

CCM

FAITH in the SPOTLIGHT | CCMAGAZINE.COM | NOVEMBER 2003

Plus One: --- Take Two



Skillet:
Out of the Frying
Pan, Into the Fire

Inside **ZOEgirl's**
Musical Makeover

Johnny Cash —

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and more remember the "man in black"

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SCHOOL OF ROCK

With its boy-band beginnings, **PLUS ONE** scored an "A" for pristine harmonies, good looks and tight choreography. Now, without a dance move in sight, the band has regrouped, signed to a new label and unveiled a collection of rousing rock anthems. What caused this radical transformation? **DAVID McCREARY** sets up the screenplay.



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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Confessions of a Christian Music Fan

As a child in the 1970's, I was fortunate to have parents who enjoyed the music of Andraé Crouch, Dallas Holm, the Mighty Clouds of Joy and Evie. And when I heard Randy Stonehill sing "I Love You" on the *Time to Run* soundtrack, I discovered you could wear needles out by playing the same song on a record over and over again.

By the time I was 10 years old, I was a fan of Christian music. But it wasn't until 1984, when I discovered "Starflight," the Christian rock program on WVEJ-FM in central Georgia, that I learned what "fandom" really is. I will never forget the first time I heard The 77s unleash "Ping Pong Over the Abyss," new waver Sheila Walsh belt out "Triumph in the Air" or Resurrection Band kick my tail with "Military Man." But it was Steve Taylor's "Over My Dead Body" and "Meltdown" that drove me to plunk down \$9 of hard-earned cash for *Meltdown*, my first Christian album. My second Christian album? Steve Taylor's *I Want to be a Clone*. Now that's fandom.

During the fall of that year, my pastor, Steve Pearson, received a promotional copy of *CCM Magazine*. And he knew my name was written all over it. As I flipped through its pages I was stunned to see news and interviews covering progressive artists like Daniel Amos, DeGarmo & Key, Bruce Cockburn, Rick Cua, Stryper and even U2. *CCM* has been a part of my life ever since.

While my professors at Bethany Bible College (Santa Cruz, Calif.) and Wheaton Graduate School (Illinois) did an exceptional job of teaching, I think it's more a testament to both God's romantic nature and His sense of humor that I've spent the past 10 years as a Christian music professional. As if helping Steve Taylor and Charlie Peacock (long-time mentor) launch their own record labels wasn't enough, I'm now *CCM's* managing editor. (And they're *paying* me for this!)

As I reflect on my new responsibilities, I'm filled with both gratitude and excitement. In that spirit I would like to say, "Thank you" to those who sat in this chair before me. I'm a fan.

This month's issue is the first I've had the pleasure of helping to create, and, I must confess, I have a soft spot for the cover story. When I think of Plus One, I think of frontman Nate Cole. During the past year or so, Nate and I have joined a collective of Christian artists and

industry leaders (including my lovely bride, Jamie) in championing the plight of Africa's HIV/AIDS victims and the poor who live on that beautiful continent. I sense a rare, innocent love for Jesus in Nate. And when I consider the turbulent history of his band, his expressions of faith are even more refreshing.

Looking ahead, I can't help giving you a glimpse of a few highlights coming soon in *CCM*. For starters, how would you like to be a fly on the wall during a revealing conversation between Steven Curtis Chapman and genre-defying author Philip Yancey (*What's So Amazing About Grace?*, *Rumors of an Unseen World*)? Stay tuned. How about *CCM's* most personal look at Jars of Clay? And remember how the faith-driven hip-hop group L.A. Symphony was featured in mainstream mags like *Spin*, *Urb*, *CMJ* and *Billboard*, yet its debut never released? Well, never say never. Also, we all know what January means—it's *CCM Magazine's* Reader Awards issue. That's when you've literally decided who we feature. Power to the people!

I look forward to joining you in the years ahead as we experience the adventure and wonder of Christian music's future. When I think about Switchfoot's increasingly influential platform or MercyMe's mainstream success with an extremely faith-focused song, I feel the anticipation build. Even the mere fact that P.O.D.'s new CD is titled *Payable On Death* (Atlantic) makes me smile. As if the band's name wasn't enough, the album's moniker invites uninitiated music critics to ask about the symbolism behind it. And when P.O.D. explains the profound and eternal truth? Bravo.

