



AUGUST 25, 2008

LAist Interview: Amy Balsam of Rock4Change

From producing and managing to raising money for charity, Amy Balsam is ready to take on a challenge. Her company In 2 It Media produces some of the largest events in Hollywood. Now Amy and her partner Michael Wasserman have started Rock4Change and are focusing their attention on raising money and awareness for initiatives in Darfur and Uganda.

On September 4, the [Rock4Change Concert](#) will bring together musicians, actors and other amazing performers to share their support for organization trying to make a difference in the lives of the people of Darfur and Uganda. Several bands will play and Emmy nominated choreographer [Shane Sparks](#) will debut a new piece inspired by African dance. Dane Cook is hosting the event and Tom Morello of Rage Against the Machine has just been added to the line-up.

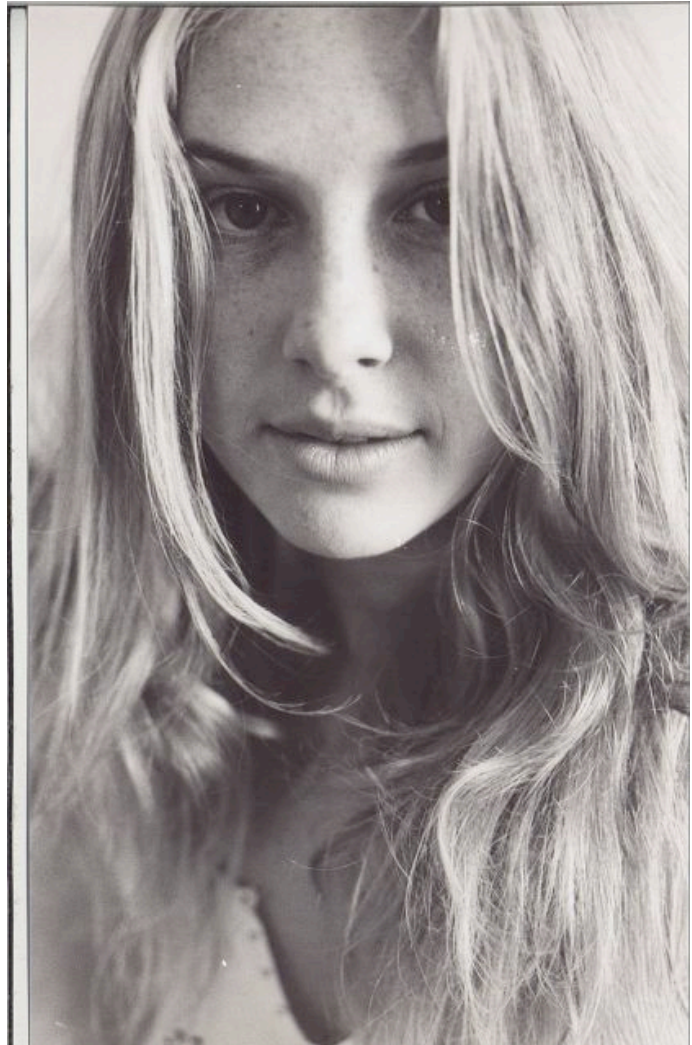
Amy Balsam wants everyone to know about the concert and share in the special night. LAist asked her about creating Rock4Change, how we can help the people of Darfur and Uganda, and what motivates her to work so hard to achieve her goals.

LAist: What is the mission of Rock4Change?

Amy Balsam: Rock4Change empowers and inspires a new generation of activism through the entertainment industry, and in doing so will raise funds and awareness for important social issues that need our attention.

When did the Rock4Change movement start and how did it come about?

Amy Balsam: My partner and I started Rock4Change with the vision of inspiring a new generation of activism while using entertainment as a platform to connect people all over the world for the purpose of affecting positive change. After helping to raise millions of dollars and awareness for the various causes I care about for the last 11 years with our company In 2 It Media, I have become increasingly frustrated in the lack of follow up by many non-profit organizations and the fact that I never really knew who I helped and if/how their



lives were changed for the better. So we started doing our due diligence and found projects that need immediate attention and funding that we can track and can quantify the results.

Your benefit concert on Thursday, September 4th at the Gibson Amphitheatre will raise money and awareness for the people of Africa in Darfur and Uganda. What projects is Rock4Change supporting in those countries?

Our first Rock4Change concert will benefit the sustainable relief efforts in Darfur and will fund the reforestation project through the work of "Aid Still Required" and also will fund multiple initiatives benefiting some of the 1 million children left orphaned by AIDS in Uganda via the on ground work of "Hands Across Nations."

You will be traveling to Uganda soon. What are the goals of your trip?

I am going over to Uganda with our Rock4Change team after the concert to meet the children we are helping via our efforts and to find out what more we can do to set up sustainable solutions for them. We want to open up the lines of communication with children all around the world. That way kids can be empowered to help other kids in need.

