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YOUR CHRISTIAN MUSIC M



TOBY
MAC

Bringin'
Da
***FUNK!**

PLUS:
Nicole C. Mullen
Rachael Lampa
Fernando Ortega

34

Reality CD?

Forget “reality TV.” **Nicole C. Mullen** doesn’t need a remote to get a picture of what’s happening in people’s lives around her. Just check out her newest *Everyday People* record for proof. **ANTHONY DeBARROS** talks with the singer/songwriter about this and much more.



Photograph by Robert Ascroft

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You’ve heard the stories about his dc talk and now solo artist success, his anti-racist activism and co-founding role in Gotee Records. But you may not know how **tobyMac** likes his coffee, about his son’s blossoming musical talent or that, at one time, he wasn’t so sure he’d finish his sophomore release. **CHRISTA FARRIS** gets the scoop about these little-known facts and much more.

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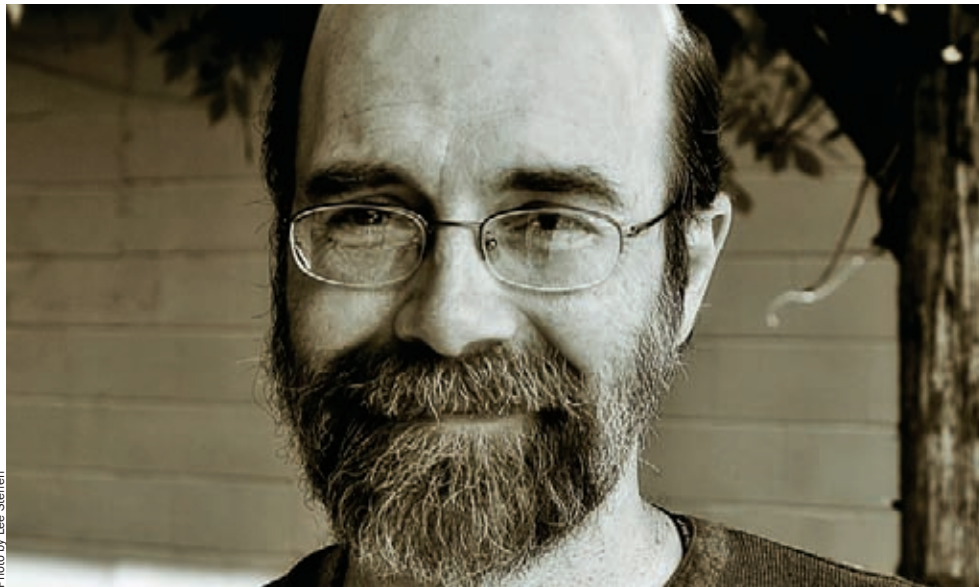


Photo by Lee Steffen

Card's in the House.

You should probably be “introduced” to *CCM Magazine*’s newest contributing editor by asking one question: What would modern Christian music look like *without* Michael Card?

Am I kidding? Perish the thought. This is the man who penned the lyrics to “El Shaddai.” Talk about a composition that’s influenced the church—never mind that minor detail of the 1983 Dove Award-winning “Song of the Year” establishing Amy Grant as a bona fide star. (Grant and her fans are also deeply indebted to Card for another of her classics—“I Have Decided.”)

Then there’s the little matter of the more than 20 distinctly profound albums Card has recorded since his debut in 1981. And does his song “Love Crucified Arose” ring a bell? Indeed. All told, Card’s got 19 No. 1 songs under his belt. For the mathematically challenged, that’s almost one per year. Need I mention that he’s also written or co-written 14 books that have collectively sold more than 400,000 copies?

For a season during the early ’90s, I had the opportunity to study under Card. Needless to say, he wasn’t your typical Sunday School teacher. No, Card didn’t bring his guitar to class or sing to tracks. It’s just that, well, he revealed more about Old Testament law and Hebrew traditions than many of my Bible college professors had. When it came to connecting the nuances of the Old Testament with the new Covenant revealed in the Gospels, Card was particularly striking. And his grasp on the “Jewishness” of Jesus enlightened many of us who had been reared in the church. Some mornings after class, I couldn’t help walking out wondering, “Shouldn’t I be *paying* for this?”

These days, in addition to teaching a Wednesday night Bible study at church, the recording artist/theologian’s insights are heard by a national audience via the Moody Network’s weekly radio program “In the Studio with Michael Card.” And Card’s thousands of music fans continue to enjoy his thoughtful

recordings—his latest, featuring world-renowned virtuosos Bela Fleck and Kirk Whalum, is 2003’s *A Fragile Stone*.

You may also be familiar with his recent book by the same title. The premise behind it is an example of the way Card challenges your understanding as he, himself, is being stretched. Card’s quick to say that he had a shallow understanding of Christ’s primary disciple. He further explains, “One of the best ways to come to know a person is to get to know his or her best friend.”

That statement intrigued me a great deal—the whole notion of better knowing Jesus by getting to know His best friend. If you’re like me, the disciple you think Card’s referring to is John, “the beloved.” Well, think again. The compelling follower of Christ *A Fragile Stone* is based on is actually Simon Peter.

While he believes the disciples had a “corporate identity” under Christ’s leadership, Card cites Peter as the primary disciple, believing the others found corporate identity in Peter. As Card points out, Jesus would ask the 12 disciples questions, and Peter would be the one to answer. Or they would have a collective question for Jesus, and Peter would be the one to ask it. Then there’s the matter of Peter’s being the head of the church in Jerusalem, deciding that Matthias would replace Judas, etc.

And on a personal level? “Coming to know Simon Peter in a closer, more intimate way,” says Card, “has deeply impacted my relationship with Jesus.” Enough said.

Earlier this year, we launched our new Bible study section in *CCM* with two guest submissions by Max Lucado. Shortly after, Michael Card was gracious enough to offer us two adaptations of recent Bible studies he’d written (see page 26). By now, you’ve probably figured out our good news. Starting with next month’s issue, Card will begin composing Bible studies written exclusively for you, our *CCM* readers.

Jay Swartzendruber
Jay@ccmcom.com

CCM MAGAZINE

Your Christian Music Magazine Since 1978
volume 27 issue 3

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

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CCM Magazine

Publisher James R. Cumbee
Associate Publisher & Editor in Chief Roberta Croteau
Managing Editor Jay Swartzendruber
Associate Managing Editor Stephanie Ottosen
Contributing & Reviews Editor Christa Farris

Art Director Lee Steffen
Associate Art Director Ben De Rienzo
Production Director Ross E. Cluver

Contributing Editors Andy Argyrakis, Joan Brasher, Michael Card, Janet Chismar, Michael Ciani, Kent Morris, Michael Nolan, Charlie Peacock, Chris Well

Contributors Kierstin Berry, Lizza Connor, Anthony DeBarros, David Jenison, Dan MacIntosh, David McCreary, Andrew Peterson, Jessica Robin, Michael Tenbrink, Rick Weber

Web Editor Christa Farris

Editorial Assistant Kelly O’Neil

Circulation Director Buffy Booker

Customer Service Representatives Amy Cassell, Leesa Smith

Executive Director of Advertising L. Smitty Wheeler
615/312-4235

Senior Director of Advertising DeDe Tarrant
805/987-5072

Account Executive Gregory Byerline

Account Executive Laurie Jackson

Account Executive Phil Davis
Marketing Coordinator Michael TenBrink
Advertising Coordinator Carol Jones
Sales/Marketing Associate Craig Felker

Main Office 104 Woodmont Blvd., Suite 300, Nashville, TN 37205
615/386-3011 (ph) • 615/386-3380 (business fax) • 615/385-4112 (editorial fax) • 615/312-4266 (advertising fax)

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NASDAQ SYMBOL: SALM



FIRED UP!

Thank you for your cover story of Pillar ["Pillar On Fire," July]! It was great to hear about what the band has been up to. Thank you for Pillar's message on how they are reaching out to non-Christians. It is hard to reach out to new venues without getting [flock] for it. I commend Pillar for staying strong. They seem to continue to play their message and seek out new ways to reach others. Way to go! Keep going, Pillar; there are people out there who support you and are praying for you!

—Christy Johnson, via e-mail

The article by Lucas Hendrickson was excellent. Pillar is made up of men of incredible talent and integrity, and they represent Christ and the music industry well. As a parent of a teen and employee of a large high school, I see how important music is to

young people. Our young people need all of the positive role models they can get!

—Cheri Stine, Cypress, TX

The July 2004 cover was the best cover I have ever seen on CCM! I'm not a fan of Pillar, but the whole look and feel of it was awesome! Great work! Keep it up!

—Davie Gonzalez, Converse TX

Thanks, Davie. Two words for ya: LEE STEFFEN. He's our secret weapon. He kicks tail, and we know it. Our editorial team is honored—and, frankly, quite fortunate—to have him as CCM's art director.

EVEN MORE IS BETTER.

I have been a subscriber since 1986. Christian music is a daily part of my life. The artists who share their music with the world are the cheerleaders of those of us who love God. When I read the reviews of new music in your magazine, it is a huge factor in my decision to purchase a project. I would like to offer a different opinion than the one given in the review of Anthony Evans' *Even More* ["In Review," July].

The "lack of blatant enthusiasm" statement tells me that the reviewer did not take the time to pause, listen and read the lyrics of this gift. First of all, I commend Anthony because he is a writing collaborator on 11 of the songs... and this is his first project! That is an awesome accomplishment.



The writing has a very clear message. Anthony is encouraging us to have a love and respect for God and then to fellowship with others. He is also



ANTHONY EVANS

challenging us to find our purpose in Him and not in the pursuit of being chronic people-pleasers. That message "captured and commanded the attention" of this listener!

Let me give it to you straight about his vocals. I can close my eyes and hear Stevie Wonder, Jon Gibson and Bryan Duncan! Enough said.

Readers, please don't rob yourselves of the joy of *Even More* by letting the [average] "grade" in the review keep you from a special source of encouragement. Purchase three of his CDs—one for yourself, one to give to a friend in your life who needs a "B-12" shot of encouragement and one to drop on the desk of your music minister so

you can rock your flock!

In a world where so many things are draining our strength, it is refreshing to have *Even More* to warm our hearts. Anthony, just keep praying, just keep writing, just keep singing and just keep blessing us. Remember that in November of last year, people said "Who is that Jeremy Camp dude?" I look forward to turning on the Dove Awards and seeing you this coming season.

—Sherri B. Thomas, via e-mail

Well put, Sherri. Thank you for this responsive review of Anthony's debut. Since our individual reviewers designate the grade for each album they review, it's not unheard of for a member(s) of our editorial staff to get worked up if he/she strongly disagrees with the given grade and review itself. When July's *Even More* review came in, we... let's just say... experienced more than minor turbulence.

TO BE OR NOT TO BE

Hey! I wanted to let you know that I read my CCM that had arrived while we were on vacation, and I did something that I have never done before. I ripped out a page! Now this wasn't just any page... this was the page that was Charlie Peacock's column ["Everything That's On My Mind," July] entitled the "Great Summer of Love." I ripped it out and posted it on my shower door so that I will reread it every day.

His words and perspective had a deep impact on me about choosing to "be"—to be one type of person and not another, about choosing to "be"





MEL GIBSON IN BRAVEHEART

and not to hurry, about choosing to be one who has a great summer. I needed to hear those words, and the timing was perfect for me since I was relaxed from having just been on vacation.

However, I was just beginning to “wind up” to return to my normal life when Charlie’s article challenged me to choose to be otherwise. I love “Everything That’s On My Mind,” and I’m so glad that you end each issue with this column as it always leaves me finishing the magazine with a good taste in my mouth.

—Buffy Drewett, via e-mail

“SPECIAL” IS NOT SO SPECIAL.

I am on my fourth issue of CCM and have really enjoyed it. However, I was somewhat annoyed with the latest issue (July '04, Pillar) because of the amount of advertising. The “special advertising supplement” of Clint Brown (24 pages) in the middle of the magazine was no big deal. But the second “special advertising section” (“Gear Guide” which took up another 15 pages) was a little too much. I realize the advertising pays the bills; but add these two sections with the other pages of typical advertising, and it seemed a bit much. The articles were good... just would have liked to see more of them.

—Doug Roskamp, Holland, MI

We welcome “special” sections as a service to our readers—such as the “Gear Guide”

for all our aspiring musicians. We also welcome paychecks and electricity.

WELCOME TO HOLLYWOOD

I came across the *Braveheart* comments under “Favorite DVD From Your Favorite Artists” [“The Reel”] in the July issue, [and they were] disheartening and dangerous reflections of the “world’s” influence on Christians. While it has long been said one should never get their theology from Hollywood, it should equally be said that one should never get their morals from Hollywood either! Where we should all be “completely ruined” and only so transfixed is in regular journeys into God’s Word and the sacrificing, saving, totally undeserved grace of Jesus Christ to and for each and every one of us—particularly as “no one comes to the Father, but through Me” (John 14:6)!

—Jerry L. Stroud, North Platte, NE

AUDIO A’S MISSION

I wanted to drop a note and say that I really enjoyed and appreciated the article in this month’s CCM about Audio Adrenaline and The Hands & Feet Project [“Get Real,” July]. I’ve loved these guys for years, and their hearts for missions still continue to amaze me! So, thanks!

—Katy McWhirter, Flora, MS

TRUTH BE TOLD

What’s your favorite Christian music legend or supposedly tall tale? What about that nagging question that, apparently, no one’s been able to answer, concerning your favorite artist? That’s where we come in. Check here each month as CCM Magazine distinguishes truth from fiction and e-mail your questions to truthbetold@ccmcom.com.

Thanks for doing a cover story on Plus One in November. They’re one of my favorite bands. Since then, though, what’s Jason Perry (formerly of Plus One) been doing? In your November issue you guys mentioned that he was going—or considering going—solo. I’ve gone on the Web everywhere and couldn’t really get any answers, so do you know what Jason has been doing? Is he going solo? Does he have any plans to make an album or return to Plus One maybe?

—Samuel Keller, via e-mail

Hi Samuel,

Last year there was a lot of talk around Nashville that Perry had left Plus One to embark on a solo career. Some of us at CCM had even heard—unofficially—that, at one point, Perry had signed with Curb Records.

music at his Nashville church but had “no plans” to re-enter the music business as a solo artist.



PLUS ONE, CIRCA 2001

However, for unknown reasons, all of the speculation apparently never materialized into a signed-on-the-dotted-line solo recording contract. CCM tried unsuccessfully to locate Perry, but we did speak with two industry professionals currently working with Plus One. One simply said that he had “no idea” what Perry was up to and that his impression was that even the three guys remaining in Plus One weren’t sure. The other said that she had seen Perry over the weekend and that, as far as she knew, he was happily and actively involved in ministry and

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



insider

by Christa Farris

A chat with Darlene Zschech, what's next for Jars of Clay and more.

Who is Mindy Smith?

This singer/songwriter's faith connection remains fully intact as Smith's "Come to Jesus" hits VH1.



She may not be a household name yet, but singer/songwriter Mindy Smith must possess some exceptionally special qualities to land on a Dolly Parton tribute record, hit the late night talk show circuit (including the "Tonight Show With Jay Leno") and appear on Lifetime's "Women Rock!" special before even having a record in stores. Maybe it's her unique pipes, candid songwriting or even persistence during several years of trial and error in Music City. "All I know is it happened so quick I've barely had time to even think about it," says Smith, phoning in from Colorado just hours before a flight to London. "The last year's been pretty overwhelming, and I'm still sorting through it all."

Before her stock began to rise, this preacher's kid (adopted at birth in Long Island, N.Y.) has persevered through a blur of open mic nights, collaborations with

other aspiring artists and dead-end day jobs to support her passion. But that tenacity also tempered the sensibility to not jump at the first major record label that came knocking at her door; rather, she waited until a great match (Vanguard) came along. Not only has the label let Smith take the creative reins, but it's also driven her single "Come to Jesus" (from her national debut, *One Moment More*) to regular VH1 and radio rotation. "VH1 has a different demographic than would typically embrace a title like that," she observes. "But God just does what He does, and there comes a certain point when people aren't getting what they need; and He steps in. It's a very positive song to take someone through a very hard place."

The tune was born out of a period not long ago when its writer was completely burned out and

exhausted from striking out at a full-time recording career. With virtually no money and anger building up inside, Smith attempted to pen the track from the perspective of how God would respond to her in conversation, which yielded lines like: "Worry not my daughters/Worry not my sons/Child, when life don't seem worth living/ Come to Jesus/And he'll hold you in his arms."

"I wondered what His answer would be, and He basically said to not question Him," she says. "It's exposed a part of me—the struggle and doubt I faced—but has got a lot of people thinking. I've heard story after story of the song reconnecting people with their faith or finding help after coming out of a loss. It's pretty incredible to hear how much it's helped people since I wrote it out of such a time of struggle!"

ANDY ARGYRAKIS

>> MORE SONGS OF SIXPENCE: WORD TO RELEASE "BEST OF" COMPILATION NEXT MONTH FEATURING SOME OF THE BAND'S >>>



The Platinum Club

Bryan Duncan is now a card-carrying member as he was recently honored for his career accomplishments.

This just in from the "Where are they now?" files: Bryan Duncan was recently awarded a Platinum record at this year's "Spirit West Coast" festivities in Monterey, Calif., to celebrate worldwide sales of a million solo albums from 1985-2003.

"It took me 14 albums to get here, but it sure feels nice," Bryan said about the surprise award.

And for those who've been itching for some new music, he's recently recorded a live CD and DVD, titled *Twin Cities Live* and *Music City Live*, which are slated to hit stores later this year.



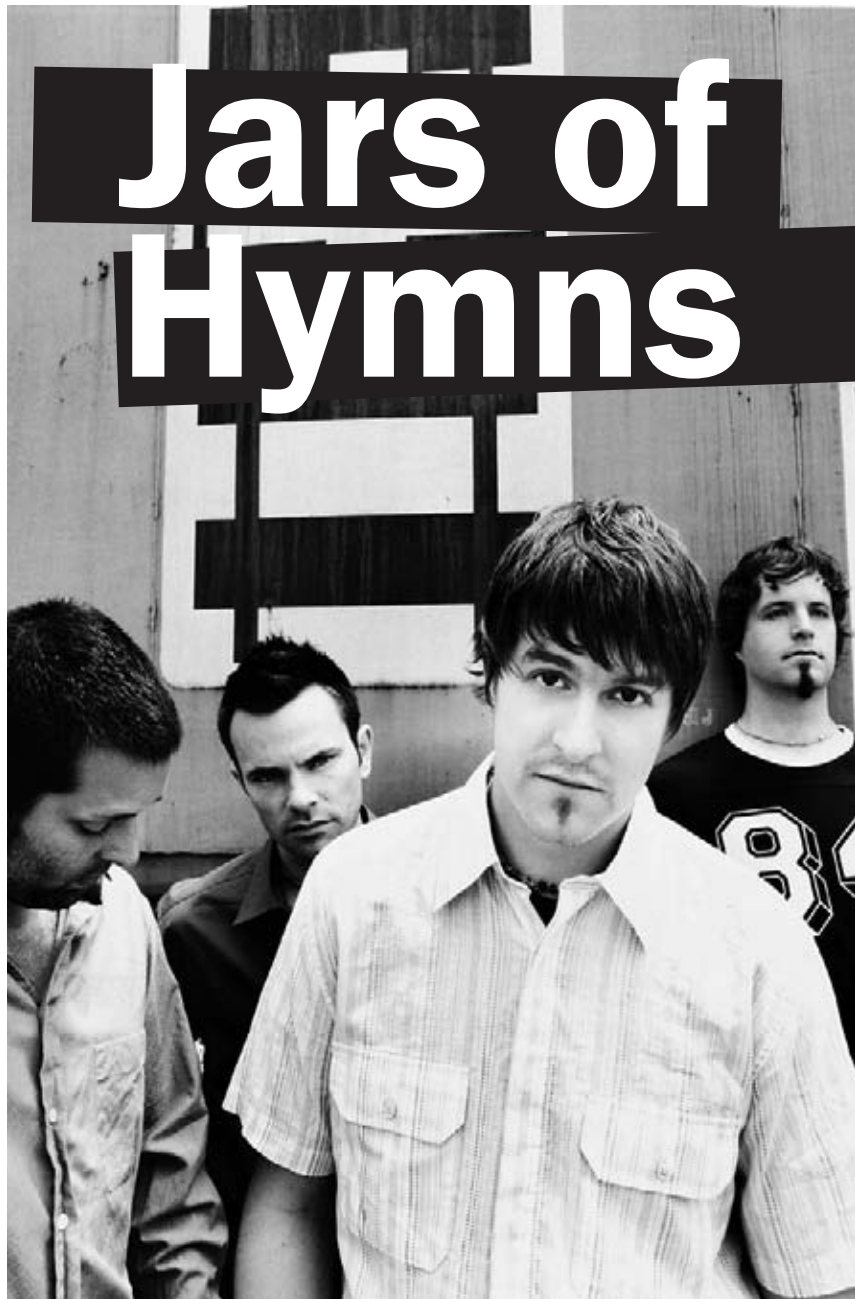
Road Warriors

Ever wonder how your favorite artists pass the time while they travel on the road together? For Audio Adrenaline and Relient K, a little healthy competition went a long way.

