

FOOL



 **KUTLESS** **TRUTH, JUSTICE AND**
THE AMERICAN BAND

UNDEROATH
Walks the Line

 **Kiki Sheard** ★ **Mark Harris**
Jill Phillips ★ **Kevin Max**

36 A Line in the Sand

When it comes to making a statement, few bands match the conviction and intensity of hardcore act **UNDEROATH**. And with the new album *Define the Great Line* as its calling card, the band doesn't just mark its territory—it expands it. **ANDREE FARIAS** surveys Underoath's changing landscape.

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With the amount of excitement surrounding Kutless these days, one may venture to ask why the band isn't on MTV? But that's what makes Kutless' rise to popularity so intriguing and unique. They aren't on MTV, and you won't find them in any other major mainstream media. **DAVID MCCREARY** has the story.

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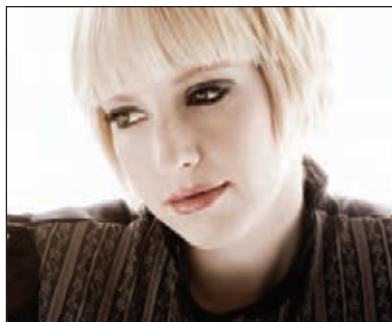
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From left: Leeland, Leigh Nash, Jars of Clay



The Joy of Discovery (A Look Ahead)

There's nothing like hearing a bona fide landmark album for the first time. And, recently, I've heard more of them than usual. Not to sound jaded, but if I encounter just one album a year that literally wows me—knocks my socks off—then I'm content. Last year, for instance, it was **Sara Groves'** *Add to the Beauty* (INO). If you've experienced that disc, chances are you know what I mean.

And this year? I'd been greatly impressed several times but not *wowed*. That all changed when, within the past month, I discovered not one, not two, but *three* WOW albums—and I'm not referring to those nifty compilation discs either.

The first arrived courtesy of a band that's new on the scene. Now, I can tend to be leery of debut albums that come on the heels of seemingly over-the-top hype. As someone who loves to be pleasantly surprised by genuine excellence, I've been let down more than a few times. Enter Essential recording artist **Leeland**. And the pre-release hype? Probably more profuse than anything I've experienced since *Delirious* came on the scene eight years ago. What I discovered when I hit "play" was worshipful rock that surpassed **Sonicflood's** debut and, yes, was actually on par with **Delirious'** bow. Now *that* was a pleasant surprise. When Leeland's *Sound of Melodies* album streets on August 15, you'll know where I'm coming from. (And you can count on us to update you on the band every few months in our "Band Wagon" column, which appears next to **Paul Colman's** "Ones to Watch" section.)

Next up was an album that I had extremely high expectations for. Not only that, but I am so nostalgically connected to the artist who delivered it that...well, let's just say most of my professional history was invested in this person. I don't mean that in the sense of trying to take some credit for her success—on the contrary, the good reputation I had as a PR guy back in the day was due, in large part, to her commitment, heart, talent and grace. You could say I rode the coattails of her and her bandmates. And, for that, I owe **Sixpence None the Richer's Leigh Nash** a great deal.

So about those high expectations... When I received the pre-release for Leigh's new album, *Blue on Blue* (One Son), in the mail, I knew what it would be up against. Namely, the pedestal I had Sixpence's artistry on. (Even if I'd never worked with them, they would still be one of my three favorite bands of all time.) And Leigh? With this solo bow, she does her musical heritage proud. *Blue on Blue* not only captures Leigh's best vocals ever—a stunning feat in its own right—this melodic delight is as genuinely beautiful as any Sixpence album. Indeed, it wows me in a hushing sort of way. And the lyrics? We Sixpence fans are sticklers for thoughtful songwriting, and that's exactly what Leigh brings to the table here. You can experience it for yourself when *Blue on Blue* hits stores August 15.

The third album I'm going to tell you about...well, I honestly don't know if I can do it justice here. In fact, after you hear it, you might wonder why I not only saved it for last but didn't, in fact, dedicate this whole page to it. Here's the thing...on September 5, **Jars of Clay** will release its career-defining album—*Good Monsters*. (Go ahead, read that sentence again.)

I know what you're thinking—*Jars of Clay's* career-defining album was its wildly-selling self-titled debut. For 10 years, I thought the same thing...until I heard *Good Monsters*. To Essential Records' credit, the label is letting the album speak for itself. (In fact, the recent press release announcing the disc merely leads with the headline: "New Project Signals a Return to Band's Award-Winning Rock Roots.")

Jars of Clay has impressed me many times over the years, but my bottom line is this: *Good Monsters* is the band's first masterpiece. It's not simply a step beyond anything Jars had done both lyrically and musically, it's a *leap* beyond. *Good Monsters* is the album that I believe will not only define them in hindsight but will also be one of the most important albums in Christian music history.

So, yes, you could say the past month has really changed my perspective on how significant 2006 will be in Christian music's grand scheme. And I'm both grateful and amazed to be taking part—most of all, as a fan.

Jay@CCMmagazine.com

CCM MAGAZINE

Your Christian Music Magazine Since 1978
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MERCYME BEAUCOUP

I recently received my first issue of *CCM Magazine*, and I can't wait for the rest of them to come. I definitely enjoyed the cover story on MercyMe ["Something to Rock About," May]. They are one of my favorite groups, and they rock! And now that I read what they went through before creating their new album, I will definitely consider buying it. I'm sure it is full of "God-hope-for-u" types of songs. I would also like to see articles on Jaci Velasquez and Stacie Orrico now that I subscribe. God bless you!

Martin B., via email

BEST OF WHAT EXACTLY?

After receiving the May edition of *CCM* in the mail and opening the front cover, I see that three artists have put out "Best Of" compilations. What the...? I can understand an artist who has been around for, say, 15 or 20 years (à la Michael W. Smith) doing this, but Rachael Lampa? As talented as she is, does she warrant having a "Best Of" compilation to her name? After only three albums? I have seen countless secular artists do this (Hilary Duff anyone?) after as many albums as I could count on two of my fingers and wanted to raise the question: Is it the artists or their respective record companies pushing for these to be released? I can't see any artist with only three albums agreeing to this kind of thing. My view is that it's just one big money making scam and artists should have some more say before record companies start releasing a "Greatest Hits" album after the band has just signed its first contract.

**Cam Hateley
Australia**

Hi Cam. That's a great question. Usually it's the record labels who initiate "Best Of" albums but not always.

ACCORDING TO JIM

I am profoundly disappointed with what I have been reading and seeing in *CCM* over the past few months. Most of the groups or individuals being featured are short on music, lack inspiration and, all too frequently, bear far too much resemblance to secular counterparts. What I don't need is a sort of *Rolling Stone* with a barely Christian edginess. Frankly, I find more musical quality and more genuine presence of the spiritual in Josh Groban, Sarah Brightman, Charlotte Church or Secret Garden than in the great majority of so-called musicians promoted in your magazine. Just because a band advertises itself as Christian doesn't mean automatically that it is therefore worth listening to. If I need real Christian inspiration, well, thankfully there are still folks like Jaci Velasquez, Cindy Morgan, Fernando Ortega or Amy Grant. Thanks for listening.

**Jim Will
Dayton, OH**

SNYDER'S REMARKS

It's my opinion that there are many ways to praise and worship our Lord and Savior and we shouldn't disregard musicians who prefer a more modern sound to those who present a more traditional one. I'm discouraged by Heather Snyder's letter in your "Feedback" section [May] because her comments seem somewhat narrow-minded and critical. As Christians, we are to hold ourselves and each other to a higher standard; and that, primarily, should be one of love, respect and tolerance. It's far too easy to isolate ourselves from the outside world while we place ourselves on a pedestal, but then how do we witness to the non-believers? To those readers who haven't moved outside of their personal "comfort zone," I encourage you to do so. I think many of you will be delighted with the love for Jesus that you hear. Also, for the record, FFH and Avalon are two of my favorite artists as well. God Bless!

**Scott L. Booth
Lakewood, WA**



Sgt. Zach Detweiler in Iraq

FROM A HERO

I have been reading *CCM* for years now. Once I was deployed to Iraq, I got my own subscription so that I could keep up with the latest music. (I'm enclosing a picture of me and the recent *CCMs*.) Your latest editor's letter, "State of the Chart" [May], was very informative. I was excited to see the charts in the magazine. I enjoy seeing how albums are faring on a large scale. Your magazine in the last 10 months has introduced me to some great new music, and I expect you will continue doing so. Hawk Nelson, Flyleaf and Underoath are just a few of the great bands I have learned about from your magazine. Thanks.

**Sgt. Zach Detweiler
PA Army National Guard
Al Habbaniyah, Iraq**

Zach, the thanks should be going to you. We're extremely grateful for your service to our country and to the country of Iraq. My brother, William, recently completed boot camp and is now a United States Marine. Simply put, I'm in awe of you guys. May God protect you and bless the fruit of your labor.—Editor

WAX ON, WAX OUT

Received May's *CCM* today. Usually, the first thing I read in *CCM* each month is John Styll's "HistoryMakers" column. Per his latest, titled "Turn Your Radio On," I, too, remember

when the only Christian radio was either preaching/teaching formats or Southern gospel. My first experience with contemporary Christian radio was at Ozark Christian College with KOBC, the campus radio station at the time and now one of the largest in Joplin, Missouri. They played mild contemporary Christian music. In fact, the station director would wax out the tracks on the LPs that were too hard. I now live in an area where there are more Christian music radio stations available than a person has a right to choose from, and I still think they don't rock enough. Things have changed. It's great! Thanks, John Styll, for your perceptions.

Jeff Jordan, via email

Correction:

In last month's issue, we incorrectly identified the co-founder of MonsterPod—it's actually Harry Thomas. To check out his innovative podcasting site, go to monsterpod.org.

We welcome your comments. Address your letter to Feedback, CCM Magazine, 104 Woodmont Blvd., Suite 300, Nashville, TN 37205; fax 615/385-4412, Attn: Feedback, or email feedback@CCMmagazine.com. Always include your full name, address and phone number. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.



insider

Poets, Jokers,
Legends and more!



A New Lease on **Life**

Dead Poetic returns with a new line-up and a surprising new sound.

As the 2004 tour in support of **DEAD POETIC's** acclaimed album *New Medicines* wound down, the band found itself on the edge of oblivion. The five-piece hardcore-tinged screamo group was more popular than ever with fans, but it was enduring internal personality conflicts and differences of opinion that stripped all the joy from playing music. "In the fall of 2004," vocalist and lyricist Brandon Rike admits, "we hit rock bottom. It was break it up and tear it down, or try to do something new. Both of those kind of happened. We kind of broke up and said, 'Heck with the band, we're not going to do it anymore.'" Though the band's drummer, bassist and second guitarist all left for good, Rike had second thoughts. "Just like any musician, you kind of need it; you itch for it; and you start reconsidering."

Some old friends offered their services to the band and, in the process, altered the Dead Poetic DNA considerably. Rike, original guitarist Zach Miles, Poor Old Lu and Demon Hunter drummer Jesse Sprinkle and former Beloved guitarist Dusty Redmon got together to hang out and jam, testing the chemistry and the musical output. Immediately, they knew that life for Dead Poetic would go on. Redmon offered the name of fellow Beloved alum John Brehm for the bass guitar slot, and the quintet was complete.

Earlier this year, the band re-entered the studio with Aaron Sprinkle (Hawk Nelson, Emery) at the helm to produce its third LP, *Vices* (Tooth & Nail). Musically, the band embraced melody and dynamics more than the previous incarnation ever had, eschewing Rike's trademark screaming in exchange for

soaring vocals. With intricate arrangements, layers of analog synth and organ, thick guitar effects and stacked backing vocals, *Vices* relishes in the band's unabashed love of big '90s rock and alternative music. "It wasn't intentional," Rike says of the band's musical evolution. "We're just over the old stuff. There is no way I could get myself to scream on a song anymore. I'm just past it. The scream is not going to stick in your head the way the melody will."

More than just a title track, "Vices" is the lyrical theme of the entire album. "Vices are crimes against yourself," Rike explains. "Most Christians have to deal with vices more than anything else—the things we are doing to ourselves that hold us back." While several of the individual tracks taken out of context may be confusing coming from a Christian writer, when heard through the lens of the closing title track, the larger meaning comes into focus. "There are definitely some really heavy issues on the record," Rike adds, "but things that people need to hear nonetheless." The lyricist won't elaborate too much on specific meanings so as to leave the songs as open as possible to interpretation. "These songs and what this record is going to do are not really in my hands because God can shape and mold these lyrics into whatever He wants them to be."

Surprisingly, Rike seems unconcerned about throwing such a seismic shift at the band's legions of fans. "You have to respect your audience," he insists. "You can't feed them the same thing over and over again. You have to know that your audience is intelligent enough to move with you and evolve with you."

JOHN J. THOMPSON



Though talk show host Logan Sekulow has taken on some questionable gigs thus far, including a brief stint as an Elvis impersonator (at age five no less) and appearances on Nickelodeon's "SlimeTime Live," he does boast many impressive credits on his resumé. By the time he hit 15, the ambitious entrepreneur already had his college degree in Film and Video from Full Sail in Orlando, Florida (the youngest in that school's history), along with his very own comedy/variety program, "The Logan Show," which is broadcast on a variety of Christian cable stations throughout America and internationally.

"There's sort of an idea that Christian media and television can sometimes appear low budget and mediocre and that Christian comedy may be funny but not necessarily appeal to our style," says twenty-year-old Sekulow of the show's teenage and twenty-something demographic. "The show has changed significantly since we first started, which was originally aimed at a younger audience but now takes on more of a high school- or college-age humor. It's outlandish but not vulgar, and it's certainly out-of-the-box humor."

The current format takes cues from "The Late Show with David Letterman" and "Late Night with Conan O'Brien," two top late night shows that intertwine a variety of special guests with skits and their own brand of stand-up. Though the program had a hard time attracting marquee names in its early stages, this year's third season seems to be the charm, reeling in the likes of Brian Littrell (from the Backstreet Boys), Kevin Max (of dc talk) and MTV reality show "Miss Seventeen" finalist Jill Belsley. Plus, Sekulow scored a cameo appearance at this year's 37th Annual GMA Music Awards. Along with interviews, the cast also stages parodies based on popular Christian culture products or personalities, similar to late night network television poking jabs at Michael Jackson or Paris Hilton.

"Of course, every week there are always critics who don't get the joke, especially a Christian joke; but we're never doing it to be mean spirited," he confirms. "We'll have skits that revolve around 'McGee and Me' or 'Adventures in Odyssey,' which, basically, anyone who grew up in the Christian world will probably know. We did a bit on a [fictitious] Joel Osteen teeth whitening [product], and people loved it!"

More than ruffling feathers or even tickling people's funny bones, Sekulow's main mission is to raise the bar and creativity levels of Christian comedy and programming in general while using his ingenuity as a witness to the world. He cites bands such as Switchfoot and Relient K as inspirations who've followed similar ideals and found themselves not only gaining the respect of the mainstream music industry but also winning over a younger generation of fans outside the church.

"Christians [in television] need to be creative and technologically driven and should stand up to anything else as someone's flipping through channels," Sekulow sums up. "A lot of people are digging what we're doing, and we're breaking down doors."

ANDY ARGYRAKIS



>> THE LOGAN SHOW: The Next Generation in Christian TV

Broadcast into 60 million homes in the U.S. and another 40 million internationally, "THE LOGAN SHOW" is making a big statement—and a funny one at that. In the vein of David Letterman and Jay Leno, **LOGAN SEKULOW** is in his third season of laughs as his brainchild half-hour television talk show is filled with everything from an opening monologue and skits to live performances and exclusive artist interviews.

Mark Harris, one-fourth of vocal group **4HIM**, wrote “Find Your Wings” as a letter of sorts to his own two children—Matthew and Madison. Harris explains, “The song is very honest and conversational. I didn’t know that it would be a single. I really just wrote it as a message to my two kids so that they would have it as part of the legacy that I leave them. It is literally what I hope and pray for both of them.”

Harris’ prayer for his children is that he and his wife can give them roots while they are still young, but that, one day, they will be able to let go of them in order for Matthew (12) and Madison (10) (pictured below) to follow their own dreams and be the unique individuals God created them to be.

Harris brags about the inspiration behind the song, gushing, “They are wonderful kids, mostly because I have an amazing wife who has been a wonderful source of strength all these years I have traveled and toured. Madison is a great little



musician; she can play the piano quite well and sings beautifully. She is one of the sweetest 10-year-olds you will ever meet. Matthew is everybody’s friend. He is a great athlete...He is an aspiring guitarist and singer as well. They both

are very talented, but their greatest quality is their heart for Christ. I could go on and on about them because I am their biggest fan.”

And, while his days with 4HIM are numbered as the group continues its farewell tour this year, Harris is intent on leaving a legacy for his two future singers at home, helping to write this chapter in his children’s lives. “Since becoming a parent, I have a better understanding of what God’s love is,” he says. “Love is completely defined to me by looking at my kids, watching them grow and seeing their life unfold. The greatest joy I have is seeing the whole story take form in their lives and realizing that I am a part of shaping the pages.”

Now that the song has struck a chord with so many others, Harris hopes that the lyrics can be “adopted freely” as others’ words to their children. “For any parent, the greatest hope you could have for your kids is that they would know who they are in Christ and have a firm understanding of where they are going,” he says. “Time flies by so fast, and soon we awake to realize that our kids are not kids anymore. I hope this song helps [people] to stop and enjoy the moment of being a mom or dad. Hug ‘em, hold ‘em every chance you get; pour everything that is good into your kids while they are right there with you. All too quickly, they will find their wings; so give them roots while you can.”

LINDSAY WILLIAMS

To find out more about Harris’ debut solo album, which includes “Find Your Wings,” visit markharrisonline.com.



The **ROOT** of It All

“Watercolor Ponies” and “Butterfly Kisses”—two classic songs written and recorded by a couple of the best artists in Christian music. Add “Find Your Wings” to this list. At press time, the single is charting at No. 1 on *Radio & Records’* Inspo chart. As a result of the single’s success, many retailers are reporting a surge in record sales of *The Line Between the Two* (INO). It seems **MARK HARRIS’** latest single is resonating with parents across the country—and for good reason.



july

Keep track of upcoming **artists' birthdays**, **key concert dates**, **events**, **HOLIDAYS** and other seasonal fun right here each month.

sat. 1	Celebrate Freedom (Dallas, TX) Third Day, Hyper Static Union & Leeland (Ft. Mill, SC)	sun. 16	Jeremy Camp and Shane & Shane (Tupelo, MS)
sun. 2	Point of Grace (Casper, WY) Melodee Deveau (Casting Crowns)	mon. 17	Susan Ashton Margaret Becker Vicky Beeching Tricia Brock (Superchic[k])
mon. 3	NEEDTOBREATHE (San Francisco, CA) Carrie Underwood (Del Mar, CA)	tues. 18	Underoath (Vancouver, BC)
tues. 4	INDEPENDENCE DAY Cornerstone (Bushnell, IL, July 4-8)	wed. 19	Dennis Michaelis (Red Umbrella)
wed. 5	Crabb Fest 2006 (Owensboro, KY, July 5-8) Lifest 2006 (Oshkosh, WI, July 5-9)	thurs. 20	One Way Festival (Smithville, MO, July 20-23)
thurs. 6	Spirit Song (Cincinnati, OH, July 6-8) King's Fest (Doswell, VA, July 6-8)	fri. 21	Praise Fest 2006 (Oklahoma City, OK, July 21-22) Nathan Lee (Forever Changed/ Cool Hand Luke)
fri. 7	NightVision 2K6 featuring Todd Agnew & Tait (Ridgeway, CO, July 7-8)	sat. 22	Steven Curtis Chapman & Jeremy Camp (Arlington, TX) Edison Glass (Buffalo, NY) Benjamin Wolaver (Annie Moses Band)
sat. 8	Sarah Kelly & Building 429 (Pottstown, PA) Steve Mason (Jars of Clay)	sun. 23	Mark Schultz (Goshen, IN)
sun. 9	The Afters & Jason Morant (Long Beach, CA) Derek Webb (Santa Clarita, CA)	mon. 24	
mon. 10	Michael W. Smith & Jars of Clay (Denver, CO)	tues. 25	David Crowder Band (Anaheim, CA)
tues. 11	Sara Groves (San Diego, CA) Larnelle Harris	wed. 26	Creation West (George, WA, July 26-29) Scott Davis (The Myriad)
wed. 12	Kutless (Santa Clarita, CA) Justin Ellis (The Crabb Family)	thurs. 27	Casting Crowns (Charlotte, NC) Brian Smith (FFH)
thurs. 13	Sonshine Festival (Wilmar, MN, July 13-15)	fri. 28	Rock the Desert (Midland, TX, July 28-29)
fri. 14	Women of Faith with Natalie Grant & Avalon (Cleveland, OH, July 14-15) Gabe Watts (Olivia the Band)	sat. 29	Lauren Barlow (BarlowGirl)
sat. 15	Mark Harris (Harrisonburg, VA) Carrie Buell (Alathea)	sun. 30 mon. 31	Jim Caligiuri (Transition) Scott Denté (Out of the Grey) 4HIM Encore Tour (Turlock, CA)

For more tour listings, visit CCMmagazine.com.

fanfare

The Baby Carriage



HEATHER PAYNE and the other three ladies of **POINT OF GRACE** recently celebrated the birth of the group's seventh baby and Heather's third child—a boy. Heather, her husband, Brian, and siblings Ella and Nate welcomed **Seth Hudson** into the world April 17 at 1 p.m. Seth weighed 7 lbs. and 11 oz. at birth and was 20 inches long. When not spending time tending her brood of three, Heather is likely to be found in Nashville with the rest of the POG foursome as they begin work on their new studio project due this fall.

The Paynes have nothing on the McKeehans, with **TOBYMAC** and his wife, Amanda, welcoming their fifth child March 24. **Judah Monroe** weighed 6 lbs. and 13 oz. Big brothers Truett and Leo and twins Moses and Marlee are the proud siblings. And, in between midnight feedings, toby can be found in the studio working on his new record.



DARRELL and Charity **EVANS** welcomed a son into their home recently, too. **Connor Jacob** arrived the afternoon of April 19, weighing 6 lbs. and 13 oz. and measuring 20 inches. Mom, Dad and big sister Leah are enjoying the new addition to their family this summer. Currently, Darrell is touring in support of his latest project, *Uncharted Waters*. To find out more about Darrell and his family, log on to darrellevans.com.

Summer Love



As reported in our April issue, BEC recording artist **JADON LAVIK** married his sweetheart, Stephanie, on April 23. The happy couple said their vows in Dana Point, Calif., close to Jadon's favorite surfing spot where he taught his lovely bride how to hang ten.



Cool Hand Luke's Mark Nicks is marrying Amy Strickhouse this fall. The couple will recite their vows in Music City on October 27.

Look for Cool Hand Luke this month at the Cornerstone Festival in Bushnell, Ill.



5 Questions

with **CLAUDE MCKNIGHT** of **TAKE 6**

Uber producer, music legend and longtime collaborator Quincy Jones has described **TAKE 6** as “the baddest vocal cats on the planet.” With 10 Grammy Awards, 10 Doves, one Soul Train Award and two NAACP Image Award nominations to their credit, the Take 6 guys have returned—in all their six-part-harmony-glory—to critical acclaim with *Feels Good*, which is also the first title available on their newly minted label, Take 6 Records. (For more info, visit take6.com.) *CCM* recently caught up with one of the group’s founding members, **CLAUDE MCKNIGHT**, to ask all those pressing questions that nobody else dares to ask...the 5 Questions!

