



THE CONTESTANT

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PLUS ONE

MEET THE
PRODUCERS

LISTENING IN:
With R.J. Helton
and Kelly Clarkson

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Meet Christian music's unsung heroes—the producers. They have more to do with making your favorite records than you probably realize. *BY MICHAEL TENBRINK*



Taking the Cross Over

Just when we were starting to get comfortable, MercyMe had to go off and shake things up. Since Amy Grant's initial mainstream pop radio invasion 20 years ago, Christian market-supported artists have relied almost completely on "relationship songs" for those rare moments of mass exposure. Hits such as "Calling on You" (Stryper), "Baby, Baby" (Grant), "Everything Changes" (Kathy Troccoli), "I Will Be Here for You" (Michael W. Smith), "Just Between You and Me" (dc talk), "Butterfly Kisses" (Bob Carlisle) and "Kiss Me" (Sixpence None the Richer) repeatedly endorsed the blueprint.

Forward-thinking believers celebrated the success of these faith-informed songs for a number of reasons. For starters, they honored purity, innocence and other-centered living, which contradicted the standard radio fare. A biblical perspective of love tends to do that. Meanwhile, these artists of faith were given a larger public platform, which, among other wonderful things, led to dramatically increased record sales. Thousands (and, in Grant's case, millions) who had no pre-existing interest in Christian music were exposed to entire albums of God-honoring content.

As we fans and industry folks looked back on the 1990s, we thought we had it pretty good. We even watched breakout singles such as "Place in this World" (Michael W. Smith) and "Flood" (Jars of Clay) gently undermine perceived topical limitations as they offered important, poetic glimpses into the faith which inspired them. And many of us back at the ranch thought it could get even better. But, truth be told, for the most part, we considered "better" to refer to quantity—not broadening the themes or theological depth of our mainstream hits.

Last year that all changed. When MercyMe's "I Can Only Imagine" took multiple national radio formats by storm, the Christian music community stared at new territory.

Here was the lead singer/songwriter, Bart Millard, wearing his heart toward Christ on his sleeve for everyone to see. Filled with anticipation, wonder and joy, the new classic connected with millions. And as it did, "I Can Only Imagine" served as undeniable proof to our community that a melodic song of profound faith could have an impact on the mainstream charts. One catch: Radio audiences would have to insist on it, just as they did with MercyMe.

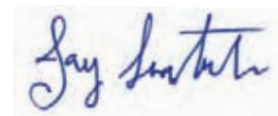
The onus is on our community of artists and the industry that supports them. We can "go there" with any topic, including thoughtful expressions of our faith. The bottom line is excellence—in simplistic terms, the marriage of killer hooks and poignant lyrics.

No sooner had MercyMe become a household name with radio programmers than Switchfoot's "Meant to Live" single started climbing the *R&R* and *Billboard* alternative rock charts. And in true Switchfoot fashion, the track was thematically loaded.

Apparently, the San Diego band was just getting things started. As 2004 unfolds, "Meant to Live" is crossing from the top 5 of the alternative charts over to America's pop radio format, where it's now charting. Simultaneously, Switchfoot is enjoying its second hit single, "Dare You to Move." Every bit as intense lyrically, the song is in rotation on alternative stations from coast to coast.

The future? Bright. And I don't just mean a few months down the road; I'm talking big picture. In fact, my most recent wake-up call walked through *CCM*'s doors on April 1. Was this a "holiday" prank? No question! After all, the age of 15 is way too young to be a captivating singer-songwriter, right?

Meet Sparrow Records recording artist Bethany Dillon (see page 28). Can you say, "paradigm shift"? Simply put, I have never seen so much maturity and creative potential in an artist so young. Right now she has a top 10 single, "Beautiful," on Christian AC radio. And did I mention she was 13 when she wrote it? Nice. Throw in the fact that Bethany sees herself as a "rocker chick," and you have all the makings of trouble. *Good* trouble. The kind of trouble that, a few years from now (or less), could stir things up on mainstream radio.



Jay Swartzendruber
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For those whose lives are strengthened through faith-informed music, *CCM Magazine* goes behind the scenes to celebrate the artistry of Christian music.

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CCM Magazine

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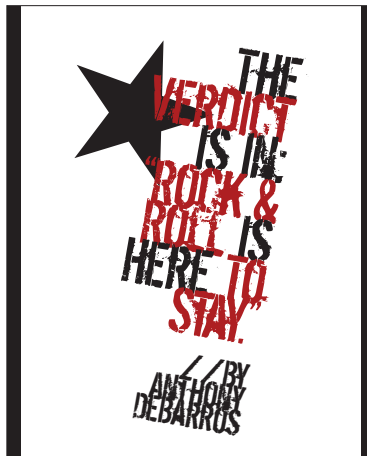
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ROCK ON

I just got my new March CCM and was so happy to see a rock issue ["The Future of Rock," March]. As a Christian teen I have always loved Christian rock and rap. My faves are Kutless, Pillar, tobyMac, Peace of Mind, Jeremy Camp and many others.

—**Jessy Beck,**
via e-mail



Thank you so much for your review of Christian rock! I was especially happy with the review on Kutless ["We Will Rock You!"]. Next to Plus One, they are my favorite band. I'm glad that Christian rock is getting recognized more. It seems Christian rock is either not recognized enough or is being ignored.

—**Mary Kuehn, Sterling, VA**

Yes, we are all about providing a platform for the underserved sectors of Christians articulating their beliefs through a valid artistic form. Today: rock. Tomorrow: polka!

As a youth pastor and Christian in Southern California for more than 15 years, I get disgusted with Christian media blending advertisement for secular entertainment. I'm familiar with the Christian music industry, as I was involved with "Reality Rock" for over 10 years with radio, print, concert promotions, etc. I've been out of it for a while, and it's been some time since I've picked up a copy of CCM. I must tell you, I was really amazed that you would promote Foo Fighters, Justin Timberlake and Linkin Park in your March 2004 issue. Do we (the Christian community) really need to see the album covers and names of these bands in bold letters in a magazine that is considered a staple in the industry? I understand that bands like Kutless have musical influences, but don't you realize that you have a responsibility to [promote] standards? What is a 16-year-old kid supposed to do with that information?

It's really misleading as well with the way the page is set up (page 34). It makes it look like Kutless is inspired by



Linkin Park more than the Lord, which, I know, is not the case. It's just unnecessary and distasteful, and I would hope that you would reconsider your editing tactics.

—**Jason Dean, San Bernardino, CA**

I was reading this month's article on Kutless. I think it's awesome that you guys covered this great band, but I found a mistake in your article. You had the bassist listed as Stu, but he's no longer in the band; and he's not in the pictures you have in the magazine. The new bassist is Kyle Zeigler. I just wanted

him to get the recognition of being in the band. Stu was a great bassist, but so is Kyle.

—**Kayla Thompson,**
via e-mail

Chet, our official staff fact-checker, replies: "Great. Thanks a lot, Kayla. After that blunder back in the March issue of CCM, I was demoted from 'staff mathematician' to 'fact-checker,' and now this happens. At this rate, I'll be working at Tigerbeat soon."

FLY ON THE WALL

What a great "fly on the wall" experience to read the Baldwin and Wells conversation. Especially moving was Stephen's and John's real-life experience of yielding their hearts to Jesus. I'm going to pass their stories on to others so that "by the word of their testimony," others might know that Jesus is the ultimate in "cool."

—**Sean Lee, associate pastor of Student Ministries, Grace Community Church, Roswell, NM**

As a subscriber to CCM, I had been looking forward to the upcoming article with Stephen Baldwin ["Listening In"]. I thoroughly enjoyed reading the conversation between Stephen, his brother Alec and John Wells [of Cross Movement]. I am so happy to know that Stephen is sold out for Jesus and that his wife is such a hardcore believer. It is great that Stephen is taking a stand for Jesus Christ in Hollywood and is so passionate about what He wants to do for the Lord. I admire how Alec is supportive of Stephen. I found John Wells' testimony awesome as well as his involvement with Cross Movement.

Thank you also for the information on Sojourn Fare ["The Insider," March]. I am also a fan of theirs and was so happy to have some information about Nathan and Jordan's CD.

—**Jennifer Crookham, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada**

IN THE NAME OF WHAT?

Please do not get me wrong: I am very much on the supporting side for giving attention to the AIDS problem in Africa. But from what I understand, this CD (*In the Name of Love: Artists United for Africa*) ["In Review Music," March] was put out as a result of Bono from U2 saying something to the Christian community

about it. Why did it take him saying something about it for us to do something? Jesus said for us to help those in need long before Bono's grandparents were even thought of, and he's not even a very good example of the Christian walk, either. He promotes attention to the AIDS in Africa problem; yet, with the same mouth, he proclaims profanities. Am I the only one who sees a problem with this?

—**Christopher Stone,**
via e-mail



WAS JUDAS A SAILOR?

I have been a long-time fan of CCM Magazine; I have read the magazine for 10 years now, and I have enjoyed the articles very much. I just recently read the article ["The Reel"] on the show "Judas," which aired on Monday, March 8. The article was well written. When I watched the show, there was one scene in which Judas and Jesus were talking, and Judas said the "b" word. (The word used for a male.) I was shocked. I have seen other works by Tom Fontana ["St. Elsewhere," "Homicide"], but why would he have Judas say that word? It's not in Scripture. What were Tom's intentions?

—**Jason Pachar, Orange, TX**

WE'RE FEELING THE LOVE.

Not to sound cliché, but I've enjoyed reading your magazine for some time now. On this the eve of my leaving for Iraq, I have decided to subscribe for 12 issues. Being my fourth deployment in four years, I've come to value and appreciate the importance of positive and spiritual reading material. I just

wanted to take the time and commend you on being such a great voice to our generation.

—SPC Owens,
via e-mail

You see, this is why you and we get along so well, this right here.

I have been a subscriber for about four to five years now, and I love your magazine. I really enjoy your introductions. You give the reader something of substance to ponder while perusing the pages of the magazine. I appreciate the fact that you are willing to give groups like Plus One (a personal fave) a second chance with a cover story ["Plus One's Second Take," November] and just a nice personal note on how real those guys are. Also, I was impressed with the fact that CCM is branching out with a Kutless cover story. I'm not a big fan of their music, but I respect the fact that you are willing to cover artists in all genres of contemporary Christian music. What appeals to one person may not appeal to another. I have learned that even if I am not a big fan of one artist's music, I can still take something away from the article. So, thank you for the nice job that you are doing. May you continue to make CCM a reputable source for all things Christian music.

—Lindsay Williams, via e-mail

THE MEASURE OF CLAY

In response to Martha S. in the March letters in CCM, I would like to offer your readers a little insight into Clay Aiken.

Rather than discourage Christians from listening to Mr. Aiken based on a few lyrics on his album, we would all do better to support this man who has effectively been thrown to the wolves in the past year since "American Idol" ended. He is currently at the very top of the most wicked and bloodthirsty industry there is—the mainstream music industry. At every turn, Mr. Aiken has shown himself to be a true "roaring lamb," a man of uncommon poise and grace who, in every interview he does, points only to his Savior as the source of his success.

We as Christians need to be in the business of supporting our brothers and sisters whom God has chosen to carry



CLAY AIKEN

the banner for the rest of us in the world. *Measure of A Man* is Clay's first album, and he has said many times that he had to fight to get the album as clean and family-friendly as it is. With his astounding success, he'll have more control over his next album, and I guarantee you that it will be even cleaner than the first one. In the meantime, let's join together and support our brother, rather than drown in the muck of legalism and finger-pointing. That's what the world expects us to do. Let's not give them the satisfaction.

—Danielle Aderholdt
via e-mail

SIXPENCE NO MORE

I wanted to say that your editorial ["From the Editor," March] about Sixpence [None the Richer] was a very nicely written tribute. I can see where they were a special part of your life in CCM the past decade or so, and I think it was a very neat way to "remember" and "reflect" on them. Keep up the good work.

—Alan Johnston, London First Baptist Church, London, Arkansas



SIXPENCE NONE THE RICHER

ASK CCM:

I've been curious to find out what happened to the group Aaron Jeoffrey. Then the other day I caught a music video by a new country group Blue County, and Aaron Benward is in the group! What happened to being a Christian artist? The song I heard, "Good Little Girls," wasn't exactly what I'd consider "Christian," so I just wondered...

—Perplexed in Pennsylvania



AARON BENWARD

We decided to go right to the source to find out the answer to your question. Here's what Aaron had to say:

There have been some major changes in my life and career over the past year. I have always had a passion and desire to expand my influence and my boundaries, but it wasn't until I came up with an idea to start a band with my best friend, Scott Reeves, that it all began to make sense.

There have been so many opportunities both on the road and in

interviews to let people know the awesome news of Jesus.

Our first single entitled, "Good Little Girls," seems to have raised some questions about my heart and intent. On a first quick listen one might have a raised eyebrow to the hook of the song "Good little girls make some mighty wild women."

To be very honest, we did on our first listen; but the hook was so strong we wanted to listen again. As the verses passed by my ears, all I could do was smile because I realized that this was a song that acknowledges and embraces a girl who has saved herself for the man of her dreams.

[In the song] when they get married she turns into a "mighty wild woman." Wow! What a clever, country way of saying what we all believe. I could totally own this song because there truly is freedom in marriage.

The concern from Aaron/Jeffrey and Aaron Benward fans has been comforting and somewhat disconcerting. Comforting to know that people still care about me and my music. I hope this is still true. Disconcerting to know that people question my heart and my character over a song that talks about everything we believe. Please know our mission as Blue County is to be a servant, to champion the individual and to give them a little dosage of who our lifeline is. I covet your prayers for boldness and protection on this journey. Please stand with us to help shine light on everyone and everything we come in contact with.

To find out more about Blue County or its self-titled release, visit bluecountytians.com.

We welcome your comments. Address your letter to Feedback, CCM Magazine, 104 Woodmont Blvd., Suite 300, Nashville, TN 37205, fax 615/385-4112, attn: Feedback, or, e-mail feedback@ccmcom.com. Always include your full name, address and phone number. Letter may be edited for length and clarity.



insider

by Christa Farris

Ten years of Point of Grace, LaRue's whereabouts and more.



They're Still Believing...

Back at the 1994 Dove Awards, four bubbly girls who made up the vocal super-group Point of Grace won the coveted title of "New Artist of the Year." Now a decade and many accolades later, these fan-favorites wax nostalgic here in CCM.

A well-worn Bible, personal letters, trendy clothes, journals and a Dove Award—those are just a few of the items **Shelley Breen** says she'd place in a time capsule if ever asked for mementos to represent Point of Grace.

"I'd put Heather's Bible in there because it's so cool. It's old, tattered and underlined. I would include our Dove Award for "New Artist of the Year." I'd put lots and lots of clothes in because we are all about clothes. Through the years how our outfits have changed is just hilarious," Breen says with a laugh. "I would enclose letters we have from our fans. We keep all of them. The life-changing letters would be the most important things—I'd put those on top. The reasons we do this is because of God and because we love people."

Breen and her fellow "points" have plenty of reason to feel nostalgic this April, as it marks 10 years since the girls garnered the "New Artist" honor at the Dove Awards. "I can't believe it's been that long and, in other ways, it does seem like a long time," says Breen, who recalls holding back tears

during her acceptance speech. "Winning 'New Artist' and meeting Billy Graham are two things that really stand out in my mind as monumental moments in our ministry. We grew up watching the Doves and never thought we'd be there. It was absolutely a dream come true."

In the past decade, there have been many significant moments for Breen, **Denise Jones**, **Terry Jones** and **Heather Payne**. The four friends began performing together as Say So in November 1990 while they were students at Arkansas' Ouachita Baptist University. Meeting record executive John Mays at Estes Park proved to be a pivotal point for the young women, who signed with Word Records and proceeded to dominate Christian radio airwaves for the next dozen years.

Point of Grace is currently working on its next album with new member **Leigh Cappillino** (Michael W. Smith, Truth), who joined the group when Terry departed earlier this year to devote time to her husband and three children.

>> HAIL TO THE CHIEF: MICHAEL W. SMITH'S "CAROL ANN" SELECTED AS THE MUSIC FOR THE FIRST RE-ELECTION CAMPAIGN >>>



More Sushi, Please!

Stacie Orrico is a hit at recent MTV Asia Awards.

Like Bill Murray in his recent flick *Lost in Translation*, Stacie Orrico has been doing her fair share of getting acclimated to the Asian culture, as she's been spending quite a bit of time touring in the Far East. Most recently, Stacie joined rappers Urban Exchange and Too Phat onstage for a remix performance of her hits "Stuck" and "(There's Gotta Be) More to Life" at the MTV Asia Awards, where she strolled the red carpet in yet another fabulous outfit. Check out a video stream of her performance at mtvasiaawards.com/Singapore/Theshow/Video/.

Changing Lanes

Career-wise, Jaci Velasquez has done it all. Artist. Actress. Prominent role model in the Latin community. Now Jaci tells *CCM* about her latest challenge as an advocate for emerging talent with her new label venture, Apostrophe Records.



It's a rainy Friday afternoon in Nashville, and Jaci Velasquez has plenty more to be chatty about than just her upcoming weekend plans. Besides being happy to be a new wife to her musician-husband, Darren, whom she calls "the absolute greatest guy," the couple has recently added a new puppy to its canine brood of three, an "adorable" dog named William. In the midst of attempting to "potty train" the pooch and working on new songs for an upcoming release, Velasquez has recently joined the ever-expanding ranks of artist-turned-label-owner.

Rather than jumping on the bandwagon of a popular trend, Velasquez says she never intended to join her musical peers in the label game—until she saw Apostrophe's debut artist, singer/songwriter Michael Cook, perform.

"He just had that 'it' quality about him," Velasquez recalls. "I really didn't want to start a label until I found the kind of artist I truly believed in and actually wanted to invest in. Michael's that kind of artist, and now is the time. My goal is to take what God's given me and reach out to help artists like Michael in their dreams."

Currently negotiating distribution for Cook's debut, *Imprint*, set to release later this year, Velasquez's official label launch begins during this year's Gospel Music Week festivities in Nashville. When describing what we can expect artistically speaking from Apostrophe in the future, she says, "I want this label to be driven by great artists and great songs, not just by what will sell."

The last concert with Jones was emotional. "We were all blubbering idiots onstage. Terry can't be replaced. We've never had a personnel change. So this has been a huge, huge deal for us; but we respect Terry for her decision," says Breen, adding that Jones will likely be back subbing for the next POG member on maternity leave.

How are they approaching the new album? "We want to shake it up," states Breen, who has heard people comment that the group's music appeals to the "Beckys," aka soccer-mom types who buy Christian music. "John Mays asked, 'Are we going to take Becky on a little trip here?' We want to. I don't think anybody can pull Becky along better than we can. The things we've done so far are a lot less slick, a lot less stacked and a lot more raw; and it sounds good."

As the group moves forward into a new chapter of its career, Breen admits Point of Grace's ministry has reached heights the four never imagined. She also says success has been different than she ever dreamed.

"I did not know how hard the work would be and in being away from your family, what that sacrifice would feel like," she says, "But the best thing is the people you meet. I never expected to hear people tell me that my song changed their lives. People have told me they were going to commit suicide, and then they heard 'The Great Divide' on the radio; and they changed their minds. That is powerful stuff. We take that responsibility so seriously when we pick our songs. That's been probably the greatest thing I never expected: the huge, life-changing effect that Christian music can have on people if they just hear it." **DEBORAH EVANS PRICE**



Point of Grace today (L-R): Heather Payne, Denise Jones, Leigh Cappillino, Shelly Breen



Where Are They Now?

LaRue



Like Radio Shack, when you have questions, we have answers. Now, Phillip and Natalie LaRue's father, Paul, who also served as the group's manager, provides the scoop.

Over the past few months quite of a few *CCM* readers have written to ask about former Reunion Records' brother-sister duo, **LaRue's** whereabouts. It turns out, according to their dad, they're doing great and enjoying life as newlyweds as both **Phillip** and **Natalie** each tied the knot last year.

Phillip and his bride, Lia, live in Del Rey Beach, Fla., where he loves to surf and continues to write songs. Although he's been approached for several solo-artist endeavors, no formal recording plans have been firmed up. But he currently works as an in-house staff writer for Word Publishing and travels back to Nashville periodically to work on music, including a new compilation project he'll co-produce with **Monroe Jones**.

Meanwhile, Natalie lives in San Clemente, Calif., with her husband, Rob, who works as a youth pastor. Preferring to lay low, Natalie hasn't really pursued much in the musical realm, despite solo artist offers. Instead, she's enjoyed mentoring young women's groups and probably will go the author route and write books in the future.

NewSong's Steppin' Out

Like Jaci Velasquez, the band plans to get its feet wet with a new, still-unnamed label venture.

The band with the most famous "shoes" in Christian music recently wrapped another successful multi-artist "Winter Jam" stint with record attendance alongside **Audio Adrenaline**, **Relient K**, **Todd Agnew** and **Jadyn Maria**. Now, **NewSong** is about to embark on another ambitious endeavor as label-owners.

Recently the group parted ways with its longtime label home, Reunion Records. **Eddie Carswell**, one of NewSong's founding members, says, "Over the past five years, we have been discussing how we could produce and promote our own projects and develop tomorrow's Christian music ministries. Now we have the chance to pursue these dreams."

The band's manager, **Troy VanLiere**, who also cited a changing industry as a reason for NewSong's excitement about a new label model for the future, commented, "Not only has the Lord been planting these desires in NewSong for a long time, but He has been preparing them along the way."

Look for more information on the new label as it becomes available at CCMmagazine.com.

Cyberspeak: What's New at CCMmagazine.com this Month!



If you've surfed over to our virtual headquarters for all that's happening in Christian music, you've probably noticed we've done quite a bit of renovating recently. We hope you enjoy all the new additions to our cyberhome-in-progress and will become part of the growing community in our forums at CCMmagazine.com/forums/.

My handle is "CCMWebEditor" if you'd like to say "hi"!

This month we've got all kinds of Web-only goodies you won't want to miss out on. Here are the highlights:

*Blogs, Blogs and More Blogs—From yours truly to *CCM's* own managing editor to a few of your favorite artists, we're all contributing our two cents on about anything you could imagine in *CCMmagazine.com's* Weblogs section at ccmmagazine.com/weblogs. Don't miss the constant banter!

*All you chatty Cathys will find plenty to love about our monthly chats where you, the reader, will get to conduct the interview as you pose questions for the artists. Look for the latest info in our "New on CCM!" box on our homepage. This month, **MercyMe** and **Sara Groves** are tentatively scheduled to answer everything inquiring minds want to know.

*Help *CCM* serve your Christian music needs even better by logging on and taking our official readers' survey at CCMmagazine.com. And who knows? You just may be the lucky winner of \$500 and several new CDs that we'll be giving away to one participant.

*Lastly, for anyone who didn't get to make it to Nashville for all the Gospel Music Week and Dove Award festivities, we've captured all the Kodak moments for you in our online photo album at ccmmagazine.com/PhotoGallery/.



Switchfoot's Platinum "Letdown"

Well, it's official: More than a million people love Switchfoot, as the San Diego rockers release *The Beautiful Letdown* (Sparrow/Columbia) has recently joined the platinum-record ranks. As the band's album continues to climb *The Billboard 200* sales chart (The disc is perched at No. 44 at press time.), Switchfoot continues its relentless tour schedule that recently included appearances on "The Tonight Show with Jay Leno," "On-Air With Ryan Seacrest" and MTV's "Total Request Live."

If you haven't had a chance to catch the band's live show, Switchfoot's new *Live in San Diego* DVD is probably your best bet. Look for a Web exclusive review of the disc online at CCMmagazine.com.

Everyday Sunday's "Imperfect" Return

The Columbus, Ohio, rockers are back for more rollicking adventures.

"I'm much more awake this time," Everyday Sunday frontman **Trey Pearson** assures me as we chat on the phone, making a reference to the first time we talked more than a year ago when I caught him mid-slumber at 10:00 a.m. on a weekday.

Now the seasoned professional after hundreds of interviews, Pearson's demeanor still seems refreshingly shy for the average artist, as he tells me about the band's sophomore disc, *Anthems For the Imperfect* (Flicker). While the album's sound maintains the same melodic rock sensibilities as Everyday Sunday's debut, *Stand Up*, Pearson says the band has matured the most in the lyrical realm, as the group penned all the songs themselves.

Utilizing the universal kinds of personal experiences that can relate to both the youth group and college crowd, the band is teaming up with labelmates **Kids in the Way** this month for a 19-city promotional tour sponsored by Epiphone Guitars. Each night during the tour, fans will also have the opportunity to win a custom "Everyday Sunday" guitar, something Pearson is particularly excited about. "I still can't believe they created a guitar just for us; it's the coolest thing!"

To find a show from the "Imperfect" tour at a venue near you, be sure to check out our searchable tour database at ccmmagazine.com/ontour.



Smokey's Cooking Up Some "Food for the Spirit"

Both in the recording studio and in the kitchen, Motown legend **Smokey Robinson** unveils a few new treats including an inspirational CD.

Sure, he was the integral part of a little musical movement known as Motown. And if that wasn't enough of an accolade, he's also one of the most respected singer/songwriters and performers in music history. But now, Smokey Robinson is ready to add some new songs to his extensive repertoire on his first faith-based CD, *Food for the Spirit* (Liquid 8).

In a recent phone interview from his tour bus, Robinson says the songs he wrote for *Food for the Spirit* were originally stockpiled for his friends, gospel artists **Donnie McClurkin**, **Kirk Franklin**, **Yolanda Adams** (who he says "has the best voice he's ever heard") and **The Winans** family. But one day he confesses, "The Lord impressed it upon me to sing them myself and let the world know about my relationship with Him."

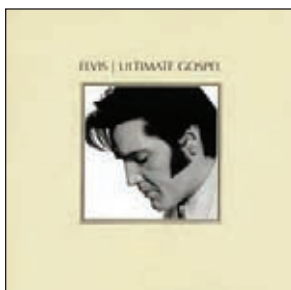
And that's exactly what he does on the praise-oriented strains of *Food for the Spirit*. Keeping with the theme of the music, Robinson also started his own food company, launching his first culinary delight, "The Soul is in the Bowl Gumbo," which debuted at Chicago-area supermarkets and has sold out five times since it's been out, according to Robinson.

Bright Lights, Big Meeting

Vickie Winans recently visited with one of her musical heroes in Las Vegas, **Céline Dion**, while doing research for the sets of her new gospel musical play, "Torn Between Two Loves." And it turns out that Céline is a fan of Vickie's as well.

While hanging out in the bright lights of Vegas, Winans decided to catch Céline's show at Caesar's Coliseum. After the show, the two hung out for a little while and found out they were fans of each other's work. Now that's not too shabby to have a diva like that as a fan.

Winans' play is touring now for the few next months. Check out her Web site at vickiewinans.com for a show near you.



Who Says Elvis Has Left the Building?

The king of rock & roll may not be walking in Memphis anymore or enjoying fried peanut butter and banana sandwiches at Graceland, but Elvis Presley will be hitting the airwaves again with his first national release in years—*Elvis—Ultimate Gospel* (RCA/BMG).

The first single from the collection will be the Happy Goodman's tune, "Here Am I." For more about the project, check out rickhendrix.com.



Friends in High Places

In what's turned out to be one of this year's most diverse worship records, Natalie Grant has teamed up with a slew of great artists for *Worship With Natalie Grant & Friends*.

Between hitting the "Women of Faith" circuit with the likes of **Point of Grace**, **Nichole Nordeman** and **CeCe Winans** and flying out to Los Angeles to preview and write a few new songs for her tentatively scheduled October release, **Natalie Grant** has certainly been staying busy. But in the midst of her hectic schedule, she also had a chance to collaborate on a project she's really excited about—a new Integrity worship CD with several of her friends.

Citing black gospel music as one of her strongest influences over the years, Grant hopes the project will allow her to showcase that inspiration while also helping "to assist the local church with integrating a more urban, gospel flavor into their worship services."

Artists teaming up with Grant on the disc include **Darwin Hobbs**, **Israel & New Breed** and **John Elefante** for worship favorites, such as "Let it Rise," "You Are My All in All," "Shout to the Lord" and 11 others. Look for our review of the project on page 78.



Live Adoration for Your Stereo

If you missed the Newsboys' recent "Adoration" worship tour with Rebecca St. James and Jeremy Camp, you can experience the next best thing—a live 2-CD set. The limited-edition collection (read: only 2,000 copies of individually numbered sets) features material from four sold-out shows in Milwaukee, Chicago, Minneapolis and Minot, North Dakota. For more information on how to secure your copy of live music history, surf over to DiscLive.com.



Takin' It Up a Notch

Israel's latest disc offers enough worshipful diversity to help listeners get their praise on.

As an internationally recognized worship leader at Lakewood Church in Houston, recording artist, songwriter and producer **Israel** has mastered the art of multi-tasking as he's been in full-time worship ministry since 1989.