"When we toured with Relient K recently, we planned on getting some writing done; but we just wound up playing a lot of football and basketball," frontman Mark Stuart says. "It was like a giant slumber party."

And just like a good slumber party, there were plenty of good stories that resulted. "We 'schooled' them!" Stuart says proudly. "Will [McGuinness, AA's bassist] didn't play, so we had someone from Wisconsin playing who never touched a basketball. We got beat by Relient K, which is embarrassing," Stuart recounts. "So we were down two games to none, and they sang about it onstage to 7,000 people. So we challenged them. We said, 'You know what? We're over; we're done with your talking. Put your basketball where your mouth is.' So we won four games in a row. We didn't cheat; we just 'brought it!'"

Quick not to discount the band's ability, Stuart said that Relient K's Matt Thiessen & Co. are "definitely good ball players." But when push came to shove, Stuart says, "They were disgraced. We're bigger than that. The last two games we all had Relient K shirts on as our team uniform. We stole shirts from their booth, so we show up all wearing Relient K shirts. We're doing a tour with them in the fall. We had a really good time with them. We love those guys."



The band reveals what's next on the docket—musically speaking.

While Jars of Clay's recent disc, *Who We Are Instead* (Essential), is still relatively new, it seems the band is already hard at work on its next project.

Checking in on the message board at jarchives.com, frontman Dan Haseltine confirmed that a hymns album is in the works. "We are working on a new record on and off between shows... It is a unique project. We are writing new songs using old hymn text and pre-Civil War spirituals as well as writing some original songs," he says. "The record is tentatively scheduled for a late fall release. We will keep you posted on the developments. We are very excited about it."



Back to School

While reading, writing and arithmetic aren't really on the schedule, The Elms' final exam will result in its follow-up to *Truth, Soul, Rock 'n' Roll*.

In the midst of putting final touches on a brand new live DVD (A release date hasn't been finalized at press time.) that the band filmed in its home state of Indiana, The Elms have been logging a lot of hours these days at Blackbird Studio in Nashville as it's been working with producers Charlie Peacock (Nichole Nordeman, Sara Groves) and Scott Denté (Out of the Grey, Christine Denté) on its third, full-length offering. While the band parted ways with Sparrow Records last year, frontman Owen Thomas says the new record will be available for general-market release only and that details will be forthcoming on the new recording agreement.

For a play-by-play account of what's been happening as the band records the 14 tracks slated for inclusion on the project, visit elmsblog.com where the band's manager, Phil Tuttle, fills you in on the latest. It turns out, too, that the band's lead guitarist, Thom Daugherty is also quite the faithful blogger. You can check out his musings on the recording process and more at xanga.com/home.aspx?user=The_Menagerie.

Behind the Scenes with downhere

While a few details are still a bit of a mystery, downhere's career direction may be more defined than ever.

As Jeremy Camp did his soundcheck in the background for a show later that afternoon, downhere recently sat down for a press conference where they answered the questions that have been the subject of quite a few online conversations: What's the future of the band, and does downhere still have its label deal in light of all the changes at Warner Bros.?

"I think we can say, for sure, that there will be another record. We don't feel our time is up," says co-vocalist/songwriter Jason Germain. "We're still writing; the Lord has still put this on our hearts. So whether it's still with Warner Bros. or it's with someone else, we really don't know. Honestly, in the big scheme of things, it really doesn't matter. But we're just excited to be a part of this and work with whoever the Lord has put in our path."

And speaking of work, downhere has a brand new DVD documentary (Look for the trailer at the band's cyberhome at downhere.com.) that captures three weeks of touring in its home country of Canada. Directed by Scott Moore, it's 80 minutes of reality T.V, without the strategic editing, that captures the band during some early-morning moments and more.



Cyberspeak:

What's New at CCMmagazine.com this Month!



Exclusive "Night of Joy" coverage: Don't miss my blog as I check in from "the happiest place on earth" at Walt Disney World for three days of concerts and more. We will also be hosting a live chat with one of your favorite artists (selected by you!) at CCMmagazine.com.

E-cards: Be sure to check out what new cybergreetings we have for you to send to your friends and family.

Photos: We've captured quite a few Kodak moments in a variety of locales. Take a look at what's new now.



Random Questions

With Darlene Zschech

Kelly O'Neil checks in with the Aussie worship leader at the Renaissance Hotel in Nashville.

CCM: Are you working on any projects at the moment?

Zschech: As far as the church goes, we do a live praise & worship album every year. The latest is called *For All You've Done*. And I'm working on a follow-up CD to *Kiss of Heaven*. Yeah, so I've always got a lot of music happening.

CCM: Have there been any recently released albums that have inspired you?

Zschech: Definitely that English band Soul Survivor. There's something really wonderful about their understanding of theology [and] capturing the Word in song. Chris Tomlin—amazing. Michael W. Smith's *Worship* is great; it really helped broadcast the worship movement as something of great integrity.

I think you can often tell, though, when people are active in their local church because all of their praise

& worship is being tested in a local church environment. And, of course, then it's all been "road tested" with real people and people who we have to lead to their expression of worship. We're here to serve the body of Christ. That's what we're there for—not just to worship but to serve.

CCM: What are some of your favorite Christian songs of all time?

Zschech: I think "Amazing Grace" is one of the best songs ever written, and I love that it can be sung anywhere—saved or unsaved—and there'll be a sense of reverence attached to it. I think that's pretty stunning when it comes to any song about the glory of God.

And I think [Michael W. Smith's] "Agnus Dei" is stunning. I mean, I sing it all the time when I'm leading worship. It's a song that "gathers." You just

have to sing two notes, and people just know it! In fact, their spirit already knows that song, and that's a pretty powerful statement.

CCM: Is there anything that you bring with you when you leave Australia that you can't do without?

Zschech: My children! [laughs, then asks her 15-year-old daughter, "What else do we bring?"] She replies, "Music." Oh yeah, all our favorite CDs. We're pretty simple. We don't bring our favorite pillows and our matching everything. We're simple people: We love the Lord, we love our local church, we love our family, and we just try to serve God the best we can. And pretty much that's as complicated as we try to make it because life is short, and you don't want to get caught up in the wrong things. We like to drink coffee, we like to shop, and we like our friends.



Keeping It Real

Forget using "bells and whistles." On Deitrick Haddon's new disc, he's committed to keeping things simple.

"I've never been a fan of working a record to death in the studio so much that you barely recognize how it would've originally sounded once it's been touched up," notes Deitrick Haddon, the up-and-coming artist, phoning in from a Nashville recording studio. "It should be all about the live sounds because that's where the real heart of a record usually is."

With *Crossroads*, the burgeoning star isn't just talking the talk. He's put his words into motion with a lip-smacking horn section, a genuine bass bounce not directed by computer programming and even moments of chilling string orchestration. And you won't find a plethora of automatic tuning devices to make Haddon's voice raise up and down exactly on pitch with each beat—a seemingly generic and overused refining process in the world of modern recording.

"I've just grown so much vocally and musically since the last record that I had to represent that in the studio," he explains. "I took my band, and we recorded live without a lot of sequenced tracks. Those

horns add so much, and we just got out of a session with an 18-piece orchestra, which is a 'first' for me that I can't wait for people to react to!"

Indeed, the singer/songwriter has grown leaps and bounds from his already lauded 2002 debut, *Lost and Found*, which was known for its incorporation of praise-minded jams through personal reflections and outside observations. Though that spiritual structuring hasn't veered off course, the material this time out is much more emotional and pensive, pointing to the refinement knocked out on the road.

"You get out there and meet so many people that it shapes you and helps you see life through so many different perspectives," Haddon observes. "This record is about decisions relating to the Kingdom. Being a Christian is full of hard times when you're faced with a lot of decisions that can alter your destiny. It's about coming to grips with the realities around you and relating to the words, no matter where you're at." **ANDY ARGYRAKIS**

Fred Hammond Hits the Road This Fall.

He's collaborated with "American Idol's" **Ruben Studdard** on his debut and just released another new album of his own. And now Fred Hammond is ready for another busy fall. Starting this month, the powerhouse of urban praise is back for a fall leg of his "Worship Alive" tour that will be hitting 40-50 cities in support of his latest album, *Something About Love* (Verity).

"It's a blessing to be able to reach so many people through music," Hammond says. "We were able to

touch so many lives and hearts that I feel like we have to just keep going." Check out CCMmagazine.com's "On Tour" database to find out when the "Worship Alive 2004 Tour" will be coming to a church near you.



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5 Questions
with **TODD AGNEW**

This worship leader is atypical, to say the least. With a gravelly, deep voice, a rock-and-blues-edged sound and a laidback attitude, Todd Agnew doesn't really fit the mold. But when it comes to worship music, many would agree he's the perfect fit. Garnering four Dove nominations and two CHR No. 1 hits for his debut, *Grace Like Rain* (Ardent), Agnew is currently headlining the "In the Name of Love" tour with openers Building 429 and BarlowGirl.

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

Just off the top of my head, I would probably trade with Sir Alex Ferguson and coach Manchester United for a day. For those non-soccer fans, ManU is one of the greatest clubs to play the sport. Why? I've always loved soccer. I've played since I was a little kid. And I've been a ManU fan about as long as I can remember.

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

I knew I wanted to be used by God at a young age. I loved leading worship when I started college; and, as God opened those doors to do it full time, I jumped at it.

3. Describe your most unforgettable date.

You know, I just can't remember.

4. What are you obsessive compulsive about?

Answering questionnaires. But besides that, not really anything. I'm a pretty laidback guy.

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

How many times can God's faithfulness be the answer to this question? I keep thinking that, after all this time, it won't surprise me anymore. But it does. He never lets me down. I don't have anything else like that in my world. And I don't have any part of me that can learn to expect it. So I'm surprised every time.

All In the Family: The Heritage of Selah

If you've grown up in an evangelical community, you know the stereotype of being called to the mission field *always* includes going to Africa or, in some cases, being afraid of being called to Africa. But in the case of Todd Smith and Nicol (Smith) Sponburg, siblings and two-thirds of Selah, that "stereotype" defined eight years of their childhood.

Their parents moved the family to Africa when Todd, Nicol and their older sister were small children. They had previously been living in the United States where their father worked as a youth minister and singer. He had begun to feel the pull to return to Africa, where he grew up with his own parents (who'd come to the Congo in 1938), to finish the work and fulfill the vision his own father had to build a Bible college for the native people. (His father was killed in an accident when he was still young.)

While Todd says his mother didn't react positively to the idea, a heart-stopping incident when the family's house burned down served as the catalyst to change her mind. In Todd's words, her sentiments were: "We would be less safe if we stayed in the States, that God's hand would not be on us if we stayed here against His will." That settled it, and the family moved the following year, 1978.

Todd told CCM that his parents' ministry in the Congo revolved around the building of Bible colleges, of which there are now three. And the effects of the schools have been overwhelming. "They've had about 200 or 300 graduates and about 40,000 to 50,000 people have accepted the Lord," Todd says.

Although he and Nicol's parents no longer live full time in the Congo, they continue to regularly spend periods of time in the country, working with their flourishing Laban Ministries (named after Laban Herbert Smith, Todd and Nicol's grandfather), the parent organization that the Laban Bible Institutes are under. Selah is also heavily involved in raising funds. Currently, there are two big projects underway: to build a hospital, since the nearest one is a nine-hour truck ride away, and a radio tower that will offer discipleship to area Christians who can't read and don't have pastors to teach them.

Sound amazing? It is, and you can get involved! Todd says the ministry needs funds to build the hospital, build the radio tower and for general, day-to-day needs. Sponsoring students at the Institute who can't afford to attend is an option as well. For more information on the ministry and how to get involved, please visit labanministries.org.

To read more of Todd's fascinating interview, visit CCMmagazine.com





fanfare

by Stephanie Ottosen

Newborns, a prayer request, birthdays and more.



No. 2

Gotee recording artist **Jeff Deyo** and his wife, Martha, recently welcomed new baby Evan David into the family on June 3. Weighing 9lbs 4oz and measuring 20.5 inches long, Evan joins his 18-month-old brother, Roman Jeffrey.

09.04 Birthdays

- 09 **Bob Carlisle**
- 10 **Crystal Lewis**
- 15 **Mark Schultz**
- 29 **Billy Goodwin (NewSong)**

Prayer Request

Number One Gun bassist **Trevor Sellers** was in a serious accident on June 19. Sellers was with bandmates at a river in northern California when he suffered a head-first fall. Miraculously, he has no broken bones, although he does have some staples in his head from his injury. The band cancelled most of its shows for the summer until Sellers gets back on his feet. Please be praying for his healing, and if you would like to send Trevor a get well message, please send it to getwell@floodgaterrecords.com.



Tell CCM

When I was growing up, I went to church because that's what my parents wanted for me. After I gave birth to my first child, I went to church because that's what I wanted for my children. In between, I rarely attended church. Sad to say, I was a "Christian" with a severely inadequate relationship with Jesus Christ.

On March 4, 2004, I visited my local Family Christian Store to purchase the newest Veggie Tales video (for my children). I'd been there many times before and had never paid much attention to the CD section. This time, for some reason, I glanced at the section in passing and noticed a brand new CD called *Sea of Faces* from a band I'd never heard of before. The sign on the display said that it was for fans of Creed, Incubus and Linkin Park. As a big fan of all three bands, I was intrigued and suddenly moved to purchase the CD. I took this Kutless CD home and gave it a whirl. After listening to it two or three times in a row, in tears much of the time, I realized why I, a woman independent of my mother and children, was a Christian. It was as if all of the pieces of the puzzle finally fell into place, and I was seeing the whole picture for the first time. I learned that day that music can be fun, live, exciting, youthful, raw and still be very much Christ-centered. I chose that day to turn my life over to God and devote myself to building the kind of relationship with Jesus Christ that I was meant to have.

I'd like to thank Kutless especially for having the faith, the belief, the passion, the inspiration and the conviction to answer God's call and allow themselves to be used as vessels for inspiring people and bringing them closer to Jesus.

—Bekki

How have CCM Magazine, the artists and their stories changed your life? We'd love to know! Please e-mail us at tellccm@ccmcom.com or write to 104 Woodmont Blvd, Suite 300, Nashville, TN 37205.



Rich Mullins, a Dodge and a Bonehead Freshman

By Andrew Peterson

We were supposed to be driving to a nursing home to sing some hymns when we fell in love. I was a freshman in college; she was a junior. Her car was a Dodge Daytona—cool and black. (I had a Dodge Omni—hot and rusty.) Every Wednesday night a group of about 20 of us strolled the halls of the Good Samaritan Nursing Home, inviting the residents to come sing with us. I looked forward to it every week because it was an excuse to stand next to this pretty girl named Jamie, who I desperately "dug." We shared a hymn book once. I would only turn the pages on my side of the book. If I accidentally flipped too far, Jamie would have to turn the pages on the left until we arrived at the right page. We giggled, and our forearms brushed up against one another, making the hairs tickle. We were pathetic.

We flirted at the nursing home and between classes for a few weeks; but I realized, to my horror, that if I kept flirting I'd find myself *married* to this pretty girl with the electric forearms in a matter of months. I was only 19. I wanted freedom, not a wife.

I waited until a drive to the nursing home to break up with her. The sun was setting over a pasture, the cattle were grazing. Rich Mullins was singing about how "*love is found in the things you've given up more than in the things that you have kept*," and I said, missing the irony completely, "Hey, let's pull over for a few minutes and watch the sun go down." I beat around the bush and skirted the issue while the sun sank low. Finally she looked at me and said, "What are you talking about?" Then I dumped her. But the more we spoke, the prettier she got. I thought, "I'm supposed to be breaking up with this girl for the sake of my freedom, but the free-est thing I can imagine is spending every second at her side."

Ten years later, I can tell that Rich was right. Love was found in the things I gave up. It was found in giving my life daily for my children. Love was found in walking daily with a woman who loves her God, and who still, by the way, has amazing forearms. For more information, visit eharmony.com.





industrybeat

by Jay Swartzendruber

A conversation with
Chris Hauser and the
latest industry buzz



Hauser's House of Hits

Chris Hauser has logged more than 15 years of diverse influence in the music business. Beginning in 1987 he spent his first three years with Myrrh Records' radio promotions, where he worked with Amy Grant, Steve Taylor, Shelia Walsh, Russ Taff, Phil Keaggy, Randy Stonehill and The Choir, among others. He then joined Warner Brother's Christian division, Warner-Alliance, where he became the vice president of promotions and marketing, championing such artists as Andraé Crouch, First Call, Take 6, The Winans and Caedmon's Call. After eight years with Warner Alliance, Hauser began doing independent promotions and marketing and, eventually, a few years of artist management (Waterdeep, '99-'01). During the past six years he's worked with Grant, Caedmon's Call, Delirious, Plus One and Out of Eden, among others.

What drew you to the Christian music business?

I wanted to be a drummer—a millionaire rock drummer if possible—in high school, but I didn't have the chops to further that in college. I grew up in a small town without a radio station, so when I'd visit larger cities with stations, I'd call them and talk about music. It was just magical to me. My dad suggested I pursue radio, and it seemed a natural fit. At a Christian station in '79, in the waiting area, I remember picking up a CCM with Seawind on the cover and was blown away by the coverage. I feel like I've grown up (literally) with the magazine!

How would you describe your job/responsibilities?

Labels—and sometimes artists themselves—hire me to call and visit Christian radio stations to try and get them to play the songs I'm working. The competition is very stiff; and, for every new song a radio listener hears, that station probably turned down 10 others.

What's a moment that made you proud to do what you do?

When I've been around artists like England's The World Wide Message Tribe or New York's The Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir and seen the kinds of street-level ministry that goes on behind the scenes. I've told their story a thousand times and still get choked up telling it.

From a career deal, I've been affiliated with a few records that have had four No. 1 songs at radio, including Amy's [Grant] *Lead Me On* and the first Caedmon's Call project, along with many records with three No. 1 songs—Steve Taylor, David Mullen, The Choir, Russ Taff, Michael English and First Call. Both the Amy and Caedmon's records represented a lot of passion and belief on my part as well as the team around me. In (Caedmon's Call's) wake, some great art and songs have followed from Bebo Norman, Jill Phillips, Waterdeep, Andrew Peterson, the "City on a Hill" records and more.