Yes, the future is looking mighty bright indeed. As we proceed, please feel free to drop me a note and give me your take. I'll welcome your e-mail to Jay@ccmcom.com. Until then, this is your friendly neighborhood Christian-music enthusiast signing off.

Jay Swartzendruber

"I believe there are vast amounts of artists in the Christian music industry that are not given the exposure they deserve. There is such a thing as the Christian hard music scene. So many times I feel that the Gospel Music Association community is sheltered." —Aaron M.



A FAMILY MAN

Thank you so much for your article on Shaun Groves ["The Reluctant Rock Star," September]. He's such an awesome musician, and it's encouraging to see someone who values his family so much. The article also opened my eyes to the unique problems that musicians face on the road and at home. It reminded me to keep not only him and his family in my prayers but also all of the other artists who have to be away from family for long periods of time and then adjust to everyday life when they get back home. I don't know how they do it!

—Kimberly Alson, Roselle, IL

We're with you, Kimberly. In fact, it's a point of tension for many of us in the Christian music community. This business does not naturally lend itself to a 40-hour work week. In addition to the intense time commitments made by artists, many managers and record label employees are often on the road or working more than 10 hours a day when they're in town. That's not the ideal way to make families a priority. Your prayers are appreciated.

R.E.S.P.E.C.T.

I am so impressed with the coverage of Petra in the September issue ["Petra Still Means Rock!"]! We hardcore fans have been known to be pretty cranky from time to time if we feel like Petra isn't getting the "proper respect" or as much attention as we think it deserves. Thanks so much for an article that

doesn't focus on how long they've been around or how many members have come and gone but on the music and the message, which are what Petra has always been about.

—Michael Jones, Tulsa, OK

I have just recently purchased the new *Jekyll and Hyde* (Inpop) CD by Petra. To me, Petra is the best thing going right now! I have really been waiting for an album like this from the band for a long time! The guys are so faithful and continue to do great rock music with a bold message!

Thanks for the great article!

—Cathy Jones, via e-mail

We couldn't agree more, Cathy—that Heckl & Jekyll are hilarious!

DID DASHBOARD CONFESS?

I keep hearing mixed reviews, so please set the record straight for me about a few bands: Dashboard Confessional (they aren't even in cmcentral.com's artist database) and Creed (they were, but there was a disclaimer at the top). Please clarify this for me. And what about Good Charlotte? Some of my friends tell me that its music is kind of Christian or at least that the band is not bad at all. What's your take?

—Jonathan Frank, via e-mail

While many Christians follow the premise, "If it's good, true and beautiful, then it honors God," consider an alternate approach:

Check out these telltale signs that the band you're listening to is not a "Christian" band:

1. Named after a Petra song but have never given one red cent to Bob Hartman.
2. Confess to Entertainment Weekly, "We don't even believe in Mel Gibson."
3. The Rapture comes, and they don't have to cancel any tour dates.
4. When dining out, leaves the waitress an excellent tip (rather than a free CD).

THE LAST WORD ON DOWNLOADING!

I appreciated the two-part articles on digital piracy in the August ["Christian Music's Worst Enemy?"] and September ["Save the Music!"] 2003 issues. Being not only a longtime Christian music fan but also the contributing editor of christianmusicarchive.com, a site



that documents the history of Christian music albums, I certainly would not want to see less Christian music released because of digital piracy.

One thing not mentioned in the articles, however, is the legitimate download of songs that artists put on their Web sites or on MP3.com. Often, artists will give away a song for free from one of their albums or give unreleased tracks to their fans.

—John DeLaurentis, Highland Park, NJ

FROM A HARDCORE FAN

I believe there are vast amounts of artists in the Christian music industry who are not given the exposure they deserve. There is such a thing as the Christian hard-music scene. So many times I feel that the Gospel Music Association community is sheltered. I think, in many ways, the Christian HM scene is looked down upon, or even shunned, by the GMA.

Christian magazines, such as yourself, seem to refuse to recognize many of the bands that lead the hardcore/metal area of Christian music. Think about it. Why is it that bands like Zao, Embodiment and Dead Poetic are never heard of at the Dove Awards? Underoath, Chevelle and

Blindside are all bands that would be unknown to the typical CCM reader. I, for one, get quite tired of hearing so much sheltered music that has gone through the stereotyping process of becoming

that which is contemporary Christian music.