1. What six words best describe you?

Athletic, mischievous, diplomatic, communicative, innovative, spiritual

2. What’s your most embarrassing moment onstage?

Years ago, we [Take 6] were doing a special performance in New York for the NAACP honoring Whitney Houston. And that’s back when I had hair—a lot of hair! So I washed my hair that day and put this leave-in conditioner stuff in my hair. I put too much in. While we’re on stage, I’m sweating, and the guys are looking at me [oddly]. I’m like, “What? What?” Next thing I know, I look on the TV monitor at a swirl of smoke coming out of my head. I get more nervous...and I’m sweating even more. Now I have a billow of smoke coming out of my head. And it was all because of the stuff in my hair—it wasn’t fire or whatever. The lights were too close; I was sweating; and it was just a swirl. So by the time we got done, people were laughing. The really cool thing is, after the performance, Whitney (who also sweats a lot when she’s singing) comes up to me, says, “I know what you’re going through,” and hugs me.

3. What’s the one question you’ve never been asked (and the answer)?

Why I decided to sing first tenor in this group when I’m actually a baritone. I sing first tenor because, when the group first started, although I wanted to sing bass, nobody else could sing the top part. And my actual singing range is about four octaves or more.

4. What’s a song you wish you had written?

“That’s the Way of the World” by Earth, Wind & Fire. That’s my jam. It’s a very spiritual song; and it just feels good to me.

5. What’s the best spiritual advice you’ve ever been given?

Just be real. The thing that I have always struggled with, is the pomp and circumstance. Christians are [just] people, too. We get up the same way everybody else does. We live our lives. We have problems during the day. But when people can be transparent and be real with who they are, that’s a beautiful thing. And I think that when you’re real with people, they gravitate toward you because they can relate.



>> Blurring the Lines

With a new album, a new tour and a new unique label imprint, **THE CRABB FAMILY** is continuing to define its distinctive niche in Christian music. Traditionally known as a staple in the Southern gospel marketplace, the Crabb Family continues to stretch its talents and push the boundaries between true Southern gospel and contemporary Christian music. But, essentially, the Crabbs desire the message versus genre category to define them. They prefer just to do their own thing, their own way—and they’re becoming revolutionaries in the process.

If Jason Crabb had his way, he’d take all the headers out of music stores that identify and separate different types of music. There would be no labels, and music would just be music, with no discrimination or pre-conceived notions attached.

Well, there’s not much Jason can do about the bin cards at your local Wal-Mart, but he

and siblings Kelly, Terah, Adam and Aaron are managing to erase barriers between music genres with their new *Blur the Lines* CD and accompanying tour.

The new project features lead vocal performances from each talented member. Among the many highlights, Aaron serves up a cover of Michael English’s “Holding Out Hope to You.” Terah covers Dottie Rambo’s “I Go to the Rock,” and Adam takes lead on the Spanish number “Amigo de Dios (Friend of God).”

Blur the Lines is the Crabbs’ first release on Clear Cool Music, a new imprint they launched in partnership with Daywind Music, the company the group has recorded with for the past several years. Matriarch Kathy Crabb is running Clear Cool Music as well as Big Ten Management.

The Crabbs see the new label as a way to nurture other artists like themselves. “I’m excited about it for the other groups,” says Kelly Crabb Bowling, “because there are a lot of groups that don’t necessarily fit a certain mold. They maybe fit into something like we do. So I’m excited that, maybe, that’s the new outlet for them to be able to do what they do.”

“We feel like we want to sow into other artists and help them,” adds Adam, the oldest of the Crabb twins. “I think the new label is a good way to do it.”

The Crabb Family will also be blurring musical boundaries on the road this summer with the innovative “*Blur the Lines* Tour,” which will consist of two-night events in each town. There will be a Southern gospel night, featuring the Crabbs, the McRaes, First Love, Crossway and the Mike Bowling Group, and a more contemporary night that will feature the Crabb Family as well as the Katinas, Julian Drive and NewSong.

“We sing all kinds of music, always have and always will,” says Terah. “It’s really nothing new to us. We just do the songs ‘Crabb Style.’”

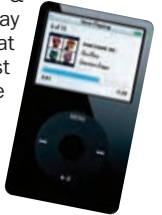
DEBORAH EVANS PRICE



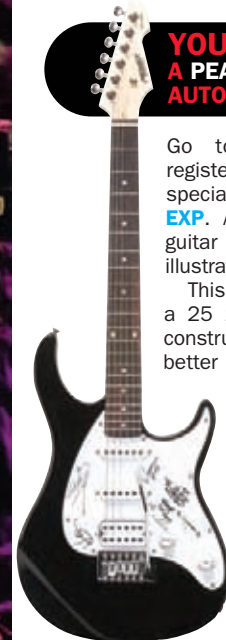
THIS MONTH @ CCMAGAZINE.COM

Since space in *CCM Magazine* is limited, we're featuring exclusive content from your favorite artists and other personalities online at CCMmagazine.com every month. Here's a bit of what you can find online in July...

>>> So, you've read our cover story on **KUTLESS**. You're inspired! You're motivated! You're going to listen to Kutless' new album, *Hearts of the Innocent* (BEC/Tooth & Nail)! In fact, you're going to listen day and night, wherever you are. To that end, you'll need an iPod! But not just any ol' iPod! You want the **CCM/KUTLESS VIDEO IPOD!** With 30 GB of storage, it'll hold 7,500 songs, 25,000 photos or 75 hours of video! So, this month, we celebrate Independence Day—our nation's and yours (when you experience the freedom of a Mac-daddy portable iPod)! Just visit CCMmagazine.com sometime before July 31st to register to win the CCM/Kutless video iPod. We'll announce the winner of the iPod (which includes a copy of *Hearts of the Innocent*) in one of our next issues. Tune in! Same Bat time, same Bat channel!



YOU COULD WIN A PEAVEY GUITAR AUTOGRAPHED BY P.O.D.



Go to CCMmagazine.com to register for your chance to win this special **PEAVEY RAPTOR PLUS EXP**. Autographed by P.O.D., the guitar also features an original illustration by the band.

This one of a kind Peavey boasts a 25 1/2 inch scale, solid body construction with modern styling for better ergonomics and balance, new dual-expanding truss rod with wrenchless, easy access adjustment wheel, wide top pole piece single coil pickups for enhanced string focus and tone, tremolo bridge, Peavey six-in-a-line headstock with ergonomic tuner placement and straight string pull, master volume and tone controls and 5-way pick-up selector. Need we say more?

Register by August 31 for your chance to win. The winner will be announced in *CCM Magazine* and at CCMmagazine.com.



In Pursuit of Passion

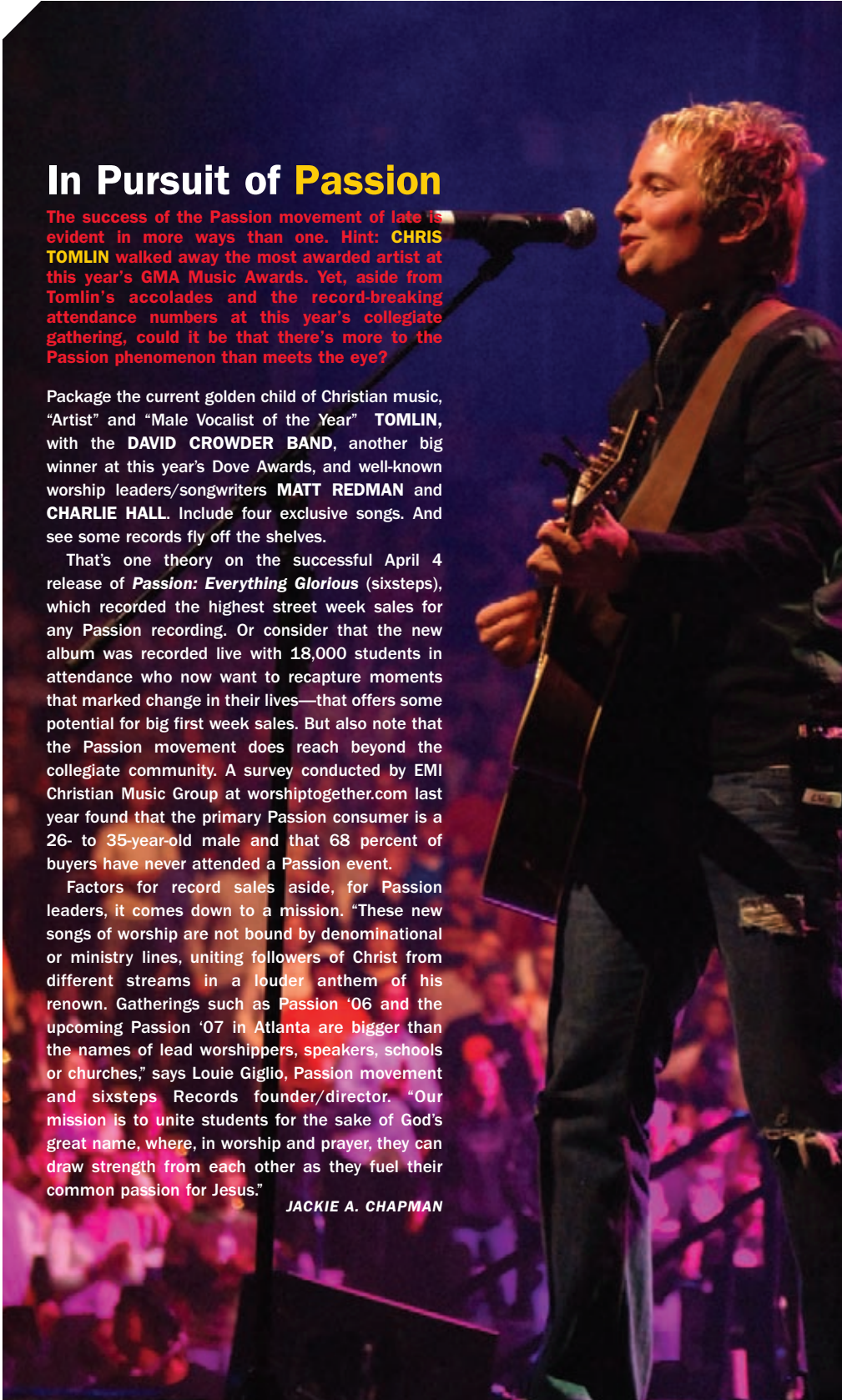
The success of the Passion movement of late is evident in more ways than one. Hint: **CHRIS TOMLIN** walked away the most awarded artist at this year's GMA Music Awards. Yet, aside from Tomlin's accolades and the record-breaking attendance numbers at this year's collegiate gathering, could it be that there's more to the Passion phenomenon than meets the eye?

Package the current golden child of Christian music, "Artist" and "Male Vocalist of the Year" **TOMLIN**, with the **DAVID CROWDER BAND**, another big winner at this year's Dove Awards, and well-known worship leaders/songwriters **MATT REDMAN** and **CHARLIE HALL**. Include four exclusive songs. And see some records fly off the shelves.

That's one theory on the successful April 4 release of *Passion: Everything Glorious* (sixsteps), which recorded the highest street week sales for any Passion recording. Or consider that the new album was recorded live with 18,000 students in attendance who now want to recapture moments that marked change in their lives—that offers some potential for big first week sales. But also note that the Passion movement does reach beyond the collegiate community. A survey conducted by EMI Christian Music Group at worshipitogether.com last year found that the primary Passion consumer is a 26- to 35-year-old male and that 68 percent of buyers have never attended a Passion event.

Factors for record sales aside, for Passion leaders, it comes down to a mission. "These new songs of worship are not bound by denominational or ministry lines, uniting followers of Christ from different streams in a louder anthem of his renown. Gatherings such as Passion '06 and the upcoming Passion '07 in Atlanta are bigger than the names of lead worshippers, speakers, schools or churches," says Louie Giglio, Passion movement and sixsteps Records founder/director. "Our mission is to unite students for the sake of God's great name, where, in worship and prayer, they can draw strength from each other as they fuel their common passion for Jesus."

JACKIE A. CHAPMAN





★ Welcome to the world of independent artists.



Micah Dalton

The Advancement



With musicians such as Matt Slocum and Sandra McCracken helping to craft his first effort, *These Are the Roots*, it comes as no surprise that the 10-song album is a piece of art. The soulful singer from Atlanta boasts a unique sound that blends unforgettable vocals and great rhythms. Check out Micah's EP, *The Advancement*, which released in early April. You can find more info at micahdalton.com.

The Sonflowerz

Alive in You



Alive in You, the Sonflowerz' sophomore release, is a worship experience you should not miss out on. This all-girl rock band from Colorado Springs artfully delivers 13 original songs, but these girls are more than just talented musicians.

Visit the Sonflowerz' website—sonflowerz.com—to learn more about the members' passion for ministry and to read their thought-provoking devotionals.



Kate York

Sadlylove



Performing at the "Austin City Limits" Music Festival and *Paste Magazine's* first "Paste Fest" are not common experiences for an indie artist with a debut album. But take one listen to *Sadlylove*, and you will understand the buzz around this songwriter from Nashville. Her rich vocals are as haunting as her lyrics are profound. Hear more about her at kateyork.com.

Children 18:3

Songs of Desperation



After nearly four years of creating hard-edged indie rock, Children 18:3 has settled into a three-piece band...of siblings. The whole family (including Mom and Dad!) has a place in this band, from driving the bus to selling merchandise.

Check out *Songs of Desperation*, which released earlier this year, at children183.com.



Profiles by KATE MCDONALD

To submit an independent album or indie news to CCM's columnist for consideration, write to her at: Kate McDonald, Box #8, The UPS Store #2356, 4742 42nd Ave. SW, Seattle, WA 98116; or email: indies@CCMmagazine.com.



RISKY BUSINESS

By: Margaret Becker

Last night, I was wide-awake at 3:30 a.m. running the "What if?" wheel. I am in the middle of making a new record which, my sister reminds me, always makes me do this. *What if I didn't choose the right songs? What if I can't finish the half done ones in time for mix? What if that trombone is over the top? What if I...what if they...what if it...?* Faster and faster the thoughts spiraled until watching the Total Gym half-hour infomercial on cable seemed like a good usage of life breath.

Risk. I hate it. Taking chances—so *not* me.

Then how on earth did I get here? That's the lovely question that my internal counselor introduced when Chuck Norris went off the air. So I considered it.

And this is what I came up with: Most every great thing that has transpired in my life, my career, even my personal sense of achievement, has come from a risk. Let me restate that: Almost every positive outcome in my life has come with knee-knocking, gut-wrenching, doom-saying fear. And, in the middle of it all, I felt *anything* but brave.

Fear is healthy. It tells us when to take cover. It tells us when to move. It's never pleasant or trendy, but it is a catalyst for change.

By the time the sun was coming up, I'd made a list of risks I'd taken over the years. There were big ones, like leaving stability, and hard-to-fix ones, like spending \$7,000 on my first "demo" (12-inch vinyl, four songs—ouch!). But that money pit got me my first advocate, who got me my first important "business contact," which got me to...

I had a half page of risks I'd taken—big ones—that did not end with the desired result. But, in truth, even these had value. God used them to further create His character in me; and, if I lost something, I eventually made it up.

Risk, when it is taken with temperance, good advisors and the willingness to be wrong, will almost always bear some kind of fruit, even if it is only to see what you do when you fail. After all, it's a promise to us: *All things work together for the good for them who are called according to His purposes* (Romans 8:28).

Over coffee, I stand against my "What ifs?" and decide to follow my instincts. The truth is that most successful risk-takers will tell you that they are scared, fearful, and, at times, even panicky—but isn't that what *bravery* is? Not ignoring fear, but moving despite it, in the face of it?

The trombone stays.



For more on this topic, see Margaret's new book, *Coming Up for Air* (NavPress), available at amazon.com or christianbook.com. And visit maggieb.com for a podcast on taking risks.



[TOP CHRISTIAN/GOSPEL ALBUMS OVERALL]

**THE TOP-SELLING
CHRISTIAN ALBUMS
ACCORDING TO
NIELSEN SOUNDSCAN**




[Highest Debut:.....STARFIELD]

Beauty in the Broken (Sparrow)


THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	WEEKS ON CHIT	ALBUM COVER	ARTIST	TITLE (Label)
1	1	12		ALAN JACKSON	<i>Precious Memories</i> (ACR/Arista Nashville)
2	2	4		MERCYME	<i>Coming Up to Breathe</i> (INO)
3	5	32		FLYLEAF	<i>Flyleaf</i> (Octone/S-R-E)
4	3	38		CASTING CROWNS	<i>Lifesong</i> (Beach Street)
5	4	7		VARIOUS	<i>WOW: Worship Aqua</i> (Provident)
6	6	33		KIRK FRANKLIN	<i>Hero</i> (Gospocentric)
7	13	29		THIRD DAY	<i>Wherever You Are</i> (Essential)
8	14	44		MARY MARY	<i>Mary Mary</i> (Integrity)
9	8	3		BRIAN LITRELL	<i>Welcome Home</i> (Reunion)
10	10	19		JUANITA BYNUM	<i>Piece of My Passion</i> (Flow)
11	11	48		CHRIS TOMLIN	<i>Arriving</i> (sixsteps)
12	7	33		VARIOUS	<i>WOW Hits 2006</i> (Sparrow)
13	9	17		VARIOUS	<i>WOW Gospel</i> (Verity)
14	15	9		KUTLESS	<i>Hearts of the Innocent</i> (BEC)
15	16	11		AARON SHUST	<i>Anything Worth Saying</i> (Brash/Word)
16	17	48		CASTING CROWNS	<i>Casting Crowns</i> (Beach Street)
17	20	9		MARK HARRIS	<i>The Line Between the Two</i> (INO)
18	21	7		HAWK NELSON	<i>Smile, It's the End of the World</i> (Tooth & Nail)
19	18	7		PASSION WORSHIP BAND	<i>Passion: Everything Glorious</i> (sixsteps)
20	19	10		MARTHA MUNIZZI	<i>No Limits</i> (Integrity)
21	35	5		ANTHONY BURGER	<i>Best of Anthony Burger</i> (Spring House)
22	27	48		JEREMY CAMP	<i>Restored</i> (BEC)
23	44	8		BISHOP G.E. PATTERSON	<i>Singing the Old Time Way Volume 2</i> (Podium)
24	40	48		NATALIE GRANT	<i>Awaken</i> (Curb)
25	25	23		VARIOUS	<i>Chronicles of Namia Soundtrack</i> (Disney/EMI CMG)
26	29	17		GAITHER VOCAL BAND	<i>Give It Away</i> (Spring House)
27	22	38		YOLANDA ADAMS	<i>Day by Day</i> (Atlantic)
28	36	39		SELAH	<i>Greatest Hymns</i> (Curb)
29	24	48		MERCYME	<i>Almost There</i> (INO)
30	34	40		TODD AGNEW	<i>Reflection of Something</i> (S-R-E/Ardent)
31	57	15		BILL AND GLORIA GAITHER	<i>Canadian Homecoming</i> (Spring House)
32	39	48		RELIENT K	<i>MMHMM</i> (Gotee/Capitol)
33	31	17		P.O.D.	<i>Testify</i> (Atlantic/Word)
34	42	48		NICHOLE NORDEMAN	<i>Brave</i> (Sparrow)
35	33	7		UNITED	<i>United We Stand</i> (Integrity)
36	28	2		NICOLE C. MULLEN	<i>Redeemer: The Best of Nicole C. Mullen</i> (Word)
37	26	7		DONALD LAWRENCE & TRI CITY	<i>Finale Act I</i> (EMI CMG)
38	52	34		BARLOWGIRL	<i>Another Journal Entry</i> (Fervent)
39	—	1		STARFIELD	<i>Beauty in the Broken</i> (Sparrow)
40	45	36		CECE WINANS	<i>Purified</i> (PURG)

*Each chart reflects Christian and general market combined album sales for the week ending **May 21, 2006**. All charts © 2006 by Nielsen SoundScan (a division of VNU Marketing Information) and Christian Music Trade Association. All rights reserved. No reproduction without permission.