These days, however, fans can enjoy his follow-up to the critically acclaimed recording *New Season* with Israel's newest worship effort, *Live From Another Level* (Integrity). The album showcases more of his explosive worship style on 21 songs that span the genre lines with catchy pop hooks, urban-infused grooves and even a few traditional praise stylings.

With both new and familiar songs highlighting the disc's track list, there's more than two hours of music in this double-disc package. And for those who want even more of *Live From Another Level*, there are also a companion DVD, songbook and accompaniment tracks available.



Let it Rain

Southern California's own Joe Sabolick is about to become a household name in the worship scene.

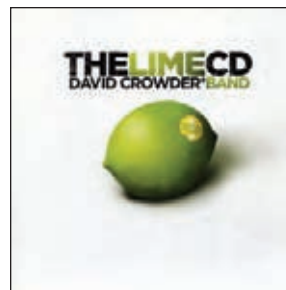
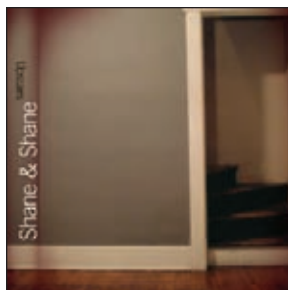
As the worship leader at the Calvary Chapel Laguna Beach congregation, **Joe Sabolick** is no "average Joe." After all, his profile is rising outside the confines of his Sunday morning services. Two songs of his, "Come Just As You Are" and "In That Day," were recently featured on the latest *WoW Worship* installment, *WoW Worship Red* (Word), alongside some of the genre's heavyweights.

Now, with 15 new songs plus two live cuts of the aforementioned tracks, a brand-new offering, *Reign* (Maranatha!), from the Joe Sabolick Band of Calvary Chapel Laguna Beach should acquaint the church masses with Sabolick's organic, rootsy rock approach to praise. With contemplative lyrics wrapped around a modern soundtrack, it maintains a universal appeal for contemporary worship services.

And as a bonus, the project also includes a DVD disc with music videos for "Reign," "Freedom" and "Everything." For more information about Sabolick and Calvary Chapel, check out calvarylaguna.com.



Shane & Shane



This Month's Trend: Worship Extras!

Hate that waiting time before projects from your favorite artists are released? Well it seems that a few are releasing bonus material in the meantime.

For instance, college faves **David Crowder Band** recently released *The Lime CD* (Sixsteps/Sparrow). This particular project got its name by combining the songs (recorded at live Passion events) of two previous "quasi-unreleased EPs" (*The Green CD* and *The Yellow CD*) together—hence the moniker, *The Lime CD*. And for a mere \$8, fans are treated to more than 40 minutes of electrifying sounds that also include two B-sides from the band's *Illuminate* sessions.

Fans of **Shane & Shane** can also enjoy a unique listening experience this month with the release of *Upstairs* (Inpop). Recorded in the upstairs bedroom of **Shane Barnard's** house to provide more of a home-spun, intimate vibe, the project features six new songs and four unique renditions of previously released favorites from the duo. Adding extra value, the CD also includes 20 minutes of exclusive video content.



5 Questions with REBECCA ST. JAMES

She's been recording music for more than 10 years, has written a best-selling book and recently added "actress" to her list of accomplishments (for her role of "Maggie" in the rock opera "IHero"). Having released *Live Worship: Blessed Be Your Name* (ForeFront) in late February, St. James is currently touring will be performing in Europe for the latter part of the month.

1. If you could trade responsibilities with someone for a day, who would that person be, what would the job be, and why would you choose to do it?

Someone asked the other day: "If Mel Gibson had called and said, 'I saw you in "IHero," and I would love for you to play the role of Mary Magdalene in *The Passion of The Christ*,' what would your response have been?" In addition to being amazed and honored, I would have loved to have played that role!

2. When was the first moment you realized you wanted to pursue music for a living?

Probably 13 or 14 was when I started to feel God leading me into music. At 12 I said, 'God, I want You to use my life, gifts and talents—I really don't know what I have to give, but I give You what I have.' It was soon after that I felt Him leading me into music.

3. Describe your most unforgettable date.

I went out with a guy in Australia; and we went and had dinner by the water, then we went out and saw a show. We had coffee later by the beach.

4. What are you obsessive compulsive about?

Probably about things being tidy on our bus! I'm one girl amidst many guys, including some of my brothers, who are a part of my road team. If the bus gets really messy, I have to do something about it!

5. What characteristic of God has surprised you the most these days?

His extravagant love! That's been a real theme in my life in this latest season.



David Dobson

Calling All Angels

"Christian musicians should start becoming sick of talking about music for music's sake," Caedmon's Call frontman, Cliff Young, exclaims. "If we're going to call it Christian music, let's have a purpose behind it. We've been convicted: We have this platform, we've sold 1.5 million records, and there should be purpose and reason behind every record and song beyond 'that was a cool song.'"

Not known for staying quiet once onboard for a cause—whether it be Compassion International's child sponsorship program or the downfalls of the Christian subculture—Caedmon's Call is treating its new passion for India's lowest class with the same fervor.

Though the band has long supported an Indian ministry, Peace Gospel Ministries, via its fan club (The Guild), it was after a show in Raleigh, N.C., last year that the band really felt compelled to act. After that Provident Baptist Church show, Timothy Kasbe, a member of India's dalit (otherwise known as "untouchable") class and now an IBM executive living in Raleigh, introduced himself and told the band his testimony and about the revival and subsequent persecution Christian dalits are facing because of their faith. "If the dalits believed that, because of the gospel, they aren't untouchable and that things should be different and better, they could overthrow the government," explains Young of the dilemma facing India's upper-class government leaders. And although Young says caste discrimination is illegal in India, the existence of the caste system is not. "D.C. doesn't know this goes on," Young notes, "The only people in our government who are Indian or who deal with government are [upper caste] Brahmins. That's one reason we're going to raise awareness for that."

And to accomplish just that, the entire band, plus a few friends/songwriters flew to India in March, staying 18 days. While in India, they traveled to different villages, visited dalit communities and Dalit Freedom Network schools and met with musicians to write and record music about issues facing this community. The band plans to include the songs and recordings on its next album, tentatively titled *Third World Symphony* (Provident Label Group), releasing this fall.

"We're so trendy, and we get into things... like the worship movement. There's nothing wrong with it; great songs have come out of it that'll be in hymnals. But to get people into world music... people love it anyway. Look at what happened to Paul Simon's *Graceland*. He had no career, and he did all this South Africa stuff; and people went nuts. And it helped people. That's what we want to do—give a percentage of the album sales, producer points, etc., to these people and these countries. I would love for trendy Christian music listeners to get into world music. It gets people interested in a culture, then they get interested in a country and the issues we're talking about." —ANNIKA MORGAN



fanfare

Souljahz's Josh Washington gets married, birthdays and more.



Two Peas in a Pod

As with one of the recent artist-artist pairings with **Jeremy Camp** marrying former lead singer of The Benjamin Gate **Adrienne Liesching**, now **Josh Washington** of sibling trio **Souljahz** has married **Jessica Matos**, formerly of Latin girl group **Chica**. The couple wed in Hawaii in February.



05.04 Birthdays

- 08 **Steve Crawford** (Anointed)
- 13 **Tonéx**
- Ken Komiya** (The Billions)
- 17 **Nic Gonzales** (Salvador)
- Andy Chrisman** (4HIM)
- 19 **Nate Cole** (Plus One)
- 25 **Steve Wiggins**
- 29 **Mark Lee** (Third Day)

Tell CCM

Have you ever listened to a song, and the message was just the thing you needed to hear, just when you needed to hear it? Is there a Christian artist who has made an impact on your life? Tell us about it! E-mail tellccm@ccmmagazine.com or write to *CCM Magazine*, Attn: Tell CCM, 104 Woodmont Blvd, Suite 300, Nashville, TN 37205. We'd love to hear from you.

e|harmony presents CONNECTING

fall in love for all the right reasons



Steven Curtis Chapman's latest release, *All About Love (Sparrow)*, is just that—all about the love he shares with his wife, Mary Beth. For this month's column, we asked the Chapmans to pick a song and

write about what it means to each of them. Steven has already entered the studio and is recording his next project, expected to release Sept. 21.

"11-6-64"

According to Steven: "11-6-64" started out as some of the other songs on *All About Love* (Sparrow) did—as cards I would write to Mary Beth. This was a birthday card, and I just got poetic. So I wrote in her card, "11-6-64. You know I was only 2 years old, but I bet that was a really good day for me—even though I was a little boy." The whole world changed for me because that was the day God put Mary Beth on this Earth.

*And I was only 2 years old so really I don't know exactly what was going on
But I, I bet I laughed and played harder on that day 'cause my whole world was changing*

What I love about the song and what it communicates about this album is that it isn't just for Mary Beth. It's about honoring and celebrating the people God has put into our lives. What would life be like without that person? How different would my life be? It's about honoring those relationships God has given us. Our relationships with each other are all about teaching us about our most important relationship—with God.

According to Mary Beth: It's a humbling thing to have a husband who can write about anything... and I mean *anything*. He's a world-class wordsmith in my opinion (OK, maybe I'm a little biased). He truly has a gift from God, and I can honestly say I have never met anyone in my life who has offered his gifts back to the Lord more than this man. Since we have been together, I've gotten more letters, notes, cards, flowers with notes, songs, lectures, speeches, love poems, apology notes and please-forgive-me-for-being-a-knuckle-head notes (my personal favorites)! I especially love "11-6-64" because it's not only a great love song written by Steven, but it reminds me of God's divine plan for our lives. And I don't have a problem with Steven advertising my birthday. Steven's two years older than me, so you do the math!

*And I, well I was only 2 so I didn't have a clue of all that was transpiring
But I, I bet the sky was blue and all the world looked new 'cause everything was changing (on)*

*11-6-64 you breathed your first breath and
Suddenly living life meant so much more
On the day that you were born*

For more information, visit eharmony.com. Dedicated to helping people find the right partner for life long love and happiness, e|harmony offers free personality profiles, a risk-free seven-day trial period and membership packages to help get you started on the path to finding the right mate for you.



industrybeat

by Jay Swartzendruber

A conversation
with Bill Hearn
and the latest
industry buzz



Bill's Excellent Adventure

Emptying trash cans and sweeping floors for a record label may not seem like the ideal start to an illustrious career in the music business. But for the Christian community's most influential industry veteran, this marked the first step in a long climb to the top of the corporate ladder. Bill Hearn earned his stripes the old fashioned way, despite being the son of one of the industry's founding fathers—Billy Ray Hearn. Having watched his dad launch both Myrrh Records and Sparrow Records in the 1970s, Bill eventually teamed with his father to build what would become the world's largest Christian music company—EMI Christian Music Group, where Bill is now president and CEO.

What was your first job with Sparrow Records?

My first job was being a warehouse worker for one hour a day when I was 17. I came in at the end of the day and emptied the garbage cans and swept the floors. As soon as I finished high school I started full-time, filling, packing and shipping orders while going to college at night. Later, after overseeing the

warehouse for three and a half years, I moved up in the office to customer service, sales and then into publicity and promotion before eventually becoming vice president of marketing. Then in 1991, when we moved from Los Angeles to Nashville, I became president of Sparrow Records. Peter York became my partner and head of A&R. That's when my father was chairman of the Sparrow Corporation, which meant he was over the Sparrow label, publishing and distribution. In January of '96 Peter York was named president of Sparrow when I became CEO of EMI Christian Music Group.

Due to the immense growth of your company, you seem to have more responsibilities now than your father ever had. Is that true?

I really believe that God put me at Sparrow to put application to my father's vision. He's the music visionary, and I'm the guy who says, "Hey, I'll help you make that happen in a practical business way." I went to junior college; I have a two-year degree. I really didn't get educated formally, but I was very formally educated in the music business. Artists were in our home constantly. I understood from just being around it how to motivate a market. I had a good idea of what might sell and what might not sell, what might be commercial, what might be less commercial. I'm not the A&R guy, and that's why God has blessed us with Peter York. That allowed me to do other things, while Peter handles signing and developing new artists and great music. I get to do the things like cast vision, set direction, acquire more growth-oriented things for the business. That's why now I have more responsibility from a business standpoint than my father had.

From the "earthiness" of its origins in the "Jesus Movement" to becoming a thriving professional industry, you've witnessed the Christian music community's evolution first hand. How were the early years different?

We weren't really professional. We were striving to be. The artists were a lot more forceful back then about *not* wanting to do that. That was still when artists toured because "God told them to tour." They got in minivans and stayed in other people's homes to save money. There was no such thing as a rider [the list of "essentials" artists request at each venue], no guarantees and big booking agents. We were trying to become a professional record company. I enjoyed it because that's really what motivated me.

Who were the first Christian artists whose music you strongly connected with?

Keith Green—no question. Obviously, a lot of people would say that in this industry, but Keith's music really affected me musically as well as professionally. Matthew Ward's first album, the Talbot Brothers—the Warner Bros. album we licensed called *The Talbot Brothers*—and then the solo John Michael Talbot and Terry Talbot albums. Those early Talbot records I still find myself listening to.

In a *Rolling Stone* article late last year I think it was actually Tim Foreman [of Switchfoot] who said: "We're Christian by faith, not genre." That was the first time I've seen someone effectively articulate that in one sentence. It didn't sound awkward or like there was a discomfort with the church.

Yeah, and I think that's great. I guess my only concern is that some people may interpret that as apologizing for the genre of Christian music. I have to say that, personally, I will never apologize for what we do. Sparrow was started as an alternative source of music for kids who wanted to affirm their faith through entertainment. I will never apologize for that, and I will never think that's wrong. I think we are providing a service to the church and a service to culture.

EMI CMG is the only major Christian company that's brought a mainstream radio promoter in-house solely to target the general market. What led to that decision?

In 2003 we saw five Christian artists have legitimate chart radio hits. When was the last time that happened? What year? You have to go back to BeBe and CeCe

[Winans], Amy [Grant], Kirk Franklin, you know, Yolanda Adams a few years ago... tell me when you've had four or five in the same year? Stacie [Orrico], Switchfoot, Smokie Norful... Steven Curtis Chapman and MercyMe all have had legitimate mainstream radio chart hits. That's pretty amazing to me. That's one of the big positives for the future. That [success] will breed other talent and will breed more support from the church for those artists who want to establish themselves in the mainstream.

A big piece of Christian music focuses on the church, and a big piece of Christian music focuses on the world. And just from an economic model, we can't just be in one over the other one. The industry's not big enough to support just one of those philosophies. It's been instilled in this company from day one that we are here to support artists. Why did we sell Sparrow to EMI? We knew we couldn't get Steven Curtis Chapman's music to spread like it needed to be spread without doing that. Immediately, Wal-Mart and K-Mart opened up; all these stores opened up and supported us. Steven Curtis went from [selling] 500,000 to one million because we got broader distribution. In addition, part of my ministry here is to show corporate America that you can apply Christian principles to the music industry and be successful in their eyes.

Who are the mentors you've had?

My dad was my number one mentor and friend, as well as my father. He taught me a lot about how to respect artists. I've also learned a lot from Peter [York]. Peter's musical chops are amazing. He's taught me a lot from an A&R perspective, which is how to view the music. I've learned something from all of my bosses. I've had four of them in my 10 years at EMI. Jim Fifield was a master at squeezing the efficiency and productivity out of someone. Ken Berry and Roy Lott were much more music-focused guys. David Munns has also taught me a lot about making better music, and that there's a bigger world than the United States.

When Jeremy Camp visited our office, he mentioned in passing that you picked the cover for his new worship album. I wouldn't think you had time for those decisions. How much are you able to get personally involved with the artists' careers?

Where I feel like I can add value and where the labels would like me to add value, I step in. I don't stick my nose in unless they want me to. I make the time to do it because it's important to them, and that, hopefully, helps their business to be more successful. Brandon Ebel at Tooth & Nail, obviously, had something with Jeremy that was different from anything Tooth & Nail has ever had. It's the first time he's experiencing significant Christian radio play; and, all of a sudden, he's got a Christian mainstream hit on his hands. I don't need to jump in the middle of Brandon's business and help him with his [indie] rock acts. He knows how to do that much better than I can. So I will spend as much time as Brandon wants me to spend on Jeremy. I've also been very involved with the new Kutless record—in the initial marketing strategy meeting and all that, again, because we think we've got something really big there. And with Gotee I've stepped in on Sarah Kelly's record, which I'm a freak over... huge Sarah Kelly fan. I think I've stuck my nose in a little too far on that one—I asked them to redo the cover [Laughs].

When you look ahead to the next year or next few years, what do you think are going to be some of the significant trends?

I think the two are going to be: What are we going to do with digital music? The

other thing is that we've got to continue to make better, more compelling, more culturally relevant music that appeals to everybody, not just a core group of people that the mainstream media will support. How do we find new uses of music to support our artists beyond the subculture? Is it interactive games, is it television? At the end of the day, better music, more culturally compelling music is going to win and going to sell and going to combat piracy. We have to be responsive to what the church's needs are because that's the second part of the business that can't be ignored and can't be undervalued. They are both valued, and they both have to have attention.

A few months ago you merged all label functions of ForeFront Records and Sparrow Records into one new entity, EMI CMG Label Group. These labels had very different "personalities" and ways of going about things. What elements of each label's mission statement and label culture will be emphasized in this new entity?

Our new structure is focused on the mission and personalities of our artists as opposed to that of labels. Our company was built on a foundation of artist development. The primary objective of our new label group is to help our artists create better, more culturally relevant music, exposing it to the most people possible.

A couple times over the past year you guys have signed new artists to singles-only contracts rather than full-length album deals. What's your strategy behind that? And do you think this approach is going to become more prevalent among labels in the near future?

Our desire to sign and develop artists is greater than our financial ability to do so. Recently, we have signed two artists to singles deals as a way to introduce more music to the marketplace and give more artists a chance to fulfill their vision.

This strategy is not new. It goes back to the Motown Records days and is very artist friendly in that it allows us to be more experimental and creative while introducing more music and artists to the marketplace.



Pictured at the EMI post-Grammy party in February (L-R): Jeff Frankenstein, Newsboys; Alain Levy, chairman and CEO of EMI Music Worldwide; David Munns, vice chairman of EMI Music Worldwide and CEO of EMI Music North America; Duncan Phillips, Bryan Olesen and Peter Furler, Newsboys; Hearn

And the beat goes on...

Casting Crowns, the Christian market's "fastest-selling" new artist in 2003, continues to climb *The Billboard 200* sales chart. While the group has consistently claimed the No. 1 spot on the Christian retail chart in recent weeks, at press time its self-titled debut (Provident) had reached No. 79 on *The Billboard 200*. Released just this past September, Casting Crown's CD has already SoundScanned more than 260,000 copies.

New artists **Sarah Kelly** and **Falling Up** recently set a new precedent for each of their record labels. Kelly, whose labelmates include **Relient K**, **Out of Eden**, **Jennifer Knapp**, **GRITS** and **The Katinas**, laid claim to the highest-selling debut week in Gotee Records' 10-year history. The rocker's *Take Me Away* scanned more than 4,100 copies, placing her debut at No. 12 on the Christian retail chart. Falling Up, meanwhile, pulled the same stunt for Tooth & Nail Records. The six-piece rock band scanned almost 3,400 copies of its album, *Crashings*, surpassing Kutless' debut week record.

reel

by Joan Brasher

Shrek 2 and
DVD picks
from artists

Why mess with success?

Shrek 2 (DreamWorks) picks up right where its popular predecessor left off: with animated lovebirds Shrek and Fiona heading off into matrimonial bliss after he rescues her from the evil Lord Farquaad. In part *deux*, they're back from the honeymoon; and Shrek has to face the scariest challenge of all: meeting the in-laws, who, incidentally, don't know their daughter has married an ogre. **Mike Myers** (of the *Austin Powers* franchise, *Dr. Seuss' The Cat in the Hat*) returns as the voice of his Greenness, with **Cameron Diaz** (*There's Something About Mary*, *Charlie's Angels*) as Fiona, **John Lithgow** ("3rd Rock From the Sun," *A Civil Action*) as the evil prince and **Eddie Murphy** (*Dr. Dolittle*, *The Nutty Professor*) as the wisecracking Donkey. Fiona's parents are voiced by British acting legends **Julie Andrews** (*The Sound of Music*, *Mary Poppins*) and **John Cleese** (*A Fish Called Wanda*, *Harry Potter*), and **Antonio Banderas** (*The Mask of Zorro*, *Spy Kids*) and **Rupert Everett** (*My Best Friend's Wedding*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*) are in the cast list as well. Myers' portrayal of this kind-hearted monster is this comic genius at his best.



I recently spoke with some of the cast and crew of **The Laws of Attraction**, including director **Peter Howitt** (*Sliding Doors*, *Antitrust*). The film concerns two lawyers who spontaneously get married and how they handle their unexpected situation. Howitt explained it was

important to him that the script emphasize the irony that people often don't get passionate about their marriage until they are in divorce court, fighting over who gets what. "Maybe their marriage could be saved," he said, "if they had used some of that passion to save the marriage." A good point indeed. Lead actors **Julianne Moore** (*The Hours*, *Far From Heaven*) and **Pierce Brosnan** (*James Bond* franchise), each happily married, echoed that sentiment. But I'll let you be the judge on whether or not you think this film is good marriage seminar material or not.

That's all I've got, folks. Stay tuned, and I'll see you at the movies.

Favorite DVDs From
Your Favorite Artists:

Chris Rice: One of my favorite "feel-good" movies is Kenneth Branagh's 1993 version of William Shakespeare's play "**Much Ado About Nothing**." This movie has all the typical elements of good Shakespeare: fun, treachery, irony, tension, mistaken identities and falling in love. This one's not for kids because of a few brief scenes and some colorful language (PG-13). But the scenery is beautiful and inspiring, and the music is great. The actors, especially **Emma Thompson** (*Love Actually*, *Sense and Sensibility*), **Kenneth Branagh** (*Hamlet*, *Othello*) and **Denzel Washington** (*Antwone Fisher*, *Training Day*), do a superb job helping the modern viewer understand the sometimes-difficult Shakespearean English. The story is timeless and leaves me with a huge smile everytime!



Nicole C. Mullen: **The Count of Monte Cristo** is still one of my all-time faves! I love seeing how God brings about justice in our lives and in our everyday situations. Even when the main character [played by **Jim Caviezel**, *The Passion of The Christ*] is wrongly accused, eventually God causes everything to turn around.

Do You Hear
What I Hear?

Did you know some of your favorite Christian artists have music featured in new movies? It's true. Check here for the latest updates!

MOVIE: **Ella Enchanted**, starring Anne Hathaway (*The Princess Diaries*)

ARTIST: **Jump5**

SONG: "Walkin' On Sunshine" (*Accelerate*, Sparrow)

The field for this month's Ones to Watch is flush with talent and diversity—there's girl-band power pop (BarlowGirl), hard rock with worshipful flair (Building 429), compelling singer-songwriter edge (Bethany Dillon) and classic R&B vocals backed by pop, rock and gospel (Anthony Evans). Here's a little of what came from CCM's time with each of these fast-rising up-and-comers.



* ANTHONY Evans

He's the Son of a Preacher Man.

When your father is an internationally renowned preacher named Tony Evans, expectations can run high. Just ask Anthony Evans. Hang on, though: This isn't a father-son drama. Evans says his family is his earthly anchor. But after touring with Kirk Franklin and making his own mark with a classy, diverse, debut album, *Even More* (INO), Evans is finally learning what it means to be himself in the sight of God.

CCM: Your album is a careful blend of styles. Was it a challenge to mix things up so the songs didn't all sound like one particular genre?

ANTHONY: One of the songs, "Restore Me," has 10 different versions! So, yes, it was a challenge to meld all my styles.

CCM: Tell me about the first time you met Kirk Franklin.

ANTHONY: It was only for a few minutes at his in-laws' house in 1998 while I was on break from college. My dad—as dads do—told Kirk I was on a music scholarship at a school in Virginia, and I was like, "OK, that's enough about music." I was familiar with who he was, of course... and later on he heard me sing.

CCM: You come from a very well-known family. Have you ever put pressure on yourself to perform or excel because of how successful your father is?

ANTHONY: That's been huge. A lot of where this record comes from is based on that. It's about realizing that I don't have to perform. Being Tony Evans Jr., riding the coattails, smiling, kissing the babies... I really struggled with that internally. But my parents have always been very involved and supportive. They really live what they preach.



BETHANY Dillon

15 Going on 30

Bethany Dillon is a 15-year-old who sings, plays and writes like a woman twice, if not three times, her age. Her musicianship and song craft are really adult fare—not that she's disinterested in connecting with her peers. As she notes regarding "Beautiful," the top 10 pop single from her new self-titled debut, "I'm a teenager. I have a new zit every day; my clothes don't always fit right; my appearance consumes my thoughts. The song is about that struggle."

CCM: What were you doing before you made your debut?

BETHANY: I made an indie CD when I was 11, got signed to Sparrow when I was 13 or 14 (in junior high). I was still learning how to play guitar and going to youth group. I'm 15 now, and I feel like my time before was a launching pad. I was growing, reading and writing a lot, developing my voice.

CCM: The way you got signed is pretty interesting. What's the story?

BETHANY: The summer after I made my indie CD, I went to a church camp; and Solomon's Wish came there to perform. My youth pastor said I should play a couple songs for them. They know [EMI-CMG Label Group Vice President of A&R] Brad O'Donnell and told him to check out my CD. The next day Brad flew to Colorado for a wedding, and at the reception he sat at a table with a kid I went to camp with... who happened to have a copy of my CD! Then when Brad got home, there was a message from Rick Cua saying he needed to hear me.

CCM: Have any artists in particular inspired you?

BETHANY: Jennifer Knapp is the reason I started playing guitar. I am so a rocker chick! I'm also addicted to Sara Groves; I listen to her all the time.

CCM: Why do you want to play music?

BETHANY: I don't want to promote myself; I want to promote Jesus. I'm young, but I love God. When I was 10, God took hold of me. I really want to do what God has called me to do.





BARLOW Girl

Passion and Purity

Its moniker may sound familiar because of Superchic[k]'s hit single by (almost) the same name—proof that sisters Becca (24), Alyssa (21) and Lauren Barlow (18) actually exist. BarlowGirl's stances on purity, modesty and avoiding the dating trap is all the buzz—as is the sisters' accomplished songwriting and precision playing on a self-titled debut that puts a lot of boy-dominated rockers to shame.

CCM: Are there any artists you particularly admire?

BECCA: Our lyrics and music come from the overflow from our time with God. He really inspires us. But it's not like we don't listen to other music!

LAUREN: We grew up on '50s and '60s music. But the vocal harmonies of the Beatles and The Mamas and the Papas have really influenced us.

CCM: How did you react when you first heard Superchic[k]'s "Barlow Girls"?

LAUREN: We were stunned. We cried a little bit—'cause we're girls. (Laughter) Then we got into our car and started screaming. We couldn't believe someone wrote a song about us. It was so flattering!

ALYSSA: Up to that point, our "don't date" stance got funny reactions sometimes. Not too many people seemed excited about that concept. Then we started asking ourselves, "Is it worth it?" So that song became a huge gift to us; it's helped us stay on our path and has been a great encouragement.

CCM: What do you bring to a very crowded Christian music table that may be different from what's currently on the menu?

LAUREN: I think the difference is how personal our songs are. They're about the struggles we went through. So much of our lives are on the record, and we want to share our lives with the world. We want to challenge kids and show them how big God is. We want them to trust God and give Him their hearts and lives.



BUILDING 429

Under Construction

After three years of roughing it on the indie-rock road, the Building 429 guys now reside on easy street. (Well, not really... but it sure beats driving 16 hours in a van to play for 30 die-hard fans.) The band's hard-edged style mixes seamlessly with its worshipful orientation. This style drew kudos from Sonicflood, who recently took Building 429 out on tour. Since the band recently garnered a No. 1 radio hit with "Glory Define," its popularity is spreading. Here's what vocalist-guitarist Jason Roy and guitarist Paul Bowden had to say about their new musical lives.

CCM: Who did you grow up listening to?

PAUL: We grew up listening to different music. As a collective, we all really like the Goo Goo Dolls and Switchfoot.

JASON: We like Stone Temple Pilots and Collective Soul, too. On a spiritual basis, Steven Curtis Chapman has lived his faith on his sleeve, and he's the one guy in Nashville I'm super jazzed about meeting some day. In 15 years, when we look back on our career, I hope it parallels his.

CCM: You're in the studio at this very moment. What are you cooking up?

JASON: We're working on our full-length debut; it comes out in August or September. It'll have three songs from the *Glory Defined* EP, plus nine new songs. It's a good statement about who we are. You can hear every one of our influences on the record.

CCM: You've toured with Sonicflood, a worship rock act. In what ways do you see Building 429 as a worship group, if at all?

