

# GRAMMY

Plus:  
**A**udio  
adrenaline's  
dios



## Wonder Women

How **Natalie Grant**, Nichole Nordeman, Leigh Nash, BarlowGirl and other female artists are storming a male-dominated music scene.





## 28 cover story

### MARS NEEDS WOMEN

It's been said that men are from Mars and women are from Venus. If that's the case, then today's Christian music scene is looking more and more like Martian terrain. This month, **GREGORY RUMBURG** highlights several female artists (many of which keep highlighting **Sara Groves**) who are going against the flow with their much needed artistry. Here's hoping that they're advance scouts laying the groundwork for an invasion.

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Fans of Audio A are bidding one of their favorite bands a fond farewell this year. Join us as **DAVID McCREARY** and some of your favorite artists help pay tribute to the unforgettable 15-year career of the guys that brought us "Big House."
- 38** **There She Goes**  
The day Sixpence None the Richer fans have been waiting for is finally here. Leigh Nash's stunning solo debut, *Blue on Blue*, will be unveiled this month. Now, Leigh's friend and industry vet **DAVE PALMER** offers you a personal, beautiful view of this wife, mother and artist.
- 40** **Nothing Like the Present**  
Having been broken and abused, Sarah Kelly is redefining who she is through the gift of her sophomore release, *Where the Past Meets Today*. **LINDSAY WILLIAMS** recently talked with Sarah to discuss her history of failed relationships and the way she finds freedom through the hope she sings about.
- 42** **Growing Pains**  
Stellar Kart is standing tall with its new album, and, boy, have they grown since their debut! **CHRISTA A. BANISTER** has the details as she recently chatted with these *stellar* guys about their surprising musical influences and the excitement behind their latest album.

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From left: Flyleaf, Natalie Grant, Sheila Walsh (circa 1983)



## The Right Stuff

Who was the first female artist whose music owned you? I mean, *really* owned you—as in *rocked* your world? For me, it was **Sheila Walsh**. I'm talking pre-Women of Faith, pre-"700 Club" co-host Sheila Walsh. As in mid-80s new wave Scottish rocker Sheila Walsh. There was no one like her then, and there's no one like that now.

I'll never forget that night in 1984 when I heard her sing "Triumph in the Air" on my local Christian radio station's rock show. Since that very moment, female artists have been speaking into my life. And I can't begin to express my gratitude...I mean, I'm so indebted. There was my discovery of **Margaret Becker's** *Immigrant's Daughter* album in 1989 which challenged my perceptions of intimacy with Christ. The new world of music that **Sixpence None the Richer** opened to me four years later as I befriended and labored alongside **Leigh Nash & Co.** The wild talent and poignant artistry of **Sarah Masen**. The deeply beautiful, worshipful and addictive music of **Michelle Tumes**. And, trust me, my personal list—which includes **Fleming McWilliams (Fleming & John)**, **Nicol Sponberg**, **Patsy Moore**, indie artist **Karen Bradley**, **Karen Peris (The Innocence Mission)**, **Kim Thomas (Say-So)**, **Sara Groves**, **Nichole Nordeman** and **Bethany Dillon**—goes on and on...

And most recently? During the past year, my favorite female artist discovery has, without a doubt, been **Lacey Mosley—Flyleaf's** lead singer and lyricist. I was struck by her band's self-titled debut when I first heard it late last year, but seeing Flyleaf play live this past April gave me an even deeper appreciation for her artistry. With all due respect to classic acts such as **Resurrection Band**, **Barnabas, Servant** and **Fighter** (fronted by my distant cousin **Amy [Swartzendruber] Wolter**), Lacey Mosley strikes me as the most gifted female singer *ever* to front a Christian hard band. Frankly, I'd put her up against any of her general market peers as well—including **Evanescence's Amy Lee**. From Lacey's extraordinary vocal range and power to her profound ability to write lyrics ushering redemption and hope into vividly painful circumstances, she's one of a kind.

If I could change one thing about Flyleaf, it would be their modest popularity among Christian music fans. While their debut continues to fly high on the

sales charts—with more than 300,000 albums sold in less than a year—only 20,000 copies have been purchased at Christian retail outlets. Why are general market rock fans embracing this openly Christian band more than we are? An artist *this* good should be making serious waves in Christian music.

That brings me to this month's cover story. With this issue of CCM, we're taking a look at some other outstanding female artists—artists who *are* making major waves in the world of Christian music. Women who are doing so despite the overwhelming majority of male artists on the scene.

Who better to represent these women than this month's cover artist, **Natalie Grant**? Sure, she's this year's GMA "Female Vocalist of the Year"; and, yes, her latest album, *Awaken* (Curb), is about to surpass 300,000 copies sold—an extremely impressive feat for a female pop artist in a male dominated rock & roll world. And, of course, no one questions Natalie's talent. Her vocal chords are the stuff dreams are made of, and her growth as a songwriter is a matter of public record (pun intended). But my favorite thing about her? Heart. She's got it—a boatload of it. Here's a woman who, even as her popularity mushrooms, chooses to use her platform on behalf of children whose lives are not only surrounded by but repeatedly wounded by the most atrocious evil you can imagine. Focusing on this—the gut-wrenching reality of human trafficking—is anything but the sort of safe "feel good" agenda that drives record sales.

Thank God for role models like Natalie Grant. And I don't simply mean role models for us, the fans, I mean role models for other artists. Natalie, Sara Groves, Nichole Nordeman and other female leaders—several of which we're highlighting this month—are just what the doctor ordered. These women are taking bold steps both with their artistry and with their public lives. And, frankly, we need more—more of each of them and more like them.

Amen.

Jay@CCMmagazine.com

## CCM MAGAZINE

Your Christian Music Magazine Since 1978  
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## SWITCHFOOT NOTES

When I was young, I would get angry if Christian artists crossed over into the “secular” music industry. I also felt guilty for enjoying some secular music. When I heard of this band named Switchfoot—that they were Christians, but weren’t necessarily all over the contemporary Christian music scene—my mindset began to shift. Then, I came across a quote from C.S. Lewis: “We don’t need more Christian books, we need more Christians writing good books.” And I believe that applies to the music and movie industry as well. I’m incredibly grateful for magazines like yours that showcase Christians taking their art to a lost world. Your article on Switchfoot [“Learning to Breathe,” June] and Jon Foreman’s “Why Now?” segment were really beautifully written. I hope hearts and minds continue to be opened by your art. Heartfelt thanks from a 30-year-old mom of two.

**Sarah Pearson**  
St. Louis, MO

I’ve read many articles and reviews on Switchfoot from a variety of sources—Christian and secular—and I don’t think I’ve really run across one that does the guys justice like yours did. I know a lot about Switchfoot, but you gave me a more detailed look at how they really started off in the business and what it was like for them personally. And I am so glad you included that email from Jon Foreman in the article [“Switchfoot-Why Now?”]. That was a really great addition. Jon never ceases to amaze me with his words and thoughts, and it encourages and pushes me to be the kind of person he is. It also makes me want to be more like Jesus, as he says.

**Janie Williamson**  
Denver, CO

I was so incredibly stoked to see Switchfoot on the cover! You seriously made me want to dance, and, I admit, I did give a happy little squeal when I took CCM out of the mailbox. I loved it! Absolutely adored it. Jon Foreman is a staggering genius. I say you need to do a special feature and just make one entire issue devoted solely to Switchfoot. Thank you so much, guys!

**Sarah Lam, via email**

Let me thank you for your cover story on Switchfoot. I may have been the only person who didn’t have a Switchfoot album. Because of your feature, I have purchased *Nothing Is Sound*, and the album is AWESOME!

**Bill Broring**  
Rochester, MN

*While we received a barrage of emails and letters thanking us for the Switchfoot cover story, not one single reader expressed reservations. Switchfoot, can you feel the love?*

## BRIAN’S SONG

A heartfelt “thank you” to CCM Magazine’s Kristi Henson for writing such a positive article about Brian Littrell [“Homecoming,” June]. I’m grateful to CCM for giving great coverage about Brian in past issues as well. I’m a 30-something Backstreet Boys and Brian fan, and I am happy to read that Kristi is very much like myself. It was terrific to read about the story of his miracle of life and how you mentioned the Healthy Heart Club for Kids. It’s issues like this that make me happy to be a subscriber to CCM.

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

## WELCOME MS. NORDEMAN!

I wanted to let you know that Nichole Nordeman’s new column has already inspired me, especially in her first one [“Loose Ends: Confessions of An Unfinished Faith,” June]. Her appreciation for valuable aspects of Christian faith, such as humility and confidence, really hits home in my own spiritual journey. I can really identify with what she has to say through her humor and serious tones. Thanks so much for adding her to CCM!

**Rebecca MacVaugh**  
Towson, MD

*You’re thanking us for adding Nichole Nordeman to CCM’s editorial team? That’s like thanking Christian radio for*



*playing her songs. I mean, hey, she makes radio—and CCM—look good!*

## KID TESTED, MOTHER APPROVED

Love the magazine! My son [Mike Smith] is the drummer for the band Leeland, which was featured in your “Band Wagon” column by Kristi Henson [June]. What a great article...I was so excited that I received my subscription in time to be among the first to get to see it! Guess you can say I’m a proud mom—God has been so faithful and his mercy is everlasting!

**Cathy Smith**  
Baytown, TX

## RAISE THE BAR

I have been subscribing to CCM since 1991 and have often taken your suggestions to heart, and I have followed your recommendations. I’d like to thank Dave Palmer, who gave Decyfer Down’s *End of Grey* album a “C-” grade, for showing the reading public his honest opinion without being unkind [“InReview Music,” June]. I have read, from many of your journalists, that they believe we serve the Creator of the Universe; and, if anyone is going to set an artistic and creative curve, it should be those tied in closest with our God. Only by honestly and constructively assessing these artists’ work will you be able to help in refining and raising the bar in the Christian market.

**Jeff Bachman**  
Fresno, CA

*Thanks Jeff—that’s well put. Regarding the multi-talented Dave Palmer, we’re grateful to have him contributing to CCM. In addition to being a great writer, he has been a key influencer in the careers of Third Day, Chevelle, Sixpence None the Richer, L.A. Symphony and many others. Be sure to check out his feature story on Leigh Nash this month, beginning on page 38.*

## SETTING THE PACE

I’ve only been a subscriber for a couple of months, but CCM is the magazine I wait impatiently for. I have gained interest in several bands due to your magazine. I’m a rocker, and I am constantly looking for new bands. And CCM is where I look. Because of you, I actually considered listening to bands such as NEEDTOBREATHE, Flatfoot 56, and Family Force 5—all bands I would normally overlook. But, because of you, I have listened to and fallen in love with all these bands and many more. Your magazine is excellent. Keep up the good work!

**Sean Pace**  
Greensburg, PA

## JONESING FOR ROCK

I’ve subscribed to CCM for almost two years now, and I’ve noticed that almost each issue is better than the last. I’m glad that Hawk Nelson has gotten so much attention in your magazine. I think they are extremely underappreciated by most people. I was introduced to them—now my favorite band—in “Ones to Watch,” which is a great section. Eleventy-seven is also a good band that I was glad ended up in “Ones to Watch.” And I really like “Hitlists.” I’ve always liked charts and stats over stories, so I was glad when you put the charts in the last issue.

**Caleb Jones, via email**

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



# insider

Michael Sweet's worship solo, Sara Groves' personal adventure, the Jesus Freak tribute and more



## >> Finding God in the Ordinary

He's well-known as a songwriter and a singer. Now, meet **Mark Hall** the storyteller and author.



Mark Hall never set out to be an author. Writing a book, he says, was not something that was on his radar. In fact, the lead singer and chief songwriter for the uber-successful group **Casting Crowns** doesn't particularly like to write—or to read for that matter. And for good reason. The 36-year-old Grammy and Dove Award winning singer/songwriter is dyslexic and suffers from Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD).

"They called it 'LD' back then," Hall recalls. "'Learning Disabled.' That's a great title to hang on a fourth grader. Not only are you a dork, but you're LD."

Hall credits his mother with helping him understand that he wasn't 'dumb' but just learned in a different way. "Some people learn through reading;

some learn by seeing or hearing; some learn by doing," he explains. "My mother always made it clear that 'LD' was not *who* I was. It just meant that I had to learn in a different way, and, perhaps, work a little harder than the other kids. She never took it for an excuse to do less than my best."

Eventually Hall learned *how* to learn, but he never developed a love for the written word and was, understandably, less than enthused when he was approached with the idea of writing a book about the stories behind the songs of Casting Crowns.

"My first thought was, 'What do I have to say to anybody?'" he confesses. "'These are just ordinary stories about everyday people.' But then I realized that's where God lives. He lives with us in the middle of the week between the mountain tops. More than anything, I wanted people to see that God speaks to us through ordinary life."

While it is not uncommon for celebrities to hire ghostwriters to help them craft their stories, for Hall it was absolutely essential. "I'm the kind of guy who, when they tried to explain ADD to me, they would get to 'Attention Def...' and I would say, 'Oooh! Look at that shiny thing over there.' It took them an hour to explain to me that I had a hard time paying attention."

Hall partnered with Tim Luke to write *LifeStories: Finding God's "Voice of Truth" Through Everyday Life*. Luke, who serves as Adult Pastor at the Atlanta area's Eagle's Landing First Baptist Church (where Hall serves as Student Pastor), honed his writing chops as editor for Charles Stanley's *In Touch Magazine*. Hall credits Luke with crafting a compelling book that sounds, for all the world, like Mark Hall put the pen to paper himself.

"He didn't run off and leave me," Hall says of his writing partner's skill. "I don't remember reading anything I didn't say. And people who are around me, who know me, tell me it sounds like me talking. I think it takes a good writer to get out of the way and do that."

Entertainment was the furthest thing from my mind," he says. More than just another story-behind-the-songs book, Hall wants *LifeStories* to be a resource to help believers delve deeper into their own stories and to find God in the ordinary.

MIKE PARKER



'Tis So  
**SWEET!**

>>> On the heels of **STRYPER's** heralded return last year with *Reborn (Big3)*, front man **MICHAEL SWEET** continues his modern-day yellow and black attack with his new solo project, *HIM*.

Michael Sweet comes with a pedigree. A Christian music pedigree, that is. A member of the groundbreaking rock band Stryper for more than 20 years, Sweet boasts record sales in excess of eight million albums, several RIAA-certified Gold albums and a Platinum certification for the classic 1986 project *To Hell with the Devil* (Enigma)—which was also named one of the “100 Greatest Albums in Christian Music” by *CCM Magazine*.

Add to that the success of his solo projects. His own self-titled debut was chosen “Favorite Rock Album” in the 1995 *CCM* Readers’ Choice Awards; and the follow-up album, *Real* (Benson), was nominated for a Dove Award in the “Rock Album of the Year” category. With such accomplishments to his credit, Michael Sweet could easily rest on his laurels. But that just won’t do...for Michael Sweet is an inspired man with miles to go!

Speaking of his new project, *HIM*, Sweet’s enthusiasm is palpable. “It’s something that I started work on about three to four years ago. And what I did is I took a bunch of old hymns and I re-wrote the melodies and music,” he explains. “It’s just my opinion, but there are so many old hymns where I just absolutely am floored and moved and touched by the lyrics, by the words...but not so much by the music. So, that’s what gave me the idea to do this—just to re-write a lot of the music.”

To that end, Sweet and longtime friend/co-producer Kenny Lewis (Stryper) collaborated on *HIM's* 11 tracks, showcasing new arrangements of well-loved classics such as “Take My Life” and “O Holy Night.” Longtime fans are sure to be surprised and delighted by the changes Sweet makes to these traditional hymns, both musically and melodically.

When asked about his future plans, Sweet first reflects. “Music is such a passionate part of my life. I couldn’t *not* do music. I’d go absolutely out of my mind, you know?” he confides. “I feel like God’s always given me melodies. I’m one of those guys where my wife’s trying to have a conversation with me, and, many times, I’m humming a melody in my head—totally preoccupied and unfocused. And she’s getting upset with me,” he laughs sheepishly. “It’s just that music’s in me. Music is my life, and I plan on doing it until I take my last dying breath.”

**KRISTI HENSON**

# Heart to Art

>> Thanks to her transparent, engaging songwriting, we've long known **SARA GROVES'** waters run deep. And now, via an unusual new documentary, we really get to experience the woman behind the songs. In the process, she takes us with her on a life-changing journey.



When singer/songwriter Sara Groves considered releasing a DVD, she, like most artists, thought of a standard concert film. But an incredibly unique opportunity presented itself to her via the Nomad production company, which sought to dig much deeper and catch candid glimpses of Groves in some highly varied scenarios.

"Nomad wanted to follow me as a girl undergoing change," she says of *Sara Groves: Just Showed Up for My Own Life*, which hits stores August 8. "The goal was to see what that looks like by catching slices of my life and travels in a reality type of documentary."

But, unlike most "reality television" programs that have scripted and staged elements, this project doesn't sensationalize or craftily edit for controversy. Rather, it poignantly follows Groves and her family in diverse settings, such as a post-Hurricane Katrina trip to Slidell, Louisiana, in which she packs her tour bus full of baby items collected from a charity drive she initiated. Even more moving—riveting, actually—is a journey across the ocean to Rwanda, where she's shown observing a memorial site and grieving over the tragic mass killings 11 years ago.

"There were a lot of new experiences for me, which kind of moves the story along; and it's amazing how this experience has captured a whole paradigm shift," Groves explains. "I've learned that I can't create an [entirely safe] world for my kids, and I don't want them to watch me hug the wall. I'm turning a corner and have seen people out there really making a difference."

Be forewarned. By viewing this documentary, your own view of the world may be changed or, at the very least, called into question. And in this case, that can only be a good thing.

**ANDY ARGYRAKIS**





# august

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

tues. 1	Tammy Trent (Holland, MI)	wed. 16	Dan Smyers (Transition)
wed. 2	<b>Soulfest (Gilford, NH, Aug. 2-6)</b> Jessie Daniels Paul Wright	thurs. 17	<i>Fair (Seattle, WA)</i> <i>MercyMe (Lynden, WA)</i> Daniel Biro (Hawk Nelson)
thurs. 3	<i>Audio Adrenaline (Springfield, MO)</i> John Sanders (Brother's Keeper)	fri. 18	<i>The Afters (Forney, TX)</i> <i>Krystal Meyers (Winsted, MN)</i> John Schnek (Relient K)
fri. 4	<i>Edison Glass (Smithtown, NY)</i> <i>NEEDTOBREATHE (Detroit, MI)</i>	sat. 19	<i>Hyper Static Union (Huntsville, AL)</i> <i>Aaron Shust (Carrollton, GA)</i> Jeremy Deibler (FFH) Dave Douglas (Relient K)
sat. 5	<i>Jars of Clay (Millers, MD)</i>	sun. 20	<i>Sara Groves (Rockford, IL)</i> Brad Avery (Third Day) Rob Beckley (Pillar)
sun. 6	<b>Kingdom Bound (Darien Center, NY, Aug. 6-9)</b> Derek Richard Mount (Family Force 5)	mon. 21	Michael "Kalel" Wittig (Pillar)
mon. 7	<i>Steven Curtis Chapman (Columbus, OH)</i> <i>Michael W. Smith (West Allis, WI)</i>	tues. 22	Jimmy Needham
tues. 8	<i>Jeremy Camp (Missoula, MT)</i> <i>Decyfer Down &amp; Nevertheless (Modesto, CA)</i>	wed. 23	<i>Warren Barfield (Bothell, WA)</i> Josh Havens (The Afters) Jason Ingram (The Longing)
wed. 9	<i>Underoath (Virginia Beach, VA)</i> Jason Roy (Building 429)	thurs. 24	<i>The Crabb Family (Bridgeport, WV)</i>
thurs. 10	<b>Unity Christian Music Festival (Muskegon, MI, Aug. 10-12)</b> Charlie Peacock	fri. 25	<b>DownPour Festival with Skillet &amp; Building 429 (Great Falls, MT, Aug. 25-26)</b>
fri. 11	Jacob Olds (Family Force 5) Josh Olds (Family Force 5) T-Bone	sat. 26	<i>Natalie Grant (Bentonville, AR)</i> Jared Brower (Bernard) Cliff Young (Caedmon's Call)
sat. 12	<i>Stellar Kart (Fairfield, IA)</i> <i>Rebecca St. James (Valdosta, GA)</i> Matt Thiessen (Relient K)	sun. 27	<i>Chris Rice (Roann, IN)</i> Megan Garrett (Casting Crowns)
sun. 13	<i>Switchfoot (Frankfurt, Germany)</i>	mon. 28	Jaime Jamgochian
mon. 14	Matt Baird (Spoken)	tues. 29	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> <p>Register to win a Peavey Guitar autographed by P.O.D. at <a href="http://CCMmagazine.com">CCMmagazine.com</a>.</p> </div>
tues. 15	<i>Flyleaf (Denver, CO)</i>	wed. 30   thurs. 31	

For more tour listings, visit [CCMmagazine.com](http://CCMmagazine.com).

## THIS MONTH @ CCMAGAZINE.COM



CCM continuously features exclusive content from your favorite artists and other personalities online at [CCMmagazine.com](http://CCMmagazine.com). Here's a bit of what you can find online in August...

>>One extremely fortunate fan is about to win the **CCM/Kutless video iPod**, complete with a copy of Kutless' *Hearts of the Innocent* (BEC/Tooth & Nail). At press time, the contest is ongoing; however, we'll announce the winner right here (and online at [CCMmagazine.com](http://CCMmagazine.com), of course) in our September issue. Be sure to check back in!



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



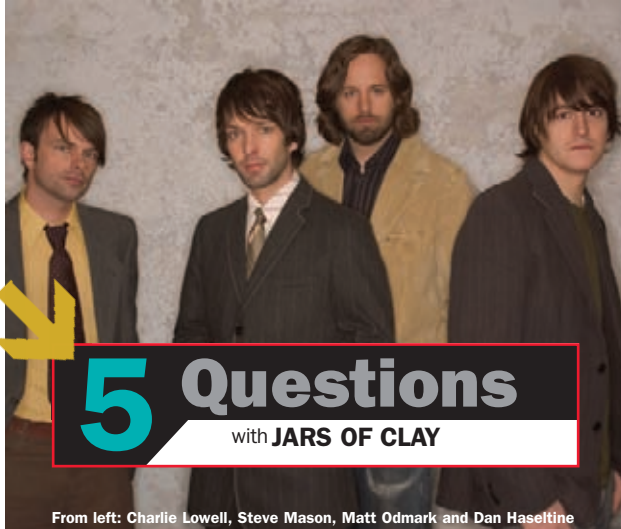
It's not too late to visit [CCMmagazine.com](http://CCMmagazine.com) by **August 31** and register to win a one-of-a-kind guitar—the **Peavey Raptor Plus EXP autographed by P.O.D.** This custom guitar also features an original illustration by the band. Check out the ad on page 67 for more info, then log on to our website to register! The winner will be announced here in our October issue.

>>Are you a fan of all things digital? If so, can you say, "**DIGITAL SUBSCRIPTIONS**"? Now, you can get *CCM Magazine* online...digitally! And we mean the *entire* magazine...not just a few stories. Go to [CCMmagazine.com](http://CCMmagazine.com) and click on any feature or review (and a few other places that we'll let you discover on your own—think of it as a treasure hunt of sorts) to find a link to our digital subscriptions page.

>>>Since this column is about all things internet, here's a list of several websites you might want to check out this month (HINT: They all relate to artists featured in this issue of *CCM Magazine*.)

- [audioa.com](http://audioa.com), [barlowgirl.com](http://barlowgirl.com),
- [bethanydillon.com](http://bethanydillon.com), [kierrakikisheard.com](http://kierrakikisheard.com),
- [mary-mary.com](http://mary-mary.com), [nataliegrant.com](http://nataliegrant.com),
- [nicholenordeman.com](http://nicholenordeman.com), [leighnash.com](http://leighnash.com),
- [rsjames.com](http://rsjames.com), [saragroves.com](http://saragroves.com),
- [sarahkelly.com](http://sarahkelly.com), [stellarkart.com](http://stellarkart.com)





## 5 Questions

with **JARS OF CLAY**

From left: Charlie Lowell, Steve Mason, Matt Odmark and Dan Haseltine

The music of the Grammy and Dove Award-winning band **JARS OF CLAY** has been lauded for years as a rare combination of hard-hitting insight, theological acumen and captivating pop/rock sensibilities. On September 5, Dan Haseltine, Charlie Lowell, Steve Mason and Matt Odmark will release *Good Monsters (Essential)*—a project already hailed by CCM as Jars' "career-defining album" ["From the Editor," July]. These guys have traveled the world performing to sold-out crowds, connecting with people from all walks of life and helping educate the church about justice and mercy as community and global activists. We recently caught up with three-fourths of Jars of Clay to present them with a most formidable task...answering the 5 Questions!

