

## Spotted



Grand slam tennis champ Roger Federer (left) and family arriving at Dubai Airport for

a much-needed break between tournaments. US Olympic swimmer Anthony Ervin snapping pics of the Burj Al Arab at the Madinat and hitting balls at Emirates Golf Club's driving range.

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## Hot seat

# The Fray's Isaac Slade

As the US pop-rockers prepare to headline Sandance, Rob Garratt asked the 31-year-old frontman about being uncool at school and hanging with The Boss



### How's things in Camp Fray? Looking forward to Dubai?

Everything's going great – I'm stoked. We've wanted to come to the Middle East for a long time, we've been pushing our label and manager to come over. Maybe some bands are scared of it because it's so far away, but not us. We fly to Australia, so why not Dubai? I'm expecting some good food. And I'm expecting it to be a bit like Istanbul, a clash of East and West, from what I hear. Or like LA in the desert.

### You're from Denver, which doesn't sound like the most rock'n'roll town...

It's actually a very healthy, reasonable mountain town – a great, great upbringing. It's a sports-loving town, which prepared me for being uncool.

### You're lead singer of a big rock band. Uncool...?

I do think that as a musician, if you're in it to be popular, your music starts sounding like everybody else. If you're in it to make people stop and listen, you have to resist popularity.

### 'If you're in it to be popular, your music starts sounding like everyone else'

### That's funny – a lot of people say you sound like other people, such as Coldplay...

To some extent that's how I work. If I hear a new band, I say, 'Who do they sound

like?' Critics have always been a funny subject. It's like the cool kids' table that we never got invited to.

### You guys started off on the Christian rock circuit...?

Growing up as an American you're assumed to be a Christian. I've found that to be an interesting conversation-starter – we all have a different answer.

### Our favourite Fray story is that Bruce Springsteen gave you marriage advice. Is it true?

I was just talking about this with my wife. I was newly married and we got ten minutes backstage with The Boss. I think he thought we were going to ask to open for him but I totally threw him off by asking for marriage advice. He said, 'If you fail to separate your stage persona from your real-life persona, your whole life falls apart. When I'm on stage I'm The Boss' – he actually called himself The Boss – 'but the second my heel hits the floor backstage, I'm a normal guy.'

### Who's the most intimidating person you've met?

Bono from U2. He was intimidating because I grew up listening to all his music. For the first couple of hours I was sweating, but it got better.

### Do you worry about how to keep the band relevant?

I really do. With this album [*Scars & Stories*], we veered a little further to the right and turned up the guitars – and we did it precisely at the same moment everyone went left towards electronic dance. We were worried.

The Fray play Sandance at Atlantis The Palm, 2pm-2am on Friday October 12.

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