



GOSPEL MUSIC ASSOCIATION ANNOUNCES INITIAL HOSTS AND PERFORMERS FOR 41st ANNUAL DOVE AWARDS, TO BE HELD ON APRIL 21, 2010 AT NASHVILLE'S FAMED GRAND OLE OPRY® HOUSE

Four-time GMA Female Vocalist of the Year, Natalie Grant and Multiple Dove Award-winning Group, MercyMe's Frontman Bart Millard, to Host 41st Annual Event

First Round of Performers Include Industry Leaders Casting Crowns, TobyMac, Donald Lawrence, Jason Crabb and GMA Dove Award Hosts

(NASHVILLE, Tenn.) Dec.23, 2009 – The Gospel Music Association (GMA) officially announces its initial hosts, appearances and plans for its 41st Annual GMA Dove Awards. The 2010 Dove Awards will be held on Wednesday, April 21, 2010 at Nashville's famed Grand Ole Opry House and televised nationwide on Gospel Music Channel (GMC) television network (www.gospelmusicchannel.com), Sunday, April 25, 2010 from 8 p.m. – 10 p.m. EST.

The GMA Dove Awards is Christian/Gospel music's biggest night of the year, where top artists from every style of gospel music come together for a night of music and celebration as the GMA bestows the industry's highest honor -- the Dove Award. Final nominees will be announced on February 18, 2010.

The 41st annual GMA Dove Awards will be hosted by 2009's Female Vocalist of the Year, Natalie Grant, and multiple Dove Award-winning group MercyMe's frontman Bart Millard. While the awards will be a highlight of the show, music performances will take center stage at this year's GMA Dove Awards, showcasing some of gospel music's top-selling and most diverse artists. Artists scheduled to appear include Casting Crowns, TobyMac, Natalie Grant, Donald Lawrence, Jason Crabb, MercyMe, and many more to be announced soon. Those appearing include GRAMMY® and American Music Award® winning-artists, among others who top the charts in sales, touring, and radio airplay in their respective formats.

"The GMA Dove Awards is our opportunity to come together as a community to worship God and support each other as we celebrate the Gospel through music," said Ed Leonard, chairman of the GMA's board of directors. "Along with this summer's Immerse conference, it is a cornerstone of what we are doing in 2010 as an association. Coming together like this makes us stronger as a community, plus it's a lot of fun!"

MercyMe's Millard commented, "Over the years MercyMe has been honored with and has performed on the Dove Awards, but more than that we have been privileged to be a part of this community of musicians and believers that share a common purpose. We always look forward to the GMA Dove Awards, and I'm excited to be co-hosting the show with Natalie Grant this year. It will be great to see the incredible talent our industry has to offer coming together and continuing to spread the gospel through all styles of music."

-more-

“Hosting the GMA Dove Awards is a real honor,” stated Natalie Grant. “I am, and have always been, a fan of Christian music and to help shine a brighter spotlight on the message of the music that's changing lives by honoring the artists who create it, will be a tremendous privilege. I love that it's not a night of competition, but an evening of giving honor and celebrating one another. It's really more like a family gathering that I look forward to every year.”

GMA Dove Week 2010 will kick off Monday, April 19 with the ASCAP Christian Music Awards. The week will additionally include an Artist Summit and the BMI Christian Music Awards as its key events. Similar to GRAMMY® Week or CMA Week, GMA Dove Week will also feature media events, showcases and professional networking opportunities, most driven independently. The GMA will help to coordinate and promote such events along with other activities taking place during the week.

Tickets to the 41st Annual GMA Dove Awards will go on sale first to GMA Members Monday, January 4th at 10 a.m. CST by calling 615-277-1376. Tickets to the public will go on sale January 19th through the Grand Ole Opry Call Center by calling 1-800- SEE-OPRY/1-800-733-6779, via the web at www.opry.com or may be purchased in-person at The Opry Box Office located at the Opry House at 2804 Opryland Drive and the Ryman Auditorium Box Office at 116 5th Ave North, in downtown Nashville. Ticket prices range from \$25 - \$200.