**1. What five words best describe you?**  
Caffeinated, ironic, hairy, free, easy.—**Charlie & Matt** on behalf of the band

**2. What's your most embarrassing moment?**

For our non-profit organization, Blood:Water Mission, we recently had a big donor banquet where we thanked a lot of our friends. And then a lot of people at the banquet donated again, which was amazing. And so we had to call and thank them again. So it's just a cycle of thanking people; it never stops. But that's cool! So I was given a few people to call and thank for being there. I got someone's machine, and I was leaving them this really long, beautiful, eloquent message about how we were thankful for their partnership and just the humility with which they've approached global poverty...and thanking them for their generosity and [that] we really look forward to working together in this project...and just really pouring my heart out there. And I think I kinda got distracted because I ended the message with, "And in Your name I pray, amen," and then hung up the phone. And it really didn't occur to me until about 10 seconds after I hung up the phone what I had said. So I had to call them back and explain that, because I am in a constant state of prayer, that sometimes the lines get blurry and I just feel the need to offer up an "amen."—**Matt**

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

**Matt:** I've never been asked, "Would you go out on a date with me?"

**Charlie:** Well, what would the answer be?

**Matt:** Well, I would have to say it would depend. I mean, I don't want to appear shallow, but...

**Charlie:** Would it depend on that ring on your finger?

**Matt:** It wouldn't be a unilateral "yes." I haven't always been married, but, at this point, it would probably have to be "no." [Laughs]

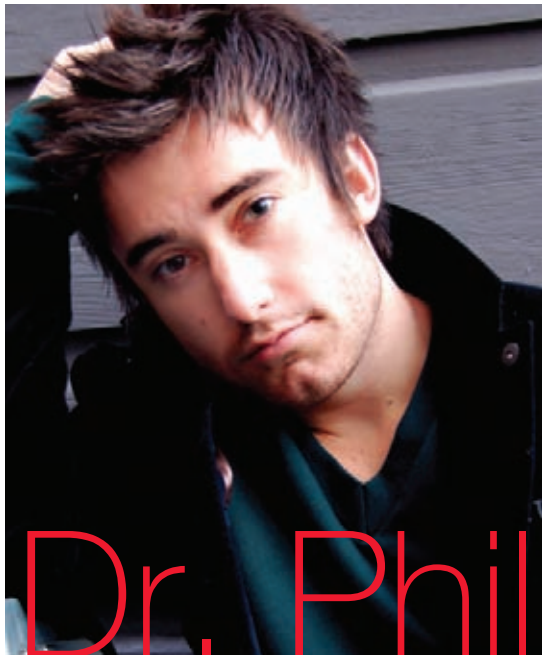
**4. What's a song you wish you had written?**

U2's "With or Without You" —**Steve**

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

I still remember Scotty [Smith, pastor], when he married [my wife and me], saying, "There will always be enough grace for the two of you." And he's been right. —**Charlie**

Our lives are changed, our hearts are changed, through confession and repentance...not through guilt and shame.—**Steve**



## Recording artist **Phil Wickham** offers a fresh dose of medicine for the worship-impaired.

With such an impressive musical pedigree, it's hard to believe singer/songwriter Phil Wickham struggled with the choice to pursue music full-time. But that's the story behind the distinctively voiced newcomer, whose parents are veterans from the 1970s' Jesus Movement bands **The Way** and **Parable**.

Beginning his musical journey at age 12, Wickham, now 22, says his parents never pushed him into becoming an artist. Even so, he learned to play guitar and piano, led worship in church and composed songs. Ultimately, Wickham arrived at a point of decision.

"I remember a four-month period at 19 when I had different paths to consider—going to college, joining a church staff, ministering with music—and I had no idea which way I was supposed to go," Wickham shares by phone from his home in San Diego. "I think, in my heart, I always wanted to be a career musician; but I also knew that the Lord's plan was best."

Wickham continued to seek God's direction through prayer and Bible study, all while honing his songwriting skills. Before turning 20, he released an independent project that gained notable grassroots popularity.

Soon, he got a visit from **MercyMe's Bart Millard** and renowned producer **Pete Kiple**, co-owners of INO imprint Simple Records. "They shared their vision and explained why they wanted me to be part of it," Wickham says. "I felt like our hearts were the same, and I responded, 'OK, Lord. This has to be from you.'"

Wickham signed with Simple Records and, in late April, released his deeply expressive self-titled debut. The disc saw strong early sales (No. 3 on *Billboard's* "Heatseekers" chart) and continues to receive increasing acclaim. He'll open for MercyMe on tour this fall.

Drawing influences from **Jeff Buckley** and **Coldplay**, Wickham's album is a worshipful collection that reflects "prayers of thankfulness to God." Of the 11 tracks, Wickham says he particularly favors "Divine Romance" due to the song's simple, yet poignant, message. "It's about being in the presence of God and realizing how big He is and how small we are," he explains. "And, yet, there's a bridge between us; and it's Jesus."

DAVID McCREARY



# [Keynote Freaker]



Gotee Records, the label co-founded by **tobyMac**, recently released the highly anticipated tribute album, **FREAKED!** The disc commemorates the 10th anniversary of groundbreaking *Jesus Freak*, the career-defining album recorded by tobyMac's Christian music supergroup dc talk. *Freaked!* features tribute recordings by Gotee veterans Relient K, John Reuben, 4th Avenue Jones, Sarah Kelly and Paul Wright as well as offerings by label newcomers Aylesha Woods, Fighting Instinct, Storyside:B, Liquid and Family Force 5, among others. Literally every song on *Jesus Freak* is covered. CCM's Jay Swartzendruber and Kristi Henson took a few moments to see what the man behind the original album had to say about *Freaked!*

**CCM:** *What's it like to know that dc talk and the Jesus Freak album ushered in a "new era" for rock music in the Christian music industry?*

**TOBY:** It's still hard for me to imagine that. It was just another recording process that I was grinding away at, like every other time. But when we finally looked up, we thought we had something very special.

**CCM:** *Besides the musical impact, the song "Jesus Freak" became an anthem of sorts. It suddenly became cool to be a "Jesus Freak" and announce it via T-shirts, bumper stickers, etc. Did you have any idea that people would latch on this way?*

**TOBY:** The first time we performed "Freak," the disc wasn't even out yet. We were in Australia, and the crowd went crazy. I think we did the song twice, and they were asking for a third. It was an immediate anthem.

**CCM:** *Why did you decide to "keep it in the family" and feature only Gotee artists on the Freaked! project?*

**TOBY:** The album was a Gotee staff idea. I really let the staff speak into those decisions...I didn't have that much to do with it really. I wouldn't want to preside over a tribute record to something I wrote and produced. Besides, it was hard enough to record the first time. I am a recovering perfectionist.

**CCM:** *Is there a remake on this album that you're particularly struck by, thinking, perhaps, that it's better than your original?*

**TOBY:** That's a double-loaded question that I am not going near.

**CCM:** *Which cut on the record is the most innovative and different from your original version?*

**TOBY:** "Mind's Eye" by Family Force 5 is probably the most adventurous. I would have never imaged "Mind's Eye" on that continent.

**CCM:** *Which album do you like better, Freaked! or your original, Jesus Freak?*

**TOBY:** You are determined to tear away at the very fiber of my humility. [Laughs] Every disc I record holds a special place and time in my life. It's like a snapshot of where you were then, the way you thought or what was driving you. *Jesus Freak* was made at a time when immense changes were happening within me, and I think I can say the same for Kevin and Michael. Three boys coming from a fairly legalistic background and opening our doors to life and faith and figuring out where we stood in it all. How can I say anything but...*Jesus Freak*.

**CCM:** *Were you surprised by the song choice of any particular artist on the tribute album?*

**TOBY:** "So Help Me God" by metal band The Showdown was a bit of a shocker.

**CCM:** *Have Michael and Kevin heard Freaked! yet, and what do they think of it?*

**TOBY:** I'm not really sure, but I hope they like it.





★ **Welcome to the world of independent artists.**  
This month, we spotlight female artists.



**Jill Paquette**

*Jill Paquette*



Currently making her abode in Nashville, this Canadian singer/songwriter's name is a familiar one. On her Reunion Record's self-titled debut, Jill delivered stunningly artful songs and with a voice that has rightly been compared to Alison Krauss. Jill is back to being an indie artist once again, and the songs have gotten better just as her voice has gotten sweeter...who knew it was possible? Visit [jillpaquette.com](http://jillpaquette.com) to listen to Jill's new music!

**Jillian Holzbauer**

Balancing music and college, this Oklahoma native is getting attention for her "disarming honesty"...and obvious talent. With music described as "acoustic soul," the strength and passion in Jillian's voice is as undeniable as her lyrics are deep. Citing her genes as the reason for her music, Jillian might be on to something. After all, Bethany Dillon is her first cousin! Check out [myspace.com/jillianholzbauer](http://myspace.com/jillianholzbauer) for more information!

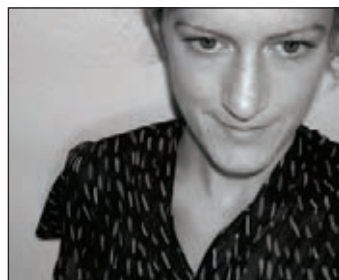


**Laura Gibson**

*Amends*



If you missed this Portland, Ore., songwriter's first six-song EP, *Amends*, there is still time to pick it up and fall in love before the release of her full album later this year. With an acoustic guitar and jazz influence, Laura's melodies are anything but ordinary. Each listen to her captivating songs will draw you in and leave you endeared. Hear more at [lauragibson.net](http://lauragibson.net).



**Anna Gilbert**

*God Sees*



Composing songs since before elementary school, this Eugene, Ore., native plays the piano as though it were an extension of her body. Her beautiful, piano-driven songs are making their mark on the indie scene; and Anna's first single topped the IndieHeaven charts in June! Listen to Anna's debut album, *God Sees*, on her website: [annagilbert.com](http://annagilbert.com).



**Profiles by KATE MCDONALD**

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



**THE SWEET SMELL OF SUCCESS**

By: Margaret Becker

We knew each other by the distinct, lingering stale smell of cigarettes. That's how we first hooked up when I lived on Long Island. I stood behind Jay in the third row of our vast church orchestra.

"You work last night?" I would whisper to the back of his head, already knowing the answer.

"Yeah. Don't tell me," he would whisper back as he took a whiff, "you did, too."

He could smell it on my guitar; and, every time he blew his horn, I got the same wind back. The smell of four sets at a club. We were bleary-eyed and ready to go, loaded up on caffeine to fight four hours sleep.

Around me sat a talented array of musicians. Among them were a clarinetist who played with the New York Philharmonic, a percussionist who worked as a session player on sight-reading-only sessions in Manhattan, and my friend, Jay, who had regular stints in the studio and club gigs as a flugle horn player.

Our conductor, Sue, was no pushover. The rules were the same for everyone under her baton. This was God's work, and anyone who didn't take that seriously would probably be "happier elsewhere." "No practice, no play" was her mantra. We all adhered to it.

It was a tough gig. It was never convenient. The scores were challenging. The rehearsals were demanding. But I loved it—because of who and what it was all for: to serve, to play as "unto God." It was a privilege to be stretched and to strive for musical perfection as a "reasonable service of worship."

I believe that's what it means to "worship" with music. To be excellent in a non-distracting way. To count it an honor to serve God's people with a primitive thing like wood and steel and to feel it become God's anointed tool when it's unimpeded.

What impedes it? Ego. Self-promotion. Non team players. Lack of fluidity. Bitterness. Jealousy. Judging. Gossiping. Laziness.

Are you part of your worship team? Do you have any of the above present on your team? If you do, what's your responsibility in it all? To change yourself. To make it your reasonable service of worship to avoid these things. To lead by example. To go the extra mile—for months on end if needed.

Show up on time. Do your homework. Play with others. Take direction, even if you think you know better. Accept and embrace the facts that there are those who are better than you and those who are not quite as far along as you—and neither should affect your attitude or offering.

Give your best. Bring your best. Be your best and serve. This is what it means to worship—in all areas. Music is no exception.

And, if you've got a Saturday night gig, I've since learned that a little Bounty dryer sheet in the sound-hole of your guitar at 2 a.m. will keep you in "close fellowship." One in the case as well would be the extra mile.



For a podcast featuring Margaret and a leading worship leader, go to [maggieb.com](http://maggieb.com). You can also hear an excerpt from Margaret's new book, *Coming Up for Air* (NavPress), which is available for purchase at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com) and [christianbook.com](http://christianbook.com).



## [TOP CHRISTIAN/GOSPEL ALBUMS OVERALL]

THE TOP-SELLING  
CHRISTIAN ALBUMS  
ACCORDING TO  
NIELSEN SOUNDSCAN



[Highest Debut.....: **UNDEROATH**]

*Define the Great Line* (Tooth & Nail)

[Underoath's *Define the Great Line* simultaneously debuted at No. 2 on *The Billboard 200* sales chart. That's the highest charting position by a Christian album since 1997 when LeAnn Rimes' *You Light Up My Life*—*Inspirational Songs* claimed the No. 1 spot.]


THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	WEEKS ON CHIT	ARTIST	TITLE (Label)
★1	—	1	<b>UNDEROATH</b>	<i>Define the Great Line</i> (Tooth & Nail)
2	1	17	ALAN JACKSON	<i>Precious Memories</i> (ACR/Arista Nashville)
3	93	2	TODD AGNEW	<i>Grace Like Rain</i> (Ardent/S-R-E)
4	3	37	FLYLEAF	<i>Flyleaf</i> (Octone/S-R-E)
5	4	43	CASTING CROWNS	<i>Lifesong</i> (Beach Street)
6	2	9	MERCYME	<i>Coming Up to Breathe</i> (INO)
7	5	12	VARIOUS	<i>WOW Worship: Aqua</i> (Provident)
8	6	5	TYE TRIBBETT	<i>Victory</i> (Integrity)
9	8	38	KIRK FRANKLIN	<i>Hero</i> (Gospocentric)
10	9	53	CHRIS TOMLIN	<i>Arriving</i> (sixsteps)
11	14	24	JUANITA BYNUM	<i>Piece of My Passion</i> (Flow)
12	10	38	VARIOUS	<i>WOW Hits 2006</i> (Sparrow)
13	7	34	THIRD DAY	<i>Wherever You Are</i> (Essential)
14	12	22	VARIOUS	<i>WOW Gospel 2006</i> (Verity)
15	13	16	AARON SHUST	<i>Anything Worth Saying</i> (Brash/Word)
16	11	49	MARY MARY	<i>Mary Mary</i> (Integrity)
17	15	14	KUTLESS	<i>Hearts of the Innocent</i> (BEC)
18	—	1	BILL & GLORIA GAITHER	<i>Tribute to George Yonce</i> (Spring House)
19	23	13	BISHOP G.E. PATTERSON	<i>Singing the Old Time Way, Volume 2</i> (Podium)
20	16	53	CASTING CROWNS	<i>Casting Crowns</i> (Beach Street)
21	17	53	VARIOUS	<i>O Brother, Where Art Thou?</i> Soundtrack (PHWY)
22	21	8	BRIAN LITTRELL	<i>Welcome Home</i> (Reunion)
23	—	1	VARIOUS	<i>Freaked!</i> (Gotee)
24	20	14	MARK HARRIS	<i>The Line Between the Two</i> (INO)
25	22	12	HAWK NELSON	<i>Smile, It's the End of the World</i> (Tooth & Nail)
26	30	53	RELIENT K	<i>MMHMM</i> (Gotee/Capitol)
27	36	43	YOLANDA ADAMS	<i>Day by Day</i> (Atlantic)
28	37	3	RED	<i>End of Silence</i> (Essential)
29	35	53	MERCYME	<i>Almost There</i> (INO)
30	57	6	NORMAN HUTCHINS	<i>Where I Long to Be</i> (JDI)
31	25	12	PASSION WORSHIP BAND	<i>Passion: Everything Glorious</i> (sixsteps)
32	24	3	DAY OF FIRE	<i>Cut and Move</i> (Essential)
33	33	12	UNITED	<i>United We Stand</i> (Integrity)
34	31	53	JEREMY CAMP	<i>Restored</i> (BEC)
35	45	53	UNDEROATH	<i>They're Only Chasing Safety</i> (Solid State)
36	49	39	BARLOWGIRL	<i>Another Journal Entry</i> (Fervent)
37	69	53	VARIOUS	<i>I Can Only Imagine</i> (INO)
38	47	10	MAT KEARNEY	<i>Nothing Left to Lose</i> (Inpop)
39	34	35	VARIOUS	<i>Open the Eyes of My Heart</i> (INO)
40	19	15	MARTHA MUNIZZI	<i>No Limits</i> (Integrity)

\*Each chart reflects Christian and general market combined album sales for the week ending **June 25, 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	1	 UNDEROATH	<b>Define the Great Line</b> (Tooth & Nail)
2	37	FLYLEAF	<i>Flyleaf</i> (Octone/S-R-E)
3	34	THIRD DAY	<i>Wherever You Are</i> (Essential)
4	14	KUTLESS	<i>Hearts of the Innocent</i> (BEC)
5	1	VARIOUS	<i>Freaked!</i> (Gotee)
6	12	HAWK NELSON	<i>Smile, It's the End of the World</i> (Tooth & Nail)
7	86	RELIENT K	<i>MMHMM</i> (Gotee/Capitol)
8	3	RED	<i>End of Silence</i> (Essential)
9	3	DAY OF FIRE	<i>Cut and Move</i> (Essential)
10	106	UNDEROATH	<i>They're Only Chasing Safety</i> (Tooth & Nail)
11	39	BARLOWGIRL	<i>Another Journal Entry</i> (Fervent)
12	12	SANCTUS REAL	<i>Face of Love</i> (Sparrow)
13	20	P.O.D.	<i>Testify</i> (Atlantic/Word)
14	41	SWITCHFOOT	<i>Nothing Is Sound</i> (Sparrow/Columbia)
15	69	KUTLESS	<i>Strong Tower</i> (BEC)
16	66	JARS OF CLAY	<i>Redemption Songs</i> (Essential)
17	12	VARIOUS	<i>X2006</i> (BEC)
18	3	GREELEY ESTATES	<i>Far from the Lies</i> (Record Collection)
19	14	BUILDING 429	<i>Rise</i> (Word)
20	13	FAMILY FORCE 5	<i>Business Up Front, Party in the Back</i> (Gotee)

## [TOP R&B/HIP-HOP ALBUMS]

THIS WEEK	WEEKS ON CHIT	ARTIST	TITLE (Label)
★ 1	53	 TOBYMAC	<b>Welcome to Diverse City</b> (ForeFront)
2	42	CECE WINANS	<i>Purified</i> (Pure Springs Gospel/INO)
3	13	GRITS	<i>7</i> (Gotee)
4	8	KJ-52	<i>KJ-52 Remixed</i> (BEC)
5	12	PETTIDEE	<i>Thug Love</i> (Beatmart)
6	40	DA T.R.U.T.H.	<i>The Faith</i> (Cross Movement)
7	53	KJ-52	<i>Behind the Musik</i> (BEC)
8	45	VARIOUS	<i>Hip Hope Hits 2006</i> (Gotee)
9	10	ROB HODGE	<i>Born King</i> (Beatmart)
10	45	LECRAE	<i>Real Talk</i> (Cross Movement)
11	22	LISA MCCLENDON	<i>Live at the House of Blues</i> (Integrity)
12	37	GEORGE HUFF	<i>Miracles</i> (Word)
13	38	T-BONE	<i>Bone-A-Fide</i> (Flicker)
14	22	FLAME	<i>Rewind</i> (Cross Movement)
15	45	CANTON JONES	<i>Love Jones</i> (EMI CMG)
16	53	DEITRICK HADDON	<i>Lost and Found</i> (Verity)
17	53	RUBEN STUDDARD	<i>I Need an Angel</i> (J Records/Provident)
18	13	JAPHIA LIFE	<i>Fountain of Life</i> (Beatmart)
19	53	THE CROSS MOVEMENT	<i>Higher Definition</i> (Cross Movement)
20	53	KJ-52	<i>It's Pronounced Five Two</i> (BEC)

## [TOP ADULT CONTEMPORARY/POP ALBUMS]

THIS WEEK	WEEKS ON CHIT	ARTIST	TITLE (Label)
★ 1	25	 TODD AGNEW	<b>Grace Like Rain</b> (Ardent/S-R-E)
2	44	CASTING CROWNS	<i>Lifesong</i> (Beach Street)
3	9	MERCYME	<i>Coming Up to Breathe</i> (INO)
4	38	VARIOUS	<i>WOW Hits 2006</i> (Sparrow)
5	143	CASTING CROWNS	<i>Casting Crowns</i> (Beach Street)
6	8	BRIAN LITRELL	<i>Welcome Home</i> (Reunion)
7	15	MARK HARRIS	<i>The Line Between the Two</i> (INO)
8	70	MERCYME	<i>Almost There</i> (INO)
9	16	JEREMY CAMP	<i>Restored</i> (BEC)
10	10	MAT KEARNEY	<i>Nothing Left to Lose</i> (Inpop)
11	7	NICOLE C. MULLEN	<i>Redeemer: The Best of Nicole C. Mullen</i> (Word)
12	64	VARIOUS	<i>WOW #1s</i> (Provident)
13	28	VARIOUS	<i>Chronicles of Narnia Soundtrack</i> (Disney/EMI CMG)
14	45	TODD AGNEW	<i>Reflection of Something</i> (S-R-E/Ardent)
15	7	JACI VELASQUEZ	<i>On My Knees: The Best of Jaci Velasquez</i> (Word)
16	66	NATALIE GRANT	<i>Awaken</i> (Curb)
17	22	AVALON	<i>Stand</i> (Sparrow)
18	33	JEREMY CAMP	<i>Live Unplugged</i> (BEC)
19	57	NICHOLE NORDEMAN	<i>Brave</i> (Sparrow)
20	16	SHAWN MCDONALD	<i>Ripen</i> (Sparrow)

## [TOP PRAISE & WORSHIP ALBUMS]

THIS WEEK	WEEKS ON CHIT	ARTIST	TITLE (Label)
★ 1	12	 VARIOUS	<b>WOW Worship: Aqua</b> (Provident)
2	92	CHRIS TOMLIN	<i>Arriving</i> (sixsteps)
3	22	AARON SHUST	<i>Anything Worth Saying</i> (Brash/Word)
4	12	PASSION WORSHIP BAND	<i>Passion: Everything Glorious</i> (sixsteps)
5	12	UNITED	<i>United We Stand</i> (Integrity)
6	35	VARIOUS	<i>Open the Eyes of My Heart</i> (INO)
7	1	VARIOUS	<i>Worship: The Ultimate Collection</i> (Sparrow)
8	3	VARIOUS	<i>Top 25 Praise Songs 2007 Edition</i> (MARA)
9	39	DAVID CROWDER BAND	<i>A Collision</i> (sixsteps)
10	23	CHRIS TOMLIN	<i>Live from Austin Music Hall</i> (sixsteps)
11	16	VARIOUS	<i>Best Worship Songs Ever!</i> (WorshipTogether)
12	35	RANDY TRAVIS	<i>Glory Train: Songs of Worship</i> (Word)
13	26	HILLSONG	<i>Ultimate Worship: Best of Hillsong</i> (Integrity)
14	3	VARIOUS	<i>Arise</i> (Integrity)
15	3	HILLSONG	<i>Jesus Is</i> (Integrity)
16	137	RANDY TRAVIS	<i>Worship &amp; Faith</i> (Word)
17	6	STARFIELD	<i>Beauty in the Broken</i> (Sparrow)
18	2	VARIOUS	<i>Very Best of Praise &amp; Worship</i> (Verity)
19	250	MICHAEL W. SMITH	<i>Worship</i> (Reunion)
20	60	AMY GRANT	<i>Rock of Ages...Hymns &amp; Faith</i> (Word)

\* Each chart reflects Christian and general market combined album sales for the week ending June 25, 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.



## WHEN CHURCHES COLLIDE

>>>The thought-provoking Christian drama **The Second Chance** is now on DVD. Starring **Michael W. Smith** in his motion picture debut, the film tells a story of two churches as they collide over issues of race, poverty and faith. *The Second Chance* DVD includes such bonus features as Michael W. Smith's powerful "All in the Serve" music video, deleted scenes and "Beyond the Making of *The Second Chance*."

## ALIAS: SAINT

This summer, **Ted Dekker** fans are in for an unusual treat: A comic book-style preview to his fall supernatural thriller, **Saint** (WestBow). The teaser is created by **Alias Comics**, a new company exploding in both the comic book and Christian retail markets with its high-quality line of Christian and all-ages comic books.

Created by industry veterans who have worked for major comics companies Marvel, DC, Dark Horse and Image, Alias Comics' titles run the spectrum from evangelistic stories to allegories to wholesome entertainment. The company is also producing a series for Zondervan and launching the Christian youth magazine *Bubblemag*.

"As a youth pastor myself," says Alias publisher Brett Burner, "it is such a blessing to be able to publish work that I can count on to edify our youth!"

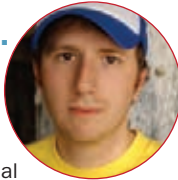


## NOW, FOR YOUR VIEWING PLEASURE...

>>>There is a new documentary film about **Danielson Famile**. Find info about the aptly titled **Danielson: A Family Movie** at [creativearson.com/danielson](http://creativearson.com/danielson).

**John Reuben** has posted all kinds of video at [youtube.com](http://youtube.com), including his TV pilot, "The Professional Rapper," plus such videos as "Out of Control," "John Reuben Rips the Mic at Age 13" and "Mistaken for a Girl."

Former **Run-DMC** rapper-turned-preacher **Rev Run** and family are back for more of MTV's "Run's House," which started its second season in July. *Newsweek* says, "In a time when TV families have to be outrageous, dysfunctional or both, 'Run's House' is sweet, wholesome and charming."



## BACK TO THE CRISPER

>>>>>>>>>>> Move over, Superman—**VeggieTales'** famous superhero is back in the new DVD **LarryBoy and the Bad Apple!** The Bad Apple is trying to take control of the town by making all its citizens give in to their temptations. Everyone is in danger—Mayor Blueberry, Reporter Petunia, Butler Alfred, even the town's fearless defender, LarryBoy!

By the way, Bob and Larry are also headed back to the big screen: Universal Pictures and Big Idea are preparing the worldwide release of feature film *The Pirates Who Don't Do Anything* for early 2008. Phil Vischer is writer and executive producer, and Mike Nawrocki is directing.

## CHRISTIAN ROAD WARRIOR

>>>>>>>>>>> The new web-based ministry **Christian Road Warrior** ([christianroadwarrior.com](http://christianroadwarrior.com)) offers accountability and encouragement to travelers. Connecting Christians through prayer, meetings, email correspondence and online chat rooms, CRW supports travelers in making decisions that edify them and their individual relationships with Christ. It also helps prevent the harmful consequences of sin committed away from home and encourages everyone associated with the ministry to share the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, leading to the transformation of the nations through everyday travel.