As a fan, what's your favorite period from Christian music's past? And why?

First, the early '80s when Amy's *Age to Age* went Gold as well as the explosion of Steve Taylor's brand of lunacy and art, along with Petra's success. Then the late '80s, working at Myrrh in L.A. and being so fortunate to be around genre-defining records like Amy's *Lead Me On*, Russ Taff's *The Way Home* and The Choir's *Chase the Kangaroo*. All of those records still sound great and resonate deeply with me. And then there are the late '90s when the "British invasion" of cutting-edge worship music just exploded Stateside.

I'd also say the times we live in right now are pretty amazing. Switchfoot, P.O.D., MercyMe, Stacie Orrico and even Josh Groban, Lifehouse, Creed, Evanescence and U2—all speaking of God, sometimes even Jesus (by name), in songs and interviews to varying degrees. And the mainstream press, media and radio are not batting as many eyes as they used to. Amy Grant, Bob Carlisle, NewSong, Sixpence and Jars of Clay all took part in knocking doors down to make room for the current trend and openness to Christian ideas in the mainstream marketplace.

How has your profession influenced your perspective as a believer?

I've been a part of some pretty sad situations where artists or industry people have lost their marriages, their careers and gotten nearly shipwrecked in their faith. The pressure they're under to "put a good face on" and be "super-spiritual" examples has made some crumble under the weight. I was pretty beat up by a number of these experiences through the '90s, so when I first heard the early worship music of Delirious, Waterdeep and Darrell Evans, I had a true spiritual renewal in my life. God put me back in touch with why I started doing any of this in the first place.

And the beat goes on...



Flicker Records has acquired the services of **Virgin Records'** promotional staff to champion **Pillar's** "Bring Me Down" single and video to major general-market outlets. At press time the song, already a No. 1 hit at the Christian Rock format, had climbed to No. 29 on *Radio & Records'* Active Rock chart. Pillar remains signed exclusively to Flicker Records.

reel

by Joan Brasher

DVD releases and
artists talking about
their favorite movies.

If you just can't get enough of Rev. Eric Camden and his squabbling brood on the WB, never fear: Paramount Home Entertainment is set to release **7th Heaven: The Complete First Season** starring Stephen Collins, Catherine Hicks, Barry Watson and Jessica Biel. It's not often that a television series has a minister as a main character—particularly when it comes from “Melrose Place” producer Aaron Spelling. But that didn't stop this show from becoming the WB's most-watched program. I'll admit it has its fair share of home-spun schmaltz (One of its “cast members” is a dog named “Happy.”), but “Heaven” tackles some tough issues, bringing a faith-informed perspective to everything from sibling rivalry to teen suicide. The six-DVD set has a running time of more than 16 hours. Look for it on Sept. 14.

Lately, it seems that television programs focused on God, the afterlife and spirituality are popping up in various incarnations—from the good-hearted CBS series “Joan of Arcadia” to the more sinister “Angels in America” on HBO. But what you may not remember is that not so long ago, faith-inspired shows just weren't being done—that is, until “**Touched by an Angel**” came along. The trail-blazing CBS drama, starring Roma Downey, Della Reese and John Dye as angels dispatched to help the living, unapologetically delved into questions of faith, heaven and the consequences of our actions—even when critics and studio execs predicted it would never go over well with audiences. They were wrong, of course; and the show went on to open the door for a whole slew of programming that dared to address matters of faith. The complete first season released to DVD Aug. 31. The



four-disc box set contains 13 episodes, including the 2003 series finale. The collection also includes featurettes and interviews with executive producer Martha Williamson.

Favorite DVDs From Your Favorite Artists:



David Phelps:

My DVD recommendation is **Secondhand Lions**. It's a great family film with a strong message about love, responsibility and what it means to be a man.



Sarah Ross, Everlife:

This is an old-school movie, but **Cool Runnings** rocks! It shows determination, love, perseverance; and it stresses a “never give up” attitude! Setbacks make the crew even stronger—a real parallel view to life in general. Throw in a little humor, and you have one of the greatest “underdog wins” movies ever!



JAMES Clay

A student for life

He was taken to live with a strict Christian sect at age 10. He started working at 14. By 18, he was married; and now, at 23, he is a father of two. As a result, James Clay has quite the dramatic story to tell. But listen to the eclectic mixture of pop, rock, reggae, blues and power ballads on his self-titled debut with Inpop Records, and you'll realize he has more than just lyrics to share. And if that doesn't grab you, just think: He is probably the only recording artist who once worked in a turkey processing plant!

CCM: *What was it like working with greats such as Phil Keaggy and Phil Madeira in the studio?*

JAMES: Phil Keaggy came in to play the solo on "I Still Believe," and I was sitting across from him playing. He's jamming along, and then he just stops. He looks at me and says, 'Man, that note you just hit was awesome! That was just unbelievable. I had to stop playing.' To have Phil Keaggy say that to me, I was peeling myself up off the floor. Also, one of the greatest blessings of making this record was the chance to learn from Phil Madeira, as a songwriter, arranger and producer. He's just phenomenal, and what he showed me was how to edit myself. Plus, he's hilarious! He would do a parody of my songs back to me, all day. He kept the mood light.

CCM: *Did you have any formal guitar training?*

JAMES: I started playing when I was 14. All I really had was a chord book. There was a man who gave me my first two guitar lessons. He was an old Cherokee guy in Georgia named Mr. Birdsong.

CCM: *Who are some guitarists you admire?*

JAMES: Ben Harper, Phil Keaggy, David Gilmore, Hendrix, Prince and Stevie Ray Vaughn. I want to be teachable in everything I do. I never want to think that I don't need to learn anything else—with guitar, especially. If I'm going to do this for a living, I need to do my craft some justice.



Starfield

The art of worship

From playing Jars of Clay covers at coffeehouses in their hometown of Winnipeg, Manitoba to bringing their brand of worship-focused rock to the masses at the "Creation" festivals, the guys in Starfield have begun to make their mark on U.S. soil. They have the ubiquitous achievement of being the second Sparrow Records band with brothers named Tim and Jon (like Switchfoot), and their "heavenly" name is borrowed from the 1976 Bruce Cockburn song "Lord of the Starfields." But that barely scratches the surface for this band—Jon and Tim (vocals, guitars), John Andrews (drums) and Shaun Huberts (bass)—that recently released its self-titled debut following two indie records.

CCM: *What has been the most memorable moment since the inception of the band?*

JON: Just being able to explore North America and being able to do ministry at the same time is an amazing privilege. We're at the point where we have to stop and pinch ourselves and realize that we're living so many people's dreams and, most of all, living our dream.

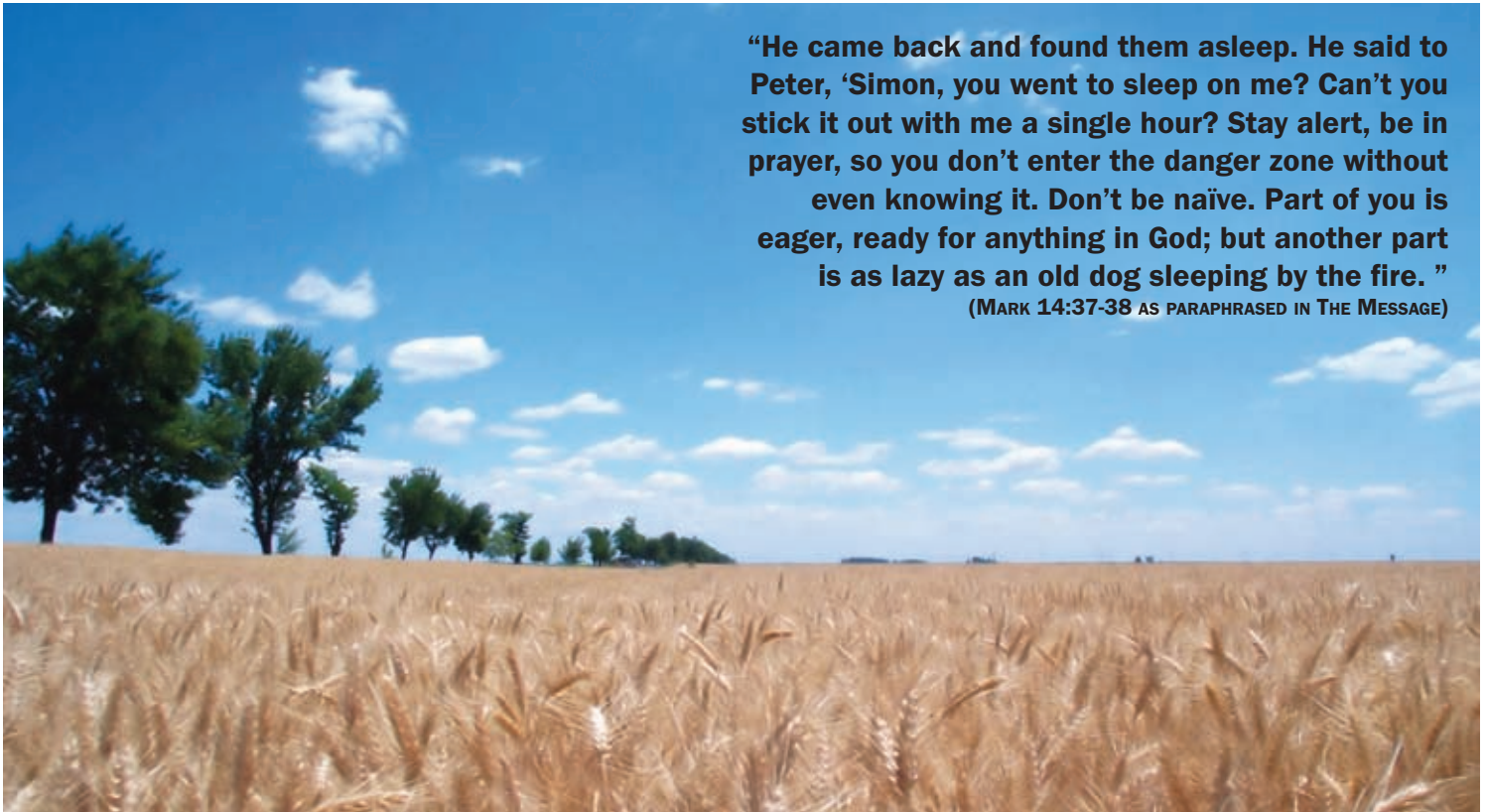
CCM: *Do you have any advice for young, beginning bands?*

JON: Be faithful to what God's called you to do in the moment, and don't spend all of your time just thinking about what could be or where you feel like you should be or want to be. God calls us to be faithful in the little things so that He'll bring about and fulfill the promises of big things. However you look at it, God calls you to service.

CCM: *What's your favorite song to play live right now?*

JON: Probably "Filled With Your Glory"—it's our radio single. There's just something really great about people recognizing your song and singing along. All people really want—myself include—if I go to a concert, is to hear the stuff they know. It's also kind of an anthem for us—about the glory of God and our response—and to see people latching onto that concept [is awesome].





“He came back and found them asleep. He said to Peter, ‘Simon, you went to sleep on me? Can’t you stick it out with me a single hour? Stay alert, be in prayer, so you don’t enter the danger zone without even knowing it. Don’t be naïve. Part of you is eager, ready for anything in God; but another part is as lazy as an old dog sleeping by the fire.’ ”
(MARK 14:37-38 AS PARAPHRASED IN THE MESSAGE)

The Despairing Denier

All four Gospels tell the story of Peter’s denial. It was an important message for the early church, faced as they were with the same temptation to deny Jesus before their Roman persecutors. It is also the vital key to understanding the rest of Peter’s life. The heartbreaking denials provide an emotional window into the heart of the man he would become. It broke Peter in the best sense of the word.

Each evangelist accounts for the three denials: two initial queries followed an hour later by a third, more direct confrontation that causes Peter not to curse but to swear an oath, something Jesus had urged them never to do (Matthew 5:37). But we will begin hours before that, immediately after the Last Supper.

Introductory Questions

When and where are you least comfortable being identified as a follower of Christ? What do you think would help you be more open about your faith?

Study

Jesus and the disciples (all except Judas) were on their way to the garden called Gethsemane. Jesus once again made a prediction that His disciples would fail to stand by Him. Read Mark 14:27-42.

27“*All of you will desert me,*” Jesus told them. “*For the Scriptures say, ‘God will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.’*” 28*But after I am raised from the dead, I will go ahead of you to Galilee and meet you there.*” 29Peter said to him, “*Even if everyone else deserts you, I never will.*” 30“*Peter,*” Jesus replied, “*the truth is, this very night, before the*

rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.” 31“*No!*” Peter insisted. “*Not even if I have to die with you! I will never deny you!*” And all the others vowed the same. 32*And they came to an olive grove called Gethsemane, and Jesus said, ‘Sit here while I go and pray.’* 33*He took Peter, James, and John with him, and he began to be filled with horror and deep distress.* 34*He told them, ‘My soul is crushed with grief to the point of death. Stay here and watch with me.’* 35*He went on a little farther and fell face down on the ground. He prayed that, if it were possible, the awful hour awaiting him might pass him by.* 36“*Abba, Father,*” he said, “*everything is possible for you. Please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will, not mine.*” 37*Then he returned and found the disciples asleep. ‘Simon!’ he said to Peter. ‘Are you asleep? Couldn’t you stay awake and watch with me even one hour?’* 38*Keep alert and pray. Otherwise temptation will overpower you. For though the spirit is willing enough, the body is weak.*” 39*Then Jesus left them again and prayed, repeating his pleadings.* 40*Again he returned to them and found them sleeping, for they just couldn’t keep their eyes open. And they didn’t know what to say.* 41*When he returned to them the third time, he said, ‘Still sleeping? Still resting? Enough! The time has come, I, the Son of Man, am betrayed into the hands of sinners.*” 42*Up, let’s be going. See, my betrayer is here!*”

“Have you ever been completely sure that you would never deny Christ— but then you failed?”

1. Trace Peter's part in this account. Where is he, what is he doing, and what does he say?
2. With what attitude does Peter meet Jesus' statement that they will all desert Him (vv. 7-31)?
3. Have you ever been completely sure that you would never deny Christ—but then failed? How do you account for your failure?
4. Jesus had taken Peter, James and John with Him to a healing and to see Him transfigured. Now a sense of foreboding hangs over the disciples and Jesus. What do you think Peter expected when Jesus took the three of them into the garden to pray (vv. 32-33)?
5. Imagine that you are Peter, instructed by Jesus to stay awake and watch, and He returns to catch you sleeping three times (vv. 37, 40-41)! What do you think, and how do you feel each time He wakes you?

When Judas and the crowd of soldiers and officials arrived, Jesus met them bravely and calmly. Peter lunged forward with a sword and slashed off a piece of one man's ear, which Jesus healed. In disbelief Peter saw Jesus bound and led away. As the Lord had predicted, the disciples deserted Him and fled. But Peter remembered his vow to follow Jesus to the death. He and John shadowed the mob to the house of the high priest, Caiaphas, where Jesus was being interrogated and accused. Read Mark 14:66-72.

66Meanwhile, Peter was below in the courtyard. One of the servant girls who worked for the high priest 67noticed Peter warming himself at the fire. She looked at him closely and then said, "You were one of those with Jesus, the Nazarene." 68Peter denied it. "I don't know what you're talking about," he said, and he went out into the entryway. Just then, a rooster crowed. 69The servant girl saw him standing there and began telling the others, "That man is definitely one of them!" 70Peter denied it again. A little later some other bystanders began saying to Peter, "You must be one of them because you are from Galilee." 71Peter said, "I swear by God, I don't know this man you're talking about." 72And immediately the rooster crowed the second time. Suddenly, Jesus' words flashed through Peter's mind: "Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times." And he broke down and cried.

What does Peter's behavior say to you about his loyalty to Jesus?

6. Considering the risk Peter took to stand there in the high priest's courtyard, how do you account for his first denial (vv. 66-68)?
7. Peter heard the rooster crow the first time as Jesus had predicted (v. 68), but he went on to deny the Lord twice more. We can sense his

"God's faithfulness is unmatched. Even in my lowest moments I can feel His warmth and adoration as I desperately try to get back on track. That's when I realize, 'what I do' isn't His focus but 'who I am' is."

—Stacy "Coffee" Jones (GRITS)



growing panic (vv. 69-71) as he is pressed by questions until he insists, "I don't know this man you're talking about." Why do you think he did not recall Jesus' words until he heard the rooster crow the second time (v. 72)?

8. Go back to your answer to No. 3. How has Christ restored you after your failure(s)?

Commit

Simon is us! He begins to sink into his own despair and goes out and weeps bitterly. He cries out and will once more be rescued and forgiven by Jesus. Consider those situations when you are reluctant to confess that you belong to Christ. Confess each one of them to Him. Prayerfully consider why each one intimidates you. Ask the Lord for a special sense of His presence and encouragement when you next go into any of those situations. Pray that you will keep alert and stay on guard against the temptation to deny Christ.

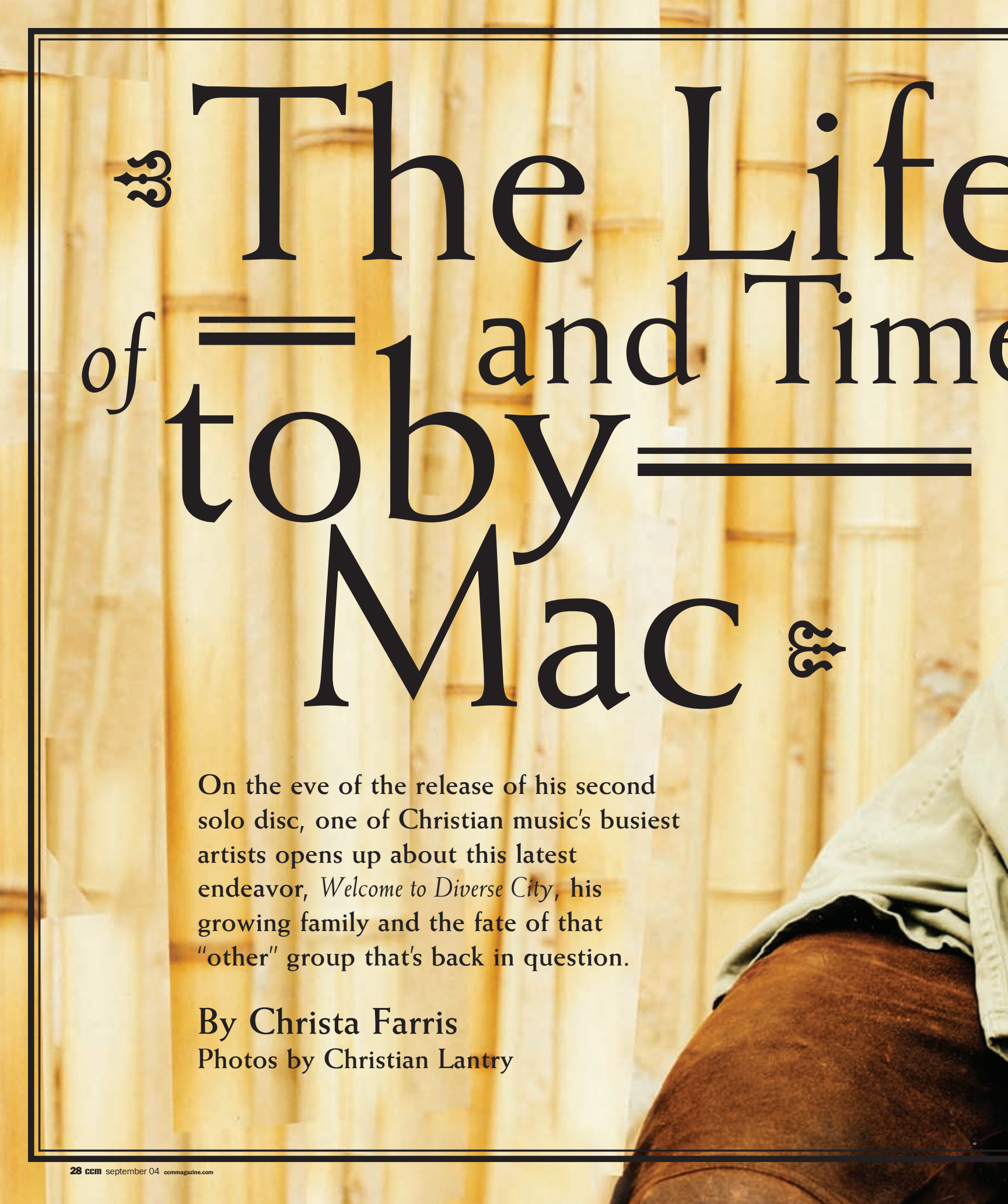
Michael Card is an award-winning author, musician and radio broadcaster who resides in Franklin, Tennessee. *Taken from "A Fragile Stone Study Guide" by Michael Card. Copyright (c) 2003 by Michael Card. Used courtesy of InterVarsity Press, P.O. Box 1400, Downers Grove, IL 60515, USA. ivpress.com.