[TOP ROCK/ALTERNATIVE ALBUMS]

THIS WEEK	WEEKS ON CHIT	ARTIST	TITLE (Label)
★ 1	32	 FLYLEAF	Flyleaf (Octone/S-R-E)
2	29	THIRD DAY	<i>Wherever You Are</i> (Essential)
3	9	KUTLESS	<i>Hearts of the Innocent</i> (BEC)
4	7	HAWK NELSON	<i>Smile, It's the End of the World</i> (Tooth & Nail)
5	81	RELIENT K	<i>MMHMM</i> (Gotee/Capitol)
6	15	P.O.D.	<i>Testify</i> (Atlantic/Word)
7	34	BARLOWGIRL	<i>Another Journal Entry</i> (Fervent)
8	1	RUN KID RUN	<i>This Is Who We Are</i> (Tooth & Nail)
9	9	BUILDING 429	<i>Rise</i> (Word)
10	7	SANCTUS REAL	<i>Face of Love</i> (Sparrow)
11	64	KUTLESS	<i>Strong Tower</i> (BEC)
12	36	SWITCHFOOT	<i>Nothing Is Sound</i> (Sparrow/Columbia)
13	7	VARIOUS	<i>X2006</i> (BEC)
14	85	TOBYMAC	<i>Welcome to Diverse City</i> (Forefront)
15	61	JARS OF CLAY	<i>Redemption Songs</i> (Essential)
16	101	UNDEROATH	<i>They're Only Chasing Safety</i> (Solid State)
17	68	ANBERLIN	<i>Never Take Friendship Personal</i> (Tooth & Nail)
18	44	THOUSAND FOOT KRUTCH	<i>The Art of Breaking</i> (Tooth & Nail)
19	169	SWITCHFOOT	<i>The Beautiful Letdown</i> (Sparrow/Columbia)
20	1	ELEVENTYSEVEN	<i>And the Land of Fake Believe</i> (Flicker)

[TOP R&B/HIP-HOP ALBUMS]

THIS WEEK	WEEKS ON CHIT	ARTIST	TITLE (Label)
★ 1	32	 KIRK FRANKLIN	Hero (Gospocentric)
2	44	MARY MARY	<i>Mary Mary</i> (Integrity)
3	37	CECE WINANS	<i>Purified</i> (Pure Springs Gospel/INO)
4	3	KJ-52	<i>KJ-52 Remixed</i> (BEC)
5	48	TOBYMAC	<i>Welcome to Diverse City</i> (ForeFront)
6	8	GRITS	<i>7</i> (Gotee)
7	7	PETTIDEE	<i>Thug Love</i> (Beatmart)
8	48	MARY MARY	<i>Incredible</i> (Integrity)
9	48	KJ-52	<i>Behind the Musik</i> (BEC)
10	40	LECRAE	<i>Real Talk</i> (Cross Movement)
11	13	JEFF MAJORS	<i>Sacred</i> (Columbia)
12	17	LISA MCCLENDON	<i>Live at the House of Blues</i> (Integrity)
13	42	KIERRA "KIKI" SHEARD	<i>Just Until</i> (EMI Gospel)
14	35	DA T.R.U.T.H.	<i>The Faith</i> (Cross Movement/Provident)
15	5	ROB HODGE	<i>Born King</i> (Beatmart)
16	48	RUBEN STUDDARD	<i>I Need an Angel</i> (J Records/Provident)
17	17	FLAME	<i>Rewind</i> (Cross Movement)
18	32	GEORGE HUFF	<i>Miracles</i> (Word)
19	33	T-BONE	<i>Bone-A-Fide</i> (Flicker)
20	48	BEBE & CECE WINANS	<i>Greatest Hits</i> (Sparrow)

[TOP ADULT CONTEMPORARY/POP ALBUMS]

THIS WEEK	WEEKS ON CHIT	ARTIST	TITLE (Label)
★ 1	4	 MERCYME	Coming Up to Breathe (INO)
2	39	CASTING CROWNS	<i>Lifesong</i> (Beach Street)
3	3	BRIAN LITRELL	<i>Welcome Home</i> (Reunion)
4	33	VARIOUS	<i>WOW Hits 2006</i> (Sparrow)
5	138	CASTING CROWNS	<i>Casting Crowns</i> (Beach Street)
6	10	MARK HARRIS	<i>The Line Between the Two</i> (INO)
7	11	JEREMY CAMP	<i>Restored</i> (BEC)
8	61	NATALIE GRANT	<i>Awaken</i> (Curb)
9	23	VARIOUS	<i>Chronicles of Narnia Soundtrack</i> (Disney/EMI/CMG)
10	65	MERCYME	<i>Almost There</i> (INO)
11	40	TODD AGNEW	<i>Reflection of Something</i> (S-R-E/Ardent)
12	52	NICOLE NORDEMAN	<i>Brave</i> (Sparrow)
13	2	NICOLE C. MULLEN	<i>Redeemer: The Best of Nicole C. Mullen</i> (Word)
14	5	MAT KEARNEY	<i>Nothing Left to Lose</i> (Inpop)
15	2	JACI VELASQUEZ	<i>On My Knees: The Best of Jaci Velasquez</i> (Word)
16	59	VARIOUS	<i>WOW #1s</i> (Provident)
17	10	WATERMARK	<i>Grateful People</i> (Rocketown)
18	26	REBECCA ST. JAMES	<i>If I Had One Chance to Tell You Something</i> (Forefront)
19	11	SHAWN MCDONALD	<i>Ripen</i> (Sparrow)
20	28	JEREMY CAMP	<i>Live Unplugged</i> (BEC)

[TOP PRAISE & WORSHIP ALBUMS]

THIS WEEK	WEEKS ON CHIT	ARTIST	TITLE (Label)
★ 1	7	 VARIOUS	WOW Worship: Aqua (Provident)
2	87	CHRIS TOMLIN	<i>Arriving</i> (sixsteps)
3	17	AARON SHUST	<i>Anything Worth Saying</i> (Brash/Word)
4	7	PASSION WORSHIP BAND	<i>Passion: Everything Glorious</i> (sixsteps)
5	7	UNITED	<i>United We Stand</i> (Integrity)
6	1	STARFIELD	<i>Beauty in the Broken</i> (Sparrow)
7	34	DAVID CROWDER BAND	<i>A Collision</i> (sixsteps)
8	30	VARIOUS	<i>Open the Eyes of My Heart</i> (INO)
9	17	ABSOLUTE	<i>Absolute Modern Worship 2</i> (Fervent)
10	30	RANDY TRAVIS	<i>Glory Train</i> (Word)
11	58	PASSION WORSHIP BAND	<i>Passion: How Great Is Our God</i> (sixsteps)
12	21	HILLSONG	<i>Ultimate Worship: Best of Hillsong</i> (Integrity)
13	18	CHRIS TOMLIN	<i>Live from Austin</i> (sixsteps)
14	11	VARIOUS	<i>Best Worship Songs Ever!</i> (Virgin/EMI CMG)
15	10	POCKET FULL OF ROCKS	<i>Song to the King</i> (Myrrh)
16	38	TWILA PARIS	<i>He Is Exalted</i> (Integrity)
17	245	MICHAEL W. SMITH	<i>Worship</i> (Reunion)
18	132	RANDY TRAVIS	<i>Worship & Faith</i> (Word)
19	55	AMY GRANT	<i>Rock of Ages...Hymns & Faith</i> (Word)
20	33	VARIOUS	<i>iWorship: No Boundaries</i> (Integrity)

* Each chart reflects Christian and general market combined album sales for the week ending May 21, 2006. All charts © 2006 by Nielsen SoundScan (a division of VNU Marketing Information) and Christian Music Trade Association. All rights reserved. No reproduction without permission.

REAL LANDS ITS 4th NO. 1 CHRISTIAN RADIO SINGLE—THIS TIME ON R&R'S CHR CHART—WITH "I'M NOT ALRIGHT" >>>



Welcome to Our World

>>>The much-anticipated Warner Bros. film *Superman Returns*, directed by Bryan Singer, hit theaters June 30. We have no idea about the film itself—magazine deadlines and all—but the messianic parallels in the trailers are certainly intriguing. Speaking of which, author **STEPHEN SKELTON** explores the biblical roots of Superman in his book *The Gospel According to the World's Greatest Superhero* (Harvest House).



➔ **LONGER WAIT FOR NARNIA II** *Entertainment Weekly* says the next film in “The Chronicles of Narnia” series may be pushed back to December 2008 because of the demands of the elaborate special effects. Walden Media plans to make all seven “Narnia” books into movies—and will shoot *Prince Caspian*, *Voyage of the Dawn Treader* and *The Silver Chair* as “an interlocking trilogy.”

IMPACTING HOLLYWOOD

In April, Emmy Award-winning producer **RALPH WINTER** was presented the Briner Impact Award [named in honor of *Roaring Lambs* author Bob Briner] at the Biola Media Conference. Winter has produced a slew of blockbuster films such as the *X-Men* and *Star Trek* movies. In recent years, he has used his clout to produce films based on popular Christian novels, including those written by **FRANK PERETTI** and **TED DEKKER**.



In May, Backstreet Boy (and Reunion Records recording artist) **BRIAN LITRELL** appeared on the “CBS Saturday Early Show.” He performed two songs from his new solo Christian album, *Welcome Home*.

Meanwhile, Seattle musician **SHAWN MCDONALD** has been all over the media lately, including stints on Napster and Sony Connect, a live appearance on CNN’s “Faces of Faith” plus a worldwide video contest with “One Cubed.”

MORE THAN A COMIC BOOK

COMIX35 invites Christian comics creators to put together their original proposals for adapting the apologetic classic *More Than a Carpenter* into an original narrative story in comic book or graphic novel form. The winner receives a cash prize for his or her proposal plus an opportunity to negotiate a publishing agreement with Josh McDowell Ministries to have the original adaptation produced as a comic book or graphic novel. Entry Deadline: Nov. 29. Rules and info at comix35.gospelcom.net.

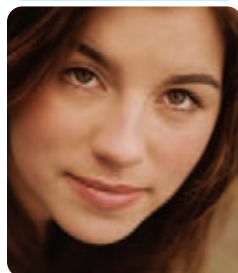


WEAR YOUR FAITH

Essential recording artist **KRYSTAL MEYERS** has partnered with Bob Siemon Designs for a new line of jewelry for teens. The “Anticonformity” collection encourages youth to express their faith with two bracelet designs, a cell-phone charm and a key ring—all inspired by Meyers’ song of the same name. See for yourself at anticonformity.net, where teens can also share prayer requests.

CCM

jeopardy.....



Answer: The greatest game in magazine history!
Question: What is CCM Jeopardy? In this month’s segment, we’ve given the answers to **BETHANY DILLON**. According to last August’s CCM cover, she’s the future! And a bright one, too! Her sophomore release *Imagination* (Sparrow) continues to garner acclaim, and she recently enjoyed her second nomination for “Female Vocalist of the Year” at this year’s GMA Music Awards.

CCM’s A: The future

Bethany’s Q: What two words were used in an article I did with my friends at CCM a while back that quickly became the butt of every joke in my house?

CCM’s A: The only reality TV show that I would have a chance to win

Bethany’s Q: What is “Go Ahead, Eat a Ridiculous Amount of Anything Chocolate”?

CCM’s A: A classic album everyone should own

Bethany’s Q: What is *The Joshua Tree* by U2?

CCM’s A: Frodo Baggins, Martha Stewart & Dakota Fanning

Bethany’s Q: Who do I share a birthday with, wish I could cook like, and go see every movie she’s ever been in because she’s so crazy talented?

CCM’s A: Beautiful

Bethany’s Q: If I were given half a penny every time I’ve played this song, what song would have made me a bazillionaire by now?

CCM’s A: The first event to which I would take a time machine

Bethany’s Q: What is any time in which I could have gone to a Keith Green concert?

CCM’s A: “I’m lovin’ it”

Bethany’s Q: What commercial ad for a fast food restaurant makes you actually feel GOOD about eating pure, deep-fried grease?

CCM’s A: The only band I’d like to be in

Bethany’s Q: What is Dizmas?

CCM’s A: 4

Bethany’s Q: How many times have I watched the movie *Pride and Prejudice* in the last month?

CCM’s A: What I want to be when I grow up

Bethany’s Q: What is a missionary/writer/counselor/junior high teacher/mom/filmmaker/chef/marathoner/roadie for U2?

CCM’s A: Why I love CCM Magazine

Bethany’s Q: What is a sweet family of writers/storytellers who care about artists, the church and painting a fresh picture of who Jesus is?

CCM’s A: The most puzzling verse/story in the Bible

Bethany’s Q: What is Ephesians 2:4-9? (“But God...even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ...for by grace you have been saved through faith. And THIS IS NOT YOUR OWN DOING; it is the gift of God...so that no one may boast.”)



Keep up with the latest “SIGHTINGS” weekdays at CCMmagazine.com.

* A compendium of arguably useless and “researched” musings

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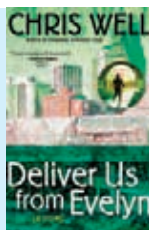
BAD IDEAS FOR YOUR JULY 4 EVENT

- 1) “Come Dressed As Your Favorite Redcoat.”
- 2) Party drinks inexplicably colored red, white and some shade of purple.
- 3) Crank up the John Philip Sousa and RAWK!!!

YOU KNOW YOU'RE TIRED OF SUMMER WHEN...

- 1) It occurs to you that the smell of chlorine has lost its charm.
- 2) You keep watching the evening news for the snow report.
- 3) You start missing the spontaneous thrill of pop quizzes.

Novelist and struggling actor Chris Well once played the role of “Monkey Boy” on the popular syndicated series “Circus Town.” At least that’s what his bio says.



SILVER SCREEN

5 PROOFS OF THE SECRET CONNECTION BETWEEN CHRISTIAN MUSIC AND HOLLYWOOD

Ah, summer. Baseball, picnics and blockbuster movies based on old television shows.

Once existing in totally separate universes, Christian music and Hollywood seem to mix it up more and more often. Witness Benjy Gaither as vocal talent (and both Fleming and John working the soundtrack) in the recent animated hit *Hoodwinked*. Witness that worship song in *Firewall*. Witness P.O.D. over the closing credits of *The Matrix Reloaded*. (Actually, don't witness that one—it's better if you just take our word for it.)

Take a seat and pass the popcorn 'cause here are five more examples...

1) THE SECOND CHANCE

New on DVD, *The Second Chance* stars (as if we have to tell you) **Michael W. Smith**, is directed by (you must have heard about this by now) **Steve Taylor**, and includes a cameo appearance from (maybe this is new) **Out of Eden's Lisa Kimmey**. The story details the culture clash between two churches—one from the suburbs, one from the inner city—and how two men must work past their differences to serve the same Lord.

2) JUST MY LUCK

This Lindsay Lohan-vehicle is about leprechauns or the tooth fairy or something. (We didn't actually see the film for ourselves—we had church that night.) Anyway, somewhere in there, viewers are treated to the rockin' sounds of rockin' rockers **The Afters**. The excellent song “Beautiful Love” is also found on the band's acclaimed debut, *I Wish We All Could Win* (INO).

3) THE GOSPEL

A surprise hit at the box office, indie film *The Gospel* is about a successful young R&B singer who turns his back on God and his father's church—and returns years later to find the once powerful congregation in disarray. Now on DVD, the film includes several gospel artists onscreen, including **Yolanda Adams**, **Fred Hammond** and **Martha Munizzi**.

4) YOURS, MINE & OURS

Hawk Nelson did not just get a song in this wacky family film, the guys rocked out on-screen. The band also once portrayed Brit classic rockers The Who on the nostalgic NBC TV series “American Dreams.” But, for the purposes of this column, we're not going to bring that up. (Oh, wait...)

5) O BROTHER, WHERE ART THOU?

This zany Depression-era retread of Homer's *The Odyssey* was notable for its “old-timey” gospel music. The ringleader was none other than producer **T Bone Burnett**—who, it turns out, has just released two new projects on Sony: the retrospective *Twenty Twenty—The Essential T Bone Burnett*, spanning 30 years, and *The True False Identity*, his first original album in 14 years.





industrybeat

by Jay Swartzendruber

A conversation with
Mark Nicholas



Nicholas Makes His Mark

As a 19-year-old, Nebraska-native Mark Nicholas relocated to Houston, Texas, in 1990 to work as an assistant studio manager at Rivendell Recorders—a studio used by Petra, King's X and Wayne Watson. Later that year, he moved to Nashville and landed work at Star Song Communications. During the next 6-plus years with the company, Nicholas worked first in its music publishing department, then the specialty projects/concept products division, and finally, in the A&R department. He then went on to work briefly with True Artist Management, developing marketing and promotion plans for Audio Adrenaline and dc talk. Soon Eddie DeGarmo (DeGarmo & Key co-founder-turned-record exec.) hired him to do A&R for Forefront Records where Nicholas collaborated with not only Audio Adrenaline and dc talk but also with Geoff Moore, Bleach, Pax217, The Normals and tobyMac and Tait as solo artists. Nicholas now serves as the general manager for Simpleville Music—the growing publishing company owned by MercyMe.

How did you first get to know Bart Millard & Co. and then come to work for them?

Back when I was doing A&R for Star Song, Scott Brickell, who is now the band's manager, called and asked me to come check out this band named MercyMe. They put on a respectable show and, after meeting the band, I really liked the guys, but didn't believe that their music was the right fit for our company. Usually, getting turned down by a record label would mean the end of communication for most bands and A&R guys, but, strangely enough, we kept in touch. A few times a year or so, Bart and I would talk on the phone, mostly just to catch up or talk about music. Many years later, after MercyMe had signed to INO Records and "I Can Only Imagine" had taken off, I got another call from Scott Brickell. Again, he asked me to come meet with MercyMe, but this time they wanted to talk to me about the job of running their music publishing company. Needless to say, I didn't turn them down a second time.

What does a music publishing company do?

Its main focus is to serve the needs of songwriters and the songs they write. When a song is created, it is the publisher's job to find an avenue for that song that will provide compensation for the songwriter. That is the process we

call "song pitching." Whether a song is recorded on an artist's album, is used in print music, on websites, television, films, or is made into ringtones; it is the publisher's responsibility to make sure that the song is properly licensed and that royalties are collected so that the songwriters can pay their rent and put food on the table. This process can require a lot of work and determination to make sure all these things happen correctly. At the end of the day, songs are like tangible assets for songwriters and publishers, much like a landlord who owns a rental house. It is the publisher's job to make sure that there are good tenants for the rental house and to be sure that the rent gets paid.

What artists and songwriters do you—Simpleville Music—currently represent?

Simpleville Music is blessed to be working with some of the most gifted artists and songwriters in music today including MercyMe, The Afters, Phil Wickham, Casting Pearls, Foreign Oren (Simple Records' new artist, releasing late 2006), Sam Mizell ("Next Thing You Know," "Who Am I"), Waterdeep's Don Chaffer ("You Are So Good To Me"), The Normals' / Caedmon's Call's Andrew Osenga ("Everything," "Rest Upon Us") and Audio Adrenaline's Tyler Burkum ("Ocean Floor," "Hands and Feet").

What's the role of a staff songwriter?

A staff songwriter is somewhat different than an artist who writes his or her own songs. Staff songwriters are musically gifted individuals who have the ability and discipline to use their skills to craft songs for other people or come alongside artists to help them in writing new songs. The best staff writers have the ability to blend into the background and come up with songs that perfectly suit the needs of the artist and, hopefully, that of the record label and radio programmers as well. I have seen staff writers create more than 10 songs a week, while artists I've worked with might take a year to write 10 songs.

Looking back on your career thus far, is there a personal accomplishment that stands out most for you?

Well, even though I've had the opportunity to work on a couple of Grammy award winning records and numerous Dove award winning records, I think the one thing that I value most are the relationships that have been built with my artists, writers and co-workers. Despite both successes and failures, many of these relationships are ongoing, even though we have parted ways professionally. In the music business or even the business world in general, that is not always the case; but I value these people as friends, and my life is much richer for them. As for an *actual* personal accomplishment? Without a doubt, I would have to say that being able to marry Molly, a beautiful woman who is way out of my league, is my single greatest accomplishment.

A Day Behind the Scenes with Mark

- | | |
|---|--|
| 7:15 Pry myself out of bed | 1:00 Call Don Chaffer to plan next songwriting trip to Nashville |
| 7:30 Check overnight email; delete spam | 1:30 Call with The Afters' manager, David Lipscomb |
| 8:00 Leave for the office/Check P.O. Box /Get coffee | 2:00 Listen to new song demo & discuss pitching ideas with Joel West, Creative Director |
| 8:30 Answer emails and return phone calls | 3:00 Delete spam, answer emails and return phone calls |
| 9:30 Go to William Morris Agency for AGMA Estes Park meeting | 4:00 Work on deal memo proposal for new songwriter |
| 11:00 Back to office—phone INO Records president Jeff Moseley to discuss licensing opportunity | 5:30 Head home |
| 11:30 Discuss foreign sub-publishers with Christopher Stedman, Director of Business Affairs | 6:00 Eat dinner |
| 12:00 Simpleville staff lunch at locally-owned eatery | 7:00 Play Scrabble with Molly and watch "Gilmore Girls" reruns on Tivo |
| | 9:00 More emails |
| | 10:30 Watch "The Colbert Report" |
| | 11:00 Go to sleep |

>>> LEFT TO LOSE™ ENTERS THE TOP 5 OF R&B'S TRIPLE A AIRPLAY CHART AND CLIMBS TO NO. 37 ON THE HOT AC CHART



thewriter'sblock

by Matthew West



MAKE IT MATTER

Today, I have a writing appointment. I'm getting together with the amazingly talented Natalie Grant and her equally talented husband, producer/writer Bernie Herms. We have scheduled time to be creative in the hopes of finding a great song. Doesn't that sound a little odd to you? Scheduling time to be creative? That's like planning to be spontaneous. Like blocking out a few minutes in the ol' schedule for some dreaming. But, when you think about it, we schedule everything else in our lives. Our world is driven by the day-timer. Balanced by the Blackberry. Covered by the calendar. Lunch at 11:00? Got it. Meeting with clients on Wednesday at 2:00? Don't forget. Take the dog to the vet. Get a haircut. You get the idea. We schedule our whole lives. So why not schedule time for creativity?

As a songwriter, I have to make time to be creative. I know it may sound like the opposite of creative. But, if I don't set aside the time to write, the day can slip by so fast; and the song will remain unwritten. So, here's the deal for this month's column. I'm going to write with Natalie Grant, and you're coming with me. And the schedule goes like this...

11:00 a.m.—Running late...as always. Call Natalie only to find out that she is running late as well. Bump our writing session back an hour.

12:00 p.m.—Arrive at the home of Natalie and Bernie.

12:02 p.m.—Walk through the front door. (Just kidding. I won't be that descriptive anymore.)

12:03 p.m.—Meet the new addition to their family, a furry little puppy named Coco. (OK, moving right along...)

12:10 p.m.—We catch up. I haven't seen them since we brushed past each other during GMA Week. I congratulate Natalie on her Dove Award. Then I crack some lame joke about how I can't believe I'm in the home of the "Female Vocalist of the Year"! They give me a tour around their home. Bernie says, "Shall we head into the studio?" To the studio we go.

12:50 p.m.—In Bernie's studio, we begin talking about music—what records we've been listening to lately, favorite songs, what moves us. We look back at Natalie's previous record, *Awaken*. I was honored to have written a song for that project, but my favorite songs on *Awaken* were written by other people. We talk about how this last record has changed Natalie's approach to picking songs and to her writing as well. The album had some of the biggest hits of the year, including the moving ballad "Held." She says something that sparks our writing session. "After singing a song like 'Held' and seeing how it has touched people's lives

in a very real way, I want to sing more songs like that." She says, "I regret every song I've ever sung that didn't say something. I want to make every song on this next record matter. I want to make it matter."

12:51 p.m.—A little bell rings inside my brain. That statement resonates with me, and inside I'm shouting, "ME TOO! I WANT TO MAKE IT MATTER!" And so we begin uncovering the song of the day with an "awakened" sense of purpose. And, suddenly, our scheduled time for creativity doesn't feel like an appointment. It's not a job. There is no ticking clock. It's just the three of us, feeling inspired to write a song and make it matter.

Do you ever feel dragged around by your day-timer? Is your schedule squeezing every single ounce of inspiration from your heart? Well, just as a songwriter needs to schedule time to be creative, we *all* need to schedule time to be with our Creator. Even if we like how the song of our life is sounding, it is so important to remember what we were born to do. We were created to spend time with our Creator. Even Jesus knew He needed



"I WANT TO MAKE EVERY SONG ON THE NEXT RECORD MATTER."

—NATALIE GRANT

to schedule time to be with his Father. In Matthew 14, He performed one of the greatest miracles recorded in the Bible. He fed five thousand people with only a few loaves of bread and a couple fish! And guess what was next on *His* schedule? "He went up on a mountainside by himself to pray." Schedule time with your Creator today. That's the only way to truly make it matter.

New dad and Universal South singer/songwriter Matthew West has written songs recorded by Natalie Grant, Joy Williams, Point Of Grace and Rascal Flatts, among others. His latest album, *History*, released in 2005 and features the hit singles "Next Thing You Know," "Only Grace" and the title track. For more information, visit matthewwest.com.



Fighting Instinct FINDING FOREVER

North Carolina rock band **FIGHTING INSTINCT**—comprised of singer/guitarist T.J. Harris, bassist Jason Weekly and drummer Dallas Farmer—originally scored a publishing deal with EMI, which led to recording some demos. The demos were so impressive that they led to a recording contract with Gotee Records. The resulting self-titled album released June 27, and though Christian radio is still sniffing out the first two singles, “Back to You” and “I Found Forever,” the latter is already charting at No. 33 on two major mainstream airplay charts—both *Radio & Records’* Rock and Active Rock charts. For more information, check out fightinginstinct.com.

PAUL: *Why do you think it is that most bands trying to sell records in the Christian market don't cite any Christian bands as influences?*

T.J.: There has always been more variety in [mainstream] music—especially when we were growing up. Some of our biggest influences, as with other bands, are classic rock bands. I think that all that is changing now, but, back then, that's the way it was. And my vocal influences consist of Steven Curtis Chapman, Michael English and Gary Oliver in Christian music—also Sammy Hagar and Chris Cornell in “secular” [music].

PAUL: *Do you ever wish you could just let your music speak for itself, or do you like writing comments for faith-based media justifying your faith?*

T.J.: I think that the music should be able to speak for itself. I think there should be enough information there for it to stand alone, but, at the same time, there should be scripture to back up everything.

