

Recovering Neuroscientist Don Vaughn Talks About Finding Love and Changing the World With Music



By Jennifer Ross

Winner of Cosmopolitan's 2012 Bachelor of Texas, Don Vaughn is more than just a hot body with gorgeous dimples. He's also a neuroscientist, a musician, a model and, more importantly, a man with a big heart. Originally from San Diego, California, Vaughn was a "huge nerd" growing up and found his first love in high school: science. With little attention from girls, he spent much of his spare time learning music and figuring himself out. Fast forward to today, his hobbies have stayed the same, but some things have definitely changed.

After winning the title of Bachelor of Texas, Vaughn was automatically nominated into the Bachelor of the Year competition, going up against some of the hottest men in America, one from each of state. Ultimately, the winner was Mr. Louisiana. Even so, Vaughn is very grateful to have been

considered at all and wouldn't change anything about his experience. "The world has ways of working things out; you don't always get what you want. I'm happy with everything that happened."

When it comes to finding that special woman, this 25-year-old bachelor is keeping his heart and mind open. Coming from a science background, he understands how experiments – even in love – usually don't turn out exactly how you plan them, no matter how strict you are with the parameters. So for him, having an idea of his "perfect girl" is out. "What ends up happening is somebody comes along who's totally different and better than you expected," he says. "So, while there are a couple of things I want in a girlfriend, I'm open."

Even though he doesn't have an official checklist, he still has two important traits that he looks for in women: "I need someone who's incredibly supportive, given all the demand on my time, and someone who's definitely fun."

As for starting a relationship with someone new, Vaughn skips out on the traditional "drinks or dinner" for a first date. Instead, he prefers to learn about a potential partner's personality through her passions and by spending time with her in her natural elements. "Who cares about what kind of pink lipstick you wear for three hours at dinner? I want to know what you normally do, where you normally drive, what you normally eat," he shares. "That's the real person I'm going to be with at the end of the day."

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Until Vaughn finds his perfect woman, he is focusing his time and energy on making this world a better place through music. In his first attempt to revolutionize this industry, Vaughn and fellow neuroscientist David Eagleman have created a mobile iPhone application called eyeFi, which allows you to "see the world through auditory feedback." Essentially, you can view

your surroundings by listening to musical notes rather than using your eyes. By combining these two passions, Vaughn and Dr. Eagleman have created a way to help visually impaired people “see” through their ears.

However, this neuroscientist won't stop there. Inspired by his undying love for music, Vaughn routinely disc jockeys or plays the drums while teaming up with local DJs at various clubs and events. His next experiment is to create an app that will forever change his music gigs. Think in terms of a major jam session where every audience member can participate as Vaughn performs on stage. The concept is to allow concert goers to share what they want to hear through their phones; the information will transfer to Vaughn, who can integrate the ideas into his music set. “Everyone's a part of it,” he explains with excitement. “Now, we have the technology to make it happen. We didn't have that 20 years ago.”

Even with so many projects in the works, Vaughn still finds time to share his love of music through teaching. Currently a member of the Rotary Club of Houston Skyline, he was introduced to Darren Hightower of the Children's Music Foundation. From there, he began volunteering his time with sick children at the Ronald McDonald House, teaching them to play a song on the guitar. As simple as it is, a song brings a moment of comfort to the children and a world of joy to Vaughn. “Some of the kids have so many IVs in them, living with cancer, lung transplants and all sorts of serious stuff.”

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By the end of the visit, the children's lives are brighter, even if only for a moment, and they have learned a new skill to help them cope with heartache and pain. When Vaughn leaves the Ronald McDonald House, he always lets the kids keep the guitars. He shares, “We always say something like, ‘You know what? This guitar is your's forever. We just ask that you play

it forward and teach someone else that song.’”

Given what Vaughn has already done to combine neuroscience with music, there’s no telling what ventures will come next. Of the future, he says, “What I want is to connect and inspire the world through music in a personalized concert for everyone with generalized empathy, which is the focus of my neuroscience research. How do we access and let people show empathy for more than just friends and family? How do we generalize this feeling to the entire planet?”

“Imagine what a world that would be,” Vaughn adds. “A lot of people may say, ‘That’s just ridiculous. That could never happen.’ But I don’t buy that.”

For more information about Don Vaughn, you can visit his site at DonVaughn.com. You can also follow him on Facebook and Twitter.