The Reading Bible

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

NAV PRESS



‡ The Life of 1 and Time toby 1 Mac ‡

On the eve of the release of his second solo disc, one of Christian music's busiest artists opens up about this latest endeavor, *Welcome to Diverse City*, his growing family and the fate of that "other" group that's back in question.

By Christa Farris
Photos by Christian Lantry

es





It's nine days before he has to turn in his new album to the record label, and Toby McKeehan, a.k.a. "tobyMac," is more than a little stressed.

But you'd never guess as he leisurely strolls into Nashville's Portland Brew to grab his usual coffee of choice, a "mostly" decaf mocha that's light on the chocolate. Even when he chats away about a possible future collaboration with Jeremy Camp, who happens to be in town working on his upcoming record, he seems to be the picture of composure in his pink LaCoste polo, army green pants and stylish hat that completes

his always fashionable look.

However, under the surface, Toby isn't quite as calm and readily admits that he can't stop thinking about what's still left to do. But when he mentions a particular track he's still deciding what to name as we speak, (He's debating between "Burn For You" and "Revived Again."), despite all the last-minute stress, he recalls a defining moment while making the record that really stood out.

"I've had a few of these moments in my career, and this was definitely one. I had probably recorded about 50 percent of the songs on the *Diverse City* album, and I was like, 'Am I still into this? Do I still love to do this? Am I passionate?' And, obviously, if I'm questioning that, maybe I'm not," he says. "So I really took some time out to spend with God in prayer and open up the Bible. I basically kept asking myself the question: Do I still believe? And I didn't mean: Did I believe in Jesus? I meant: Do I still believe that God can use a song to open someone's heart toward Christ for the first time? Do I still believe that God can use a song to turn around that wayward believer? Do I still believe that God can use a song to cause people to walk deeper with Him?"

"I spent some time just waiting on God—and, trust me, there's no big ending to this story—except that one day I just stood up and said, 'I still believe. I still believe that God can take a song.' And, out of that time of questioning, everything was confirmed, and I wrote that song."

"I think the best songs come from our own experiences. I have always believed that. And when I listen back to that lyric, it takes me back to that place every time. It sort of gives me something to hold onto when I doubt."

Lovin' the Day

When catching up with tobyMac three weeks before, it was a much different scene. On a muggy Friday afternoon a few hours before showtime on the dusty grounds of Agape Farm in Mt. Union, Pa., home of the annual "Creation East" music festival, he's chilling on his bus, sipping a Pepsi and catching up with Out of Eden, the first artist he signed to his label, Gotee Records, more than 10 years ago.

But beyond the typical business pleasantries between artist and label head, there's an obvious, deeper friendship, resulting in lots of laughter and conversation of the more personal, what's-been-going-on-in-my-life-variety. And while they all probably could've continued chatting for hours, professional duty eventually called.

As tobyMac passes the rows of bunks to the bus' lounge area, this master of multi-tasking easily switches gears as he excitedly talks about the project that's been consuming most of his time lately. Releasing Oct. 5, his sophomore solo effort is titled *Welcome to Diverse City* (ForeFront), which is synonymous with everything that he's about. More than just a witty motto he crafted for a line of t-shirts he's worn onstage, diversity permeates everything from his family dynamic, to his personal mission, to how his live

show is executed later that evening—where even the unexpected rainy conditions couldn't hinder his enthusiasm on the topic.

And speaking of performing, it's months of extensive touring, where he's played songs from his freshman solo foray, *Momentum*, along with the montage of mainstream funk classics he serves up during each show that have greatly influenced the fun, live, "party feel" of the new project.

"The major difference between this record and *Momentum* is that I know what's working for me live, and I could write songs based around that," Toby asserts. "I wanted an old-school, timeless feel of the classic funk songs this time around, and I wrote songs that feel like that era. There's a little Gap Band influence, a bit of Parliament injected in there. It's been so fun and such a blessing to be able to do what you want to do creatively."

A Method to the Madness

This time around, his creativity was forced to come in spurts. Unlike his days with dc talk, Toby couldn't afford to devote six straight months to his work on *Diverse City*. Known to be a stickler for perfection when it comes to his art, his tenacious work ethic wasn't even the reason for the two-and-a-half-year gap between albums. Instead, it was the practical differences between being one-third of Christian music's most successful group and continuing to establish himself as a solo artist—a successful feat that continues to surprise many industry insiders, as sales of his solo debut have surpassed 340,000 copies, according to Soundscan.

"It's because my schedule was a little different," Toby says of the lengthy break between albums. "It wasn't like, 'Let's put the *Momentum* record out and do the 'Momentum Tour.' That's a luxury I can't afford yet. I have to tour when I can—or when a band like Third Day asks me out on tour. Even though my record isn't out, I want to do that tour. So, needless to say, the album was sort of made in these small periods of time."

"I have some songs that, when we're done, were finished two years ago by the time they come out on the album. And I've never done that in my history of recording."

But despite the obstacles he's faced time-wise, Toby claims he was definitely more carefree about the process than he's been in the past. "When it's your sophomore project, you tend to be a little pensive, intense and a little over-analytical," he says. "I was talking to the guys in Kutless, who I love, and they did everything they were supposed to do [with their second disc, *Sea of Faces*]. They focused, and they made great songs. And I complemented those guys and told them, 'I think you followed up well.'"

"And then I started thinking after my conversation with them, 'This is sort of my sophomore project.' But I don't feel that pressure, that anxiety. I've been through that. So I'm more free. I didn't feel that intense. And I think that's showing up in the new music."

The Question of the Ages

One of the new songs from the *Diverse City* sessions, a track called "Atmosphere" which Toby says is "like 'Irene' meets 'Consume Me,'" is already stirring up quite a buzz online, even though it hasn't been released as a radio single or served as a promo track on a compilation. So what's causing all this pre-release hullabaloo?

When word got out in cyberspace that Toby's dc talk bandmates Michael Tait and Kevin Max recently joined him at his Franklin, Tenn., studio to record some vocals for the song, the whole "are-they-or-aren't-they-getting-back-together?" debate ignited in full force once again.

"I had just hung out with Kevin in L.A. when I was doing a Third Day show. We spent the day together eating lunch and talking, and he showed me his place. We had such a great time," Toby recalls. "So when he came into town a week later, I was like, 'Dude, you should come over. I've got this song, and it would be great for you to sing on.' And separately I told Tait, 'Hey, why don't you sing on this song?' So for about a week, they thought they were each going to sing on this particular song; but they didn't know they were going to sing on the *same* song."

"So I actually booked them to come into the studio at the same time. But one was late, and so I recorded one, and he had to go. But I did tell him the





day before when I started working on the schedule that they were both coming in for the same song. And they both were totally into it."

While it still remains in flux, at press time, whether the song will appear on the record due to time considerations, Toby says it will surface somewhere in the future. "I hope it gets on the record with all my heart because I wouldn't want Mike and Kevin to think I recorded them and didn't put them on there. But, of course, it would just end up somewhere else if it didn't anyway," he says. "We were talking about an iTunes exclusive—something like that. I might put the song on the record as I recorded it because it's already recorded and mixed. And I might make a bonus track with a whole different version with Mike and Kevin. I don't know yet."

With the recent recording experience that Toby describes as "amazing" because "it felt like old times and brand new times all at the same time," does this mean that dc talk will officially return to the scene anytime soon?

Shifted Priorities

"I think everyone's really happy doing the solo thing," Toby remarks. "I think all three of us are wide open to getting back together and doing something. There's nothing negative between us, and I can say that clearly. I couldn't always say that, but I can say that now for sure. There are literally 'warm fuzzies.'"

"I think we want to do something together, but I think we've all sort of carved this path out separately—a real legitimate path. And there are people involved in those paths—people I love and people I'm having a great time with," Toby continues. "I think the people who are listening and watching most closely just want us to do what they want us to do. And I understand that. We've made them assume that we're going to do that in all our actions. But, for us, we have to be where we're at peace, where we're happy, where our families are being looked after."

"And, for me, this solo thing has been very freeing in all of that. I can set my schedule. I can move forward urban music in the community, which is one of my passions. All of these birds—I'm nailing down with this one stone called tobyMac. It makes me happy. Getting back together with Mike and Kevin would probably make me happy, too. But right now, I'm on this road. I'm not on that road. And I have to stay focused and true to the vision that God has given me on this road."

The Hippest Dad on the Planet?

"Scheduling has become more and more crucial when you have a family," Toby comments as he brags on his kids: 5-year-old Truett and 2-year-old twins Marlee and Moses, who Toby and his wife, Amanda, adopted when they were infants.

And, apparently, when it comes to twins, Toby's getting quite the practical education. "I've learned a lot about twins and the differences

between boys and girls—mostly, how smart and quick girls are and how kind of laidback and not worried about things boys are," he says with a laugh. "Marlee does everything first, and Moses does everything three or four months behind. I think there's some kind of conspiracy. Somehow or another, women are brighter, and then, when they get to a certain age, I think society holds them back. The twins are just making me think about crazy stuff like that."

And with Truett, it seems that Dad might have a budding producer on his hands. "Truett is such a great kid; he's really funny. Lately he's been re-writing my songs," Toby says as he recalls Truett's offering his two cents on a new track from *Diverse City* called "Slam."

"He'll go 'Daddy, I think when you say, 'This is the slam/This is the one,' he's like, 'I, think you should put a 'What?' in there like, 'This is the slam/What?/This is the one./What?' And I'm like, 'That's a pretty good idea.' He's 5, and he's re-writing my hooks, telling me what I should do."

And it looks like Toby's going to continue to be getting plenty of parenting practice as he and Amanda were recently surprised with some unexpected news. "We're pregnant," Toby says proudly. "We're really excited. It's so funny because everyone says when you adopt, you'll get pregnant. And I was like, 'Whatever, dude!' and then it happened."

"I'm going to go from having one child for four years to four children instantly. But we always wanted a big family, so that's great. It's truly miraculous. I don't read into it too much, but I really feel like God's going, 'You obey me in this, and I'm going to bless you.' That's what it felt like. I know we don't earn God's blessings, but it felt like: We obeyed Him, and we were blessed with that adoption. And we did that. He just has a sense of humor." **ccm**



Chilling with tobyMac

Now that he's got that pesky album deadline behind him, tobyMac revealed a few ways he plans to chill out when he has a chance in the coming months, although he admits, "There's not too much time to chill out when you have three kids running around."

It's Tee Time

"I do play some golf," he says. And from today's wardrobe choice, it looks like Toby's all set for his Tiger Woods moment.

Shop! (Maybe Not Until He Drops, Though)

"I love to shop. I try not to make it too much of a big deal; I just sneak off somewhere and roll around by myself. For so many years of running around with big groups of people, I think I've slowly become more and more to myself."

And Speaking of Clothes, Gotta Clean Out That Closet

"I was just noticing today in my closet hats and shoes and belts; it's a little ridiculous. I got to get it in check. I need to have a tobyMac garage sale."

Scooting Around Franklin

"One of the things Truett and I do all the time is ride scooters in downtown Franklin on all the sidewalks on Main Street. He's old enough now to sort of get into it. I mean, it's kind of funny because we like to go in between people who are walking on Main Street. For a while we really had to go slow, and now he zips through people. But downtown Franklin is mostly craft shops and stuff, so we're buzzing between two older ladies with our scooters."

Surf's Up

"I've just taken up wakeboarding, and it's amazing! I can't wait to do some more of that."

I had probably recorded about 50 percent of the songs on the *Diverse City* album, and I was like, 'Am I still

into this?

Do I still love to do this?

Am I passionate?'

And, obviously, if I'm questioning that,

maybe I'm not."



Like a glam rocker's commitment to Aqua Net or the coffee aficionado's loyalty to Starbucks, such is the tight bond tobyMac has with diversity—diversity that's branched out to many facets of his life. Need proof?

- Serves as one-third of dc talk, a band that's always been a blend of rap, rock and soul.
- Began the non-profit E.R.A.C.E. (Eliminating Racism and Creating Equality) foundation.
- He and his wife, Amanda, adopted multi-racial twins, Marlee and Moses.
- Fulfilled a longtime dream by going on the road with Kirk Franklin for the "I Have a Dream" tour.
- Created a line of t-shirts with the catchy slogan "Welcome to Diversity City"
- Started Gotee Records to provide a platform for progressive artists and urban sounds.
- Contributes to book projects that help educate readers on martyrs for their faith (in *Jesus Freaks Vol. 1 & 2*) and America's spiritual heritage in this month's *Under God*.



EVERYDAY WOMAN

Having established herself as one of the Christian community's most prolific singer/songwriters, **NICOLE C. MULLEN** returns with her first "regular" album in three years and talks openly about the personal experiences that helped shape it.

WORDS: Anthony DeBarros

PHOTOS: Robert Ascroft



IT'S

around noon in Atlanta, but Nicole C. Mullen's still feeling drowsy. "I'm sleepy, but I'm good," she says over the phone, feeling the effects of working late nights to mix *Everyday People*, her third studio album for Word Records. "We've been working on it for the past six months... nine... a year, maybe more—who knows? You lose track of time after a while. But it's all good."

The album releases Sept. 14. But, as Mullen chats away, it's mid-July, and she's fighting the battles that go with giving birth to a new recording: nailing down songs and lyrics, handling publicity, missing sleep. (Later in the month, she'll dispatch an e-mail to this writer, sending it at 1 a.m.) To say there's extra interest in this album is like saying fish think water's an "OK" place to live. Mullen put out a Christmas album in 2002 and a live CD/DVD in 2003, but *Everyday People* is her first all-new studio recording since 2001's *Talk About It*—an album that sold more than 380,000 copies, according to SoundScan. High-profile producers are onboard, it's being mixed at the Atlanta studio owned by platinum rappers OutKast, and Word Records is planning to give it an extra push, possibly into the general market.

And that's not all that's keeping Mullen busy. Life at home has taken on new complexity. Son Josiah, the third child for Mullen and her husband, artist and producer David Mullen (They also have a daughter, Jasmine, 10, and another son, Max, 7.)—turned 1 in February.

A lot's happening. And it is, she says, "all good." Spend any length of time talking to her, and you'll hear that phrase pop up often: "It's all good." She drops it into conversation with the same smooth, supple voice that fueled hits "Redeemer" and "Call on Jesus." And with six Dove Awards, a Grammy nomination, a loyal fanbase and a growing family behind her, there's every reason to believe life is good for this singer/songwriter.

But the more Nicole talks, the more it becomes clear: What's good isn't so much the success. What's good is the process of working through the challenges along the way—and playing a part in helping others do the same.

"Often, when I'm writing, the people I'm seeing in my head are the people I've seen at my concerts—people who have e-mailed me or sent me letters afterward," she says. "And it definitely lets me know that I'm singing for a hurting audience—vulnerable people who are crying out to God, people who are going through circumstances, people who are 'everyday.' These are the people I see, these are the voices I hear when I'm putting pen to the paper."

If there's a story that reveals Nicole's heart for people—and the heart of *Everyday People*—it is the story of Brianna Nelson. She met the girl, the subject of her new song "Brianna," in 2002. "One of my favorite things after I sing is to go out and meet the people, hug their necks and ask, 'What's your name, and what do you want to be when you grow up?' I love that; it's my favorite part of the night. And I remember somebody telling me that there was a little girl who wanted to meet me, and she was blind," Nicole says. "And my whole thing is, 'OK, the world is going to stop.' If you've come and you're in a wheelchair or you're deaf or blind or if you look like you need a little extra love, the world's going to stop for you when you're around me."

So, Nicole walked across the lawn with her own daughter, Jasmine, and struck up a conversation. "She was with her mom, and we were talking about how cute she looked," Nicole recalls. "I said, 'Girl, your mom has your hair looking good, your clothes are stylin',' and she was laughing." Nicole asked her what she liked to do. Brianna talked about reading and playing and her little sister.

"We had this little 7-year-old conversation," Nicole says. "And I remember leaving that night, and [her memory] stayed with me for several weeks. I remember praying for her and thinking, 'What should I be bold enough to pray for her? Do *You* want to heal her? Lord, did I do what I was supposed to do? And I remember hearing so clearly what Jesus had told the disciples when they came upon the blind man. They said, 'Master, who did sin?' And Jesus said, 'Neither this man nor his parents but that the work of God might be manifest in him.' And I remember hearing so clearly, 'But that the work of God might be manifest.' And I kept praying, 'Lord, I don't know what that means, but I know, in her life, manifest Your work.'"

Sometimes, people who feel led to pray for a person don't fully know why. This was one of those times: Within a year, Brianna's young life would end.

Brianna's death in July 2003 made national news. According to accounts from CNN and The Associated Press, she had been swimming in Lake



Calhoun in Minnesota at a camp with a group of blind students. After growing tired, she told one of the counselors in the water—who also was blind—that she was going to shore. She drowned before reaching land.

Nicole did not learn of Brianna's passing immediately. She found out weeks later, before a concert, via a letter written by someone who knew the girl. "I remember it just hitting me in the heart so hard," the singer says. "I just had to put my jacket over my head, and I just started balling. I couldn't imagine... we are not supposed to bury our children. That's a fallen world, and, at that moment, I grieved."

Toward the end of 2003, Nicole had a bittersweet reunion with Brianna's family during one of the shows on her Christmas tour. "We just had a good time of tears, laughter and just hearing their hearts," Nicole says. "In the midst of their trauma and tragedy, they had no bitterness. Their whole view was, 'God gave her to us for a time. And, though we hurt and we're grieving, she's with the Lord.'"

"It was healing to my heart because I was supposed to be comforting them, and somehow they were bringing comfort to me. They were saying, 'We didn't know how the Lord was going to use her life. We thought maybe it was going to be in the area of piano.' But they say that, even through her death, a lot of people have gotten saved. Even at her funeral, people came to know Christ. Brianna was very vocal about her faith."

It is only natural for a songwriter to be moved by such a significant event. So Nicole, with permission from the girl's parents, captured her thoughts about Brianna in simple verses. The song ends:

*I talked to your mama the other day
And she told me you'd passed away
I couldn't find the words to say
I started to cry (continued on p.38)*

(continued from p.36)

She said when her heart begins to ache

She can remember you're in a place

Lookin' at Jesus face to face

What a delight

You got your sight

You dance in the light

And you can see me tonight

Bye bye, Brianna

...I'll see you in the daylight

"Brianna" quickly became one of the focal points of Nicole's new album, which she describes as a celebration of people and a rebuff to the cares of this world. "It's about the women who live in abusive situations and attend my concerts at times. It's about the single mom. It's about the boy and the man struggling to be who God's called them to be," she says. "Jesus Christ came from everyday people. He saved everyday people."