PAUL: *You say in your bio that people these days want more “real” people on stage and that, “before, they wanted a fantasy life they couldn't attain.” Tell us how you came to this conclusion? I, for one, don't agree at all. I think people always want a fantasy, illusion or “hero” to idolize and the stage is kind of a fabrication of reality anyway.*

T.J.: I agree that people want a hero and people want a fantasy, but I think they want someone who they can relate to in the position as “hero.” Look at the popularity of reality television. People watch others, taken from ordinary life, put into situations where they become rich, a star or an icon. I think this gives people hope. They see these people achieve these things. They may still perceive them as a hero living a fantasy life, but it gives hope that anyone can achieve these things, given the opportunity. It's not all about who can make the most noise but who can connect with the audience. To me, this is different from the days where the show was what attracted people to a concert. I really think that it is more about the music now. People still want the fantasy. Everyone is looking for hope. But what is hope if you do not think there is a chance of reaching that fantasy?

The exciting rock band **DECYFER DOWN**—also from North Carolina—features vocalist/bassist Caleb Oliver, guitarist/vocalist Brandon Mills, guitarist/vocalist Chris Clonts and drummer Josh Oliver. The band's music came after, not before, their friendships with each other. Music became the place where they poured out their hearts. As a result, the message in the music truly feels authentic. Decyfer Down's debut album on S/R/E Recordings, **END OF GREY**, released last month and seems a perfect title. There is nothing “grey” about this melodic rock band's sound or heartfelt message. Christian rock radio is responding quickly with lead single, “Life Again,” hitting No. 11 on *Radio & Records’* airplay chart at press time. For more information, check out decyferdown.com.

PAUL: *Tell me about the themes on your album End of Grey.*

JOSH: [This album is] about coming out of confusion and a mindset of man-made rules and regulations. It's about coming to truth and understanding God's calling on our lives and the walk that we have come from in our own personal lives...anything in the grey has been shown black or white. When we were recording the album as a new band, we learned new things—that temptations and confusion are always there...so many things that can distract you. This album has been a process of coming out of the grey in our own lives, truly an end of that. Hence the name.

PAUL: *I get the feeling you guys are the real deal and you're not doing this because it was just a good idea. How are you planning to stay on track?*

JOSH: In scripture, everything that was ministry-oriented was based on building a team around you—examples include the disciples, new testament church, Paul and Timothy, etc. It is very important to have that established. We've gathered together a team that is like-minded and committed to the walk that we're on. They have surrounded us and helped in accountability and direction and support us in fulfilling what God has called us to do. We have come from a place of following God's direction and showing His hope and truth—it's not just about the music. We love to play music. The meaning of “decyfer” is to interpret something of truth/worth. We, as a band, choose to interpret God's truth. That is why we do what we do.

PAUL: *What is your current single, and what's it all about?*

JOSH: “Life Again.” As a band, we felt the best representation of us would be to put out something that people could hear to start the journey where we started. The lyrics talk about bringing us back to a place in Christ where He gives us life again in a new walk and new life in Him. We feel that if we can start our relationships with people on that basis, anything we release after that will be built on that foundation.

Decyfer Down BLACK & WHITE IN A GREY WORLD





Red THE SACRED COLOR

During the few years that lead vocalist Michael Barnes, guitarist Anthony Armstrong, bassist Randy Armstrong, guitarist Jasen Rauch and drummer Hayden Lamb have comprised **RED**, the band has been constantly touring and in the studio. The resulting album, **END OF SILENCE**, released early last month on Essential Records, was produced by Dove nominated, platinum-selling writer and producer Rob Graves (Natalie Grant, Casting Crowns). The band's name is symbolic for the blood of Christ. Red's music, meanwhile, is a wonderful blend of tough guitars, passionate vocals, strident melodies and epic strings. You may have already heard the lead single, "Breathe Into Me," which at press time has climbed to No. 13 on *Radio & Records'* Christian Rock airplay chart. For more information, visit redmusiconline.com.

PAUL: *How did Red form as a band?*

ANTHONY: Red has been a band for three years. We began in June 2002—Randy, Mike and I all grew up in the same town in Pennsylvania. After moving to Nashville, we met Jasen and Hayden through various connections.

PAUL: *What is your new record, End of Silence, all about?*

ANTHONY: It's about being at the worst part of life, crying out to God for the breath of life. It's about Him restoring you.

PAUL: *Can you give us some insight into your hit song "Breathe Into Me"?*

ANTHONY: Finding the redemption in the midst of the brokenness.

PAUL: *What's a Red show like?*

ANTHONY: High energy, flying guitars, melodic vocals, dynamic, intense—huge sound, well-rounded.

PAUL: *Who would you rather have dinner with? The Dalai Lama, Bono, Billy Graham or Marilyn Manson?*

ANTHONY: Marilyn Manson. I would love the interaction with him, being able to ask him questions and see why he has so much hatred. The spiritual warfare would be very interesting.

Band Wagon

BY KRISTI HENSON

The popularity of reality TV shows like "American Idol" and "Making the Band" suggests that many people possess an interest in the process of becoming a professional artist—or, at least, in the *making* of an artist. In this column, we follow the evolving careers of several new artists. This month, we're introducing **AYIESHA WOODS**.



No, seriously. It's time for *Introducing Ayiesha Woods* (Gotee)—the debut major label release from one of the hottest new singer/songwriters on the scene this year. You may have heard her first single, "Happy"—a straight-ahead, pop-laden tune with a hook that just won't end—on the radio. You may have seen her picture in magazines and ads for the new album. You may have heard the buzz online at Christian music sites. And, by now, you may have already picked up a copy of the CD, which just released in June.

Appearances may lead you to think this has been a quick and easy process. A veritable overnight success story, right? Not quite. Just like the other two artists we will continue keeping an eye on in this column, **Leeland** and **Group 1 Crew**, **Ayiesha Woods** has been honing her craft for a while now.

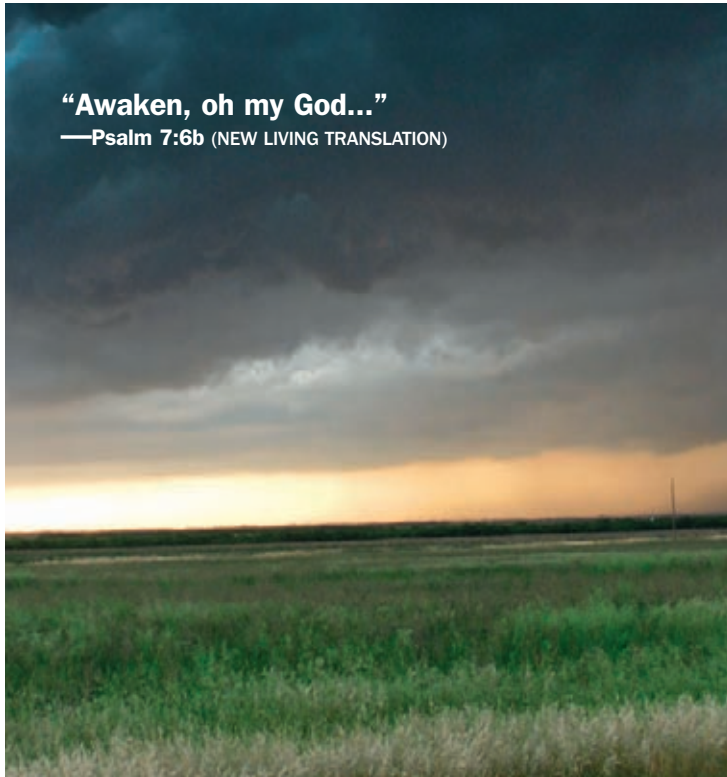
Ayiesha grew up in a musical family, soaking up musical influences in a variety of cultures...but, most importantly, in Bermuda, where she spent the bulk of her childhood. About six years ago, she recorded an independent album which, much like *Introducing*, drew upon and combined elements of her diverse musical background into a solid, unified offering. On this indie project, Ayiesha explains, "I have a reggae song that just really, really got a lot of love down in the Caribbean." This love led to numerous nominations at the 2004 Caribbean Gospel Music Marlin Awards (the equivalent of the GMA Music Awards in the States). What's more, Ayiesha walked away with three major titles, including "New Artist of the Year," "Contemporary Vocal Performance of the Year (Female)" and "Producer of the Year" (with Ayiesha being the first female recipient of this award...ever!).

However, a few years before garnering her Marlin Awards, Ayiesha caught the ear of tobyMac. "They were playing the independent record in Jamaica on one of their main radio stations," she recalls, "and Toby happened to be down there at the station and heard my song playing." Shortly thereafter, Ayiesha found herself courted by Toby's Gotee Records; but the signing process took almost two years to complete as Ayiesha and her family sought to insure they were taking the steps God had in mind for her.

Socially speaking, introductions are important and should be done correctly. "This is '06, and I signed with Gotee in '04. So it's been going on two years—working on this record," Ayiesha shares. But this is one introduction well worth the wait. Ladies and gentlemen, *Introducing Ayiesha Woods!*

For more info on Ayiesha, check out ayieshawoods.com.

Singer/songwriter/author Paul Colman, the former front man of Grammy nominated and Dove Award winning act Paul Colman Trio, is also the Newsboys' guitarist. The latest single from his current solo album, **Let It Go** (Inpop), is "Holding on to You." Colman currently tours, speaks and performs internationally. For more information, visit paulcolman.com.



“Awaken, oh my God...”
—Psalm 7:6b (NEW LIVING TRANSLATION)

Awakening the God Who Never Sleeps

Whenever we turn and make our first small steps in the direction of thinking about God, we inevitably stumble over paradox. The Bible seems to be saying two mutually exclusive things at the same time, or our experience in the world tells us one thing about God while his Word seems to say something radically different. (Literally, the word “paradox” means [“para”—contrary; “doxa”—glory] “contrary to the glory” of God. Most dictionaries, however, would render it “contrary to reason.”)

Some groups make light of the crisis. “You just need more faith,” they say. Others represent it as an un-scalable wall. “The God of the Bible must be one with the God of reason,” they say. Most often, they conclude that the biblical God must be rejected for their more reasonable god. Both groups are wrong, and both groups are right.

Yes, we do need more faith to survive the scandal of the paradoxical God. But this dilemma is no small thing to be “gotten over.” The second group is also right; it is a wall that is impossible to scale. But does God not consistently call upon us to do the impossible?

The Father knows our struggle with paradox. He revealed this awareness once and whispered to Isaiah:

*“My thoughts are not your thoughts,
nor are your ways my ways...” 55:8f.*

This pronouncement to the prophet opens with God’s urging the people paradoxically to come and buy wind and milk though they have no money. God speaks of an abundant forgiveness rooted in His hesed (steadfast love). All this is to say the Father does not think like us, and so neither does He go about doing

things the way we would do them. If we thought like Him, we would not be people. If He did things the way we do, He would not be God.

One such paradox, which makes its way into many biblical laments, involves the sleeping God. In Psalm 121:4, the unnamed musician says that “He who keeps Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps.” It is supposed to be a lyric of comfort. It is good to know, after all, that the One who is watching over you is not ever going to fall asleep on the job. (Compare Psalms 4:8.)

But what of those paradoxical moments when the God who never slumbers seems to be asleep? When we are crying out for the help that only He can provide and the only response seems to be a kind of holy snoring from the other side of heaven? When we are caught in the midst of a storm, how are we supposed to awaken someone who never sleeps (Job 19:7, 30:20)? How do we call out so the Lord will “rise up, as though waking from sleep” (Psalm 44:23)?

Early in the ministry of Jesus, He and His disciples were caught in the middle of a huge, demonic storm on the Sea of Galilee. The Gospels describe it as a “seismos,” an enormous shaking. Though commentaries frequently explain the storm in terms of the normal meteorological patterns in and around Galilee, the truth is the disciples had never seen a storm like this before. They were all together in one small boat. It was Satan’s chance to wipe them out in one blow.

But Jesus, the Son of God, was asleep in the midst of the tempest. If it had been one of their customarily calm crossings of the lake, the Twelve might have been able to understand. But the boat is about to sink! “How,” they say to themselves, “could He possibly be asleep in the midst of a storm like this? Doesn’t He care about us?”

Mark, who tells the story from Peter’s perspective, says the disciples castigated Jesus. “Don’t you care if we drown?” they scream above the storm. Jesus lifts His head from the little, rough pillow that is normally used by the man who steers the boat, wipes the sleep from his eyes and rebukes the storm. “Be muzzled!” he says. They are the same words he speaks when He casts out demons. With two words, the attack disappears completely. Turning to the Twelve, perhaps with a yawn lingering on his lips, he says, “Where is your faith?” Trapped in the middle of a storm on a boat that is sinking. All the while, the One who can calm the storm with a word sleeps blissfully unaware.

Sound familiar? Is this your life? It frequently is mine. Just when He calls us into relationship, just when we “get into His boat,” the storm descends on us. We are called to follow the Way, and, yet, we seem always to get lost, to lose Him. This is not the time to “try harder.” This is not the moment to strain to manufacture more faith. It is the occasion to cry louder to the One who, though He may seem asleep, is most significantly still present in the boat with us. He is there to be awakened by our cries. He is moved to act by our tears.

“We are called to follow the Way, and, yet, we seem always to get lost, to lose Him.”

The story of the storm on the sea is more than a parable. It is more than a lived out example of being saved not *from* but *through* the tempest that would destroy our lives. It is all that and much more. It is a story which prophetically appears in the Psalms as well. Besides the detailed description of the death of Jesus, it is the only other story in the Gospels that makes such a prophetic appearance in the Psalter.

In Psalm 107, we find an account of the same storm we read about in the Gospels, a song which celebrates the hesed of the God who, in tears, makes provision for those in the wilderness, for those in misery and chains, who humbles those who rebel against Him.

In verse 23, “those who go down to the sea in ships,” who make their living as fishermen, are promised that they will see His wonders. What follows is an emotional pre-telling of what the Gospels only provide a newspaper account of. In



verse 28, they cry out to the One who can save them; and the seas are “hushed.”

The simple, trusting cry that comes from the lips of those of us who are learning that our last hope has always been our only hope—this is the cry that awakens the God who never sleeps.

Study: Look at the following psalms and listen for the same echo of the passages above (14:23, 78:65, 121:4). The image of a sleeping god is a paradox. Can you think of any other paradoxical images of Him?

Pray: Jesus, we call out to You in the midst of our own storms. We wonder that You would have us wait for so long. With the disciples, we ask, “Don’t You care...?” Come to us, Master, walking upon the troubled waves of our lives. Let us hear You say, “Peace.”

{Healing Waters International}



From left: Richie makes some friends in Maria Auxiliadora, La Vega; Richie with the local children in La Victoria

“God never sleeps, but, sometimes, I think He hides the fact that He’s awake. It tests our faith. And, even when our world looks like the exact opposite of His plan, He’s still in the boat with us, in full control of the situation. He’s never sleeping, even though our circumstances sometimes give us the illusion that He is.”
—Jack Mooring (*Leeland*) [pictured below, top row, center]



Michael Card is an award-winning scholar, musician and radio broadcaster who resides in Franklin, Tennessee. His new album, *The Hidden Face of God*, released in May. This enhanced CD with a devotional booklet features songs of lament. Visit michaelcard.com for more information.

Clean water shouldn’t be a luxury. Yet, according to the World Health Organization, for more than 1 billion people, this basic life element is often accessible but is severely contaminated and too expensive to purchase in stores.

Rock and Roll Hall of Fame member Richie Furay aims to tap new hope. He’s partnering with Healing Waters International to reduce the problem of natural water supplies being contaminated with amoebas and parasites. The Colorado-based organization works in countries such as the Dominican Republic, Kenya, El Salvador, Guatemala and others to provide affordable, sustainable water to underdeveloped communities.

“I was asked to do a benefit concert for an ‘unknown’ cause which I was to later find out was Healing Waters International,” Furay shares via email. In January, the singer/songwriter traveled to the Dominican Republic with the organization. “After seeing the work firsthand, I’m one of their 100 percent supporters.”

Now a Calvary Chapel pastor in Denver, Furay is best known as a founding member of the late-’60s group Buffalo Springfield (which included Neil Young, Dewey Martin, Bruce Palmer and Jim Messina). Later, Furay forged Poco (with Messina and others) plus the Souther Hillman Furay Band. After converting to Christianity, the Ohio native recorded a handful of critically praised Christian albums and entered into ministry. He was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1997 as a member of Buffalo Springfield.

Healing Waters International improves water conditions by securing common water purification equipment, purchasing and installing it locally with the help of area workers—a boost to the community’s economy. It partners with a neighborhood Protestant or Catholic church to

serve as a central distribution point, providing approximately 5,000 gallons per day of healthy water at an affordable price. Charges are put back into maintaining the system, creating viable sustainability. The individual needs of some 10,000 people per day can be served this way; and residual benefits include better community health, water for schools and other social healing.

To develop the \$20,000 sponsorship required for each system, HWI works with churches, foundations, civic groups, corporations and individuals. Sponsors can even travel with the organization as part of a project’s launch. Dean Nelson, who directs the journalism program at San Diego’s Point Loma Nazarene University and has written articles about HWI, traveled with Furay to the Dominican Republic.

“The symbolism of all this coming out of a church is really profound,” Nelson observes. “Look at the number of times Jesus refers to Himself as living water or the number of times baptism redefines who you are. I think the Healing Waters folks are really onto something.”

Still recording, Furay recently released a new CD—*Heartbeat of Love* (Friday Music)—and included a postcard inside the slipcover to raise awareness about Healing Waters International. And he plans to continue singing the praises of the group.

“I have encouraged our church fellowship to get involved in raising enough money to build a system,” Furay says, “and I look forward to doing some concerts to help and [contributing in] whatever other way the Lord may lead. This is a great outreach for the church!”

Check out a video about the organization’s work at healingwatersintl.org.

BIG BANG

Just moments into an early afternoon interview, Kutless' Jon Micah Sumrall seems weary.

His voice gravelly and sluggish, the 25-year-old lead singer is in the midst of a tour stop in Toledo, Ohio. As his band nears the end of a successful, yet grueling, road stint, a nasty cough has bedeviled Sumrall all week. His 18-month-old son, Caleb, plays nearby and, based on the considerable hubbub, seems to be enjoying himself. "He's a maniac," Sumrall says softly with a barely audible laugh.

Despite all these vicissitudes, Sumrall manages to forge ahead with the conversation in a cordial and cogent fashion—just another ordinary day in the music business.

But standard procedure aside, there's been nothing commonplace about the explosive rise of Kutless.

In case you didn't get the memo, this Portland, Ore.-based quintet has emerged as one of Christian music's hottest acts. So hot, in fact, that the band's latest project, *Hearts of the Innocent* (BEC), debuted at No. 45 on *Billboard's* Top 200 Albums chart (selling more than 21,000 copies the first week), No. 2 on Nielsen SoundScan's Top Christian/Gospel Albums Overall chart and No. 1 on the Top Christian Rock/Alternative Albums chart. Even more impressive? In less than four years, Kutless has sold more than 725,000 albums.

Success is nothing new for Kutless. The band's 2002 self-titled first project scanned almost 200,000 copies, giving the group the honorable distinction of having the Tooth & Nail family's second fastest-selling debut (behind only Jeremy Camp's). The band's subsequent albums, *Sea of Faces* and worship-driven *Strong Tower*, posted even stronger numbers. Not bad for an erstwhile college worship group.

The facts and figures behind Kutless are extraordinary. But what's truly extraordinary—if not uncanny—is the breakout success Kutless has enjoyed without the benefit of general market radio airplay and only modest mainstream exposure. (Its song "All the Words" was featured on a March episode of NBC sitcom "Scrubs";

and Target stores recently began airing the group's video of new single, "Shut Me Out", for its exclusive Red Channel.) What's more, no other rock act in recent years has realized such an exceptional ascent focusing primarily on the Christian audience.

BOILING IT DOWN

So what's the formula for igniting such fast-burning success? Sumrall and others credit a variety of key factors:

- 1) A balancing act.** Kutless deftly intersperses intense rock numbers with earnest ballads. "We know how to ride the fine line between providing good rock & roll cuts along with softer songs that play well on radio," Sumrall explains. "I believe that combination has helped us to grow quickly."
- 2) A road-warrior mentality.** Playing more than 600 shows over the course of four years, Kutless has developed a strong following across the country. "We've also been privileged to play large events like Billy Graham Evangelistic Crusades, Luis Palau Festivals, Harvest Crusades with Greg Laurie and major Christian music festivals," Sumrall says.
- 3) A proclivity for well-penned lyrics.** Sumrall is among the genre's most sincere and pensive scribes, tackling subjects such as brokenness, suicide and self-mutilation. Producer Aaron Sprinkle (Jeremy Camp, Hawk Nelson) also serves as a song co-writer, providing even more depth. "We consider Aaron our sixth band member in a way," says Sumrall. "He was a big part of the writing process, and his experience was helpful when sculpting the songs."
- 4) A strong billing.** Previous tours with seasoned groups such as Audio Adrenaline and MercyMe have given Kutless tremendous exposure. More recently, the band headlined packed-out nationwide shows with Stellar Kart, Falling Up and Disciple. "We've been fortunate to have all these amazing and talented guys touring with us," Sumrall says. "It's worked out nicely for a well-rounded rock & roll show."
- 5) A church-ed-youth demographic.** "One of the great things about touring in the Christian circuit is that youth leaders really get behind what we do," Sumrall

Since the dawn of this millennium, the Christian music community has observed more breakout rock bands than ever. And from P.O.D., Switchfoot and Underoath to Relient K, Pillar and Flyleaf, each has had one key thing in common—a strong presence in the mainstream rock world. While groups such as David Crowder Band and BarlowGirl have focused on the church and managed to gain significant exposure while doing so, only one such band has separated itself from the pack—**Kutless**. By: David McCreary ☆ Photography By: Jeremy Cowart



GIVING BACK

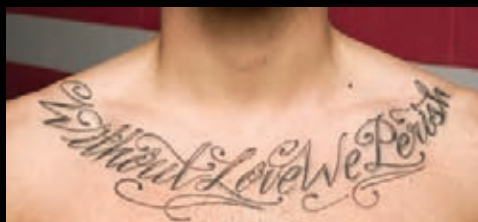
After receiving so much in the way of fan support and industry accolades, the guys in Kutless decided it was time to give back to others.

Following the devastation of Hurricane Katrina last year, the band performed a benefit concert for those affected and raised more than \$50,000 to provide much-needed assistance.

Another way Kutless continues to reach out involves partnering with child relief agency Compassion International. This highly regarded evangelical ministry helps feed, clothe and provide medical supplies to young people in impoverished areas around the world.

"One of the main reasons we teamed up with Compassion is because they get kids plugged in to educational programs and local church organizations," Sumrall says. "They help give children the tools needed to break out of the cycle of poverty and hopelessness. You've heard the saying, 'Give a man a fish, and he eats for a day. Teach a man to fish, and he eats for a lifetime.' Compassion takes the approach of teaching kids how to do well for the long term."

To see how you can get involved, visit compassion.com.



shares. "Think about it: If young people have their ride and tickets set up, all they have to do is show up with a few bucks; and they can go have a fun, safe time. You don't see that happening in the mainstream market."

6) A lasting portfolio. In an industry replete with derivative selections, bands won't build a lasting fan base with less-than-exceptional music.

According to touring mate Kevin Young of Disciple, that's not an issue with Kutless. "These guys are solid musicians with really good songs, and kids at the shows sing every lyric," Young says. Chuck Finney, program director at 94.9 KLTY-FM in Dallas, Texas—the station which boasts the largest Christian radio listenership in the country—says the band's music is a comparable alternative to what listeners hear on general market radio.

"Kutless has a sound that's edgy but melodic, and that resonates with a lot of listeners," he says.

7) A desire to follow God's will. Says Young, "The guys in Kutless are totally content to minister to kids within the church because that's what God has called them to do. At the end of the day, they just want to honor Him."