—Aaron M., via e-mail

Thanks for your note, Aaron. You'll, no doubt, be pleased to know that Chevelle has already been honored by the GMA with three Dove Awards. And the band, along with Zao and Dead Poetic, have had its music highlighted in CCM. From the sound of things, you'll be very interested in our big feature on Tooth & Nail Records and the special full-page review of P.O.D.'s Payable On Death—both of which will appear in next month's issue. You're right. There are "vast amounts" of artists in Christian music that aren't given the exposure they deserve." This is especially true of hard, urban and country gospel artists. CCM will continue to feature the most popular artists, while looking to cover those aspiring to push the boundaries in various genres.

Correction for CCM's October issue: Rock 'n' Roll Worship Circus is on INO Records (not Vertical Records); Ten Shekel Shirt is on INO Records (not Fervent Records); Darlene Zschech's new release is called *Kiss Of Heaven* (not *The Kiss*).

ON THE FLY: TALES OF THANKSGIVING

Between family gatherings, football games and the Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade—not to mention the traditional turkey and all the tasty trimmings—there's plenty to love about the holiday dedicated to giving thanks. Now, a few of your favorite artists divulge secrets about their respective Turkey Day celebrations. Gobble, gobble!



KIRK WHALUM

"My fondest Thanksgiving memory, by far, is of the one we spent in Paris. I was touring with Whitney Houston when she announced she was pregnant and taking time off to finish *The Bodyguard*. We seized the opportunity to fulfill a lifelong dream of moving all four kids to Paris, where I had studied as a college exchange student. Only expatriates celebrate Thanksgiving in France, so finding the bird was challenging. My wife, Ruby, went down the street to the butcher and selected two freshly sacrificed turkeys—my first time without the traditional *frozen* beast. And the kids and I watched the butcher 'prepare' the birds. Yuck! We paid three or four times the normal cost for all the other fixings like cranberries. But my Ruby dazzled us all with the best turkey I've ever had to date as we marveled at our distant view of *La Tour Eiffel*."



KRISTY STARLING

"Being a newlywed has been a blast and so has coming up with new traditions as a couple. [My husband] Adam and I plan to always put our Christmas tree up on Thanksgiving night. I know that may be a little early; but if it were up to me, I'd probably keep it up year round because I love the whole spirit of Christmas (and it's just a pain to put up and take down)."



JONATHAN PIERCE

"My wife, Denise, and I have carried on a tradition we began our first Thanksgiving together in 1994. I was spending the holiday at her family's house, even though we were just dating at the time. When we all sat down to enjoy the meal, I suggested that everyone around the table take a turn explaining what they were thankful for. After letting several of Denise's family members go ahead of me, I finally got the nerve to take my turn. I explained to everyone how thankful I was that Denise had come into my life because I had fallen in love with her. And right then and there, I pulled out an engagement ring and asked her to marry me. She was totally caught off guard but quickly agreed. To this day, Thanksgiving is very special to us."



SANCTUS REAL WITH PRODUCER TEDD T

In true "We Are the World" fashion, a slew of Christian artists are joining forces on a benefit album titled *In the Name of Love: Artists United for Africa* (Sparrow). Recording hits made popular by **U2**, the project is in response to a church-wide call for action made by the band's frontman, **Bono**. At press time, artists confirmed for the project that'll release Jan. 27, 2004 include **Sixpence None the Richer**, **Jars of Clay**, **Switchfoot**, **Delirious**, **Audio Adrenaline**, **Chris Tomlin**, **Pillar**, **GRITS** and **Sanctus Real**, pictured here with producer **Tedd T** in the studio while recording "Beautiful Day."

MORE STUDIO NEWS...

With more of a "band feel" than previous efforts, **Rachael Lampa** is busy with her third studio album, slated for an early spring 2004 release. With production from Grammy winner **Tommy Sims** (Jaci Velasquez, Taylor Dayne), Lampa has co-written all the songs thus far.

Now here's someone you'll want to keep on your musical radar. From the "it-must-be-nice-to-have-so-many-talents file," former lawyer and new Rocketown artist, **George Rowe**, is set to release his debut, *Think About That*, on Dec. 2. Fans who pick up the CD will also be able to access an exclusive Web site, with a special five-song acoustic performance. Cool!