One song on the album, "Dancin' in the Rain," was written for a friend whose husband died suddenly. Another, "Valorie," portrays a woman struggling to find forgiveness for a man who beats her. "I was just faced with every time I turned around, either myself or someone else I knew was going through something," she says. "The God we serve is not just a God who is relevant for Sunday morning, but He is relevant from Sunday through that next Sunday. How do we walk out our faith? How do we see the supernatural in our mundane? How do we see all these things the Bible talks about, worked out in our everyday problems? These are things I tried to address."

Of course, it's no secret that Nicole sees herself as an everyday person, too. Raised in Cincinnati—the daughter of Napoleon and Mary Jane Coleman—she has often told the story of growing up as "not the beauty queen or the cute one" and feeling shame from the taunts of her peers. At home, though, her foundation was strong. Faith in God was the center of the house. Her father worked more than three decades for the local telephone company as a line technician, and the family often gave help and refuge to people.

Inspired by her parents, she grew up pursuing music. Her mother, in the documentary on Nicole's *Live in Cincinnati* DVD, recalls Nicole's writing poems at an early age. Her dad taught her harmony. She wrote songs and recorded demos, one of which attracted RCA Records, when she was 16. (Her mom refused to let her sign a contract.) At age 17, Nicole went to Christ for the Nations Bible college in Dallas and began singing and traveling with its group, Living Praise.

A connection with artist Tim Miner led to a deal with Frontline Records. "They were looking for a rapper," she remembers. "He was like, 'I guess she can rap.' And so he came to me like, 'They want a rapper, and they want to sign you,' and I was like, 'I don't rap.' So he called me back and said, 'OK, they'll take you.' And so I recorded a couple of albums with them."

Don't Let Me Go and *Wish Me Love*, released in the early '90s under simply the name "Nicole," failed to make more than a few ripples in Christian music. Today, they are so out of print that they rarely even pop up for sale on eBay. "You can get them in the 50-cent bin somewhere," Nicole says.

Unfazed, the singer moved on, taking backup roles on tours with Amy Grant, Michael W. Smith and the Newsboys. She married artist David Mullen—who continues to write and produce and co-owns a recording studio with Toby McKeehan—around the time of a Newsboys tour. One of the couple's earliest writing successes was "On My Knees," a huge hit on Jaci Velasquez's debut album in 1996 and winner of the Dove Award for "Song of the Year" in 1998.

Nicole had little intention of getting back in the spotlight. She and David were content with their growing family and work behind the scenes

writing and producing material, ranging from Carman's *Yo! Kidz* to the Larry Boy theme song for *VeggieTales*. Then Word Records—in the form of producer and artist Brent Bourgeois—came calling. "I'm like, 'No, I'm not the kind of person you're looking for, Brent.' He's like, 'No, I'm telling you, you really are because Word wants some new music,'" she says. "It took about a year and a half, and we had prayed, 'Lord, keep the right doors open and close the wrong doors.' He kept the door open. Then we had a peace about signing."

In the studio to record her first album for Word, Nicole pulled out a guitar and began singing something she'd begun writing for Point of Grace but had decided to record herself. It was a song based on a passage from Job, a song that resonated deeply with the troubles of everyday life, reaching back to the taunts she heard on the school bus as a kid. It was called, simply, "Redeemer."

The song's success led to three Dove Awards for Nicole, including 2001's "Song of the Year," and established her as one of Christian music's most respected singer/songwriters. "It was because of the Lord's doing," she says. "Even today, when people tell me of how a song that I've been able to write has affected them, I know it's not Nicole C. Mullen. I know that I don't have the power to change anybody's life. But Christ does."

That approach to her music has carried over to this newest album. Mixing *Everyday People* in Atlanta instead of Nashville is, in a sense, symbolic of Mullen's desire to take her music to a broader audience. Management won't talk about any plans, but Nicole, when asked if the album could have crossover appeal, says: "I sure do hope so. I think we have plenty of things that could do that. ...I want to have my feet planted firmly in the church so that I can reach over into the world, pull people out without falling in. It's always been my desire to take the message of Christ, the hope of Christ... into the world. I make no apologies for it—it's always been my desire, and so I would love to see the Lord do that with this. I would love to see Him give His favor in the mainstream arena, and, at the same time, I'd love to take my Christian audience over with me."

The album certainly has enough connections to make people notice it outside of the Christian music industry. The majority of *Everyday People* is being mixed by John Frye, who has worked with OutKast, Toni Braxton and other star R&B and rap artists.

Guest producers include Tommy Sims (Jaci Velasquez, Michael McDonald), Big Jim Wright (Mariah Carey, Yolanda Adams, Janet Jackson) and Andrew Ramsey and Shannon Sanders—better known as Shannon and Drew—who produced India.Arie's latest.

Nicole even covers "Everyday People," the 1968 hit by Sly and the Family Stone. "Which is ironic," she admits, "because I didn't even know it until a month and a half ago." Still, she says, "One of the things that I am constantly trying to make sure of is that I'm not put in a box because I know that people would love to hear Nicole C. Mullen sing a thousand 'Redeemer' songs. And I love 'Redeemer,' and I will probably be singing it till I'm 190 years old and I have no teeth in my mouth. But, at the same time, 'Redeemer' was birthed in the midst of a hard situation. That is where I feel called—to bring our attention back to 'Wherever you are, that's where Christ is.' He is the I Am.

"Jesus didn't walk in the clouds. He lived in heaven, but He came down to Earth. And He came down and got dirty with us; He came down and died for us.

"There's a balance there; and, for this season of my life, these are the songs that have been birthed in my heart. This is the trumpet I feel I have been called to sound—just to proclaim that the Christ we serve is relevant for everyday pain, for everyday life. At the end of the day, my heart is to scream to the world, 'O taste and see that the God we serve is good.'" **ccm**



W

hen I first met Rachael Lampa, she was 14. She had recently performed at the Gospel Music Association's "Seminar in the Rockies" in Estes Park, Colo., and afterward she ignited one of the most intense bidding wars in Christian music history. Major labels courted Lampa and her parents with great fervor for months to urge them to sign on the dotted line of a lucrative, multi-album record contract. Executives were touting her as "the next Céline Dion"; and, while such hyperbole is not so unusual in the music biz, this time the claims were being made by executives who believed it. Apparently, this young girl, just five feet tall on a good day, was what they call "the real deal."

So having known all of this, I was surprised to discover Lampa was the virtual antithesis of all the overly eager, aspiring artists in Nashville. For starters, she was so shy that her eyes spent more time directed at her shoes than anywhere else. Her mom, Marianne, did most of the talking that day. But Rachael did what, at least at that point, she did best: She sang. She grabbed a lollipop—no lie—and, using it as a prop "microphone," she sang for the industry types present. I'll never forget that moment: The realization that we had just seen a rare talent seemed to hit all of us in the room.

The other thing I remember from that day is that, as "uncoached" and unrehearsed as she was, Rachael seemed very certain of her calling. She may have been introverted, but she was not shy about her belief that God, Himself, had given her a gift and that she was supposed to use that gift to reach the world. In fact, she wasn't sure she was even supposed to sign a Christian record deal at all because she felt it might limit her chances to reach the people who most needed to hear the message she had to deliver.

Rachael, of course, signed with Word Records soon after our first meeting. Her contract included the rare "notation" that she was free to sign a separate pop deal, which would allow her to record Christian albums for Word and full-fledged pop albums for the world at large. But then she released *Live for You*, her Word debut album, amid a media whirlwind that included appearances on "The Tonight Show with Jay Leno" and Barbara Walter's "The View" as well as coverage in *Teen People*, *Seventeen* and many other mainstream outlets. The project met with record-breaking (at the time) sales its first week, and it suddenly seemed that Rachael would not need a pop deal, after all, to reach the masses.

Fast-forward a few years. An awful lot had changed in Rachael's landscape. Her management company had been sold, and her record company had also been sold—not once but twice, in part resulting in the departure of at least 10 executives who had been influential in her early career. Her music had morphed from more adult contemporary sounds to the urban/R&B flavor of sophomore effort *Kaleidoscope* and *Blur*, a 2002 remix project that even found Rachael collaborating with rappers.

For a time Rachael more or less disappeared. But, after two tumultuous years of often painful growth, she's back. Rachael is an engaging young woman of 19 now, with a new self-titled album, a blossoming artistic identity, a nose piercing, a new hometown, a new family dynamic and a confidence that comes after weathering a few storms.

But how bad could these "storms" be when she's only 19? Evidently, bad enough. For starters, over the past two to three years there have been a rash of suicides and

Growing Pains



Though she admits to being far from having all the answers, after two years of personal and professional hardships, **Rachael Lampa** has emerged more confident in herself, her music and God's call on her life.



By
Michael TenBrink

Photos
by **Kristin Barlowe**



attempted suicides in her small hometown of Louisville, Colo., population approximately 20,000. "There have been eight people—not people I knew closely. But it's almost a trend right now. It's affected so many people close to me, and I've seen how it affects families and schools. It just hit my heart really hard. I had to write about it because it was on my mind all the time."

It was on Rachael's mind so much, in fact, that she began talking about this from stage as it was unfolding in Louisville. "God just puts different things on my heart so strongly that I just kind of have to go with it. There are times I've built almost an entire concert around it. I've had tons of kids come up to me and tell me either that they were in that situation or that their friends were in that situation. It was scary at first."

But the most significant struggle in the past year has been the divorce of her parents. Rachael admits she is "still not sure" how to talk about it and several times cites deep concerns about saying something that might cause hurt to her family. Yet, she also admits that the situation presents her with an opportunity.

"When all of it started happening, my mom told me that God would never waste my pain. That stuck with me for so long. [It also became a song; see "The Art" on her new record.] I think about how this is my chance to not put it to waste, to talk about it. I'm still kind of wondering how much to let go, but I would say that it is affecting me in every way; it's all I think about. It's not like I went through it and then wrote about it on the record, and now everything is all better. It's very therapeutic to write about it, but it's definitely still very sensitive. I think God put me in this situation and kept me this sensitive for a reason. It's definitely something that I'm not alone in."

She hesitates, choosing her words carefully. "I think one of the biggest problems with how people deal with things is that they hide it away and just try to ignore it, and I totally did that; and it just tore me apart. I went to counseling and just tried to figure out how to deal with it without being a big emotional mess, without holding everything back but, at the same time, without having outbursts all the time. But I just prayed that God would take full control over it and that He would take things off of my shoulders. And, as simple as that sounds, it worked. I am such an advocate for prayer; it works."

She pauses and then continues quietly. "As far as how the divorce affected my music, I think almost every song on the record was affected by it. Sometimes it just hit so close to home, that I would think, "I can't believe I'm even doing this." But I did my part, as far as being honest and real about it. I'm not 100 percent OK with my feelings yet; I'm still just a 19-year-old mess," she says with a wry grin. "I don't have any answers for it, any explanations for it. I just know that if you call on Him, if you trust in Him, He'll take it where He needs to take it. And I'm just trying to follow along right now."

Sensing that it's time to change the subject, I ask Rachael if she ever regrets starting her career so young. She answers quickly. "I don't regret it; but, for a majority of people, I don't recommend it [laughs]. It took me a good year or so after the first record and after doing some shows to realize that this is not about me! And so I had to figure out what it was about. I started to talk to people [that I thought could help me]. Rebecca [St. James] was a big help to me, just encouraging me to always be real, to not ever act like I had everything figured out but just to communicate honestly. I could have gotten lost so easily, but I didn't. If you surround yourself with the right

people, and they are truly looking out for what is best for you, which may not always be what you want, then I think you can do it."

For Rachael, part of surrounding herself with the right people involved moving to Nashville. She says, "I moved here right after I graduated from high school last year, and it was just a good time in my life to go. I'm having a blast; I have great friends here. One of the deciding factors [about moving here] was I had friends that would pray for me. I never had that in Colorado; I just didn't really have Christian friends. I had a few people I would hang out with occasionally from youth group; but, in my immediate circle of friends, there weren't really Christians. I just really felt like I would be able to grow here, and [in Colorado] I just kind of felt like I was stuck. I definitely miss my family like crazy; but I get to see them once in a while. And when I travel, sometimes I get to make stop-offs in Colorado."

Rachael says she has been amazed at her mom's ability to let her go and says she's been her biggest inspiration. "She's such a strong person. Her answer for everything is prayer. She so just wants me to learn and grow and experience things. And while she's making sure I'm not staying out too late and I'm taking my vitamins, she is so good at letting me find God in my own ways and find people around me who will encourage that." **CCM**



Introducing... Rachael Lampa

For her third, full-length studio release, Rachael Lampa certainly brought in a big gun to head up production—the one and only Tommy Sims (CeCe Winans, Bruce Springsteen). According to Lampa and her management during a recent visit to the CCM offices, Sims was only scheduled to produce a limited number of tracks on the self-titled album. However, once he started working, he asked to produce the whole thing. Needless to say, he didn't have to ask twice.

As to the musical direction of the new album, Lampa says, "It's kind of a funk/pop/rock thing. Some of it is real straight-up funk, some a little 'R&B-ish,' some rock. There's one that's a little 'ska-ish.' It's a mixture of a lot of things." Lampa credits her growth to Brent Bourgeois, her first (former) A&R rep. "I don't know if he even knows," she reveals, "but he showed me a whole new way of looking at music." A nod for this growth also goes to Sims and her second (former) A&R rep, Chris "Rodge" Rodriguez, who she says "challenged" and "humbled" her.

And while Lampa clearly relishes the musical growth, it's the lyrical themes that she is most passionate about. And, for the first time, she wrote or co-wrote every song on the album. "It's a collection of what I've learned in the past year about life and how my faith has affected it and how God has come into play with it. Certain songs are about victories that I've had, things that are worth celebrating; and some are about questions I still have, struggles I have. I think it's important for me to communicate that it is just a snapshot of my life. It's not the end; it's not my final answer on everything. It's just where I'm at right now. Ultimately, God has woven His way through every song and every situation that these songs come from; and I wanted that to show, and I feel like it does."


So what about her future? Does Lampa still intend to get a mainstream record deal and "cross over" to pop music as she had considered years ago? She responds, "Right now, all I want to do is make a record that I believe in, lyrically and musically; and that truly reflects me and my faith and where God is working. We made this record for the Christian market, if that's what you want to say; but I feel like, when we say those things, we only limit ourselves. It's not like I want to go be a pop star, but I would love to just put no limits on it. I just want it to speak to people the way that God speaks to me." —**M. T.**





Behind the Eyes of Fernando Ortega

Now 12 albums into his career, this singer/songwriter is “introducing” himself to fans again. **Kierstin Berry** gets the story on this, plus his observations on the music industry, gardening and much more.



If you took a drive from Los Angeles down the coast toward San Diego, you'd pass through a quiet town called Laguna Beach. A far cry from the glitz of Hollywood, you'd find charming cottages on lush hillsides adorned with tropical flowers, mountain lions roaring from the canyon bluffs and craftspeople moving from place to place with the ease of a life by the sea. This is the town singer/songwriter Fernando Ortega calls "home."

Ortega needs this kind of picturesque landscape, not only for his peace of mind but as a resource for his visual style of songwriting. Away from what he calls the "hubbub of the city," Ortega seems content to step back and observe.

"There's plenty of music industry stuff 50 minutes north in Hollywood, but I live purposely away from all of that," Ortega says with a casual laugh. "Some people thrive in that competitive arena, but I do much better if I'm not caught up in the scene. There's an anxiety, even a desperation that goes with it that I'd rather not subject myself to."

It's not that Ortega doesn't face his share of anxiety. He's an incurable insomniac, conjuring lyric ideas while lying in bed at night, agonizing over life's usual worries or merely the fact that he can't seem to get any sleep. While awake, he listens for every sort of creature imaginable. And they have shown up in several songs on the artist's recent August release, a cast of characters that includes coyotes, dragonflies and other desert-dwellers he's gone lengths to analyze. Curiously, Ortega has chosen to self-title this album—his twelfth (but sixth major label release). And with this long overdue introduction of sorts, it makes sense that, on many levels, Ortega has been taking a good long look at his music and his surroundings.

When Ortega phones for his interview, he is actually away from home in Vail, Colo., where he admits to be studying the cloudy sky at this very moment. Following a recent trip to Puerto Rico with his wife, Margee, and Billy Graham's daughter, Anne Graham Lotz (The artist and speaker recently teamed up for their 18th crusade.) as well as some work to make the final edits to his new DVD, Ortega has arrived in Vail two days before his scheduled concert to rehearse and soak up some scenery.

Instantly friendly, with a pleasant chuckle that shows he doesn't take himself too seriously, Ortega also has the air of an inner poet, seeming more aligned with complex, creative souls like Georgia O'Keefe and Beethoven than his peers in today's Christian music world.

"My wife and I are really into gardening," he explains right off the bat. "We live in a wooded area that's got its own little micro-climate. Most of the stuff we plant is Mediterranean succulents," Ortega continues, sounding a bit more like a botanist than a songwriter. "There's lots of wildlife where we live, and the town itself is an artist community with a lot of painters and potters. Last night my wife and I went to a craft fair just two blocks away from our house."

Sure, it seems like he's relaxing more than working these days; but, for an artist like Ortega, this is all just a part of his research. You can almost imagine him roaming barefoot along the shore, a notepad in one hand and a pencil behind his ear. But if the notion of a life so intentionally watchful still seems a bit blurry, its imprint can be found all over the songwriter's new project, his first on Curb Records.

A tune called "California Town" is a perfect example of Ortega's slicing his perceptions into songs that almost seem to happen as you listen. This one, in particular, takes a romantic stroll downtown with Margee to find a quiet restaurant where they can talk. It's this kind of casualness, a laidback approach to success, that helps the artist see through the residue of life to something more important.

"If you don't pay close attention to the details around you, you're not

going to be any good at writing songs. You're not going to be any good at writing anything," he says. "My piano teacher always used to say that God exists in the details, and his point was that you find the truth and the poignancy of something in the details. That's what writing is all about. It's looking and seeing things in a way that other people don't."

Musically, Ortega and longtime producer John Andrew Schreiner (Crystal Lewis, Bryan Duncan) decided to stretch their legs and venture off the beaten path on what's their tenth collaboration. For people just becoming familiar with Ortega's vivid folk/rock music, it won't be a radical change; but loyal fans should notice a subtle departure. This album, for instance, tilts more to the edge adding in some funky instrumentation, a well-timed fresh approach with the artist's recent move to Curb Records.

"I think anytime is a good time for a new beginning, just because you're always glad that you're still able to do what you do. I'm 47 years old; and, when I walk through the halls at [Gospel Music Week] and everyone is young enough to be my kid—or even some of them my grandkid—I just think, 'Golly, I'm so glad I'm still doing this and that people are still listening.'"

And, indeed, people *are* listening. Over the course of his career, Ortega's garnered eight No. 1 singles and won a Dove Award for "Inspirational Album of the Year" (2000's *Home*) and one for "Bluegrass Recorded Song of the Year" ("Children of the Living God") for a duet with Alison Krauss. Plus, his last original studio album (He recorded *Hymns of Worship* in 2003.) sold more than 150,000 units.