## CCM

## jeopardy



**Answer: The greatest game in magazine history!**  
**Question: What is CCM Jeopardy?** This month, we've given the answers to **JESSY RIBORDY**. London Bridge may be falling down, but Jessy's band, **FALLING UP**, is definitely on the rise. Falling Up has been burning up the highways, touring with bands such as Hawk Nelson and Project 86 in support of its sophomore album, *Dawn Escapes* (BEC). The answers may have fallen into Jessy's lap, but have the questions escaped him?

**CCM's A:** Fourteen bottles of hair gel

**Jessy's Q:** What do I eat for breakfast everyday with skim milk? [*Um...—Editors*]

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

**Jessy's Q:** What is "Fear Factor"?

**CCM's A:** 4, 8, 15, 16, 23, 42

**Jessy's Q:** What are the numbers you enter in the computer in the hatch? [re: TV's "Lost"]

**CCM's A:** A classic album everyone should own

**Jessy's Q:** What is Stevie Nicks' *Bella Donna*?

**CCM's A:** Jesse James, Jesse Ventura, Jesse Jackson & Uncle Jesse

**Jessy's Q:** Who did I spend the weekend in a clown car with?

**CCM's A:** Jessie's Girl

**Jessy's Q:** Who is a super babe (aka my girlfriend, Allison Newell)?

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

**Jessy's Q:** What is the first time two people were arguing whether it's "ketchup" or "catsup"?

**CCM's A:** "I've fallen, and I can't get up"

**Jessy's Q:** What phrase was made famous by a human being with a nose, two eyes and two ears and who lives off of air, water and food? [*Again, Um...*]

**CCM's A:** Tom Cruise

**Jessy's Q:** Who invented air?

**CCM's A:** The only other band I'd like to be in

**Jessy's Q:** Who are the Foo Fighters?

**CCM's A:** To visit life on other planets

**Jessy's Q:** Where is our next tour going?

**CCM's A:** Who I wanted to be when I grew up

**Jessy's Q:** What is a doctor?

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

**Jessy's Q:** What is the Tower of Babel?

**CCM's A:** If I weren't an artist, this would be my occupation

**Jessy's Q:** What is a kitchen appliance? [*OK, this one we get...*]



Keep up with the latest "SIGHTINGS" weekdays at [CCMmagazine.com](http://CCMmagazine.com).

# Chris Well's SUPER-SIZED CCM List-O-Rama

\* A compendium of arguably useless and "researched" musings

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20

## SIX DEGREES OF SUPERMAN

THE SECRET CONNECTION BETWEEN CHRISTIAN MEDIA AND THE MAN OF STEEL



WHEN TWO JEWISH HIGH SCHOOL KIDS GROWING UP DURING THE DEPRESSION FIRST CAME UP WITH "SUPERMAN," THEY HAD NO IDEA THEIR CHARACTER WOULD BE SO ENDURING OR, FOR THAT MATTER, INVENT AN ENTIRE GENRE. CREATED IN THE 1930S BY JERRY SEIGEL AND JOE SHUSTER, SUPERMAN WAS AN EQUAL MIX OF PULP HERO, CIRCUS STRONGMAN AND MOSES.

BUT, IN THE MORE THAN 70 YEARS SINCE THEN, THE CHARACTER HAS BEEN RESHAPED BY HUNDREDS OF STORYTELLERS IN THOUSANDS OF STORIES FROM COMICS TO CARTOONS, RADIO DRAMAS TO TELEVISION SHOWS, AND STAGE TO SCREEN. (NOT TO MENTION HUNDREDS OF SONGS, BY EVERYONE FROM THE MONKEES TO GENESIS TO 50 CENT). AND THE CAMPAIGN FOR THE FILM SUPERMAN RETURNS HAS CERTAINLY PLAYED UP THE "MESSIAH" ANGLE, WHICH MAKES US THINK OF THIS SUPER-SIZED LIST ...

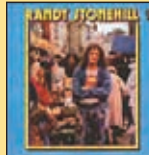
### 1. PILLAR

THE CCM COVER BAND (JULY 2004) HOLDS TWO KRYPTONIAN-RELATED DISTINCTIONS: FIRST, THE SONG "ORIGINAL SUPERMAN," FROM 2001'S ABOVE (FLICKER), DECLARES JESUS IS MORE POWERFUL THAN ANY MERE SUPERHERO; SECOND, THE BASS PLAYER IS NAMED KALEL (SUPERMAN'S BIRTH NAME ON KRYPTON WAS "KAL-EL").



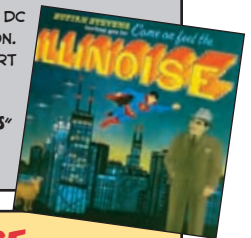
### 2. RANDY STONEHILL

THIS CHRISTIAN ROCK PIONEER WORE AN "S" SHIRT ON THE COVER OF HIS ALBUM GET ME OUT OF HOLLYWOOD (RECORDED IN 1973 BUT NOT OFFICIALLY RELEASED UNTIL SOLID ROCK PUT IT OUT IN 2003) AND A SUPERHERO COSTUME IN THE VIDEO FOR "THE GODS OF MEN" FROM HIS 1985 ALBUM LOVE BEYOND REASON (MYRRH).



### 3. SUFJAN STEVENS

THE ACCLAIMED SINGER/SONGWRITER PUT SUPERMAN ON THE COVER OF HIS 2005 ALBUM ILLINOISE (ASTHMATIC KITTY) UNTIL THE LABEL REALIZED NO ONE BOTHERED TO ASK DC COMICS FOR PERMISSION. (THE CURRENT ALBUM ART IS SANS SUPERHERO.) THE TRACK "THE MAN OF METROPOLIS STEALS OUR HEARTS" ECHOES SUPERMAN AS A CHRIST FIGURE.

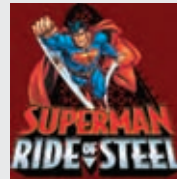


### 4. THE O.C. SUPERTONES

THE BAND'S 1996 DEBUT, ADVENTURES OF THE OC SUPERTONES (TOOTH & NAIL), SPORTED A NIFTY "SUPERMAN"-ISH CARTOON IMAGE ON THE COVER.

### 5. KINGDOM BOUND

MARKING ITS 20TH ANNIVERSARY THIS YEAR, KINGDOM BOUND AT SIX FLAGS DARIEN LAKE IS ONE OF THE LARGEST CHRISTIAN MUSIC FESTIVALS IN AMERICA AND ALSO BOASTS THE SUPERMAN ULTIMATE ESCAPE ROLLER COASTER. (ACTUALLY, IT'S A SIX FLAGS RIDE; BUT WE THINK THE SAME TICKET COVERS IT ALL.)



### 6. JARS OF CLAY

ON THE BAND'S 2002 ALBUM, THE ELEVENTH HOUR (ESSENTIAL), JARS OF CLAY USES KRYPTONITE, SUPERMAN'S ACHILLES' HEEL, AS A METAPHOR FOR FRAILTY IN "WHATEVER SHE WANTS."

### 7. SIXPENCE NONE THE RICHER

WHILE SIXPENCE NONE THE RICHER NEVER ACTUALLY RECORDED A "SUPERMAN" SONG, THE BAND DID APPEAR ON THE SMALLVILLE: THE TALON MIX SOUNDTRACK TO THE TV SERIES, WHICH DETAILS CLARK KENT'S ADOLESCENT YEARS. SIXPENCE CONTRIBUTED ITS COVER OF THE CROWDED HOUSE CLASSIC "DON'T DREAM IT'S OVER."



### 8. DAILY PLANET

THIS BAND TAKES ITS NAME FROM SUPERMAN'S DAY JOB, WHERE CLARK KENT WORKS AT A MAJOR METROPOLITAN NEWSPAPER. THE BAND'S 2002 DEBUT, HERO (REUNION), ALSO INCLUDES A SUPERMAN REFERENCE IN THE SONG "FIVE."



### 9. THE VIOLET BURNING

ALT-ROCK WORSHIP BAND THE VIOLET BURNING HAS REFERENCED THE LAST MAN FROM KRYPTON TWICE: IN "THE SUN AND THE SKY," FROM 1996'S THE VIOLET BURNING; AND IN "I'M NO SUPERMAN," FROM 1998'S DEMONSTRATES PLASTIC AND ELASTIC.

### 10. THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THE WORLD'S GREATEST SUPERHERO

STEVE SKELTON HAS MADE A NAME CREATING BIBLE STUDIES BASED ON SUCH CULTURAL TOUCHSTONES AS "THE ANDY GRIFFITH SHOW" AND "BONANZA." HIS NEW BOOK, THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THE WORLD'S GREATEST SUPERHERO (HARVEST HOUSE), EXAMINES THE PARALLELS BETWEEN THE LAST SON OF KRYPTON AND GOD'S ONLY BEGOTTEN SON.

### BONUS POINTS:

ACCORDING TO SUPERMANNOMIEPAGE.COM, A WHOPPING 337 SONGS REFERENCE SUPERMAN. INCLUDED ON THAT LIST ARE SUCH CCM FAVORITES AS BLINDSIDE, BOB CARLISLE, BUCK ENTERPRISES, DC TALK, FIVE IRON FRENZY, LUNA HALO, TONIO K., TREE 63 AND ZILCH.

- SIGNS YOU NEED TO GETTA LIFE
- 1) Always clipping faces out of CCM magazine to create dioramas.
  - 2) Spend sleepless nights worrying some kid will beat your high score on Stargate Defender.
  - 3) Won't take your Johnny Cash action figure out of the package to make sure it stays collectible.
  - 4) You score Chris Well's hit thrillers for cheat codes to "Left Behind: the Video Game."
  - 5) You're reading this fine print instead of moving on to all the other great stuff in the magazine.



Chris Well's suspense thriller *Deliver Us from Evelyn* (Harvest House) is also chock-full of comic book-related goodness. If Chris had been thinking "media tie-in," it would have been less about Batman and more about Superman; but what are you gonna do?



# industrybeat

by Jay Swartzendruber



## Six Degrees of Tyler Bacon

Ever wonder how faith-based songs often get placed in today's biggest films and television programs? Just ask Tyler Bacon, one of Christian music's best advocates with Hollywood and Burbank. His Los Angeles-based company, Position Music, focuses on music publishing and artist representation for film, TV and media licensing. Position also has an artist management division. Before he founded Position in 1999, Bacon spent several years working for indie label R.E.X. Music (where he headed up the A&R department) and, then, Pioneer Music Group. During that span, the North Dakota-native helped launch the careers of Sixpence None the Richer, Fleming and John and Living Sacrifice while also working with CeCe Winans, Believer, The Choir, Julie Miller, Whitecross and Randy Stonehill, among others.

### How did you choose music as a career?

I was a total metal-head growing up. I went to college in Minnesota for two years without a major. I figured, "Who actually works in the field they study in school? I might as well do something that sounds cool and just get a degree." So, I happened upon an issue of *Mix Magazine* and saw there were schools that advertised recording degrees. I had two requirements: I wanted to be near some sort of city; and I wanted my credits to transfer. I saw Middle Tennessee State University was listed as one of the top schools, and it fit my requirements. So, I moved to the South... I went to study recording engineering but realized they had a music business emphasis as well. That was much more my fit. I don't have the personality to sit in a studio for 14 hours a day.

### How would you describe what Position Music does?

The heart of what we do is license songs to movies, TV, movie trailers, video games, advertising, etc. We represent record companies and artists in that capacity. We have spent seven years developing relationships with music supervisors. We also work directly with the film/TV studios and production companies. Often, music supervisors will let us know what they are looking for. Sometimes, it is really specific like, "We need a song to replace U2." They often have to "replace" songs because they don't have the budget for the big expensive songs. So, we can come in and provide a more affordable option. Other times, they just need a lot of songs in various styles. They may need a lot of hip-hop for an urban film. We will then send them a package of artists and compilations. They will go through them and let us know what they like. Then, we negotiate a price and generate license agreements. We also create film/TV compilations and service them in general. Music supervisors will listen to the CDs and often call us and let us know they want a song

## A conversation with Tyler Bacon

from the compilation for a project they are working on. We also manage two artists—Tyrone Wells [formerly of Skypark] and Celldweller. We do a lot of film/TV work for both artists but also oversee their entire careers. Position Music is also a traditional music publisher. A music publisher owns copyrights to songs, whereas a record company owns copyrights to recordings.

### Which key record labels and artists has your company represented?

Gotee Records (my first client), Tooth & Nail (my second client), Malaco Records ('70s soul/blues/gospel), Surfdog Records (Brian Setzer), DM Records (Tag Team—"Whoomp! There It Is"), Arkadia Chansons ('40s French artists—Edith Piaf, Charles Trenet), Leiber & Stoller Music Publishing ("Stand By Me," "Jailhouse Rock") and lots of indie artists.

### What are some of the key song placements you've landed in film and television?

My first really big one was getting King Floyd's "Groove Me" in *Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery*. We had it in the film, in TV spots and on the soundtrack. Landing Celldweller in the *Spider-Man 2* trailer was also really exciting. One of the biggest commercials we have done was a Hershey's "Swoops" spot. We worked with them to change "Whoomp! There It Is" to "Swoops! There It Is" for that campaign. Beyond the traditional "background" use in film/TV, there are a few other key types of placements. We had a band called Jackpot on-camera in "Boston Public." They played in a bar that the characters hung out in a lot. We were on set all day and watched the whole process. We also just had our first TV show theme song in a WB show called "Bedford Diaries." Some of the placements we have had for Christian artists include Switchfoot in "One Tree Hill" (WB) and "The Unit" (CBS); Underoath in "The O.C." (Fox); and GRITS in *Spanglish* and *The Perfect Man*.

### How were you involved with Sixpence None the Richer's launch?

We signed them to their first deal at R.E.X. I wasn't initially as involved. I remember [guitarist/cellist] Matt Slocum was getting frustrated with us because we were taking too long to start making the first record. At that point, the president said, "Let them go." That's when I got more involved and got us going on the first album. I thought there was something special there and didn't want to pass up making the record. We made [1993's] *The Fatherless & the Widow* for \$9,600. [Lead vocalist] Leigh Nash was 16 years old. It was fun to see Sixpence really develop over a couple of years. We worked hard to make a good second album [1995's Dove Award-winning *This Beautiful Mess*]. That was a fun time in the R.E.X. days. They were definitely one of my passions on that label.

## A Day Behind the Scenes with Tyler

<b>10:00</b> Office opens, staff starts—I'm still sleeping	compilation mailing—song selection, artwork
<b>11:00</b> I'm in the office/movie trailer request comes in/check email	<b>4:00</b> Attorney conversation—negotiating record deal
<b>11:15</b> Determine how much to charge for movie trailer	<b>4:20</b> Tour/marketing planning
<b>11:20</b> Actually start talking with staff and, then, the public	<b>5:00</b> Generate film/TV licenses
<b>11:45</b> Music search request comes in for a project	<b>5:30</b> Open mail
<b>12:00</b> Start sending mp3 ideas to the music supervisor for the search	<b>6:00</b> Last-minute music search comes in; send mp3s
<b>12:15</b> Video editing conversation; contact The U.N. to license war footage for a music video	<b>7:00</b> Dinner
<b>1:00</b> Lunch with music supervisor	<b>8:00</b> Video conference with artists about songs/new record
<b>2:30</b> Send list of song ideas that were sparked over lunch to music supervisor	<b>9:00</b> Play poker online
<b>3:00</b> Work on new film/TV	<b>11:00</b> Send accounting to labels and artists
	<b>12:30 AM</b> Catch up on email; listen to music submissions
	<b>1:30</b> Shut down computer
	(I'm getting married in February; life as I know it is over.)





# thewriter'sblock

by Matthew West



## PEACE AND QUIET

It's 10:34 p.m. Correction. 10:35. All is quiet in my house. My dog, Earl "the Girl," has stopped barking at the Puppy Chow commercial on TV. My 6-month-old little girl, Lulu, is fast asleep (at least for now). The phone has finally stopped ringing. The email inbox is empty. All is quiet at 10:40. This is when I do a lot of my songwriting. I can escape to my music room and work on a song idea before it's time for me to change another diaper, which should be any minute now!

But, many times, I'm too quick to kill the quiet of the room. I approach my songwriting frantically, as if the music is in some sort of a hurry. I hop on the piano bench and begin banging on the keys before I even have an idea of what kind of song I should write. And, if the piano isn't singing any songs to me, I quickly lose patience and grab my guitar. I start playing some random sequence of chords and singing an aimless melody in hopes of digging up something worth singing, ending up with nothing but noise. So, I stop singing, put down the guitar and step away from the piano; and there it is again. The quiet.

Now, I don't know about you; but quiet rooms can be quite uncomfortable. They make me nervous. Must be why I never liked the library! I often find myself trying to turn a quiet room inside out, filling up the space with words, music, ESPN—anything to kill the quiet.

I guess we just get used to the noise. We wake up in the morning and turn the television on. We play the radio all the way to work. We turn it up louder because there's a traffic jam and a cluster of cars

has decided to see who has the loudest horn! Then the cell phone rings, and what would we do without all those free nights and weekend minutes? And, oh, can you hold on a minute? "Yes, I'd like a tall, soy latté—not too hot—with one Splenda and a blueberry scone, please?" OK, I'm back. Wait; I've got another call coming in...

You get the idea. Noise. It piles on top of the peace and quiet so fast that we begin to forget what beauty blooms in the silence. What voice speaks in the stillness. What wisdom waits in the solitude. But, when we listen before speaking, pray before writing, sit still long enough to hear the quiet and call upon the name of the Lord, the noise soon disappears. And the rewards? Clarity. Sanity. Direction. Peace and quiet. The words of this old hymn say it all:

*Oh, what peace we often forfeit  
Oh, what needless pain we bear  
All because we do not carry  
Everything to God in prayer*

Has it been a while since you had some peace and quiet in your life? Cell phone ringing off the hook? Classes constantly throwing more work at you? Kids screaming in the backseat? The radio, the television, the NOISE of this world! It's hard to concentrate on writing a song in the midst of all the noise, and it's even harder to write the song of your life. Find some peace and quiet today, even if it's only for a few minutes. Ask God to show you what kind of song He wants to write with your life. Let *Him* do the talking, and don't be surprised if the noise of your daily life turns into an orchestrated thing of beauty.

### SONGWRITING TIP #113:

"IN A QUIET ROOM,  
A SONG WAITS TO  
BE WRITTEN, A  
VOICE WAITS TO  
BE HEARD."

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](http://matthewwest.com).



JIMMY NEEDHAM SPEAKING UP

**JIMMY NEEDHAM** is a soulful singer/songwriter from Texas. Imagine listening to an acoustically driven album that combines the blues of Jonny Lang and Ben Harper, the smooth vocals of Gavin DeGraw and John Mayer and the lyrics of Keith Green. That's what Jimmy hopes to do; and I have to say, he does, indeed, pull it off. His music saunters up, gently wrestles you to the couch and, then, holds you there until it's finished questioning your eternal destiny. Jimmy doesn't just want to entertain you, he wants to politely, but persistently, detain you. His debut album on Inpop Records, **SPEAK**, is already in stores. See [jimmyneedham.com](http://jimmyneedham.com) for more info.

**PAUL: Who are your musical heroes?**

**JIMMY:** Anyone who speaks the Truth in love is a musical hero of mine: Ross King, Keith Green, Derek Webb and Lecrae.

**PAUL: Tell us about your album, *Speak*. Why "speak"? It's a great title!**

**JIMMY:** As you walk into the heart of Christ, you are not only walking into the reward of His sufferings, but you are walking into His burdens as well. I have recently realized that Jesus' heart is deeply burdened for the lost, and He has commissioned us to share in that hurt with Him. "Speak" simply articulates the call not merely to serve in the name of Christ but to actually preach His gospel. Paul pleads with the readers in Romans 10:14 as he asks, "How will they hear without a preacher?" Good music should either cause a person to worship or repent. The project *Speak* has been an attempt at both. Much of this album is a challenge to the church. The challenge is this: Love is proved by obedience (John 14:21), so let us joyfully flee from the fence of mediocrity and embrace our cross, which the Lord Jesus so graciously gave us to bear.

**PAUL: What's your all-time favorite movie, book and meal?**

**JIMMY:** Movie: *Braveheart*. Book: *Revolution in World Missions* by K.P. Yohannan. Meal: My mom's homemade mac and cheese.

**PAUL: Do you think there is a place for Christian music that is subtler in its message about Jesus?**

**JIMMY:** To my knowledge, Christian music is the only musical genre completely defined by the lyrical content. If I was in a musical genre that only sang about the color blue, and I stopped singing about the color blue—no matter how good the music was—it is no longer fit for that genre. There is no biblical precedent for softening the message of the gospel. Everyone in scripture who spoke the word of God spoke plainly. We have it all wrong. We think by softening the message of Jesus in our songs that we can now win more people to Christ who wouldn't normally listen to Christian music. The truth is that the Holy Spirit is the one who woos men's hearts to the Lord. It is *not* contingent on how well we sell Jesus. If we embrace this truth, we have only to speak plainly about Christ and let God do the rest.

After five years of touring and refining, **THE TURNING**—featuring Jacob McGinniss (front man, chief songwriter), Jeremy Little (bass), Matt Warren (guitar, BGVs, co-writer) and Jeff Goff (drums)—is ready to take its music to a bigger platform. The Chattanooga, Tenn.-based band's debut album on RKT (an imprint of Rocketown), **LEARNING TO LOSE**, is, according to label founder Michael W. Smith, an infectious record that he hasn't taken out of his CD player since he got it. *The Turning* is not light on content either. The underlying message of *Learning to Lose* is about giving up our attempts to make life happen and, instead, letting God take the lead. See [turningmusic.com](http://turningmusic.com) for more info.

**PAUL: Tell us about your band's name.**

**MATT:** A few years ago, we were faced with the option of either accepting the fact that following our dreams in our own way had resulted in failure or trusting God's heart and His plans for us and committing this band to be a ministry focused on glorifying Him. It was around this time that we needed a name for the band that incorporated that part of our journey. After watching some behind-the-scenes footage about *Lord of the Rings*, I was inspired by the way Tolkien wrote his characters to experience such seeming defeat but to respond in faith that their journey was worth all trials. In our lives, it's that "turning" from hopelessness to faith that is a starting point in a new adventure with God.

**PAUL: What's it like having Smitty as one of your biggest fans?**

**JACOB:** I grew up listening to all of Michael's albums, and I still believe that *Change Your World* was the most anticipated album release of my CD purchasing career. He is easily one of the best songwriters in Christian music history, and having his "stamp of approval" inspires a lot of confidence in our music. If I could pick one man's approval in the Christian music industry, it would be his.

**JEFF:** It's so surreal to me because his albums were the first I think I ever had where I knew the lyrics to all his songs. So, it's really funny having him compliment our record and hang out with us while we did our video.

**PAUL: Why should people buy your record?**

**JACOB:** We love hit songs, but we hate albums that have two or three hits and seven or eight filler songs. It is so rewarding to buy an album and enjoy it from front to back. *Learning to Lose* is a journey. We believe it has great songs from track one through track 12. Sure, everyone will have their favorite songs; but, from our perspective, there is merit and value in every song on the album...no fillers.

**JEREMY:** On the first listen, the listener is hit with catchy pop/rock tunes. On a closer examination, you will find that we want to challenge you in some key areas and issues.

THE TURNING STARTING A NEW ADVENTURE





## PIVITPLEX ONE OF A KIND

**PIVITPLEX**—comprised of lead vocalist/guitarist Scott Brownson, guitarist/vocalist Joby Rudolph, guitarist/vocalist Alex Hicks and bassist/vocalist Phillip Hicks—is a four-piece rock band whose members are based in both Music City and Montana. The band's sophomore album, **THE KING IN A ROOKERY** (Selectric/Sony), is a beautifully eclectic recording that, at times, resembles the Brit-pop of Oasis and Richard Ashcroft as well as the pop sensibilities of The Beatles and Neil Finn's (Crowded House) solo projects. Pivitplex's artistry is fueled by its members' love for God and has been shaped and hardened by years of touring. At press time, the street date for *The King in a Rookery* has been moved to September 5. See [pivitplex.com](http://pivitplex.com) for more info.

**PAUL:** *I LOVE this record! It is creative, moody, subtle and beautiful. These are not adjectives that describe many platinum-selling albums in Christian music history. Does that disturb you?*

**SCOTT:** Thank you so much. I went through a period after our last record was released nationally when I stood in front of my amp and tried to write songs that sounded like what everyone else was doing. When our contract fell apart with BEC and two of our founding members moved on, I was at a crossroads. I felt God telling me, "Scott, you're not good enough to sound like everyone else; but no one else can sound just like you. Write what I've gifted you to write. I don't need another band if you're not going to be who I created you to be." It was a very liberating experience. We worked for nine months on this record. Our producer, Jason Burkum, and all of us knew we had to be driven by that call from God, not by what the industry might demand. We would come up with something in the studio and look at each other and say, "They won't play that on the radio." Then we'd smile and say, "So what! It sounds amazing!" It is scary sometimes. But our time on earth is short, and we needed to worship God with our gifts and make something we were proud of. God will provide.

**PAUL:** *Can you tell us a bit about the title of your new record?*

**SCOTT:** It is a description of Jesus Christ. God came to earth to be a man. I try every day to avoid pain and humiliation, and the God of the universe decided to put Himself in the midst of it. With this title, we are describing our earth and the people as "a rookery" and Jesus as "the King" in the midst of it. He was ordinary in His appearance, extraordinary in His love.

## Band Wagon

BY KRISTI HENSON

Go ahead! Jump on the "Band Wagon"—a column in which we follow the evolving careers of three promising new artists. This month, we check in once more with **GROUP 1 CREW**.



Find out more about Group 1 Crew at [ferventrecords.com](http://ferventrecords.com).