HEARTS FOR OTHERS

Kutless' latest recording, *Hearts of the Innocent*, returns the band to its celebrated roots and features high-energy, hook-laden rock numbers along with a requisite supply of power ballads. Following last year's considerably softer worship-oriented project, *Strong Tower*, Sumrall says he and his bandmates were glad to get back to the hard-driving music they enjoy most.

"The worship record was different, but it really wasn't our signature style," he reveals. "We struggled with trying to make those songs our own, but, on the

new record, we've made it sound the way we like."

Sumrall suggests that much of the band's earlier work compared favorably with acts such as Staind, Puddle of Mudd and Nickelback, but the current disc moves Kutless toward a different vibe. "With *Hearts of the Innocent*, we're going for more of a driving, straight-ahead rock & roll sound like Stone Temple Pilots and Foo Fighters," he says.

Beyond the album's sonic template, there's a much deeper message about which Sumrall feels quite passionate. "The meaning behind the title track is what we are really focusing on," he says, "and that's raising awareness about how young people nowadays are being neglected by the older generation. You have kids whose parents aren't around, so, whenever life throws them a curveball, there's nobody around to help them grow and learn. They don't know how to deal with emotions and pain. As a result, they just turn to whatever they can to try to survive and deal with things. Sometimes they turn to illegal activity or things like self-mutilation. Many are deeply depressed or have suicidal tendencies."

Sumrall says the band often hears questions like "What's wrong with youth today?" and "Why are kids so out of control?"

"What we say to that is 'Who's taught them to do anything differently?'" he answers. "These kids are being set up to fail because they're not equipped to succeed in life. They grow up and don't know how to live responsibly. We're encouraging people to get involved in kids' lives and to reach out and share Christ's love with those who don't have anyone helping them."

Another profoundly meaningful track, according to Sumrall, is standout ballad "Promise of a Lifetime." He says, "It was kind of a last-minute song that Aaron [Sprinkle] shared with us. He came in and said he



From left: James Mead, Dave Leutkenhoelter, Jon Micah Sumrall, Ryan Shrout, Jeffrey Gilbert

thought he had written one of his best-ever melodies. Whenever we started writing the lyrics, I spent time thinking about how many promises nowadays are broken, like marriage vows."

After reflecting on God's ultimate promise that He would never leave or forsake us (Deuteronomy 31:6), Sumrall penned these insightful words: "I am holding on to the hope I have inside/With you I will stay through every day/Putting my understanding aside/And I am comforted."

"That's an amazing promise, and it's never broken," Sumrall says. "No matter where we are or whatever we are dealing with, we can hold onto it forever."

CHANGING TIMES

Of all the songs on Kutless' new CD, the cut "Winds of Change" seems particularly apropos to Sumrall. "I've been at a point in life where things changed dramatically, especially with the birth of my son," he says. "The song deals with trusting the Lord during times when life might not be exactly how you planned it. When changes happen and things get crazy, the situation can be a blessing. At first, I wondered what we would do when we had a child; but he's been a real joy."

Another change that's affected the band is the addition of two new members, drummer Jeffrey Gilbert and bassist Dave Luetkenhoelter, both formerly of the group Seven Places. And original members Kyle Ziegler and Kyle Mitchell? "The road is a difficult place for some people," Sumrall explains. "The guys with us before just weren't into it; and anytime you're in an environment where some of the guys don't want to be there, it's a tough situation."

Currently, both men run a recording studio in Vancouver, Wash., where they help young, local bands develop their talent.

As for the newest bandmates, Sumrall says the transition has been extremely smooth. "Their enthusiasm has been magnetic and a boost for all of us," he says. "Jeff and Dave definitely helped us bolster the sound of the new record, and our live show keeps getting tighter."

STAYING STRONG

Anytime a band spends so much time on the road, trials and temptations are inevitable. For Kutless, accountability and boundaries are essential safeguards for remaining on track spiritually.

"We've been fortunate to have a support network of people who make sure we keep our heads on straight," says Sumrall. "We have a tour pastor with us named Brad Duncan, and he leads all of us in daily devotions. We also have our wives with us most of the time, and they help put us in our place like no one else can," he says with a chuckle.

Disciple's Young has been impressed with the maturity and integrity Kutless has exhibited over numerous months on the tour circuit. "It's an honor to know these guys and watch them offstage, which is where they inspire us most," he says. "One of the most remarkable things about Kutless is, if a girl comes up after a show and asks for a hug, the guys don't [comply]. Sometimes people get offended, but the guys simply say, 'The only woman I hug is my wife.'"

What about the temptation to get caught up in the trappings of fame and success? "We hear testimonies from young people who say that our music has touched them or changed their lives, and that helps keep us humble," Sumrall says. "We're not out here to become rock stars or anything like that. We just want to impact people's lives for Christ, and, when that happens, it keeps our focus in the right direction." CCM

STRONG TOWER REVISITED

It's not uncommon for artists to have their songs played on a variety of radio formats. What is unusual is for a hard-edged modern rock group like Kutless to have one of its tunes spun on adult contemporary pop stations. More unique still is for a song to start getting airplay more than a year after it's released.

Such is the case for the song "Strong Tower," the title track from the group's 2005 worship record. At press time, the single is in regular rotation on stations around the country, climbing to No. 7 on the *Radio & Records* Christian AC chart.

Jon Micah Sumrall says he and the rest of the guys in Kutless were surprised to see the song gaining momentum on the AC airwaves. "We had sent 'Strong Tower' to some CHR [Christian Hit Radio] stations because we felt that it would be too heavy for AC radio," he says. "There are some solid, driving guitars on that track, and, typically, AC stations don't play songs like that."

But several stations *did* start playing the song, and, before long, more outlets picked it up. "This is definitely one of the heaviest cuts you'll ever hear on AC radio," he says. "It could help change the face of AC forever."

Dan DeBruler, general manager of 107.3 WCLN-FM in Fayetteville, N.C., believes several factors explain the surfacing of "Strong Tower" on AC radio. "In today's AC culture, people are looking for music with a substantial message and a truth that endures; and Kutless provides that as well as any artist," he says. "Also, the target age demographic for AC is anywhere from 25 to 54; and there are new 25-year-olds coming in every day. These folks bring their modern standards music with them. The climate is right for groups like Kutless, especially given the fact that the lyrics have depth and the band still rocks."

Aforementioned radio programmer Chuck Finney, who's also national program director for Salem Communication's FISH music network, suggests another convincing reason. "There's no shortage of appetite among Christian listeners for more worshipful and passionate music, and Kutless is doing all the right things to get heard," he says.



WHAT'S IN A NAME?

No doubt you've seen his name in print both ways: **JON-MICAH** (with hyphen) and **JON MICAH** (without). Even *CCM* has gone back and forth when publishing it. Which is correct? "It doesn't matter to me as long as both names are included," Sumrall says. "I think technically, on my birth certificate, there's no hyphen."

Speaking of names, here's the idea behind Kutless' moniker: When Christ suffered and died on the cross, He bore all of the cuts and punishment we deserve, consequently leaving us "kut-less."

drawing out



UNDEROATH IS ONE OF THE MOST OUTSPOKEN BANDS OF FAITH IN TODAY'S MUSIC SCENE. YET THIS ACT'S POPULARITY LIES ALMOST SOLELY IN THE MAINSTREAM MUSIC WORLD. WHAT GIVES?

BY: ANDRÉE FARIAS

PHOTOS BY: JEFF CRAS

side the lines

The mosh pit area at Allentown, Pennsylvania's Crocodile Rock Café bears the semblance of organized chaos on this early May evening.

Underoath has taken the stage, and the pit leader, a lanky teenager in atypical emo wear—typical emo wear usually consists of a tiny T-shirt, even tinier jeans and Converse while this dude is wearing shorts and a tank top-style undershirt—guides his followers in an orderly ritual that involves pushing, shoving and the dance.

By statute, you mosh *only* during the heavy, throat-shredding segments. During the soft moments, you do the dance. Since this is one of those rare instances where Underoath *isn't* pounding and hammering away on its instruments, the pit leader is doing the dance—a circular, methodical jig that's actually quite...*un-hardcore*.

The band pummels through "It's Dangerous Business Walking Out Your Front Door," a multi-part anthem that seems custom-made for this methodical alternation between turmoil and daintiness.

All this moshing, crowd-surfing and head banging would be commonplace at your average metalcore event, except this gig is anything but average. Underoath is the headliner; and, when Underoath headlines, it's always more than just music.

"I let people know what we believe in every night," Spencer Chamberlain, Underoath's lead vocalist, says later. "It's not something that's planned out or anything. I just want to be honest with people as much as I can...We make it a point to let them know what we believe in but also that we're not cooler than the people in the crowd or better than them for believing something that they don't."

It's not exactly an altar call, but Chamberlain does proclaim Jesus' name boldly from stage. And, like the pit leader at the center of the mosh, as soon as the band stops to make its solemn declaration, the crowd stops too, latching on to every word. All cheer.

It's hard to gauge the non-Christian-to-Christian ratio at the show, but, judging from the commotion,

the Gentiles almost certainly outnumber the saints. After all, Christians can't mosh.

That's an Underoath show in a nutshell. The sextet is one of the hottest tickets in post-hardcore circles right now and also the latest pride and joy for Tooth & Nail Records, which continues to expand its presence in general market avenues. To date, the band's breakthrough second album for the label's Solid State imprint, *They're Only Chasing Safety*, has sold more than 365,000 copies since its release in June 2004—a staggering figure for a band with no significant radio airplay or constant placement on emocore's poster channels, MTV2 and Fuse.

For such an openly Christian band, Underoath is also an anomaly: Of all the *Safety* copies sold, a mere trickle—slightly more than 20,000—has been purchased at Christian retail outlets with the rest being picked up at places such as Best Buy, Circuit City, Wal-Mart or at shows.

How'd they do it?

"Plain and simple, the band is relevant," says Tooth & Nail founder Brandon Ebel. "I think people respect you if you're authentic, and the Underoath guys are authentic in a very unassuming way. You can see this in the way they perform as well as in the way they treat their fans. They're an awesome voice for the gospel."

"They have not changed," says Daniel Davison, drummer for label mate Norma Jean and longtime friend of Underoath. "They have remained faithful to God and to their friends. To me, that has a lot to do with their success. When you see them play or hear them speak from stage, you can see that they are genuine people. And you want to be a part of what they are doing. I know that is a big part of why they have done so well...Every step of the way, they have been content and thankful. Again, the fact that they have remained faithful to God through all of the years, especially in the hard times, speaks volumes on who they are as people."

For Underoath—collectively made up of Chamberlain, drummer/vocalist Aaron Gillespie, guitarist Tim McTague, keyboardist Chris Dudley,

bassist Grant Brandell and guitarist James Smith—success is a byproduct both of going against the grain and its ability to create real fans out of listeners.

"I think the whole mainstream process of getting a single and working it to radio and blowing a band up isn't real," says McTague, easily the most loquacious of all the Underoath members. "It's conjuring up false bands and false hype in order to sell a product. Even though that does work a lot of times—and the band will go platinum, double platinum, triple platinum, and be the biggest thing one year—they turn around the next year, and nobody cares about them because the people that bought their record truly didn't want to buy their record. They weren't really grasping anything besides the fact that they couldn't escape it on TV; they couldn't escape it on the radio and were, more or less, force-fed it."

He adds, "We didn't sell records by doing radio shows and being on MTV. We sold records by touring and by kids coming out to see us. The kids that come out to see us—the kids that come out to the shows—those are the real kids; those are the real fans. Those are the people you want buying your records."

Still, they don't let the six-figure success of *They're Only Chasing Safety* go to their heads. In a circuit where image and popularity is everything, the Underoath guys try to remain levelheaded about their higher profile. McTague confesses the most "mainstream" thing the band has done is buy a tour bus, and, even so, that was a decision that didn't come so easily.

"We didn't [buy] a bus until we were over 100,000 or 120,000 records [sold]. That was our goal, our rule," he says. "Until we made it to the level where we could afford a bus and not go home broke and starving, we weren't going to have it. We'll tough it out as long as we need. It's all about making smart, grounded, humble decisions with the way you do your business. It's not about looking cool or looking rich or looking big."

Numbers also can be deceiving, which is why Underoath has made it a point not to rest on its



From left: Grant Brandell, James Smith, Spencer Chamberlain, Chris Dudley, Aaron Gillespie and Tim McTague

laurels and to make the album of its career with *Define the Great Line*, which released in June just as the band took the main stage at this summer's "Vans Warped Tour," currently underway.

From an outsider's point of view, Underoath could easily be lumped with countless other bands in the ever-growing emo/post-hardcore canon—screamo staples such as My Chemical Romance, Senses Fail, A Static Lullaby, From Autumn to Ashes or many of its "Warped Tour" contemporaries. The good news is, *Define the Great Line* is the farthest thing from an emo record. If anything, its 2004 predecessor sounds puny next to it.

McTague calls it the album where Underoath finally became men.

"One [album] sounds like a bunch of teenagers who are still looking to discover themselves," he says. "And [the other] sounds like real dudes who know what they want, [who] are actually executing finally what they've had in their brain and the back of their heads for years but have never been able to express."

He isn't kidding. By comparison, the new album sounds *nothing* like the previous one. Co-produced by Atlanta-based producer/drummer Matt Goldman and Killswitch Engage guitarist Adam Dutkiewicz, the album is rawer, more complex and more visceral than the relatively tame *Safety*. And, like many

bands who graduate to the big leagues, Underoath enlisted the help of mixmeister Chris Lord-Alge (P.O.D., Hoobastank), who gives the proceedings a larger-than-life feel that was absent from the band's earlier, thinner output.

"This is the record that, since we joined this band, we knew was possible, but we didn't know how to get there, how to do it," adds McTague. "Now, we finally did. This is the record that Underoath was made to make."

The growth isn't just musical. Vocally, also, front man Spencer Chamberlain has come into his own. In 2003, he replaced Underoath's founding vocalist Dallas Taylor (who has since formed the increasingly popular band Maylene and the Sons of Disaster) amidst doubts that he'd be able to fill Taylor's shoes. Chamberlain passed the test satisfactorily, but he still wasn't what he is now. Whereas *Safety* found him content screaming in monotone while Gillespie sang the melodic lines, for *Great Line* he clutches the microphone like never before—screaming, growling, yelling, bellowing and, yes, singing as well.

But beyond any sonic evolution the band members may have experienced, they want their faith to remain front and center in everything they do. Unlike other bands in its scene, Underoath voluntarily excludes itself from all the wild partying and debauchery

typically associated with the genre. And those they come in contact with know better than to invite these guys to things that would belie their beliefs.

"I tend to think that we're extremely honest with people," says Gillespie. "God gave me my very life and breath, so why wouldn't I be honest? That's the way I kinda view it. Jesus is the reason that I walk this earth every day. He's the reason that I wake up every morning, the breath in my lungs, my beating heart. Why wouldn't I give back in that sense?"

Underoath isn't trying to proselytize. Though outspoken, they're more interested in impacting people in their everyday interactions than with their words from stage.

"We're not here to hype kids up and have a big ol' Jesus [rally]," says McTague. "We want to be real with kids. We want kids to see us for who we are, to see that we're not perfect and that we're just dudes that play music that have found something greater."

"I'm a really messed up person sometimes," adds Gillespie. "I do stupid stuff; and I say stupid stuff; and I fall on my face every day, a hundred times a day. But I want kids to know that Jesus is the reason that I'm able to do anything." **ccm**

See this month's lead review of Underoath's new album, *Define the Great Line*, on page 57.

Whose Life Is It Anyway?

When it comes to its band members' faith—or pretty much anything else for that matter—Underoath is not one to mince words. And when we heard the band had something specific it would like to communicate to CCM Magazine readers, we offered Underoath an editorial platform via a 400-word essay. In response, guitarist Tim McTague took up his pen and rendered this dose of medicine in a way that would have done the late Christian music legend Keith Green proud.

What can anyone change with 400 words? In a world where poverty, starvation, war, racism and thousands of other evils are at work, where do you go with 400 words?

I believe that we, as "Christians," have lost sight of what Christ intended our lives to be and the purpose and faith He gave His life to teach us. As long as we give our 39 cents a day and make it to church on Wednesday and Sunday, we're all good...the American way...the new "Christianity." Whatever happened to the church of Acts where people would sell all they had and give to the poor and join a body of thousands of people, living a life of prayer, community and servanthood?

We now sit, 2,000 years later, in our comfortable homes and Lexuses and

mega-church youth groups watching the rest of the world rot away and starve to death. Where is Christ in our watered down, self-serving hybrid of faith and hypocrisy...the new "Christianity"? God exists to pay our mortgages and heal our families, but, when it comes time to sacrifice something of our own, we look away. We're too concerned with church attendance and having the biggest building in town to see that we're wasting our days and God's money for our own comfort and well-being. The answer to our world's issues isn't charity drives and new taxes and Republican parties...but, rather, a complete renewal of thinking. Loving people as you would want to be loved, clothing the cold, feeding the hungry and housing the homeless—not at God's expense but our own—giving all we have in order to shine the light of Christ and live a life that counts.

Somewhere along the way, we decided that being a Christian wasn't a life of serving but a life of being served. I can't change anything with 400 words...but you can change the world. God is real and is waiting for a few real Christians to step up and let Him work through them the way He worked through the disciples. But it will cost everything. The best use of 400 words I can think of is to raise a lot of questions in everyone's heart who reads this and let God answer them. I ask you this: Will we still turn from God Himself? This is no longer YOUR life...so stop living like it is. God have mercy on us all.

—Tim McTague, Underoath



Bearing Witness

R&B artist KIERRA "KIKI" SHEARD lays her *life* and *faith* on the line.

BY: GREGORY RUMBURG

Kierra Sheard dares to represent for the Los Angeles Lakers smack dab in the middle of Detroit Pistons territory—that bad boy, rough-and-tumble hometown team earning the best NBA record last season. It's a sign of the times for the vocalist and emerging songwriter. Nicknamed "Kiki," Sheard is bold. Determined. Convicted in faith. Aiming to stand on her own.

With her newly-released sophomore recording *This Is Me* (EMI Gospel) at center court, 18-year-old Sheard is shedding her former "Little Kiki" persona and becoming her own woman right in front of Motown. Indeed, in front of a growing number of music fans coast to coast. With this latest outing, failing to hear Sheard's silky voice and how she owns her lyrics with a dovish yet in-your-face honesty would be like...well, failing to see LeBron James drive the lane against Kobe Bryant at least once next season.

We are all witnesses.

Just ask Natalie Grant. "Her vocal talent is undeniable," the current GMA "Female Vocalist of the Year" says of Sheard. "I think she is unique in that she is so young, yet she sings with such authority. A lot of times you have teen artists that have talent but not a lot to say. Kiki's the whole package. She not only has talent but carries herself with a maturity beyond her years. I also love the fact that she's not trying to be anything other than herself, and that genuineness shines through in her artistry."

Sheard, who doubles as a college student at Wayne State University studying entertainment law, says her 12-track project "tells of my experiences as I mature as a young adult. This record is actually my testimony and me just having to go through life experiences. That's why it's called *This Is Me*." For the Warrryn Campbell and Dark Child Entertainment-produced record, Sheard co-wrote seven tracks, symbolic that songwriting has become Kiki's form of journaling. "And I tell my journal *all* of my business!" she shares. Lately, Sheard's had plenty to chew on, especially as she gives God the business.

Sheard started tussling with the Almighty four years ago when her mother was diagnosed with a blood clot in her lung and experienced a

frightening coma. Karen Clark-Sheard, a co-founder of gospel's legendary Clark Sisters, has recovered exceedingly well. But, along the way, Kiki says she had words with the Lord.

"My parents are important people to me," she says of Karen and Pastor J. Drew Sheard, Kiki's father, who ministers at Detroit's Greater Emmanuel Institutional Church of God in Christ. "I know I probably wouldn't have been the best child if my momma wasn't there. There are a lot of things I would take into my own hands if it wasn't for mom, and I'd probably be locked up somewhere or on the six o'clock news," she muses. "Having to see her go through that was like, 'Wow, I don't want to see my momma go through pain. I don't want to see this, Lord.'"

"Sometimes," Sheard continues, "my prayers were, 'If she doesn't make it, Lord, I'm not going to make it; and I'm not going to turn back to you.' I shouldn't have prayed that type of prayer because it's selfish of me. But it taught me that you have to have faith. You have to believe that God will make a way out of no way." Sheard says the season helped her to make her faith personal.

"Going through that experience strengthened me, and it also gave me more faith. You can't sit back and let everybody else pray. You've got to get a prayer through," she says.

Then, the sky blue again, there was the usual teen-parent tension many experience.

"You know how young adults go through a rebellious stage? Well, I went through that," Sheard admits. "Parents get on your nerves, and my parents got on my nerves. But I've learned from them."

"And there are some things we have to learn on our own and see for ourselves," she picks up. For Kiki, that meant finding out who her real friends were in tough times, that shopping can't fill the heart's empty spaces and that certain boys are simply not worth dating.

"Sometimes you just have to learn the hard way," Kiki says. "Through these experiences, I was able to write these songs and share how the Lord brought me out of everything."

Born and raised in Detroit, Sheard continues a revered gospel music pedigree. Not only is she

the daughter of celebrated parents, Kiki is also the granddaughter of Dr. Mattie Moss Clark. Credited as one of the defining influences in gospel music, Dr. Clark was a conductor, arranger, songwriter, singer, instrumentalist and teacher, plus the president of the Church of God in Christ's music department for 25 years. When the matriarch's daughters—Jacky, Dorinda, Twinkie and Karen—formed The Clark Sisters, the quartet helped usher in a new brand of gospel during the '70s and '80s. With its breakthrough hit "You Brought the Sunshine" landing on the general market dance chart, The Clark Sisters helped reinvigorate gospel music in the R&B community, affecting artists from Tramaine Hawkins to Kirk Franklin and Mary Mary.

Kiki has been singing since the age of six. When she was nine, she recorded "The Safest Place" with Karen, which earned the duo a Stellar Award. At 10, the stage became Kiki's playhouse; and she's never looked back.

This Is Me is the follow-up to Sheard's 2004 touted solo debut, *I Owe You*. Sheard had yet to graduate from high school when the project released, but her professionalism and her passion for God were obvious. With top-billing producers such as Rodney Jerkins, Warrryn Campbell and J Moss at her side, Sheard was rewarded with a lengthy list of accolades, including a GMA Music Award win and nominations for an NAACP Image Award and three Stellar Awards.

But what stands out for her today is how God's patience is turning her into the woman she's meant to be.

"Today, I am someone who can actually sing and cry and feel what I'm singing because I've actually been through an experience. Now, I know that Jesus is real," she says. "'This Is Me' is a song anyone can sing because we say, 'Lord, I'm asking that you accept me even though I make the decisions that I make. Lord, this is me, and I'm talking to you. Nobody else, just me and you. So please hear my cry,'" It's a moving testimony.

