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By Tom Joyce

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BarrowBand in support role

Malcolm Le Maistre, formerly of influential British folk group the Incredible String Band, talks about engaging both children and adults with his educational BarrowBand



Malcolm Le Maistre performing with the BarrowBand

The idea for the BarrowBand came to British musician Malcolm Le Maistre as he watched celebrity chef Jamie Oliver attempting to educate school children about the importance of eating fruit and vegetables. "He held up a bunch of tomatoes and asked the children what they were," recalls Le Maistre. "One child said potatoes."

It is this basic childhood ignorance of fruit and vegetables that Malcolm Le Maistre's fresh produce-themed BarrowBand seeks to address. "Kids don't know about fruit and vegetables or their history," he says. "So I thought maybe we could educate them using songs."

Le Maistre was also driven by the government's 5-a-day campaign, which he says has been an abject failure. "There are plenty of efforts to convince people to eat more fruit and vegetables, but they are easily ignored," he says. "That's because they do not connect with people, whether young or old. The

BarrowBand, on the other hand, manages to connect, with both children and adults. You need to know how to engage people. That's why it's useful to get performers involved."

The band's *shows* feature a large, kinetic fruit and vegetables barrow that comes to life as the group plays around it. "It is all very unlikely," he says. "We give out lots of produce at the end of each song and ask the audience questions about it. The songs are performed in very different styles to represent the wide variety of produce available from all over the world."

The concept may ostensibly be aimed at children, but the lively, well-crafted songs are deserving of a wider audience. "Music is universal," says Le Maistre. "People remember the songs. You even see them singing along on their first listen. Where else will you hear a song with the word 'phytochemicals' in it? A generation growing up with the BarrowBand would be a healthier one."

The main challenge is in reaching a larger audience. "Not enough people have seen us," he says. "We are working on getting governmental support. We are very popular with kids and their parents, but we need support from the right people. What we want to get across to the industry is if you support us, and if we are seen enough, vegetable consumption will go up. The appeal is astonishing. People never walk past us. They always stop."

<http://www.fruitnet.com/americafruit/article/1474/parts-of-san-diego-quarantined-as-psyllid-count-mounts>

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