**Manwell Reyes, Pablo Villatoro and Blanca Reyes** (no relation to Manwell) are excited. And rightly so. After all, it isn't every day you're told that your first radio single will be releasing to several formats...nationally! But that's exactly what's happening for Fervent Records' newest signing, Group 1 Crew, whose debut single, "(Everybody's Gotta) Song to Sing," is hitting the airwaves now.

Manwell, G1C's founder and a dedicated student of the music industry, is thrilled...but maybe for reasons a bit more *studied*. "I'm really pumped about it! I'm more 'pumped' about it because the label's pumped about it. I'm 'pumped' because everybody's really excited, and they're getting behind it. It's just a whole different thing for A&R [Artist & Repertoire—the people at the label who locate, sign and develop artists] to love your music compared to the president [of the label] loving it. If the president's like, 'This is awesome! We need to get this out!' Then, it's like we have the full support of everybody [at the company]."

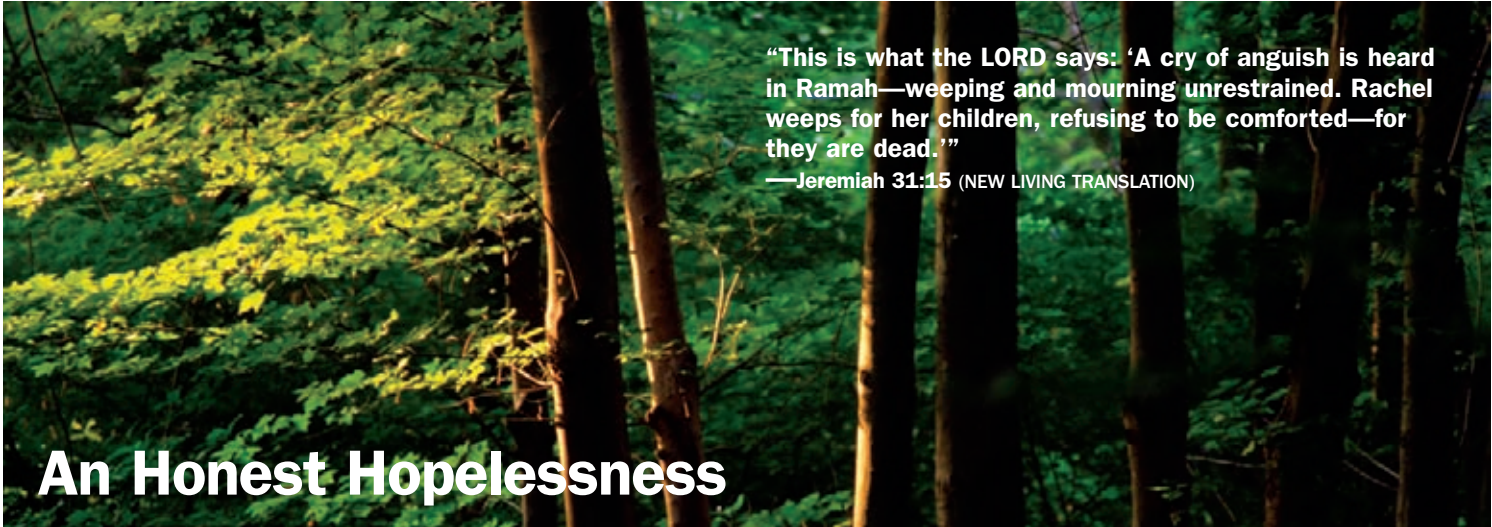
This insight brings us to another artist development maxim: Keeping a watchful eye on in-house support of your project—as any driven and mindful artist should—is just plain ol' good, down-to-earth business sense. Had Manwell not been cognizant of his group's career trajectory, he may not have understood the reasoning behind the label's delay of G1C's album street date, now scheduled to drop later this fall.

He thoughtfully explains that the Group has been preparing for such situations. It's all part of the signing process: "I've been studying like crazy—about how labels work and the business side of labels. And Pablo has gone to school where teachers have taught him a lot about the industry. So, we look at it; and we understand why they're doing it. When it comes down to it, it's all about what can we do to make sure this record is assured success? We have to do everything we can possibly do to make sure it's going to be a hit," Manwell muses.

"We look at it like, 'Okay, it gets pushed back. Cool.' What that means is we have an extra amount of time to make sure that our marketing is flawless and that we have explored every avenue when it comes to marketing and promotion. We can't make people like [our album]. We can put it in front of their face with all this press, but we cannot make anybody like this. So, I'm just like, 'Okay, we have covered all our bases. We've done everything that we possibly can, Lord. Now the success of the album is truly, truly up to You.'"

In the interim, Group 1 Crew isn't slowing down. On a recent afternoon, Manwell phoned in after leaving the studio. "We recorded another song!" he enthuses. "It's called 'I Have a Dream,' and..." It's this kind of neverending excitement and love for their craft—for doing what they're doing for its own sake—that insures G1C's success...even if they never sell one record.

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 Onto You." Colman currently tours, speaks and performs internationally. For more information, visit [paulcolman.com](http://paulcolman.com).



**“This is what the LORD says: ‘A cry of anguish is heard in Ramah—weeping and mourning unrestrained. Rachel weeps for her children, refusing to be comforted—for they are dead.’”**

—Jeremiah 31:15 (NEW LIVING TRANSLATION)

## An Honest Hopelessness

*“He sent soldiers to kill all the boys in and around Bethlehem who were two years old and under because the wise men had told him the star first appeared to them about two years earlier. 17 Herod’s brutal action fulfilled the prophecy of Jeremiah: 18 ‘A cry of anguish is heard in Ramah—weeping and mourning unrestrained. Rachel weeps for her children, refusing to be comforted—for they are dead.’”—Matthew 2:16-18 (NLT)*

The first time we meet her in the Bible (Gen. 29:6), she is a young and beautiful shepherdess. Her face is flush from running alongside her father’s sheep. She has led the flock there to be watered at the well. She is one of Laban’s two daughters, the prettier one. (Her sister, Leah, was said to have “weak” eyes.)

Jacob, the dreamer, is fresh from his experience at Bethel, where he saw a ladder coming down from heaven and angels ascending and descending upon it. But, when he sees Rachel for the first time, he’s not sure if she’s a dream or not.

Wide-eyed, Jacob rolls the stone from the mouth of the well, leans forward, kisses her sun-kissed cheek and breaks down in tears. At this moment in her life, she is as beautiful as she will ever be. Her eyes are dark and clear and, at this point, cannot see all the barren years that lie before her like an expanse of desert. Neither can she imagine how that wilderness will end with the birth of Joseph. For now, she is the stunning shepherdess, blushing at just having been kissed by a stranger.

The last time we see Rachel, her image could not be more different. She is no longer the vivacious young girl but a desolate, abandoned woman consumed by inconsolable grief. Her dark, almond eyes have swollen shut from weeping as she collapses by the road to Ramah, just outside Jerusalem. In his own tear-filled eyes, Jeremiah prophetically sees her, a living symbol of the suffering of the Northern tribes whose leaders—Ephraim and Manasseh—are her grandsons. The people are being herded like sheep north to Babylon, never to return.

Whenever someone tries to console her, she shrinks away. Rachel “refuses to be comforted.”

Jeremiah, who knows more about grief than anyone else in the Old Testament, recognized this disturbing, final stage of lament. More than once he had seen the kind of suffering that desperately reached out for comfort, whether it could be found or not. He had seen others who eventually became numb to the pain, who had suffered so long they had forgotten what it was like to be comforted. But, by far, the worst was this final stage, where the sufferer would violently drive away any attempt at being comforted. These inconsolable ones were the most desolate. They had come to the darkest place—the realization that there was no comfort for their suffering. It simply no longer existed.

Jeremiah heard the echo of such sobs 600 years distant, still coming from Ramah, near Bethlehem. They were the screams of Rachel’s descendants, crying

the same inconsolable cry. Herod had slaughtered their innocent male infants in an attempt to murder the new King of the Jews. It reached back six centuries and fell upon the prophet’s ear.

The next time you witness suffering of this magnitude, whether it’s on television or, perhaps, closer to home, take a moment and listen more intently. Amidst all the strains of grief, listen for a single unexpected note...honesty.

Those who are lost in this wilderness of grief, most especially at the loss of a child, have come to know that there is no comfort for what they are experiencing, no morning at the end of this dark night. Theirs is an honest hopelessness that sees with a disturbing clarity through their tears that there is no hope. It simply does not exist...anywhere. Neither is there the seed of the hope that it ever will exist.

At this darkest stage, in order for comfort to exist, it must be created out of the nothingness that smothers the sufferer. Comfort *ex nihilo*, which is to say, a comfort that can only come from the God who can create something out of nothing.

He whispered to Jarius, who had just lost his own little girl, “Don’t be afraid, just believe.” He calmly told the inconsolable Mary, “Your brother will rise again.” And, then, He proceeded to create life out of the chaos of death and comfort from the nothingness of despair.

Hope where the possibility of hope does not exist. Comfort for those who are comfortless. For those who, in honest hopelessness, refuse to be comforted with the pale distractions of this world, the pointless poems, the pious slogans, He comes, the Word of Comfort—for “comforter” is one of His names. (John 14:16)

**“Amidst all the strains of grief, listen for a single unexpected note...honesty.”**

**Study:** What are some other well-known “wilderness experiences” in the Bible? (Hints: Exodus 2:15ff, 12:37ff, Psalms 51, Matthew 4, Luke 22:39ff)

Do you believe that God can transform and use any wilderness experience?

**Pray:** Father, I find myself in the wilderness day after day. Sometimes, it is a deserted place You’ve called me to. Most of the time, it is a place made desolate by my own sinfulness. Lord, I wait for You here in the wilderness. I wait for the hope that is Your presence. I wait alongside those who are suffering. Together, we weep and wait for You to “show up.” In Jesus’ name.



"When I looked in the doctor's eyes as he told me that my dad was going to die of cancer in two to eight weeks, I could not help but feel like I had been punched in the gut! I tried to have some kind of sense of hope, but it didn't seem to come naturally at all. I remember speaking with my dad the day after the doctor's diagnosis and asking him how he felt about all this. (Keep in mind he was only 47 and had just received this news five days after my son, his first grandchild, was born.) He looked down at the ground quietly for a moment, then answered, with one simple, honest word spoken very softly, "Cheated."

It's amazing the level of honesty the feeling of hopelessness can drive us to. It is definitely times like this when the God who sees our every need reaches into our hearts and provides the comfort that only He can give, the only comfort that seems to work in those situations. I'm so thankful that my dad knew the Lord. He would say to my sisters and me that "heaven" meant that we would never have to say goodbye. The only hope Dad had is the hope that I also have—that we will see each other again because of what Christ has done for us. It's true that, in this world, we will have many troubles, but let us take heart, for Christ has overcome this world!"

—Mark Graalman (Sanctus Real)



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](http://michaelcard.com) for more information.

## {Character Development}



From left: Casting Pearls performs on the "180 Tour"; Students enjoying the show; Crystal Miller; Casting Pearls performing later that night at a local church.

Bullying is a leading problem among students today, along with other forms of intimidation and hostility. We were all reminded of this fact earlier this summer as network news programs showed frightening surveillance images of one student repeatedly punching a smaller one on a school bus.

This fall the "180 Tour" will work to stem the tide against school violence by bolstering strong student character. Featuring pop/rock band Casting Pearls (lead by former Newsboys guitarist Bryan Olesen) and Crystal Woodman Miller, speaker and author of *Marked For Life* (NavPress), the troupe presents a clear-cut message to junior and senior high assemblies: Students can change the world now.

"As students, you're kinda under the assumption that your life doesn't really begin until after you graduate high school or graduate college and start a career," Olesen says. "We want those kids to realize they can make a difference today. That their life doesn't start 'someday'; they should be engaged right now in their culture, affecting things for the better."

The 55-minute educational presentation includes songs from the band and spotlights Miller's forward-thinking reflections as a survivor of 1999's Columbine High School shootings in Colorado. Miller was in the school library at the time the rampage began, protected only by a heavy wooden table.

The program ultimately urges teens to build strong personal character that will help them to develop good decision-making skills. It will also increase their sensitivity toward treating others fairly and compassionately.

On most dates the "180 Tour" follows up the day's assembly with an evening concert at a local church or assembly hall. This is where the members of Casting Pearls—which also includes bassist Case Maranville and drummer Scott Rutz—play a full set and relate how their Christian faith makes a difference for them and their communities.

The band was looking for a way to work regularly while Olesen split his time between Casting Pearls and Newsboys. Casting Pearls hoped to address a pressing social issue, while performing songs from its 2005 self-titled release. Though the "180 Tour" started out as a simple way to earn a living, now it's thriving, giving students across the country a chance to enjoy new beginnings.

"There are opportunities for kids that they aren't seeing," Olesen observes. "Everybody knows the kid who always gets picked on at lunch, the kids who are kind of the outsiders. Students can look to them as equals and be a friend to them. Change definitely starts there."

For more information go to [180tour.com](http://180tour.com).





# This One's for the

# Girls

by:  
**gregory  
rumburg**

Artists light a way for listeners to discover unique aspects of God's character. But, in Christian music, is a woman's point of view being edged out in favor of popular musical trends? ...Not if these leading female artists have anything to do with it.

**N**ot much more than a decade ago, if you played in a Christian band, you were generally elated just to have enough greenbacks to get to the next gig. Ask StarFlyer 59, Bleach, the O.C. Supertones, Five Iron Frenzy, Seven Day Jesus and The Waiting. Even Third Day once traveled at the mercy of a fuel-thirsty van.

Now, there are more bands in the limelight than you can shake a stick at. Think Kutless. David Crowder Band. Pillar. Sanctus Real. Hawk Nelson. The Afters...and on and on and on. The pendulum of popularity has swung in favor of these bands of brothers like no other time in Christian music.

And female artistry is losing out on the gas money.

As labels divert artist development and marketing dollars to these male acts in this \$700 million dollar Christian music industry, it's tough to advance a female act's career, let alone break a new artist who is a woman.

So, for those who dream dreams by singing into hairbrushes—or once did—we salute several of today's top female acts—[pictured clockwise from the top:] **Sara Groves, Mary Mary, Nichole Nordeman, Rebecca St. James, Natalie Grant, Kierra "Kiki" Sheard, Bethany Dillon, BarlowGirl** and **Leigh Nash**. These leaders share their perspectives for restoring Christian music's time-honored tradition: Women and men standing shoulder-to-shoulder for the sake of the cause.

## the real me

The most high-profile female artist of this last year has been **Natalie Grant**.

"I've had so many people ask, 'How does it feel?'" the 2006 GMA "Female Vocalist of the Year" says. "I don't know how else to say it but to be honest and say, 'I feel really, really good.'"

Enjoying the Pottery-Barn-styled home she shares in Nashville with her husband/producer Bernie Herms (Avalon, Plus One), Grant's dressed this June afternoon in earthy summer casuals. It's a scene disguising the fact that she's a scrapper, an artist who's survived not one, but two, label shutdowns across her first two records—each time just as her career taxied for a blue-sky takeoff.

But her last two studio projects—2003's *Deeper Life* (Curb), which included the hit "No Sign of It," plus 2005's *Awaken*—finally gave Natalie flight. Christian radio's been one key to Grant's takeoff. She's long been admired for her vocal expertise and spot-on emotional interpretation, as with last year's moving No.1, "Held" (which also charted at mainstream radio).

"It took me a while to realize that it is OK to speak up; you have to take control of your own artistry," Grants says, trying to key in on how she cleared the clouds. She gives ample credit to her record label, Curb Records, for sticking with her as she found her wings for a third time. She's also taken charge by learning the craft of songwriting. "It took me on a real journey of self-discovery to find out what I wanted to say," she explains.

Along with her husband's coaching, Grant says she was inspired by other women whose artistry helps guide her toward discovering her songwriting voice—peers such as Sara Groves, Leigh Nash and Nichole Nordeman.

## we build

Grant says a woman's artistry at its best "reflects that she's empowering, that she's a woman of substance and has something to say." That's a fitting description for today's top female acts. Several, of which, tend to focus their efforts on presenting an encouraging message to the Christian church.

**Nichole Nordeman**—a two-time GMA "Female Vocalist of the Year" widely recognized as a songwriter's songwriter—is one of them. With the poetry and precision of a surgeon's scalpel, her lyrics cut to the crux of both human brokenness and divine hope.

Speaking to the state of female artistry in Christian music, Nordeman reflects, "I have been obsessed recently with Sara Groves' *Add to the Beauty* album (INO). It feels very much to me like an example of what the strong but broken heart of a woman can offer in a culture where we seem mostly to be giving credibility—and airplay—to 'God is Great! God is Great! Praise His Name! He Reigns! He Rules!' etc. Sara's songs don't deny any of God's goodness. To the contrary, instead of heaping on the superlatives, she just starts peeling layers away...one song at a time...until I'm sitting at the red light weeping because I, too, want to add to the beauty, or build the kingdom one chunk of stone and messy bit of mortar at a time, or love someone who is impossible, just because it's right to."

Continuing in this vein, Nordeman adds, "This is what women bring to the table of Christian music. Or should. This is what motivates me now. First, that we look for the redemptive work of Christ's love—always and in everything and everyone—and that we write and sing about that. Second, that we make a pact with ourselves not to perpetuate the *mis*-marketing of God—singing and saying empty and theologically shaky things because that might be easier and people might buy more records. And, thirdly, that the music we offer to the world and to the church is not just for the sake of stirring everyone up emotionally, but that it calls us to action—whether that action is serving anonymously in our community or taking a public stand against sex trafficking like Natalie [Grant] or exposing the suffering in Rwanda like Sara [Groves]. Once our music points to the redemption of the love of Christ on a broken planet, it has to ask, 'What now?' Otherwise, we've brought nothing."



Taking a public stand has literally defined the career of **Rebecca St. James**. Late last year, her *If I Had One Chance to Tell You Something* (Forefront) signaled a newfound sense of freedom, joy and energy for doing what the Grammy-winning artist does as well as anyone—rallying the Christian church to be and do its best.

“Rock Bec is back!” remarks St. James, and fans are loving it. During a recent visit to the White House, even President Bush appeared pleased with her efforts. St. James—who also moonlights as an author, speaker and co-founder of the SHE events for girls—has spent the first part of 2006 feeding her ever-broadening worldview. She says, “We’ve had some really, really amazing ministry opportunities so far this year, starting out in Kenya and Rwanda earlier this year—my first trip to Africa. It’s really been a blessing.”

Singer/songwriter **Sara Groves** continues to enjoy a remarkable season herself. While she’s been a popular favorite since her first hit single, “The Word,” entrenched itself on Christian radio in 2001, many of her most avid fans are fellow artists. In addition to Grant and Nordeman—who have already cited Groves’ influence—Jars of Clay, Bethany Dillon, Point of Grace and many others are quick to champion her artistry—especially her latest album, *Add to the Beauty*. Groves’ critically acclaimed 2005 release sounded a clarion call to the church, urging it to become increasingly active in God’s justice work around the world.

“Long before the album ever came out, I felt like *Add to the Beauty* was my clear declaration of faith,” Groves says. “So, to have other people reinforce that is obviously a great feeling.”

Regarded for the vulnerability communicated in her art, Groves releases *Just Showed Up for My Own Life* (INO) this month. It’s an engaging, documentary-style DVD that’s a natural extension of *Beauty*, illustrating Groves’ personal transformation toward advocacy. She says this “paradigm shift, this heart change” is about being in greater community with the body of Christ. “It’s the greatest thing I’ve ever experienced.” (Read more about Groves’ poignant DVD on page 11.)

## young pioneers

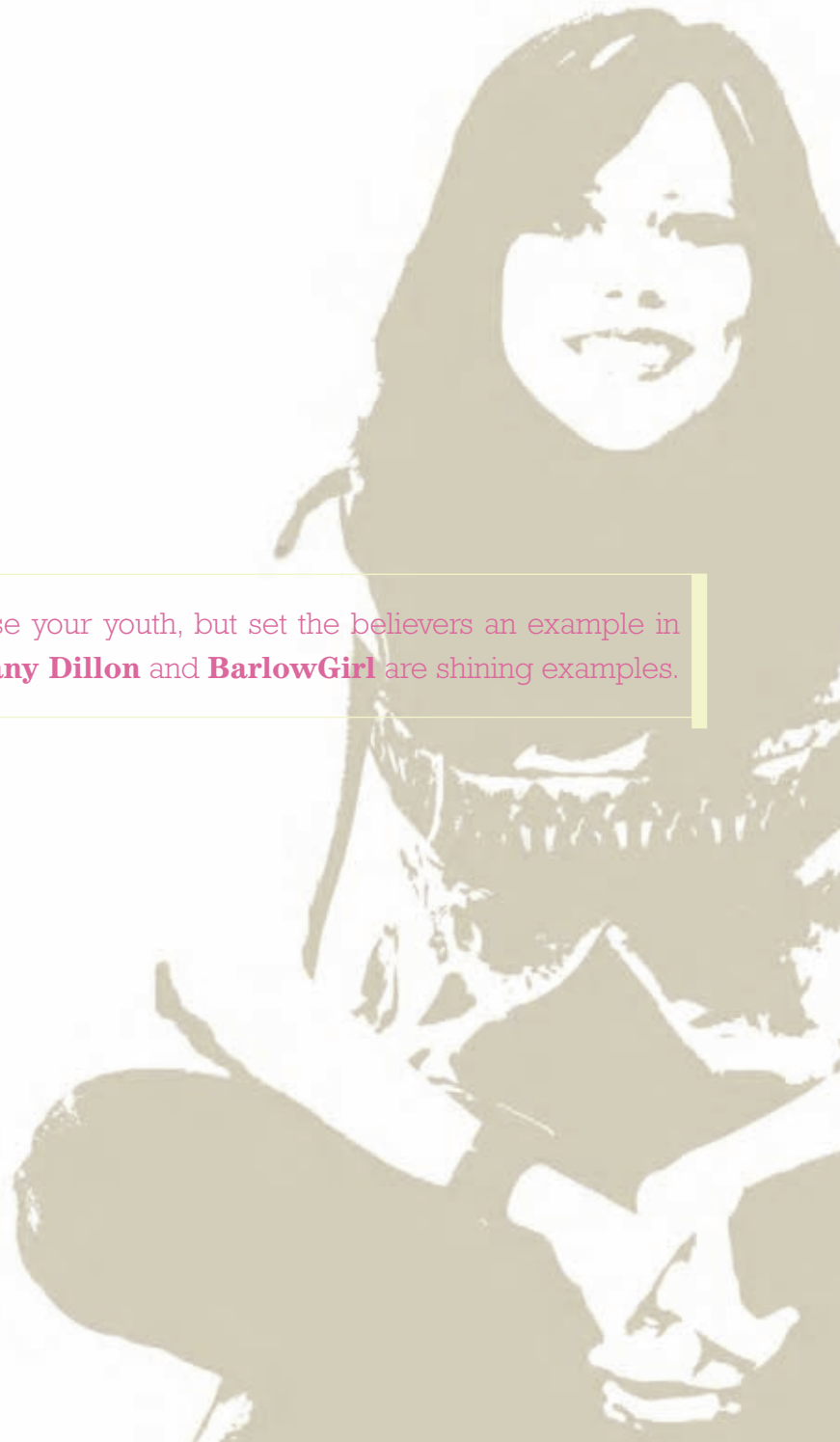
The writer of 1 Timothy exhorts, “Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.” **Bethany Dillon** and **BarlowGirl** are shining examples.

Dillon resembles a sort of prodigy singer/songwriter whose lyrics belie her youthfulness. A self-described tomboy from rural Ohio, she released 2004’s *Bethany Dillon* (Sparrow) at the age of 15, scoring big at radio with the No. 1 single “All I Need” and the Top 10 hit “Beautiful.” Her second record, last year’s *Imagination*, landed her song “Dreamer” in the motion picture by the same name, put Dillon on the cover of *CCM* and further exhibited that she’s a blue-chip talent.

“I think I’m grateful that I still feel like one of the kids in my family,” Dillon says, reflecting on her achievements. “I’m happy all this has happened, but, if all of it ended tomorrow, I’m glad that family has been maintained.” On the edge of 18 years old, there’s little doubt Dillon’s best is yet to come.

While Dillon may be in good company as a solo pop artist, all-female rock bands remain a rare musical commodity. In the Christian genre, Moses had more visions of God than we’ve had girl bands. So kudos to Chicago’s BarlowGirl. Sisters Lauren (drums), Alyssa (guitar/piano) and Rebecca Barlow (bass)—each in their early to mid-20s—were 2004’s best-selling new artist with *BarlowGirl* (Fervent). Earlier this year “I Need You to Love Me” became the band’s second No. 1 cut off its sophomore effort, the Otto Price-produced *Another Journal Entry*. Simultaneously taking very public stands for sexual purity and related causes, BarlowGirl has emerged as an example to girls and boys alike.

“I think it’s a given that we are role models for girls,” Lauren Barlow says. “But I think just as many guys who come to our shows say, ‘I look up to you because you’re standing for purity and I’m standing for that, too.’”



## salt and light

Top female Christian artists work effectively to engage larger culture, too, carrying a hopeful message to the marketplace of ideas.

Sisters **Erica** and **Tina Campbell** formed **Mary Mary** and released their extremely popular debut album, *Thankful* (Columbia/Sony/Integrity), in 2000. The duo has been at the top of the charts practically from day one with what are now signature gospel harmonies and polished urban beats. Their string of major crossover radio hits has included “I Sings,” “Shackles (Praise You)” and “In the Morning.” After taking a break to focus on family life, last year Mary Mary returned with a magical third, self-titled project and two more radio hits—“Heaven” and “Yesterday.” Among a truckload of accolades, the duo recently earned an American Music Award.

“We definitely appreciate the Dove Awards and the Stellar Awards,” Erica Campbell says, “but to know that people outside our genre pay attention is absolutely amazing.”

Like Mary Mary, **Leigh Nash** has made a strong impression in both the Christian and general markets. She started finding her artistic voice as a girl growing up in New Braunfels, Texas, listening to strong women of country music such as Loretta Lynn, Patsy Cline and Tanya Tucker.