JASON: Worship has always been part of our set. And when I think about our music, worship comes through in the way we write, too. "Glory Defined" isn't a typical worship-sounding song, but it's still worship. When we play, we're quenching our own thirst for worship; and it's cool that people can worship along with us. It's totally a God thing.





Imagine losing nine people you care about in less than three months. That's exactly what MercyMe is experiencing at the height of success.

By David Jenison
Photos by David Edmonson





"MY WIFE'S ONLY BROTHER, CHRIS, WAS KILLED IN A CAR wreck on Jan. 3," says lead singer and primary songwriter Bart Millard, sitting with his MercyMe bandmates backstage at the Charleston Civic Center. "Chris was the eighth person to pass away in a four-week period who was somehow connected to our lives."

MercyMe's new album, *Undone* (INO), had essentially wrapped by the time of the auto accident; but the group quickly recorded and included "Homesick," a memorial inspired by this domino-like string of fatalities. Hitting the road in preparation for the new disc's arrival, the six-member band took time in the Mountain State capital (Charleston, W.V.) to discuss the new album; yet Millard's cell phone buzzes several times during the interview. He politely ignores the phone calls as he continues discussing the anguish of losing eight loved ones, all the while not knowing he'd just lost a ninth.

"I Can Only Imagine," the group's career song inspired by the death of Millard's father, catapulted MercyMe into the mainstream in 2003, capping a series of successful runs for a song first released in 1999. "Imagine" made its debut on the group's self-released disc *The Worship Project*, which went on to sell 60,000 copies and helped the group land a contract with INO Records. The song reappeared on its 2001 label bow, *Almost There*, on its way to winning a Dove Award for "Song of the Year" and turning MercyMe into Christian music's fastest-selling new group that year. Remarkably, the band was already supporting its follow-up album, *Spoken For*, when Dallas' Wild-FM spun the song as a gag to silence an eager fan who kept requesting it. One spin later, the station's phone lines fired up, the song went to No. 1, and the "Imagine" radio wave began sweeping the FM dial from coast to coast.

Whereas "Imagine" paints a celestial portrait for those who have left us, "Homesick" addresses death from another perspective. Millard explains, "The difference with 'Homesick' is that it talks about those who are stuck around

here after someone passes away. When you lose somebody, you learn what being homesick is really about. It's a hard thing. It shapes who you are."

The first loss came early this past holiday season. A friend five months pregnant with twins lost her babies; but with the pregnancy so far along, the doctors had to induce labor to remove the deceased infants. Millard, who sang "Imagine" at the babies' funeral, went home that night and wrote the chorus to "Homesick," though he couldn't write much more. "I didn't want to fake my way through it," he says, explaining why he didn't finish the song that night. "My dad passed away 13 years ago, and I just couldn't recall what such a tragedy felt like."

Throughout the month of December, the names of lost loved ones piled up as tragedy struck the families of band members, management and several hometown friends. The eighth casualty, thought to be the last, involved Millard's 20-year-old brother-in-law. "Needless to say, what I didn't remember came back quickly," says Millard. "We finished 'Homesick' and sang it at Chris' funeral." After a pause, he adds, "We never meant to write a sequel to 'Imagine.'"

A few hours after the interview, MercyMe takes the stage, performing favorites from its platinum-selling albums, *Almost There* and *Spoken For* (INO). Fanned across an enormous stage, the six members—Millard, guitarist Mike Scheuchzer, keyboardist Jim Bryson, bassist Nathan Cochran, drummer Robby Shaffer and six-string newcomer Barry Graul—deliver a multimedia concert experience sure to keep the most ADHD-prone kids engaged. Just under an hour into the set, the band leads into "Homesick"; and Millard breaks down. "I just learned a few hours ago that my uncle died," says the singer from the stage, sobbing heavily.

Millard struggles to maintain his composure. He tells about the eight people he's lost in the last few months and admits to the difficulty in accepting how yet another loved one could be taken. Having played such a major role in

Millard's childhood, the death of his uncle feels overwhelmingly raw. With his confession, the crowd waits for a spiritual spin; but Millard gives none. Instead, he says all he feels is "bitterness."

Earlier, during the interview, the singer spoke openly about all the tragedies and tried to put them in a spiritual context. In this painfully personal moment onstage, however, not even his own music—which has helped millions cope with their own losses—could help comfort the singer's sorrow. When the show ends, Millard quickly departs the venue. Four days later, he would help bury his mother's brother, who died suddenly from a brain aneurysm.

In a brief follow-up phone interview days later, Millard reflects on the show in West Virginia, "Whether you are the most godly person or not, after a while you feel you deserve a break. I'm not saying that's the right way to feel, but it's the human side. That's what hit me when I first heard the news. I felt like Job in the Old Testament saying, 'Enough is enough.' All these emotions went through my head—anger, grief and especially bitterness. 'This can't be happening after everything we've gone through.' I kept thinking, 'Why is it that all the good people are going through this?' I'm talking about those who lost their lives and not just that they died but *how* they died. Even with all the right Sunday school answers, sometimes the best thing you can do is be brutally honest and say, 'This hurts a whole lot and really ticks me off.' God is big enough to handle it." Millard also says that being home with his family has helped dramatically. He adds, "The best thing for me was to go home and be a nephew who lost his uncle, to hold my wife and son and cry for them and not worry about the next city on a tour. I'm still dealing with it. I'm dealing with a lot."

Earlier in the day before the Charleston show, Millard referred to MercyMe as "the funeral band," a reference to the number of people who have played "Imagine" at memorial services. Survivors find comfort in the song's emotional

theme, but the group's sensitivity to such losses, sadly, comes from personal experience. When the singer mentions how Bryson lost both of his parents (His father, Dan, died Dec. 10 from congestive heart failure; his mother, Elizabeth, two years earlier), the keyboardist's eyes dart downward as if he hopes he's not asked to comment. Of course, "Imagine," itself, arose out of the 1991 death of Millard's father.

"My father's death shaped everything I do in this band and not just because our 'career song' was written out of that experience," says Millard. "It's the way I relate to people, the way I do things, the way I approach things. At that age, watching my dad wither away made me grow up really, really fast. It's probably the pinnacle of my life."

The Texas-raised singer was just a high-school freshman when his father was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, a disease with one of the lowest survival rates. Millard was 3 when his parents divorced and when his mother remarried and relocated to San Antonio, he and his older brother stayed with their father. During these years, the youngest describes his father as having "a really bad temper and being a really abusive guy. There was no 'time out' when I was growing up."

During his own youth, Millard's father became a huge football star in high school and college and thought he would be drafted into the pros. Instead, he found himself raising two boys and making around \$26,000 a year building bridges for the highway department. "There was so much in my dad's life that didn't happen," recalls Millard. "He had the whole 'what if' game the rest of his life."

His older brother had already left for college when the cancer was discovered, so it was just Millard and his terminally ill father, who coped with it together each day. In their case, the sickness brought a change of heart. The once abusive father reinvigorated his faith and gained a *(continued on p.37)*



MeettheBand

JAMES PHILIP BRYSON

Instrument: Keyboards

DOB: Jan. 11

Favorite Food: Leo's BBQ

Born/Raised: Born Joplin, Mo.;
reared in Clinton, Mo.

Football Fave: Kansas City Chiefs

Worst show: "I was falling off the back of the stage at least two or three times with my accordion. We used to play really small stages, and I got wedged in between the stage and the wall and couldn't get out."

BART MILLARD

Instrument: Vocals

DOB: Dec. 1

Favorite Food: Tex-Mex

Born/Raised: Greenville, Texas

Football Fave: Dallas Cowboys

Worst show: "I had ear monitors on, and something wiggled out on the microphone. It was the loudest thing I'd ever heard in my ears. It shocked me, and I couldn't get my 'ears' out fast enough. You know when the grenade goes off in *Saving Private Ryan*, and he goes deaf for a couple seconds? No lie, I went completely blank. We watched the video later, and you can see me turn pale white. When my hearing finally came back, I was singing in a completely different key. In fact, I couldn't have been singing any more off-key than I was."

ROBIN (ROBBY) TROY SHAFFER

Instrument: Drums

DOB: Nov. 14

Favorite Food: Mexican

Born/Raised: Born Tifton, Ga.;
reared in Columbia, Mo.

Football Fave: Kansas City Chiefs

Worst show: "I started a key in the wrong time signature. The song was in 4/4, and I started in 6/8. It's hard to recover in the intro of a song when you are in the wrong time."

MICHAEL (MIKE) JOHN SCHEUCHZER

Instrument: Guitar

DOB: June 8

Favorite Food: His wife's
chicken rolls

Born/Raised: Born
Portland, Maine.;
reared in Bartow, Fla.

Football Fave: Tampa Bay
Buccaneers

Worst show: "It was the night I forgot to retune my guitar and thought it was broken. We were doing spontaneous worship, and we went from one song to another. I switched from acoustic to electric between songs, and I forgot to put my capo back on. I was retuning, stepping on the pedals, and then I finally grabbed another guitar thinking the first one was broken."



photo by Tony Baker

BARRY GRAUL

Instrument: Guitar

DOB: May 18

Favorite Food: Sushi

Born/Raised: Baltimore, Md.

Football Fave: Buffalo Bills

Worst show: "We were filming a DVD, and my strings didn't feel right. Is this the right gauge strings? My tech polished my guitar that day when he changed the strings, and he'd somehow cranked the bridge all the way down against the body of the machine, so the strings were hitting against the pickup. It was unplayable. I had to pick up a different guitar, and it threw me off the whole night."

NATHAN COCHRAN

Instrument: Bass

DOB: May 26

Favorite Food: Sandwiches

Born/Raised: Columbia, Mo.

Football Fave: Kansas City Chiefs

Worst show: "Mine was last night. I never before had a crowd so 'mess with my head' that it messed up my playing. When we started, it was like we scared them. They looked at us like there was something wrong. I'm like, 'Is the sound system on?' People were rubbing their faces. I have no idea what happened."



(continued from p.35) whole new perspective. "My dad went from being the guy I was afraid I'd become to the person I most wanted to grow up and be like," says Millard. "We went from a very strained relationship to becoming best friends."

Because the cancer was slow growing, his father didn't become seriously ill until his son's senior year in high school. Every few months, he would spend about a month in the hospital; and, for the times he stayed home, Millard served as his primary caregiver. The family used Hospice and in-home nurses until an in-home nurse died in a car accident about a month into the care. Painfully affected by the death, Millard's father didn't want another full-time nurse, which meant even more responsibility would fall on his son's young shoulders. "I had to start learning how to give him his shots in the middle of the night," Millard recalls. "It was my senior year, but on weekends, I wouldn't get to go anywhere. I'd be home, and every three hours I would give him shots that took 20 minutes to push through his IV. I was taking care of my dad as an 18-year-old. If the nurses moved him too much, he started crying and called for me. That's something you don't ever want to hear as a teenager."

By the time he was a college freshman, his 320-pound father had withered down to 118 pounds. Throughout this time, Millard often used made-up words to avoid cursing, which eventually turned into a game between father and son. Millard would say one of these fake words, his father would accuse him of swearing, and the two would humorously go back and forth. Oddly enough, this game played a role in the last words Millard's father ever spoke.

When their father had been in a semi-coma for two weeks, his older brother flew into town, thinking it would be the last time to see his father. Checking on his father one morning, Millard recalls, "His feet were cold, and it freaked me out; so I ran to get the nurse. When I turned to go out of the room, my sister-in-law screamed because my dad sat up and was reaching for me. I ran back over and took his hand. My brother came in and took his other hand. We were sitting there. This was it: the moment."

With his boys in hand, the father's breathing slowly began to stagger. "He would exhale; then about 30 seconds later, he'd take another breath. The time between breaths kept getting longer and longer. All of a sudden, I got so anxious I yelled at the top of my lungs, 'D--- it! Breathe!'" Suddenly, the breathing started to pick up, at least momentarily. "My dad turned, looked at me, smiling, and said, 'I got you.' After that, he closed his eyes and passed away."

Among so many tears, Millard had to laugh. Though his older brother didn't know the reason for the laughter, he later said it helped him feel that everything was going to be OK. Shortly after, Millard wrote the lyrics to "I Can Only Imagine," even though the song would not be unveiled for many years. Remarkably, the song might never have surfaced if not for a conversation late in the illness. With his own sports-related dreams falling flat, the father always criticized Millard for pursuing music. Millard says his father thought it was a joke.

"Right before he passed away," the son recalls, "my dad said, 'Whatever you do, just be passionate about it. Don't go for the 9-to-5 just because you have to. Whatever makes you happy, whatever fulfills you, do it.' I'll tell you, that was just what I needed to hear to stay broke for another six or seven years doing the band!"

From such a compelling back story, it's easy to see how Millard became such a prominent frontman. He wears his emotions openly, whether from the stage or in his songs. After the success of "Imagine," Millard stood out as both the singer and songwriter, and more attention started gravitating his way rather than to the group as a whole. Surprisingly, the band seems unaffected. "One guy has to be the voice, and Bart is the perfect example," says Cochran. "We can all speak for the band, but we have that one guy who really connects with the crowd for all of us. It's like that in most bands."

Scheuchzer adds, "When it first started changing, it was a little culture shock; and we had to get used to it. Ultimately, each person has his place. Like the body of Christ, not everyone has to be the head of the body. Not everyone has to be the voice."

Specifying some of the shifting scenarios, Millard remarks, "It gets weird when someone asks me to sing on an album or make an appearance without the whole band. I didn't sign up to be a solo act. We're learning that we have the option to say that the band is available but not me alone. We are finally learning to say, 'No.' We like to say we were in 'promotion mode' for so long, but now we're in 'protection mode.'"

Following such a wildly successful run in 2003, MercyMe had several new dynamics to work through in approaching *Undone*. The band was given substantially more resources to make the new album, arguably because the label hopes to ride the buzz into a new hit single. Other Christian acts have landed mainstream hits, and sometimes that one taste can leave a band sour at having to settle for anything less. Whether the band thought "Imagine" was a fluke or its priorities simply stretch higher than FM glory, MercyMe stands out as one of the few crossover successes to stick with its previously



“
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 They don’t get
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 ”

established approach to lyrical content, concerts and interviews. “When a song like ‘Imagine’ gets played in Dallas because someone dared them to play it, we’re sitting here scratching our heads like everyone else,” admits Millard. “So what do you do now? What can we do? ‘Imagine’ is what we stood for, and we aren’t going to change if the next single doesn’t get embraced because it’s ‘too godly.’” Cochran adds, “We are called to be worship leaders. The mainstream stuff is nice icing on the cake, but that’s not the whole picture.”

“We’ve been missionaries to the mainstream, but the church is still our home,” continues Millard. “We’re going out to share the gospel; but if we lose sight of where we came from, we might as well hang it up.”

Though “Homesick” carries a similar theme to the band’s smash hit, *Undone*’s first single will actually be “Here With Me,” a mid-tempo worship song with a Coldplay musical vibe. The song, written by Millard and outside writer Dan Mukala, puts faith front and center, so the band clearly remains committed to its stalwart spiritual message. Still, *Undone* does reflect some firsts, such as working with outside songwriters, employing the London Symphony on four songs and actually writing and recording the music before penning any of the lyrics. As far as putting the music first, Millard notes, “Instead of my words swaying the music, lots of what they [the band] did gave me a canvas with which to write. We’ve been making records for 10 years, so anything that sparks creativity, whether it’s a stretch or doing things backwards, is very much welcomed.”

Another major change is the inclusion of a sixth member, guitarist Barry Graul (Jaci Velasquez, Whitecross). The new six-stringer remarks, “We first met on ‘Festival con Dios’ when I played with tobyMac, and we did the ‘Go

Show’ tour together when I played with Audio Adrenaline. The relationship developed from there. At the time, I was tired of just being a sideman. I wanted to be a part of something, and MercyMe gave me the opportunity.”

“The five of us have done this for so long,” says Bryson, “that with a new member, it’s suddenly like starting over. Barry is a breath of fresh air. Plus, he’s older than me; so I’m no longer the oldest guy in the band.” Cochran jokingly adds, “It’s great because Barry allows us to park closer at grocery stores, gets us the senior discount at Denny’s and buys us movie tickets at a cheaper rate!”

With *Undone*, the MercyMe guys also took the time to define who they really are and what they do. Is MercyMe a rock band, a worship band, a crossover act, a church act, and how should all this affect where it goes from here? “We always say we are a rock band, but ‘Imagine’ is the poster child of adult contemporary music,” laughs Millard. “We are worship leaders first and foremost, but part of our calling is to broaden the definition of worship. We are trying to show worship as a lifestyle and as relevant on mainstream radio.”

Looking at the big picture, “Imagine” is the first contemporary worship song to crack Top 40 radio since Sister Janet Mead’s double-platinum selling version of “The Lord’s Prayer” in 1974. MercyMe’s success provides fresh inspiration for other worship groups; but, for some, witnessing this success can muddy one’s priorities. “There is nothing worse than an unsettled worship leader!” says Bryson, inciting the entire band to laugh. “It’s true, man. We get it all the time. ‘What I’m doing now is just a stepping stone to something bigger.’ Well, if you don’t think the 10 people you play for are just as important as the five thousand we play for, you aren’t going to get any bigger.”

Shaffer adds, "People will say, 'I just want to be doing what you're doing.' They don't get it. They are doing what we're doing. We are all leading worship. They think there's something bigger for them, and there may be; but the chances are it won't come across their path before they are content with where God has them at that time."

When MercyMe speaks of making the most of each level, it comes from not taking the express elevator to the top. In fact, the guys jokingly call themselves "the longest overnight success ever," a comment reinforced by the fact that *Undone* is actually their ninth album. In its decade together, MercyMe tackled every opportunity, tried every angle and slowly grew into a group prepared for a larger stage. Millard, who started the band with Bryson and Scheuchzer, remarks, "Our goal was just to be a worship band, but we didn't really understand why. Back in 1994, there was no label putting out worship records unless you were a worship leader. We thought maybe we could make a decent living doing church camps; but bottom line, we just loved what we were doing."

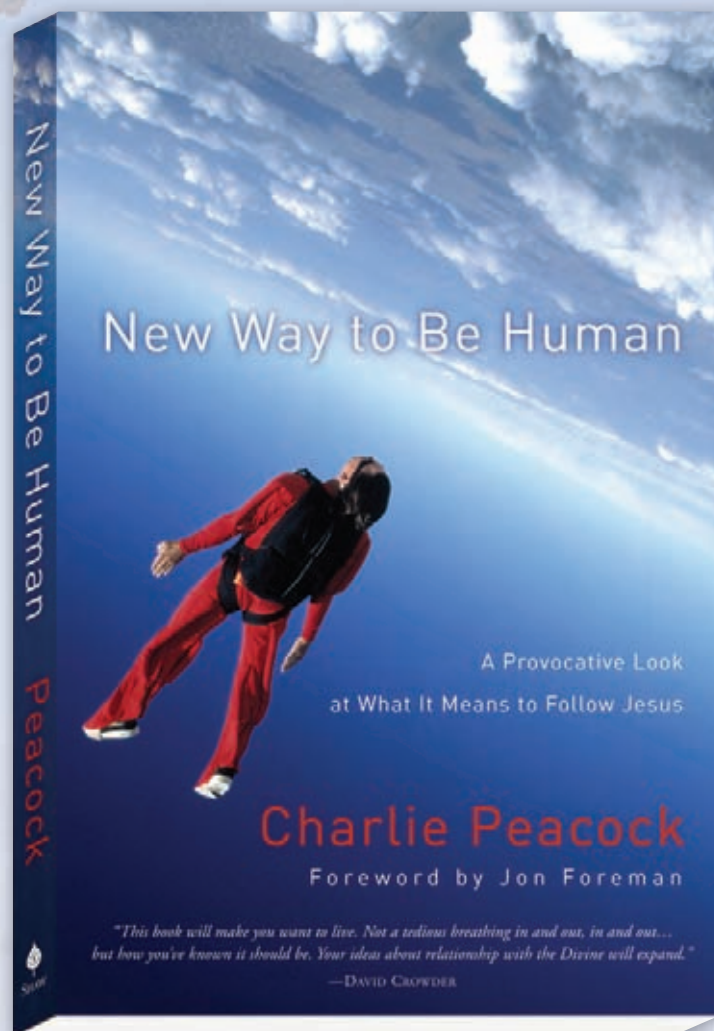
The band recorded its first independent, *Pleased to Meet You*, the year they started; but MercyMe soon chased the myth that a band must move to Nashville to land that ever-elusive recording contract. "We moved to a place called Inglewood; and, if you lived there, you'd understand why we called it 'Inglehood,'" says Bryson, who's ironically sporting a Nashville t-shirt. "There were gunshots, police helicopters and liquor stores as far as the eye can see." Regretfully, the time spent in Music City yielded no fruit. Cochran notes, "When you move to Nashville looking for a deal, you basically come across as desperate." MercyMe eventually headed back to Dallas to join a ministry there. Mark Matlock, who took over a ministry Dawson McAllister started, recruited the band to travel with him to student conferences, youth conventions and other events. During this time, MercyMe gained huge coast-to-coast exposure while continuing to self-release albums like *Traces of Rain Volumes 1 & 2*, *The Need* and *The Worship Project*. The band was just finishing up its sixth independent album, *Look*, when the record labels first heard "I Can Only Imagine." The band was signed soon after.

After years of diligent effort, MercyMe can say the roads-less-traveled took the band to a plateau it never imagined. Only when the guys gave up on Nashville did the band land a record deal. Only by focusing on the Christian market did they land one of the biggest crossover hits in Christian music history. More than anything, MercyMe's journey inspires faith and hope, two virtues Millard surely needs in his days of mourning.

In the end, it was the unexpected twists and turns of the band's journey that inspired the new album title, *Undone*. Millard concludes, "We had our plans for what we were going to do, but when the bigger picture happened, all of our plans came unraveled. We don't know what tomorrow will hold. When you make your own plans, you suddenly find yourself undone; and that's exactly where God wants us in the first place." **ccm**

Charlie Peacock asks...

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PRODUCERS

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They are in-demand leaders, mentors, innovators. Yet, unless you regularly read album liner notes, you may not even recognize their names, much less their faces.

Meet the Producers.

By Michael TenBrink



Photos by
Lee Steffen



PRODUCERS ARE UNQUESTIONABLY SOME OF THE MOST INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE MAKING MUSIC TODAY. They often determine the direction of entire projects, sonically and sometimes even thematically. Good producers stretch artists beyond their comfort zones, encouraging them to reach for a higher level in their art. Through their creative vision for an album, producers craft, mold and refine until it elevates from “good” to “better.” Occasionally their efforts can result in a landmark work that inspires us even years afterward. A *Lead Me On* (Amy Grant), a *Welcome to Paradise* (Randy Stonehill), a *Winds of Heaven*, *Stuff of Earth* (Rich Mullins)—the stuff legends are made of.

We recently had the opportunity to sit down one-on-one with five of today’s leading producers, so enjoy a rare look into the hearts and minds of these unsung music heroes, as they discuss trends, controversies, ministry, Whitney Houston and the future of Christian music.

CCM: It seems like 10-15 years ago, it was fairly common for one producer to be at the helm of an entire record, while now it is very common for there to be anywhere from two to 12 producers, depending on the artist and the genre of music. Why do you think that is, and, from your perspective, is that a good or a bad thing?

Michael Omartian: I think it really just comes down to taking people who’ve had a certain amount of success and saying, “If we put five producers together who do well, it increases our odds of doing well.” The trouble is the albums are pretty safe sounding—kind of a homogenized mish-mash of songs you hope you can get a hit with.

Steve Hindalong: I think it’s because of radio. And that happens in the pop world, too. I’m not really comfortable with that, not really excited about doing just a couple of songs. I still think of an album as a whole, of the entire scope of the project. Although it can be successfully done; Nichole Nordeman’s latest album was a good example.

Tedd T: It really depends on what sort of musical vision the artist or group has in mind. Artists looking for an eclectic mix of music can benefit from each producer bringing in his or her different musical influences. But if you’re talking about a band that’s going after a particular direction and sound, having several producers can be a hindrance. Then you want someone who can help you define that sound and keep you focused.

Brown Bannister: It’s kind of like everything else that we’ve done in Christian music: We sort of modeled ourselves after the secular market. It seems like kids, at least when I watch my own kids, they just check out things; and then they download. (My kids don’t download unless they pay for it.) They download everything, and then they put it in a playlist. With that in view, this sort of album-sculpting and album production is kind of falling out of vogue, in a sense, because of the way people listen to music now. Still, just being old school, I still prefer full albums.

CCM: As digital downloading increases through legal sites like iTunes and the new Napster, there is talk throughout the industry at large that the full-length, 10-song CD as we know it is on its way out and that single-song releases from artists are the wave of the future. What is your reaction to that, both from a professional standpoint and a music-lover’s standpoint?

Bannister: You know, part of it’s current technology, part of it is that I just don’t think the music business, in general, has done a great job at providing value and content of albums as a whole.

CCM: Which I think has driven consumers to the point where they’d rather buy only one or two songs off an album.

Bannister: When I go online to iTunes to buy music, I may take two songs off the record because a lot of

times the other songs aren’t consistent. No A&R person says, “Hey, let’s do a record with only two or three great songs on it.” But somebody, including producers, somebody’s not holding the bar high enough on material.

Omartian: I think it’s a temporary stopgap. I think everybody’s trying to find a way to reduce costs. And I think this is one way out; I don’t think it’s the way it’s going to be, just the way it’s going to be right now.

Hindalong: It’s terribly disappointing. I’m all about creating a 45-minute experience [of a whole album], so as a producer and a songwriter, it’s kind of scary.

Monroe Jones: I still think in terms of writing a book or making a movie when I am creating an album. I want it to be a complete listening experience where when you are done. And I feel like, in that regard, I hate to see that happen. When I first heard about this, I was just thinking “Oh no, please don’t do this.” But you know, that’s what the music business came out of in the ‘50s and ‘60s. You could argue that what broke the Beatles was a singles-oriented market. But I do think that great music will always be heard; that’s the bottom line. But yeah, it’s still scary.

Tedd T: The exciting thing about singles is that they give the artist a chance to have the record company’s full attention devoted to one song without going through the often lengthy process of making an entire album. That might well give us at least a glimpse of many more artists. But (continued on p. 44)



★ Brown Bannister ★

Why you know him: He produced or co-produced seven of *The 100 Greatest Albums in Christian Music* according to the book published by Harvest House/CCM in 2001, including the No. 1 honoree, *Lead Me On*, by Amy Grant. Speaking of Grant, Bannister produced her first 10 albums (including the classic *Age to Age*) and has had a hand in all but two of her eight albums since.

But wait; there's more. Bannister has also produced an astonishing range of other talent, from Avalon to Charlie Peacock, Point of Grace to Michael English, Twila Paris to Whiteheart, CeCe Winans to Rachael Lampa, Debby Boone to Kim Hill. He was also at the helm for the now-classic *My Utmost for His Highest* project. Oh, and one more thing: Bannister occasionally co-writes a classic tune such as The Imperials' "Praise the Lord" and Kathy Troccoli's "Stubborn Love." Bannister has received the Dove Award for "Producer of the Year" an unparalleled four times since the award originated in 1994 and at press time is nominated again for the 35th Annual Doves.

Coming Soon: a new Anointed album for Columbia Records, a new "more organic" project from Steven Curtis Chapman and the debut from The Afters on a new label from producer Pete Kipley (MercyMe, Rebecca St. James) and MercyMe's Bart Millard.

Quotable: "I still look at all these other guys and think they're the ones with all the talent."

Dream Gig: Producing James Taylor.

Overheard: "Some of my fondest memories of music-making are with Brown Bannister. He has a great mind for detail and overview. I learned many things working with Brown, primarily: Be humble, grateful, prayerful and uncompromising. He is a giant in the world of production and deservedly so."—Charlie Peacock

★ Steve Hindalong ★

Why you know him: The four-volume "City on a Hill" series is his baby, and he co-wrote the modern classic "God of Wonders" from the first *City* album. He is the co-founder (drummer/lyricist) of the Grammy-nominated and Dove-winning pioneering alternative band The Choir with Derri Daugherty, with whom he still works with regularly. He and Daugherty released two volumes of *At the Foot of the Cross*, a worship project nearly a decade ahead of the "City" series. (Several of the songs from the albums are included on *The Christ: His Passion*, a beautiful anthology piece recently released by Essential Records.) Hindalong produced several songs on Jeremy Camp's *Carried Me: The Worship Project*, as well as two of the standout tracks on *In the Name of Love: Artists United for Africa*—Sixpence None the Richer's "Love Is Blindness" and Nichole Nordeman's "Grace." At press time, he is nominated for "Producer of the Year" for the 35th Annual Dove Awards.

Coming Soon: new projects from bands Cool Hand Luke and Something Like Silas.