We are starting a Video Pen Pal Program where the children in Uganda will upload videos on the Rock4Change website telling their stories and sharing what they need to improve their situation. For example, if the orphanage in Uganda needs 100 blankets, and they upload a video asking for the blankets, then kids watching the video can respond and can host a blanket drive or bake sale to raise money to buy blankets and help the children in the orphanage. That way kids around the world, no matter how old they are, don't feel powerless and like they can't help. They can now know what to do to help, and kids around the world can communicate with each other and foster a community that cares about each other and that creates real solutions built on love, brotherhood, friendship & respect.

We use the technology for the ultimate good, to directly connect children around the world to help each other and in doing so we take care of the world's most precious resource...our children. Then we have helped to create a generation that will grow up to be amazing leaders who from a young age have learned to love thy neighbor as thyself and to be socially conscious and responsible citizens of the world.

We are going to be bringing some recording artist and actor friends of ours with us and will be documenting the trip for a post Rock4Change follow up piece to see the people whom we have helped and how we helped to change their lives for the better.

What motivates you to do this work?

This is some of the most worthwhile and fulfilling work that I have ever been a part of in my life, and being able to have some amazingly talented and generous artists on our team is wonderful. We are beyond determined and committed to the people in Darfur & Uganda who need us now and want so much to be able to reach our goal and fund these life saving and life changing initiatives for them.

Each one of us has the opportunity and the responsibility to use our voice to make a difference. Partnering with the biggest names in music, film, television, and sports, we shine a spotlight on worthwhile causes to motivate people across the globe to do their part to affect change. We invite you to be a part of the worldwide movement. Together we will rock to change the world.

Choreographer Shane Sparks is creating an original piece for the show. What kind of performance is he planning?

Shane is keeping his performance a surprise. I don't even know what he is planning, other than that it will be HOT as always when he does something. I do know that he came to our round-table on Uganda a few weeks ago and watched "War Dance". He was so moved and inspired. He is committed to really showcasing the beauty, history and strength of African dance. Watching the documentary really opened our eyes to what the children in Uganda are going through and how dance for them is such an escape and such a real thing of joy. I know he will create a such an amazing display of their culture and history through dance at the benefit.

What would we find you doing on a day off?

This might sound crazy, but the last few months, pretty much all I do is Rock4Change 24/7 and I LOVE it! While I totally need a day off (to catch up on sleep since I haven't really slept more than 2-4 hours a night in months), I can't stop and won't stop until we reach our goal of funding the Reforestation Project in Darfur and the Clean Springs Campaign in Uganda. Our team is so committed to helping the people in Darfur and Uganda and we are really determined to affect positive change through this worldwide movement that we are creating, that it really gets me going in the best way. When I think about all of the children we can help around the world by uniting people through music and dance, I get so fired up. I can feel and see it working already. It is so exciting how responsive people are being when we tell them about the cause and what we are doing, they all want to help and get involved. It really shows the goodness inside of everyone and that if given the opportunity, most people will step up to the plate to help those in need.

Rock4Change

September 4, 2008, 8:15pm

Gibson Amphitheatre

[tickets](#)

Hosted by Dane Cook with performances by Tom Morello, Flea, John Frusciante, Josh Klinghoffer, Stella Mozgawa, Charlie Wilson, Angie Stone, Alex Band, Jon B., Lalah Hathaway, and more to be announced soon.



Shane Sparks on his Rock4Change performance:

After watching the documentary "War Dance", it changed my whole outlook on the performance I want to do. Instead of some big hip hop number I want it to be more of a story about survival and overcoming the impossible. I'm so inspired right now!!!

Alex Band of The Calling:

It's no mystery that Darfur is a complete mess, the numbers are staggering and the photos are mind numbing. Once you learn about what has been going on there and continues to go on, you can't turn your back on it. I jumped at the chance of being a part of Rock4Change, helping in any way is not just a necessity for me but a duty as a fellow human being.

Emmanuelle Chirqui, star of HBO's "Entourage":

I got involved with Rock for Change because of it's amazing message of informing people of what's going on in Darfur. I learned what was going on and desperately wanted to do something, anything to create awareness. Rock4Change created the opportunity to collaborate with other concerned and conscious artists to put on a great show. No better way to get a message across than through entertainment. I wanted to give my time to this cause because I was profoundly affected when I learned how terrible the conditions were in Darfur, and worse, that it has been going on for too long. It also opened my eyes to other horrible events going on in that part of the world and that a small amount of my time and passion could make a difference. As artists with any kind of celebrity I feel strongly that we have the responsibility to give back and create awareness on the truly important human right issues that exist. I am blessed, and truly believe everyone has the right to live and pursue their dreams. If I can help make that a reality in any way then I will.

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