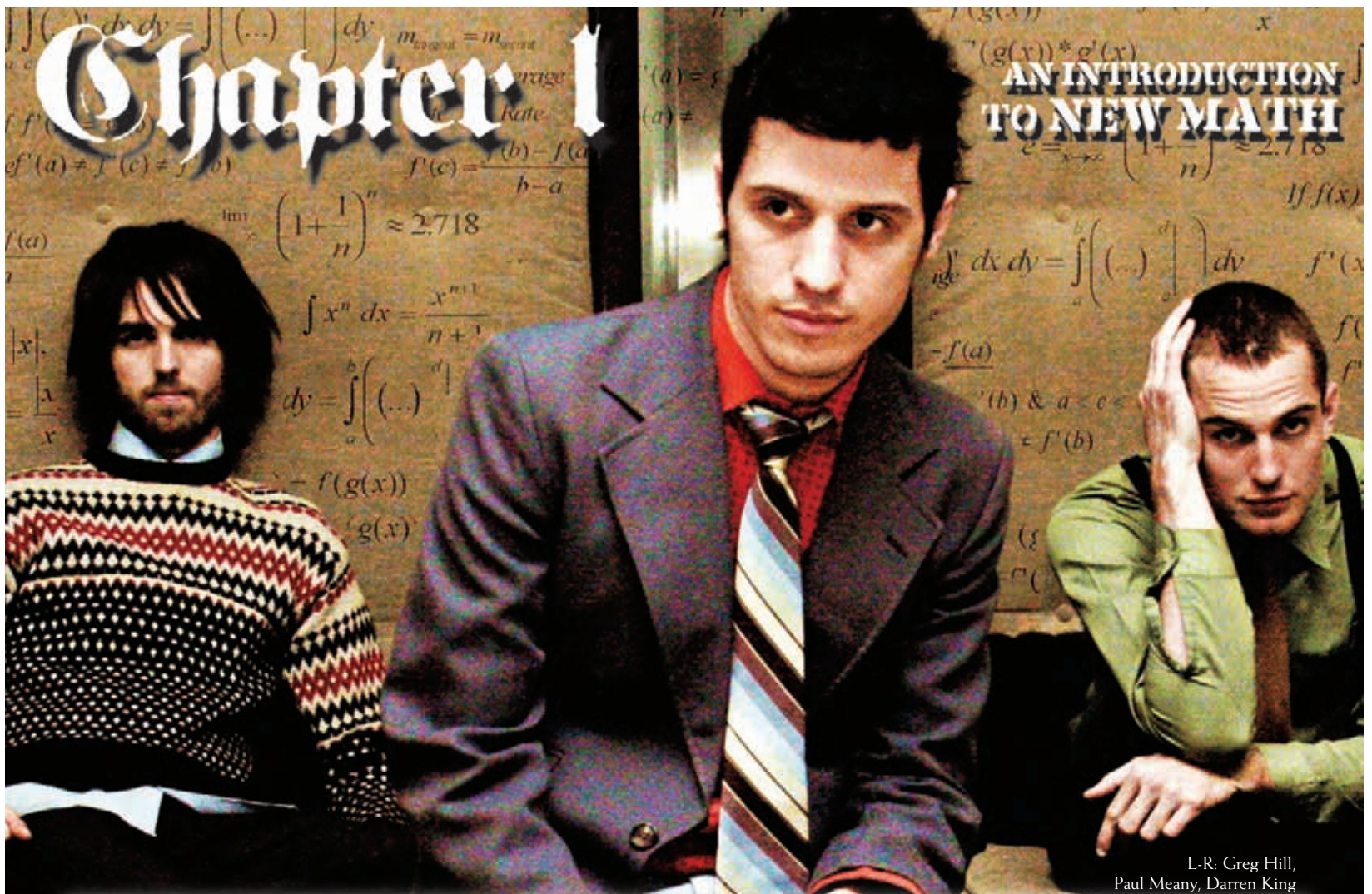
But, despite his preference to remain on the fringes, apparently, Ortega does make his way to Nashville every now and again, even if he is reluctant to follow the grain of the industry. Case in point is that peculiar decision to release a self-titled project so far into his career, a choice most artists make closer to their debut. But Ortega makes no excuses for re-introducing himself at this stage of the game. In fact, he doesn't even offer a profound explanation.

"Honestly, part of it was that I could not come up with a good title," he admits. "I went through every line of every song over and over. You find some good lines like 'California town' or 'sleepless nights,' which are some of the names that were tossed around; and you think, 'Oh, that's a nice title for an album.' But it just doesn't capture what the whole record is about." Presumably, the easiest way to sum up a collection of songs about a world seen through the eyes of Fernando Ortega is simply to call it *Fernando Ortega*.

Until his fall touring schedule gets underway, Ortega says he plans to continue his usual routine of exploration, hiking and strolling the beaches with Margee, making notes for future songs and looking for stories in obscure places. "For me, imagery is everything. People can conjure up their own picture, even though it may be radically different than what the songwriter has in mind," he explains. "If I'm successful, they've got their own imagination flying away, and I love that."

Perhaps his careful view of the world is the reason many of Ortega's fellow musicians regard him to be a true "artist's artist." His not-too-shabby list of admirers (with whom he's also shared the stage) includes Alison Krauss, Matt Slocum (former musician/songwriter for Sixpence None the Richer), Amy Grant and Nickel Creek. But Ortega, not quite as keen to others' observations as he is to his own, laughs humbly when informed that he has earned this reputation.

"Musicians like Lyle Lovett or Lucinda Williams [are] really great at saying things that are true about life. I guess that's what an 'artist's artist' is to me," Ortega explains. "If after I stop doing this people say something like that about me, it certainly would make me feel good to know that." **ccm**



L-R: Greg Hill, Paul Meany, Darren King

2 Earthsuit mates + one new guitarist = Mute Math

Lizza Connor gets the story.

Though Mute Math claims the jazz and Cajun-infused city of New Orleans as home, it's not washboards or accordions that you'll find on the band's upcoming debut EP, *Reset* (Teleprompt). The pop/rock threesome, comprised of lead singer/pianist Paul Meany, drummer Darren King and guitarist Greg Hill, emerged from the ashes of Meany's crumbling Earthsuit outfit. Just before Earthsuit disbanded, Meany, along with King, had started on a batch of songs that were veering in another musical direction. These new tunes lent themselves to a whole new sound, Meany explains, and "it just felt right to create another band," he says.

When the other ES band members parted ways, Meany and King stuck together. They channeled their musical chemistry and life experiences into song, and the outcome is what audiences will know as Mute Math. Mute Math rings of Earthsuit

influences for certain, with its pop and Euro-tech vibe. But it's the concept, the meaning behind the music, that really sets this band apart from anything in Meany's past, he comments.


Meany calls the meat of *Reset* a derivative of the Earthsuit sound... minus the rap element. He explains: "It falls into the pop/rock category, and we've incorporated a lot of electronic elements." He also credits the music of the '70s/'80s pop outfit The Police, from which rocker/writer Sting emerged, as well as Icelandic sensation Bjork with providing plenty of influence for the new EP.

On the songwriting side, Meany says he's always up for the job because one never knows when inspiration will strike. "Songwriting is a '24-7' on-call job," he explains. "You have to be ready to go when a chord strikes inside. Something that usually happens to trigger the inspiration, for me, is when anything new happens: when I meet new people, move to a new location, make new friends, enemies, have new problems. That always surfaces in the next song. As long as I'm living, I know I can look forward to some sort of inspiration," says Meany.

Mute Math titled the EP *Reset* due to a shift in

perspective on Meany's part and a newfound optimism fueled by faith in God. Meany tells CCM that the the "bottom line" and what is consistent throughout all the songs on *Reset* is the band's steadfast effort to stop "over thinking." "One of the traps I was falling into when Earthsuit [was breaking up] was that I was trying to figure everything out, and it was becoming this awful thing. [The overanalyzing] was choking the joy out of life," he shares.

The big change, or the "reset" of perspective, perhaps, came as Meany & Co. began digging into the song lyrics for the new project and evaluating the direction they wanted to move in. "As I was writing songs for Mute Math, I was beginning to change perspectives. I began to write these songs not about trying to figure out more but trusting more and letting go. Everything in life doesn't have to have a rhyme or reason," he says, "It doesn't have to be figured out. It's not all mathematical."

Meany continues: "I [realized] there truly was a spiritual realm that's paralleling all that stuff I was going through, and there's something great that can come even from my mistakes and failures. If you look at it that way, it's hard to be cynical." 

* 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

Game Face: 5 Examples of the secret connection between Christian Music and Game Shows

As detailed in the June issue of *CCM*, Seth Gilbert, frontman for Tooth & Nail's *Seven Places*, appeared as a contestant on "The Price Is Right." (No word yet whether he played Plinko or that game with the yodeling stick-figure guy.) However, as we thought about it, it occurred to us that there might be a deeper connection with others in Christian music.



1. TONÉX, "Games"

On his double-disc CD, *Out the Box* (Verity), the always-brilliant Tonéx (possibly the coolest person I have

ever met in my life) mixes funk, rock, jazz, hip-hop and gospel to create what *Billboard.com* rightfully tagged "the *Sgt. Pepper* of gospel." With this particular track, Mr. Tonéx rebuilds the theme to "The Family Feud" into a masterful, gospel-stomp rampage against apathetic Christians.



2. JACI VELASQUEZ on "Hollywood Squares"

Back in 2000, around the time that Jaci Velasquez first became a darling of the Latin music community, her duties as a Latin Grammy Award nominee included a stint on "Hollywood Squares" during Latin Grammy Week.



3. KANSAS, "Play the Game Tonight"

With such '70s rock classics as "Dust in the Wind," Kansas songwriter Kerry Livgren shared his search



for spiritual meaning. When he became a Christian in the late '70s, there were clues in subsequent songs. However, the 1982 Kansas album, *Vinyl Confessions*, with such hits as "Face It" and this one, exploded with expressions of faith. (The album also introduced new lead singer John Elefante.)

4. KIRK FRANKLIN on "Pyramid"

We always get confused: Was Donny Osmond a little bit country or a little bit rock & roll? Sadly, the topic never even came up during Kirk Franklin's guest appearance on syndicated game show "Pyramid" in September 2003.



5. DANIEL AMOS, "New Car"

Speaking of "The Price Is Right," *CCM* Hall-of-Famer Daniel Amos used a fun sample from the show ("A new car!") on this track, found on the 1983 classic, *Doppelganger*. The game-show metaphor was used in this diatribe against shallow Christians who think God is at their beck and call.

NOTES: For those looking for extra credit (you know who you are), a similar (if not the same) "The Price Is Right" sample was used in the title track of the 1984 *Prodigal* album *Electric Eye* (Heartland).



MERCYME GUITARISTS MIKE SCHEUCHZER'S AND BARRY GRAUL'S 5 FAVORITE GUITAR SOLOS (HONEST!)

1. Pink Floyd, "Comfortably Numb" and Jimi Hendrix, "Cross Town Traffic"
2. Jimi Hendrix, "All Along the Watchtower"
3. Eddie Van Halen, "Eruption"
4. Pink Floyd, "Time"
5. Stevie Ray Vaughn, "Little Wing"



5 EXCUSES FOR MISSING SCHOOL WE WOULD NOT RECOMMEND (AGAIN)

1. "I gave up school for Lent."
2. "I was waiting in line for tickets to the next 'Homecoming' concert."
3. "I was reading the latest issue of *CCM* and just lost track of time."
4. "I was here all along... I was here all along." [Jedi mind trick]
5. "I thought Steven Curtis Chapman's birthday was a national holiday."





The Great Adventure

Steven Curtis Chapman is blazing a brand new trail of diverse pop gems on *All Things New*.



File under: Pop **Grade:** A-
For fans of... Steven Curtis Chapman with a few new sonic flourishes.

STEVEN CURTIS CHAPMAN

All Things New
 Sparrow

There are many signs of life found here.

While the change isn't as drastic as, say, dc talk's, when the band followed up *Free at Last* with *Jesus Freak*, or even as glaring as Amy Grant's leap from the pop sheen of *House of Love* to the plaintive spirit of *Behind the Eyes*, let's just say that *All Things New* couldn't be a more appropriate title for what to expect from

Steven Curtis Chapman's latest disc.

As some elements remain the same in terms of stellar songwriting and catchy, hook-laden choruses that are tailor-made for radio, the overall sound of his vocals and the sonic palette that Chapman draws from has noticeably expanded by leaps and bounds. He chose to record the album in Los Angeles rather than Christian music's home of Nashville, and the fresh perspective from venturing out of the comfortable is the project's crowning achievement—especially considering this is Chapman's 14th recording after 17 years in the music biz.

Kicking things off with an intro that, at first listen, could easily be confused for a nod to a Journey power ballad, it's the title track that provides the first

indication that this isn't merely "recording as usual." Chapman's voice is in fine form, as demonstrated with the smooth, moody delivery that sets the tone for the U2-tinged guitar of the musical score.

"Only Getting Started" also takes on an experimental quality that employs a few strategically placed hip-hop record scratches and standout guitar licks, courtesy of general-market artist Jonny Lang, a devout believer with a penchant for blues. Also a sizable leap into a different musical direction—especially for a ballad—"Last Day on Earth" features a moving soundtrack that could easily fit in on Coldplay's next record, with Chapman mustering up a pretty fine falsetto that evokes extra emotional punch.

And providing a little blast from the past for Beatles' fans, "Big Story" is a fun, sing-a-long song with instrumental flourishes borrowed liberally from the *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* era, while "Coming Attraction" has almost the epic rock feel you'd hear on a Linkin Park track. Yes, *that* Linkin Park. But just before things could get a little too musically schizophrenic, Chapman keeps the last four tracks simple, mostly using lush piano timbres and the strum of an acoustic guitar as the focal point for some beautifully written, faith-affirming songs.

At a point in musical history where a lot of more established pop artists (think along the lines of Sting or Madonna) aren't exactly making the best records of their careers, Chapman's reinvention demonstrates that diversity in artistry doesn't have to be a sales gimmick—just a sign of the continued maturity that often comes with experience. **CHRISTA FARRIS**



SHAWN MCDONALD



File Under: Pop/Folk **Grade:** A
For Fans of... strikingly fresh introspective musings on faith.

SHAWN MCDONALD

Simply Nothing

Sparrow

A simply divine debut

Any time a listener becomes captivated by a disc halfway into the first spin, it gives rise to hopes that the remaining experience will be just as special. When it comes to new artist Shawn McDonald's stunning pop/folk debut, *Simply Nothing*, the only disappointment occurs when the last song ends.

Rarely does any artist's first effort come out of the bin with as much inventiveness, honesty and raw emotion as McDonald's (although Jeremy Camp fans

may rightfully beg to differ). What's more, it's recorded by a former drug user and pusher who only learned to compose songs and play guitar some six years ago. Melding elements of pop, folk and soul, the singer/songwriter deftly weaves 12 acoustic-driven tracks into a cohesive and consistent set.

Although forthright minimalism prevails overall, leadoff track "Take My Hand" kicks up the mix with its unusual syncopation, imaginative orchestral touches and layered harmonies. McDonald's eclectic vocal style recalls the earnestness of troubadour Derek Webb and the confessional approach of alt-folk songstress Tracy Chapman. Whether rendering an imaginative portrait of God's grace with "Beautiful" (inspired by Brennan Manning's *The Ragamuffin Gospel*) or pleading for divine intervention on "Gravity," McDonald's impassioned voice simply beckons to be heard.

On the disc's title track, he evokes singer Ed Kowalczyk from rock outfit Live (With eyes closed, one can envision hearing the initial stanzas of melancholy tune "Lightning Crashes."). Deeper into the repertoire, pensive tune "Take This Life" is sumptuously trimmed with piano and nylon guitar stylings, culminating with this provocative assertion: "*I trudge and I step through the height and the death/Of a long narrow as I'm growing old/And soon I will be home.*"

Perhaps the most exquisite song of the lot, "Have You Ever," thematically ventures from forlorn circumstance ("*Have you ever wanted someone to care?*") to peaceful contentment ("*What you're looking for is my sweet Lord*"), all the while revealing an artist who finds strength in vulnerability and—most importantly—an undeniable dependency on the Savior.

What McDonald achieves on his debut is nothing short of remarkable. Simply put: Here's an album that's downright hard to stop

listening to when the music runs out.

DAVID MCCREARY



File under: Pop/Rock **Grade:** A
For fans of... a radio-friendly rock band with a grace-centered message.

BUILDING 429

Space In Between Us

Word

Anthems with all the prodigals in mind

If you've listened to Christian radio in the past few months, chances of hearing "Glory Defined" by Building 429 were good. Its debut single dominated the charts for weeks, stretching from the release of its EP to the release of its full-length record, *Space In Between Us*. Too often, a single that hot means an album full of lukewarm leftovers. But that's not the case here. Instead, the band offers 11 more tasty morsels.

The band's name, a shortened reference to "building others up according to their needs" as stated in Ephesians 4:29, is reflected throughout songs which address Christ's love and grace toward His children. Each track tackles the theme of falling short of His glory and yet being welcomed back with open arms. In "Back to Me," lead singer Jason Roy sings "*This twisted road eventually is gonna lead you back to me,*" in the chorus and ends the song with the hopeful "*I'm gonna lead you home.*"

The title track is just unspecific enough to allow

for crossover to mainstream success: "*All I really want to do is to fall into the emptiness that is the space in between us, erase it and bring us together again.*"

Although the songs can easily be categorized into rock anthems ("Glory Defined," "Back to Me"), mid-tempo pop ("Above It All," "Ever Wanted") and ballads ("Shadow of Angels," "No One Else Knows"), they are expertly written and tightly performed. It's apparent that these musicians had significant experience before getting signed, and they've got the pattern for writing memorable music down pat. The vocals are reminiscent of Vertical Horizon, and the guitar solos carry a hint of former Grammatrain glory; but it all comes off sounding fresh and relevant. Overall, *Space In Between Us* is a welcome contribution.

JESSICA ROBIN



File under: Roots Rock **Grade:** B+
For fans of... a fascinating concept album from this impressive group of artists.

LOST DOGS

Mutt

Lo-Fidelity

A nostalgic "must have" for fans of DA, the 77s and The Choir

The Lost Dogs are dedicated explorers of American roots music; but on its new *Mutt* album, these three united artists (Terry Taylor, Derri Daugherty and Mike Roe) have reconnected with the

roots closest to the tree, so to speak.

Instead of creating an album of all new tracks, these established singer/songwriters have chosen to re-record a set of their other bands' familiar and unfamiliar songs.

For instance, Mike Roe (77s) sings lead on The Choir's "To Cover You," Derrri Daugherty (The Choir) revisits Daniel Amos' "Ain't Gonna Fight It" (which he once sang in his dad's church as a high schooler!), and Terry Taylor (Daniel Amos) adds his voice of experience to Roe's "The Lust, the Flesh, the Eyes and the Pride of Life."

Steve Hindalong (The Choir, "City on a Hill" series) helped produce this album along with the trio itself and created a recording that retains a mostly quiet and acoustic aural quality. One exception to this rule, however, is a new take on the old 77s' song, "It's So Sad," which has been revved up with unbridled rockabilly power for this unique release. And speaking of new things, there's also one fresh Taylor/Hindalong composition, "I'm Setting You Free (But I'm Not Letting You Go)," which addresses the

heartache associated with watching children grow up and leave the nest.

Don't be misled by this CD's title because it's the mixed breeding that makes this release so special.

DAN MACINTOSH



File under: Rock
Grade: B
For fans of... accessible rock with plenty to communicate.

MOURNING SEPTEMBER

A Man Can Change His Stars

Floodgate

A promising debut of the thoughtful, pop metal variety

Mourning September formed in Tulsa, Okla., around the time of the Oklahoma City bombings, but the group's name stems more from the emotional upheaval it's endured in the band's personal lives. On "Light and Jewels," Tony Chavez sings of the death of a friend,

accompanied by Further Seems Forever's Jon Bunch and the plaintive wail of Josh Tipton's searing guitar: "She saw a door standing open, with light and jewels and fields forever/She never knew she would see you this soon."