Quotable/Dream Gig: "I don't really know how to name someone I'd like to work with because, as producers, we try not to step on someone else's territory. That's a tough question."

Overheard: "Steve was very easygoing and a complete joy to work with. I felt he brought out a different element of creativity in me."—Jeremy Camp

★ Monroe Jones ★

Why you know him: He's produced (or co-produced) many of the major releases from Michael W. Smith's Rocketown Records, including all of Chris Rice's, Shaun Groves' and Ginny Owens' projects (except *Blueprint* EP). Jones has also worked with Margaret Becker, Lincoln Brewster, Caedmon's Call, Paul Colman Trio, LaRue and on the *Jonah: A VeggieTales Movie* soundtrack. He's produced four gold-selling projects for Third Day, including both *Offerings* albums and the Grammy-winning *Come Together*. Jones recently started his own record label, Eb+Flo, with his first artist being Steven Delopoulos, formerly of Burlap to Cashmere.

Coming Soon: a few new songs on Chris Rice's best-of, *Short Term Memories* (Rocketown) new ForeFront artist Kimberly Perry, new Eb+Flo artists Holly Williams (daughter of Hank Jr.), Jeremy Casella and a new project from '60s guitar icon Dwayne Eddy.

Quotable: "We need to be challenged as [music] listeners."

Dream Gigs: Producing Paul McCartney and U2.

Overheard: Monroe Jones has been one of my best friends for almost 20 years, so from the very beginning when I started recording, there was nobody I trusted more with my songs and my work. I've learned most of what I know musically from him.—Chris Rice

★ Michael Omartian ★

Why you know him: He produced or co-produced four of *The 100 Greatest Albums in Christian Music*. He's in his fourth decade as a major music-biz player. He's worked with everyone from Steely Dan to the Four Tops, Donna Summer to Rod Stewart, Christopher Cross to Loggins & Messina (topped the pop charts in 1975). He is reported to be the first producer in music history to have No. 1 songs in three separate decades: the '70s, '80s and '90s.

In Christian music, he's worked with Gary Chapman, 4Him, Amy Grant (including five songs on the five-million-plus selling *Heart in Motion*), The Imperials (He co-wrote "The Trumpet of Jesus" with his wife, best-selling author Stormie Omartian.) and Kathy Troccoli, among others. In the '70s, his group Rhythm Heritage also performed the actual theme songs to several TV series such as "S.W.A.T." and "Baretta." Omartian also recorded several solo albums, including 1974's *White Horse*, named one of CCM's "Top 100 Greatest."

Coming Soon: debut from the "incredible" Joshua Payne, songs on the new stateside album from U.K. sensation Cliff Richard and a concept album to accompany Stormie's new book *The Prayer that Changes Everything: The Hidden Power of Praise*.

Quotable: "I don't look at anything I've done as an accomplishment. I look at my response to a call from God as an accomplishment."

Dream Gigs: Producing Bono, Sting and a film score.

Overheard: "Omar is, by far, the most talented person we have ever had the experience of knowing. His ability to make a song come alive is rivaled by no one. And would you believe he's a great person, too? It's as much fun to hang out with the guy as it is to work with him. That's rare. He'll definitely go down in music history as one of the all-time greats."—4HIM's Andy Chrisman



★ Tedd T ★

Why you know him: Tedd Tjornham, much better known as "Tedd T," got his start at Paisley Park, the Minneapolis studio owned by pop superstar Prince. T's since gone on to produce recordings for Avalon, Margaret Becker, Delirious, Stacie Orrico and Tammy Trent. He's also produced quite a bit for Rebecca St. James, including her Grammy-winning *Pray*. He recently started his own label, Teleprompt Records, in partnership with Word Records.

Coming Soon: projects from MuteMath, Antonio Neal, Natalie Warner, Maximilian Williams and Sanctus Real, as well as Jeremy Camp remixes and a live album/DVD from Stacie Orrico.

Quotable: "It's a great time to be making music."

Dream Gigs: Producing Bjork, No Doubt and Frou Frou.

Overheard: "I truly believe I would not have the platform I have in my music and ministry today if it weren't for Tedd T. His commitment to experimenting with sounds and pushing the boundaries musically greatly inspires me whenever I work with him."—Rebecca St. James

(continued from p.42) also as a music lover, my worry is that a singles-driven market doesn't introduce me to an artist in depth. Sometimes it takes those 10 or 12 songs on a CD to really get to know the heart of a singer/songwriter or a band, to paint a picture of what an artist is called to say.

CCM: I think it's fairly common knowledge to the American public now because of the efforts of the RIAA that illegal downloading has had a negative impact on CD sales. And the declining sales has had an impact on record companies, at least partially resulting in mergers, consolidations and thousands of layoffs. But I think what a lot of people don't stop to think about is the trickle-down effect it has on producers, engineers, studio players, etc. How much of an impact have the woes of the music business had on you personally and on those that you work with or hire when you

are on a project?

Jones: It affects me as a producer because labels are either not going to do projects, or they're going to look for another route. There are many amazing engineers and session players that in the last year and a half are just not getting the work they used to get. Numerous times I've had guys tell me in the studio, "Man, this is the first work I've had this month."

Hindalong: Yeah, everyone is affected because record budgets are down. You don't use strings; you hire five players instead of 20. It affects everything.

Tedd T: It's hard to see so many talented people and their families struggling because there's less [work] to go around. All we can do is try to look at this from a positive standpoint, which means taking this as an opportunity to find ways to be more

effective and more efficient while staying focused on making great music.

Omartian: Somehow, to me, the richness of the music is a little bit gone. And yet we go, "Oh, why isn't it selling?" Well, because it's crap. I'm sorry; it's snobbish of me to say so, but we can blame it on downloads, blame it on whomever we want to blame it on. What it comes down to is: Are we making music good enough where someone's going to go, "I'm not just going to download a song on my computer. I'm interested in the whole thing, and I want to go out and buy this thing." And to me that's the issue.

Bannister: You know, for artists who I have worked with on a regular basis, a budget now would be 20-40 percent less than what it was just the last time we worked together. It's not always the case. But, in general, that's true. Kids [who are illegally

downloading] just have no concept of how something that seems like an inalienable right affects so many lives.

Omartian: When I go through a struggle when all of a sudden work is kind of drying up, I can always go, "Whatever's happening to us inside the industry, for those who know the Lord, we know that this is not all we have. This is not the end of the road; it's just one step." God really knows about all this stuff; and if we really believe that He's there and He's got His hand on us, then we can live in a relatively peaceful state even though hell is going on all around us.

CCM: Now on to something happier. I think especially over the last four or five years we've seen a substantial shift in the way Christian artists have an impact on the mainstream culture. I think where "crossover" used to be a real rarity—it pretty much used to be just Amy Grant—it's now almost becoming routine to have Stacie Orrico on MTV, Switchfoot on "The Tonight Show" and MercyMe all over multiple formats on the radio. What do you think that means for the future of what we know as the "Christian music industry"?

Bannister: It seems a lot of young people I talk to really don't have an interest in being in "Christian music," per se. But they certainly have a vibrant faith, a vibrant spiritual life and a desire to be "salt."

You know, it used to be when we talked about crossover that the big headline was: "Artist Trying to Dilute the Gospel." I think what we're realizing now is that there *really* are people who are called different places.

About 10 years ago I asked Billy Ray Hearn [founder of Myrrh Records and Sparrow Records] what the big difference was between artists now and artists when he started on the West Coast [during the '70s]. And he said, "Well, artists would come in and just have this burning passion for the gospel, to minister on the beach or to go to Berkeley or college campuses or just take it to the streets or wherever. They would really have a vision about where they wanted to go. And now more often than not, artists managers come in and say, "Where are you going to take my artist?" And that's a huge shift now that we're two or three generations away.

I think it's all about calling. What is your calling? Who are you supposed to speak to? Who are you drawn to, and how are you gifted to communicate?

Omartian: Well, I've done both. I've produced secular artists; I've produced Christian artists; I've produced Christian artists who want to crossover. The more I do this, the more I think what it really comes down to is individual vision for an artist. Jesus said, "If I suffer, you will, too." The decisions that you make to be a testimony for Christ will close certain doors for you. Because the very nature of Christianity is that Jesus said, "I came to bring a

sword." So the whole concept of being popular and being a Christian is an oxymoron. It's a message of love and peace, but it's a divisive message. The Cross is an offense to people who don't understand. It makes people uncomfortable.

Jones: I do think that the last year and a half has been very exciting. I'd love for artists who happen to be Christians to go out into the world and do exactly what's happening with these artists. I think this could be great for Christian music if it means we're pumping that many great artists out into the world who are right up there with their favorite rock & roll acts. I'd love to see the lines melt away.

CCM: Generally speaking, it seems in recent years that Christian music has had trouble developing substantial new artists who are able to maintain and build on their initial success. In a lot of ways this industry is still dominated by Michael W. Smith, Steven Curtis Chapman, Point of Grace, Avalon, Third Day—the same A-level artists who were here five or 10 years ago. Why do you think that is?

Omartian: I don't know the answer to that. To me, what attracts people to these artists you mentioned is the thing called a song. Not an attitude, not a concept but a song. The very people you were talking about, their whole thing was built on songs and songwriting. That's why I remember Beatles tunes;

The advertisement features a photograph of a young man and woman standing in front of a green wooden door. The man is wearing a green t-shirt with a white cross logo and blue jeans. The woman is wearing a yellow t-shirt with a white cross logo and grey pants, carrying an orange jacket. To the right, a dark green rectangular logo with a white 'FBA' and '®' is displayed above the text 'FAITHBASED APPAREL' in green. Below this, the text 'not just another put on' is written in orange. At the bottom right, the phone number '1-888-594-2675' is shown in orange. Across the bottom, the website 'www.faithbasedapparel.com' is written in large white letters.

that's why I remember stuff from 40, 50 years ago—because those songs meant something.

Bannister: I've seen the same thing. I think that, just like on the secular side, it seems like there's not a real long-range development kind of concept on the part of labels. You don't see labels sticking with artists. But I don't want to be too hard on labels. Maybe things aren't as bleak as we think they are.

Jones: I think that, in my experience, there are artists who can deal with the environment of being successful a little more easily than others. It's almost just a microcosm of what's going on in the pop world. And it's almost more confusing because you're going, "Hey, wait a minute now. I know these are brothers and sisters who like this music. But how do I comprehend this; how do I deal with this?" Also, we have a lot of artists who make a big splash on their first record. But then the system says that six months after that first record comes out, they need to be writing and getting ready for record number two. And it's really hard to expect people to keep up the quality of the material. I mean, they had their whole life to write that first record!

Hindalong: Well, it's a lot more like country music than anything else, isn't it? I think that market is also more of an older audience, one that's not changing very fast. The Bible Belt isn't exactly interested in the next trend. So it's always been safe... obviously the Dove Awards play it safe; they're not really about change. The CCLI [Christian Copyright Licensing International, which tracks song use in churches] chart is the slowest moving chart on Earth. If you get a song in the Top 10, it'll be there for years. Of course, I hope "God of Wonders" stays in the Top 10 for another 10 years! [Laughs] But Christian music has never had an audience that embraces change.

CCM: Other than what we've already touched on, are there any trends you see in Christian music right now? And trends specifically from the production side of things?

Tedd T: The single most exciting thing about modern Christian music is that the palette, the musical language we speak, that we work with has expanded so dramatically. Producers and artists are being encouraged to explore new musical ways to communicate their heart, their faith and their view of Christ at work in today's world. Add the technical achievements of recent years, and you've got a period that is unequalled in diversity, innovation and excitement. It's a great time to be making music.

Jones: I think we're moving into a time where it's more acceptable to have stuff that isn't as slick. I think we're moving back into a time when more artful music is going to be accepted. I hope we're going to see more music that is going to expose artists' hearts.

CCM: All of you, at one point or another, have started a record label. Some of them aren't around any more, and some of them are just getting off the ground. Talk about that process a little bit. What were/are your goals for the labels?

Jones: My concept for Eb+Flo is really just a little boutique label that, I hope, will put artists out there who will cover a lot of territory. I'd like to be progressive with the way this label handles things. I'd like, eventually, to get really heavy into the online delivery of music. The artists I've signed are all very prolific, and I'd like to put out a lot of music with them. I think these are phenomenal artists, and they need to be heard. I really have a heart for artists who are going to push the envelope, not in an indecent way, just in a challenging way. We need to be challenged as listeners. I'll forever crusade for those types of folks.

Tedd T: Teleprompt Records was started out of my desire to go deeper in the world of artist development. I wanted to provide a nurturing environment for artists who could be at home both in Christian and mainstream settings. It was really an extension of what I'd been doing as a producer. The label is structured so that it's small and focused

on one level, a place where we can take the time to search for and refine an artist's vision. And it's large and well-connected on another level so that we can make the best music possible with all the integrity we can bring to the task and to give the artist the best possible chance to flourish.

Hindalong: That idea [starting a label] comes up all the time, but I keep shying away from it more and more. I want to be free to do music for the "wrong" reasons, not just based on what's going to make me the most money. When you get on the label side, it's all about what will sell. It's all about sales. And yeah, I want to succeed; and I want artists to succeed. But the main thing is that I want artists to love their music. And being on a label doesn't have anything to do with that; it's all about "How much success did we have?" And I'm not entirely motivated by that.

Bannister: I might want to be involved with something that has a different focus to it in terms of profitability and ministry and the global work of the church and the Kingdom of God at large. Debbie [his wife] and I have gotten our heads turned around a bit, reoriented and recommitted and revitalized spiritually. I would just love to see some sort of commercial-oriented ventures that were non-profit in status, with all the profits going to different ministry opportunities around the world. Sort of a business model with real low overhead, so that there actually would be profits [laughs]. I think if I did the label thing again, it would be more a model like that. Make it more of a ministry. And not to compete with the "Christian music business" but just to make it more of a different model. That's what I would love to be involved in, as a life passion.

CCM: Is there anything in particular in your career that, if you could go back in time, you would love to do over differently?

Omartian: I remember when Clive Davis [founder of Arista Records] called me and said, "Come to the hotel; I want to play you something." He played me a videotape of [a new artist named] Whitney Houston, and said he wanted me to produce her.



Producers of the Year



While only one studio whiz can walk away with the Dove Award as the 2004 "Producer of the Year," the Gospel Music Association has honored five with nominations in the category. In addition to Brown Bannister, who has already won the award four times, and Steve Hindalong, the others being hailed as this year's standouts are Christopher Harris, Steven V. Taylor and Marc Byrd.

Harris, whose earliest production credits include 4HIM's 1990 self-titled debut (Verity) and dc talk's 1991 disc *Nu Thang* (ForeFront), owns a prestigious resumé which features top-selling albums by Anointed, Avalon, Ron Kenoly, NewSong and Jaci Velasquez. His recent production highlights include David Phelps's (Gaither Vocal Band) solo debut, *Revelation* (Word), and Allen Asbury's *Somebody's Praying Me Through* (Doxology).

Taylor, a long-respected studio veteran, is best known for overseeing praise & worship albums, musicals and children's projects and has helmed recordings by

Christian music pioneers such as Truth and Scott-Wesley Brown. Last year Taylor co-produced Sandtown's debut, *Based on a True Story* (Gotee), which is nominated for a 2004 Dove Award in the "Urban Album of the Year" category.

Byrd, meanwhile, entered the Christian music scene as a founding member of the alternative rock band Common Children, before going on to form GlassByrd with his wife, Christine Glass. His reputation as a producer and songwriter ("God of Wonders") catapulted during his recurring collaboration with Hindalong for the "City on a Hill" series of releases. Byrd's recent production contributions include work on Jeremy Camp's *Carried Me: The Worship Project* (BEC) and Sonicflood's *Cry Holy* (INO).

This year's "Producer of the Year" was announced at the Dove Awards the week this issue of CCM hit newsstands. And the winner is... Go to CCMmagazine.com. **JAY SWARTZENDRUBER**

And I said, "I'm sorry; I'm too busy." [laughs]

Jones: I've been back in Nashville since '93, but before that I was in L.A. for five years and was really thrown in the middle of working with people who were my heroes growing up. I would love to go back to that place now. I feel like, first of all, I would have something to contribute and also that I would at least be willing to hear what God would have me do in those situations.

Hindalong: I've worked with so many bands, and I wish I could go back and tell them that it's just not worth the amount of fighting, bickering, dissension that goes on among brothers—the anger at managers, promoters, agents. In the end, it's a lot of comedy, but I wish I could go back and have more levity, have more grace.

Tedd T: I'd love to have learned a better balance between career and family earlier in life. I would have to say that I have been most profoundly affected by moments that have had little or nothing to do with career success. I'm proud of the successes, but I haven't found in them what I find in those moments when creativity, honesty and divine inspiration intersect. I love it when my creative plans for the day are overturned by the arrival of something God-inspired and unexpectedly beautiful. **ccm**



Artistic Production?



Before Charlie Peacock hit the production scene during the mid to late '80s with the 77s' *All Fall Down* (EXIT/Word), The Choir's *Diamonds and Rain* (Myrrh) and then Margaret Becker's *Immigrant's Daughter* (Sparrow), established artists weren't seen as potential heavy hitters in the role of producer. A lot changed over the next 15 years as Peacock helmed projects by Nichole Nordeman, Switchfoot, Avalon, Audio Adrenaline and Twila Paris, among others, while landing the Dove Award for "Producer of the Year" three times and being profiled in *Billboard's The Encyclopedia of Record Producers* as one of the 500 most important producers in history.

Nowadays it's no surprise when a new artist such as INO's Anthony Evans calls on another artist to help bring musical muscle and an esteemed producer's reputation to a high-profile debut. In the case of Evans' *Even More*, the artist of great repute is Kirk Franklin, who's overseen recordings by Crystal Lewis and Trin-tee 5:7 and produced the original soundtrack for the 2001 motion picture *Kingdom Come*. And when you think of the Newsboys' most popular albums, which producer comes to mind? No doubt, a producer who first established himself as a groundbreaking artist. Steve Taylor. Taylor also has a platinum-certified album to his production credit, Sixpence None the Richer's self-titled Squint 1997 release.

Is your favorite artist also a trusted producer? And if so, have you heard the latest albums that he or she has produced? Can you hear their influence on the music and quite possibly the albums' lyrics?

Here are several artists we think you should keep your eyes on as their production prowess continues to grow:

Newsboys' **Peter Furler** (Plus One, Petra); **Michael W. Smith** (Stacie Orrico); **Margaret Becker** (Ginny Owens, Kelly Minter); Caedmon's Call's **Josh Moore** (Bethany Dillon, Pilot Radio); Out of the Grey's **Scott Denté** (Christine Denté, Charlie Peacock); Poor Old Lu's **Aaron Sprinkle** (Kutless, MxPx); Watermark's **Nathan Nockels** (Point of Grace, Phillips, Craig & Dean); **Steven Curtis Chapman** (Casting Crowns); FFH's **Jeromy Deibler** (Big Daddy Weave, Palisade); Audio Adrenaline's **Mark Stuart** (Jennifer Knapp); apt.core's **Will Hunt** (Shane & Shane); **tobyMac** (The Katinas); Glitter Twins—**Gabriel Wilson** and **Solo** of Rock 'N' Roll Worship Circus (Sherri Youngward, The Deadlines); Starflyer 59's **Jason Martin** (Fine China, Map) **J.S.**



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5 Hours, 13 Minutes, 24 Seconds with CeCe Winans

Story by Michael Nolan

Photos by Lee Steffen

When CeCe Winans' plane touched down in Nashville at 11:50 a.m., she almost hit the ground running—literally. She had just 12 hours and 10 minutes to set her house in order, keep things moving forward on her next album and be ready to board a bus bound for Austin, Texas, for the next leg of her 40-city tour. This “road trip” includes stops at mega churches for a praise & worship-filled concert of music from her latest, *Throne Room* (Purespring/INO/Epic). And the best part for the fans? Free admission.

Fasten your seat belt—it's gonna be a fast ride.



12:42 p.m.

Even though an artist's life in the spotlight seems glamorous, there are a few mundane basics of life that everyone faces—death, taxes and laundry. After unpacking, CeCe demonstrates she can be a domestic diva as she cleans up her act. However, we note that her laundry room is not exactly like yours or mine: Hers doubles as a beauty parlor with a beautician's sink and dryer.



1:32 p.m.

After sorting through the mail and phone messages, she and her husband of 19 years, Alvin, jump in the SUV and head south to Franklin, Tenn. (a suburb of Nashville), for a late lunch at a deli just two doors down from the famous Bennett House recording studio where Keith Thomas (Amy Grant, Vanessa Williams, Selena, The Gaither Vocal Band) is working his producer's magic on her next album.

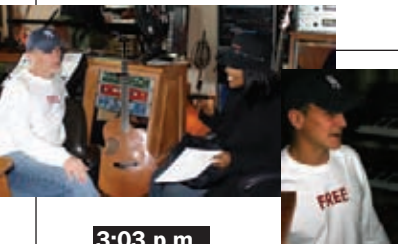
1:59 p.m.

CeCe orders the soup-and-sandwich combo. For those who crave explicit details, she requested tomato basil soup and half of a turkey sandwich with lettuce, tomato, mayonnaise, a dab of mustard and provolone cheese.



2:13 p.m.

With lunch on the table and a quick blessing, we recap recent history. She and Alvin have spent the past three days in New Orleans hanging out with their 16-year-old daughter, Ashley, and one of her schoolmates, who were on spring break. She notes that seafood and Cajun specialties were the main attraction, followed by lots of walking and window-shopping to exercise those calories away. Clearly proud of the balance his wife maintains, Alvin says, "When she puts that microphone down on the stage, she picks up her 'mom mantle,'" which she clearly wears with enthusiasm.



3:03 p.m.

She slips out the back door and strolls over to the Bennett House to talk about the tracks that have already been recorded. Keith, keyboard extraordinaire and technological genius, gives CeCe a friendly hug and quickly settles into a conversation about the songs CeCe has reviewed on the road. Switching gears from the highly meditative album *Throne Room*, she's rewiring things up with a full-force pop/R&B adventure. Her critique is punctuated with an abundance of praise: "I don't know what you're doing to get that, but it's like woaaa," accompanied by a blissful look toward heaven. Among the new arrivals was a second, completely different arrangement for one of the songs she already loved. Conspiratorially she advises, "They did this other one when I was gone." The merits of both were discussed without a firm decision made.



2:24 p.m.

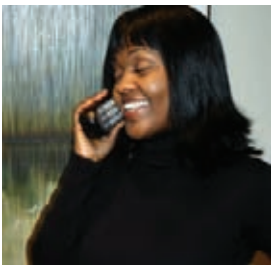
CeCe mentions she is currently in the care of a voice doctor. Now here's the shocking revelation of the day: "It turns out I've been doing it wrong all along—singing wrong, talking wrong, everything," she confesses. Doesn't seem to have held her back, huh? She's being coached on how to breathe and emote so her voice will remain in top shape for years to come. Good news for us!

2:47 p.m.

Walking down Fourth Avenue in Franklin, CeCe delivers a singing telegram to her mother-in-law on Alvin's cell phone. Even her rendition of "Happy Birthday" has that marvelous note-bending touch that is *sooo* CeCe.

4:27 p.m.

With Alvin pursuing other errands, CeCe's assistant arrives to take her home. Keith and CeCe plan to meet back at the studio later in the evening for a writing session. Don't be surprised to see another Winans debut in the album credits: CeCe's 18-year-old son, Alvin Jr., who is a college freshman with music on his mind, has also been contributing to the writing and sonic ideas.



5:30 p.m.

Back at home, CeCe continues to return calls. She's trying to track down a teenage girl from her church whose life is coming apart with a series of family problems and bad choices. She doesn't reach her, but she'll keep trying. Then a call comes in that makes her day: Another girl from the church phones to report on her encouraging grades from school. CeCe beams as she praises the girl's success. When she hangs up, she observes, "I'm not sure just what I'm supposed to do, but I feel like the Lord may be moving me toward some kind of ministry to teenage girls. The pressures and dangers are just unreal." It's apparent that, at least on an informal basis, the ministry is well underway.



2:52 p.m.

We duck into a drug store to indulge CeCe's prevalent passion: greeting cards. Although she enjoys looking for clothes and accessories—especially shoes and purses that match, she is all about greeting cards. "Every card has to be the right card," she emphasizes. Just how committed is she to this? "I've prayed for the right card," she confesses. With the expansive Winans family, plus eight godchildren and a horde of friends, she's always on a quest. Today's search for her father's 70th birthday doesn't turn up a winner—but she'll keep looking. Count on it.



5:48 p.m.

Ashley comes down from her bedroom for a quick mother-and-daughter photo before heading out to church. Describing Ashley's aspirations for a career in acting, the concerned mom admits with a mischievous look, "I just don't want to see this one end up on 'MAD-TV.'" They laugh.



5:55 p.m.

Alvin arrives from his marathon errand-running. Unless he is hungry, CeCe announces that the kitchen is closed. After a little time to repack, it's back to the studio and that midnight ride to Texas. **ccm**



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7 Hours, 15 minutes and 28 Seconds With Plus One

Story by Christa Farris Photos by Lee Steffen



Forget scripted scenes, extravagant shopping sprees and the silly “is-this-chicken-or-tuna?” quandary of Jessica and Nick on so-called “reality” shows like MTV’s “Newlyweds.” While the job description of a rock star may seem a lot more glamorous than, say, the “Average Joe,” a day in the life of a band like Plus One doesn’t involve the usual celebrity traps like an entourage, bottles of Evian or even glitzy evening party plans.

Instead, Nate Cole, Nathan Walters and Gabe Combs prefer to keep things pretty low-key in their adopted hometown of Nashville when they’re not playing shows. In fact, we quickly discovered that all these guys really need to keep them entertained this particular Friday night is plenty of musical conversation, cookie dough egg rolls to maintain a proper sugar high and a few photo ops (complete with crazy stage attire, ranging from a can’t-miss-it-because-it’s-bright-orange parka, to a ghetto fab faux rabbit’s fur coat, to a purple jacket that would make Prince positively green with envy).

4:07 p.m.

Plus One is expecting us at the Newsboys’ little red studio where the trio shed its boy-band roots and recorded *Exodus* (Inpop), its foray into rock & roll. But we’re lost in the quaint confines of downtown Franklin (just outside of Nashville), and already running seven minutes late.



4:14 p.m.

We join two quiet Belmont University students, who are here attentively taking notes on the recording process. The boys start work to remix their song, “Circle.”



4:23 p.m.

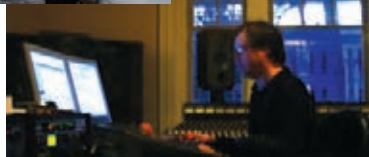
In the studio’s writing room, complete with a giant furry green rug, we chill out on comfy couches and discuss our favorite concerts to date. Radiohead and Rufus Wainwright easily pull rank in Nate’s estimation.



4:29 p.m.

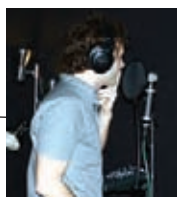
Nathan’s unabashed devotion to Michael W. Smith’s music is revealed when he claims he listened to *Go West Young Man* and *Change Your World* (Reunion) “just a few days ago.” Nate and Gabe confirm his ardent admiration, while Nathan suggests he’d struggle to narrow it down to just one song if a M.W.S. tribute project was ever recorded. Now, *there’s* a novel idea... remember you heard it here first.





5:15 p.m.

The real "work" of the day begins with the arrival of producer Joe Baldridge, who most recently worked with tobyMac on "Mysterious Ways" for *In the Name of Love: Artists United for Africa* (Sparrow). We huddle around the soundboard as the guys assess the new direction for the song. Nate and Nathan then slip into the booth in the next room to record a few new vocals. Meanwhile, Gabe checks his e-mail on his Mac laptop.



6:32 p.m.

The Belmont girls have now called it a night, and Lee (CCM's art director) and I also temporarily flee the scene for some Starbucks caffeine refreshment so the band can finish its session.



5:29 p.m.

Still camping out in the studio, we've listened to different parts of "Circle" a million times, or so it seems. The band is surprisingly patient during the repetitious process.

7:34 p.m.

We reconvene at the studio. Everyone's hungry, so we collectively decide on Jackson's, one of the band's favorite bistros in Nashville's Hillsboro Village.



8:01 p.m.

The restaurant's crowded, but we manage to spot a table in the back. Since the guys frequent the place, it takes only a few seconds for them to collectively decide on chicken salad wraps. Nate prefers fries on the side, while Nathan and Gabe go the salad route.

8:13 p.m.

The food arrives, and favorite movies are discussed. While their taste in films runs the gamut, it's surprising to learn about the band's affinity for lesser-known indie flicks.

8:45 p.m.