Last but certainly not least, breakout rockers **Kutless** are currently working on a sophomore disc, *Sea of Faces* (Tooth & Nail). Produced by **Aaron Sprinkle**, the project dubbed as "a giant leap from the first record" is set to hit store shelves Feb. 24, 2004.



GEORGE ROWE



KUTLESS



ILL HARMONICS



PLAYDOUGH

Hip-hop fans will have plenty to cheer about in the coming months as both **Ill Harmonics** and **Tunnel Rats** are currently crafting new rhymes. Produced by the group's own **Blake Knight** and **Playdough**, the new Ill Harmonics' disc is taking a more organic and jazzy-sounding direction. A new "harmonic" has also been added to the group and will back them up instrumentally for live shows. Meanwhile, Tunnel Rats has also expanded its lineup to include five new players for its latest CD that has a progressive sound and style comparable to the likes of **Eminem**, **Jay Z** and **Nas**.

AND THE NOMINEES ARE...

Don't forget to program those VCRs or have TIVO record this year's American Music Awards on Nov. 16. In what's sure to be tough competition, **MercyMe**, **Third Day** and **Steven Curtis Chapman** are all nominated for "Favorite Artist in Contemporary Inspirational Music." Also look for Mr. Chapman to co-present an award on the live telecast held at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles.



PAUL COLMAN

PAUL COLMAN'S SURVIVAL GUIDE TO THANKSGIVING WHEN YOU'RE AN AUSSIE

Always the comedian, **PC3** frontman **Paul Colman** shares his nine-step plan he's dubbed the "**Australian Guide to Surviving Thanksgiving With Anyone.**"

- STEP 1:** Find out when Thanksgiving is.
- STEP 2:** Find out what it is.
- STEP 3:** Be thankful, even if you don't really understand.
- STEP 4:** Find out quickly that there is going to be some amazing *tucker* (food).
- STEP 5:** Eat as much as possible.
- STEP 6:** Be very thankful.
- STEP 7:** In everything, give thanks (especially for fabulous American holidays where the food is that good).
- STEP 8:** Play dumb again next year and the cycle, along with the food, will be repeated.
- STEP 9:** Take back the fireworks you bought because you confused it with Independence Day.

• And in other PC3 news, the band's hit single, "Turn," has turned up in an interesting place as the song has been chosen to promote the second season of **Dr. Phil's** popular self-help program.

JOHNNY CASH



1932-2003

We can all learn from Johnny Cash.

When the man introduced the gospel in his songs, interviews and one-on-one conversations, he spoke with authority. Whether he was proclaiming Christ's love with the Rev. Billy Graham at crusades or talking to MTV's Kurt Loder about eternity, his approach was genuine and his demeanor, humble. The man had, in a word, credibility.

When Cash chose to cover Trent Reznor's "Hurt" on his latest album (*American IV: The Man Comes Around*), he explained it was simply the best anti-drug song he'd ever heard. Indeed, Cash could relate. And when the 71-year-old shot the video for the song, Cash purposely portrayed his own frailty and incorporated riveting crucifixion scenes from *The Gospel Road*—the 1973 motion picture he co-wrote and funded himself. When critics heard Cash's latest album and then saw the video, many were simply dumbfounded. How could a man at his age be in his artistic prime? *American IV: The Man Comes Around* was quickly certified Gold and then "Hurt" received six 2003 MTV Music Video Award nominations.

Johnny Cash epitomized the most profound definitions of "Christian" and "artist." We watched and are still learning.

—JAY SWARTZENDRUBER

To read more memorial quotes, visit CCMmagazine.com

The Rev. Billy Graham:

"Johnny Cash was not only a legend but a personal friend... a good man who also struggled with many challenges in life. Johnny was a deeply religious man. He and June came to a number of our crusades over a period of many years. Ruth and I took a number of personal vacations with them at their home in Jamaica and in other places. They both were like a brother and sister to Ruth and me. We loved them... I look forward to seeing Johnny and June in heaven one day."

Steven Curtis Chapman:

"(Cash's) contribution to American music is immeasurable. He started it all for me on guitar—the first song I learned to play and sing at age 8 was Johnny's "Folsom Prison Blues." His countless and legendary songs and his work with the Billy Graham Crusades are just some of the things that will help us remember the life of this great man."