Later, Nash and churchmate Matt Slocum assembled Sixpence None the Richer, eventually gaining worldwide popularity and a Grammy nomination with huge hits such as the No. 1 smash “Kiss Me” and their cover of The La’s “There She Goes.” It was a bittersweet taste of success, as record label foils repeatedly nagged at the group during its 12-year career. No one would have blamed Nash if she had walked away from music to treasure life out of the limelight with her husband, producer and former PFR drummer Mark Nash, and their son, Henry. Yet, Leigh continues to help shape the face of music with this month’s release of *Blue on Blue*, her long-anticipated solo debut via her own imprint, One Son Records.

“I feel like it’s what I’m supposed to do. It’s also something I really want to do,” Leigh explains. “I guess I think that, as long as God is making it possible and it keeps on seeming like it’s the next thing, [I’ll do it]. That’s what I’m into—you say your prayers and then you do the next thing.” [Read more about Nash and her new album on page 38.]

And remember that admonishment from 1 Timothy? Check out **Kierra “Kiki” Sheard**. Following her stellar 2004 debut, *I Owe You* (EMI Gospel), Sheard is a student in Detroit and continues to record and perform. She recently released the R&B delight *This Is Me*. With an emphasis on her own songwriting for this project, the 18-year-old says, “This is my testimony. It’s about me going through life experiences as a young adult. It’s about me stepping out into the music industry and being less under Mommy and Daddy’s wings.” Broad wings they are: Kiki’s mother is Karen Clark Sheard of the landmark gospel group The Clark Sisters (whose mother was Dr. Mattie Moss Clark, a revered gospel music matriarch). Kiki’s father is Detroit’s highly-respected Pastor J. Drew Sheard.



## between rock and a hard place

The achievements by these women and others in the last year should warrant a celebration of Greek wedding proportions—if it were not for the current dilapidated state of female artistry in Christian music.

“There’s always been that strong core of empowered, successful female artists. And we still have that,” Natalie Grant observes. “It’s just a little lopsided now with male artists.”

That’s a generous description.

An unscientific polling of Christian industry insiders suggests Christian music is facing a unique condition today: Its offerings by female artists run thin. As previously reported in this magazine, the 2006 record release schedule is deluged with band acts. Rock is the sub-genre flavor of choice, as it has been the past couple years. (Some might argue rock is edged out by the continuing popularity of worship music. Yet, more worship music today than ever is rock & roll. Think David Crowder Band, Starfield, Building 429, The Longing and Dalton, not to mention longtime staples such as Delirious and Sonicflood.)

This year’s trends mirror last year’s tendencies. *Billboard*’s 2005 Year-End Top Christian Albums chart contained one female title in its Top 10 (*Mary Mary*). Natalie Grant’s *Awaken* and Amy Grant’s *Rock of Ages: Hymns & Faith* (Word) were the only additional projects from women to crack *Billboard*’s Top 25. Only nine projects by women landed in the year’s Top 50. And, between March 2005 and February 2006, only one out of 14 albums certified gold (500,000+ copies sold) was a female act’s title (again, *Mary Mary*) as tallied by the Recording Industry Association of America.

Claims of innocence tend to come from every corner. Release schedules reflect that record labels aren’t signing as many female acts. “Consumers want bands,” they retort. Off the record, a fraction of insiders point fingers at radio stations, saying programmers are playing fewer singles by women. Charts seem to bear that out. In fairness, that decision seems to be in response to consumer testing—station-directed surveys in which local listeners influence song rotation with their preferences. Presently, songs performed by women are not testing well. And this magazine’s August cover story you hold in your hands? It’s *CCM*’s first female artist cover in 2006. Radio, retail, media—all just giving us what we want, right? And that’s all we, as consumers, have ever really demanded.

But are industry decision makers really sure? Christian music’s core demographic is women between the ages of 25-44. The Gospel Music Association recently reported the industry’s primary audience is 30 percent more likely to be between the ages of 18-44 compared to the rest of the U.S. population. Are consumers actually saying “no”? Or are some just not getting the chance to have their preferences counted?

Then, there are the usual cultural obstacles. “It’s very image driven,” says *Mary Mary*’s Erica Campbell about the music industry. “It’s very much about being thin and being beautiful and about perfection. But the only perfect one is God.” As with at-large culture, these issues loom more pointedly for female acts than for their male counterparts.

All these elements form a slippery slope for Christian music—a genre boasting that it is distinguished from all other music by being lyrically-driven rather than stylistically-driven. If industry decision makers are reticent to take chances on female acts due to popular demand and if conditions are not favorable for attracting new female talent, then Christian music’s mission to draw people closer to God moves forward today with a bad limp.



## all i ever have to be

To a woman, each artist interviewed for this story had considerably more good to say about Christian music than not.

What seems to unite this perspective is landing on a definition of success not driven by numbers or even accolades. Success, they suggest, happens when one has the chance to discover who God intends a woman or man to be in the present, constantly hurling toward a hopeful future.

For Mary Mary, that means pursuing that beloved scripture often quoted from pulpits on Mother's Day, Proverbs 31. "The God that is shining inside [you] is definitely the most important factor," Tina Campbell says. "If you don't have that, you are wasting your time."

"I think what was important for me was finding my voice," Natalie Grant says. "Not my singing voice, but finding out how to do something that matters with my life. I think, as a woman, I ask, 'How does that translate into my artistry?'" To that end, her songwriting voice is influenced by her experiences through her HOME Foundation, a campaign to raise awareness about international human trafficking.

Sara Groves, too, aims to continue her work toward social justice. She prefers to work with what's in front of her instead of fighting for what isn't available. For her, that means zeroing in on developing one's character.

"The women I really respect are women who know who they are in Christ and who have that ability to nurture everything around them to be better," she says. "That can be the gentle power of women." Sara remembers meeting Christian music's most influential artist, Amy Grant, for the first time. "The thing I was so struck with was her gentleness. She was so kind and gracious."

For BarlowGirl, finding success used to mean practicing as a band 50 hours a week so they could play as well as guys, Rebecca Barlow says. Now, it means being faithful to God's calling. Rebecca explains that this begins with one's heart.

"It's not like you're going to wake up one day, and God is going to go, 'Here's your calling,' if you've not even picked up a guitar. No, it's the little things first."

She continues, "God is going to start gradually; so, if we don't obey Him in the little things, He can't take us to where He wants to take us." Her trio illustrates this point. "The three of us joined

our church worship band because that was one of the things God was putting on our hearts. We didn't know why. We thought it was just for fun. But, now, as I think about it, God used that. If we hadn't been obedient in that, I don't think we would be where we are today."

Author and Women of Faith core speaker Luci Swindoll agrees. "God made us to be us. And it's such a joy to be around people who never try to be something they're not," she says via email. "Vulnerability is the key to finding who you are. When we throw up barriers or defend or protect or deny, it circumnavigates what God is trying to get at: the real you. It blocks His work. But, when those barriers are dropped and we let go of all those trappings, the world opens. People listen. They even buy our albums, and they feel different for having listened to what God is saying through us."

## the road ahead

We would be remiss not to acknowledge that popular preferences tend to ebb and flow.

Like economic markets that correct themselves, like theological experimentation finally recorded by scholars as fad, Christian music's popular pendulum will likely swing back the other way, favoring, again, pop and singer/songwriter acts regardless of gender. Not all bands introduced this year will find commercial legs—in fact, based on record sales, very few of 2006's new bands have been well received so far. And many that don't connect over the next year will be unceremoniously pruned from label rosters. To feed interest (and industry distribution systems), a new crop of potential stars, including women, will begin to rise. But is it good enough to rely merely on natural forces to balance the scales again?

In Christian music, women have long made tremendous strides, kicking at the darkness to bring light to the world. First, it was **Evie, Annie**

**Herring** of **2nd Chapter of Acts** and the **Boone Sisters**. Then it was **Shirley Caesar, Sandi Patty, Twila Paris** and **Amy Grant**. Add **CeCe Winans, Yolanda Adams, Margaret Becker, Susan Ashton, Cindy Morgan, Jennifer Knapp**—and, of course, the women we celebrate today—and it's clear from the nascent Jesus Music days to the present era, female artistry makes a pervasive difference in the genre.

So, as new female acts develop their artistry to fill the shoes of those performing before them, are they being set up for success? How do we tell rising acts such as **Ayiesha Woods, Krystal Meyers, Sarah Kelly, Vicky Beeching, Jessie Daniels, Ana Laura** and others: "Thanks for your work today, but we've only got room for you tomorrow"?

"It's true. There are a lot of bands blazing a trail today; but we definitely have our place," Mary

Mary's Erica Campbell says. On our journey to know God better, Christian music is at its best when diverse cultural, theological and experiential points of view are available, each one drawing us closer to the Creator of human diversity.

But, maybe, change can best start when that young girl's hairbrush is finally exchanged for a microphone. Or a keyboard. Or a guitar.

"I wish more girls would rise up and grab hold of their calling and what they feel they are supposed to do," says Rebecca Barlow. "God has so many different aspects. God gives each person in their life one aspect that they are to share with their generation. If you just had guy musicians, there would only be that aspect. But God gives each person a different place to be a mirror of who He is. As women, we need to start speaking out more about what God has given us on our hearts, just as the guys are already doing." **ccm**

# lead me on

As in most fields, successful women in the Christian music industry stand on the shoulders of giants. Even Amy Grant and Sandi Patty had Evie—the first Christian pop star. And for Point of Grace there were the groundbreaking vocals of Annie Herring and Nelly Greisen (2nd Chapter of Acts). Today's stars and those who are up-and-coming owe a debt of gratitude to the ladies who have forged the path they now trod. Here are just a few pioneering women—both singer/songwriters and vocalists—who have taken the music scene by storm in the past and whose continuing artistry broadens the horizons for women today.

## I Write the Songs

### Amy Grant



This singer/songwriter's numbers alone are staggering. She's a six-time Grammy Award winner who also has 24 Doves to her credit. Sales-wise, Amy Grant has sold more than 25 million albums worldwide, including one quintuple platinum album (*Heart in Motion*), one triple platinum album and one double platinum album in addition to six other platinum and four gold albums. Moreover, she's appeared on virtually every major TV outlet providing previously unprecedented exposure for Christian music. If that's not enough, Grant's on-camera career includes made-for-TV movies and her own prime time TV show, "Three Wishes." And, by no means is she finished yet. She's set to release her first full-length live concert recording in more than 20 years, along with its DVD counterpart, *Time Again: Amy Grant Live* (Word), on Sept. 26.

### Twila Paris



Twila Paris is a three-time GMA "Female Vocalist of the Year" who's landed an additional seven Dove Awards. During her 25 year career, she has released 19 albums, including 2005's live worship recording *He Is Exalted* (Integrity). As a profound songwriter who set the bar for so many of her peers, she's penned multiple songs that are staples in today's church worship services. "I've always been someone who wrote out of what [God is] doing in my heart," she says. "I'm an inspiration writer; I'm dependent on that spark of inspiration to write a song that will resonate and that people can put on like a garment and make their own."

### Margaret Becker



With multiple Grammy nods, four Doves, over 2.7 million albums sold and 20 No. 1 singles of her own, Margaret Becker has a formidable resumé. But it doesn't begin to stop there. Her

advocacy for the world's poor has been praised by Bono, and she's an accomplished producer and author. And did we mention she's a CCM contributing editor? "I've been here long enough to say with confidence that we run in cycles," says Margaret about the state of Christian music today. "When I first started, there were hardly any women who played aggressive music—only men were being signed. But, then, there was a push for signing female singer/songwriters; and you were overlooked if you were a male artist. As always, the pendulum will swing again."

### Cindy Morgan



Cindy Morgan has accumulated multiple Dove Awards and No. 1 radio hits, and her songs have been recorded by the likes of India.Arie, Michael W. Smith, Avalon, Michael English, BeBe Winans, Sandi Patty, Mark Schultz, John Tesh and Natalie Grant. Her projects always garner critical acclaim and widespread admiration, with her latest, 2006's *Postcards* (Reunion), being no exception. Commenting on the recent influx of male-dominated rock bands, Cindy muses, "I think healthy competition is a very good thing because it causes all of us to bring our best... [And] I think for young women in Christian music today, the lesson that I believe is so valuable is that you cannot find your worth in the praise of others but in the knowledge that you are doing your best and surrounding yourself with people who bring the best out of you."

## Being Vocal About It

### Sandi Patty



Sandi Patty has long had one of the most incredible and sought-after voices in the world...period. From 1983-1992, she was GMA's reigning "Female Vocalist of the Year," an as yet unmatched feat. In all, Patty has collected 39 Doves and five Grammy Awards and was a 2004 Gospel Music Hall of Fame inductee, making her the most awarded female vocalist in Christian music history. Her albums have sold more than 11 million copies, including three platinum and five gold records. In addition to standard concerts, Patty regularly performs with top symphony orchestras around the country, demonstrating her talent and versatility. And the hits will keep on coming with the release of her new studio album, *Falling Forward* (INO), slated to drop in early 2007.

### Kathy Troccoli



With several Grammy nominations, multiple Dove Awards and four Top 5 mainstream radio hits, not to mention 17 No. 1 Christian radio singles, Kathy Troccoli is a voice to be reckoned with. And with nine titles published thus far, her voice also

comes out in her writing. When asked about her legacy to date, Troccoli thoughtfully replies, "It has all been a learning experience, because the hard times have enabled me to do what I do now—sing, speak and write songs and books about God's comfort, love and faithfulness; and I have the freedom of producing, writing and putting out there exactly what I feel is truly me. If someone told me I would have to wait until I was past 40 to feel like I was in my groove, I would have been so discouraged. But God's timing is perfect. I love what the years have done. I love being able to encourage and inspire others in their pain and searching, because I have gone through my own."

### CeCe Winans



Grammy Awards: 8. Dove Awards: 20. RIAA-certified Platinum & Gold Records: 9. Her Legacy: Priceless. CeCe Winans is easily one of the most recognizable voices in music today...Christian, gospel, pop, R&B or otherwise. Through the years, she's graced the top of the *Billboard* charts—for both radio airplay and record sales—as well as numerous magazine covers, including that of CCM. Born the eighth of 10 children in the Winans clan, CeCe began her Christian music career as one-half of the BeBe & CeCe Winans duo. Now, as a top-selling solo artist, her remarkable career remains on track with future projects continuing to be released on her own imprint, Pure Springs Gospel.

### Point of Grace



With a stellar career marked by multiple Grammy nods and Dove Awards, two platinum and four gold records and an unprecedented 27 consecutive No. 1 singles, Point of Grace is already an industry touchstone. They've channeled their recording success into a steady speaking (and performance) gig... "Girls of Grace," a yearly series of weekend conferences ministering to young women. In light of their success, how do they feel about the Christian music arena today? Shelley Breen offers: "I think things always go in cycles. We rode the wave of a cycle—this big AC [wave]. Then all these other girls started coming out, and females were doing really well and selling lots of records. Time will turn; it always does. Some of the biggest songs last year were by females; and I was just talking to a guy the other day [who said], 'Your single, 'Who Am I,' is still the second best testing song at The Fish in L.A.' It's not that [women have] lost their place; it's that women and female singers, if they're good, are going to do okay."

KRISTI HENSON

# GOING OUT WITH A

# FINIS

1992  
Released self-titled debut




1993  
AUDIO ADRENALINE live bootleg

1995  
AUDIO ADRENALINE live bootleg

1996  
Won first Dove Award for "Long Form Video of the Year" ("Big House")

audio adrenalina  
1996

AUDIO ADRENALINE  
some kind of zombie  
1997

1998  
Won second Dove for "Modern Rock/Alternative Recorded Song of the Year" ("Some Kind of Zombie")

1999  
Album Bloom, RIAA-certified Gold

1999  
UNDERDOG

2000  
Won Dove Award for "Rock Recorded Song of the Year" ("Get Down")

Audio Adrenaline  
HIT REUNION  
2001

AUDIO ADRENALINE  
LIFT  
2001

2003  
Won Dove Award for "Rock Album of the Year" (Lift)

2003

2004  
Won first Grammy for "Rock Gospel Album of the Year" (Worldwide)

2005  
Audio Adrenaline  
2005

2006  
Won second Grammy for "Rock Gospel Album of the Year" (Until My Heart Caves In)

2006  
Release Adios: The Greatest Hits, announcing impending retirement



AUDIO ADRENALINE  
ADIOS  
THE GREATEST HITS



After 15 unforgettable years, **AUDIO ADRENALINE** is saying “goodbye” in the only way it knows how—by putting the fans first. BY: DAVID McCREARY

Saying “goodbye” forever is tough. Just ask veteran pop/rock outfit Audio Adrenaline.

When the group recently announced that it is ending its 15-year career, legions of fans were surprised and disappointed. After all, of the current bands on the Christian music scene, no other artists epitomize lasting youthfulness and unwavering stamina more than Audio A. And let’s not forget their substantial achievements along the way: more than three million records sold, 18 No. 1 hits, two Grammys and four Dove Awards, to name a few.

“They’ve left a significant, indelible mark on Christian music by making great music that was real and relevant while applying the truth of scripture in an honest and open way,” says Christian music stalwart Steven Curtis Chapman.

Even now, not a day goes by without the group’s definitive track “Big House”—named *CCM Magazine*’s “Song of the Decade” in the 1990s—hitting the airwaves and reminding listeners of the celebration to come in heaven. “I respect so much these guys who have continued on through the years with integrity and hearts for ministry, touching different generations along the way with songs like ‘Big House’ and ‘Hands and Feet,’” says burgeoning singer/songwriter Phil Wickham.

Releasing their 11th career album August 1, Audio A delivers the aptly titled *Adios: The Greatest Hits* (ForeFront). The disc features 12 previous No. 1 hits in addition to new track “Goodbye” and a cover of The Alarm’s classic cut “Blaze of Glory.” Also, a special edition companion DVD contains a distinctive rendition of Charlie Peacock’s “Down in the Lowlands” along with concert footage, music videos and tributes from artists such as tobyMac, Relient K, Pillar and others.

The foursome is currently working the major summer Christian festival circuit. They’ll wrap up live performances this fall on a 35-city tour with MercyMe, a band that holds Audio A in high regard. “Our first big break was opening for Audio Adrenaline back in 1995, and we will be forever grateful,” says lead singer Bart Millard.

For the members of Audio A, it’s a bittersweet ending to an enduring journey. “We never could have imagined that we’d be together as a band for 15 years, but the fact that it’s lasted so long is

amazing to us,” says bassist Will McGinniss alongside his cohorts during an exclusive phone interview with *CCM*. “We have the greatest fans, and the hardest thing is saying ‘goodbye’ to them,” McGinniss adds.

The impetus for the band’s imminent retirement arose out of front man Mark Stuart’s ongoing struggle with his vocal chords, a concern that caused doctors to encourage him to quit singing altogether.

“I don’t have a problem with polyps or nodes, but my vocal chords are swollen; and singing causes continual strain,” Stuart explains. “That’s the lynchpin reason we’re coming to an end because we love each other and enjoy what we’re doing; but God has a different path for us now [see “Hands and Feet” sidebar].”

Drummer Ben Cissell shares this perspective: “A lot of people have asked us, ‘Why don’t you just get a new lead singer and continue?’ Last summer, we were sitting in the bus discussing that option; but it just didn’t feel right. To us, it’s like asking, ‘Why don’t you guys find a new big brother?’”

Asked what they will do once the band calls it quits, McGinniss says, “The new ministry opportunities God is calling us to are really exciting.” Those opportunities likely will include him and Stuart continuing to work with up-and-coming bands through their Flicker Records label. As for Cissell and guitarist/vocalist Tyler Burkum (who missed a flight and was unavailable), Cissell says, “Tyler is so talented that I’m sure he’ll keep playing guitar and writing songs. Christian music is so close to our hearts that we’ll all stay involved in some facet.”

Not surprisingly, the guys acknowledge a sense of sadness over a closed chapter in their lives. “I’ve been everywhere I ever wanted to go, and I’ve done everything I wanted to do,” Cissell says. “I don’t see how the rest of my life can be any better than this, and that makes it really hard to give it all up and walk away.”

But Stuart provides a different take. “I feel like what we were part of was miraculous,” he says. “There’s nothing special about us as individuals, and we fail every day. But God somehow brought us together to do some extraordinary things. We feel like God’s strength was revealed in our weakness, and fans seemed to appreciate that. Now, it’s our time to thank all of them for standing by us over the years. We just hope we can go out with a bang.” **ccm**

## Being the HANDS AND FEET of Jesus

Putting their faith into action, the members of Audio Adrenaline founded The Hands and Feet Project ([handsandfeetproject.org](http://handsandfeetproject.org)) in 2004, a nonprofit orphanage initiative for impoverished children in Haiti, one of the world’s poorest and most spiritually needy nations. It’s a continuing endeavor that fuels the fire of front man Mark Stuart, so much so that his parents serve as missionaries in Haiti and run the orphanage.

“This project helps provide a caring and loving Christian environment for Haitian orphans so they can affect their country when they grow up,” says Stuart, who explains that the ministry’s secondary emphasis involves connecting Christian musicians and fans with greatly underprivileged kids. “It’s a chance to give people in America [and elsewhere] the opportunity to be the hands and feet of Christ.”

Audio Adrenaline is committed to providing orphans practical help, such as food, shelter and education—all while sharing Christ’s unconditional love.

Stuart says a number of other artists have expressed interest in the cause, including T-Bone, who has similar plans for an orphanage in Nicaragua. “We’re building 10 dwellings right now in Haiti that each will house eight orphans, and the first building is already finished,” he says.

A book titled *Hands & Feet* (Regal) releases Sept. 5. It provides a travelogue-style account of a trip the members of Audio A took to Haiti with a missions team of young people. According to Stuart, the book features what it is like to be a child in Haiti and addresses “how the church can come to the rescue of the third world.”

“We’re putting our money where our mouth is with this project,” says drummer Ben Cissell. “For us, the music is ending; but the mission is continuing.” **D.M.**

true blue





For months, fans of the late great Sixpence None the Richer have been counting down the days to August 15. That's the day their beloved singer, *Leigh Nash*, releases her full-length solo debut, *Blue on Blue* (One Son/Sony/Provident). To commemorate the event, we asked music industry veteran—and longtime Sixpence comrade—*Dave Palmer* to give you an insider's access into her world. Photography by: [rwphotographic.com](http://rwphotographic.com)

Leigh Nash loves the 1970's TV show *Little House on the Prairie*. She has blogged about this affinity as well as jibed listeners to her podcast about the fact that she has missed the show to record for them. The former Sixpence None the Richer vocalist also loves Leonard Cohen, Peter Cetera, Spanish language love songs and the "old-timey" practice of a singer going town to town to make a case for radio stations playing her music. I've had the chance to witness all of these objects of affection with Nash, and, while none of it (save the door-to-door salesmanship) surprises me, I'm still charmed and taken off guard when they're all thrown in the mix during conversation. But first, some history:

In the spring of 1998, I sat with Leigh Nash and her then bandmates guitarist/cellist Matt Slocum and drummer Dale Baker in what appeared to be a seldom-used conference room turned storage area at WXEG, Dayton, Ohio's alternative rock station. Sixpence's core was there to, as we called it, "conference rock." I was there as the label representative for Squint Entertainment. We'd assemble a group of station staffers, always intending (hoping really) to see the program director and music director; and the band would whip out acoustic guitar and percussion and play two to three songs, always including the new single "Kiss Me."

Some visits seemed to go well, as in St. Louis, where the alternative station and its sister Hot AC station each put the band on the air for an impromptu interview and performance. Others were not so encouraging, as with a station in Vermont that cancelled our visit without our knowledge. Faces were saved by the gracious actions of a production assistant who was a fan and who conducted a taped interview for the station's archives. A kind gesture, to be sure, but the conference rock team left The Green Mountain State tail between legs.

But Dayton was close to the norm: the audience was mostly the ad sales team, propelled by the scent of free pizza and an implicit demand by the station manager that the band not play to an empty room while the real decision makers were rounded up. Sixpence must have done at least 50 of these visits in the course of the promotion. It was unglamorous and hardly the stuff of pop-star fantasy, much less the stuff of merely wanting to make music for a living.

Flash forward to a sunny June afternoon in 2006 at the Nash household, where Leigh is about to embark on a whole new round of "conference rock" gigs to support her full-length solo debut, *Blue on Blue*; and, to my surprise, she's looking forward to it. "It's like being a salesman I guess," says Leigh. "And it's the satisfaction of leaving and knowing, 'I just got an add!' It's real old-timey. I like the whole thing from start to finish, when I'm actually involved and going in there. It's like Loretta Lynn in *Coal Miner's Daughter* when they're going to radio stations and, if they like you and you do a good job, they add the song. It's like a

challenge that I find very satisfying, as if, at the end of the day, I had something to do with it. I don't know what it is—I guess it's salesmanship. Maybe I'm a good salesman."

Reflecting on the ubiquitous place that Sixpence's hits "Kiss Me" and "There She Goes" maintain on radio to this day, one must give a nod to Nash's sales prowess. While all of the usual music business machinations were involved, Nash & Company's musical acuity, dogged work ethic and genuine kindness won over scores of music and program directors; and so it is hard not to believe that this new chapter of Nash's musical career will yield some of the same broadcast omnipresence. And that would be fine with Nash, though not for the usual reasons. "I don't want to be worshipped or idolized; I just want to be in your home. Someday, I'd like to be like Chicago and Peter Cetera. I just assume that everybody, like me, wants to turn that stuff up. I want to be *that* girl—I want to be on the radio in 15 years, 20 years—multiple times. And have people be happy when they hear it."