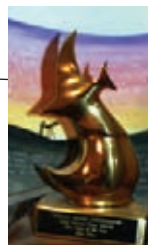
After consuming three orders of cookie dough egg rolls between the five of us, we're positively stuffed. The rest of the evening's plans are discussed, with us settling on karaoke.

8:49 p.m. Stage fright?

Nah. But karaoke is nixed nonetheless.

8:52 p.m.

A new plan is formulated. Instead, we'll be heading to Nate and Gabe's downtown apartment.



9:18 p.m.

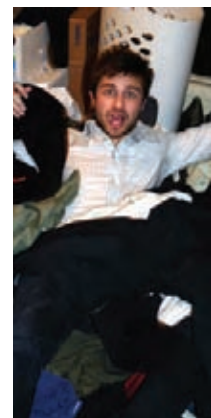
We get the "official apartment tour." Lighted candles add a nice ambience to the already cozy, two-level living space. The band's Dove Award for "New Artist of the Year" in 2001 sits inconspicuously next to an array of DVDs. The kitchen is tidy in a way a mother could love with—*gasp!*—a mop, broom and other cleaning supplies adjacent to the fridge. Several cereal boxes are lined up on top of the fridge, and the kitchen also proves the guys must iron on occasion as an ironing board is propped against the counter.

9:31 p.m.

Gabe cues up the new musical sounds the band has been dabbling with as of late. It's really like nothing Plus One has done before—it's more moody and experimental overall.

9:57 p.m.

The guys wade through heaps and heaps of clothes to find the perfect threads and sunglasses for a fashion show/photo shoot of *Zoolander* proportions. After the wardrobe is settled on, the band strikes various poses with and without its guitars. From the assured looks and variety of creative ideas they come up with, we realize they've certainly done this a time or two.



11:52 p.m.

Nearly two hours have passed, and we've just concluded our unofficial Plus One fashion parade. Now if only Marc Jacobs could be here for an afterparty.

12:24 a.m.

After checking out a song Nate highly recommended from a new live music DVD he picked up recently, we all decide to call it a night before we really get sick of each other or become friends—the "cardinal sin" of rock stars and journalists. **ccm**



7 Hours, 36 Minutes 5 Seconds with Natalie Grant

Story and Photos by Jessica Robin



It's Wednesday, March 17, and Curb Records artist Natalie Grant is spending the day in meetings, preparing for her next album, which she will be recording in May. Her schedule is packed since she leaves the following day to sing at a church conference. But, despite the hectic running around, Natalie's magnetic personality and charm have a way of putting one right at ease.



9:12 a.m.

Natalie heads to the entrance of Nashville, a popular Nashville eatery. She's the epitome of "casual glam" in jeans, an aqua t-shirt and blue Pumas, all complimented by a funky blue scarf. She is also sporting new dark streaks in her normally all-blonde hair.

9:17 a.m.

Inside, we're greeted by a giant penguin and handed raffle tickets. The staff is decked out in green, and paper shamrocks hang from the ceiling. A local radio station is there, and fliers advertise the daily special: green eggs and ham. "Is it St. Patrick's Day, really? I had no idea, and I'm Irish!" she exclaims.

9:32 a.m.

Natalie, Rachel (assistant to Natalie's manager) and Hope (backup singer and road manager) go over the "rider"—a document that contains touring specifications and catering preferences—for upcoming tour dates. Turns out, Natalie is nuts for Diet Vanilla Pepsi, Splenda and almost anything low-carb.



9:49 a.m.

Our food arrives. Natalie's scrambled eggs do not contain cheddar cheese as requested, and—surprise!—they are green. She sends them back for cheese, silently hoping they will return normal-colored. No such luck. She closes her eyes and digs in. Meanwhile, I love the griddle cakes she recommended.

10:27 a.m.

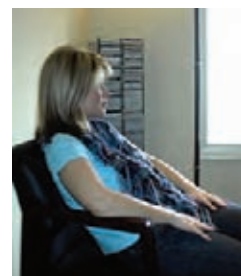
Natalie gives up on her eggs, and the meeting is adjourned. On the way to the car, she admires a baby blue classic Corvette. Natalie confesses she and her husband are "reversed" since she is really into cars, and he isn't.

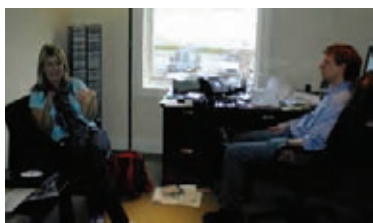
10:32 a.m.

Next stop: Curb Records with her manager, Mitchell Solarek. Mitchell and Natalie have a planning meeting with Jeff Tuerff from Curb's marketing team to discuss her upcoming photo shoot for the new album.

10:46 a.m.

Finally finding an empty conference room, the group listens to a demo of "Awaken," which will likely be the first single. Natalie says she has rewritten the verses.





10:52 a.m.

Mitchell discusses how the past album artwork has been very natural, and he would like to move toward "bold." After mulling over wardrobe, hair and makeup options, Mitchell reminds Natalie that this shoot will be in a studio, and she will be completely responsible for the "life" of the shots. "I've got moves you've never even seen," she responds. She admits, "That's from My Best Friend's Wedding."

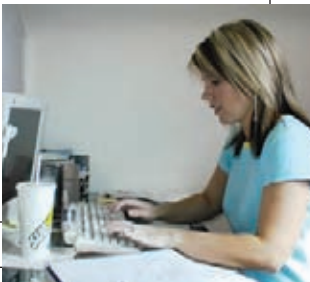
11:10 a.m.

Time for another meeting—this one with Bryan Stewart from Curb's A&R department to go over the new songs. As we listen to various tracks, Natalie closes her eyes and nods to the beat. Artists like Elton John, Coldplay, Jason Mraz, Nelly Furtado, Norah Jones and Liz Phair come up in conversation to describe what the songs should or could sound like.



12:10 p.m.

Back on the home front (Mitchell's office), lunch options are discussed and settled on a place known for its grilled salmon—a good high-protein dish to make up for the green mess at breakfast.



12:30 p.m.

As the rest of the lunch group arrives, Mitchell and Natalie are already entrenched in serious business discussion. At the table, they pour over itineraries and spreadsheets. The server arrives to take our drink order, and Natalie requests a Diet Coke with a splash of Coke on top. She says it's really good that way.

1:09 p.m.

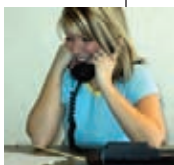
Conversation bounces from movies to possible missions trip destinations, Natalie's fear of flying (It's the turbulence she hates.) to an affinity for gossip magazines. Natalie states with assurance that "Brad and Jen" are headed for "Pittsville" and that South Africa would be an interesting place to visit.

1:38 p.m.

After a satisfying experience with the salmon, we return to the office. While checking her e-mail on Rachel's computer, Natalie notices a picture on the desk of someone who looks very similar to her husband Bernie. It turns out to be Nate Sallie (another Curb artist).

1:54 p.m.

Natalie ducks into the bathroom, and I hear her crystal-clear vocals as the door shuts behind her. It's probably safe to assume she also sings in the shower.



2:02 p.m.

Natalie has a conference call with Linda, the founder of Shared Hope, a charity Natalie wants to help promote. Shared Hope's mission is to rescue victims of human trafficking, an issue Natalie became aware of through an episode of "Law & Order." She found Shared Hope online and called them. It so happens that the woman who answered the phone had just been to one of Natalie's concerts.

"Sometimes it's so God it's eerie," Natalie comments as she explains how all the pieces are fitting together.

2:41 p.m.

Natalie calls her husband to "check in." She mentions the green eggs.



3:36 p.m.

At his home studio, Natalie and producer Shaun Shankel review the seven tracks already selected for the album. She describes what else she is looking for: something "up-tempo," "aggressive" but not "trite." For the sake of comparison, Shankel plays her a few of his songs, one of which was featured on "8 Simple Rules." He also produced the new single "Eighth World Wonder" from "American Idol" contestant Kimberly Locke and worked on R.J. Helton's album, which prompts Natalie to recall her surprise at the length of R.J.'s autograph line at a concert they both played. "He didn't even win; he came in, like, fifth!" she laughs, in awe of the show's influence.

4:11 p.m.

Talk turns to orchestration options for the record; Natalie and Shawn agree that Prague, Czech Republic is the place to record quality strings on a tight budget. Natalie cheers, "We're going to Prague!"



4:48 p.m.

It's time to go. Natalie insists on a quick photo of us for her Web site and then hugs me goodbye. While it's possible that any job other than your own seems more intriguing, I'm convinced that being a singer is almost as glamorous as it appears. **ccm**

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5 Hours, 29 Minutes, 13 Seconds with Trevor Morgan

Story and Photos by Kierstin Berry



Trevor Morgan may be considered “new” in terms of name recognition, but you wouldn’t guess it by the looks of his schedule. Despite having a full to-do list on this particular Tuesday, he handled every situation with an air of confidence and light-hearted humor. Trevor’s ease as an artist makes sense, considering he’s been holding his own in the indie scene for several years. As a songwriter he has penned songs for such performers as Ginny Owens and Geoff Moore and has also gained notoriety as a guitarist for mainstream act Owsley. Now that Trevor has added “signed recording artist” to his list of endeavors, an average day in his life seems to run him all over town...

11:00 a.m.

Trevor happens to have a scheduled “meet and greet” with the CCM staff this morning. Everyone is seated around the conference table, munching on the confetti cupcakes Trevor and his publicist Rich Guider have brought. Wearing jeans, a blue rayon button-down, black boots and a chain-wallet, Trevor seems immediately comfortable among the group he’s just met. He leans back and fields questions about his native Alabama, bantering as if he’s done this a hundred times before.



11:08 a.m.

Trevor breaks out his Gibson Hummingbird acoustic and plays a few songs, including the title track to his forthcoming project, *Wonderlight* (BHT). Applause follows and more cupcakes are passed around.



11:32 a.m.

A tour of the CCM offices brings out Trevor’s surprising knowledge of fabrics when he comments on Administrative Assistant Mechelle Sheneman’s “nice toile bulletin board.” After admiring Managing Editor Jay Swartzendruber’s collection of bobble-heads, Trevor says his goodbyes; and we head for the car.

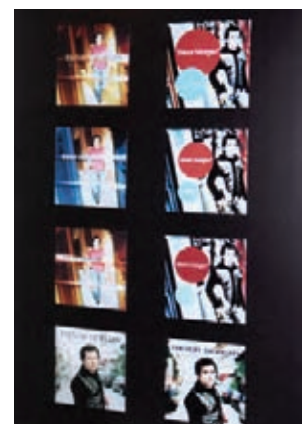
11:40 a.m.

Next stop: the offices of BHT Entertainment, Trevor’s label. During the drive over, I learn that Trevor’s going to be a dad. His wife, Murray, is pregnant with the couple’s first baby, due in June.



12:14 a.m.

Trevor gets settled in BHT’s colorful art department that’s adorned with samples of “Trevor Morgan” CD cover ideas. (He’s the only artist on BHT so far.) It’s time for him to call radio station deejays and ask them to consider adding his new single, “Upside Down.”





12:26 p.m.

After speaking with six receptionists and being re-routed to voicemail every time, Trevor mumbles, "I bet you Michael W. Smith doesn't do this," and checks his watch. Realizing that lunch time is not the best hour to reach people... Hey, that gives us an idea.

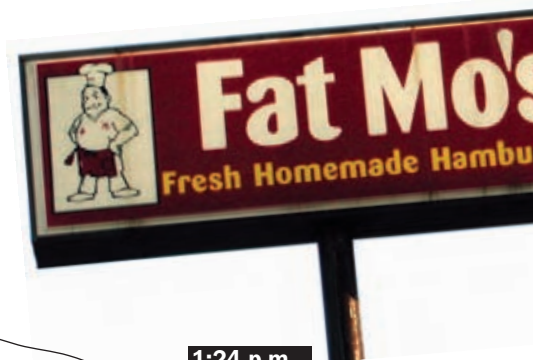


12:31 p.m.

Pizza time. We head toward the kitchen where Trevor stops to inspect a peculiar plexi-glass table lamp before filling his plate with two slices of Hawaiian pizza (pineapple and Canadian bacon) and grabbing a Dr. Pepper from the fridge.

12:35 p.m.

Over lunch, Trevor, Rich and I gather with a few label reps in the plush lounge area to brainstorm ideas for Trevor's upcoming EPK (electronic press kit on DVD). Behind us, a plasma TV plays frightening music videos from the '80s. Possible locations are discussed for filming the EPK, including Trevor's favorite local burger stop, Fat Mo's. An apparent random-trivia aficionado, Trevor informs us that the restaurant's little-known real name is Fat Mohammed's. Of course, all the men are fascinated.



12:42 p.m.

Distracted by a Jefferson Airplane video on TV, Trevor contemplates copying Grace Slick's stage wardrobe of enormous shoulder pads, saying, "Supposedly fashion is cyclical. Maybe I should be the one to bring them back."

1:01 p.m.

With a full stomach and a rough plan for his upcoming shoot, Trevor is ushered back to the art desk for a phone interview with USA Radio News. He's a pro at these interviews, though he explains he's done very few.



1:24 p.m.

I ride downtown with Trevor for his next task: a showcase at the Hilton where he'll play guitar and sing background for Billy Ray Cyrus. In the car, Trevor flips through his CD changer, hinting at his array of musical interests: 1. Jimmy Eat World. 2. Sarah Kelly 3. John Mayer 4. Coldplay 5. Gavin DeGraw 6. Jack Johnson... He then pauses on 7, trying to figure out what it is. "Hmm, old Lifehouse," he shrugs. "I think my wife put that in."

1:43 p.m.

We make our way to the parking garage; and, before I know it, Trevor has hoisted three guitars on his back, refusing to let anyone help. "You're seeing a day in my life," he insists, smiling.

3:13 p.m.

After a brief soundcheck, the showcase begins. Trevor is a great accompanist, along with the rest of Billy Ray's house band. Switching between electric and the Hummingbird, he also sings backup on Billy Ray's cover of the Bebo Norman tune, "Tip of My Heart" (from *The Other Side*, Word).



4:07 p.m.

A quick photo-op with Billy Ray, and it's time to pack up and head for home. Exhausted, Trevor takes us up on our offer to carry his cases this time.

4:29 p.m.

During the drive back to CCM, Trevor calls his wife to check in and recap the day. Murray has been shopping for maternity clothes with her mother. When he hangs up, I ask Trevor if every day is this busy for him. "It depends," he admits. "Tomorrow I have the day off; so I'll probably just wake up, have a bowl of Frosted Mini-Wheats and take it easy." Ahh, the life of an artist. **ccm**



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R.J. Helton & Kelly Clarkson

Remember the excitement when the first season of “American Idol” winnowed down to the top 10? Admit it: Most of you were on pins and needles as you waited to see who won. That may have been almost two years ago, but that doesn’t mean friends aren’t friends forever. And when CCM discovered that our own R.J. Helton, whose *Real Life* (B-Rite) CD released March 23, still stays in contact with first season winner Kelly Clarkson, we knew we had the perfect fit for a great conversation.

R.J.: What “Idols” do you keep in touch with?

Kelly: I keep in touch with you and EJay [Day]. I don’t get to talk to Jim [Verraros]; but I talk to him through everybody because he always sends messages, and I send them back. And Tamyra [Gray], actually, is the one I keep in contact with the most.

R.J.: Of course. I think I keep in touch with Tamyra the most as well.

Kelly: She’s just one of those people; she’s nice to talk to all the time. She’s just such a cool girl.

R.J.: Well, what about Clay [Aiken]? Have you gotten to know him very well?

Kelly: I never really got to talk to Clay until I really met him when we decided to tour together. I just called him up and said, “Why don’t we just tour together since we’re touring at the same time?” He’s such a cool guy. He’s very, very Southern, so I get along with him.

R.J.: That’s always a plus. I enjoy my Southern people as well.

Kelly: And actually, a lot of people that do well on “Idol” are Southern.

R.J.: OK, here’s a more personal question: How has dating changed for you since you were crowned?

Kelly: Wow, it’s so hard.

R.J.: Do you even have time for that?



Kelly: No, to be honest with you. Like the other day, I met this really cool guy at Sea World, who trains killer whales; and he was so cool. I was like, “Wow, I could so date you. But I can’t because, wow, I’m never going to see you.” I don’t have the time. And it’s kind of a selfish point in both of our lives just because we’re so busy.

R.J.: On another note, how would you describe yourself spiritually?

Kelly: I always grew up in church. I was the leader of our youth group. I’ve always grown up pretty close to church and with God. But I think I’ve just gotten a lot closer just because He’s the only One I can lean on.

R.J.: Do your spiritual beliefs influence your decisions on how you present yourself as an artist or onstage? You’ve stayed extremely humble, which is an amazing characteristic of Christianity. You’re still the same person from what I can tell.

Kelly: Right. I think that's *why* I've stayed humble. Because, to be honest with you, R.J., you and I both know tons of people who can sing far better than both of us. And it's a blessing that I'm even here. I think it's just cool because we both want to be positive role models for kids, and I think the best way I've done that is not trying to be "little Miss Perfect"—just being myself. And just letting God speak through me and do His work.

R.J.: Being a role model is very scary because everyone watches you 10 times more, and me being in the Christian or gospel market is even worse. I can't go anywhere; I can't do anything without people holding me under a microscope. How do you feel about being a role model?

Kelly: Same. It's kind of scary sometimes just because you look at yourself, and you're like, "Wow. I mean, I'm *not* a role model." You don't want to slip up because you're trying to set a good example for, especially, the young ones who are our fans.

R.J.: Besides me, who are your personal heroes? (Just kidding.)

Kelly: You are so cute. I'd definitely say my mom. I grew up pretty much the hard way and went through a couple of divorces with my family.

R.J.: I've been there, done that.

Kelly: I raised myself really quickly. But the thing is she let me out on my own because she was so busy as a single mom. But, at the same time, I learned so much from her—like being independent and being the person I am today. I can be put anywhere, and I'm comfortable.

R.J.: That's the same with me. My mom went through a couple of divorces; I didn't meet some of my family until I was actually on tour. And so my mom is probably my biggest hero. So tell me, are you at all familiar with the Christian music scene?

Kelly: Yeah, I like Jaci Velasquez; I like Avalon...

R.J.: I love Avalon!

Kelly: And Steven Curtis Chapman. I like a lot of the older artists.

R.J.: The people who have actually made a huge impact.

Kelly: I think the reason why they have, though, is because it sends a positive message; but it sends it in a way that I'm going to listen to it. Like sometimes a lot of Christian music—not to be mean—it sounds the same. It sounds redundant and stuff. And I like the fact that, for your album, you've put in the R&B, the urban soul.

R.J.: Everything sounds exactly the same. And I think that's exactly how it was. For me, I wanted to put every type of music I love—with the exception of country. I didn't add that, but everything I love I wanted to add into the CD—like pop, a little bit of rock, a little bit of R&B, urban, gospel.

Kelly: Listening to your songs and listening to your writing—I never had seen you write before—and it's just cool because it's something people can relate to. It's something people really want to listen to.

R.J.: Yeah, I think "churchy" language turns people off. Even if you are a Christian, "churchy" language turns people off; and I tried to steer clear. There are, obviously, some more Christian songs on the record; but, for me, I wanted to kind of stay away from the really, really "churchy" language. That way it could be more universal.

Kelly: That's stepping outside of the Christian bubble and trying to reach others. That's what you should be doing. I think with your record, what's good about it is the fact that whenever I play it—like on tour right now—all the band would be like, "Oh wow. That's so awesome." Nobody said right away, "Oh, that's Christian music," and then walked away. They listened to it because it's really great music. And it touches people.

R.J.: Well, you know what? Even listening to your record—because I've pretty much memorized it—there are some I would call inspirational songs...

Kelly: Like "Thankful."

R.J.: Definitely. I would consider that more of a Christian...

Kelly: That's one of the ones I wrote.

R.J.: In getting to know you and watching your live show, you have completely evolved as an artist. And your voice has never sounded better. But you're using live instruments on your tour; you're playing, which is really cool. I respect that a lot about you. How is it onstage? Do you get even more nervous than you normally would?

Kelly: To be honest with you, I don't get nervous with guitar. I'm fine with it. It's a stringed instrument, and I've grown up with it because I used to play violin. But I got *really* nervous with the piano. I wasn't singing as well as I should be. I was worrying so much about the piano that I wasn't relaying the message of the song. If I'm not comfortable with something, I don't do it. First off, I'm a singer; and I always will be. But with the guitar, I love it—I feel like I'm Jimi Hendrix. And I'm not. (Laughs.) But I love playing it, and it's just fun for me.

R.J.: People who write their music, who play their music, are respected so much more. And so my goal, I think, for the future is to learn. I'm going to start taking guitar lessons in the next couple of months because I really would love to do it.

Kelly: It's just fun because when you start writing your own stuff and doing it with the instruments as well, it becomes more *you*. It becomes more of your soul, more of your heart.

R.J.: Now, obviously, people know that you are a very, very soulful white girl. But a lot of people don't know that you love rock music.

Kelly: I love rock music.

R.J.: Who are some of your musical influences?

Kelly: OK, these are across the board—are you ready? (Laughs.) Reba McEntire, Aerosmith, Aretha Franklin, Annie Lennox, Bette Midler, Rosemary Clooney. They're all so different. I grew up in a household with so many different, eclectic styles of music that now I can incorporate them in my show. As you saw on tour, I do big band, jazz, with all sorts of rock. I just love everything. Basically, I love any music with soul in it. Be it country, be it big band, be it rock, anything... I don't think there's any music other than soul music. If it doesn't have soul in it, I don't even want to hear it.

R.J.: Is there any last message you want to send out to the fans?

Kelly: Keep praying for me, and I hope you enjoy the music. And thanks for supporting me. This tour has been awesome. I never really realized how many people like my stuff, and it's cool how loyal people are. **ccm**





The Root of the Question

When **Tree63**'s debut landed a 2001 Dove Award for "Rock Album of the Year" and a slot on a major tour, the band's future looked promising. Now, after a sophomore slump and the departure of its rhythm section, the band unveils its third album with a new line-up and a focused sense of purpose.

By David McCreary

SPEAKING FROM HIS MOBILE PHONE IN Durban, South Africa, John Ellis sounds euphoric. Fresh off a first-time set at a Franklin Graham Crusade, he and his cohorts in modern rock/worship band Tree63 have just been invited by Graham himself to continue performing at future evangelistic events. "It's such an honor for us to be a part of these crusades," Ellis says graciously.

Whether talking about ministry, his 1-year-old son, Liam, or Tree63's latest recording, Ellis seems exceedingly grateful for the opportunities he and the band have been afforded recently. After all, the South African-bred trio has come a long way since originating as Tree back in 1996.

The group signed with Inpop in 1999, ventured out on a 40-city tour with Sonicflood and shortly thereafter released its eponymous U.S. debut. The record was a bonafide hit, so much so that it garnered Tree63 a 2001 Dove Award for "Rock Album of the Year" and a spot on the popular "Festival con Dios" circuit.

But life for Tree63 hasn't been without some bumps along the way. The group's sophomore album, 2002's *The Life and Times of Absolute Truth*, garnered modest sales. Also jarring was the amicable, yet untimely, departure of bassist Martin Engel, and, more recently, drummer Darryl Swart. (Engel now runs a successful multi-media company in Durban, while Swart remains active in the U.S. music industry.) Factor in the pressure of uprooting from their homeland and dealing with the challenges of marriage and fatherhood, and these guys have good reason to feel worse for wear.

But despite enduring some rough terrain, Ellis remains surprisingly upbeat. The reason for his positive outlook? Much of it involves the addition of two new bandmates, bassist Daniel Ornellas and drummer Thenuis (Tain) Odendaal, both of whom hail from South Africa. "Daniel is from Capetown and comes from a long line of musicians," says Ellis. "Tain comes from Durban, but we met in Nashville. It was really God's provision for us to find another drummer from Africa while in the United States."

In addition to being content with the new lineup, Ellis also takes great satisfaction in Tree63's latest studio project, *The Answer to the Question*. This album, more so than any previous effort, effectively strikes a balance between Brit-influenced pop/rock and mid-tempo worship songs. It's a formula Ellis says the band was "born to do," he adds. "We want to worship God for His sake, not for the sake of business or what's popular at any given time."

One distinction that sets the new project apart from previous efforts is the way the producers captured the essence of the band's live sound. High-octane cuts like the title track and "You Only" resonate with full-bodied force. Even the softer selections, such as "Blessed Be Your Name" and "I Stand for You," play as if they were recorded in a modern sanctuary. The live-in-concert effect was achieved, thanks to the production approach taken by Jason Burkum and Nathan Dantzler, both of whom have worked closely with Audio Adrenaline.



(L-R): Tain Odendaal, John Ellis, Daniel Ornellas

As Tree63's principal songwriter, Ellis shares that most of the songs on *The Answer* correlate with his recent life experiences, especially when it comes to spiritual lessons he's learned along the way. The result is the band's most intimate album to date. "I'm not one to write doctrine but, rather, what I've lived," he notes. "This time I'm commenting on what God is doing in and through my life. Any subjects I've written about are things that could happen to any Christian."

Indeed, many of the songs draw from a common-ground perspective; but two tracks in particular stand out to Ellis, each for entirely different reasons. First, there's "Overdue," a song

based on his son's impending birth. Due to arrive last year on March 23, Liam was born a full week later. "There was a sense of waiting and excitement and nervousness and frustration that I think has a strong spiritual parallel," Ellis says. "All of us as Christians are pregnant with possibility and with the thing that God has birthed in us to do with our lives. Sometimes, though, God makes us wait for it to finally happen."

"Let Your Day Begin," another intensely personal track, deals with the reality of living in a fallen world. Ellis says the song was inspired during a flight from Nashville to California when he read an entire issue of *Rolling Stone*. "After finishing the magazine, I had a great sense of sorrow and concern over seeing how celebrities and rock stars live their lives," he says. "I grew more concerned that the world we live in, literally, is going to hell. The values and morals a lot of people have are shockingly anti-God."

This is all the more reason why Ellis is so gratified when he hears about people who listen to Tree63's music and then radically change for the better. The band steadily receives e-mail, he says, from fans who share how the music has dramatically affected the members' lives. "I think of one girl who e-mailed and said her brother was on the brink of suicide, and then he heard our music; and God touched his life," Ellis shares. "I also met a girl who got saved at a Tree63 show several years ago in Africa, and she's still a fired-up Christian today."

"It's exciting anytime we hear that people weren't just entertained by our music, but that they are inspired and encouraged to take steps toward God, or even that their lives are transformed. We love recording and playing music; but, essentially, we're most passionate about advancing the Kingdom of God and seeing lives touched in a real way."

That's certainly something worth getting euphoric about. **ccm**

Tour de Force

With more than 100 live performances scheduled for this year alone, Tree63 knows about life on the road. The tour circuit can be grueling for any artist, but often it's even more demanding for those who are married and have families. "Touring is a young man's game," Tree63 frontman John Ellis says. "If you're 18 and single, it's one thing. When you become a husband and a father, it's totally different. But God has called us to perform, and we're just trying to be obedient to Him."

Ellis says there are pros and cons to globetrotting. On the positive side, the guys in Tree63 have had the opportunity to visit much of the United States and Africa, as well as such distant places as Europe and Australia. "We still consider ourselves tourists," he says. "We've also made a lot of wonderful friends around the world."

Standout performances also are considered a boon. "We had an experience in Johannesburg [South Africa] where we felt we should just drop the whole Tree63 persona and just worship God," Ellis explains. "We ended up playing one song for 10-12 minutes, and the Spirit moved. People in the audience were singing out and praising Him in a wonderful way."

But what about the downsides? Some include being away from home, sleeping in strange places and eating the same food much too often. "We get served pizza a lot, and that's OK," he says before adding, "But we also have eaten more than our share of barbecue pork. That's just something we are not fond of."

Ellis says some days the rigors of life on the road make him contemplate giving it all up. "But then we hear that someone's life has been changed by our music, and that makes it all worthwhile. We just want to see how God can continue to use us in this generation to inspire people." **D.M.**

DON'T MISS THESE FESTIVALS!

Luis Palau Reno Festival

June 11-12, Washoe County
Rancho San Rafael Regional Park, NV
Renofestival.org

Alive Festival

June 16-19, Clay's Park, Canal Fulton, OH
Alive.org

AtlantaFest

June 16-19, Six Flags, Atlanta, GA
Atlantafest.com

Creation East

June 23-26, The Agape Farm-Mt. Union, PA
Creationfest.com

Cornerstone Festival

July 1-4, Bushnell, IL
Cornerstonefestival.com

Creation West

July 21-24, Gorge Amphitheater, Gorge, WA
Creationfest.com

SoulFest

July 29-Aug. 1, Lincoln, NH
Thesoulfest.com

Kingdom Bound Ministries Festival

Aug. 1-4, Six Flags Darien Lakes Resort, NY
Kingdombound.org

Seminar in the Rockies

Aug. 1-7, Estes Park, CO
Gospelmusic.org/rockies

Hoi Polloi Music Fest

Aug. 5-8, Denver, CO
Hoipolloifest.com

Luis Palau Twin Cities Festivals

Aug. 7-8, St. Paul, MN
Twincities.org

Check out
ccmmagazine.com
for more info.