Still, the group's debut album is dominated by themes of hope ("Glorietta," inspired by Lamentations 3), mercy ("Every Dream," with Chavez singing, "You heard the cry of a broken soul") and love ("April Dreams," written by Chavez to commemorate his wedding day, with Bunch helping out on vocals).

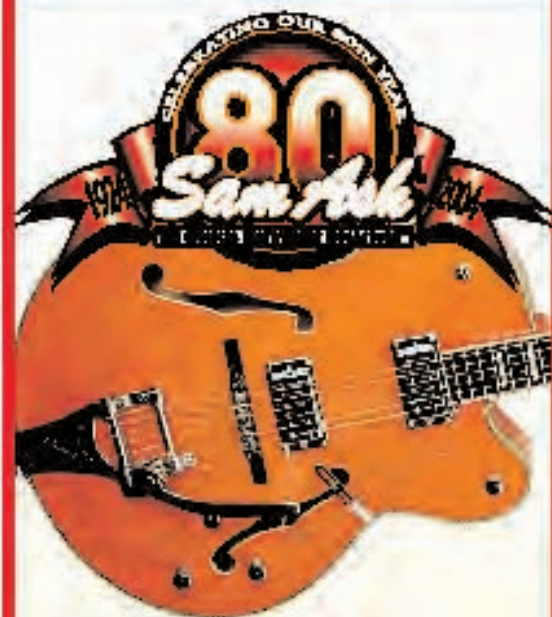
The group cites Foo Fighters as an influence, which is particularly evident on "The Damage," "Glorietta" and "Every Dream." But the ethereal yet aggressive sound is reminiscent of Anberlin, with whom they have toured extensively. It's melodic and accessible, with a pop-metal sensibility.

While the album could've used a ballad to break up the repetition—a *la* Kutless' *Sea of Faces*—this is an impressive, out-of-the-gate burst by a band that could mature into something special.

RICK WEBER



MOURNING SEPTEMBER



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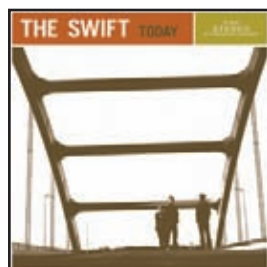
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File under: Pop/Rock
For fans of... piano-driven rock in the musical vein of Ben Folds.

Grade: B-

THE SWIFT

Today

Flicker

Swiftly moving up the ranks

The Swift plays piano-driven pop/rock that hearkens back to an era when rockers like Elton John and Billy Joel used their pianos more as instruments of warfare than something that simply blended into the background.

Ben Folds would be the most modern equivalent, although The Swift goes one step farther by adding biting guitar fills in between piano melodies.

All this makes *Today*, the group's second album, a promising alternative to guitar-centric modern rock. *Today* isn't perfect, but it is altogether pleasant.

“Anthem” showcases the band's operating motif: A driving piano pounds out an opening line; the band crashes in and builds to an

appropriately anthemic chorus: “Love come rescue me/Take me away from the world and set my spirit free.”

After another verse and chorus, guitarist Chris Byers (who, unfortunately, has since left the band) takes a solo with tight, stabbing lines.

Then it's back to the chorus a few times before winding down. It's about as poppy and focused as they come.

Today offers other highlights as well. “You Burn” is a forceful declaration of offering one's life as a living sacrifice. And “Trumpet Song” is a bouncy number with a sing-along chorus. Singer-pianist Britt Edwards possesses a strong, textured voice that's easy on the ears.

At times, though, the band falls prey to the music industry's current obsession with flowery string arrangements. Both “Now

That You Found Me” and “I Need You” could have sounded more intimate without the burden of those distracting layers. Indeed, beneath that schmaltz are more fine songs from this promising band.

ANTHONY DEBARROS



File under: Praise/Worship
For fans of... passionate worship that manages to set itself apart.

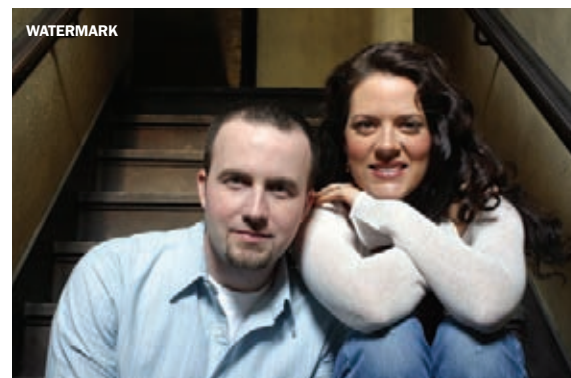
Grade: A-

WATERMARK

The Purest Place

Rocketown

Worship—pure and simple.



Watermark's new album, *The Purest Place*, proves that the modern worship wave continues to swell with grander production and elevated artistry that doesn't sacrifice reverence and awe.

Nathan and Christy Nockels, the hitched pair behind Watermark, have already racked up several Dove nods, five No. 1 singles and more than 400,000 combined albums sold. Nevertheless, their fourth label release offers ever wider multi-generational accessibility and an endless well of worshipful inspiration.

On the more edgy side, the album track "You Come As You Are" exudes youthful exuberance that builds toward a powerful expression of grace's covering, while "Hidden" doubles as energized praise-pop with peppy beats and acoustics that anchor an undeniably catchy chorus. Capturing a more mid-tempo tone, "The Glory of Your Name"—inspired by Mel Gibson's film *The Passion of The Christ*—delivers such glorious musical theology that even the great hymn-writers of history would likely stand up and sing. Of course, *The Purest Place* leaves no mood untouched as exemplified in the piano-powered "Knees to the Earth" and the gentle acoustic and percussion-driven title track.

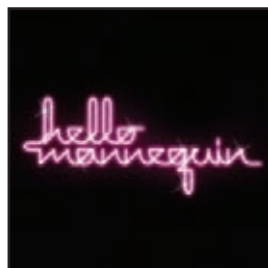
Nathan, who produced the disc, brings considerable experience, having produced for Point of Grace, downhere and several Passion worship projects; yet, their collective worship-leading experience stretches back over a decade to Oklahoma and Texas.

Most notably, Watermark led weekly worship at a city-wide Bible study for 2,000 young adults in Houston, which is where they likely fashioned their

energetic style.

Regardless, the group's collective experience flows freely throughout *The Purest Place* with songs that will simply sweep people away.

DAVID JENISON



File under: Electronic Pop
Grade: B+
For fans of... artsy fare of left-of-center melodies combined with abstract lyrical imagery.

JOY ELECTRIC

Hello Mannequin

Tooth & Nail

There's still plenty of joy left in this electronic pop.

Like black coffee or a vocalist along the lines of a Bob Dylan or David Gray, Joy Electric's music has always been a bit of an acquired taste. But for fans of bands like New Order, Depeche Mode and Joy Division, the hopeful new wave/electronic pop genius of Ronnie

Martin's band has provided much musical enjoyment over the years.

Now in volume three of Joy Electric's "Legacy" series, which started in 2001 with the release of *The White Songbook* and was followed up with 2002's *Tick Tock Treasury*, Martin continues down his familiar path of employing old-school synths as the backdrop for songs ripe with a poetic underbelly.

Open to individual interpretation by the listener, as Martin isn't one to exactly spell things out, the tracks seem to ring with the redemptive theme of searching for purpose in life and, ultimately, leaving a legacy behind that really matters.

While it's difficult to distinguish *Hello Mannequin* sonically from the majority of Joy Electric's extensive catalog, the album's occasional darker musical turn demonstrates that, despite his commitment to using a small range of musical devices, Martin continues to still have a few inventive tricks up his sleeve.

CHRISTA FARRIS

new releases

SEPTEMBER 7

The Katinas *Live DVD* (Gotee)
Sonicflood *Gold (2 disc set)* (Gotee)
Thousand Foot Krutch *Set It Off (reissue)* (Tooth & Nail)

SEPTEMBER 14

Casting Crowns *Live From Atlanta* (Provident)
Nicole C. Mullen *Everyday People* (Word)
Sandi Patty *Hymns of Faith: Songs of Inspiration* (INO)
Sonicflood *This Generation* (INO)

SEPTEMBER 21

Steven Curtis Chapman *All Things New* (Sparrow)
Ian Eskelin *Save the Humans* (Inpop)
JONTEZ *And So It Is...* (Soul2Seoul/Compendia)
Jump5 *Dreaming In Color* (Sparrow)
Mat Kearney *Mat Kearney* (Inpop)
MewithoutYou *TBA* (Tooth & Nail)
Praise Baby Collection *God of Wonders* (Big House)
Seven Places *Hear Us Say Jesus* (BEC)
Smalltown Poets *It's Later Than It's Ever Been* (BEC)
Christ Tomlin *Arriving* (sixsteps)
Jason Upton *Great River Road* (Gotee)

SEPTEMBER 28

FFH *Still The Cross* (Provident)
Kim Hill *Real Christmas* (Spirit Led)
Mute Math *Reset EP* (Word)
Phillips, Craig & Dean *Let the Worshipers Arise* (INO)
Various Artists *Exodus (reissue with new tracks)* (Rocketown)
Various Artists *Gloria (Christmas/Advent)* (Rocketown)

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1



2



3



4



5

1

What emotions do the words “back to school” elicit in you? Fear? Joy? Ambivalence? In my case, high school was great; but seventh grade was the worst year of my life! Thanks to three “less-than-nice” classmates, being 12 was pure agony. Bring back any memories? Or, maybe, you are there right now. If so, you really need to check out *Mean Girls: Facing Your Beauty Turned Beast* (Revell) by Hayley DiMarco.

Not to be confused with the movie of the same name, *Mean Girls* takes a sympathetic “big sister” approach to the cattiness and outright nastiness many girls face each day at school. DiMarco not only addresses the very real pain that comes with being picked on, she encourages her readers to “fight back” with Biblical ammo. Don’t worry—this is not a cheesy, “drop Bible verses on them” prescription. DiMarco, instead, points readers to Scripture to learn how to overcome fear, jealousy and insecurity. She shows girls how they can stop the “mean” cycle in their schools and nip the curse of gossip in the bud. In spite of the heavy material, this book is fun to read and well designed.



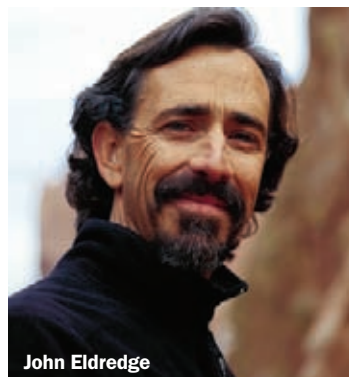
Hayley DiMarco

2

While we are on the subject of girls and school, Shannon Ethridge (*Words of Wisdom for Women at the Well*) and Stephen Arterburn (*Every Man’s Battle*) deal with flirting, skimpy clothes, body image and the pressure to have sex in their latest release, *Every Young Woman’s Battle: Guarding Your Mind, Heart, and Body in a Sex-Saturated World* (Waterbrook). Ethridge’s writing reflects her personality—honesty infused with empathy. She is passionate about this subject because she was date raped at 15, and her writing style is completely non-judgmental. *Every Young Woman’s Battle* tackles the tough stuff: knowing where to stop, flaunting your body to get attention, “technical virginity,” self gratification, making friends with the mirror and looking to a guy to meet all your emotional needs. Since most battles with sexuality really begin in the mind, the authors offer solid advice on guarding your thoughts.

3

OK, guys, we haven’t forgotten about you. All people need to embrace their God-given identities, and a wonderful new book called *The Art of Being* (Shaw Books) will help you do just that. Author/editor Constance Rhodes (*Life Inside the “Thin” Cage: a Personal Look Into the Hidden World of the Chronic Dieter*) compiled essays on what it means “to be you” from recording artists such as Jon Foreman (Switchfoot), Ginny Owens, Jill Phillips, Matt Odmark (Jars of Clay), Sara Groves, Gabriel Wilson (Rock ‘n’ Roll Worship Circus) and more. Each contributor graciously opens up his or



John Eldredge

her own life and lets the reader learn from their experiences. As a native of Youngstown, Ohio, I particularly enjoyed reading Phil Keaggy’s chapter on his childhood in my hometown. Christine Denté’s essay on becoming the girl in the mirror is a “must read” for any woman struggling with appearance issues. And those of you who haven’t yet read Tammy Trent’s book, *Learning to Breathe*, will want to check out the chapter dealing with the death of her husband and how she is learning to live without her beloved at her side.

4

Stories. You have one. God has one. All great movies have one. That’s the point John Eldredge (*Wild at Heart: Discovering the Secret of a Man’s Soul*) makes in his latest, *Epic* (Thomas Nelson). Think about flicks like *Gladiator*, *The Matrix*, *Titanic*, *Braveheart* or *Lord of the Rings*. What makes them so good? According to Eldredge, they ring with universal truth—they borrow from the Story. They are filled with love, fellowship, a trial, a hero and a happily ever after—just like the gospel. It is no accident that all humans long for these things. God has woven them into our very being, says

Eldredge, who, with *Epic*, scores another hit. It is a great little book to give someone who is searching for meaning and, ultimately, God.

5

Want to look at the Bible with fresh eyes? Look no further than *Word on the Street* (Zondervan). I absolutely love Rob Lacey’s street lingo version of Scripture. But purists beware! King James English this ain’t! A cancer survivor with a passion for Christ, Lacey takes many liberties; but he doesn’t compromise the core message of the gospel. Unique touches, such as turning the book of Jude into an e-mail, give *Word on the Street* a very “now” feel. Lacey has also been taking the Word to the street on a seven-city performance tour and with an audio CD.

Matt Redman, whose critically acclaimed book *Facedown* (Paraclete) has recently released, is reading *The Royal Way of the Cross* by François Fenelon. Here’s what Matt had to say: “Fenelon is a French theologian from a couple of hundred years ago. I got hooked on Fenelon’s writings ever since I read

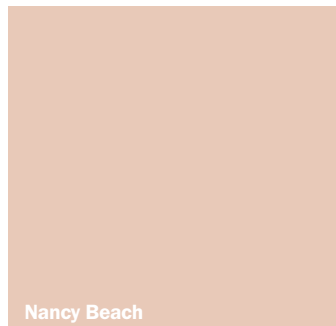


the line, ‘Make yourself little in the depths of your heart.’ That is fantastic advice for any worship leader (and, in fact, for any Christian). The same theme runs through so much of his stuff: getting over ‘ourselves’ and getting more consumed with Jesus. This book hammers home the point that He must increase, and we must decrease. At times Fenelon gets, perhaps, even a little harsh. (Make sure to read a book on grace soon after!) But, to be honest, a heart like mine needs a ruthless spiritual check-up every now and again, and this book helps get the job done!”

5

THE ARTIST BOOKSHELF: HOT SUMMER READS

Whether they are taking a break from the road this summer or passing time on yet another tour bus, a number of artists are curling up with great books. We asked a few of your favorites what they are reading during the dog days of August.



Nancy Beach

THE 'KEYS' TO SUCCESS

From the latest keyboards to learning by the book, here's everything you need to develop your finger-playing skills.



OPEN LABS NEKO

When the Kurweil K250 keyboard made its debut in the early 1980s, Stevie Wonder showcased its natural-sounding piano tones at his concerts. The difference between the K250 and other synthesizers of that day was immense—even a casual listener was able to judge the Kurweil as a superior product. Now the same superiority can be found in Open Labs' new keyboard-based Neko workstation. With an engineering team assembled from the lighting, system control, music and pro-audio worlds, Open Labs is a new company with decades of experience. The group's skills are centered on a pro-grade XP Professional operating system with ancillary software recording packages. In use, the Neko can be an elaborate synthesizer, a fully functional recording system or anything in between. The sounds are detailed, transparent, practical and cover all the natural instruments as well as every known synthetic creation from the past 20 years. Transitions between sounds are inaudible in the live performance mode, while the recording section has made efficient use of its resources to provide a stable operating system. Just when you think you've seen it all in the world of keyboards, something new opens up.

\$5995
openlabs.com

ROLAND JUNO 6D

MIDI keyboards were introduced in 1983 and spawned a new generation of synthesizers designed to "talk" to each other. One of the most popular models of that era was the original Juno-6, a single oscillator synth with easy programmability and thick sounds. With a nod toward its roots, Roland has revived the Juno nameplate and attached it to a digital keyboard that follows in its predecessor's key-prints. The Juno-6D packs a practical set of controls generally missing in the current crop of preset dance-oriented keyboards. As a malleable tool, the Juno-6D excels without precluding its role as a plug-and-play device. Roland deserves accolades for going "retro" and adding new value to an old classic by updating the sounds and upgrading the interface.

\$1295
rolandus.com



KEYBOARD WISDOM: THEORY & TECHNIQUE BY STEVE GOOMAS

There are shelves of introductory keyboard instruction books but few texts designed for the intermediate or "next-step" player. *Keyboard Wisdom* is one of the best tools for pushing yourself to a higher musical level. Be warned: This is not a book you can, as author Steve Goomas (Steve Taylor, Crystal Lewis) says, "sluff over" in a week. However, the intense study it demands is repaid with a new

understanding of tritone substitutions, open voicings, pentatonic scale constructions and upper structures.

Worship music in North American contemporary environments can become stale if the musicianship is not constantly challenged and invigorated. So, consider this book a tool to help you move beyond your musical comfort zone. While it is tempting to recoil at the text's density, Steve, or "Goom" as he is known, is adept at making the incomprehensible palatable. For instance, his "unlocking key" for the seven modes will dissipate the fog surrounding modal concepts as quickly as a summer morning at the beach. Keyboardists seeking to improve their craft have a true asset in Goomas and his *Keyboard Wisdom*.

\$31.95
stevegoomas.com



YAMAHA PSR3000

Portable keyboards can be as simple as a \$59 model in a drug store or as elaborate as this new unit from Yamaha. The PSR3000 has the tones, features and playability of the best "pro" models but with the added value of built-in speakers and a lightweight enclosure. Typically, the more advanced the keyboard, the harder it is to operate. But the PSR3000's interface is intuitive, and the controls are located at the hand's natural fall. This keyboard excels at making good music quickly, thanks to a logical layer of drums, bass and accompaniment connected to complementary melody tones that are easy to grab and go. The worship-themed section represents the genre well, with excellent renderings of everything from Point of Grace to Paul Baloche. The screen's output is routable to an external monitor for use as a lyric generator in place of PowerPoint, thanks to the PSR3000's ability to download files via its USB port. Thus, new songs can be covered stylistically without the music becoming boring. Yamaha has put considerable resources into the PSR3000, enough to warrant its inclusion on anyone's short list of keyboard options.

\$1795
yamaha.com





L-R: Jaci Velasquez, Mark Stuart (Audio Adrenaline), Billy Buchanan (Fusebox)

CHICAGO'S WZFS-FM'S "FISH FEST" LAKE COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS GRAYSLAKE, IL—JULY 18, 2004

There simply isn't a better way to spend a sunny, summer afternoon than with a full day of Christian music's finest acts backed by one of the fastest growing radio stations in the country. The Fish and local promoters Edan and Rush Concerts combined to bring the likes of Jars of Clay, Audio Adrenaline and Rebecca St. James, plus the prominent lineup of Jaci Velasquez, Plus One, Tree63, KJ-52 and Skillet to its stages. The multiple-band bill also allowed concertgoers the opportunity to catch the hottest emerging acts, including Matthew West, BarlowGirl, Warren Barfield and Hawk Nelson, which continued the trend of diversity for the day.

