heaven, however for me, 6 years later, I was ready for something new!

Enter Vinyasa flow, hot and more eclectic, most classes are 60 minutes, with the occasional 75 minute classes. Most of the studios that have Hot Yoga have a real intense workout that Combines the following:

- **Strength training upper body**
- **Cardio**
- **Balance**
- **Handstands**

Most studios offer a class that is titled “Warm vinyasa flow”, this is a very relaxed and mellow version of the regular class.

When I first started practicing Hot Yoga, there were rarely any men in the classes, most of the time I was either the only guy in the class, or one of two, or maybe three guys. Most men thought it too emasculating, or way to feminine to go to a “Yoga” class, until they tried it, and quickly had their asses handed to them! Now that it’s gone “mainstream” many guys go regularly, and the classes are more balanced with men and women of all ages, I have seen age ranges from 12 to 80+ and have seen videos of people in their 90s all the way to 100!

What draws me to Hot Yoga is that I can get a really great workout, sweat like crazy, so I am detoxifying any pollutants, (whether that was something I ate, or beer, wine, coffee, etc) Just my own observation but, most of the time Yogi’s do not smell bad, (unlike many gyms that I have worked out in!) I think the reason is, when you sweat profusely and do it as a regular practice, your body is constantly cleansing and purifying itself, so your sweat and what else is inside you is clean, especially if you practice a healthy diet!

If your traveling you don’t need anything but a pair of shorts, I go shirtless in my practice several reasons,

#1 It’s that much less laundry to clean,

#2 To give myself a “gut check” and make sure I am exercising in all the correct places!

The practice not only focus’s on the physical but also helps to create enlightenment in the mind, practicing self-awareness, and self-observation, goals that allows the mind to relax and enjoy the present moment thus turning off the insane mind machine of endless loops keeping you living in the past and future, thereby losing that precious gift that is the present!

So then why (you might ask) as a SINGER/SONGWRITER did you settle on Yoga?

THE OPENING

In addition to all of the descriptions above, for me, it starts with the OM, at the beginning of class, traditionally it starts with a small prayer and the sound of “OM”, which symbolically embodies the divine energy, or Shakti, and its three main characteristics: creation, preservation, and liberation. The mantra, or vibration, derives from Hinduism and is considered to have high spiritual and creative power. (Keep in mind you do not need to embrace Hinduism, or any formal religion during this practice, I am a Christian, and most of the time I am speaking or connecting to Jesus in this state).



PHYSICAL BENEFITS OF YOGA

When pronounced correctly, OM has four syllables and is pronounced AUM, beginning in the solar plexus and sending vibrations up into the chest.

The second syllable – U – moves the sound up into the throat as the sound moves forward along the upper palate.

The third syllable – M – is a prolonged syllable and brings the vibration through the upper chakras as the teeth come together to touch gently.

The final syllable is the deep silence of the Infinite as the overall vibration rises through the body and into the Universe.

The cool part about the OM is that when everyone is in the groove and on the same note, it is a very powerful sound that fills the room with a really intense vibration, as a singer, it really gets my voice in tune with my body and emotional soul! You gotta try this if you have not yet!

THE PRACTICE

The actual practice is really awesome, unlike Bikram that is the same 26 poses (x 2 sets) “Vinyasa flow” is a method of yoga in which movements form a flowing sequence in coordination with the breath. So this has become “my jam”, its actually pretty awesome and it is exactly how it's stated, it combines a flowing sequence of movements that really combine cardio, balance, strength training and breath/mind/body control all simultaneously.

“Being in the room” and focusing on this method really keeps your mind from wandering all over the place and instead of making that horrible mistake of rewinding, or fast forwarding, you are placed exactly where you are supposed to be, in the present moment! This allows you to get the greatest benefit out of each workout.



**YOU CAN
PRACTICE
YOGA
ANYTIME,
ANYWHERE,
EVEN ON
THE WATER
IN TAMPA
FLORIDA IN
FEBRUARY!**

THE HEAT

The average temperature for a hot yoga studio is right around 92 degrees Fahrenheit (33 Celsius), for Bikram, it's a bit hotter 105 Fahrenheit (40.5 Celsius) or higher.