When We ROARED

By Steve Rabey

Jesus told His disciples not to hide their light under a bushel. Nearly 20 centuries later author Bob Briner updated Jesus' challenge in his 1993 book, *Roaring Lambs: A Gentle Plan to Radically Change Your World*.

"It's time for believers to confidently carry their faith with them into the marketplace so that our very culture feels the difference," wrote Briner, who died in 1999. The artists highlighted here, though firmly grounded in the Christian subculture, had a profound impact on getting the message of their faith out to the larger world. In no particular order, we remember their bold steps.

Debby Boone

The 1977 hit "You Light Up My Life" launched the singing career of the third of 1950s hit-maker Pat's four daughters, achieving major mainstream success by topping the pop single charts for 10 straight weeks and earning Boone a Grammy, an Oscar and millions of fans. During her round of national talk show visits, she explained she was singing this love song to God.

Bob Carlisle

"Butterfly Kisses," the former Allies lead singer's tear-jerking family values ballad, became a phenomenon at mainstream radio stations nationwide and catapulted the album of the same name to the top of *The Billboard 200*, a Christian music industry first.

Steven Curtis Chapman

The soundtrack to Robert Duvall's 1998 film *The Apostle* featured Chapman's "I Will Not Go Quietly," a faith-driven standout which received both mainstream radio and video airplay. Five years later Chapman entered the top 30 of the mainstream AC charts with his prayerful "How Do I Love Her."

Christian Artists Unite for Africa

For more than a year 35-plus Christian artists have been actively endorsing an immediate response to Africa's HIV/AIDS and poverty crisis before a watching world. Their combined efforts garnered national exposure that included, among other things, U2's official Web site, the frontpage of *USA Today*'s "Life" section, a widely read review by the Associated Press and television coverage on Fox News.

As artists like Michael W. Smith, Out of Eden and Third Day have been calling on the church to love its neighbor, bands such as Switchfoot and Sixpence None the Richer have raised awareness in the culture at large. Pained by the crisis and inspired by U2's Bono (and reminiscent of 1985's The CAUSE artist collaboration for Ethiopian famine victims with the song "Do Something Now"), artists, including Nichole Nordeman, Delirious and Audio Adrenaline recorded *In*



The Name Of Love: Artists United for Africa (Sparrow), which was released in 2004. Jars of Clay, meanwhile, founded a ministry in response—Blood: Water Mission.

dc talk

Three friends from Jerry Falwell's Liberty University founded a rap-pop trio that changed the face of Christian music, promoted racial reconciliation with "Colored People," hit mainstream pop charts with a song about forgiveness ("Just Between You and Me") and earned a Grammy and widespread fame for 1995's double-platinum *Jesus Freak*.



Kirk Franklin

"Stomp," the energetic single from 1997's Grammy-winning *God's Property* from Kirk Franklin's *Nu Nation*, combined the sound of the city with the hope of heaven. The song's video was the first gospel clip to go into heavy rotation on MTV. Then in 1999 Franklin invited Crystal Lewis, Bono and others to join him for an electric performance of his compassionate "Lean On Me" on the Grammy Awards. Amazingly, the song had been nominated for "Song of the Year."



Amy Grant

"Find a Way," the first single from *Unguarded*, landed on national Top 40 charts—a first for a Christian singer. The song's bridge was a clear gospel presentation: "If our God his Son not sparing came to rescue you, is there any circumstance that He can't see you through?" Thanks in large part to Grant's continuing efforts, Christian music would become a growing force in the mainstream, generating controversies about "crossing over."



Andraé Crouch

International tours, a 1979 performance at the White House, contributions to *The Lion King* soundtrack, an appearance on “Saturday Night Live” and collaborations with Elvis Presley, Quincy Jones, Madonna and Michael Jackson kept this gospel music legend busy in many mainstream circles.



Jars of Clay

“Flood” from the then unknown band’s self-titled 1995 debut entered alternative radio’s Top 40, thanks to repeated play on MTV. Major media coverage, movie soundtracks and concert dates with Sting followed for the band that helped introduce alternative rock to Christian pop radio.

Jump5

These kings and queens of the “twens” (those millions of youngsters between the childhood and teenage years) presented their positive pop through *The Lizzie McGuire Movie* and *Kim Possible* soundtracks, the *Lilo & Stitch* and *Beauty and the Beast* DVDs and through ABC Family television, Nickelodeon, a Disney tour and the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day parade. And did we mention they have had eight songs in rotation on Radio Disney?



Larry Norman

There wasn’t a contemporary Christian music industry when this ground-breaking rocker created his debut solo album, so Norman’s *Upon This Rock* (1969) was released by Capitol.



Stacie Orrico on TRL

Teen singing sensation Stacie Orrico experienced a whole new level of fame after her relationship song “Stuck” became a hit on MTV’s **afternoon show “Total Request Live”** in 2003. VH1.com said it best: “In the wilderness of navel-pop, Orrico shines like a welcoming beacon.” Or as Stacie put it

herself: “You see how young women are so affected by the celebrities that they watch. So I think, ‘What type of role model do I want to be?’”

DeGarmo & Key

Everyone recognized the strategic importance of MTV’s visual revolution; but these pioneering rockers did something about it, creating a stunning video for their end-times rocker, “666.” Rejected by MTV for “senseless violence,” the video was edited and then briefly added to the network’s rotation in 1985.

Sandi Patty

Long beloved by Christian listeners, Patty achieved major crossover success when her powerful rendition of “The Star Spangled Banner” was broadcast during NBC’s 1986 “Liberty Weekend.” She followed that up with Grammy Awards,

major TV appearances and performances with symphony orchestras across the country.

Michael W. Smith

The kid from West Virginia, who played keyboards with Amy Grant for years, broke into the mainstream with 1991’s pop hit “Place in this World,” earning an American Music Award, appearing on the Grammy Awards telecast and being named one of the “50 Most Beautiful People” by *People* magazine in 1992.



Sixpence None the Richer

The band’s 1997 *Squint* debut featured “Kiss Me,” which Casey Kasem announced as the No. 1 song in America two years later. The ensuing media madness allowed Leigh Nash to graciously explain the band’s unusual name (It’s inspired by C. S. Lewis’s *Mere Christianity*.) and faith, as she did on David Letterman’s show and many others.

Switchfoot

TV introduced *New Way to Be Human*, this San Diego band’s 1998 debut, to millions of teens who heard its catchy pop on shows like “Dawson’s Creek,” “Party of Five,” “Popular” and “Felicity.” Five years later Switchfoot’s faith-inspired anthem, “Meant to Live,” climbed the

alternative charts before becoming a mainstream pop hit this year.

Take 6

Debuting in 1988, this Grammy-winning, *a cappella* jazz-gospel vocal sextet raised the bar for musical excellence, won fans and kudos worldwide and worked with Ray Charles, Stevie Wonder, Branford Marsalis, James Taylor and film director Spike Lee (*Do the Right Thing*).

Jaci Velasquez

Best-selling English-language recordings were just the beginning for this Latin songstress, who achieved major crossover success with a book, numerous TV appearances, a role in the 2003 film *Chasing Papi* and two Spanish-language recordings that earned her Latin Grammy Awards and a Latin Billboard Music Award.

CeCe Winans

Numerous Dove, **Grammy and Soul Train awards** have paved the way for this vocalist’s appearances on TV programs like “The Today Show” “Regis and Kathie Lee,” “Rosie O’Donnell,” “Motown Live,” “Entertainment Tonight” and Oprah Winfrey’s top-ranked show.



MercyMe

The lyrics of “I Can Only Imagine” would fit right in at Christian radio. That’s why it’s so amazing that the song, from MercyMe’s *Almost There* album, received heavy play at mainstream and country stations nationwide and topped **Billboard’s singles chart** for 10 weeks in 2003.





It's not the one who plants or the one who waters who is at the center of this process but God, who makes things grow.

(1 CORINTHIANS 3:7 AS PARAPHRASED IN *THE MESSAGE*)

Beginning this month, we're pleased to offer this special devotional section in hopes that it will be an added source of insight and encouragement as you seek practical ways to live out your faith. To kick things off, we welcome this submission from your "Favorite Author" (per the 2004 CCM Readers' Choice Awards), Max Lucado. Be sure to check back each month as we reflect on God's Word, along with some of your favorite artists who will also chime in on the subjects being discussed.

Who's It About?

Nothing mattered more to Paul than the gospel. "I am not ashamed of the gospel," he wrote, "because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16 NIV).

Since Paul existed to deliver the message, how people remembered him was secondary. (Why else would he introduce himself as a slave?) Paul's message was not about himself but about Christ.

How difficult it is to maintain such a Christ-centered focus! Don't we tend to tinker with the message? Aren't we prone to insert lines of self-service?

A young guide in an art museum was prone to such tendencies. One sentence summarized his job: Lead people to the paintings, answer their questions and step out of the way. Initially he succeeded. He walked clients to the framed treasures, identified the artists and then stepped out of view.

"This is a Monet," he would say and move back as people *oohed* and *aahed* and asked a question or two. When they were ready, he would lead them to the next masterpiece and repeat the sequence. "This is the work of Rembrandt." He stepped back; they leaned in. He stood; they stared. Simple job. Delightful job. He took great pride in his work.

Too much pride, one might say. For in a short time, he forgot his role. He began thinking the people had come to see him. Rather than step away from the work of art, he lingered near it. As they *oohed* and *aahed*, he smiled. "Glad you like it," he replied, chest lifting, face blushing. He even responded with an occasional "thank you," taking credit for work he didn't do.

Visitors disregarded his comments. But they couldn't dismiss his movements. Lingered near a painting became insufficient for the guide. Little by little he inched toward it. He extended his arm over the frame, then his

torso over part of the canvas. Finally his body blocked the entire piece. People could see him but not the art. The very work he was sent to reveal, he began to conceal. That's when His Superior intervened. "This job isn't about you, Max. Don't obscure my masterpieces." How many times has He had to remind me? The very first time He called me to display a painting, I felt tempted to eclipse it.

The request came when I was 20. "Can you address our church youth group?" We aren't talking city-wide crusade here. Think more in terms of a dozen kids around a West Texas campfire. I was new to the faith, hence new to the power of the faith. I told my story, and, lo and behold, they listened! One even approached me afterward and said something like, "That moved me, Max." My chest lifted, and my feet shifted just a step in the direction of the painting. God has been nudging me back ever since.

Maybe you don't relate. The limelight never woos you. You and John the Baptist sing the same tune: "He must become greater and greater, and I must become less and less" (John 3:30 NLT). God bless you. You might pray for the rest of us.

We "applauseaholics" have done it all: dropped names, sung loudly, dressed up to look classy, dressed down to look cool,

"This job isn't about you, Max. Don't obscure my masterpieces." How many times has He had to remind me?

quoted authors we've never read, spouted Greek we've never studied. For the life of me, I believe Satan trains battalions of demons to whisper one question in our ears: "What are people thinking of you?" A deadly query. What they think of us matters not. What they think of God matters all. God will not share His glory with another (Isaiah 42:8). Next time you need a nudge away from the spotlight, remember: You are simply one link in a chain, an unimportant link at that.

Don't agree? Take it up with the apostle: "So the one who plants is not important, and the one who waters is not important. Only God, who makes things grow, is important" (1 Corinthians 3:7 NCV, emphasis mine).

Remember some of the messengers God has used? A donkey to speak to Balaam (Numbers 22:28), a staff-turned-snake to stir Pharaoh (Exodus 7:10). The Lord has used stubborn oxen to make a point about reverence and a big fish to make a point about reluctant preachers (1 Samuel 6:1-12; Jonah 1:1-17).

God doesn't need you and me to do His work. We are expedient messengers—ambassadors by His kindness, not by our cleverness. It's not about us, and it angers Him when we think it is. In fact, Jesus has a stern warning for gallery guides who eclipse His work. *The Message* paraphrases it this way: "When you do something for someone else, don't call attention to yourself. You've seen them in action, I'm sure—'playactors' I call them—treating prayer meeting and street corner alike as a stage, acting compassionate as long as someone is watching, playing to the crowds. They get applause, true; but that's all they get (Matthew 6:2)." Gallery guides don't deserve applause for great art. Campfire speakers shouldn't grab a pen to sign autographs.

We whom God has entrusted with the gospel dare not seek applause but best deflect applause. For our message is about Someone else.

This point is made clear in a story about a European village priest in medieval times who once gathered his church for a special service. "Come tonight," he told them, "for a special sermon on Jesus." And they did. To their surprise, however, no candles illuminated the sanctuary. They groped their way to the pews and took their seats. The priest was nowhere to be seen. But soon the crowd heard him walking through the church toward the front. When he reached the crucifix that hung on the wall, he lit a candle. Saying nothing, he illuminated the pierced feet of Christ, then the side, then one hand and then the other. Lifting the candle, he shed light on the blood-masked face and the crown of thorns. With a puff, he blew out the candle and dismissed the church.

May we do nothing more.

May we do nothing less.



Author and speaker Max Lucado's latest book, *It's Not About Me* (Integrity), is available from Integrity Publishing. Lucado is also the senior pastor of Oak Hills Church in San Antonio, TX. Recently, he and MercyMe joined together to bring a one-time only concert experience to theaters on April 13th.



"It brings such hope and strength to me to know that God is all-powerful. Sometimes circumstances lead to that feeling of being out of control—whether it's a



health thing or a relationship issue. But just to know that God is all-powerful, and that He's got the whole world in His hands brings peace and security. I also think that the power of God is such an exciting thing when you see Him coming in and changing lives. I work with a lot of young people, and it can take years for people to change; but sometimes God just comes in and breaks things that have held people. Seeing people being healed and God moving in such wonderful ways, it just makes you think, 'What an incredible God, that He can do that.'"

—Worship leader/artist Tim Hughes

Questions to Ponder:

1. What message about Christ do I communicate to others by the way I live?
2. Why do you care so much about what people might be thinking of you? How can you train yourself not to listen to Satan's "battalions of demons"?
3. What's the best way you can demonstrate today that it's not about you but about God? How can you show the watching world that God is more important than anything else?



The Reading Bible

God's Word has all the elements of a great story – good guys, bad guys, epic battles, devoted sidekicks, romance, betrayal, an eternal Savior. It's everything we need to *stay alive*. Sometimes the truth is better than fiction.

NAVPRESS

new-to-you music

by Sara Groves

Providing the inside track on some of today's brightest talent still under most people's Christian music radar, *CCM Magazine* presents its annual look at the independent music scene. In addition to showcasing several acts you should know about, we've also got some insider tips on how to succeed as an artist, among other intriguing highlights in the next few pages.

Sara Groves may now be a successful major-label artist, but this singer/songwriter will always be an "independent" at heart. In that spirit she offers this primer on the Christian community's independent music scene.

We are living in the era of the super mega-chain. On any given Friday night a family looking to eat out can find any number of chain restaurants with good food, an accessible location, easy parking and tons of things nailed to the walls. However, it takes a little more effort to find the independently owned mom and pop operations; but the work involved can be extremely rewarding. If I had not ventured out, I would have never found my all-time-favorite bean burrito at Pepitos or my all-time-favorite hamburger at The Malt Shop. Unique music can be difficult to locate, too; but there is something very rewarding about finding music that moves you and then investing personally as an advocate for an independent artist.

Independent labels and distribution sites are a great place to start looking for out-of-the-way music. Silent Planet Records and Rhythm House Records don't have the mass marketing to Christian outlets that major labels do, but they house some of the greatest Christian people singing and writing music today. You will never find a life-size cutout of Pierce Pettis at your local Christian bookstore, but you would be hard pressed to find a more thoughtful songwriter.

Many established artists have left the label life but are still making great music. If at one point you really enjoyed an artist's music but haven't heard from them in a while, there's a good chance they are still making music in a less commercial season of their career. Waterdeep is not currently signed with a label, so I was glad when my brother-in-law told me about Lori Chaffer's new solo project, *1Beginning*. It blows me away. Carolyn Arends, Jill Phillips (She's now signed with Fervent Records.) and Joel Hanson (with PFR) have all been doing the best music of their careers, *sans* the major label.

Truly independent artists can be hard to sift through, but Grassrootsmusic.com and Indieforce.com are two sites that keep close tabs on the independent scene. *Paste* magazine is a general-market publication that has a strong spiritual bent—they review many out-of-the-way artists, and they give a free compilation CD with every issue, allowing you to get to know the music before you buy.

One of my favorite things about independent music is that it tends to grow in community. Good music grows more good music, and many cities have a hub of artists influencing each other, creating music together and promoting each other (see "Minneapolis, For Instance" sidebar). One good indie often leads to another.

Another way to track down indie bands and artists is through the places they play. If you live in Dallas, The Door would be a great place to start; in Green Bay, Wis., The Cup of Joy. But, even if you don't live near these venues, their Web sites can be a great resource for new-to-you music. If you do live near a venue that is hosting indie artists, show up every once in a while or better yet, try to host a concert at your church. I was an indie artist for three years and will forever appreciate the people who took the time to seek us out and find us off the beaten path.



Sara Groves

Minneapolis, For Instance:

Joe Rogness, *Right with You*

...came out of the business world, great songs, worked with producer Nate Sabin (who's worked on three of our albums)...

Jason Gay, *A Place Called Hope*

...makes me want to be a better songwriter, toured with us in 2002, produced by Nate Sabin, has a live project produced by Matt Patrick...

Joel Hanson, *Captured and Broken*

...lead singer of PFR, attends Church of the Open Door, sang lead on "Traveling Light" (from the *Traveling Light* compilation album) touring with us Spring 2004...

Matt Patrick, *Change*

...played bass in local favorite Pegtop, leads worship at Church of the Open Door, sings and plays on two of my albums (has never invited me to sing on his)... **S.G.**

Sara Recommends:

carolynarends.com
grassrootsmusic.com
jasongay.com
jillphillips.com
joelhanson.com
joerogness.com
mattpatrick.com
pedereide.com
silentplanetrecords.com
rhythmhouse.com
waterdeep.com

CCM also recommends:

indieheaven.com
ciasummit.com
kindred-cross.com
andygridley.com
phillaeger.com
marthamunizzi.com
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DOs and DON'ts FOR indie artists...

by Sydney Alexander

You may have the passion, talent and drive it takes to succeed; and, if you're fortunate enough, you may even have the resources to record a demo to showcase your best work. But even with all these assets, it's no easy endeavor to attract the attention of a major record label. After all, the competition is stiff, and funds are limited.

But don't let that fact discourage your dreams of musical grandeur. To help you get ahead of the class, we've checked in with Director of A&R at EMI Christian Music Group and renowned producer Brent Milligan, who's worked with a slew of artists, including Rebecca St. James, The Elms, Paul Colman and more than we have room to list here. Milligan gives us an insider's perspective on a few tricks of the trade that could help in your quest to get that CD heard by the right people.

1

PRESENTATION IS EVERYTHING!

Sure, a good-looking press-kit is a nice thing to send to a record label, but it's not as important as easily accessible information. "Make sure your project is clearly labeled with your name and phone number on the CD," Milligan recommends.

2

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

Like you and me, people in the A&R department of record labels are busy, busy, busy; so don't expect to receive feedback about your submission, as yours is often one of many. When Milligan is listening to demos he receives, he reveals that "an amazing voice" is the first thing he notices. "If the voice is not there, it's hard for me to listen all the way through," he says. "After that, I evaluate the songs, style and overall vibe."

3

SOUND ADVICE

"If you do start talking with a label, don't put what you're currently doing on hold as a result," Milligan asserts. Like anything else in the negotiation process, it can take a long time to lock down a deal. To avoid any added financial calamity, Milligan says it's important to keep your day job in the meantime.

4

DON'T RUSH!

A lot of artists put a "false deadline" on themselves for when they need to finish a demo, Milligan says. Instead, he encourages artists who don't have a label deadline to meet to take as much time as they need to make a worthy product to submit. He also encourages artists to find someone who "really cares about you and the music you want to make" rather than just another talented local studio musician who doesn't have an investment in what you're doing.

Special thanks to our resident aspiring artist/supermodel, Craig Felker, of indie band Special Delivery. Checkout speciald.net



Some additional suggestions from your pals at CCM...



BE REALISTIC.

Generally, artists start small and build big. Trying to go national before you even have a fanbase in your hometown is probably not the best way to handle things. If you try to do too much too soon, you're likely to just end up discouraged. Remember, "Rome wasn't built in a day."



LIST EXPERIENCES AND QUALIFICATIONS THAT HELP YOU STAND OUT

from the hundreds of other demos record labels receive. For instance, if you book 200 shows a year, play all your own instruments and write all your own songs, a record label needs to know that.



DON'T MISREPRESENT YOURSELF.

Don't say you're 23 if you're 27. Don't say that you have "played with Steven Curtis Chapman" if, in reality, you just played at a local county fair four hours and three other acts before Steven headlined on that same stage that evening. Honesty is always the best policy, and dishonest claims have a way of coming back to haunt you.



SEND A GOOD-QUALITY PICTURE WITH YOUR CD.

It is a reality: Record labels need to know what you look like if they are going to consider investing in you. They will understand if you couldn't afford professional hair, makeup and wardrobe artists to work their magic on you. They can afford that magic for you if they give you a record deal, but they need to know what they've got to work with!



DON'T SEND A CASSETTE TAPE!

Seriously, cassettes are *soooo* 1987. If you're not at the level where you can send a CD, you're likely not ready to go professional.



DON'T GIVE UP.

If you are serious about pursuing a full-time musical ministry/career, don't give up! Always keep business cards with you in case you meet someone who might be able to help you achieve your goals. Stay organized, keep working hard, keep sharpening your skills, and stay true to what you believe you are called to do! Beyond that, it is up to God to open and close the doors for you as He knows best. **S.A.**



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Indie SPOTLIGHT

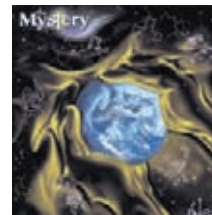


Destiny One Records:

During Gospel Music Week in Nashville, Tenn., Destiny One Records is presenting a unique showcase dubbed "Live at Rocketown" on Thursday, April 29 at 7 p.m. at the popular downtown club located at 401 6th Avenue South. Admission is \$5, and the lineup includes JDT and his fellow Destiny One artists JERI, J3, KABOD and the JDT Ensemble. More information about Destiny One is available online at destinyonerecords.com.

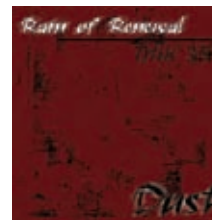
Alexi:

With a debut titled *The Mystery*, contemporary instrumental musician Alexi draws inspiration from Scripture to craft intriguing songs that are rich in texture and musical interpretation. Using a variety of instrumentation to achieve his sound, no two songs sound the same and will keep listeners guessing what might be next. Read more about his work at aleximusic.com.



Rain of Renewal:

With a high-energy sound that clearly communicates the truth of the gospel message, Rain of Renewal's music rings with hope and authenticity. The group's self-titled album (a few clips are available on Rain of Renewal's Web site at rainofrenewal.com) will be released on May 22. **S.A.**



i surrender my life to Your blood • i surrender my name for Your glory • i surrender my heart to Your will • i surrender my dreams to the

phil laeger

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i held onto • i surrender it all • i surrender my everything for You • plans You have for me • thank You for showing me • the emptiness of



The CIA Summit

More than 275 independent artists joined together in Franklin, Tenn. March 5 and 6 for the CIA Summit, co-sponsored by Indieheaven.com and CCM Magazine. The purpose of the summit was to educate, network, empower, affirm and equip indie artists for music ministry. "The spirit of the event was positive, encouraging, and motivating because artists were not there to compete against one another," says Indieheaven founder, Keith Mohr. "I felt early on we needed to offer artists something different and take competition out of the event. The purpose of the Summit was to bring artists together in a spirit of unity. By cultivating camaraderie, they can more effectively serve Christ as they serve one another. Attendees said the Summit was one of the most effective conferences they have been to because a spirit of unity and encouragement was present."

Here's a sample of some of their comments:

"I came in with some expectations, but they were blown out of the water. God stopped by and did some amazing things. Connections were made—both with others and with God. I have a greater sense of direction and purpose." —Steve Wood

"Everything is different. Everything about what I thought I did has changed. There has been a deep and holy revival in my heart for my Savior, for ministry and for music, and I didn't even know there needed to be." —Carrie Coffey of Jacob's Road

"Wow. Let me say a big 'thank you' for all you put into making this a great weekend. My life is forever changed, not to mention my music business/ministry. I feel soooo full inside, thanks to all you did. It was certainly a God-thing, and I wouldn't have missed it for the world." —Frances Drost

Check out ciasummit.com for many more comments and pictures of the event. Keith adds, "We'll be back with another CIA Summit soon. Sign up for our mailing list for the latest info!" **S.A.**



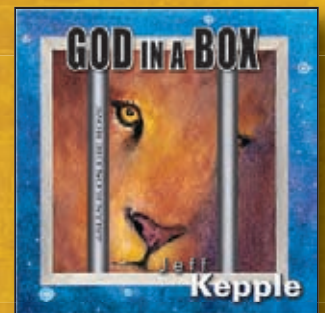
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Kindred Cross

"Songs that we sing since we were young, a harmony that's never done." This line from a song on their debut album, *From Now On*, sums up the foundation of Kindred Cross. Siblings who grew up singing at various churches and events under the band continues to lift its unique harmony in worship to God.

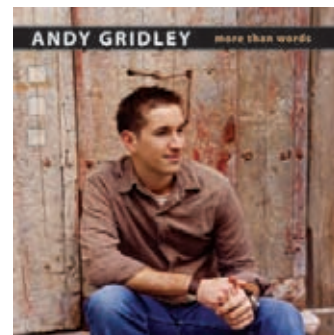
Kindred Cross, which includes three brothers, a sister and talented musician friends from Coatesville, Penn., bases its music on a wide range of influences from gospel to country to rock and roll, to create a sound that appeals to a wide range of listeners. But the chief influence on the band and its music is the spiritual strength found in the family. Says founding band member and songwriter Steven Cunningham, "My mother always wanted a singing family. She was blessed with four boys and a girl, and we've been singing our entire lives."

Kindred Cross was formed in April of 2002 when Steven began writing down the songs that would eventually make up the album *From Now On*. It was an emotional period in his life, and, with the Lord's inspiration, he channeled those feelings the best way that he knew how: into music. Before long, Steve had 22 songs written, 11 of which are on their album, released in December 2003.

Kindred Cross includes: Steven Cunningham on vocals, guitar, drums; brothers Mark and Tim Cunningham and sister Ruth Berkheimer on vocals; J. Harry Wilkinson on bass; Lorne Porta on guitars, mandolin and dobro; and co-producer David Allen Kurtz on keyboards.

For more information please visit kindred-cross.com.

Indieheaven.com is dedicated to bringing together independent Christian artists from around the globe and providing them a platform where they can be heard, seen and supported. Indieheaven offers solutions that enable, equip, affirm and empower independent artists to fulfill God's call on their lives.



Artist Name: Andy Gridley
Homebase: Los Gatos, CA
Web site: andygridley.com
Sounds Like: Delirious, John Mayer, Dave Matthews, Sting, Lifehouse, James Taylor
Discography: *More Than Words* (2004); *Green* (2001)
Get It Now!:
TowerRecords.com,
CDBaby.com, Itunes.com,
Rhapsody.com, Napster.com

Kudos: "Natural Born singer and songwriter" -*Worship Leader Magazine* (2002)
"Qualities that even the toughest critic on 'American Idol'...would admire"
Los Gatos Weekly Times 2004.

Seen & Heard: From Australia, to Latvia, to New York, to Los Angeles, music has been a part of Andy's entire life. Plays at churches and coffeehouses.

What's Unique: Often is told he looks like Noah Wyle, actor from NBC's "ER."

Contact: 408/499-0754 or booking@andygridley.com

In A Nutshell: The heart of a lead worshiper combined with the skills of a mature performer meld into a fresh, creative and authentic art that sounds familiar to secular listeners while embodying the power and substance of Christian spirituality.

Artist Name: Phil Laeger

Homebase: Atlanta, GA

Web site: phillaeger.com

Sounds Like: earthy, acoustic, folk, pop, rock worship

Discography: *All I Held Onto* (2003)

Get It Now!: phillaeger.com,
CDBaby.com, buymusic.com

Seen & Heard: coffeehouses and churches throughout the Southeast

What's Unique: Phil has traveled with Christian rock bands on missions trips, using music to tell the good news of Jesus Christ.