We are all witnesses. ccm



NO MATTER WHAT HE'S DOING, WHETHER HE'S PLAYING A SHOW OR SHARING HIS FAITH, DAY OF FIRE'S JOSH BROWN WANTS TO REACH PEOPLE WITH THE MESSAGE THAT'S CHANGED THE COURSE OF HIS LIFE. **BY: CHRISTA A. BANISTER PHOTOGRAPHY BY: REISIG & TAYLOR**

When you meet Day of Fire's front man, Josh Brown, two things immediately stand out. First, of course, is the array of tattoos that cover nearly every square inch of his skin. But even more impressive than his head-to-toe ink is an almost Pentecostal preacher-like enthusiasm about his faith in Christ. And Brown's fervor? It stems from being on the other side and realizing exactly what he's been saved from. As a former member of Island/Def Jam hardcore act Full Devil Jacket, Brown struggled with depression and heroin addiction but knew that, once he eventually met God, he didn't want to make music that didn't point people toward Him. So, in what he calls a "harsh break-up that felt like a really bad divorce," Brown left the band and eventually teamed up with Gregg Hionis, a guitarist he met at his home church in Jackson, Tenn., to record spiritually-charged rock & roll as Day of Fire.

The band released its self-titled debut via Essential Records in late 2004 and saw the album land a GMA Music Award ("Rock Album of the Year"), garner a Grammy nomination and enjoy sales in excess of 80,000 copies, according to SoundScan. Since *Day of Fire's* release, Brown has added three new members to the group (guitarist Joe Pangallo, bassist Chris Pangallo and drummer Zach Simms) and now returns with an even more focused resolve on the band's sophomore disc, *Cut & Move*, which hit stores in early June.

Surprisingly enough, this new resolve came shortly after Day of Fire performed at a tattoo convention. "We went there and played a rock show," Brown recalls. "We didn't preach from stage or anything like that. What was really cool, though, was that my music pastor from Jackson Family Worship Center came to this show. He's a guy who leads worship and looks like

someone who works at a church. But, a couple days later, he called me back and said, 'Man, I will never be the same after that experience.'

"I was like, 'What happened?' And he said, 'Well, man, when I left that place, God broke my heart. God showed me that all those people at the tattoo convention are not going to come to our churches, no matter how relevant we are. They've already been there, and they were hurt or didn't find love. And that's why they're at the tattoo convention.'"

After several conversations and further biblical investigation, Brown says the band's mission became more specific, namely to love people wherever they are. "For us to be the light of the world, we will have to go to the places that don't have light. We've got to be who God's created us to be and love people at all cost, whether they choose to accept our faith or not," Brown affirms. "We've got to love homosexuals. We've got to love drug addicts. We've got to love Muslims. We've got to love agnostics, atheists—that's what we're called to do. We feel like our music is a vehicle. Wherever this music reaches, that's where we want to go and what we're going to do."

And going is exactly what they are doing. For those who haven't seen the band live yet, you can catch it on the "Reborn Tour" or at a summer festival near you. Says tourmate and Decyfer Down guitarist Chris Clonts, "[Being on the road] with Day of Fire has been an awesome experience and a breath of fresh air for us. Not only do we all have a great time together, but both bands' styles really complement one another." **ccm**



PLAYING WITH FIRE

DECLARATION OF AN Independent

Jill Phillips has been on both sides of the fence. She's done the record label things, and she's done the indie things...two times each. With her latest album, *Nobody's Got It All Together*, Jill is once again forging new ground as an independent artist. Photo By: Mark Nicholas

In 1999, when Jill Phillips originally signed to Word Records, singer/songwriters were in vogue. And singer/songwriters of her caliber are a rarity. She's a thoughtful writer whose insights are at once universal, unique and personal. Add in her intuitive grip on melody, and you have the real deal. Point of Grace's Shelley Breen testifies to that: "An artist like Jill Phillips is hard to come by. An incredibly poetic songwriter, a voice that sets her apart, a seasoned performer who is beyond her years and, most importantly, a heart to lead people closer to Christ. Her projects hold a permanent spot in my CD player, and I suspect they always will!" But, even while critics and fellow artists agree on Jill's talent, the music industry can be a fickle animal.

When Word went through an ownership and management change, Jill saw an opportunity to do her own thing independent of a record label. The result was the critically acclaimed *God and Money*, which helped garner Jill the "Favorite Independent Artist" title in CCM's 2002 Readers' Choice Awards. In turn, this indie project led to another major label deal, this time with Fervent Records. And the process repeated itself, as before, with Jill becoming an indie artist once again.

But she's not complaining about any of these experiences. "I think there is good and bad about both. [Aspiring artists often] struggle with, 'Well should I try to pursue a label, or should I do what I do?' And the good news and the bad news is that there is no right way to do this," Jill muses. "I think the good thing about technology being cheaper and people being able to make records in their houses is that it's giving more people the chance to do what they love. That's really great, and I love that! I think that anything that puts the power back in the hands of the musician is good—it's better for the art.

"But, you know, there are a lot of things that the label can do for you...like if I hadn't been at Word first, nobody would have even listened to my indie CD," Jill continues. "Or maybe somebody would have, but, at that time, magazines probably would not have reviewed it. There's something about the label that still gives people credibility, even if it's false credibility. So I'm very thankful for both of the label experiences because I was able to utilize a lot of the advantages that they have but that I don't have on my own."

On her new project, *Nobody's Got It All Together*, one song, in particular, addresses Jill's music industry experience. In the cut "Square Peg," Jill sings, "Like a square peg in a round hole/I can't seem to fit their mold/And make my way past the entrance." And she's not the only talented, yet frustrated, artist.

Jill and her husband, Andy Gullahorn—also a very gifted singer/songwriter—joined with other like-minded independent artists to form a coalition dedicated to supporting and promoting one another. And the name of this community? No surprise, it's the "Square Peg Alliance."

Jill explains, "It's really just putting a name to something already existing, which was this community of people that, for whatever reason, maybe doesn't fit into the traditional mold of what is going on in music right now. But we feel like we have found something in common with each other, and our audiences share some similarities. So we're just basically trying to say, 'Hey, support our friend over here. He's a really great musician. You would really love his CD.' That's basically all it is. It's just our way of trying to be in community. I really feel like art is better in community."

And, for now, living independently in community is just fine with Phillips. She confesses, "I'm not the type of artist that labels are really looking for. I'm sort of more the slow burn, not the giant flame. And I'm really content with that. I heard an actor, William H. Macy, talking about that one time. He just said, 'I'm glad I'm not a hot actor because, then, you're destined to be cold at some point. And I would rather just be warm.' And I think that's how I feel. I'm just thankful to do this, and I love my life."

Hot or warm, Jill's found just the right temperature on her new album and in her life. **ccm**

To purchase a copy of Jill's new record and to find more info on her, visit jillphillips.com. Also check out squarepegalliance.com.

By: Kristi Henson



Alright, school's out, and it's time to rock!

Whether you're a newbie saving up your summer job paychecks for the perfect investment in your future career or a road dog traveling from city to blistering city knocking 'em dead, it's likely that more musical gear will be bought and sold this summer than ever before. From indie bands to worship leaders and colleges re-stocking for the new school year to hobbyists looking for ways to pass the lazy days in style, for many of us, summer is all about the tunes.

This is also the season of major festivals and tours as well as uncountable hours of jamming in garages and basements from coast to coast, and the options have never been greater. With new catalogs showing up in the mail almost every day, web stores stocked to their virtual rafters with shiny, new gear just waiting to be played and the local store filled to capacity, where do you begin?

The **CCM Summer Gear Guide**, of course. In the following pages, we have collected some of the hottest new products in the music gear universe as well as some timeless standbys. From the stunning beauty and delicate artistry of **McPherson Guitars** to the bone-burning volume of **Peavey's** flagship 6505 amp, this is a good place to start. If you're looking for the perfect stage piano and just get overwhelmed comparing the options, we'd like to introduce you to the amazing **Roland RD 700SX**. And any guitarist looking for perfect tone and effects needs to check out the killer **Visual Sound** effects pedals—and their new amps! Veteran mic purveyors **Audio Technica** are helping a gospel group fill arenas with just the sound of its voices—wirelessly! Other bands are criss-crossing the country, maybe even cruising in that bus you passed on the highway just last week, with an arsenal full of high quality and affordable **Audix** mics in tow. And, if you're looking for a top-notch one-stop to record your next album, provide production for your big tour or festival or sell you the gear to do it yourself, you won't want to miss **CK Sound**. So, grab your iced tea and take a few minutes to consider the following contenders for your gear dollars this summer!

By John J. Thompson



GearGuide2006

Design By Jeff Amstutz,
A2ZDesign

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SPECIAL ADVERTISING SECTION

Roland RD-700SX

GUIDE

Though it looks like a keyboard, there's good reason to go along with Roland as they describe the new RD-700SX as a "stage piano." Though it accomplishes everything your basic keyboard needs to accomplish, this powerhouse brings a whole lot more to the party. As music seems to be consistently moving towards warm, organic tones, Roland's timing with this unit seems perfect.

Stunning Sounds

With Roland's most powerful processing engine at its core, the RD-700SX provides two complete 88-note, world-class concert grand pianos, each with individual multi-samples for every key and each recorded at a variety of velocity levels. The RD-700SX also contains authentic electric piano and virtual tonewheel organ instruments as well as an entire GM2-compatible sound set. Load and play standard MIDI files with the built-in MIDI file player. Onboard rhythm and arpeggiator functions are provided as well.

Progressive Hammer-Action Keyboard

The RD-700SX is equipped with Roland's top-of-the-line Progressive Hammer-Action Keyboard, which provides heavy-to-light response as you climb from low to high octaves—just like a real piano. Combined with a

true hammer-action mechanism, the keyboard offers an incredibly natural response that feels and plays like a true grand.

Instant Access

With its front-panel sliders, large buttons and backlit LCD, the RD-700SX is a fast and friendly instrument to pilot—especially for live performers who need instant, fumble-free access to sounds. The one-touch PIANO and E.PIANO buttons let you recall your favorite instrument sounds and edits—such as changes to the piano's String Resonance and Key Touch or the E.Piano's Amp type. You can also switch entire groups of settings during a performance by selecting a setup that you've edited and stored in advance; up to 100 setups can be stored and instantly recalled.

Onboard Effects

Transform your sound with the RD-700SX's powerful twin multi-effects engines onboard. Among the many high-quality effects types are reverb, chorus, Sound Control (3-band compressor) and dedicated 3-band parametric EQ (with adjustable frequency, Q, and gain for achieving the perfect custom-tailored sound). Dedicated knobs, buttons and a large graphical display allow intuitive sound control.

Well-Connected

The RD-700SX is fully equipped for the gigging professional. Both 1/4" and XLR outputs provide compatibility with all popular types of mixers and amplification systems. And for the utmost in performance expression, the RD-700SX offers inputs for damper pedals and two-function assignable foot pedals. Use the tandem MIDI outs and USB I/O for MIDI control and data backup/exchange. The RD-700SX's customizable "Master Control" features allow it to serve as the master for other MIDI instruments. And for audio/visual-minded musicians who want to "play" graphics (via Edirol video equipment), the RD-700SX is V-LINK compatible.

Sound Expansion

The RD-700SX offers an impressive 474 internal tones and 14 rhythm kits, which can be expanded by adding two optional Roland SRX boards. Choose from an impressive lineup of SRX titles including Complete Orchestra, Big Brass Ensemble, World Collection, Platinum Trax and more.

For the latest RD-700SX product information, visit roland.com.



If you were on a desert island (with electricity), what three pieces of gear would you take with you?

PHIL KEAGGY: *Legendary guitarist and songwriter, Grammy nominee and Dove Award winner*

1. My iPod. If I have electricity, I would have everyone I love to listen to from Johnny Ray, Elvis, The Beatles, Mike Bloomfield, The Ventures, John Renbourn, Bruce Cockburn, Jeff Beck, Michael Hedges, Anthony Phillips, Vaughn-Williams, Keith Moore, Phill McHugh, Bob Dylan, Randy Stonehill, Sara Groves, Cheryl Bliss and even some of my music—especially those where [my wife] and my kids are singing. I have lots of music there—even C.S. Lewis on audio. How about that band Love Song? And who could forget those great recordings of Mark Heard, Rich Mullins and Keith Green? I might even have the whole Bible on my iPod. Thank you Apple and thank You God!
2. My Nespresso machine—Always a fresh cup of espresso, different, yet consistent with each cup, or should I say E-pods. It takes water and some electricity, lots of that, given I have access to some AC.
3. My Oral B electric toothbrush. There's nothing like a good brushing at the day's end. Be sure to pack a lot of Arm & Hammer Baking Soda toothpaste. Brush once in the morning; maybe an afternoon brush and an evening brush...puts a smile on your face.



Peavey 6505

GUIDE

Peavey Electronics, long a purveyor of affordable solid-state amps and value-conscious guitars, absolutely blew away the rock world in the '90s with the introduction of the 5150 amp and speaker cabinet package. The original design was put together with rock legend Eddie Van Halen; and its combination of tone, volume and reliability—along with Van Halen's name—immediately made the 5150 a strong competitor in the big rock amp category with the classic Marshall JCM series and newer Mesa Boogie line.

Re-named in honor of the 40th anniversary of Peavey (1965-2005) and slightly re-tooled, the new 6505 amps are increasingly popular among rock, metal, hardcore, punk and, even, classic rock bands.

The secret to the 6505's ear-trashing power lies in its assemblage of six 12AX7 preamp tubes and four 6L6GC power amp tubes—enough power easily to knock over the poser in the back row. Simple controls allow for no fuss adjustments to presence and resonance, and a stripped down three-band EQ makes managing the aural range an easy task.



6505 Amp

The 6505 head churns out 120 Watts (rms) into 16, 8 or 4 Ohms (which the user can switch). A foot-switch-able lead/rhythm channel—select and effects loops add versatility, and the lead channel offers pre- and post-gain controls.

All this menacing sound is projected through a special 412 cabinet fitted with four Sheffield loudspeakers. Rated at 300 Watts (rms), the cab can handle everything the head throws at it and more. Heavy duty hardware and casters and high-density plywood hold it all together. Road tested and rocker approved, the 6505 will be seen frequently this summer on stages at festivals, in clubs and in arenas. If anyone doubts the legitimacy of the post-Van Halen-era Peavey monsters, just ask P.O.D., Chasing Victory, 12 Stones, Blindside, Demon Hunter, Mike Bauer, Mortal Treason, Symphony in Red, The Agony Scene or former Marshall and Mesa Boogie fans Stryper. Nothing destroys your hearing like the 6505!

Check out peavey.com for more information.

Audio Technica

While the folks at Audio Technica earned their stripes making high-end phonograph cartridges in the 1960s and 1970s, for nearly 30 years, they have been blazing trails in developing, perfecting and manufacturing amazing microphones. Sure, they have left their mark on everything from optical cables to headphones, but their main bread and butter continues to be microphones that deliver exceptional quality at affordable prices.

New gospel vocal ensemble Valor has been touring the country non-stop, including singing the national anthem at major sporting events like the NBA Finals. The group certainly puts its AT wireless mics and receiver system through its paces on a nightly basis. From finding available UHF frequencies quickly in hostile environs to handling a demanding vocal range that would curl the cables of lesser equipment, the band's Audio Technica Artist Elite® 4000 Series UHF Wireless System and AEW-T3300 and AEW-T5400 cardioid condenser handheld transmitters take it all in stride.

Even when bass singer Paul David hits a low note four octaves below middle C—territory previously lost in wireless systems—the Artist Elite microphones work perfectly. "In our particular genre," David says, "so much of the time our voices actually become the instrument. And Valor's approach to music stylistically puts an even greater amount



Artist Elite 4000 UHF Wireless System

of emphasis on vocals. We've tried a number of wireless microphones and found what we needed at both ends of the spectrum with the Audio Technica 3300 and 5400 handheld microphones."

Established artists like Michael W. Smith and Steven Curtis Chapman have been endorsing Audio Technica's mics for years. With Audio Technica's constant innovation, it's no surprise that a new generation of artists are as enthusiastic as the veterans.

Check out audio-technica.com to learn more.



Valor

McPherson Guitars

GUIDE

The acoustic guitar is possibly the most quintessential instrument in American music. For centuries, the craftsmen (luthiers) who design and build them have been perfecting the art and science of guitar making—identifying the best woods, the most effective body designs and what kinds of hardware best hold them all together.

Arguably, some of the most significant advances in guitar artistry and technology have come in the last few years through a boutique maker whose worshipful attitude towards craftsmanship is earning him the love and respect of the most scrupulous players in the world. After some personal prayer time and revelation, Matt McPherson launched McPherson Guitars a few years back with not just a single noteworthy innovation but three!

The most famous of McPherson's innovations stares at everyone from the outside. However, Offset Soundhole Technology is much more than a visual distinction. Understanding that the sound of the acoustic guitar is created by vibrations on the face of the guitar (literally the "soundboard"), it made sense to McPherson that removing that important wood right at the "sweet spot" might actually be dampening the tone of the guitar. By moving the sound hole off center, more contiguous real estate for vibration is achieved. The effect is noticed immediately by any experienced player.

Following the same thinking, McPherson looked for other ways to optimize the vibrations on the soundboard. His attention came to two other systems—the neck and the bracing inside the guitar. On most guitars, the neck rests against the soundboard and is often glued to it. The glue acts as a dampening agent, and the solid wood of the neck stops vibrations on the part of the soundboard that it rests upon. To eliminate this, McPherson invented a cantilevered neck that does not make contact with the soundboard at all. It worked.



Turning his attention, then, to the innards of the guitar, he applied the same logic to the bracing. Again, no glue and limited contact were the starting point; but he also discovered a significant increase in sound by placing braces at odd angles—nothing square. Instead of bouncing back and forth, the sound bounces at all angles inside the box, greatly enhancing the natural acoustic projection of the instrument.

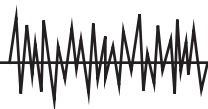
These three major modifications produce the astounding results that have made McPherson one of the most respected names in boutique guitar making in the world. Artists as diverse as Brad Paisley, Phil Keaggy, Paul Baloche, Amy Grant, Peter Furler, Steven Curtis Chapman, Martin Smith and, even, Wayne Newton all rave about the amazing sound and feel of a McPherson guitar. On stage, in the studio or on the porch, this guitar is rapidly becoming the gold standard in quality, tone and excellence.

Though sales are at an all-time high (company spokesman Scott Twite confirms that demand for the guitars is actually outstripping supply right now), every piece is still hand-made in the company shop near LaCrosse, Wis. Moreover, despite the rapid increase in the awareness and appreciation of the guitars and the radically increased demand, prices have not been raised since the company first hit the market. With an entry point around \$4,000 and a ceiling just below the \$10,000 mark, McPherson's are premium but not unattainable.

Though not nearly as stunning as actually playing one, the McPherson Guitar website is an amazing experience. Visit mcpersonguitars.com to see—and hear—for yourself.



Matt and Sherry McPherson



CK Sound Productions

GUIDE

Calling CK Sound Productions a full service company doesn't quite cover it. You want to record a 48-track digital album? They have you covered. Want to track a live album on the road? No problem. Need a full sound system for a concert or tour? A permanent installation at a church or stadium? No sweat...they do it all the time. Looking for a piece of equipment for your rig? Maybe a console or a microphone or some acoustic baffling for your home studio? Again, they do it all the time.

• Founder Clinton Kennet got his start as an engineer at the ripe old age of 13, touring with Alvin Slaughter and the Slaughter family. Though his gear has improved mightily from the Tapco board of his youth, this commitment to integrity, quality and Christian principles remains intact and blazing bright. "Every event is an opportunity to serve both the artist and the Lord," Kennet insists. "No matter what the project, our clients come to us secure in knowing we stay true to our foundations of integrity, working around any budget while still maintaining a level of excellence. My team and I strive to set ourselves apart to win customer loyalty through our great service and methods that will not compromise our commitment to Christ."

In addition to a team of crack engineers, CK Sound boasts an impressive collection of equipment in its arsenal as well. "We use some of the best names out there in the audio industry to enhance an artist's sound," Kennet insists. "Comers are never cut at the expense of quality. We use Neumann vocal mics, Radian and/or EAW Wedges, depending upon what our artists need. We also use all the Elite series of mics from

Audio Technica, wired and wireless, along with Shure, Shure Beta, Audix and Sennheiser mics. The amps are Crown-I Tech; and, for processing, we use Ashly, DBX, Lexicon and T.C. Electronics. The list goes on."

Kennet continues, "We are set apart by quality and excellence in our work. Our number one goal is to make sure our artists and clients are happy. When it comes to concerts, we understand the ministry of the musicians; and, as professional Christian engineers, we make sure to flow along with what God is doing. During awesome praise, we'll crank it, sending the kick drum pulsing through your chest. But, in times of worship and reverence, we know how to produce a crystal clear sound to let the music penetrate your soul." Over the years, CK Sound has earned the trust of artists such as Don Moen, Alvin Slaughter, Darrell Evans and Michael Gungor, among many others.

So, regardless of your sound reinforcement needs, CK Sound should be on your short list to check out. Their amazing website is brimming with information and it's ready any time of the day or night, just like CK.

Hit cksound.com for the scoop. Additional information provided by Angie Teater.




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IMPORT SERIES HEADPHONES

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Visual Sound

GUIDE

In case you've spent so much time jamming in your basement that you haven't seen the light of day for a few years, let us break some news to you.

Pedals are back!

In the '70s and early '80s, guitarists got all their crazy sounds and effects from brightly colored little boxes, all daisy-chained together, creating noises both welcome and not. In the late '80s, the pedals all got absorbed into multi-effect processors that laid at your feet like a strange piece of A/V equipment and were often harder to work than a typewriter underwater. Next came the age of "modeling," where companies like Line 6 could fit hundreds of computer-sampled tones and effects into a single pedal or the ubiquitous POD gadgets.

Visual Volume Pedal



But, in the new millennium, it's back to the pedals; and the more old-school, chunky, analog and retro, the better. Some are all about image and branding, and others are all about sound. The latter is certainly the case with the jaw-dropping and increasingly popular wares of Nashville-based Visual Sound. If such notables as U2, Relient K, Day of Fire, Audio Adrenaline, The Strokes, Eric Johnson, Avril Lavigne, Phil Keaggy, MercyMe, Metallica and Keith Urban all swear by them, then, grasshopper, it is time to listen up!

Each of Visual Sound's pedals—Jekyll & Hyde Ultimate Overdrive, Route 66 American Overdrive and the H2O Liquid Chorus and Echo—is actually two pedals in one, having two completely separate channels that can be used individually or in combination with each other. The

company is also re-issuing its flagship innovation, the Visual Volume pedal to celebrate its tenth anniversary.

Visual Sound is also excited to announce that it is expanding its "stable" of products with the Workhorse line of amplifiers—the 60W 212 Stallion and the 30W 112 Pony. Both models have revolutionary easy user-biasing as well as 100 percent clean tube amplification, Celestion speakers, hand-wired controls and jacks, carbon comp resistors (where they count), a toroidal power transformer, a 9VDC output and cable for powering the free Jekyll & Hyde pedal (which comes with every amp) and a padded amp cover with pockets on the sides. Protection circuitry throughout each amp prevents failure of all critical components. Housed in an all-wood cabinet, each amp features a Hubcap sound dispersion speaker grille (patent pending), making it sound great from anywhere on stage.

As if all that weren't enough, the 1 SPOT space-saving adapter continues to fly off shelves as word keeps spreading about the first 9VDC adapter to require only one spot on a wall outlet or power strip. Why? Because the 1 SPOT works with almost every pedal in existence and can easily power an entire pedal board by itself with the addition of optional daisy chain cables. It's also a fraction of the cost of brick-sized pedal board power supplies, and it takes up no space on the board. It even converts voltage automatically, anywhere in the world!

For more information about Visual Sound visit their website at visualsound.net.