In addition to GMA Dove Week and the GMA Dove Awards, GMA's highly-regarded IMMERSE conference will return to Belmont University July 28-31, 2010. IMMERSE will bring together artists, songwriters, musicians, worship leaders, music business students, industry experts and more in a celebration of music and learning. Popular events from GMA Music Week, such as the highly successful Songwriters' Showcase and Evening Worship Service, will be available to attendees as well as concerts from top Christian artists. Additional information is forthcoming.

For more on supporting the GMA or becoming a member, please visit www.gospelmusic.org or contact the GMA directly at 615.277.1376. It's not too late to be eligible to vote for the 2010 Doves! The GMA has extended its membership deadline to December 30, 2009 via www.gospelmusic.org/membership/individual/join.aspx

About GMA

Founded in 1964, the Gospel Music Association serves as the face and voice for the Christian/Gospel music community and is dedicated to exposing, promoting and celebrating the Gospel through music of all styles including pop, rock, praise & worship, black Gospel, R&B, hip hop, southern Gospel, country, and more. The GMA community consists of more than 3,000 members including agents, artists, church leaders, managers, promoters, radio personnel, record company executives, retailers, songwriters and other industry visionaries. The GMA produces the GMA Dove Awards, GMA Dove Week and IMMERSE. For more information, please visit www.gospelmusic.org.

About GMC

Gospel Music Channel (GMC) is the fastest-growing network in television and can be seen in 45 million homes on various cable systems around the country, on DIRECTV on channel 338 and on Verizon FiOS on channel 224. For more information, please visit www.gospelmusicchannel.com

About NATALIE GRANT

Over the past four years, Natalie Grant has gained prominence as a major contemporary Christian singer and song writer. She won numerous Dove Awards for her song, "Held," which kept her at the top of Christian radio charts for months. She was awarded the GMA Dove Awards' Female Vocalist of the Year for the past four consecutive years, in 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009. Since 2001, she has released four albums with Curb Records and has recently headlined the "Make it Matter Tour" with Chris Sligh and Meredith Andrews and toured with Jeremy Camp and Bebo Norman this past fall. In addition to her dedication to singing and song writing, Grant serves as a popular speaker and performer at the Women of Faith & Revolve tours nationwide. She uses her own stories of overcoming life's struggles to motivate young girls to make smart decision about their own life and encourage them to see their own self-worth. Grant is also passionate about ending human trafficking and gives a major amount of her time and talents to the cause. In 2005, she created The Home Foundation in order to raise awareness and financial support for the cause. To find out more about Natalie Grant, please visit www.nataliegrant.com.

About BART MILLARD/MERCYME

Since the group's debut in 2001, Grammy®-nominated, American Music Award and multiple GMA Dove Award winners MercyMe has sold over 5 million units in CD and DVD sales, including "Almost There", nearly triple platinum, "Spoken For," which is approaching platinum sales, and the RIAA Gold certification for "Undone," the MercyMe Live DVD, and "Coming Up to Breathe." Their latest, "All That Is Within Me," entered the Billboard Top 200 chart at No. 15 and sold an impressive 83,626 units, the most ever sold by the group in a project's first week. MercyMe is one of few Contemporary Christian music groups to have had all of their recordings certified Gold or Platinum, as well as garner 21 No.1 multi-format Christian radio singles, and four consecutive mainstream radio hits with "I Can Only Imagine," (No. 4 AC/top 25 on Top 40/Hot AC), "Here With Me" (No. 4 AC), "Homesick" (top 10 AC), and "So Long Self." In 2008 the band was named R&R's Christian AC Artist of the Year and as one of the industry's most notable talents, MercyMe has sold out venues including Radio City Music Hall and has been seen on The Tonight Show, CNN, Fox New Channel's Fox & Friends, ABC News, CBS' Early Show, and on the pages of Entertainment Weekly, The New York Times, USA Today, Billboard, and more. For all things MercyMe, please visit: www.mercyme.org.

###