Nash's *Blue on Blue* album, which hits stores on August 15, offers several chances for radio programmers to take her up on that invitation. (The first comes in the form of lead single "My Idea of Heaven," which is going for adds at press time.) Nash's trademark voice and lilting melodies are tailor-made for life's soundtracks. And the production flourishes of Pierre Marchand (Sarah McLachlan, Rufus Wainwright) offer a work that holds both mass accessibility and off-center surprises that can stand the test of time. While those characteristics are shared with Nash's former band, *Blue on Blue* is a work all her own, a flag planted solidly in her own artistic terra firma.

What's more, after years of record label ups, downs, further downs and dissolutions, the album is being released on her own label, One Son Records, so named to be a totem of sorts for Nash's now 2-year-old son, Henry (and administered through her management company, Netwerk, and their arrangement with Sony BMG Music). Her own label offers both the greatest flexibility and the most responsibility of her career, something that can both bless and curse the process. "I never in a million years thought that I could be on this side of it and be this proud of what happened [in making this record] and be this excited about it," she says. "I can imagine it working out, and I can imagine it not working out. And, if it doesn't, I'm not sure what's next; but we'll find out. But, having [One Son Records], I can do whatever I want and nobody can say "no." Everything's in God's hands, where I like to leave them. I'm in a position now where I don't know how everything's going to work. I know it's worked so far."

And, while the dissolution of Sixpence in 2004 brought its own set of unanswered questions, Nash offers few to no regrets. "When we, as a band, broke up, I had never felt more free. I think I felt really sad in one sense, but the other 90 percent I felt like I was

free. I'd always wanted to spread my wings and see what I could do. And I immediately knew. I *knew* that I wanted to do a record on my own. I was so excited, and I was already thinking about everything about it."

Asked about the constant insecurity that accompanies the life of a working artist, particularly as a new album cycle begins, Nash communicates a simple, faithful outlook tempered by years of living this reality. "'Say your prayers and do the next thing,' that's my mantra—have you heard that before? Have you read that? My mom always tells me that, but, you know, it just makes perfect sense. I just think we get so ahead of ourselves, and that's where I am right now, saying my prayers and then putting one foot in front of the next. Whatever that is—take a shower, wash your clothes, do the dishes.

"You have to put your money where your mouth is. That's where you're cashing in on that trust that we all say we have. And I think God honors that trust and will catch you when you fall, and, sometimes, He lets you fall. But it's active trust—not passive trust...I believe that the Word is true and that He's already worked it out, and our job is to be as godly as we can by staying in communion with Him and praying that we're in His will and doing the right thing. And, then, just do the next thing, whether it's doing the laundry or making that phone call."

Nash's simple and humble faith is one that often confounded the evangelical subculture that expressed desire for a more explicit public statement. Yet, anything of the sort would have been out of place for Nash and her bandmates, who let their music and lives do the talking. Still, there were amazing opportunities, such as the band's appearance on "The Late Show with David Letterman" where Nash was invited for some on-air chat time with Dave (a rarity for artists). When asked about the origin of the band's name, Nash gave a simple, charming and straightforward explanation of a passage in C.S. Lewis' fine *Mere Christianity* tome. It was the sort of moment so subtle and tender that it seemed to catch even Letterman off guard. Such are the opportunities of humility and graciousness one finds hard to imagine from more forceful or aggressive communicators.

In a business so filled with outsized egos from even the most modestly successful, Nash's down-to-earth sensibilities are a pure pleasure. *Blue on Blue* is a confident and life-filled album with far-reaching potential. Nash is preparing for her barnstorming radio tour followed by a fall tour with Jars of Clay to take the songs out to audiences old and new. Beyond that lie the hopes of radio domination, more touring and a long career ride of artistic chances and opportunities. Being around Nash brings a sense of both unbounded optimism and well-grounded principles assuring that whatever is in store will be met with the same determination, faith and strength that have accompanied her thus far. **ccm**

See this month's lead review of Leigh Nash's new album, *Blue on Blue*, on page 53.

# finally free

What does it take for someone to realize that a serious change is needed in his or her life? For **Sarah Kelly**, it was her new sophomore release, *Where the Past Meets Today* (Gotee). **by: lindsay williams**

Imagine sitting next to Steven Segal at the 2005 Grammy Awards dressed in a \$20,000 Jennifer Nicholson dress flowing in hues of pink, green and orange. Then, as if being there wasn't enough, imagine being *nominated* for "Best Rock Gospel Album." This dream became a reality for Sarah Kelly with the success of her debut project, *Take Me Away* (Gotee). Kelly reflects on that night with so much excitement that you barely catch all the words, "I was like a Disney princess for a day...I mean I can't even explain to you what a day that was! It was like a big dream for me."

Most would consider Kelly's career, thus far, quite the dream. In addition to the Grammy nod, 50,000 copies of *Take Me Away* sold, two hit singles and touring stints opening for Jars of Clay, a life-size portrait of her appears in the "World's Largest Outdoor Photo Exhibit" seen in 140 Guitar Center stores nationwide.

But don't be fooled. Take one listen to the honesty found on Kelly's new disc, *Where the Past Meets Today*, and you begin to sense that her life has been far from that of royalty. In fact, it's just been in the past year that Kelly has been able to come to terms with a lifelong battle with abusive relationships that began when she was 12 years old. "To be honest, it's an addiction," she says. "That's why women stay. [The men] are so nice to you for four or five days after that...You go through what you need to [in order to] get through to the make-up period." Kelly speaks from experience, having had tables and chairs thrown at her and, even, having been locked in a closet for days. "I was hiding this room in my heart from God for the longest time, so I was literally disqualifying myself from peace until just last year when I finally drew the line," she admits.

Incredibly, Kelly's Top 10 single, "Take Me Away" was written while she was still in a violent relationship. She quips, "I mean what do people think I'm talking about [when I sing] 'Take Me Away?'" On a further sobering note, Kelly adds, "One out of four women have dealt with physical abuse; and if we think that's different in the churches, we're just fooling ourselves."

Kelly's sophomore album, which releases August 1, has proven to be a source of healing for her; and she hopes that it will also impact others in a similar way. "I watched God, through the making of the songs on this album, bring me full circle to honesty and, finally, acknowledging my role in it—my sin in it—in enabling these people to do this," she continues. "[This album] is like the end of my rope meets the beginning of my life."

With Mike Clink (Guns N' Roses, Metallica) at the production helm and co-writers James Michael (Alanis Morissette, Meatloaf) and Chris Chaney (Jane's Addiction), among others, it seems inevitable that mainstream ears will perk up. Kelly says Gotee is her "dream label," but she welcomes general market opportunities. She puts it this way, saying, "You know, if Jesus was walking around today and he was a singer, I don't think He'd just be singing to Christians. I'll make a very bold statement: I don't think He'd forget them either. I love the church, but, for whatever reason, God—not me—opened up these doors. So I'm gonna bust through them with everything I've got."

Gotee co-founder tobyMac is one person who knows Kelly has what it takes. "Sarah pushes beyond the typical 'ccm safe' female voice. Lyrically, she is so honest; she writes from the depths of her soul," Toby explains. "She is a true artist—a worshiper."

Though originally an English teacher in her hometown of Rockford, Ill., Kelly now has apartments in both Rockford and L.A., where life has pushed her into the throes of mainstream culture and the lives of many non-believers from whom Kelly seems to have gained infinite insight into the human psyche. She says, "These people are not as far from God as we think they are. Musicians are such spiritual beings, and they know that there's a God. They know it because they encounter it every time they play. And they're either running to Him or running from Him. I've had some really great talks and, even, prayers with some people that would blow your mind—real people with real lives on the journey trying to figure it out just like everyone sitting in a church pew."

When not performing, Kelly strives to help others continue on their own unique journeys through mentoring students. "There's only one theme of my life," she says, "and that's to help people write music so they can connect with God."

Free from abusive relationships and better able to pour her energy into the lives of others, Kelly is poised with a fresh perspective: "People are people—everyone is just trying to find their way. I'm not up there claiming that I've found the perfect way 'cause, honestly, I'm still searching, too. If we're dead honest, we are all still figuring it out."

With *Where the Past Meets Today* releasing, opportunities looming and a full touring schedule in the works, Kelly's quest continues. Sounds like a dream coming true. **ccm**

# ★ Growing Up Is Hard to Do by: christa a. banister ★

**Stellar Kart** learns that growing pains are sometimes crucial for better understanding God's personal nature.

Whether it's the band's unusual name that resulted from an afternoon of go-kart racing or its wide spectrum of influences, Stellar Kart finds inspiration in unlikely places. Case in point? When frontman Adam Agee is quizzed about his musical influences, the rocker namedrops the usual suspects: Green Day, blink-182, Switchfoot, Jimmy Eat World, All American Rejects and Nichole Nordeman. Wait a minute...Nichole Nordeman?

While many a punk rock guy wouldn't be man enough to admit that a piano-playing songstress inspires him, Adam wishes he could write songs "as good as hers." But, even though he readily admits he's not there yet, he remains optimistic and hopes "that'll come with time."

In the meantime, though, his band is also beginning to make a name for itself after its early 2005 debut, *All Gas. No Brake.* (Word), received favorable reviews and sold a respectable 45,000-plus copies—not bad for a brand new act in a seemingly never-ending sea of new artists.

And, even though Adam is encouraged by Stellar Kart's success, he admits there were "plenty of growing pains" that came with making the sequel. "You have a couple of ideas for songs that you think are great, and then people either aren't getting it or people don't understand it," Adam shares. "Or you don't even think it's as good as you thought it was. When that happens, you start questioning yourself as a songwriter and asking, 'Am I supposed to be doing this?'"

"Before long, I realized that I'm not good enough to be doing this. It's not

about me and how great I am as a songwriter but making sure that God's getting the point across through me—what He's wanting to say to our fans. Once we realized that as a band, we just let go and realized that it's a whole lot easier when we let God take control."

That theme—of not being able to make it through life without God's divine intervention—is what's emphasized again and again on the band's sophomore disc, *We Can't Stand Sitting Down* (Word). Aside from a more introspective approach lyrically, Adam says he hopes that listeners will sense a new maturity from the musical side of things as well. "Honestly, what's different about this record is that it's going to sound a lot better this time around." He says with a laugh. "Without sounding too cliché, it's not only louder; but there are a lot of moments where there's growth as musicians. It's the step forward we were hoping for."

Even before *We Can't Stand Sitting Down* hit store shelves on July 25, the band had the affirmation of one of its most prominent peers, both personally and professionally. "After several tours together we have gotten to know the Stellar Kart boys very well," says Kutless front man Jon Micah Sumrall. "It is always a privilege to share the stage with bands that not only put on a quality show but also are clearly focused in sharing their faith both on and off the stage. They are a great group to work with and have become some of our closest friends within the music industry." ccm



The logo for CCM magazine, featuring the letters 'ccm' in a bold, blue, lowercase font with a stylized blue arrow pointing to the right.

Design by Jeff Amstutz, A2Z Design

Comedienne Chonda Pierce finds her funny self on the road after taking time off to find her funny again; page 46 tells her story.

Written by Jacqueline A. Chapman

Big Idea's VeggieTales brand still entertains children and adults alike, especially with *LarryBoy* and *the Bad Apple* and *Bob and Larry Sing the 70s*. Check out the big news from Big Idea on page 47.

Maybe his face looks familiar from stints on Nickelodeon or at his current job on "The Logan Show." Now, meet the character behind the man, Logan Sekulow, starting on page 50.

Go bananas on DVD (and on page 51) with the latest collection of comedy from the "Bananas" television series.

A close-up photograph of the brown, textured sole of a black sneaker, with the words 'SPECIAL ADVERTISING SECTION' printed in white along the edge.

# READY

## GUIDE

### '06

# HAVE A NICE

# TRIP!

# CHONDA PIERCE

Chonda Pierce is a veteran comedian. That's not to say she's old or, even, past her prime—she admits that she has veteran experience under her belt. “Now I'm in a place where young comedians who work mostly in clubs ask me how I do ticketed concerts and have thousands of people come out to the shows. I wish I had a book or formula for them, but I don't.” She finds that it was mostly “expensive lessons for the spirit, mind and pocketbook.”

Knowing how to do comedy for an audience of various church backgrounds is one possible key to Pierce's success. “I used to tease my comedian friends, [saying], ‘We'll see how funny you are. You come make a room full of Christians from different doctrines laugh—without a three drink minimum.’ I've been in a room with women without a stitch of make-up on and hair in buns and others in leather pants, from the Church of Christ crowd to devout Pentecostals to the Baptist women. Somewhere in there, you find a meeting place where you can laugh about something in common. That's why most of my material is about being a woman—whether you're wearing make-up or not, you're still a girl.”

Tours, ticketed concerts and sets at conferences before thousands of people are the comedy circuits that Pierce travels comfortably. She recently completed the “Pierce of Mind” tour with new fodder from her latest DVD release, *A Piece of My Mind*. More than 30 dates took her across the country this past spring (and continuing this fall) on her first tour in almost two years. “I parked the bus for a while and didn't tour. I filled the year with a few Women of Faith events; but, other than that, I stayed at home and rested. And I needed it.”

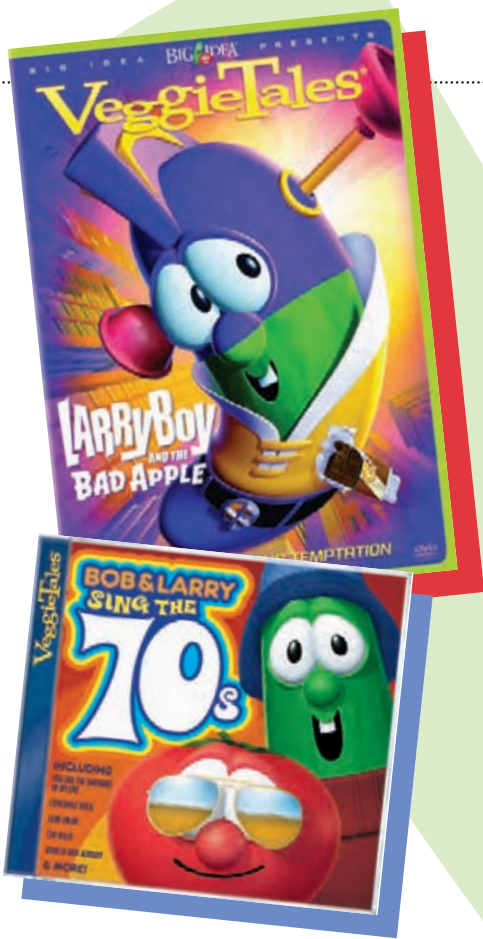
You see, the award-winning, gold-selling funny lady suddenly wasn't feeling so funny. “I was at a spa with some girlfriends and, within a few hours, was in the hospital,” Pierce recalls. Turns out, exhaustion and menopause turned her body chemistry upside-down. “People warned me to take some time off, but, always the comedian, I thought I was on a roll. I hit the wall.” Pierce found herself “deeply, darkly depressed.”

“I used to be one of those who thought that Christians shouldn't get depressed. I was wrong,” Pierce admits. The year off has given her time to grow and learn and time to be with her husband, David, and two children, Chera Kay and Zachary. It has also been a time to recover and learn about depression. “You go through the spiritual checklist and find those things are in place, but you still don't want to get out of bed. That has to be a physical illness, something wacky happening in your body chemistry.”

Coming out of the glum, Pierce gathered up her funny again for *A Piece of My Mind* and has shed new light on the illness with her audience. “My email box has been flooded with women telling me ‘thank you’ for being honest. I want women to know they are not alone in the dark. And I want families and friends to know that depression is real.” And, it could be this kind of honesty and faith which has given this comedian veteran status. Looks like those expensive lessons paid off.



**“I used to tease my comedian friends, [saying], ‘We'll see how funny you are. You come make a room full of Christians from different doctrines laugh—without a three drink minimum.’”**



# BIG IDEA: VEGGIETALES

Surely the adults at Big Idea, Inc., take their task of creating funny seriously. Still, there must be times when working on their best-known big idea (the award-winning VeggieTales) that nothing but chuckles spread around the office, especially recently when they created new doses of kids' comedy—another tale of a cucumber superhero and a music revival from the '70s.

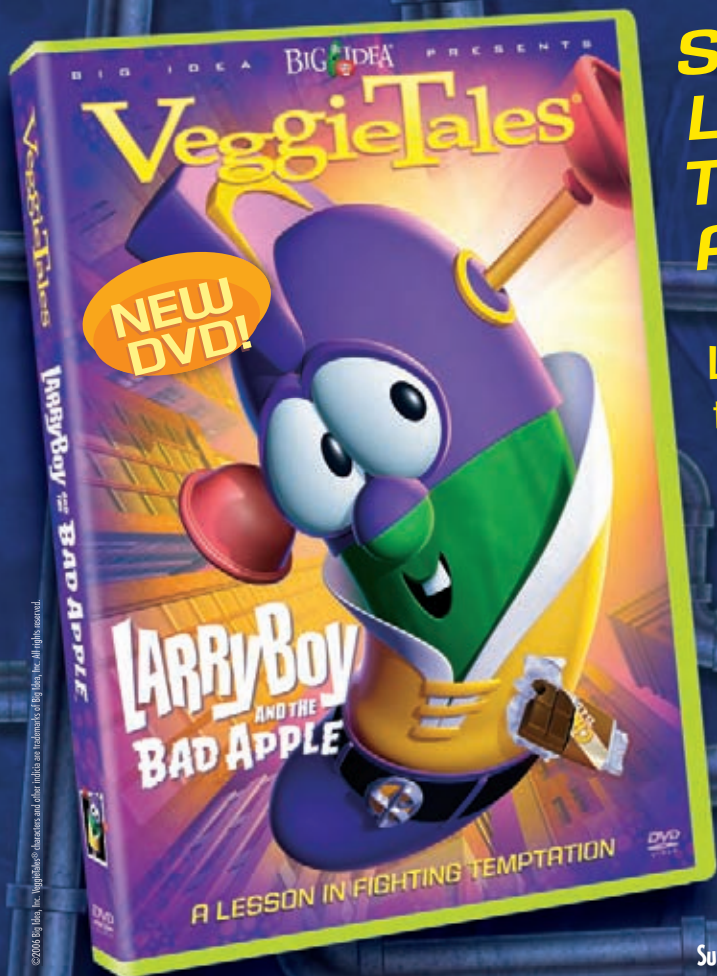
## OUR SUPERHERO FACES A BAD APPLE

Just arrived is the new adventure of LarryBoy, the cucumber superhero whose powers extend to his super-suction ears, in *LarryBoy and the Bad Apple*. "LarryBoy faced the fib from outer space, wrestled the rumor weed and now has to see through the sour plot of the Bad Apple," says Greg Fritz of Big Idea, Inc. But the big kids at Big Idea, Inc., don't stop with the LarryBoy feature and lesson. They've given LarryBoy a new theme song ("Rock on LarryBoy"), set up interactive features on DVD, developed PlayStation 2 and Game Boy Advance games, released a soundtrack and sent LarryBoy on a 12-city promotional tour!

## PLAY THAT FUNKY MUSIC, VEGGIES

At first, there were only silly songs and sing-alongs. But, now, Bob and Larry are singing hit songs of the '70s. The newest audio release from VeggieTales, *Bob and Larry Sing the 70s*, comes out this month. It's expected to be a hit among parents and kids, as moms and dads hear popular oldies and introduce them to their children. Songs include "Lean on Me," "The Lion Sleeps Tonight," "Locomotion," "Car Wash" and "We Are Family," all sung by the Veggie cast.

Things don't stop with LarryBoy and disco music though. Universal Pictures announced in May that it plans to release *The Pirates Who Don't Do Anything: A VeggieTales Movie* worldwide in early 2008. And, launching in September, Big Idea programming will become part of the new Smart Kids Network, a multi-platform children's network which includes a dedicated Saturday morning time period on NBC. Along with the upcoming *Gideon* DVD release this fall, it's clear that those big kids at Big Idea, Inc., do take their funny for families seriously.



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# THE LOGAN SHOW

A tank of slime. That's all it took. Working on television meant being off-camera to Logan Sekulow, host of the nationally syndicated "The Logan Show," until he got pulled into a stunt while interning at Nickelodeon's "SlimeTime Live." "It all started with a giant tub of slime," says Sekulow. "Live at Universal Studios, they threw me up there for this stunt. That was my first time doing on-camera work. I had no intention of working in front of the camera, but I fell in love with it."

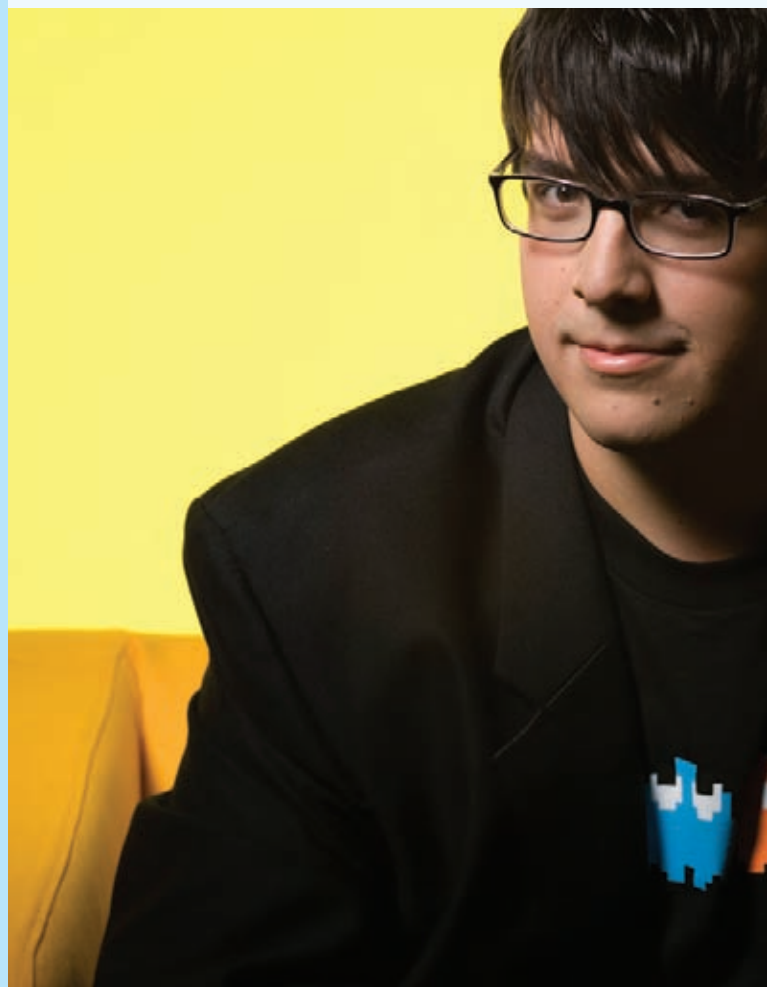
Behind-the-scenes television and film production was more the direction Sekulow originally intended to take. A child prodigy of sorts, he graduated from the prestigious Full Sail in Orlando, Fla., with a college degree in film and video at age 15. "When I figured out that I needed and really wanted to go to film school, I researched and found Full Sail, a school that was open to bringing me in at such a young age. It was amazing; and it's the reason I'm doing what I do now."

Though bitten by the on-camera bug while interning, Sekulow didn't make his way to a hosting job immediately. After his stint with "SlimeTime," he worked on Nick's "U-Pick." "The crew just seemed to really dig my sense of humor, and they threw me up on 'Crew Week.' I did a dance-off, and, from there, I started coming back as a frequent personality," he remembers.

From "U-Pick," Sekulow began working with a voter registration organization, creating catchy videos encouraging people to register to vote. "We were doing videos to run at music festivals. We took a different approach on the videos by including some comedy and had huge success. It was while we were on tour with that that my friends and I came up with the idea for 'The Logan Show' and pitched the pilot."

The pilot was picked up for a full season, and January 2005 saw the launch of "The Logan Show," a half-hour comedy show that includes skits, bits, musical guests and a snowman co-host. Over 60 episodes have aired so far, with the anticipation of the 100th episode taping this year. The show is currently available in 65 million homes via JC-TV, FamilyNet, The Inspiration Network (INSP), iLifetv, TCT Network, Victory Television Network (VTN) and Good Life Broadcasting. The program was also recently added to Alpha Omega Broadcasting and DirecTV through World Harvest Television. In addition, since January of this year, the audio version may now be heard on Sirius Satellite Radio (channel 159). Moreover, the show streams live online on the weekends; and the newly added on-demand feature allows viewers to catch up on or re-watch favorite episodes at the show's website, [loganshow.com](http://loganshow.com).

Taped before a live studio audience in Nashville, Tenn., "The Logan Show" follows a common late night format, similar to "The Tonight Show with Jay Leno" or "Late Night with Conan O'Brien"—a monologue, guest musicians and plenty of cracks at culture are standard fare with the obvious difference being content. "Many of our bits and satire are only for our Christian audience," says Sekulow, referring to regular conversations with



**I think we've made a huge step forward  
for Christian comedy—  
especially for the high school  
and college age group.**



**Logan with  
"Songwriter of the Year"  
Christa Wells**



**Logan with Building 429**



**Logan with Everlife**

"Michael W. Smith, Superhero" and skits taking jabs at other Christian culture icons. "In the beginning, we didn't know what we could do and where the lines might be. We thought that there might not be a lot of room to move within those lines. So, when we wrote a skit on Joel Osteen, we were scared when it ran. We thought people would either love [that skit] or hate it, and I think we anticipated that we could get kicked off some networks. But it turned out to be one of everyone's favorite skits."

It was at that point that "The Logan Show" host, cast and writers realized that people were willing to laugh at the culture and at themselves. "We recently had Carman on. I've never seen someone play along with a show like he did. It started with a 'Carman Counter' earlier this season, where we counted the days until we could get him on the show. Finally, we talked to him and figured out how to make that episode special. He totally gets in on one bit, as if he was part of the mafia. The season ended with him being arrested after his last song. Those are the moments that people remember."