Contact: booking@phillaeger.com

In A Nutshell: Phil loves to lead people in worship and believes that music is only as good as its ability to point people to Jesus Christ.





Artist Name: Martha Munizzi

Homebase: Orlando, FL

Web site: marthamunizzi.com

Sounds Like: A blend of Crystal Lewis and Yolanda Adams

Discography: *The Best Is Yet to Come* (2004); *Say the Name* (2002); *Judah One Live* (2001)

Get It Now!: marthamunizzi.com, amazon.com, walmart.com, familychristian.com

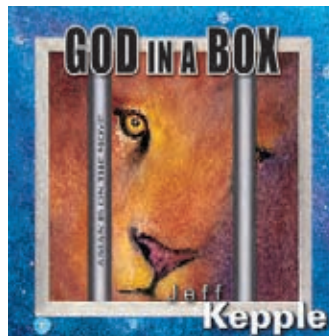
Kudos: 2004 Dove Award nominee as songwriter for "Best Contemporary Gospel Song Of The Year"

Seen & Heard: national and international music conferences; TV appearances with CeCe Winans, Israel Houghton; music video featured on BET; featured on "Hopeville" fall 2004 tour with Donnie McClurkin, Kirk Franklin and Yolanda Adams.

What's Unique: Martha Munizzi is currently the only non-African American in 2004 to debut near the top of *Billboard's* Gospel Chart. Her original praise & worship songs such as "Shout" and "Because Of Who You Are" are fast becoming modern day praise & worship standards in churches around the nation and throughout the world. Additionally, Martha is achieving her notoriety with no major label support, doing everything independently.

Contact: 407/884-5620 or booking@marthamunizzi.com

In A Nutshell: Martha's desire is to bridge cultural, denominational and generational gaps and see the Body of Christ come together in unity through praise & worship.



Artist Name: Jeff Kepple

Homebase: Quincy, CA

Web site: jeffkepple.com

Sounds Like: contemporary acoustic

Discography: *God in a Box*

Get it Now!: jeffkepple.com

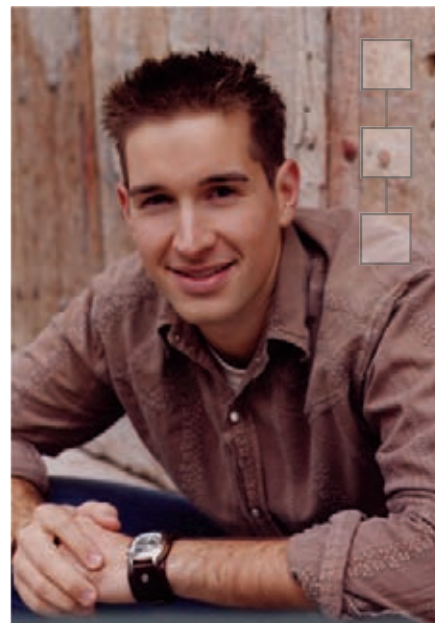
Kudos: 3rd place, 4th grade

"Punt, Pass, and Kick" competition (5 entries)

What's unique: Jeff's an M.D. who has written songs about delivering babies, watching dying patients and experiencing "burn out" in the ER. He's also an avid fan of C.S. Lewis, and several of his songs have been inspired by Lewis' writings!

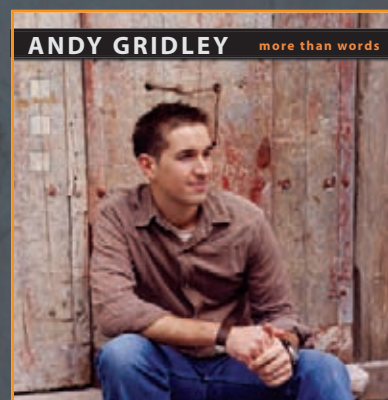
Contact: jeffkepple.com

In a nutshell: Jeff takes his listeners on a wild musical journey—from gut-wrenching stories about his patients, to whimsical songs about the weather, to intensely worshipful songs about our Lord. His debut album, *God in a Box* is a contemporary acoustic sound with stunning musicianship and powerful lyrics.



ANDY GRIDLEY

more than words



"A natural born singer and songwriter"
- *Worship Leader Magazine*

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- *Los Gatos Weekly Times*

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Wired for Sound

Embracing the guitar gusto of days past, Third Day cranks up the amps without alienating its newer fans in the process.



File under: Rock **Grade:** B+
For fans of... Third Day in its rock & roll heyday.

THIRD DAY

Wire

Essential

It seems rock & roll was clearly on these Georgia boys' minds.

Years ago the classic punk group Wire released an album called *Third Day*, so why shouldn't Third Day release an album called *Wire*? Still, Third Day's latest could just as easily be called *Wired*, as it appears the band finally rediscovered the amped-up rock & roll rush of its past.

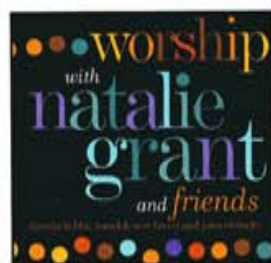
After releasing three rock albums in its first four years, Third Day crossed the Y2K dateline with mellower music in mind. The new decade's work produced two worship albums and the mid-tempo *Come Together*; and while the band earned gold plaques for each, the albums took the band even further from its rock roots. With *Wire* these Peach State superstars show they can still make an electric guitar squeal.

Fans coughing up the coin will enjoy Atlanta-sized rockers like "I Got a Feeling," "Rock Star" and "Billy Brown." The album's clear standout, "Til the

Day I Die," actually features the band's heaviest guitar riffs in years, balanced out with acoustic drops for a stunning tempo-driven exchange. "Come on Back to Me" utilizes similar dynamics with a strong musical start paired with partly subdued vocals that kick it up on the chorus. While *Wire* won't inspire "mosh" pits any time soon, the album does deliver a choice handful of southern fried rockers capable of recruiting younger fans to the Third Day caravan.

Of course, *Wire* also doesn't shun the pop-rock formulas that earned Third Day 20 No. 1 singles and enough Dove Awards to fill a city zoo. Beautifully crafted songs such as "I Believe," "It's a Shame" and "Blind" (featuring Dave Matthews Band violinist Boyd Tinsley) deliver a fair dose of energy without the sharp rock edges, while the title track finds its favor in a dramatic chorus ripe with poetic symbolism and catchy inflections. The tracks "Innocent" and "You Are Mine" also give the album an offering of worship, while "I Will Hold My Head High" finds its voice in a distraught-sounding appeal for hope.

While Third Day recruits producer Paul Ebersold (3 Doors Down, Skillet) and the mix of studio great Brendan O'Brien (Aerosmith, Limp Bizkit) for its rock return, interestingly, the new producer and the album's mainstream rock style coincide with a recent contract extension with Provident. Putting the pieces together, it seems obvious that the fresh legal ink came with a new label commitment to cross Third Day over into the general market. Should the band be taking a toss of the mainstream dice, *Wire* is clearly its best chance at avoiding snake eyes. **DAVID JENISON**



File under: Praise & Worship
For fans of... contemporary worship with a flavorful twist.

Grade: A-

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Worship with Natalie Grant and Friends

Integrity

It helps that Natalie has friends in high places.

Worship with Natalie Grant and Friends easily manages the difficult feat of distinguishing itself from the glut of worship products flooding the Christian marketplace. For starters,

the album benefits from the snappy production prowess of Grant's husband, Bernie Herms (Avalon, Plus One). Smartly arranged and energy packed, the album feels live, despite being recorded in a studio. However, the real highlight here is the exceptional singers involved. Grant takes the lead on four of the album's 14 tracks, and she's never sounded better. (That really means

something when you're talking about Natalie Grant!) In addition, she also teams up with the soaring voice of John Elefante, the incomparable Darwin Hobbs and the powerful delivery of Israel & New Breed, as well as a backing "praise team" of six. The results are impeccable, pristine performances that take perhaps overly familiar songs ("Shout to the Lord," "Breathe On Me," "Agnus Dei") and manage to make them fresh again.

With a contemporary/charismatic feel to it, *Worship* is decidedly multi-cultural in its approach. "Crown You With Praise" has a smokin' Latin vibe to it, while "Let it Rise" falls into the urban/gospel category. When it needs to be, *Worship* is nearly explosive. Yet appropriately, the album



NATALIE GRANT

also reins things in when necessary—in a quiet, reverential way, as on "You Are My All in All," a stunning offering that serves as an obvious highlight.

AARON KING



File under: Rock
For fans of... a youthful perspective on love and life with plenty of rockin' musical influences.

Grade: A

TAYLOR SORENSON

The Overflow

Rocketown

Eminem, The White Stripes, and now Taylor make Michigan proud!

Rocketown's newest artist waxes poetic with an album of love songs for his full-length debut, *The Overflow*. However, Sorenson's articulation of love isn't what you'd get from, say, Steven Curtis Chapman's latest offering, *All About Love* (Sparrow). Sorenson's debut, rather, stands tall on a classic rock foundation and sparkles with an Euro-tinged glaze. The result is a solid body of work that will surely

draw in fans of the old school renderings of the Rolling Stones as well as fans of newer rock darlings like The Strokes.

This 23-year old Belmont University grad spent the past few years honing his musical skills on stages across the Midwest, opening shows for the likes of dc talk and Newsboys. Credited with penning most of the albums' tracks, this Adrian, Mich.-native has a smart approach as a lyricist and a talent for memorable melodies.

Sorenson's production team includes Dave Perkins (Over the Rhine, Newsboys), Sam Ashworth (Switchfoot, Charlie Peacock) and Matt Slocum, the principle songwriter/instrumentalist for the now-defunct Sixpence None the Richer. This combo of talents produced the surefire rock-radio gem "Love Somebody Else," the album's first track. Like many of the songs, it relays the central theme found in Sorenson's work—the notion that the greatest way to exhibit love for God is to love others. On "Follow Me," Jesus' message of obedience to His disciples is displayed with heavy electric guitars, hook-laden, anthemic chorus lines and soulful, call-to-action vocals.

At times, Sorenson brings U2's charismatic frontman Bono to mind (think U2 tracks like "Elevation") with his passionate vocal style and sonic mix on songs such as "Sanctuary." Tracks like "World Keeps on Spinning" with Sixpence's Leigh Nash on guest vocals and relevant story-song "Bethlehem Girl," though more moody and mellow than the album's aforementioned rockers, also emerge as standout tracks on Sorenson's memorable debut.

LIZZA CONNOR



TAYLOR SORENSON

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What are your favorite artists listening to?

Margaret Becker reviews the latest from independent artist Alli Rogers.



Over morning coffee, Alli Rogers' *Always Eden* project echoes through my house, bringing with it the simple elegance of poetry. It is loose and unapologetic. It's raw, under produced, built around Alli and her acoustic guitar. It's textured and accurate, with a knack for phrasing familiar words in unfamiliar ways. But it is only an association, not an imitation

because Alli has her own voice—both on the record and, apparently, behind the scenes since she co-produced this lovely record with Donnie Boutwell. Sometimes they all find the downbeat together, sometimes they don't; and it's brave. It's right. It's real. But all in all, it is her message, her Solomonesque leanings that have earned her an extended invitation on my 5-CD lazy susan.

I believe her when she says: *"It's more than a choice than a feeling, It's more than a wound than a healing, the act of believing in*

you." I shrug with her when she tackles the deeper issues and finds herself simply with words such as: *"Sometimes I look too hard at the big things, when the best thing I can do, is love you."*

Alli Rogers is a poet. Listening to her makes me want to try harder at my own craft.

To purchase *Always Eden* visit allirogers.com.



MARGARET BECKER



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Alathea's Cristi Johnson reviews Johnny Cash's *Life*.



ALATHEA'S CRISTI JOHNSON (ON THE RIGHT)

On Sept. 12, 2003, the girls in Alathea and I heard on our truck radio that Johnny Cash had passed away, meeting June on "The Far Side Banks of Jordan" (a song

we saw the legendary couple perform only a few short years ago in concert together at the Carter Family Fold). Just four days prior to his death, Johnny turned in the titles for this project. When invited to review *Life* (Sony), we were not only honored and humbled but also a little giddy. *Life* is the follow-up/conclusion to his *Love, God, Murder* collection, which we owned immediately upon release, in part because our own Carrie Theobald has been a fan since her wonder years and also as part of our ongoing attempt to study timeless artists.

Spanning three decades of music, *Life* hinges on the authentic sounds of guitar, upright piano, bass, the happy banjo and the sad steel guitar, the deep tremor of Johnny's voice and an occasional duet with June. His life's work becomes a profound voice for those who have been kept silent—the blue-collar worker, the Native American, the small town citizen, the prisoner. Or as Johnny himself articulates on the *Life* track "Man in Black":



"Just so we're reminded of the ones who are held back/Up front there ought to be a man in black." One of the treasures hidden in this compilation is the previously unreleased, "I Can't Go On That Way," which is something of an ecclesiastical account of filling life with all that is meaningless.

Life embeds songs of everyday, shared experiences into a foundation of faith from the opening song, "Supper time," that celebrates coming home to dinner as a foretaste of our final homecoming to the closing benediction, "Lead Me Gently Home."



File under: Worship
Grade: B+
For fans of... renowned hymns with a modern-day soundtrack.

VARIOUS

Passion—Hymns Ancient and Modern—Live Songs of Our Faith
sixsteps

Ancient words still ring true with a soundtrack that's brand new.

Passion's latest project, *Hymns Ancient and Modern—Live Songs of Our Faith*, is inspired by perhaps the oldest surviving Christian hymn, "Phos Hilaron" ("Hail Gladdening Light"). This album takes classic worship songs and dresses them in modern musical clothing as worship leaders, including Chris Tomlin, Charlie Hall, Christy Nockels and Matt Redman, come together to blend ancient words, modern instruments and passionate adoration.

Hymns begins with the time-honored mainstay instrument, an organ, on "O Worship the King"; but tradition quickly gives way to an electric guitar-driven melody and crashing cymbals. Tomlin's respectful singing further unifies the mix. Keeping things fresh, "Doxology" opens with an emotional guitar rendition of the melody, while hushed contemporary backing vocals pair harmoniously with Crowder's worshipful "Amen" chorus.

One of the strongest cuts on the album, "Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee," features a rocking rhythm and Hall's captivating take on vocals. Barely restraining emotion during the verses, he readily shouts for joy on the chorus, ad-libbing praises by its end.

"Praise the Lord, the Almighty" allows Nockels' pure voice to serve as a perfect centerpiece, transforming from a whispering praise into a soaring call to worship. Redman offers a more traditional bent on "Here Is Love" with his relaxed tone, allowing the lyrics to take precedence. *Hymns* effectively closes with an enjoyable duet of "Take My Life," featuring Tomlin and Nockels. Above all, this album remarkably blends old and new and serves as a respectful nod to the great worship songs of our time.

JESSICA PHILLIPS



File under: Rock
Grade: B+
For fans of... intelligent modern rock with plenty of mainstream appeal.

DUVALL

Volume and Density
Asian Man

Still smokin'—with or without the Popes

As frontman for The Smoking Popes, Josh Caterer had more perks and pleasures than most Chicago rockers could ever fathom. He had a deal with Capitol Records,

went on tour with Morrissey and Jawbreaker and held a relatively rare ranking as both a critical darling and a commercially viable artist. But at the cusp of his band's fame and at the peak of his personal profit level, Caterer started to search for something beyond the rock & roll lifestyle. He wanted to dig deeper to truly discover who he was and escape a continual cycle of dissatisfaction that resulted from the hectic hoop-jumping demanded by the industry.

Enter Duvall, Caterer's latest artistic endeavor with Popes' alum Eli Caterer (bass) and Rob Kellenberger (drums) that reflects his born-again ideals and previous band's signature melodic sweeps. Following a string of self-released EPs, the results on *Volume and Density* are a charming blend of the Popes' authoritative pop positioning ("Between the Lines," "Where I Belong"), contagious hopefulness driven by gliding instrumentation ("Taking Me Home," "Gimmie Some Light") and unshakable faith ("All in Your Hands," "Jesus Never Leaves Me"). Plus, those who already own the EP *Racine* are sure to enjoy the pleasant resurfacing of that title cut's unadulterated pop and the modern remake of Spandau Ballet's easy crooner "True."

Overall, listeners can chalk this one up as both a creative and Christ-centered victory for one of rock & roll's ex-bad boys, who, based on his previous platform, has the potential to shine a luminous light on the mainstream.

ANDY ARGYRAKIS

CREATION 04

June 23 to 26
The Agape Farm • Mt. Union, PA

July 21 to 24
George Amphitheater • George, WA

Newsboys • Audio Adrenaline
Jars of Clay • Switchfoot
Steven Curtis Chapman
Relient K • Skillet • Delirious
tobyMac • Jeremy Camp
Stacie Orrico • Kutless • Petra
Chris Tomlin Band • Grits
12 Stones • Pillar • Plumb
Paul Colman Trio • KJ-52
David Crowder Band
Superchick • Out of Eden
Paul Baloche • John Reuben
Casting Crowns • Telecast
Big Daddy Weave
Sanctus Real • Starfield
Rock & Roll Worship Circus
7th Day Slumber
Thousand Foot Krutch
FM Static • Falling Up
Cool Hand Luke • 7 Places
Sarah Kelly • Building 429
Desperation • Jason Morant
The Speakers Luis Palau Josh
McDowell • Rob Bell
David Nasser • Bob Lentz
Duffy Robbins • Greg Laurie
Josh Harris • Laurie Polich
Ryan Dobson • Mike Silva
Stephen Baldwin
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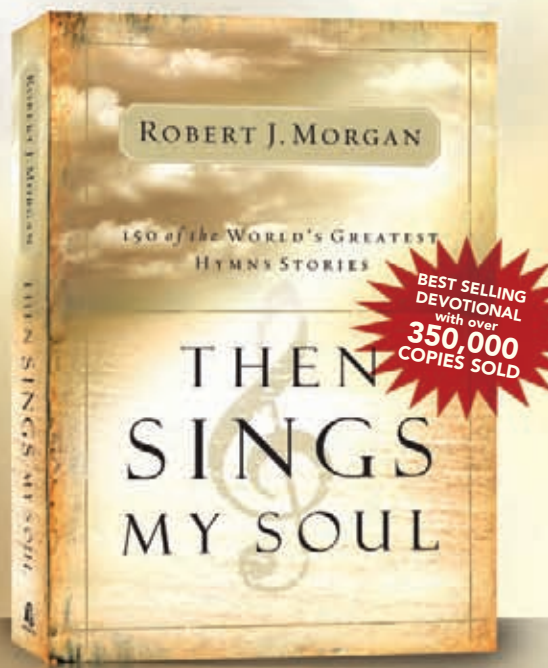
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THEN SINGS MY SOUL BOOK 2



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BUILDING 429

Glory Defined EP

Word/Curb/Warner Brothers

**Talented rockers explore
familiar territory.**

File under:

Pop/Rock

For fans of... radio-friendly, rollicking songs with a spiritual spin.

Grade: B+

The formula isn't exactly new: a southern band that plays highly produced, radio-friendly hard rock with precision and passion (read: Creed, Third Day) and a lead singer with a rich, earth-shaking baritone just like, well, Creed's Scott Stapp or Third Day's Mac Powell.

But while Building 429 isn't hammering down stakes in the camp of originality, these former DIY road warriors are veterans enough to know that just sounding like nobody else doesn't necessarily get audiences to bend their collective ear.

Building 429 will likely hit it big because the quartet (vocalist-guitarist Jason Roy, bassist Scotty Beshears, guitarist Paul Bowden and drummer Michael Anderson) writes memorable melodies, huge hooks and straightforward, humble, worshipful lyrics. Plus, its brand of heavy rock isn't so heavy that Roy's vocals get drowned in distortion soup,

and the fellas know a thing or three about subtle sonic touches (i.e., well-placed acoustic guitars, real pianos, Hammond organs, strings).

So what if the title track from its debut six-song EP sounds like a twice-removed cousin of Creed's "Higher"? It's a perfect rock single that's already hit No. 1 on the *Christian Radio Weekly's* adult contemporary charts and that's probably already taken up residence in your gray matter in less time than it takes to utter "Hey Ya."

Overall, Building 429 has the rockin', poppin' goods for those with ears to hear.

DAVE URBANSKI



File under:

Rock

For fans of... rock salad with plenty of cheese.

Grade: C+

VARIOUS

Veggie Rocks!

ForeFront

**Veggies are now rockin' the
produce aisle.**

Bob the Tomato, Larry the Cucumber and the rest of

the VeggieTales video gang occupy a warm place in the hearts of many a church kid and adult. While the Monty Python-esque humor is fun and the message uplifting, the music has been even better. Anyone who's watched toddlers bop to "I Can Be Your Friend" will likely agree that it and other "silly songs" are rightfully considered classics.

So, what do those silly tunes sound like when a bunch of rockers try to turn them into semi-serious fare? Although we can debate whether that question even needed to be answered, the result, *Veggie Rocks!*, turns out to be a mixed bag.

The best results come when the rockers stay true to the wacky spirit of the originals. Audio Adrenaline's live "The Hairbrush Song" (originally released in 1997) is a ton of fun with the band mimicking characters. Michael Tait's soulful voice is just right for the ode to drive-thru happiness, "His Cheeseburger." And Steven Curtis Chapman joins his sons for a rip through "I Love My Lips."

Others fare not as well. Superchic[k]'s "The Water Buffalo Song" attempts street-level hipness with a reggae/hip-hop feel, but it pales next to Larry the Cucumber's squeaky take on the original. And Rebecca St. James' VeggieTales theme invokes some unintended creepiness with its Evanescence-like goth-rock. Tracks from Relient K, Sanctus Real, Paul Colman and Newsboys are fine, but *Veggie Rocks!*, ultimately, demonstrates that, like a ripe, juicy vegetable, some things just can't be improved upon.

ANTHONY DEBARROS



File under: Modern Worship
Grade: B+
For fans of... the new school of praise ala Chris Tomlin, Lincoln Brewster and Charlie Hall

JASON MORANT

Abandon
Vertical

Audiences will love to sing these praises.

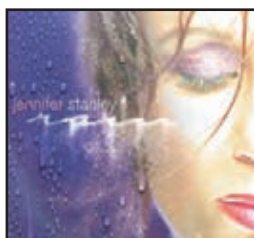
Vertical Music has always been known for introducing artistically compelling and easily relatable worship leaders to the world at large, and its latest signee, Jason Morant, follows in that tradition. The 22-year-old singer/songwriter from New Orleans is sure to be a hit amongst the college crowd as his material ranges from amped-up guitar anthems to momentum-building ballads of fervency.

In terms of vocals, Morant evokes a similarity to what one might hear within the Passion movement, while his lyrical approach is direct, descriptive and dedicated exclusively to praising God. "You Give Me Life" kicks off the disc with pure foot-stomping joy, and "Bless the Lord" steps back a few notches to deliver lush keyboard and acoustic guitar splendor, while "Great Is the Lord" soars with transfixing melodies and stirring build-up. An alternative adaptation of "I Love You Lord" combines both Morant's gripping immediacy and prayerful focus as does "There Is No One," which is efficiently splashed with a vibrato vocal presentation. The album wraps up with the sparse delicacy of "I

Delight," alluding to yet another interpretive side of this budding minister that lends additional credence to his worship leadership cause.

TYSON SHAW

JENNIFER



File under: Acoustic-based pop rock
Grade: B-
For fans of... Singer/songwriters such as Kelly Minter and Margaret Becker

STANLEY

Rain
Independent

The third time's the charm for this indie act.

Jennifer Stanley may be a new artist to most Christian music fans, but she is not technically a new artist.

Rain, produced by Margaret Becker, is actually Stanley's third release. As a veteran of the road, playing around 100 dates a year, *Rain* should help her extend her fan base even farther.

Stanley co-wrote half of Rain's dozen tracks, including three written with Becker. Fellow artist Kelly Minter contributes background vocals throughout much of the project, and Becker lends her voice to a few tracks as well. The album's biggest surprise is a cover of Van Morrison's "Whenever God Shines His Light," performed here as a duet with Ray Boltz, who unearths a pleasing grittiness to his voice.

Fans of Cheri Keaggy and Carolyn Arends are likely to become fans of Jennifer Stanley as well.

LI LIU

DVD SPOTLIGHT



File under: Pop/Rock/Worship
Grade: B
For fans of... Smitty in a live concert setting.

MICHAEL W. SMITH

Live in Concert—A 20 Year Celebration

Reunion

Two decades later, Smitty still "has the dream."

Considering that Michael W. Smith's last non-worship video released more than a decade ago, it's only fitting for the superstar to release a live project once again, and for what better reason than his 20th anniversary?

The *Live in Concert—A 20 Year Celebration* DVD correlates with *The Second Decade* collection released last fall, both of which chronicle the historical impact and musical growth of the entertainer since 1993. The set list starts out with a pair of tracks from that time period—the arena filling "I Still Have the Dream" and the latest single, "Signs" (co-written by Michael's son, Ryan and Wes King).

Both bring the crowd to an immediate standing ovation and resound with Smitty's robust pop. He then blasts back to the past for slightly modernized versions of "Rocketown," "Wired for Sound" and "Secret Ambition," all of which conjure up sweet nostalgia for the older audience members.

The electric edge takes a break for a solo piano set where Smith incorporates much of his *Go West Young Man* material into a medley. "For You" features comedic improv in lieu of the normal Beatlesque horn solo, "Love Crusade" is updated with a reggae splash, and "Place in This World" adapts a more sparse approach. The inevitable tearjerkers, "I Will Be Here for You" and "Friends" follow nicely with the crowd's traditional background singing.

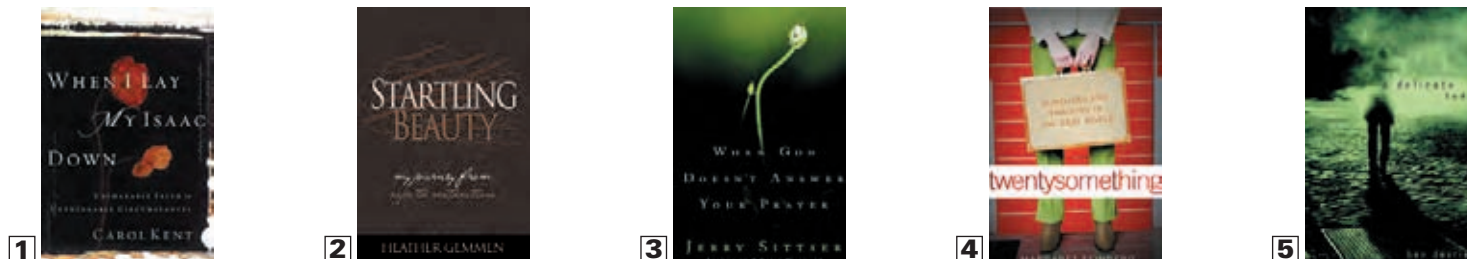
And, of course, no career retrospective evening would've been complete without a cameo by Smith's frequent collaborator, Amy Grant, who contributes "Lead Me On," "El Shaddai" and "Thy Word." Having the two superstars on the same concert stage is truly a throwback to the old days, reminding fans of the power in that partnership. Following the surprise Grant set, Smitty effectively wraps up the evening with worship, leading the audience through thunderous choruses of "Above All," "Agnus Dei" and "Awesome God." **ANDY ARGYRAKIS**

This Summer, get Delirious

Between the reckless driving and the double-double mochas, Neil will have to figure out who's the girl for him—a process that would render any guy delirious.

Don't miss this hilarious sequel to *Flabbergasted!*

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Imagine being awakened in the middle of the night with the news that your Naval officer son has murdered a man. Imagine giving birth to the bi-racial child who is the product of a violent rape. Imagine losing your wife, your mother and your daughter in a collision with a drunk driver who walks away. Now imagine experiencing these things and not only responding in faith but having the ability to write about it. That's exactly what these authors have done in the books I want to tell you about this month.

1

Carol Kent's *When I Lay My Isaac Down: Unshakable Faith in Unthinkable Circumstances* (NavPress) tells the story of the shock and loss of walking through the trial and ultimate imprisonment of her only son for the murder of his wife's ex-husband (a case you may have seen profiled on NBC's "Dateline"). "Our 'Isaacs'" she writes, are "the heart sacrifices we make when we choose to relinquish control and honor God with our choices even when all seems lost." As you read the gripping story, it is obvious Carol Kent has come to this place of sacrifice at the cost of great struggle and pain. "The strange paradox is that in the middle of Jason's hopeless sentence of life without the possibility of parole, Gene and I are

living out our own life sentence of dashed hopes. But with dashed hopes comes the possibility of new dreams. Dreams that are forged by fire, heartache and suffering are made of strong metals, and we see more opportunities all the time that make us feel privileged to be walking this path of heart sacrifice." This is an amazing story that's well lived and well told.