These are only ranges, and each studio is unique and also depends on how many people in the class, humidifier and each studios heating equipment, but the "kool" factor is, you get to sweat, sometimes a lot!! The heat is not for everyone, I have been to Bikram classes where I have seen people bolt out of the room even while the instructor was pleading (or sometimes yelling) to them, "please stay in the room"! If you are resistive or uncomfortable with heat, this may not be the workout for you! (I'll give you another one in my next report) Make sure you have a decent towel with you as you are likely to be working out in a puddle of sweat on your mat by the end of practice!

WATER

If you are just trying this out for the first time, you will need water! Bring plenty of it, and it will help you deal with the heat and the sweating during the practice. I gave up water about 4 or 5 years ago as I felt it was no longer needed and was really just an unnecessary distraction. I drink plenty of water before I go into workout, and most of the time I feel we drink it as a distraction, or simply because it's there. The only exception I make is if I am suffering from a sore throat or feeling under the weather or dehydration etc, only then will I allow water into my practice.



SAVASANA OR SHAVASANA

(dead body pose)

Although it looks easy, Savasana (Corpse Pose, or dead body pose) has been called the most difficult of the asanas. I have also heard everyone pronounce it differently, some instructors call it Savasana, and others refer to it as Shavasana, I have given up on which version is correct (as it does not matter), but this is where all of the benefits of your hard work over the last 60-75 minutes sink in. The idea being that you surrender into such a relaxed state of rest/dream/meditation and allow all of the benefits of the intensity and hard work settle into your mind/body with relaxed deep breathing, this is really the "prize" piece of the practice.

Being a songwriter, this is where some really juicy things happen for me, I get such amazing ideas for songs in this state, sometimes I even bring in my little black notebook and a pen and have it ready, as I don't want any gold nuggets to slip through my mind without being captured, I only need write down a few "key words" or "triggers" these will instantly bring me back to the image, title, idea, concept, etc, for later on when I look at my sweaty scribblings, I have been doing this for years, and it always works, a great way to capture a new song or album if you are a songwriter!

Try to stay awake when in this pose, so you can retain the essence and benefits, personally, I feel its really best to be consciously awake, but often teetering on the precipice of dream/sleep state, in other words, the most relaxed and peaceful state you can be in without sleeping, that's where the gold is!



**YOU MUST
COMBINE ANY
EXERCISE
PROGRAM WITH
A HEALTHY DIET!**

THE BENEFITS

- Increased flexibility
- Increased muscle strength and tone
- Improved respiration, energy and vitality
- Maintaining a balanced metabolism, yes I have felt a much better frame of mind in attitude, focus, concentration, and awareness, this is just my personal experience with yoga.
- Cardio and circulatory health
- Protection from injury, I got this from Kenyon Coleman (he was playing for the NY Jets at the time,) I met him at a Bikram studio in NJ, he shared with me that he had been practicing for years, and he felt it helped prevent him from getting injured with the extra flexibility that yoga provides. I have met dozens of marathoners, snow and water skiing champions, weightlifters, karate experts, triathlon athletes etc, all who swear that Yoga has enhanced the benefit's of their other athletic endeavors .

COMMUNITY

You will find that making friends in a Yoga studio is really easy, everyone that comes here is primarily focused on their practice, it is almost a sacred place where you get your best workout, and, it stands apart from many of the "vanity gyms" that have people showing up with designer sportswear, makeup, jewelry, and yes even perfume! Yogi's are not really interested in devaluing the currency of their Yoga practice by treating it like a pickup bar. You will make real authentic friends here who share many of the same passions and interests as you do, so if you do meet someone special, and it turns into a romantic interest, your foundation will be built on the most necessary building blocks for a successful intimate relationship.....Friendship!

SLEEP!!!

I saved the dessert for last, by FAR, the best part of Yoga is sleep, if you love a good nights sleep, look no further, for you have arrived at Nirvana. I sleep like a stone every night and never use an alarm clock, sleep-wake cycle is in fine working order, and I actually jump out of bed anxious for each and every new day! I hope you will give this a try, and if it appeals to you, you are in for a real treat, it will change you in a most positive and dramatic way, and will enhance your life in ways that you will not even realize at first, but after a few weeks you will start to notice many of the things listed above. Please check out more about my brands below so I may continue to do all the things I was put on this earth to do, which is to *Love *Inspire *Entertain!

May God bless you!

James~

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