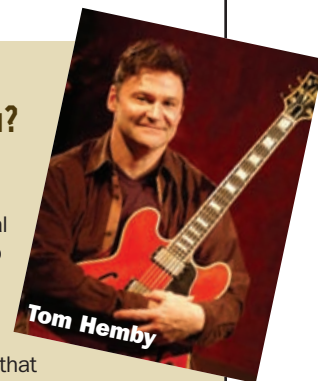


60W 212 Stallion & 30W 112 Pony

If you were on a desert island (with electricity), what three pieces of gear would you take with you?

TOM HEMBY: Veteran guitarist, Grammy Award-winning producer and songwriter

1. My 1960 GIBSON 355, simply because it's the best sounding and easiest playing guitar that I've ever played. It has the original PAF pickups, which are thick and sweet sounding. But of course, a great electric guitar needs a great sounding amp to compliment and enhance the sonic quality of the instrument. (See my #2 pick.)
2. The BADCAT (hot cat model) amplifier. Hands down, it's one of the best sounding amplifiers I've ever heard. The distortion channel has an almost vocal quality to it and has smooth glassy highs and a nice warm complex midrange. The 355 and the Badcat are a magical combination for me. It's as if they were made for each other! But, since we are on an island, this means that the electrical situation could always be at the mercy of a hurricane or tropical storm.
3. My McPherson acoustic guitar. I love this guitar for many reasons—it's amazing playability, impeccable intonation and detailed tonal qualities. But, truth be told, if I ever go to a desert island, I'm thinking the only gear I'll take with me is a beach umbrella with a lawn chair, iPod, and a cooler full of Cheetos, sandwiches and Stewart's orange and cream soda. (I actually go to the beach to get away from gear!)



Tom Hemby

Audix Microphones

GUIDE



M1290

Whether providing sound reinforcement for the choir at your church or handling the blood curdling screams of Pillar's front man Rob Beckley, Audix microphones are becoming an absolute essential for thousands of applications.

Though they are the go-to vocal mics for a range of artists including Casting Crowns, Kutless, Phil Keaggy, Avalon, Chris Rice, Tree 63, Rita Springer, Derek Webb, The Listening and hardcore rockers Spoken, vocals are just the beginning. From amps and acoustic instruments to specially-designed drum mics and a whole line of amazing studio-quality condensers, Audix does it all.

With everything from horn sections and percussion to multiple vocals and amp cabinets, Salvador needs a wide range of microphones and has found it all in Audix. For Phil Keaggy, it's not only his wireless VX10 on the road but also his in-studio SCX25 condenser mic that make him an Audix fan.

As if that wasn't enough, Audix recently unveiled the impossibly discreet MicroBoom™ carbon fiber boom arm that attaches to any microphone stand and allows its Micros series M1290 condenser mic to capture the sound of an entire choir without bulky distractions or permanent hanging installation. The spy-like microphones clock in at

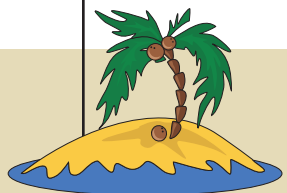


Casting Crowns' Mark Hall

an astounding 3.5 inches long and are available in cardioid, hypercardioid, omni-directional and super-cardioid (shotgun) polar patterns. The Microboom stand defies all logic with a diameter of less than 0.3 inches (7.4 mm) and a weight of only 2.5 ounces (78 grams). Internal electronics eliminate unsightly hanging cables and aid in ease of use.

Audix also recently launched its first entry into the increasingly important wireless category. The RAD-360 UHF Wireless system offers convenience, versatility and reliability (along with affordability) and the now famous Audix sound. This product is a frequency-agile UHF wireless microphone system with 193 selectable frequencies and a dual tuner, true diversity receiver. Operating in the UHF band between 638–806 MHz, the RAD-360 is designed for a wide range of professional applications, including live performances, regional sound companies, fixed installations, corporate meetings, events and churches.

Ease of use, consistency of sound and durability under frequent use are all characteristics of the Audix line. For more information, visit audixusa.com.



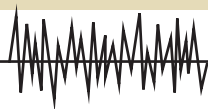
If you were on a desert island (with electricity), what three pieces of gear would you take with you?

VICKY BEECHING: Sparrow Records recording artist

1. First would be my electric guitar...I can't last more than a few hours without playing it! It's a Gibson Les Paul, part of a new range of guitars called the "Goddess Series," built for women. They are lighter in weight but with the same cool tone. Seeming as it's solid wood, maybe it would double up as a raft. Then I could float on it and paddle away, making a daring escape from the island!
2. Second, my beloved harmonica! It was originally inspired by Alanis Morissette, but now I see it as an affectionate tribute to my country-music-soaked new hometown, Nashville! (I also recently discovered you can buy harmonicas in the key of C for only \$2.50 from Cracker Barrel. So, for only \$2.50 you too could take one onto a desert island and learn to play!)
3. Third would be my fire-juggling torches. Although they are not musical gear, they provide a lot of inspiration and fun! Besides, there are a lot of worship songs about "holy fire" and "refining fire"...So I could take my torches onto the desert island and write a whole new album of "fire-themed" worship songs.



Vicky Beeching





WARNING: ADDICTIVE HARDCORE ROCK

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY’S BIGGEST METAL ACT UNVEILS ITS BEST EFFORT YET!



UNDEROATH
Define the Great Line
 Solid State

A GREAT ALBUM DEFINED

File Under: Hard **Grade:** A-

It’s trendy and cool to like Underoath these days, but the band seems willing to test that “easy” devotion with a decidedly heavy album. Yes, there are bright and catchy guitars, big sing-along choruses and ear-pleasing keyboard sounds aplenty; but the rough and rowdy screaming vocals tend to dominate the emotive ones. No, Underoath has not really changed its sound; it’s just that the band hasn’t bent its ear towards the successful Matchbook Romances and Taking Back Sundays of the world and followed suit with a sonic mix that weighs in more with melody than distortion and riffage. You couldn’t have blamed Underoath if it went a softer route to gain more radio airplay, but the band stayed true to the heavy and brutal sounds that flavor its world and, in doing so, has probably delivered an album that’ll top its predecessor, *They’re Only Chasing Safety*, in popularity, sales and adoration. But what Underoath has really done is topped itself with an engaging, high quality album that will earn all the accolades that’ll come its way.

The band’s first single, “Writing on the Walls,” is not too unlike “It’s A Dangerous Business Walking Out Your Front Door” in that it’ll have you singing along to a speedy chorus and anticipating each unique fill and accent as it squeezes the emotion out of a story of well-intended conversation like the juice from one of Underoath’s native Florida oranges. And then it, too, ends with a haunting refrain of layered vocals.

Co-producers Matt Goldman (Copeland, Third Day, Anberlin) and Adam Dutkiewicz (Unearth, August Burns Red, The Agony Scene) helped the band expand its sound. Goldman, who founded Blue Man Group, worked with Underoath’s rhythm section, spearheaded by wonder-drummer (and part-time vocalist) Aaron Gillespie, to create a very thick and solid low end. Dutkiewicz, who plays guitar for Killswitch Engage, coaxed Tim McTague and James Smith to use E-bows and actual violin bows and to experiment with various delays and effects pedals. The self-indulgent moments of this album are so darn enjoyable that there’s no disconnect between band and audience as Underoath wanders into an extended jam that begins “Casting Such a Thin Shadow,” ticking off about 3 minutes and 50 seconds before the vocals come in. This kind of experimentation usually pushes the listener’s patience beyond normally acceptable tolerance levels, but it actually works here quite well. It’ll be amazing to see this stuff performed live.

DOUG VAN PELT



DAY OF FIRE

Cut & Move
Essential

File Under:
Hard/Rock

Grade: B

SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

Josh Brown means business. After winning 2005's GMA Music Award for "Rock Album of the Year" with his band's eponymous debut, Brown sounds more confident and—if it's possible—more urgent on Day of Fire's sophomore release, *Cut & Move*.

Having experienced the personal apocalypses of addiction and near self-destruction, Brown knows what it feels like to hit life's bottom, to know alienation and hurt, to experience the "wages of sin." But he also has an intimate experience of God's astounding, life-changing grace.

Those are the two polarities at the heart of the gritty rock songs that make up Brown's second tract, aimed toward those who have experienced only the hurt and not the healing. In that regard, Brown taps standing themes at the heart of early evangelically-motivated veteran Christian rockers, going back to Larry Norman and Randy Stonehill, whose classic "Keep Me Runnin'" is called to mind in Day of Fire's "Run."

It's probably no accident that the first half of the disc climaxes with "Regret," but it ends with the promise of "Reborn." In the title track, he cries for relief when he begs for someone to "show me the way out of this hole." Life apart from God's love is some "twisted dream," but, as he sings in the anthem "When the Light," in God's presence, we find we are not alone.

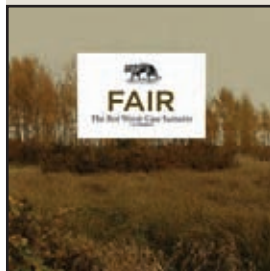
Brown's former mainstream band, Full Devil Jacket, managed to tour in opening slots for Creed and Nickelback. Clearly, he's learned the lessons of their success, creating maximum guitar crunch but not forgetting that songs that connect need a melodic hook. At times, Day of Fire can be similarly overwrought and musically predictable, two qualities that rock crowds have never found to be too much of a problem. More of these tracks could use the solo guitar heroics of "Frustrating," but, generally, *Cut & Move* delivers the authentic goods.



DAY OF FIRE

While at times, Day of Fire appears to lack originality, it is assuring that the band rocks solid with enough passionate energy to carry the message that "you can find freedom, you can be safe." For Brown, the chaotic world becomes manageable "when the light shines on my face"; when things get complicated, he sings God's song "inside my head." That's an experience he's desperate to share with others.

BRIAN QUINCY NEWCOMB



File Under:
Alternative/Modern Rock

Grade: A

FAIR
The Best Worst-Case Scenario
Tooth & Nail

THERE'S NOTHING "FAIR" ABOUT IT!

Aaron Sprinkle must certainly be one of the most underappreciated people in the music business. Though highlighted recently in CCM as one of the most influential and important producers these

days (Kutless, Demon Hunter, Dead Poetic), Sprinkle's contributions date back to the early '90s when he played guitar for the fantastic alternative band Poor Old Lu. Though Lu did re-convene for 2002's *Waiting Room* and Sprinkle has released several solo projects (independently and through Tooth & Nail), his day gig as a producer has established him as an essential voice in modern rock and alternative Christian music.

If enough people hear the debut by his new band Fair, though, that might all change. Comprised of members of his touring band (including Lu alum Nick Barber), Fair is touted as an actual band as opposed to a solo recording disguise. Though Sprinkle handles all lead vocals and his tone-saturated power-pop alt-rock style guitar prowess dominates the mixes, *The Best Worst-Case Scenario* definitely sounds like a real band playing really great music.

Sprinkle's late '80s/early '90s alternative influences abound as hints of The Posies, Dramarama and, yes, Poor Old Lu bounce through the songs with abandon. Incredibly melodic, drivingly electric and consistently dynamic, Fair sounds like both a blast from the past and a glimmer of hope for the future of "modern rock" all at the same time.



PIVITPLEX

The King in a Rookery
Selectric

File Under:
Eclectic Modern Rock

Grade: A

**SO GOOD IT SHOULD HAVE A
MONEYBACK GUARANTEE**

In 2003, Pivitplex released its debut on BEC, *Under Museum Quality Glass*. That was a good record, but, beyond the Christian radio hit "You Know," it didn't get much attention. Fast forward three years to the band's stunning new sophomore release, *The King in a Rookery* (Pivitplex is two-for-two on incredible album titles), which shows little to no resemblance to its first record. The songwriting, production and performance are light years beyond that debut. In fact, I don't think I've ever known a band to change and mature this much between releases. Lead singer Scott Brownson, bassist Josh Ogle, guitarist Joby Rudolph and drummer James Clark bring a fresh artistic

Not surprisingly, the production is perfect. From floor-to-ceiling electric guitar crunch to crystalline acoustic guitars and piano, *The Best Worst-Case Scenario* is the total package. The album opener, "Monday," sets the stage perfectly with a slow-burn intro, plenty of moody analog keys and an immediately captivating lyric before launching into the best power-pop track since "Flavor of the Month" by The Posies. The hits keep on coming as track after track proves that pop music can be accessible and melodic without ever becoming cliché and that modern rock need not be all about screaming and rage.

Younger bands should pay attention to Sprinkle's deft lyrical prowess as well. Meaningful, interesting and never condescending or too obvious, tracks such as "Confidently Dreaming" and "Bide My Crime" offer layers of reflection for those choosing to dive in.

As great a producer as Sprinkle is, Fair's debut album is one more reminder that his talents are in no way limited to those behind the console. Hopefully, enough people will discover this gem for him to justify making this a large part of his schedule.

JOHN J. THOMPSON

As former front woman for Grammy-nominated band *Sixpence None the Richer*,

LEIGH NASH

steps out on her own for her most personal project yet.

blue on blue

**IN STORES
AUGUST 15, 2006**



www.myspace.com/leighnash www.leighnash.com www.nettwerk.com



approach to the popular Brit rock sound, assisted by award-winning producer Jason Burkham (Building 429, The Swift).

The band's transformation has taken it from a straight-ahead modern rock outfit to one of the most creative and interesting groups going. It all starts with the songs, which are hooky, melodic and truly unforgettable, including my current personal pick for "Song of the Year": "End of the Line." This track features influences ranging from modern alternative pop rockers such as Fountains of Wayne and Jellyfish to The Beatles and the layered vocal harmonies of The Beach Boys; yet, it never loses its contemporary rock feel. If only more bands could write and sing infectious hooks with the ease and skill that Pivitplex deftly achieves here!

Great guitar riffs, odd instrumentation, strings and intricate vocal arrangements litter the landscape of this record, making it an artistic gem and an interesting listen from start to finish—another rarity for full albums these days. Fear not, there are commercial nuggets and radio singles here as well, including "The Deal," a catchy alt-power-pop track for the MTV rock set (see Relient K and Click 5), and "I'm Alive," which should be an easy Top 10

single on multiple Christian radio formats.

"You're gonna take a hit to the way you've been thinking/To find when you lose it all you gain so much more." These words, from the song "End of the Line," sum up what will happen when you delve into the intelligent and thought-provoking lyrics on this album. One of the best and most memorable hooks is from "It's Our Time," when Scott so passionately sings, *"We're part of a generation of massive dreams and hair-brained schemes of love/There are people who stand in line to freeze our minds and say it's not our time/Will you stand with me?/Will you sing with me?/We'll show the world that it can be."* There is nothing trite or immature here; this is well-crafted prose that will move you, make you think and feel.

From the music to the lyrics, *The King in a Rookery* is an unbelievable alternative power-pop masterpiece. Pivitplex has delivered its answer to *Sgt. Pepper* and *Pet Sounds*.

DR. TONY SHORE



THE TURNING

Learning to Lose
RKT

File Under: Alternative/Modern Rock **Grade: B+**

PASSION WITH A PURPOSE

Signed to Michael W. Smith's new RKT label just last year, The Turning has released its debut disc titled *Learning to Lose*. Lyrically, the band has the chops to reign as new praise and worship icons; and the debut boasts an infectious modern rock slant that fits very, very well.

Cuts such as "Home to You" serve as anthemic testimony to a group serving up straightforward rock in bunches.

At times, vocalist Jacob McGinnis displays breathy vocals similar to Audio Adrenaline à la "Out of My Hands" while, at other times, the flavorings of The Elms come to mind via songs like "Change."

Tracks such as "Through All the Earth," "Everything Matters" and "In My Mind" are hooky, singable excursions. These cuts exemplify modern rock at its finest and could easily have been lifted from a Sanctus Real session.

One of the disc's most enduring tunes comes courtesy of the acoustic-laced "Escape." Here, the band utilizes an acoustic guitar, orchestration and the apt vocals of Jacob McGinnis to forge a song with eloquence and sincerity. Similarly, "For You" features a piano melody and drum loops that pinnacle into a MercyMe type of vibe. Both styles are really covered flawlessly.

"My Heart Is Free" closes the disc strongly. Musically, the band leans on U2 with falsetto vocals, a driving bass line and drums that build throughout. On this cut, The Turning seems to have found the groove; and it flourishes in it.

While *Learning to Lose* releases into a modern rock market that seems flooded with similar artists, this opus distinguishes itself. What the Turning accomplishes here is well-written songs performed with passion and purpose. The fact that driving guitars lead the charge doesn't hurt either.

STEVEN DOUGLAS LOSEY



THE TURNING



File Under:
Pop/Rock

Grade: **B**

JESSIE DANIELS

Jessie Daniels
Midas

**GREAT MUSIC + PROMISING LYRICS =
BRIGHT FUTURE**

Eighteen-year-old Jessie Daniels may be new to the Christian music scene, but she has practically spent her entire life in the entertainment industry. An actress since the age of eight, Daniels has appeared in several independent films as well as commercials for both MTV and Lifetime. Now, 10 years later, this little girl is all grown up, releasing her full-length national debut last month on Midas Records.

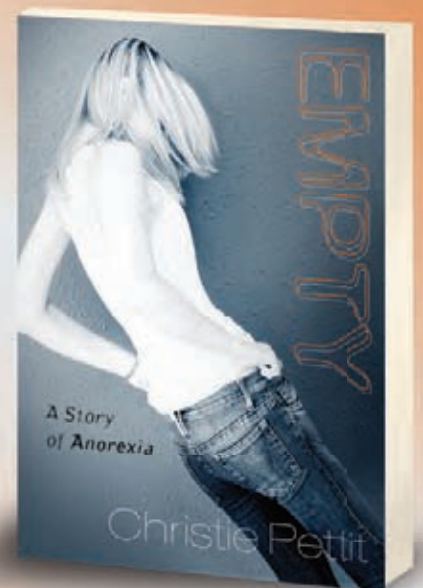
Daniels is the first Christian artist on Midas, and, though the lyrics on her self-titled debut are not overtly faith evident, a positive, spiritual element is represented on all 11 tracks, with Jessie sharing co-writing credits on eight of them. Other

writing recognition belongs to producer Scott Davis, Jason Ingram and All Star United's Ian Eskelin, the latter two of whom have penned hits for Natalie Grant, Point of Grace and Joy Williams, among other female faves.

In the vein of Kelly Clarkson, this chick rocks to the tune of pop on every track. The album opener and explosive lead single, "The Noise," is a funky, guitar-driven cut that rocks in all the right places while also introducing Christian radio to Daniels' soaring vocals. Equally impressive is the aggressive hook of "Everyday," a song about God's pursuit of us all in spite of the barriers that we may erect. Standout track "Hold Me Now" is Daniels' self-described worship song with sweeping vocals and prayerful verse.

As the album progresses, it's clear that Daniels desires to be a role model for girls her own age, sharing candid truths in several songs revolving around relationships, self-esteem and image. "Stand Out," for instance, is a song about inner beauty with honest lyrics such as: "You're staring in the mirror and you're looking back at me/Somehow you've replaced yourself and don't like what you see/You've been a slave far too long to

hope-filled first person account of battling anorexia

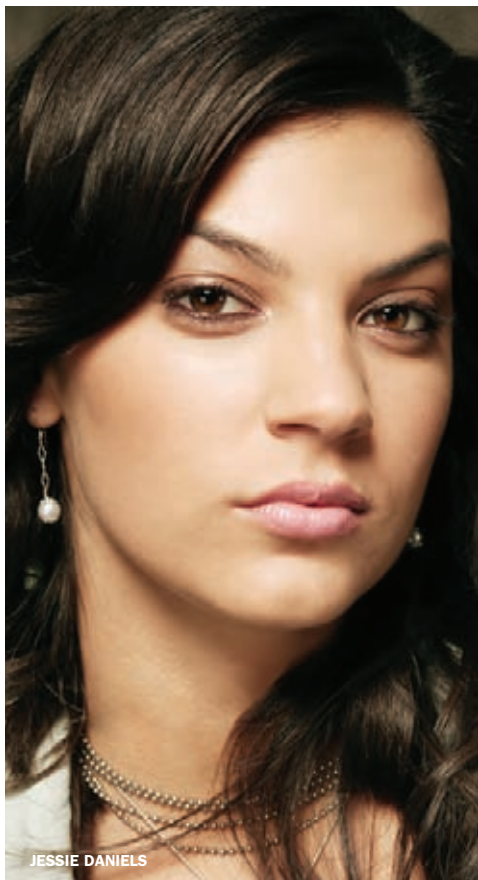


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JESSIE DANIELS

what other people think/So you bend and you break and you lose along the way.”

“Hello/Goodbye” is an in-your-face tune with a fun hook, making Daniels a dead ringer for Ashlee Simpson. But, in case you’re not a fan of Simpson, Daniels struts her own stuff in dealing with relational issues (divine and otherwise) on songs such as “What Happened to Me” and the Mandy Moore-esqe “It’s No Wonder.”

Lyrically, the album falls short, leaving plenty of room for growth as Daniels blossoms into her own. However, if the often trite, cliché-riddled lyrics can be overlooked (hint: skip to the second verse of “Next to You”), Daniels’ incessantly, catchy hooks more than make up for it. Plus, some relevant, gut-wrenching honesty is thrown in for good measure, making Daniels’ debut one teenage girls everywhere will be able to relate to instantly.

LINDSAY WILLIAMS



File Under:
Rock

Grade: **A**

DECEMBERADIO

DecembeRadio
Slanted

KEEP ON ROCKIN' IN THE FREE WORLD!

Back in January, *Billboard* named DecembeRadio as *the* Christian artist to follow this year in its “Faces to Watch” cover story. And for good reason.

Produced by Scotty Wilbanks (Third Day, Overflow), this four-some’s major label debut album is rife with straight-ahead, down-home, hard-hitting rock & roll. It’s very clear these Southern boys owe a debt to such predecessors as Lynyrd Skynyrd, The Allman Brothers and, even, Led Zeppelin. But they’ve also been taking lessons from The Black Crowes, Lenny Kravitz and other more modern influences.

Starting off the party full-steam ahead with upbeat, driving songs such as “Dangerous” (which is on an aural frequency reminiscent of



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DECEMBERADIO

Stone Temple Pilots circa 1992) and “Love Found Me (Love’s Got a Hold)” (which, of all the cuts, sounds most like Chris Robinson and Co.), the self-titled project takes off and doesn’t slow down until halfway through the record. When it does, though, the quartet shines just as bright, with “Drifter” sounding every bit as anthem-ic as any praise and worship chorus. And it also doesn’t hurt that Peter Stroud (Sheryl Crow) adds some nice layers of atmosphere with his sublime slide guitar stylings.

The album rounds out with “Least of These” which, in addition to sounding as close to *The Joshua Tree*-era U2 as these guys get, features an extended recording session tagged on at the end. Let the CD continue playing after the song is officially over to get a taste of DecembeRadio free-styling with Wilbanks. It’s the best version of “Mary Had a Little Lamb” that I do believe I’ve ever had the pleasure of hearing!

And, as far as its moniker is concerned, December is one of our most beloved months—the one in which we celebrate Christmas. With the birth of Christ, the entire world was changed. What better way to transmit that message to a massive

audience than through the radio? Plus, according to the band members—Josh Reedy (lead vocals/bass), Brian Bunn (lead guitar/vocals), Eric Miker (guitar/vocals) and Boone Daughdrill (drums/vocals)—“DecembeRadio” just sounds cool.

With the intention of spreading its message of love and hope as far and wide as possible, DecembeRadio is aptly named.