2

I was touched by the author's authenticity and artistry in *Startling Beauty: My Journey from Rape to Restoration* (Cook Communications) by Heather Gemmen. Her ability to draw back the curtain and expose the reality of her rape, along with her openness about all of the difficult decisions, awkward experiences and conflicted relationships it gave birth to, is at



Heather Gemmen

once sweet and stunning. "Rape takes too much," she concludes. "But I, for one, have gained more than I have lost. I have been startled by beauty in places where it doesn't belong. I see it on a bloodied cross, and bitterness loses its power. I see it on the face of the man who keeps his vows to me, and fear releases its grip. I see it in the graceful dance of a child who was so unwanted, and hope revives its song." This book reveals the kind of beauty that is only made possible by a Redeemer.

3

I first read Jerry Sittser's story in an earlier book he wrote called *A Grace Disguised: How the Soul Grows Through Loss* (Zondervan), and I found myself underlining in page after page. I so appreciate his honesty. He writes, "It is a wonder that we pray at all, considering how often we have been disappointed by unanswered prayer." Sittser, who lost his wife, mother and a daughter in an automobile accident, had prayed for their protection that morning. And so he wonders along with his reader, why didn't God answer that prayer? "It is no longer an abstract question to me," writes Sittser in *When God Doesn't Answer Your Prayer* (Zondervan), "the kind of question that some philosophy class might explore. It's a real question, as gritty and gutsy as the



Jerry Sittser

painful experience that forced me to ask it. I simply couldn't keep praying without finding an answer to it." Anyone who has wondered why God seems to answer one person's prayer for a parking space and deny another's request for healing or restoration or protection will gain from reading this perspective-shaping book.

4

I loved it when recently someone at church told me I look like I'm in my twenties. (Perhaps the money spent on microdermabrasion really is worth it!) But, alas, I am not in my twenties. Not even close. This became even more obvious when I looked at two new books for those who do fit in that decade of dreams and decisions. *Twentysomething: Surviving and Thriving in the Real*



Margaret Feinberg

World (W Publishing) by Margaret Feinberg serves as a guide to facing the challenges of an entry-level job, finding your niche, feeling alone and figuring out what and who you want to do and be. Bebo Norman writes in the foreword, “Margaret speaks to the practical mind and the spiritual heart of what I believe to be the single most transitional figure in modern life—the twentysomething.” If you are in your twenties—current, capable, cosmopolitan—and completely confused—this book is for you.

5

The publishers of *A Delicate Fade* (Zondervan) by Ben DeVries describe the book as an “honest and engaging personal approach to the problem of pain that will resonate with people in their twenties and thirties who find themselves on the fringes of Christianity because their experience doesn’t jibe with the evangelical subculture.” I think that is true. Certainly this is a unique

book with its poetic style, open-ended questions with no tidy answers and its lack of capitalization. More stream-of-consciousness narrative than spiritual life how-to, *A Delicate Fade* is thought-provoking. A songwriter, the son of evangelical missionaries and a graduate of Moody Bible Institute, DeVries avoids easy, simplistic answers to profound questions. So much is quotable, but I’ll leave you with just one. “I used to think of faith as a catchall for reality. I thought that if you put yourself in the position of salvation and what the Christian life was supposed to be you would be saved from all things, especially the ones that hurt. But I don’t think faith is so much an umbrella as a hand underneath me that lets me feel everything that rains down. and holds me when I can’t feel anymore and when I think I’ve left it for the pain and questions.”

UNDERSTANDING THE EFFECTS

When **Jeremy Deibler** of **FFH** was 5 years old, his parents divorced; and it was then, according to Deibler, that his childhood was stolen from him. Jeremy found a kindred spirit and a parallel experience with Jen Abbas, author of the new book, *Generation EX: Adult Children of Divorce and the Healing of Our Pain*.

CCM: How did you get connected with Jen Abbas, author of *Generation Ex* and agree to write the foreword to the book?

Jeremy: Because of my song “Have I Ever Told You” about my folks’ divorce, Jen knew that I came from a broken home and asked if we could talk about it.

I read *Generation EX* fast because it was so close to home. It is hands-down the most explicative and well-written book about divorce I’ve ever read.

As an adult child of divorce, you are always longing for a piece of something stolen from you. The Bible says that Satan is out to rob, kill and destroy. And for a child of divorce, the security of your parents’ marriage is one thing Satan has succeeded in stealing from you.

CCM: What resonated with you in the book?

Jeremy: Jen explains why a child of divorce has certain thoughts or fears or feelings; and, as I read, I thought,

“Oh, yea, *that* is why I’m feeling those things.” That, in itself, is like a support group setting—there is comfort in people sharing the same emotions, feelings and hurts.

CCM: But the book doesn’t just focus on the negatives about divorce. It helps us ask the question: What do we do now? How do we build a legacy of godliness for our future and turn around the cycle of destruction?

Jeremy: I was 24 or 25 when I really started to want to expose my broken family for what it is. It is uncomfortable—like a death that keeps on dying. And it left me searching for identity. To re-open that wound with the guidance of the Holy Spirit was important to me and has been healing for me.



CCM: Who should read this book?

Jeremy: If you are ready to dive in and deal with the pain caused by your parents’ divorce or want to get ready, *Generation EX* is a great guide through it. It is also a great book for the spouse of someone who is the child of divorce to read, to bring understanding to the issues facing your own marriage because of the divorce of your spouse’s parents.

FFH has just finished its 86-city “Ready to Fly” tour and will have a new album releasing from Essential this fall.



newreleases

by Christa Farris



Sure, there's been plenty of buzzworthy releases in Christian music already this year; but with its first non-worship studio release since 2001's *Come Together*, **Third Day's** new disc, *Wire* (Provident Label Group), is sure to be the talk of May. With a return to rock that, at times, hearkens back to **Mac Powell & Co.**'s self-titled days, there's also a fresh, aggressive guitar punch that adds an extra dose of musical excitement to the May 4 release.

Speaking of bands that know how to crank up the decibels, Solid State's fastest-selling new band, **Demon Hunter**, will unleash its sophomore smash, *Summer of Darkness*, the same day as **Third Day**. Featuring an even heavier musical direction than its debut, the band enlisted an all-star cast of contributors, including **Aaron Sprinkle**, **Thousand Foot Krutch's Trevor McNevan** and more.

Fans who enjoy **Jeremy Camp's** brand of rock will also find something more to love this month as he provides a behind-the-scenes look at his life on a typical concert day with his first DVD, *In 24* (BEC). From soundcheck to meet & greets, his personal testimony and even a few pranks, it's all here on May 4.

On that same day, it's a blast from the past for '80s music aficionados, as former **Tempest** member **Mick Rowe**, who was also in **Plush** in the late '90s, will release his solo debut, *Summertime* (Digital Worship). If none of those bands ring a bell, you may recognize **Rowe's** name since his brother, **Jamie**, is the former lead singer of **Guardian** and now plays with rockers **London Calling**.

Also returning to the rock scene—albeit after a much shorter hiatus than Mr. **Rowe**—Columbus, Ohio's own **Everyday Sunday** is back with its second set of spiritually charged, hook-laden songs on *Anthem for the Imperfect* (Flicker) on May 18.

And if your musical tastes don't exactly fall into the rock vein, never fear, there are plenty more releases where those came from. Contributing its unique, tuneful take on hymns, worship songs and a couple African-influenced tracks that pay tribute to the eight years that siblings **Todd Smith** and **Nicol Sponberg** spent growing up in Africa, **Selah's** latest record, *Hiding Place* (Curb), will bow on May 25. Fans of worship-oriented fare will also find plenty to love in the two hours of live praise on **Israel and New Breed's** *Live From Another Level* (Integrity Gospel). Also providing a lot of value for one low price, Vertical Music's **Vertical Momentum—Trading My Sorrows** offers 35 songs from a diverse set of artists, including **Ten Shekel Shirt**, **Delirious**, **Sonicflood** and more. Finally, the *iWorship @ Home—Volume 4* DVD gives a multi-media worship experience in the comfort of your living room with a diverse set list of favorites like "All the Earth Will Sing Your Praises," "Friend of God" and 12 more.

Bridging the gap between the pop, rock and worship genres, new Sparrow act **Starfield** will also release its self-titled U.S. debut this month. As one of Canada's standout artists, its music resonates with vivid worship lyrics and melodies that recall acts like **Jars of Clay**, **MercyMe**, **Delirious** and early **Sonicflood**.

Also falling into the new artist category, Minneapolis singer/songwriter **Joe Rogness** rounds out our report this month with his first disc, *Right With You* (Two Fish) on May 4. With an organic sound and introspective songwriting approach, much of the inspiration for his music deals with his struggle to really trust God to provide for his needs following his foray from the corporate world into music ministry. Good stuff!

LISTEN UP: MICS THAT SING

Whether singing in the studio or performing onstage, these mics are the perfect choice for every vocalist. Just ask some of your favorite Christian artists.

SENNHEISER EVOLUTION 565

Sting uses it, but that's not what makes this a great mic. It responds quickly, never becomes brittle on loud passages and picks up the tiniest whisper, all while making very little noise of its own. Worship leader/producer Don Moen (Graham Kendrick, Ron Kenoly) says, "It sounds like the expensive mics I use in the studio, but it handles airport security without a hitch." Sennheiser offers the 565 as a wired mic or as part of the 500 Series UHF evolution wireless line. Either version sounds great, is designed to last for years and looks as pro as a mic can get. So what's not to love?



Don Moen and Lenny LeBlanc



AUDIX VX10

It's got what singers want: robust response that cuts but not deep enough to hurt. Audix mics have always found a front-and-center spot with Christian artists from Amy Grant on but never in front of voices needing condenser elements. With their ability to convey every nuance, condenser mics are perfect for detailed vocals and those who want to sound that way. Christian music veteran artist, songwriter and producer Paul Baloche, a standard Shure SM-58 kind of guy, fell for the VX10 the first time he used it in concert. After Paul asked if he could use it in the studio, mixing genius Salvo (MercyMe, ZOEgirl) found it good enough for all of Paul's vocals on his new *Offerings* (Hosanna) project. Enough said, now start singing.

AUDIO TECHNICA ARTIST ELITE

A-T is shedding its "good for the money" image, thanks in large part to some serious engineering bestowed on the Artist Elite range of vocal mics. Held up against the best of the "snob appeal" brigade, these mics do more than just hold their own—they outshine some very bright stars. From dynamics designed for robust baritones to condensers perfect for soaring sopranists, the Artist Elites deliver the goods and the "betters."



HOW TO HOLD A MIC

Like most things, holding a microphone correctly is more difficult than it appears. While a stand-mounted mic delivers the best sound, many vocalists prefer the freedom handholding gives them in a live performance. A mic on a boom stand has no handling noise, is positioned at the correct angle and won't fall to the stage floor, but it does limit movement and expression. So, here are five tips to make holding a vocal mic a sonic pleasure:

1. Position the mic a fist's distance from the mouth and mic (four inches from the mouth). At closer distances, moisture can enter the element and ruin the mic. Greater distances can result in a "thin" sound and increase chances for feedback.
2. Angle the mic 45 degrees down. If you hold the mic perpendicular to the mouth, you increase the likelihood for "blasting," and you also place a physical barrier between yourself and the audience. Most mics are designed to accept the focused energy of the human enunciation cylinder that is strongest just below the chin.

3. Move the mic 20 degrees off axis. Have you ever noticed how some mics tend to "pop" badly? Moving the mic slightly to the side of the mouth will almost eliminate those annoying pops generated by explosive consonants such as "p," "t," "b," and "z." Your audience will appreciate the difference a few inches can make.

4. Use the windscreen only when there is wind. By following the preceding tips, you will be able to remove the windscreen and deliver a clearer tone in your songs.

5. Decide who will compensate for loud notes. Either the vocalist must pull the mic down on those "hit it" notes or the engineer must strap a compressor across the channel. Most veteran sound techs would prefer the purity gained from a vocalist willing to "work" the mic but will do what is necessary to preserve the audience's hearing. So learn to back off when you go for the roof.



Stacie Orrico



Clockwise from top left: Jeremy Camp, Peter Furler, Rebecca St. James, Furler and St. James, Newsboys guitarist Bryan Olesen, Furler as cameraman

“THE ADORATION TOUR” featuring Newsboys, Rebecca St. James and Jeremy Camp

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA DAVIS, CA—MARCH 5, 2004

One promise fans can always bank on at a Newsboys concert is a legitimate show—one that extends beyond the music into a barrage of flashing lights, state-of-the-art scenery and exhaustive movement by the entire band. Throw in a bunch of its greatest hits alongside a bulk of popular worship tunes, and the ticket holder is guaranteed both a good time and a spiritually gratifying experience. The punchy dance-looped opener, “Joy,” engrained a bit of both elements into the audience’s psyche, as frontman Peter Furler prompted all to lift his/her hands and voices in exuberant praise. The smiles beamed throughout the stadium and that atmosphere remained, thanks to the delight of “Name Above All Names” and an anthemic twist to “Entertaining Angels.” That *Step Up to the Microphone* (Sparrow) standard was sung primarily by blond-haired bassist Phil Joel, with additional fuel flowing from Jeff Frankenstein’s ethereal keyboard programming.

Though past tour regulars “Not Ashamed” and “Take Me to Your Leader” were disappointingly left off the set list, smashes “Shine” and “Breakfast” sparked a youth group karaoke session. No matter what the demographic, all worshiped reverently to the spiraling beats of “He Reigns” and the thoughtful escalation of “It Is You.” However, a collaboration with fellow artist Rebecca St. James for “Blessed Be Your Name” served as the most moving moment of congregational unity.

In addition to her cameo in the Newsboys’ set, St. James also turned in an hour of her own, sticking closely to the tour’s worship theme as she performed a smattering of hits and newofferings, too. The Alanis Morissette styled “God,” the purity themed “Wait for Me” and the prophetically centered “Omega” were supercharged with rhythmic voltage, while the sparse contexts of “Breathe” and “Here I Am to Worship” accentuated Rebecca and her backup singers’ choir-like quality.

Singer/songwriter Jeremy Camp set a pensive tone for both Aussie acts, backed by his roasting rock quintet and supporting vocalist Adrienne Camp (his wife and former The Benjamin Gate frontwoman). Together they glazed over the burgeoning worship leader’s two discs—2002’s *Stay* and his recent offering, *Carried Me—The Worship Project* (BEC), ranging between aggressive alternative undertakings and swooning acoustic ballads. “I Still Believe” made for a stirring tribute to unshakable assurance, “More Than Enough” exposed God’s endless grace, and “Beautiful One” abounded with awe over our majestic Creator. Such dutiful stage recreations of those faith-affirming statements upheld Camp’s ministering mentality and hinted at his probability for longevity.

ROAD RELATIONSHIPS:



One downfall of concert touring is that it keeps artists away from home. For newlyweds, that can be especially straining, but having Jeremy

and Adrienne Camp on the road together has brought sanity to their relationship. Here’s a glimpse at how the couple gets along in their unique situation.

Mutual understanding: “We’ve both fully understood where we’re coming from and what we do for a living. For me, having been on the road before, there haven’t been any surprises.” —Adrienne

Private time: “The bus has a private room in the back, and the guys in the band know that when I close the door, it’s a time we need to ‘veg’ or get together by ourselves.” —Jeremy

Create a date: “We often have times together when we just read the Word and pray or refocus. And then once a week or once every two weeks, we take our dinner into the bus and have a little romantic getaway. We also enjoy going shopping and watching movies together—that’s kinda like our time alone.” —Adrienne

Ministry matters: “Just from a whole spiritual aspect, she understands this is what God’s called me to do; and she has supported that so much, even denying herself of a lot of what she might want or need because she knows God is doing a work in this ministry.” —Jeremy

TOUR TIDBITS:

Relief organization Compassion International enlists **Geoff Moore** to headline its recurring “Evening of Compassion” concert series, which also features **Tait** and **Erin O’Donnell**.

This year’s “See Spot Rock” outing wraps up its 40-date run this month featuring **12 Stones**, **Skillet**, **Pillar**, **GRITS** and **Big Dismal**.

Be sure to check out tensheshelshirt.com to catch the college venue schedule for its Justice for Children benefit tour.

All photos by Andy Argyrakis

19 THINGS YOU PROBABLY DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT: TOBYMAC

BY MICHAEL NOLAN



"I love a lot of styles of music," confesses tobyMac (aka Toby McKeehan) whose solo debut, *Momentum* (ForeFront), is both an album title and a description of his career. The dc talk founder, Gotee Records co-founder and now solo artist describes his music: "I love blending guitars, wurlitzers, reggae bass lines, banjos, etc., with a foundation of hip-hop. Old school, new school, multi-cultural; everyone's invited." And what a mixmaster he is, rolling out a welcome mat that extends across the board. Now, let's get this party started.

19. PRE-DC

If you think Toby McKeehan's only group was dc talk, we need to talk. In high school, he was in a quartet that primarily sang Negro spirituals. "I was 2nd tenor, but I should have been 3rd. [Note: There is no 3rd tenor.] We wore good ol' red, white and blue, complete with those fashionable flag ties."

18. SPEAKING OF THREADS...

Always a walking fashion statement, Toby finds his clothes "everywhere." Some are designer duds, some come second-hand, and some Toby designs himself. "I like mixing it up, putting things together that shouldn't be together... kinda like my music. Dirty urban, rootsy urban, urban punk—that's me."

17. HAT TRICK

If you've seen many pictures of Toby, you know he wears many hats—but just how many does he own? "I have no idea. I go through cycles. I'll wear one everyday for a few months and then put it down, just to rediscover it a year later."

16. DOWN WITH DAD

When you see Toby, your first thought probably isn't "Wow, he's a father of three," unless you hear him bragging about his kids. Truett, his 5-year-old, made his first shot in his basketball league recently. "Actually," claims the proud papa, "he was three for four—that's 75 percent from the field, but I wasn't counting—I promise." Moses and Marlee, his twins who are about to turn 2, "light up my life. When I test my demos on them, they bounce to 'em.'"

15. PARENTS' NIGHT OUT

When he and his wife, Amanda, get a babysitter, they usually go to dinner at their favorite little spot, maybe get coffee and always hit a movie for a little mental escape/adventure. His standard concession stand picks: popcorn, Sourpatch Kids and a Pepsi.

14. SPORTS HUDDLE

Although his years in Nashville have cultivated a love for the Tennessee Titans; as a kid, Toby lived next door to Washington Redskins coaching

legend Joe Gibbs, who is coming out of a 15-year retirement to lead the 'Skins again. Toby's take: "First loves never die, especially when your coach is back. I can't wait for the season. Gibbs rocks!"

13. FRIENDS REUNION?

The Internet is always abuzz with talk about when and if Toby, Kevin Max, and Michael Tait will reunite for a dc talk album. We went to the source to find out what's goin' down. "We're all on solo adventures for now and still enjoying that ride. I don't know... how long do you officially have to wait to call it a 'reunion'?"

12. TRULY HIGHER EDUCATION

ERACE, the organization co-founded by Toby to promote racial reconciliation is taking its mission to a new level. "We just got approved and will begin the ERACE Institute this summer. It's actually college accredited. We're finally putting feet on a dream."

11. GO TEE, GOTEE

Gotee Records got its name from the crowd yelling "Go T" to rev Toby up during dc talk concerts. Says the music mogul: "We have an incredible roster of passionate artists with vision. My greatest role is finding the artists who inspire me and then helping them make a recording that will inspire the world."

10. NEW BEATS IN AN OLD HOUSE

Although you might expect Toby to live in a high-tech crib, his home is old—really old. It was built in 1846 and used in the Battle of Franklin during the Civil War as headquarters for General John M. Schofield of the Union Army.

9. DREAMING OF DUOS

Being a solo artist is working fine for Toby these days; but if he could collaborate, who would he choose? "Mary Mary would be hot. The Police reunion tour, maybe? Bob Marley, but let us not forget Lauryn Hill."

8. SLAMMIN' ON THE COURT

Toby plays on Gotee's basketball team, where he counts his primary strength as "knowing when to pass the ball. Of course at 5'9" my rebounding skills are off the chain. Oh yeah, I'm known for my triple-doubles... at Starbucks."

7. THAT NEXT RECORD

"All I can tell you is I 'like' too much. I want to pursue every thought I have and turn it into a song. Eclectic's an understatement. Diverse City, baby, loud and clear."

6. MACWRITE

Want to approach songwriting like Toby? Here's how: "I always write choruses first. For me, the hook is instant. From there, it's all work. I write hooks in five minutes and verses in five months."

5. TIME MACHINE

If he could travel back to the start of his career, what would today's tobyMac tell Toby McKeehan? "Don't put out anything for public consumption until *Free at Last* (ForeFront). Until then practice, write, practice, write and figure out who you are. Growing up artistically in front of everyone was kinda fun, though."

4. JUMPIN' WITH JERRY

One of dc talk's first shows was at a barbecue in Liberty University President Jerry Falwell's backyard. Toby reports, "He was bouncin' in his 'Jesus First' lapel pin."

3. IN THE YEAR 2024

Twenty years from now, Toby imagines he'll be "watching Marlee's final show on her world tour, seeing Moses get drafted by the NFL and being a parishioner at Tru-dog's church. But, for real, hopefully Amanda and I will be doing Kingdom work somewhere."

2. IN GOOD COMPANY

Over the years, Toby has been excited to meet Bono, Billy Graham, Sting, Mel Gibson, "and, of course, Loverboy on their reunion tour in a hotel elevator last summer."

1. DON'T BELIEVE EVERYTHING YOU READ ON THE WEB

Recently, while surfing the Internet, Toby discovered "that I'm a wicked guitarist... and I wanted desperately to believe it."



Art & Spirituality: The Word that Leads to Dancing

Once upon a time there was a living being named David, an artist-king, a musician and singer of songs, a dreamer, a dancer, a man with an aptitude for sheep. And like you and me, David held a high position in the economy of God, people and place. He was God's direct representative, working on the planet Earth in the Milky Way, tending the "jazz of God."

Like me, like you, David made some mistakes—just the kind of mistakes musicians make. (I should know.) One mistake in particular is worth mentioning. (I don't think it's gossip. It's pretty much public knowledge at this point.) David's mistake? It's the oldest in the world—goes back to Eden—a musical mistake: He improvised when he should have played the chart (sheet music). The chart is the Word, and the Word stirs the soul of improvisation—and not the other way around.

David's work, at the time, was to restore the Ark of the Covenant, the house of God, to Jerusalem and to oversee all things Ark, including the Levites (the only tribe allowed to care for the Ark). In musical terms, God gave David the chart to play. Some from the tribe of David chose to improvise instead, and there were deadly consequences—a crash and burn. Lives were lost. Dreams were vanquished. The Ark never made it to Jerusalem on that trip. The artist-king returned home. There was no party and no dancing.

The next time David tried to make the trip, things were different. He danced in exuberant celebration. This time he had cared for the Ark in keeping with the Story—he'd followed the will and the way of God. David could dance because he'd stepped into the Story of God, people and place with intentionality, with obedience and with congruency. And it makes perfect sense that he would dance. Worship is the appropriate response to the joy of living within the Story on the road to the New Jerusalem.

There are some things worth noting about the day David danced:

1. He was intentional in caring for the things of God: He prepared a place for the Ark of God and pitched a tent for it.

2. He acknowledged the sin of not finding reality in God's ways alone. He remembered the life-saving, life-defining Word and spoke the Word back to his community. He took the Word seriously as a definitive, controlling story. He took it personally, and, as a result, it had personal and community impact.

3. Like an artist using the principle of contrast, he recalled his tribe's anti-art story of disregard and disobedience to the Word. He reminded his community, specifically the Levites, to step into their roles in the Story of God, people and place—roles that God had destined for them and only them.

4. David called for the skillful artists—singers and musicians. Their purpose? To sing joyful songs, to make art, to be and do in the image of God. David also called for the doorkeepers of the Ark to guard it and other musician/priests to announce the coming Ark with the sound of trumpets.

In the company of thousands, David brought the Ark up to Jerusalem. Many, including David, were dressed in their best. They shouted and rejoiced—all of them a work of art and faithfulness, moving uphill on the road to the City of God. It was on this road that David danced. And when they arrived in Jerusalem, the Levites brought requests to God, thanked Him and praised His name. And all of this was done to the sound of music. Art, because it has its genesis in the Story of the Artist. Art, born out of walking in the ways of the Artist/Creator, believing that the Word of the Artist is a trustworthy and life-aligning beginning. (Based on 1 Samuel 6:12-15)

arthouse
a word on worship



Illustration by Jimmy A.

Contrast the road David danced on with another road—the road out of Eden that the first living beings took when they were cast out of the Garden. It wasn't a sureness of the trustworthiness of God's Word that set them on that road but rather a mistrust—one that gave birth to a universal, chronic mistrust.

Two thousand years ago Jesus came to Earth and dealt with the mistrust in a lasting way. He entered into the fleshy side of the God-human story and let people know the time had arrived for something entirely new. God's old way of interacting with creation was over, and a new way had begun. "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" (Mark 1:15).

Jesus came to subvert every aspect of life and culture with the Kingdom—that which brings a person's life into alignment with reality. To live in the Kingdom Way is to live a real and everlasting life, beginning the very moment you follow Jesus. This means that everything is overhauled or restructured to fit the Kingdom Way. Knowledge, education, romance, marriage, sex, parenting, work, play, money, ambition, business, social services, caring for the Earth, even being the church in the world—all of these areas and a thousand more now come under Kingdom rule and authority. Following Jesus faithfully means seeing to it that all of these areas in our lives are subverted by the Kingdom and rebuilt in the new way. Our work is to base our lives on this reality. Our work is to be interested in the same things God is interested in. When the children of God are interested in the same things God is interested in, they dance. It's so personal, so visceral that the bones and ligaments and muscles move even before the voice speaks, or sings, or shouts. Be a David. Step into the Kingdom, live the Word and dance.

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Rich Mullins

1955-1997

THEY SAY YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT you've got until it's gone. Christian music has, perhaps, never known that to be more painfully true than after the loss of Rich Mullins, who died after being thrown from a Jeep near Peoria, Ill., on Sept. 19, 1997, just a month shy of his 42nd birthday. Grief-stricken tributes and remembrances poured out across the nation and around the world as word of Mullins' death spread. In a world still reeling from the losses of Princess Diana and Mother Teresa less than three weeks before, Mullins' death hit us like a sledgehammer, a life-altering event impossible to forget.

Richard Wayne Mullins was an enigma. He was a prophet, a prankster, a preacher and, at times, a pariah. He was an unlikely worship leader, rough around the edges and emphatically unashamed of it and yet deeply—some say fiercely—in love with Jesus. In a world that teaches us to hedge the truth lest we offend someone, to hide our weaknesses lest we dismay someone, to squelch our inner thoughts lest we be thought of as odd, Mullins was a fish out of water. As his professional notoriety increased, whether via touring with Amy Grant or penning the now-classic worship anthem "Awesome God," he moved down in the world—rather than up. He refused the perks of fame and fortune and, instead, chose to give away nearly all his possessions and live on a Native American reservation in the Southwest as he attempted to bring Christ to that community. He was a relentless advocate for Christian child development organization Compassion International, unafraid to challenge his audience to put their faith into action or quit calling it faith. (He once commented in CCM, "I hope that I would leave a legacy of joy, a legacy of real compassion, because

I think there is real joy in compassion. I don't think that you can know joy apart from caring deeply about people—caring enough to actually do something.")

Of course, above and beyond the somewhat puzzling package that was Mullins, he was a poetic, unparalleled songwriter. Michael W. Smith said of Mullins upon his death, "Nobody on the planet wrote songs like he did." Mullins' longtime producer, Reed Arvin, reflected: "He had the ability to write a line that moved you to tears even though you didn't know what it was about. With his time here on earth, he turned his discontent into art, separating himself from the careerists who think it would be neat to make a little money off of Jesus. His life and work stand alone, and they are the stuff of heaven and very much the stuff of earth."

Though Mullins' music was widely recognized in his lifetime, he achieved few outward symbols of that success until after his death. Almost unbelievably, his handful of Doves were all awarded after his passing, as was his sole gold record, *Songs*. He never won a Grammy, and he has yet to be inducted into the Gospel Music Hall of Fame. And yet the world would be such a different place without Rich Mullins.

*When I leave I want to go out like Elijah
With a whirlwind to fuel my chariot of fire
And when I look back on the stars
It'll be like a candlelight in Central Park
And it won't break my heart to say goodbye.*

["Elijah" by Rich Mullins ©1983 Meadowgreen Music, Inc. (ASCAP)]

It may not have broken his heart, but it still breaks ours.

MICHAEL CIANI

For more information, visit richmullins.com, kidbrothers.org and legacyministry.org.

CCM COVERS



May 1990 "Hope to Carry On"
June 1992 "Taking Life Step by Step"
November 1995 "Joy, Confession
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(Reunion, 1993)
Songs (Reunion, 1996)
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"Sometimes By Step"
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