Velasquez demonstrated the most obvious implementation of stylistic fusion, crossing sophisticated pop with explosive dance and Latin/salsa side dishes. For instance, "Unspoken," off her latest disc of the same name, skidded with rumbling percussion and a pulsing club thump, while "Vaya Con Dios" catered to her Spanish-speaking audience. Her recollection of "God So Loved the World" and "On My Knees" displayed her diva-like pipes and the life-changing choruses that have led them both to become career staples thus far.

Former tourmates Plus One provided the longest leap of artistic expansion, shedding its boy-band roots for a more progressive, pop/acoustic rock smattering. New cuts off *Exodus*, especially "Be Love," were much more mature sounding than previous outings, which the guys

were quick to mock several times throughout the show. Singer Nate Cole smirked through a special "American Idol" version of "Written On My Heart" and chuckled about his parents' forbidding him to get a tattoo during an unplugged rendition of "Soul Tattoo."

There was hardly anything laidback or stripped down about predecessors Tree63, who took its South African rock influences, plus a dual mirroring of U2 and The Police, to an anthemic level. The audience was mostly familiar with the regularly played "Blessed Be Your Name," but the band also won everyone over with the entrancing chord progressions of "Treasure" and "King."

For those with a liking for rap and hip-hop, KJ-52 provided all the goods needed to bounce to the bass, complete with crafty rhymes and humorous anecdotes. Skillet switched gears to sauté hard rock, synth-pop and even a dose of hair metal, proudly presenting its mainstream crossover hit "Savior" (courtesy of a new partnership with Lava Records).

Speaking of smashes, Matthew West's "More" earned the karaoke title of the night, though he was more than just a one-hit wonder, given the songwriting smarts of "I Can't Hear You" and "The Lie." Rounding out the afternoon were short-but-sweet sets by BarlowGirl (who addressed the subject of self-esteem over slickly produced pop), Warren Barfield (the soft spoken acoustic guitar slinger) and Hawk Nelson (providers of a punk-induced sugar rush to kick off the day).

L-R: The BarlowGirls, two Hawk Nelson members sandwiching KJ-52



All photos by Andy Argyrakis

HEADLINER HIGHLIGHTS:

The triple-action headlining attack of **Jars of Clay**, **Audio Adrenaline** and **Rebecca St. James** pulled out a few surprises:



Jars of Clay

The influence of the late, great Johnny Cash has especially rubbed off on this innovative act that has interpreted several pedal steel-derived hymns and even applied a twangy twist to the dusted-off cut "Frail."



Audio Adrenaline

We've seen the band typically scale back the mega-smash "Ocean Floor" to acoustic contexts; but in this massive setting, the gang plugged in and rocked hard with stadium-filling fervor.



Rebecca St. James

The purity-preaching superstar performed her greatest hits with enthusiasm but also invited Fusebox's Billy Buchanan onstage to perform his band's most current single "Once Again."

HERE AND THERE:



Caedmon's Call

Are you within a day's drive? Here are a couple concert dates you won't want to miss!

Caedmon's Call - 9/26: Eastern Hills Wesleyan Church in Williamsville, NY

Nicole C. Mullen - 9/5: Point of Grace Church in Waukee, IA

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

15 THINGS YOU PROBABLY DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT: DEREK WEBB

BY MICHAEL NOLAN



More than two years after his departure from Caedmon's Call, INO Records' Derek Webb is charting an unconventional course as an artist. For his first solo album, *She Must and Shall Go Free*, this student and teacher of theology sang about the life of the church. Derek's follow-up, called *The House Show*, was recorded in a living room setting that took the concept of an "unplugged" concert album into new territory as he interspersed teaching with stripped-down versions of his songs. For his next release, due this fall, he'll focus his attention on relationships.

Derek took time while traveling in Europe to answer our questions.

15. MY MOM, THE TATTOO ARTIST

Derek's first tattoo, an *ichthus*, was etched by his mom, who was experimenting with a new hobby—applying permanent make-up. She used the skill primarily used for non-fading eyeliner to try her craft on her willing son's ankle.

14. THEOLOGICAL BODY ART

Tattooed on his left arm, Derek has the five tenants, or "solos" of the Reformation. Written in Latin, they translate as follows: "Scripture alone," "Christ alone," "grace alone," "faith alone" and "to God alone be the glory." "I have a Canterbury cross on my left forearm, a Celtic eternity knot around my right arm and the Greek word for 'grace' on my right thumb," he says.

13. DRESSED TO A "T"

Derek never intended to make a fashion statement when he started wearing white t-shirts—he just needed something that could be packed *en masse* for relentless touring with Caedmon's Call. "I haven't thought about what I was going to wear on any given day for better than 10 years," he confesses.

12. ONE ROOF, TWO SONGWRITERS

Being married to a songwriter, Derek says, "can be very inspiring. Lots of great songs are written in my house. Unfortunately, few of them are being written by me. We're really different writers with different writing processes. So it can be frustrating to wake up and hear three new songs that she [independent artist Sandra McCracken] has written that morning that are all brilliant, and I haven't written anything in months."

11. AND HE QUOTES:

Derek is inspired by the words of a Scottish Puritan named David Dickson, who was asked on his deathbed how it was with his soul. His response: "I have taken

my good deeds and my bad deeds and thrown them together in a heap. Then I have fled from both of them to Christ, and in Him I have peace."

10. HIDDEN IN THE VAULT

Perhaps Derek's most unusual composition was a song recorded for Caedmon's Call's *Long Line of Leavers* that didn't make the album's final cut. Titled "Famous Last Words," it is a song about his transition from adolescence to adulthood, becoming a full-time musician and dealing with his mistakes. The first two verses were written from the perspectives of a squirrel and a dog. He confesses, "I have no idea what I was thinking."

9. RECOMMENDED READING

"For the most part, I like to read dead guys—church fathers, Puritans, reformers," Derek observes, "But there are actually some great books coming out right now." On his reading list: *Reaching Out Without Dumbing Down* and *A Royal 'Waste' of Time* by Marva Dawn, *The Enduring Community* by Brian Habig and Les Newsom, *Risking Church* by Jim Kallam Jr., *Stop Dating the Church* by Joshua Harris, *New Way to be Human* by Charlie Peacock and *The Rock Cries Out* by Steve Stockman.

8. HEADED HOME

If we gave Derek and Sandra two airline tickets to travel anywhere in the world, they'd hop onboard and fly "from wherever we are back to our house in Nashville."

7. GOOD BUY FROM GOODWILL

"I used to faithfully mine thrift stores in Texas and have tracked down some good finds," the bargain hunter enthuses. "I once found an amazing brown corduroy coat just before Caedmon's was heading out for a few months of winter touring. I believe I paid \$7 for it. That's probably a dollar a year considering how long I wore that thing."

6. CONTINUING ED

If he could pursue a new skill, it would be "the 'art' of loving my wife well... that's one I wish there was a class for. Actually, I've been pursuing seminary this year. But, for a few reasons, it's been difficult getting started: my schedule and lack of an undergrad degree—well, any college at all, actually."

5. NOW THAT'S INTIMATE

Derek really enjoyed the interaction of the 'house shows' last year because "there's something appropriate about the artist not having the advantage of the lights and the P.A. system over the audience. I like just sitting in someone's living room, playing music and getting to teach. It's made for great discussion (which is generally part of the evening) and given me the opportunity to learn and occasionally receive some good correction or encouragement from those who attend."

4. SURPRISE!

For his 30th birthday, Sandra shocked Derek by secretly arranging to have all of his immediate family come to Nashville for the weekend. "It's not often that we all end up in the same place, so it was really special," he reflects.

3. GROWING UP

Turning 30 has awakened an important understanding about his vocation. "I'm getting more and more secure about the fact that I want to make music for adults. That's not an easy thing to make sense of when music is categorized the way Christian music is. You either play 'adult contemporary' style music or you play for youth (jr. high and high school), and there's not really much in between. I guess I'm learning that I'm kind of neither. I'm an adult, and I write and sing songs about adult issues. But I'm also into folk and roots music, which tends to appeal more to younger audiences."

2. WORDS TO ASPIRE TO

Derek embraces this quote from Thomas Merton's book, *New Seeds of Contemplation*: "Better to be known first as a good artist than as a 'Christian' artist, as your good art can lend credibility to your witness while explicit art done poorly is more likely to disparage your witness."

Derek adds, "As we struggle to remain both relevant and faithful to the world that we're called to love and engage, we, especially as Christian artists in the church, must lose our preoccupation and concern with trying to get songs on the radio, following industry trends and huge quarterly sales and start learning how to simply make good art."

1. THE UBIQUITOUS QUESTION

So what's next, Derek? "I have about 15 very new songs, and I hope to record 11 or 12 of them. I'm recording final guitar/vocal performances of all the songs first (which is a bit backward, really). Once I feel like I have the honest performances that I need, I'm going to take them to a studio for a few days and start building the rest of the recording around them. I think that will allow me to stretch my legs a bit more as a producer as well."



Going to Raleigh

I recently spent an hour and a half traveling from the Raleigh-Durham airport to a hotel in Raleigh. A map downloaded off the Internet said it would take 15 minutes, and it would have—if only I'd been carrying a compass. The directions I had assumed personal knowledge of direction (just the basics, really): north, south, east and west. People keep telling me to use the compass in the rental car. I keep looking for it to no avail. I must need an upgrade.

Besides learning that I've got to get a compass, I came to a few other conclusions that weekend in Raleigh. Maybe they serve as simple reminders of what I already know. Nevertheless, I'll repeat them for you: The untrustworthiness of people; their predictable, bad behaviors; exaggerations; and shoddy work often lead us to disappointment and apathy. If we dwell on this too long, it can lead to a lack of hope and a cynical heart. Then you end up becoming what you dislike in others: "I've seen this kind of thing a hundred times. I'm telling you, it's gonna fail." There is a sense where negativity does seek to create more of the same. Spiritually, it's more that darkness begets darkness.

I confess that I've been a little dark lately. I'm training two new employees in the business of music. My method needs a hope injection. I keep finding myself telling these talented young people that I know exactly how things are going to go—how people are going to behave and perform in their duties. I write off my arrogance as experience and fail to tremble at my assumptions.

I was in Raleigh that weekend for a concert, among other things. The optimistic promoter had explained to my assistant that a thousand people would be in attendance. "Right," I said. "It will be a cold day in... well, Raleigh when that happens." Actually it was very hot—fourth of July hot. And, yes, a thousand people came—not because I drew them there

necessarily but because the promoter knew her community and trusted its faithfulness to support an event sponsored by her local church. Thankfully, Raleigh shook my complacency.

The lesson is simple. Experience and assessment skills are important; but they can be hope-killers, too—especially when you trust them more than God's ability to surprise. Surprise is a good antidote to "know-it-all" thinking and apathy. This leads me to ask myself: Am I hopeful for a good surprise? Now I am. I forget, I have a compass—personal knowledge of Jesus and His ways. I'm not lost. I know the right direction. The Spirit of God has spoken. Thank God. And Raleigh.

Like the Bible says, set your mind on things above. This is right in line with one of my favorite verses, Philippians 4:8, "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things."

Perhaps this is a good word for artists struggling to find their way in an often discouraging, commercial environment. I try to keep my ear to the ground to keep up with what concerns artists. It's not unusual to hear people comment that the music industry is all about the money—that it cares little about music or the Kingdom mission. There is, of course, some truth to this. It is a system of exploitation for profit: capitalism. People are not as easily reduced to simple labels, though. In many ways they are more complex than the most elaborate corporate system. People are made of something a corporation will never know—the image of God within and, for followers of Jesus, the Spirit of God within. This is another reason not to lose hope. God is always at work within the human family. You never know when He's going to surprise you with an event, a meeting or opportunity that will change the course of your artistic life. The bottom line is this: Do good work, don't fixate on the money or the fame. Keep your eyes open. Have ears to hear.

arthouse



Illustration by Jimmy A.

Think about the seasons. Change is in the air, correct? In the mid-South we can clearly see that fall is coming. The turning of the leaves is an important rite of passage every year. How do you feel about the changing of seasons? Is fall good for your imagination? Or does it depress you a bit?

Explore this subject in conversation and in your creative work. Are there cycles and seasons when imagination eludes you? Are there seasons when you do your best work? I like the fall. As seasons go, it's a hope inducer for me. I usually dream some good dreams and get some good work done. I pray the same for you.

"There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven..."
Ecc. 3:1

For more information about our ministry write to: P.O. Box 218307, Nashville, TN 37221 or e-mail: arthouseamerica@bellsouth.net.

Charlie Peacock is an artist, producer, author and teacher. Both his album, Full Circle: A Celebration of Songs and Friends (Sparrow), and his book, New Way to be Human (Waterbrook), released in March.

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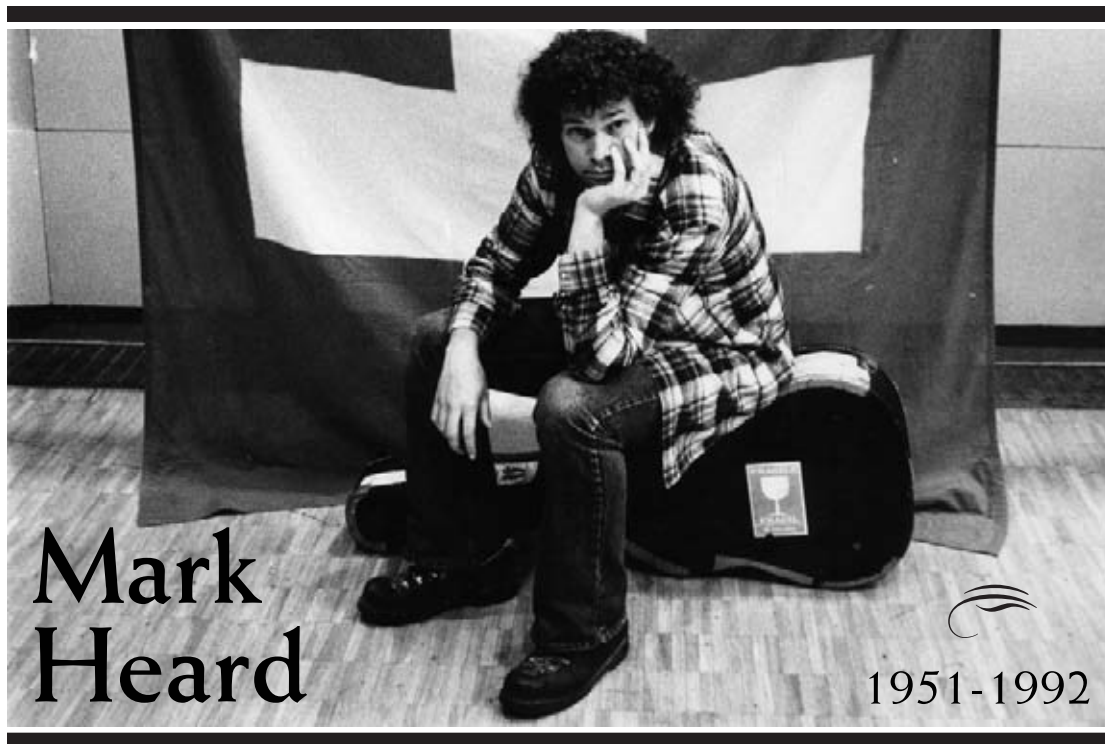
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Mark Heard

1951-1992

To say that Mark Heard was an enigma is to somewhat understate the case. Though nearly universally adored by both critics and his fellow artists, who found this singer/songwriter to be a first-rate poet of faith, Heard was largely either ignored or misunderstood by the Christian music industry and most Christian music fans during his lifetime. It is sad but not surprising that Heard never won a single Dove Award nor had a No. 1 hit single, though his "One of the Dominoes" reached No. 2 on Christian pop radio in 1982.

Born in Macon, Ga., John Mark Heard III released his first self-titled record in 1975 on a small label named Airborn. After being introduced by Pat Terry, Heard joined forces with Larry Norman, who produced 1979's classic *Appalachian Melody* and released it on his Solid Rock label. The album featured the country-tinged folk/rock sound for which he would later be most well known.

Though subsequent releases such as 1983's *Eye of the Storm* and the following year's *Asbes and Light* were well-received by his fans, he generally toiled under the radar for more than a decade, improving his craft while continuing to record for the Home Sweet Home and Myrrh labels.

In the mid '80s, Heard signed with What? Records, a new mainstream-focused Christian label that had a distribution deal with A&M Records. Heard released a much-hyped, progressive, pop-rock album under the moniker of iDEoLA, landing his first (and only) CCM cover in the process. Though the album featured the moderate MTV hit "Is It Any Wonder?," it was a commercial disappointment, and Heard retreated from the music scene for a few years. When he returned, it

was to form Fingerprint Records with partners Dan Russell and Chuck Long and release what are widely regarded as the best works of his far-too-short life.

An "artist's artist," Heard collaborated with many acclaimed musicians, including Buddy and Julie Miller, Sam (Leslie) Phillips, Michael Been (The Call), Randy Stonehill, R.E.M.'s Peter Buck and Vigilantes of Love. In addition, artists as diverse as Rich Mullins, Olivia Newton-John and Joan Baez recorded his songs. Heard's own work garnered effusive praise from critics, who hailed him as "intelligent," "unflinchingly honest" and a "true poet" who "refused clichés."

In fact, Heard refused to politely package his faith in a positive and simplistic way that would be more palatable to the masses. Longtime CCM columnist John Fischer twice touted Heard as the polar opposite of, and prescription for, "shallow Christian music."

Sadly, at the age of 40, Heard suffered a heart attack while performing on July 4, 1992, at the "Cornerstone Festival" in Illinois. After being treated and released from an area hospital, he went back to his Los Angeles area home, where he suffered another heart attack that caused him to slip into a coma from which he never recovered. On Aug. 16, Heard passed away.

Strong Hand of Love: A Tribute to Mark Heard (Myrrh) released in 1994. The 17-song album featured Heard's songs covered by artists, including Bruce Cockburn, Phil Keaggy, Pierce Pettis, Victoria Williams, Ashley Cleveland, Tonio K, The Choir and even a re-formed Chagall Guevara. The project was unanimously hailed by critics and was even nominated for a Grammy Award. Proceeds from the benefit album went to Heard's widow, Janet and their daughter, Rebecca.

MICHAEL CIANI

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Victims of the Age (Home Sweet Home, 1982): Ranked No. 32 by CCM's *The 100 Greatest Albums in Christian Music* (2001)

Tribal Opera by "iDEoLA" (What?/A&M, 1987): "10 of the smartest, freshest pop songs in years... a dizzying, heady mix of primal rhythms, literacy and perspective... delivers the knockout one-two punch of substance and beat." —*Cash Box* magazine.

Dry Bones Dance (Fingerprint, 1990): Ranked No. 29 by CCM's *The 100 Greatest Albums in Christian Music* (2001)

Second Hand (Fingerprint, 1991): Ranked No. 4 by CCM's *The 100 Greatest Albums in Christian Music* (2001)

High Noon (Myrrh, 1993): Recaps the best of his last three albums with a few previously unreleased tracks as well.

SIGNATURE HEARD

"Age of the Broken Heart"
 "Another Day in Limbo"
 "Dry Bones Dance"
 "Eye of the Storm"
 "Heart of Hearts"*
 "How to Grow Up Big and Strong"
 "I Always Do"
 "Nod Over Coffee"
 "One of the Dominoes"
 "Orphans of God"
 "Satellite Sky"
 "Strong Hand of Love"*
 "The Pain that Plagues Creation"
 "Tip of My Tongue"
 "Treasure of the Broken Land"
 "We Know Too Much"

*Named in CCM Critics' Top 100 Songs, July 1998