KRISTI HENSON



File Under:
Hip-Hop

Grade: B

PLAYDOUGH

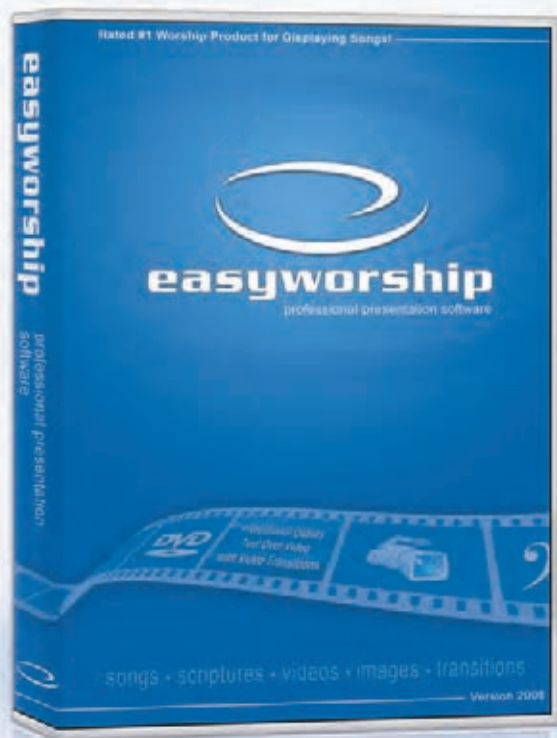
**Don't Drink
the Water**
7Spin

DEFINITELY DRINKABLE

If you’re a little confused by the name—normally a grubby substance squished between a three-year-old’s fingers—or the jacket art—which depicts a graffiti-strewn bathroom with a dog poised to lap



PLAYDOUGH



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DALTON

out of the toilet (and other thematic elements such as a toilet paper roll and faucet)—you're not alone. Who is this guy? Oh yeah, it's Doug Krum, the dope underground emcee who fronted the Uprok Records group Ill Harmonics and released his debut solo project, *Lonely Superstar*, in 2002. You know, the white guy in the hoodie.

Don't Drink the Water, Playdough's sophomore effort, can be translated: Don't be satisfied with what the world has to offer. Displaying impressive lyrical agility and confirming his reputed genius behind the mic, the Texas wordsmith raps about materialism and the dangers of being a follower, demonstrating a keen social awareness that flies in the face of his mainstream contemporaries.

For example, the track "You Sound Funny" boasts a catchy sample—the warbling of an antiquated gospel singer—and cuts to the quick of the rap industry's materialism. "It's all about money, cars and clothes...your rap sounds funny," Playdough says succinctly. "Your raps make me giggle."

The obvious single is "Emergency Broadcast," which belongs in the club with its grinding guitars and fat bassline. The funky "Sandal Sole" follows close behind with a memorable guest appearance by Kevin Max.

On other tracks, such as "Dangl," we find Playdough singing his own praises—"It's hard to holster all that I bolster/I'll write a paragraph autographing posters." A

little self-confidence is good. But isn't it as yawn-worthy as money and bling-bling? Playdough should assign his creativity to more interesting topics.

Overall, it's a playful conceptual record filled with fresh rhymes, somewhat inexplicable samples and the occasional irresistible hook. One caution: You know how Eminem's voice can give you a headache? Likewise, Playdough's slightly nasally voice can wear on you over a jarring composite of beats and samples.

ANDREA BAILEY



DALTON
Taste the Sky
Selectric

File Under:
Modern Rock

Grade: B

**ARE YOU GONNA PULL THOSE PISTOLS
OR WHISTLE "DIXIE"?**

Led by brothers Spencer and Preston Dalton, this musical quartet isn't big and scary enough to pass for the Wild West's infamous Dalton Gang, which specialized in train and bank robberies during the 19th century. Dalton, nevertheless, displays ample aural firepower throughout *Taste the Sky*.

In further contrast to its namesake gunslingers, who originally hailed from Missouri, these boys are Texans. Dalton's sound may be best described as a harder-edged Delirious, and, like that British band, Dalton reaches for the sky with the sort of grandiose music first popularized by U2 back in the '80s. And while Dalton's style is derivative in places, it's never overly imitative.

The title track, "Taste the Sky," shows how Dalton is unafraid to offer solid answers to life's big questions. They sing: "Take a chance and we will find/Everything isn't mystery." Furthermore, Dalton emboldens listeners to pursue life with gusto—even if they've had a rough go of it so far. The empathetic "Life Afraid" contains a string of especially encouraging words: "Don't waste your life/Living life afraid/Wondering what you've made." Dalton is, however, honestly realistic, which is supported by "Hold Me Now (Summer's Song)." "Jesus rescue me somehow," they sing, "for I am so weak."

The notorious Dalton Gang never would have admitted to weakness. But these modern day Daltons are here to say that sometimes you need to cry if you hope to Taste the Sky.

DAN MACINTOSH

newreleases

JULY 11

Chapters	<i>Forever Changed</i> (Floodgate)
Circleslide	<i>Uncommon Days</i> (Centricity)
Pivitplex	<i>The King in a Rookery</i> (Selectric)
Various	<i>The Second Chance DVD</i> (Provident)
Various	<i>Worship Jamz 2</i> (Provident)

JULY 18

Dead Poetic	<i>Vices</i> (Tooth & Nail)
Lacrae	<i>After the Music Stops</i> (CMR)
Liquid	<i>Tales from the Badlands</i> (Gotee)
Superchic[k]	<i>Beauty from Pain 1.1</i> (Inpop/Columbia)
Tragedy	<i>Princess Cut</i> (Holy Hip Hop/EMI Gospel)

JULY 25

Muriel Anderson	<i>Wildcat</i> (CGD/Burnside)
Fireflight	<i>The Healing of Harms</i> (Flicker)
Hundred Year Storm	<i>Hello from the Children of Planet Earth</i> (Floodgate)
Brian & Jen Johnson	<i>We Believe</i> (Floodgate)
Caleb Rowden	<i>Free from Ordinary</i> (Slanted)
Stellar Kart	<i>We Can't Stand Sitting Down</i> (Word)
Various	<i>Larry Boy and the Bad Apple DVD</i> (Veggie Tales/Big Idea)



the fineprint | books

by Kristi Henson

A DEEP SUBJECT

CCM's very own **CHRIS WELL** returns with a striking sophomore effort, *Deliver Us from Evelyn* (Harvest House). This thriller packs all the punches, capers and obscure allusions you've come to expect from Well, a novelist and long-time Christian music industry writer and editor. In this offering, the heartless Evelyn Blake lords over the family media empire even as her reclusive billionaire husband has vanished. Do yourself a favor and pick up a copy of this book! It's definitely great summertime fare!

WHAT'D I SAY

Modeled after the extremely popular *No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency* books, *Sanctified Blues* by **MABLE JOHN** with **DAVID RITZ** (Harlem Moon/Broadway Books) is the first in a new series featuring Albertina Merci, a former R&B singer who spent many years performing with world famous artists like Ray Charles. Albertina experiences a re-birth

and becomes an evangelist who uses her musical platform and scriptural wisdom to solve people's problems. Author Mable John was the first female recording artist for Motown Records. From 1968-1976, she was the lead "Raelette" for Ray Charles; and then she recorded as a solo artist for Stax/Volt. Now, Mable's an ordained minister with a doctorate in counseling. If you enjoy a good read with musical under- and overtones, check out this book!

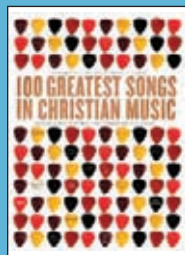
HOW SWEET THE SOUND

With *The Longing Season* (Bethany House), **CHRISTINE SCHAU** continues her *Music of the Heart* series with one of the greatest redemption stories of all time—the story of "Amazing Grace." Let the tale of former slave trader John Newton and his childhood friend Mary Catlett take you away to another time and place. Who knows...you might just find yourself there! This is a must read!

BREAKING THE CODE

Looking for a "Christian" alternative to *The DaVinci Code*? Look no further! *The Last Sacrifice* (Tyndale Fiction) may just be your cup o' tea! **HANK HANEGRAAFF & SIGMUND BROUWER** return with the second installment in their *Last Disciple* series, and the mystery continues. It's got intrigue, a letter written in code and a historical setting. As Sigmund's wife, Cindy Morgan, might say, how could you ask for more?

THE COUNTDOWN'S ON!



Want to know what songs were voted the greatest in Christian music history according to a consortium of key industry executives and more than 2,500 Christian music fans? Then *CCM Magazine Presents The 100*

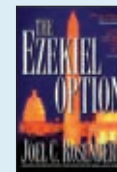
Greatest Songs in Christian Music: The Stories Behind the Music That Changed Our Lives Forever (Integrity Publishers) is the ticket for you! This informative overview features selections from multiple genres including pop, rock, Southern gospel, inspirational, soul and hip-hop. We've got songs by everyone from Larry Norman and Dallas Holm to Michael W. Smith, Amy Grant and Switchfoot. So, if you want to know the No. 1 song, you'll have to pick up a copy of the book...but I will tell you that Sandi Patty's classic "Love in Any Language" came in at No. 73. If this stellar selection is that far down the list, you know the others are incredible!

B(u)y the Book

Other Titles of Interest



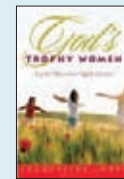
If you're a fan of Southern tales, then **BETH WEBB HART's** *Adelaide Piper* (WestBow Press) should be on your short list of books to read this summer! This poignant debut novel transports the reader to Hart's native South Carolina low country and into the mind of a renegade poetess.



JOEL C. ROSENBERG's fiction titles have an odd tendency to imitate and, it seems, presage things to come. Perhaps *The Ezekiel Option* (Tyndale Fiction) will be no different? Read it and wait!



Rarely are such pretty gift books full of such insight! **MARY GRACE BIRKHEAD's** new trio of titles, *The Heirloom Promises Series* [*Beautifully Pinned Promises, Pearls from Heaven, Teacups Full of Treasures*] (Integrity Publishers), is a welcome addition to any tea or coffee table.



The only sister of Bishop T.D. Jakes, **JACQUELINE JAKES**, returns with *God's Trophy Women: You Are Blessed and Highly Favored* (Warner Faith). God's Trophy Women are not "trophy wives." No, they're the survivors of life's harshest battles—tried and true, Godly women. An interesting read!



What does it mean to be BLESSED? **DR. SUZAN JOHNSON COOK** lays it out for you in *Live Like You're Blessed: Simple Steps for Making Balance, Love, Energy, Spirit, Success, Encouragement and Devotion Part of Your Life* (Doubleday). The acronym says it all!



A former college athlete, **CHRISTIE PETTIT** shares her struggle with anorexia in *Empty: A Story of Anorexia* (Revell). Her firsthand experience enables Christie to encourage today's teen and college girls who struggle with eating disorders. Very compelling!





From left: Kevin Max, Michael J. Pritzi (The Violet Burning)

[KEVIN MAX / THE VIOLET BURNING: "THE IMPOSTER TOUR"]

THE INTERSECTION | GRAND RAPIDS, MI

In just four short years since the release of his solo debut, 2001's *Stereotype Be* (Forefront), **KEVIN MAX** has evolved more than most acts do their entire lifetimes. Though it was apparent he was destined for artistic exploration from the very first solo performances on dc talk's *Intermission* (Forefront) outing, a move to Los Angeles and a celebration over his new baby has sparked an even greater flame within one of the most distinctive voices in modern rock.

Max is currently on a 40-city (and counting) trek behind *The Imposter* (Northern), his second official full-length solo effort following a collaborative project with King Crimson's Adrian Belew and last spring's EP *Between the Fence and the Universe*. The project pays homage to a lengthy list of '70s and '80s rock heroes, such as David Bowie, Morrissey, Duran Duran and Bono, but with a signature stamp that can only be attributed to the highly talented singer/songwriter himself.

In a homecoming show packed out with family, friends and rabid fans, Max and his four-piece band led with the thunderous "Seek" off the aforementioned EP. Rather than coming out like a ping-pong ball of hysteria, the headliner casually settled into the venue's sleek vibe, his hand comfortably resting in his suit coat pocket with the occasional rocking back and forth in front of the microphone stand. After coming to a crescendo close, his backers put pedal to the metal for "The Imposter," for which Max slipped out of his playfully shy stares to unveil a magnetic charisma that would continue for the next hour.

During that time, he pulled out many selections from the past five years, including the gothic tinged "Sanctuary," an acoustic rendition of "Existence" and the bombastic "Jumpstart Your Electric Heart!" Throughout such pacing changes,

he regularly gave props to his wife, daughter, parents, relatives and pals in the crowd while thanking his old-school followers and newer die-hards for their continued support. Such sincerity transitioned towards a stunning duet with guitarist Brennan Strawn on an interpretation of Muse's ethereal "Absolution"; and the walloping wails of the finale "21st Century Darlings" were greeted with the singer's reminder that "there's only One you need to impress."

But more than just the music, Max is an incredibly effective example of being salt and light in mainstream culture, complete with fresh fashions and relevant messages. Though his live dates flip between colleges, churches and clubs (with the likes of The Psychedelic Furs, The Church and members of The Black Crowes); this particular night was playing to the latter but still backed with an inspirational undercurrent. Poetry readings such as "Handsome Samson" and "Princess of Snakes" (an intriguing look at the women who asked for John the Baptist's head) steered clear of all corniness or cliché, showing how faith can be displayed tastefully and artfully no matter the audience.

Preceding Max, fellow Californians **THE VIOLET BURNING** turned in nearly 40 minutes worth of their atmospheric mood music with new wave nuances. The group's founder and front man, **MICHAEL J. PRITZI**, is nowhere near the showman of Max, though his group's dreamy material doesn't require as much interplay. While selections from the new album *Drop-Dead* (Northern) seemed to share nearly identical morphings of Radiohead, The Cure and Nick Cave & the Bad Seeds, the cerebral guitar-driven grinds made splashes with the indie rockers in attendance.

➔ CLUB CONNECTION

[Giving concertgoers a look at one of the country's coolest Christian venues]



Every **MICHAEL W. SMITH** fan knows the song after which **ROCKETOWN** was named, but the club has made a major impact beyond old school '80s pop fans to the current culture at large. That's because Smitty saw a vision to have a safe haven where teens and young adults could hang with all the attractions of a typical mainstream venue—the bar (but alcohol free), a killer concert hall (loaded with monstrous production) and even a skate park (a true attraction for the athletically inclined).

Since 2003, the 40,000 square foot Nashville facility has housed an average of 1,350 attendees a week who've checked out an array of acts from **SWITCHFOOT** to **STRYPER** or simply caught up with friends over coffee. Though concerts are staged on a regular basis, Rocketown also seeks to be a safety net from the streets, helping foster relationships amongst peers, mentors, role models and, most importantly, Christ. For additional information, log on to rcktown.com.

HERE AND THERE

ARE YOU WITHIN A DAY'S DRIVE?

Here's a concert date you won't want to miss!

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LOOSE ENDS

CONFESSIONS OF AN UNFINISHED FAITH

BY NICHOLE NORDEMAN



Ready or Not.

Most parents, educators and psychologists agree—kids are unbelievably impressionable at a very early age. Give them processed junk food from the time they can say “Twinkie,” and, odds are, they won’t ever be all that into broccoli. Stick them in front of five consecutive hours of “SpongeBob” every day, and they probably won’t be building imaginary castles in the backyard very often. And while I am a huge advocate of vegetables and castles, I also know that an early introduction to my son’s faith is more important still.

It just never occurred to me how messy and awkward it could be.

I picked up a children’s book called *Heroes of the Old Testament* the other day. What little boy doesn’t like a good hero? This, I decided, would help me introduce him to Bible stories one pop-up Moses at a time. That night, we read the first story; and it raised some issues I wasn’t ready for. I may be incredibly choosy about what he has for dinner or what videos he watches, but I had not considered that I might need to monitor Bible stories as well. Here is a basic summary of the story I was reading my three-year-old:

Joseph’s dad loved him the best. (*Way* more than the other kids.) He gave Joseph a really neat coat with lots of nice colors. His brothers got jealous, beat him up, threw him in a big hole and left him to die. Then they lied and said that a ferocious lion had eaten Joseph, hence the shredded coat. His dad couldn’t stop crying because he was so sad. Then someone snatched Joseph out of the hole and sold him into slavery. But it’s all good because, years later, he became a nice leader of Egypt and forgave his brothers. So...um...the end. Night night, sweetie.

At some point in the middle of my panicked attempt at trying calmly to explain concepts like

favoritism, jealousy, dishonesty, lion mauling and slavery, my son asked if we could “just please read the train book now.”

Indeed. Thank you, *Lord*, for the train book.

Admit it. Explaining the violence in the Old Testament can be problematic. The loaves and fishes are far more pleasant. This is why most Christian kids sing that song about those adorable animals that came on Noah’s ark by “two-sies, two-sies,” but nobody wrote a verse that mentions the worldwide drowning that took place because of rampant sin. Or why we pay homage to the courage of Lot and how God honored his bravery by sparing his family from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, but we conveniently (and consistently) skip over the part where Lot sends his virgin daughters out to a crowd of crazy men to be raped in an effort to pacify them. I just backspaced over that several times because I’m certain it sounds too horrible and harsh. But this is Genesis we’re talking about...it’s not like I’m embellishing for dramatic effect.

Before you send me a very well-constructed email explaining the righteous anger of the Old Testament God versus the grace of the New Testament Jesus, I assure you that I get it. I really do. I understand that Jesus was the sacrifice that stood in place of the punishment we rightly deserve. And I am in love with Christ because of that understanding. I just don’t think my three-year-old is quite there, which was my mistake, not the Bible’s.

This brings me to my point. (*Finally*, you say.)

I really love the way God reveals Himself to us only when we are ready. Not a moment too soon. He knows when we are only prepared to drink milk and when we are ready for some meat, as Paul put it. How many times, looking back on your life,

have you realized that only God could have known when you were ready to learn certain things? Even in listening back to previous records, I am struck by God’s timing. There are many songs I never could have written eight years ago, not because I am a better songwriter today but because I just wasn’t ready for those particular lessons, yet.

I guess I had never considered that scripture would be a part of that very gradual revelation. I’ve always thought of the Bible as a rather static account of stories, truth, lessons and life that God gave and protected for us. You either “got it” or you didn’t. But, now, I am starting to understand that it lives and breathes between the bound leather and that certain things might actually leap off the page only when we are ready...and you might be three or 93 when that happens.

“God reveals himself to us only when we are ready. Not a moment too soon.”

I could read the same passage hundreds of times, but it won’t matter unless the seed is finally falling on fertile soil. Perhaps this might help to explain the countless interpretations of scripture. After all, what man is immune to his own perspective and prejudice?

There will come a time when the story of Joseph makes more sense to the heart of my toddler. There might come a time when Lot’s choices might make more sense to me. Maybe that time will come on the other side of this life...but I do believe that God reveals things in His time, not ours.

Peace to every traveler...

Nichole Nordeman’s current album, Brave (Sparrow), features the hits “Brave” and “What If” as well as the new single “Real to Me.” For more information on the CD and to find out if Nichole will be performing in a city near you this month, visit nicholenordeman.com.

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HISTORYMAKERS WITH JOHN STYLL

MOMENTS THAT SHAPED CCM

WHAT DO POINT OF GRACE, JACI VELASQUEZ, DAVID PHELPS, STACIE ORRICO, STEVE TAYLOR AND RACHAEL LAMPA HAVE IN COMMON? THE ANNUAL "CHRISTIAN ARTISTS SEMINAR" (NOW KNOWN AS GMA MUSIC IN THE ROCKIES)—WHICH TAKES PLACE THIS MONTH—PLAYED A PIVOTAL ROLE IN LAUNCHING THEIR CAREERS.



Some of this year's performers (from left): Steven Curtis Chapman, David Crowder and Mary Mary

ROCKY MOUNTAIN HIGH

July 30 will mark the opening day of one of the Christian music industry's most beloved annual events – GMA Music in the Rockies. This week-long getaway in beautiful Estes Park, Colorado, was started by Cam Floria in 1974 as a way to help aspiring artists and songwriters. In 1967, Cam founded the Continental Singers (which today is made up of numerous traveling troupes of young people who perform 1,500 concerts annually). He saw the need for a place where folks could have a concentrated learning experience with professionals and, essentially, save months or years of "trial and error" in pursuit of their musical destinies.

Remember, in the early '70s, the modern Christian music industry was in its formative stages. It was not centralized in Nashville, and the annual "Christian Artists Seminar" (as it was called then) became a great place for artists, songwriters and industry folks to gather for inspiration, education and fellowship.

The event also fulfilled its mission of providing tools for those interested in pursuing Christian music as a ministry or vocation. Cam even launched a "competition" element (decades prior to "American Idol!") that offered valuable critique sessions and the opportunity to be "discovered." Over the years, artists as diverse as Steve Taylor and Point of Grace have been signed as a result of being at Estes Park. And Michael W. Smith attended as a teenager (it was a high school graduation gift from his parents).

"Seminar in the Rockies," as it was commonly called, became a Gospel Music Association event in 2000, and the GMA changed the name to "GMA Music in the Rockies" in 2004. Fundamentally, the week has changed very little in its 32 years of existence. Each morning begins with a worship service and an inspirational message. (This year, Passion founder Louie Giglio is one of the speakers.) Then the day is

filled with seminars, artist teaching sessions, competition preliminaries and finals and wonderful recreational opportunities.

Each night, there is a concert featuring top artists. (This year's lineup includes Steven Curtis Chapman, "Passion" with Chris Tomlin and David Crowder, Rebecca St. James, Mary Mary and many others.) One of the fun things about the concerts is the musical diversity. If you go, prepare for "musical whiplash," since an evening will often feature everything from bluegrass to black gospel with rock bands and Southern gospel quartets in the mix as well. Since the event is held in the mountains at an altitude of over 8,000 feet, the air is thin. Performing artists notice this immediately and often find themselves gasping for air on stage. (An oxygen tank and EMTs are always nearby, just in case!)

I could probably write several pages about funny stories that have come from this event. But one of the most memorable was the night several years ago when the Mighty Clouds of Joy performed. They are a legendary gospel group, and it was cool that they were there. The evening concerts take place in a building called "The Longhouse," which is essentially a gym. But the way it is set for concerts requires the stage to be placed in an area where the ceiling is relatively low. That means the hot stage lights are much closer to the performers than they would be in a normal concert setting.

Well, whatever hair product the Clouds were using reacted to the heat from the lights; and, by the time they were into their second or third song, there was literally smoke rising from the tops of their heads. Problem is, the Clouds didn't realize what was happening. Meanwhile, the audiences' snickers grew louder and louder, which was, no doubt, disconcerting to the singers. I have never seen anything like it! Fortunately, there was only smoke and no fire!

A couple years ago, Russ Taff was one of the featured artists. As only Russ would do, as he started his set, he shared with the audience that he had forgotten to use the restroom prior to taking the stage and that he "had to go." (Okay, Russ, that's OVER-sharing!) But he turned in one of the best performances I have ever seen him do. And, immediately after his last note, he literally ran off the stage straight for the men's room. It was hilarious. (Maybe you had to be there.)

Who knows what will happen this year? I cannot wait to get up there. Throw a thousand or more creative people together for a week in the mountains, and God is sure to do some great things. I hope you'll be able to join us.

For more information, visit musicintherockies.com.

Send your thoughts to me at john@gospelmusic.org.

JOHN STYLL is the president of the Gospel Music Association. Before taking its helm, he launched *CCM Magazine* in 1978 and captained our ship for more than 20 years. For more information on the Gospel Music Association or the GMA Music Awards, which it oversees, go to gospelmusic.org.