Sekulow works hard at creating moments people will remember, especially since viewers are flipping channels. He explains, "When people hear that you're associated with Christian television, they don't think Hollywood budget; they think the quality is low. So, we've worked at overcoming a Christian TV stereotype." Sekulow admits to turning on Christian TV, searching for shows with quality production for a teen or 20-something. "Most of the shows were dealing with deep issues, and I just wondered, 'Where are the shows that kids can watch with mom or grandma and not be horribly offended but just be entertained?' I think we've made a huge step forward for Christian comedy—especially for the high school and college age group. We're definitely the first to target and market this kind of show."

Influenced by the comedy of Woody Allen, Mel Brooks, Garrison Keillor's "A Prairie Home Companion," filmmaker Wes Anderson and TV's "Scrubs" creator Bill Lawrence, Sekulow and "The Logan Show" benefit from the art of storytelling with a punch line and the use of dry humor. "I love dry humor. Add something here and there for a smart brand of humor. At least, I hope this show is pseudo-intelligent."

"I do have a calling, but I don't take it as a ministry. Some people have been reached that way, which is great. But I'm not a preacher, and I'm pretty sure I won't be. There are Christian characters on the show, but it's not a preaching show. If artists want to talk about religious beliefs, that's fine; but I have a problem with doing comedy, comedy, comedy and then pulling out the Bible."

"Comedy is comedy, and I'm here to entertain. So, hopefully, we've created a show that is about laughs and good times."

# BANANAS COMEDY

Slipping on a banana peel is one of the oldest gags in comedy. The "Bananas" comedy television series changes the way comedy lovers think about this discarded fruit with its "appealing comedy for the whole family." It's a clean, family-friendly comedy television series taped before a live audience.



This fall, *Bananas TV Season 1* DVDs hit the store. Containing more than 10 hours of comedy, the four-disc boxed set features nationally acclaimed comedians Anita Renfroe, Bob Nelson, Daren Streblow, Jeff Allen, John Branyan, Kenn Kington, Leland Klassen, Mike Williams, Nazareth, Paul Aldrich, Taylor Mason, Ted & Lee and Tim Hawkins. Also coming this fall is "Bananas Featuring Fred Travalena." A veteran impressionist and stand-up comedian, Travalena is both clean and hilarious as he sings, dances and impersonates celebrities like Dr. Phil, Lawrence Welk, Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan.

Check out [bananascomedy.com](http://bananascomedy.com) for more comedy and all three seasons of "Bananas" TV.

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**File Under:**  
Pop

**Grade:** **A**

**LEIGH NASH**

***Blue on Blue***

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**LOVE, SALVATION AND THE JOY OF BIRTH**

It's been more than two years since Leigh Nash and her longtime musical compatriot Matt Slocum agreed to fold up the tent known as Sixpence None the Richer. That means fans have been waiting two years for the inevitable solo debut of Mrs. Nash.

Considering Sixpence took five years between

its last two albums, two years seems like nothing.

There's no use trying to critique a Leigh Nash solo record without referencing her work in Sixpence. It was her gently aching voice that brought Slocum's songs to life; and Sixpence was a fantastic band that many fans already miss terribly. Fortunately for them, Nash's *Blue on Blue* compares very favorably indeed. Though certainly not a Sixpence sound-alike, the same love of melody, texture and romance shines through. And rest assured, this is no soundtrack-driven compilation of "Kiss Me" tributes either. In short, Nash has delivered exactly what Sixpence fans came to expect—excellence.

Though self-released, *Blue on Blue* is far from "indie" in its aesthetics. Producer Pierre Marchand (Sarah McLachlan, Daniel Lanois) brings the songs—all written or co-written by Nash—to life with articulate grace. Though predominantly oriented around vocal and piano, the music never sounds sparse. From pure pop to borderline rock, with colors bright and subdued, Nash rallies her Sixpence experience to great effect, managing the sonic options well.

Lyricaly, the collection is truly fascinating. The dominant, if not central, theme is the birth of her first child two years ago, though a casual listen may not make that apparent. "Angel Tonight" and "Just a Little" both deal with the subject of new parenthood while never settling for sentimentality. They reflect on connection, intimacy and unconditional love in a way that, while particularly interesting from a parental perspective, works on other levels as well. When the baby isn't the pink elephant in the room, Nash's relationship with her husband, Mark Nash (PFR), is. The sublime opening track, "Along the Wall" (co-written by Marchand), places all of the forthcoming romance, struggle, fear and bliss smack in the lap of the Almighty.

Overall, Nash's solo debut more than lives up to expectations. Artful and accessible, the winsome charm of the Sixpence-era Leigh Nash remains, while she deftly breaks new ground of her own. The album's spirituality is as gentle as the voice that explores it and may be lost on more didactic ears; but, on the whole, *Blue on Blue* is about as satisfying as faith-informed art gets.

**JOHN J. THOMPSON**



## DEAD POETIC

**Vices**  
Tooth & Nail

**File Under:**  
Rock

**Grade: A-**

### A DRAMATIC STEP

If pain and suffering forge the best work out of an artist, Dead Poetic's almost breaking up last year was a godsend. This new album, *Vices*, finds them sounding as desperate as an *American Idol* semi-finalist in one song, as intense as an angry World Trade Organization protestor in another, but as calm and collected as a veteran band showcasing its wares on a *Tonight Show* stage in the next. While that sounds like a description of a diverse-sounding album, it's actually cohesive, flowing and very listenable.

This rejuvenated band is in full swing from the first power chord struck in "Cannibal vs. Cunning," which sounds very similar to the song "Witchhunt" from Stavesacre's 2003 self-titled album. Other tunes, such as "Lioness," sound very chunky, like Chevelle in one of its low-end grooves; and the sweet rock & roll desperation near the end of this album (as on "Copy of a Copy") sounds uncannily like Sweden's *Blindside* in vocal meter and tone. A slow ballad never sounded so punk rock.

Similarities aside, these 14 songs hold their own, with infectious hooks that dig their claws deep into any musical heart with open ears, which will incite plenty of sing-alongs in a live setting. And the musicianship here is quite impressive as well, with stop-in-an-instant tightness and nary a moment between tracks to catch one's breath. All in all, there is much to like on this album.

Lyrical, vocalist/songwriter Brandon Rike takes the listener on a "Seven Deadly Sins" type voyage that honestly looks at the many vices faced in this world. With a blunt, but biblical lens, he traverses deception, greed, sex, self-destruction, drugs, defensiveness, escape and vanity—all culminating in the crushing weight of sin and the wonder of a Savior who sees through our sin and, nevertheless, values us.

Founders Rike and Zach Miles re-tooled their lineup by adding super drummer Jesse Sprinkle (Poor Old Lu, Demon Hunter) and former Beloved members Dusty Redmon and John Brehm (guitarist and bassist, respectively). The result is a dramatic step up from the solid screamo of *New Medicines*—doing so with a solid rock identity that defies sub-genres.

**DOUG VAN PELT**



DEAD POETIC



**File Under:** Power Pop/Modern Rock  
**Grade: B-**

## FM STATIC

**Critically Ashamed**  
Tooth & Nail

### WHAT YOU ARE WAITING FOR?

FM Static is the alter ego of Thousand Foot Krutch's front man Trevor McNeven and drummer Steve Augustine. Their 2003 debut, *What Are You Waiting For* delivered surprising bite and wit to Christian radio and saw the one-time side project develop into a full-blown touring entity.

*Critically Ashamed* delivers melodic pop songs with nods to Fountains of Wayne, Weezer and the lighter side of blink-182. The first half is heavily weighted toward satirical barbs and pop culture reference overload. FM Static starts by skewering shallow pop culture ("Flop Culture"), false celebrity praise ("The Next Big Thing") and perverted desire for attention ("America's Next Freak"). "Flop Culture" addresses "the good old days" with a chorus asking, "Can ya tell me what happened to Michael Jackson?/And MTV tradin' music for acting/Avril Lavigne's on the cover of Maxim/Whoa-oh."

"America's Next Freak" comes out of the gate name checking any number of scenesters trying to fit in before declaring, "And I never tried to be your trend/Never asked to be everyone's friend/I'm just who I am/And that's life for real."

From there, the record delves into themes that generally cover girls ("The Video Store"; "Girl of the Year"; "The Moment of Truth") or spiritual yearning ("Tonight"; "A Nice Piece of Art"; "Waste of Time"). The band delivers much more on the lyrically lighter fare, with the more introspective material falling into generic territory.

The satire that dominates the front half of the album is bound to attract the lion's share of attention, with the bountiful ironic pop culture sourcing evoking both chuckles and eye rolls. The lyrical punch lines are hit and miss, such that, even with tongues planted firmly in cheek, a lyrical foil may have helped the proceedings. And, ironically, the most uptempo material sometimes suffers from a lack of energy in the recording. These songs scream to jump out from the speakers but can't quite muster the momentum to do so.

*Critically Ashamed* is a solid, if not remarkable, follow-up for the band. No new ground is broken; but no steps backward are taken either. FM Static holds a unique position as charming satirical commentator and court jester. With some lyrical fine-tuning and sonic expansion, the potential for greater things is its for the taking.

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LEELAND



LEELAND

**Sound of  
Melodies**  
Essential

**File Under:**  
Worshipful Rock

**Grade: A-**

### THE BEST NEW ARTIST OF THE YEAR?

The commodification of worship music in the past decade has, invariably, stunted creativity and originality within the genre. It's almost as if artistry and adoration have suddenly become strange bedfellows, diametrically opposed instead of marching hand in hand.

Since the need for safeguarding the bottom line has caused the craftsmanship of worship to become stagnant, it's a rarity to hear a debut like Leeland's *Sound of Melodies* which releases August 15. The Texas quintet was christened after 17-year-old band leader Leeland Mooring, the ensemble's youngest member, lead singer and principal songwriter.

Given Mooring's and his teammates' ages, one would expect *Sound of Melodies* to sound young. Instead, the album is mature and textured, an intricately layered affair that calls to mind the group's Brit-pop influences—namely, U2, Travis, Muse, Delirious and other torchbearers from across the Atlantic.

Leeland got its start practicing nightly in a funeral home, but its compositions

are far from dirge-like. The band's songs aren't congregational, but they brim with humanity and brokenness—plaintive elegies full of urgency and solemnity.

"We're leaping over walls to get to you/Would you pull us along?" asks Mooring in "Reaching," a sonnet that could pass for a Coldplay outtake from the X&Y sessions. Elsewhere, he sings, "You've stolen my heart, yes you have," and one can imagine him nodding with conviction. In this sense, *Sound of Melodies* possesses the universal appeal of the Psalms, as its numbers are Davidic and relatable even when they aren't readily replicable in a corporate setting.

But "worship" is a verb, and the members of Leeland use it not only to venerate their Maker but also as a vehicle to fulfill the Great Commission. In what's clearly the pinnacle of the record, "Tears of the Saints" paints a haunting, apocalyptic picture of the time when every knee shall bow: "All Your children will stretch out their hands/And pick up the crippled man/Father, we will lead them home."

In the 2000s, the modus operandi of worship is to rehash popular praise choruses in a way that's palatable to the positive-hits constituency and conducive to radio airplay. Leeland could have chosen that route, but the band is too precocious for that. *Sound of Melodies* is worship music that faithfully straddles the continuum between the sacred and the secular, a disc that—though in spots too fresh-faced and eager for its own good—demonstrates that Creator and creativity shouldn't be mutually exclusive.

**ANDREE FARIAS**



SHOWBREAD takes its album title seriously. (Don't try this at home.)



File Under:  
Rock

Grade: **A**

**SARAH KELLY**

*Where the  
Past Meets  
Today*  
Gotee

**SHE'LL TAKE YOU AWAY**

Not since Jennifer Knapp has a woman rocked with as much conviction on the Christian music scene as Sarah Kelly. With blistering guitar licks, a larger-than-life stage presence and her Janis Joplin howl, listeners couldn't help but believe every word she sang on her Grammy-nominated debut, *Take Me Away*. And, while the majority of the songs on her previous effort were more worshipful in scope, Kelly stakes a more personal claim with *Where the Past Meets Today*.

After falling prey to a cycle of physical abuse as a teenager, Kelly uses the songs on *Where the Past Meets Today* as a creative outlet for peace and continued healing. For anyone who has experienced a similar situation, there's also a genuine sense of hope to be found in God's unconditional love, something she articulates so poignantly on the piano-driven "At About Midnight."

With the constant theme of living without regrets throughout, Kelly's gritty vocal delivery—that's part Janis and part Alanis—particularly shines on the memorable, mid-tempo opener, "The Beauty of It All." But, before one assumes she's going for a softer sound this time around, "Still Breathing" squelches those thoughts in a hurry with its full-on guitar assault that'll probably remind many fans of the hair-band era when Axl Rose was king. And, while this may cause a few to wonder why she chose that direction, it really comes as no surprise since Kelly teamed up with Mike Clink, the producer behind Guns N' Roses' multi-platinum *Appetite for Destruction*. And that guitar assault? Courtesy of GNR's own lead guitarist, Slash, who also contributes his chops to "Out of Reach."

While the moments where Kelly most heartily embraces her inner rock chick are certainly memorable and well-executed, the disc's best tracks are usually the quieter ones because Kelly's personal lyrics steal the spotlight, instead of the guitars. The best examples are the moody strains of "Hold On Love" and the lilting, nostalgic feel of closing track, "Remember Me Well." But, whether she's rocking out or getting introspective, there's still plenty to enjoy here, either way, on what's ultimately a stellar sophomore offering.

**CHRISTA A. BANISTER**



File Under:  
Hard

Grade: **A**

**SHOWBREAD**

*Age of  
Reptiles*  
Solid State

**WHEN YOU'RE THIS GOOD,  
IT'S HARD TO BE HUMBLE**

Pull up Showbread's website, and you'll see what lead vocalist Josh Dies has to say about his band's new disc: "You can expect this album to resemble the last one very little or not at all. This record is more direct, more structured, has more hooks and is the most incredible work of raw rock the world has ever known."

Can you imagine making such a statement, much less trying to live up to it? Well, after listening to *Age of Reptiles*, all I could think about was how different this release is from Showbread's last and how much better the hooks and in-your-face rock riffs are. Is it the most incredible "raw rock" album the world has ever known? Doubtful—but it's so good it scares me to think about it.

The interaction between the varied vocal styles of Josh and Ivory Mobley and the combined melodic and hard attack of guitarists Mike Jensen and Matt Davis are a perfect blend with solid bass playing by Patrick Porter. However, what really makes this album great (next to the songwriting itself) are the incredibly quirky synths and keytar played by John Giddens. The keyboards do not come across as a novelty, and they don't take away from the "raw rock" sound of the album—that is an amazing feat in and of itself.

Showbread has come a long way since its debut, maturing in every area. Gone is the "been there, done that" screamo vibe, replaced with an up-front rock vocal power. There is no other sound or record like this out there right now, especially in the world of Christian music. Imagine wild synths playing alongside what are, in this reviewer's opinion, the most hook-filled loud rock guitars and amazing rock vocals since Nirvana's *Nevermind*.

Josh, who wrote all of the songs, seems to have a real gift for melodies and lyrics that defy categorization. The CD liner notes quote Genesis 3:1 and state "Welcome to the Age of Reptiles. The soundtrack to the era of cold blooded vertebrates will be raw rock." There's a wild concept here that deals with some heavy subject matter; although, I think, they are

being a little tongue in cheek, at times, but still making serious points. The band is very secure and open about its faith, but this is not a contemporary worship album. These are songs about real life as told through an incredibly artistic theme. From the opening track, "Naked," the lyrics grab you and make you think: "I want to throw up/But for now I hold back/I can't express just how I'm feeling/It's true." There is also the more sublime "Sing Me to Sleep," which includes this moving line: "Your heart is a song that I hear Jesus sing/It comes over oceans to me/And the notes spell out messages in vibrant streams/And what's written you show only me."

While the lyrics may intrigue you, the music will assault you. *Age of Reptiles* is both melodic and hard. The first single, "Oh! Emetophobia," will grab you with its opening synth hook and melodic chorus, while the oddly titled "Your Owls are Hooting" is by far the best track with driving drums and guitars. Whether your blood runs warm or cold, this raw rock is meant to be played loud and played often.

**DR. TONY SHORE**



**File Under:**  
Eclectic Rock

**Grade: A**

**AYIESHA WOODS**  
*Introducing Ayiesha Woods*  
Gotee

#### **A WELCOME INTRODUCTION**

Combining the best stylistic attributes of Sheryl Crow and Lenny Kravitz, Ayiesha Woods is a rock singer you need to know about. And her debut album—produced by Chris Stevens (tobyMac, Shawn McDonald), Otto Price (BarlowGirl, GRITS), Ric Robbins (Out of Eden, Sonicflood) and David Mullen (Nicole C. Mullen, *End of the Spear* soundtrack)—is a disc you need to hear.

Her duet with tobyMac on "Big Enough," a lyrical reminder of God's greatness, provides noteworthy insight into this new artist's unique musical character. Much like tobyMac's past work with dc talk, this track mixes rock's edginess with soul power to create an undeniably affirming musical statement. Woods



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RED UMBRELLA

accents her phrasing with a likeable vocal rasp. But, rather than coming off like a gospel singer, such as Mavis Staples, her words often roar out like Melissa Etheridge in gritty, full-force gale mode.

Nevertheless, *Introducing Ayiesha Woods* is about more than just a girl with guitars. “Crazy” jets along to a hot-stepping reggae beat, for instance, whereas “Days” throws in old school soul horns. Both of these spectrum-stretching selections reveal Woods to be comfortable in a variety of musical settings.

Woods’ primary lyrical message concerns contentment in Christ. “Happy” lays out a long list of Hollywood perks that cannot make a person truly happy; only a close relationship with Christ can do that. The closer, “What Matters Most,” finds Woods explaining: “You want to know how I am fulfilled/I tell you in doing my Father’s will.”

All successful rock singers make you believe every word they sing, and *Introducing Ayiesha Woods* leaves absolutely no doubts.

**DAN MACINTOSH**



RED UMBRELLA

**Wishing for Boardwalk**  
7 Spin

File Under:  
Modern Rock

Grade: A

**WHEN WISHFUL THINKING BECOMES REALITY**

*Wishing for Boardwalk* succeeds without a noted industry producer, modern worship clichés or any easy modern rock compar-

isons. This Canadian quartet has masterfully pieced together a mature sound collage that feels both organically classic and progressively forward leaning. The band’s melodies and unique sound hold seemingly disparate influences together nicely.

Take, for instance, the intro, “Storm Warning,” and the hard-driving “Straitjacket.” Listeners are just as likely to hear remnants of early ’80s rock icons The Cars as they are early Radiohead or ’90s piano rock upstart Ben Folds. Tracks such as “Home” successfully balance poetic, hope-filled lyrics and distinctively soulful arena-sized vocals on top of the slow shimmy of a ’60s go-go.

Fortunately, vocalist/guitarist Jeremy Michaelis is perfectly suited to front such a multi-dimensional band. Falling somewhere vaguely between Paul McCartney and Roy Orbison in tone, Michaelis’ warm and welcoming voice morphs perfectly to meet each track, as in the song “Slide.” When Michaelis croons the lines “There she’s on her knees saying, ‘No one’s ever pleased,’ my dear/Life is like a slide/It’s a really fine ride/If we could realize God’s on our side,” he transforms fairly straight-forward lyrics into a hopeful, yet heart-wrenching, mantra. And, while this—like all the songs on this disc—is thematically a song for our times, it also swirls with spacey *Revolver*-era Beatles undertones that make Red Umbrella a band that can be easily enjoyed across generational lines. It also makes *Boardwalk* a contender for “Best Modern Rock Album” this year.

**ANTHONY-BARR JEFFREY**



FLATFOOT 56

**Knuckles Up**  
Flicker

File Under:  
Celtic Punk

Grade: B-

**CELTIC INDIE ROCK FOR HARDCORE FANS**

A band of brothers—Tobin, Justin and Kyle Bawinkel and Josh Robieson, the Chicago-based Flatfoot 56 cranks out brawlin’ punkers that recall an earlier, more passionate era in Christian rock. These gritty rock anthems, punctuated with just enough bagpipe and mandolin to earn the “Celtic” label à la The Pogues, would not have been out of place 20 years ago when So. Cal. bands the Altar Boys and Undercover were giving Christian punk music legitimacy.

*Knuckles Up*, the third indie effort from singer/songwriter Tobin Bawinkel & Co. (although it’s been re-mastered for a national debut on Flicker), has a raw, unpolished bar-band quality, which works out just fine because that’s what it is. Songs such as the title track, “Blood and Sweat,” “Chi-Town Beat Down” and “Fight to Live” suggest a certain adolescent rough and tumble street bravado; and the fast-paced polka-on-steroids punk tempo, albeit redundant, suits them just fine.

Influenced by classic Irish rockers, Flatfoot lacks the subtlety and musical variations of, say, L.A. band Flogging Molly. But, there’s a truth in advertising quality, as these songs of fighting for one’s faith and family more than live up to the disc’s title. There’s an acceptance of violent metaphor in the song “Brotherhood,” where “a punch to the face, a kick to the rib” is a given; but the real issue is spiritual rather than physical: “We fight against sin/Our battle’s not outward/Our battle’s within.”

Fast, loud, aggressive and unrelenting, Flatfoot 56 is for hardcore music fans. While not always discernable at first glance, the message is an affirmation of age-old faith and “Amazing Grace.”

**BRIAN QUINCY NEWCOMB**



**DAVID CROWDER BAND**  
**B Collision**  
 sixsteps/  
 Sparrow

**File Under:** Eclectic Modern Worship  
**Grade:** A-

**IF AT FIRST YOU SUCCEED, HEY, TRY AGAIN**

There's a reason the collegiate set and scores of millennials flock to David Crowder Band's music: the six-piece modern worship act pushes the boundaries of sonic creativity, perhaps more than any other Christian artist. On the heels of the group's GMA Music Award-winning CD, *A Collision*, comes that project's truncated offspring, essentially a seven-song EP aptly titled *B Collision* because, in the words of Mr. Crowder, "B follows A."

While a convincing argument could be made that every Crowder release is experimental at its core, *B Collision* certainly fits alongside previous unconventional works such as *The Lime CD* and *Sunsets & Sushi*. And, while *B Collision* is by no means a remix record, the album largely showcases acoustic-based versions of songs from the full-length parent recording.

It's important to point out that there's no room to sit on the fence with Crowder's latest endeavor. Either you'll find it the most eclectic and clever piece of work to emanate from your iPod in recent memory, or you'll absolutely hate it. That's both the ingenious beauty and the incredible risk Crowder offers here; but it's likely this virtuoso outfit will only broaden its already loyal fan base.

Listeners with an affinity for bluegrass will find much to appreciate (the album's subtitle is *The Eschatology of Bluegrass*), as Crowder provides fresh and intimate renditions of the baker's half-dozen selections. The bulk of the material was recorded in the barn behind Crowder's house in Waco, Texas, where the band broke out banjos, violins and acoustic guitars to produce astonishingly simple constructions of songs such as "Beautiful Collision" and "Everybody Wants to Go to Heaven." On standout track "Wholly Yours," somehow, almost inexplicably, Crowder's understated vocals coalesce with inconspicuous instrumentation and modest programming to create an enduringly serene experience.

Captured during a performance in Kansas, closing numbers "Be Lifted" and "I Saw the Light" feature special guests Robbie Seay Band and Shane & Shane.

These tracks are far and away the most up-tempo of the set, and they serve notice to listeners that Crowder renders yet another collision worth encountering.

**DAVID McCREARY**

**newreleases**

**AUGUST 1**

- Audio Adrenaline** *Adios: The Greatest Hits* (Forefront/EMI)
- Marcus Cole** *Write My Song* (Pure Springs Gospel)
- DJ Morphizz** *Beat of the Submissions, Vol. 3* (Beatmart)
- FM Static** *Critically Ashamed* (Tooth & Nail)
- Gasoline Heart** *You Know Who You Are* (MVS)
- Jonas Brothers** *It's About Time* (Columbia/INO)
- Keith O'Neal** *We Lift Your Name* (EMI Gospel)
- Out of Eden** *The Hits* (Gotee)
- Showbread** *Age of Reptiles* (Tooth & Nail)
- Michael Sweet** *HIM* (Infinity)
- Tammy Trent** *I See Beautiful* (September Day)
- Various** *Sing Over Me: Worship Songs & Lullabies* (Sparrow/EMI)
- V3** *Reality of Love* (EMI Gospel)

**AUGUST 8**

- Sara Groves** *Nomad: Just Showed Up for My Own Life* DVD (INO)
- Kids in the Way** *Apparitions of Melody: The Dead Letters Edition* (Flicker)

- The Longing M.O.D.** *Amplified Impact DVD* (Indelible)
- Ginny Owens** *Ministri of Defence* (Cross Movement)
- Selah** *If You Want Me To: The Best of Ginny Owens* (Rocketown)
- Vickie Winans** *Bless the Broken Road: The Duets Album* (Curb)
- Woman to Woman: Songs of Life* (Verity)

**AUGUST 15**

- Sarah Kelly** *Where the Past Meets Today* (Gotee)
- Last Tuesday** *Become What You Believe* (MVS)
- Leeland** *Sound of Melodies* (Essential)
- Leigh Nash** *Blue on Blue* (One Son/Sony/Provident)
- Jimmy Needham** *Speak* (Inpop)
- Various** *Hip Hope 2007* (Gotee)
- Various** *Men of Gospo, Vol. 2* (GospoCentric)

**AUGUST 22**

- The Cross Movement** *Chronicles: Greatest Hits, Vol. 1* (Cross Movement)

**AUGUST 29**

- Anadara** *Into the Unknown* (Springhill Worship)
- BarlowGirl** *Another Journal Entry Expanded Edition* (Fervent)
- MercyMe** *Almost There* Platinum Edition (INO)
- Stacie Orrico** *Beautiful Awakening* (Virgin)
- Salvador** *Dismiss the Mystery* (Word)
- Springhill Worship** *Back to You* (Springhill Worship)
- Various** *Absolute Smash Hits for Kids 2* (Fervent)
- Various** *Days of Elijah* (Integrity)
- Various** *Three Wooden Crosses* (Word)

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## THE MAGIC DRAGON

During a recent tour stop in Nashville, both **Warren Barfield** and **Shawn McDonald** testified about the impactful message found in *To Own a Dragon: Reflections on Growing Up Without a Father* by **DONALD MILLER** and **JOHN MACMURRAY** (NavPress). No surprise there. Donald Miller has fast become the touchstone author for Christian music artists and fans alike. In fact, his *Blue Like Jazz* (Nelson) was voted “Favorite Book” in this year’s CCM Readers’ Choice Awards. Now, in *Dragon*, Miller offers up humorous observations alongside beautifully serious insights about what it means to be a boy growing up without a father. To help in this task, Miller brings in John MacMurray, his friend and mentor who is credited as an inspiration for the book. If you enjoy Donald Miller’s witty, yet poignant, style of writing, pick up a copy of *To Own a Dragon* today. While you’re at it, pick up a copy for a friend, too! He or she will thank you!



## THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH

By age 20, **ARIEL GORE** had run away from home, traveled the world (and we mean, the whole deal...from California to Kathmandu to Calcutta to Amsterdam and back again) and become a mother. Soon thereafter, she became a hip mama. Actually, she founded *Hip Mama: The Parenting Zine* while finishing her college degree and writing for numerous nationally recognized publications, too. Having found her voice, she began to tell her own stories. Her latest is *The Traveling Death and Resurrection Show* (HarperSanFrancisco), and the title alone tells you you’re in for a treat! Coming from the mind of an author with such a storied background, it’s not surprising to learn that the “Show” is actually a Catholic-themed traveling freak circus featuring a cast of misfits who have embraced the main character—supposed flaws and all. Mind opening. Awe-inspiring. Read it.

## THE MUSIC MAN

Having penned several music-themed oeuvres, **ROBERT ELMER** returns with yet another enticing title, *The Recital* (Waterbrook). As a sequel to Elmer’s *The Duet*, *The Recital* takes the reader into the second verse, so to speak, of pianist Joan’s and former dairy farmer Gerrit’s new song together. In this movement, Gerrit must find a different occupation in the couple’s new home of downtown Chicago as Joan labors to define herself amongst the musical elite in her newly appointed post as a music professor. Too, they struggle together to make their own music in this changing world. Will the harmony last?

## I’M LOVIN’ IT

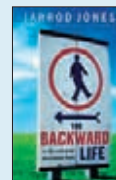


As a member of an omnipresent Hollywood clan, **STEPHEN BALDWIN** is used to conquering the media. Now, he’s set his sights on the Christian marketplace with a welcome triple threat: *Livin It: What It Is, Livin It: Testimonies & Spirit Warrior* (Broadman & Holman).

The *Livin It* series includes skate films, an extreme sports nationwide tour, a clothing line and, now, books. The *Livin It* books allow various professional athletes, including skateboarders and BMX racers, to share with young people what *livin* the Word means to them and how they do that, day in, day out. Youngsters (and grown-ups, for that matter) can also relate to the six radical kids portrayed in *Spirit Warriors*, Baldwin’s first graphic novel. Through all three titles, Baldwin seeks to equip today’s youth with material to aid them in everyday struggles of good versus evil. Here’s hoping the skaters win!

## B(u)y the Book

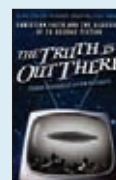
### Other Titles of Interest



**JARROD JONES** and **Mac Powell** played Little League together back in the day. Powell went on to become the lead singer for **Third Day**. Jones went on to play college sports before finding his calling in the ministry. He’s been the featured speaker on the “ShoutFest Tour” and now releases *The Backward Life: In Pursuit of an Uncommon Faith* (Revell). Be sure to check this one out!



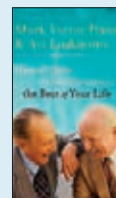
Even for those of us a bit more testosterone-impaired, **BRUCE MARCHIANO**’s *The Character of a Man: Reflecting the Image of Jesus* (Howard) is captivating. Marchiano, the actor who portrayed Jesus in the acclaimed movie *Matthew*, shares the insights he gained into who Jesus was as a man...his masculine personality. Very interesting, indeed!



Are you a Trekkie? Love “The X-Files”? Think science and religion are at odds? Fear not, friend! *The Truth Is Out There: Christian Faith and the Classics of TV Science Fiction* by **THOMAS BERTONNEAU** and **KIM PAFFENROTH** (Brazos) goes where no man has gone before! OK. Maybe not. But it is a stellar read!



If you enjoyed **DAVID GREGORY**’s breakout bestseller *Dinner with a Perfect Stranger*, then you’ll want to pick up a copy of his new offering, *A Day with a Perfect Stranger* (Waterbrook). Imagine having a seatmate on an average, everyday plane ride who seemingly sees straight into your soul. Hmm...



Pair the co-creator of the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* series with the host and author of *Kids Say the Darndest Things*, and you’re in for a compelling conversation! With *How to Make the Rest of Your Life the Best of Your Life* (Nelson), renowned authors and motivational speakers **MARK VICTOR HANSEN** and **ART LINKLETTER** have created a guide for those in, entering or contemplating (i.e., everybody) their Second Prime. A must read!





## WHEN A BIG BAND GEARS UP

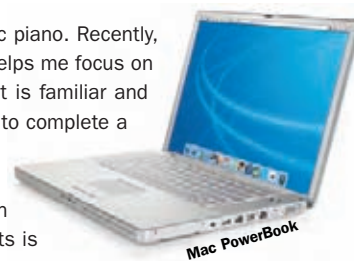
THERE WAS NO SUCH THING AS A CHRISTIAN BIG BAND BEFORE DENVER AND THE MILE HIGH ORCHESTRA HIT THE SCENE IN THE LATE '90S. AFTER FALLING IN LOVE WITH THE BIG BAND SOUND OF THE 1930S AND '40S, DENVER BIERMAN FORMED THE GROUP AS AN ATTEMPT TO RECREATE THIS CLASSIC SOUND FOR THE MODERN AGE. CONSISTING OF THREE TRUMPET PLAYERS, THREE SAXOPHONE PLAYERS, TWO TROMBONE PLAYERS AND A RHYTHM SECTION, THE INCREASINGLY POPULAR BAND HAS SPENT THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS CIRCLING THE GLOBE PLAYING AT FESTIVALS, CHURCHES AND CONFERENCES.



Bach Stradivarius

### >> THE TUNES::

Denver explains his process in writing music for the group: "Mostly, I compose the melodies and chords on an acoustic piano. Recently, I have been composing for [our] upcoming studio album; and I have found that going to my hometown in Indiana really helps me focus on this writing. It is important for me to get away from the distractions of my daily life in Nashville, going to a place that is familiar and comfortable." Denver goes on to explain, "Writing the melody and harmony is only a small fraction of the work it takes to complete a Denver and the Mile High Orchestra song. After the melody and chords are written, I still have to arrange the rhythm section parts and the horn parts. I arrange the rhythm section parts at an acoustic piano and hand-write the chart for the players. The horns, however, I arrange using Finale. When the band is touring, I will arrange the horn parts sitting in the back of the bus using an Edirol USB keyboard - PCR-M1 plugged into my Apple Mac PowerBook. Arranging horn parts is very time consuming, and using Finale really helps me use the time efficiently."



Mac PowerBook

Denver explains the band's traditional approach when it's time to go into the studio: "The nature of our recordings has been capturing the natural sounds of our instruments. We try not to process any instrument too much, as we want to maintain the integrity of the instrument's sound." The band tracked to 2" analog tape on the last two projects, and they typically use a wide assortment of classic sounding tube and ribbon microphones, including Coles 4038s for the trumpets, Neumann TLM 170s and Royer R-121s for the saxes and Neumann U47s and Royer R-121s for the trombones."

### THE SHOW::

Denver elaborates on the gear he needs to have a successful show: "First and foremost, a DMHO show would not be right without the red suit and my trumpet. I use a B flat Bach Stradivarius. Second, to get my vocals over the screaming Mile High Orchestra I need my Audix Wireless OM6. And, finally, I protect my hearing with my Westone In-Ears and the wireless Shure PSM700 in-ear monitoring system." The monitors are mixed via the Aviom Pro-16 monitor mixing system, which Denver says they can't live without. Denver also mentions the importance of having a great behind-the-scenes team, which, in this case, includes production manager Sandy Tipping and tour manager/front-of-house engineer Eric Kilby, who work together to insure that every show happens without a hitch.



Audix OM6

### PLAYING WITH FIRE::

Denver describes a couple of the band's gear mishaps: "There was a show where the guitar amp caught fire, and, speaking of fire, it is no fun when the bus catches fire in the middle of Wyoming in the winter. Other than those two incidents, I occasionally have a problem making sure the mic is switched on—the little things always seem to get me. There was a time when my palms were sweaty, and, at the end of the show, I energetically cut the band off and the mic slipped out of my hand hitting the ground with a huge thud. Audix graciously made sure we had a working lead vocal mic after that incident. Oh, and then there was the time that we were playing at the 2002 Winter Olympics. Our bass player at the time, while dancing on the stage, accidentally kicked my trumpet off its stand sending it sailing through the air into the audience. I cringed knowing that we were going into the studio the next week.

## [Frustrating gear]

BAND MEMBER	FAVORITE	MOST FRUSTRATING PIECE OF GEAR
CHRIS GREGG	X-Box - Halo	X-Box - Halo
JEFF PARDO	Mac PowerBook	X-Box
KENN HUGHES	Cingular 8125 PDA Phone	Bus Satellite
COURT CLEMENT	Dr. Z Maz 18 Guitar Amp	X-Box
SCOTT STEWARD	Portable DVD Player	X-Box
JARED RIBBLE	Wi-Fi on the Bus	Bad Mic Cables and Broken Wheels on Road Cases



X-Box

## GEAR LINKS

For more information on the gear on this page, visit: [bachbrass.com](http://bachbrass.com), [aviom.com](http://aviom.com), [audixusa.com](http://audixusa.com), [neumann.com](http://neumann.com), [royerlabs.com](http://royerlabs.com), [apple.com](http://apple.com), [edirol.com](http://edirol.com), [selmer.com](http://selmer.com), [xbox.com](http://xbox.com)

Russ Long is an award-winning recording engineer who has helmed gold and platinum albums by Sixpence None the Richer and Newsboys as well as recordings by Chris Tomlin, Relient K, MercyMe, Wilco, Phil Keaggy, Over the Rhine and others. Russ recently created an educational DVD on studio engineering tailored for singers, songwriters and home studio enthusiasts. For more information, visit [audioinstruction.com](http://audioinstruction.com).



From left: Brian Littrell, Brandon Heath, Ana Laura

## [ BRIAN LITRELL/ BRANDON HEATH/ ANA LAURA "WELCOME HOME TOUR" ]

HOUSE OF BLUES | CHICAGO, IL — JUNE 16, 2006

Stepping aside from the Backstreet Boys for a solo break was an awfully brave move for Brian Littrell, especially since he's not afraid to wear his faith on his sleeve. With a mostly general market fan base, millions of records sold and a constant string of sold out shows at the world's largest arenas, it would've been easy to stay confined to his comfort zones. But the vocalist/songwriter and, now, occasional guitar strummer has returned to his church roots with *Welcome Home* (Reunion), taking to an intimate club tour (similar to the first leg of the Backstreet Boys' *Never Gone* outing) to share his faith and a couple of Backstreet's greatest hits.

The inspirational "My Answer Is You" kicked off the set, met with squeals and screams from teens and slightly older attendees, who quickly thrust up signs professing how much they loved Brian and the world's leading boy band. Yet, they quickly started singing along to this song and its pop centered follow-up "Wish," which was backed by Littrell's soulful four-piece band. Littrell wasted no time sharing his testimony with surprising, but impressive, boldness, celebrating the gospel and his Christian upbringing. That conversation introduced his own No. 1 radio single "In Christ Alone," but the yelps and yowls from diehards were so overwhelming it nearly drowned out the track's meaning.

As the next hour went by, that became this Backstreet Boy's primary problem, although he always played it off with the utmost professionalism and showmanship. As he continued setting the background for touching tracks such as "You Keep Givin' Me" and "We Lift You Up," he kept getting interrupted with "I love you, Brian" onslaughts and requests for more familiar material. Even amidst the hysteria, Littrell was

determined. "Gone Without Goodbye" was probably his best chance to drive themes of faith home, thanks to its spine-chilling story about his wife being scheduled to fly on the plane that crashed on September 11, 2001 (thankfully, she canceled those plans at the last minute).

However, Littrell made sure to steer away from the heavier moments with the obligatory Backstreet Boys memories. He performed the immensely popular hits "I Want It That Way" and "As Long As You Love Me," both supplemented by the crowd screaming at the top of its lungs. Those throwbacks kept the audience's attention during "Welcome Home" (with its music video playing overhead), though many Christian music followers likely noticed the lyrics and sentimental mood seemed a little too similar to Mark Schultz's "When You Come Home." But, by the time the acoustic finale "Over My Head" rolled around, Littrell had them all eating from the palm of his hand and continued demonstrating his character by leaning over to sign several autographs after the touching track's conclusion.

Openers Brandon Heath and Ana Laura turned in short sets presenting their acoustic rock and Latin influenced pop respectively. Heath fit right in with the modern day "guy with a guitar" movement, sporting glowing organics throughout "Our God Reigns" and "Don't Get Comfortable" while previewing his forthcoming Essential debut. Ana Laura admitted to the audience she was suffering from a cold but still managed to deliver gallantly on three of her self-titled CD's tracks (most noticeably on "Water" with an acoustic guitarist), showcasing maturity well beyond her youthful years.

## ➔ CLUB CONNECTION

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



For the past half decade, **THE UNDERGROUND** in Cincinnati, Ohio, has staged hundreds of Christian concerts with a specialty in alternative genres. Everyone from the scorching **SKILLET** to the high horns of **FIVE IRON FRENZY** to the rap attack of **L.A. SYMPHONY** and the Celtic color of **CEILI RAIN** has graced the venue, often packing out the nightclub with redemptive lyrics.

Aside from the music, the establishment opens its doors every Friday and Saturday from 8 p.m. – 1 a.m. for attendees 16 and over, offering a smoke-free environment. In addition to concerts, it features pool, ping pong and shuffle board tables, plus Sony PlayStation 2 systems and games, all of which are free to play.

For additional information, log on to [theug.com](http://theug.com).

## HERE AND THERE

### ARE YOU WITHIN A DAY'S DRIVE?

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

**08/18-08/19 Relient K, Thousand Foot Krutch, Hawk Nelson and more—Lewisberry, PA**

For the latest concert listings, check out [CCMmagazine.com](http://CCMmagazine.com)'s searchable tour database to find out when your favorite artists will play in a city near you.

# THINGS I

With **BRIAN LITRELL**



This guitar is a **1975 Acoustic Ovation** that my brother-in-law gave me, which is one reason I love it. The other reason is that it was made the year I was born. I played it in my new video, "Welcome Home."



My **father's Holy Bible**. It has been put to great use!



This picture is of **Leighanne**, my wife—when she was around six years old—and my mother-in-law. I love this picture because it captures a mother's love.

Raindrops on roses and whiskers on kittens. Favorite things? Yes. But how about things you just love?! As your preeminent source for all things Christian music related, CCM has taken on the task of finding out just what makes your favorite artists tick. In this debut segment, we've asked Backstreet Boy **BRIAN LITRELL** to give us a taste of some things he loves.



**September 2, 2000**  
This is my favorite wedding photo.

The **rose garden** that Leighanne and I planted for Baylee, our son. It's a little piece of heaven.

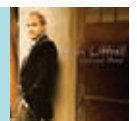


The **kitchen** is my favorite room in my house because we spend the mornings together here as a family drinking coffee and cooking breakfast.



My **shoe closet**. Need I say more?

By the way, we consider it a "given" that Brian loves his newly released project, *Welcome Home* [Reunion]—after all, how could an artist not love something that he put so much blood, sweat and tears into? For more info on Brian, check out [brianlittrellmusic.com](http://brianlittrellmusic.com).



# LOOSE ENDS

CONFESSIONS OF AN UNFINISHED FAITH

BY NICHOLE NORDEMAN



## Fear Factor

There is a slight misconception about the glamour of being on tour. Someone, a long time ago, started some vicious rumor about how exciting road life is. Playing music, connecting with people, watching God at work...those are the exciting things. But, unless your name is Sting or Madonna or Bono, the most adventure you will find on the road depends largely on whatever is in walking distance from your room at the Fairfield Inn. More often than not, this is usually a Wal-Mart, which is where I found myself looking for beach towels with my road manager, Michelle, in the middle of Arkansas recently.

No beach in sight, of course. But heck if we weren't going to be ready. After we'd purchased our towels, we began to walk across the parking lot and back toward our hotel. We were chatting...girl talk...discussing how appropriately prepared we were should a body of water appear on the horizon.

Suddenly, without noise or warning, a man joined our stride and started walking next to us. Not near us. Not behind us. Directly next to us, with an alarming amount of poise and confidence...like it was the most natural thing in the world.

Now, please understand that I have rehearsed this scenario in my mind a hundred times. As a woman, I am always aware of my surroundings. Always looking around the parking lot when I get in and out of my car. Always suspect of the guy who looks...well...suspect. I have, at times in my life, carried Mace, learned basic self-defense and called the cops on suspicious looking weirdos. Which is why it becomes even more difficult to admit how I reacted to this strange man who inexplicably started walking shoulder to shoulder with me in the middle of a parking lot.

I froze. My feet kept walking, but everything else ceased to function.

For some totally bizarre and unfathomable reason, I did absolutely...nothing. I was utterly terrified and paralyzed. I never once looked at his face. I did not quicken my pace. I did not motion to my friend to

unleash ninja warfare on him (she seemed unfazed and still chatting). I only froze. I saw my life flash before my eyes. I pictured him shoving us into his trunk. I saw the headlines...“Christian artist and road manager abducted...Foul play suspected...Beach towels a mystery.” Fear had completely taken over, and I was, without a doubt, its prisoner.

We continued walking...the three of us...Laverne, Shirley and the serial killer for a few more minutes, and I still could not even find the courage to glance at him. Then he spoke. And I almost collapsed at the sound of the very familiar voice of Scott, my bass player. He, himself, had been aimlessly wandering around Wal-Mart, saw us walking back to the hotel and just quietly caught up with us. And, being a rather introverted type, he never announced his presence or felt the need to engage us in conversation. He was happy just to tag along.

After I scraped myself up off the pavement and we all had a good laugh, I sat in my hotel room thinking about the power of fear. So powerful that it erased all common sense, all resolve, all determination to “step up” in the moment. It basically took me out at the knee caps. I was simply too afraid to respond or react.

Fear is potent and central to our lives. The next time you watch the news, count how many times you hear a form of the word “terror.” And, while fear is easy to identify on a global scale and in a time of war, consider the more subtle kinds of fear we breathe in and out all day. Career paths are chosen by our fear of financial instability. Relationships wither and die from a fear of intimacy. Fear of cancer motivates me to pick out certain vegetables in the produce department. Fear of rejection makes me laugh at jokes that are offensive and demeaning. Fear of judgment keeps me from raising important questions about my faith. And I know this might jeopardize my status as an evangelical, but it astounds me to consider

the number of people who continue to enter into a relationship with Jesus because a well-intentioned preacher spent half the sermon hollering about how hot the lake of fire is going to be. And, naturally, people respond...out of fear. I think I got “saved” five different times between the ages of 9 and 13 for the same reason.

1 John 4:18 makes one of the most uncomplicated and profound statements in the New Testament, and it would be life altering if we lived it all day long.

“There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear...”

I love the choice of the word “drives”...not tosses aside fear, not works around fear, but sends it packing. Buh bye. Imagine living a life where decisions, both personal and international, were made out of perfect love and not paralyzing fear. Imagine what that would look like to the world to see Christians responding from a place of certainty rather than reacting from a place of panic and damage control (a recent blockbuster movie starring Tom Hanks comes to mind).

I'm still a little freaked out by the way I just surrendered to my inevitable fate in the Wal-Mart parking lot. I would love to think that I would react very differently if it happened today. But I learned a lesson about what a formidable enemy fear can be, and it might take a while for me to re-program my natural responses. Besides, if I had acted in self defense, that might mean my bass player would still be in a body cast, which would make things tricky for him on stage every night. Still looking for that beach, by the way...

*Nichole Nordeman's current album, Brave (Sparrow), features the bits “Brave,” “What If” and “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.*

“There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear...”

—1 John 4:18

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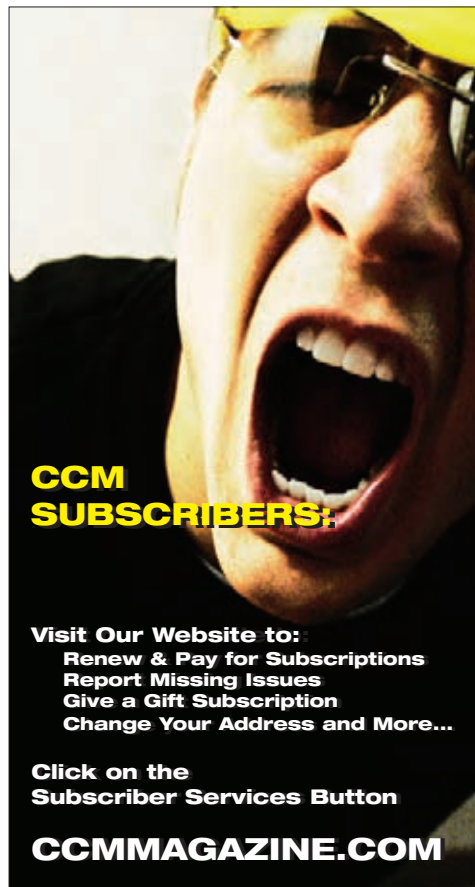
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# HISTORYMAKERS WITH JOHN STYLL

MOMENTS THAT SHAPED CCM

THIS MONTH, JOHN GOES INTO HIS "PERSONAL FILES" TO OFFER US A CANDID, INSIGHTFUL LOOK AT A BELOVED CHRISTIAN MUSIC LEGEND—THE LATE KEITH GREEN.

## RUNNING TO THE END OF THE HIGHWAY

July 28, 1982, was a day I will never forget. That was the day that Keith Green, two of his children and nine others perished when their Cessna crashed during a sightseeing trip in Lindale, Texas. At that time, Keith was one of Christian music's biggest artists. When my phone rang that night with the stunning news, I was dumbstruck.

Just five days earlier, I had enjoyed a wonderful meal with Keith, his wife, Melody, and several others at the Last Days Ministries compound in Lindale. It was a warm time, and I will be eternally thankful for that because my relationship with Keith had been a bit rocky over the years. This was a night of healing and reconciliation—the grace of God at work.

Keith burst onto the scene in the late '70s. A "child prodigy" who had been signed to a mainstream record contract, Keith was a passionate, charismatic individual and a brilliant songwriter. After signing with Sparrow Records, he released a string of classic albums, including *For Him Who Has Ears to Hear*, *No Compromise* and *So You Wanna Go Back to Egypt?* Many saw him as a modern-day "John the Baptist" with his wild looks and unbridled passion for Jesus.

Surprising no one, Keith decided that the "system" of producing and selling records for money was flawed in that the cost of a record could prevent some people from hearing the Gospel. Thus, he decided that he would circumvent the system and offer his albums for whatever someone could afford, even if that was nothing. So, Last Days Ministries began offering his music directly to the public on a donation basis.

I upset Keith quite a bit when I wrote something about his "free" album offer for those who couldn't afford to buy a record. I rather cynically asked a rhetorical question about what sort of device a person who couldn't even afford a record (\$5.00 or so at the time) would play said record on. I



Keith Green, CCM cover September 1982

asked, "Is he going to give away stereos too?" Well, the inevitable call came from Keith, who said that, yes, they would, in fact, provide a cassette player or something to anyone who said he or she needed one. Well, suffice it to say that his comment shut me up quickly.

As that one example might indicate, Keith had "issues" with this magazine because, in his eyes, it was emblematic of all that was wrong with the "industry." We had many intense discussions about that. Ironically, Keith still wanted visibility on these pages and was one of the only artists I can recall who personally pitched himself for coverage. ("Hey John, I have a new album coming out. Can we do an interview?")

I also remember a conversation with Keith where he told me that a mutual friend had stated that this magazine "grieved the Holy Spirit" and was "a stench in the nostrils of God." Keith indicated his agreement with that opinion and then proceeded to inquire about the cost of advertising on the back cover. ("I need to promote my album.") Such was the passion and enigma of Keith Green. You couldn't help but love the guy.

And so it went with Keith until the night of our last dinner together. Despite our differences of opinion regarding certain things, we shared a bond not only in our mutual love for Jesus but also in the fact that we both headed organizations. That night, he gave me an extensive tour of the Last Days operations, which included large presses for printing ministry materials, a graphics department, mailing facilities and much more. He knew I understood that stuff. Fatefully, he also showed me the ministry's Cessna and small airstrip.

Our conversation that night focused on the many things about which we agreed and was, in fact, very much a time of "fence-mending."

Needless to say, it was incredibly sad to travel to Lindale just a few days later to attend his memorial service. But I also felt the peace of knowing he was with our Heavenly Father and that our earthly relationship ended in a good place.

The magazine staff had finished most of the September 1982 issue when Keith was taken from us. We discarded most of it and assembled a tribute issue in a matter of days. It was no small feat. It felt wrong to be interviewing Melody and pouring through their personal photos on the day of her husband's funeral. But she and the staff at Last Days were extremely gracious and cooperative, which enabled us to put out a timely issue to honor Keith. We also attempted to address the many bewildering questions surrounding the accident, such as, "Why did God let this happen?" There were far more questions than answers. And like much in this life, the questions remain.

Send your thoughts to me at [john@gospelmusic.org](mailto: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](http://gospelmusic.org).