Rob Beckley, Pillar:

"I can't remember *not* knowing about Johnny Cash. His new album touched a new generation and left a great legacy behind. A great heart and great music. The 'man in black' lives on."

Larnelle Harris:

"From Johnny's own testimony that I heard him share during several Billy Graham Crusades, God was relevant and real in his life. He was a self-confessed 'outlaw' that found the grace of Jesus. He will truly be missed."

Ethan Luck, OC Supertones:

"We should all take to heart the life and legacy that Cash lived. He was fearless, not looking back in regret, not worrying about the future. He lived an imperfect and sinful life, but he lived it for Christ. And therefore, he was truly blessed. Johnny Cash is an amazing example of how to never waste a day of your life."

Chris Tomlin:

"I've always appreciated the honesty of Johnny Cash. When he sang it, you believed it. I think he was a little like the 12 disciples. He was rough around the edges, but he knew Jesus as a friend."

Amy Grant:

"Johnny Cash bridged the world of country and early rock with songs like 'Cry, Cry, Cry' and 'Get Rhythm When You Get the Blues' in a way that no one had ever done before or will ever do again. He was a scholar, a poet and a musician to his bones, and he brought creative minds together from all genres. He had the respect of common men and dignitaries alike because he was honest even about his shortcomings. He was passionate about his faith. Anyone that knew him would be quick to say that the 'man in black' is definitely wearing a robe of white."

John Tesh:

"I remember interviewing June Carter Cash years back, and I asked her to describe her husband. She thought for a moment and then said simply, "A decent, God fearing man."

Paul Colman, Paul Colman Trio:

"His recent video and single of the song 'Hurt' prove that, in any era, Johnny Cash was a true legend. More than that, though, he was a disciple of Jesus and a biblical type of character whose life had the mark of redemption and the scars of the battle."

Mac Powell, Third Day:

"Even though I never met him, I felt as if I knew him after reading his biographies and other writings. Just knowing the struggles he had—struggles with temptations and vices—and to see how his response to those things was steeped in grace just gives evidence that he had a deep and real faith."

Sara Groves:

"Who wakes up one day and thinks, 'I'd like to record a live album at one of the roughest penitentiaries in the country'? In the liner notes of *Johnny Cash at Folsom Prison*, he writes, '...you feel the electricity and hear the single pulsation of two thousand heartbeats in men who have had their hearts torn out, as well as their minds, their nervous systems and their souls. Hear the sounds of the men, the convicts—all brothers of mine...' Wow. That is pure ministry and an inspiration to sing and speak to people, not consumers."

Bonnie Keen, artist/author (founding member of First Call):

"The greatest aspect of his legacy, for me, is that just when it looked like everything was over for him (his age and 'dated' music out of vogue), he came into his most lasting work when the powers that be said it wasn't possible. New generations of listeners began to discover the unique power of his talent... kids like my 15-year-old who mourned the loss of Mr. Cash. The tenacity of his artistry, the timelessness of his writing and voice will inspire many to keep on keeping on in the face of doubting ourselves."

Dan Haseltine, Jars of Clay:

"Johnny Cash has always been the voice of men who believed that God was real and life was hard, and there had to be a way to accept both as truth. And sin was real but so was redemption. When a man like this sings a song like 'Amazing Grace,' he sings it with the authority of one who needs every drop of blood spilled to gain the benefit of such a necessary pardon. And for reasons only God can tell, he had reconciled with his weaknesses and lived a life of transparency, giving voice to both his struggles and to his devotion to God."

Owen Thomas, The Elms:

"If there was a place where ruggedness, resilience and tenderness met, it would be in the heart of Johnny Cash. He wasn't a man who could make you believe he was being real. He was a man who was real, and so you believed."

Carrie Theobald, Althea:

"The 'man in black' was a storyteller—an extremely vulnerable, honest, heart-wrenching storyteller. So believable were Johnny Cash's songs that the listener questioned his involvement. And even though he wasn't always directly involved with his characters, he shared their pain. He knew sorrow; it had become his friend. His music was their story, and now his songs are ours forever."

Bob Kilpatrick, worship leader/songwriter (who penned "In My Life Lord Be Glorified"):

"Like Pat Boone—a sometimes maligned and much overlooked pioneer of faith in pop culture—Johnny Cash let his faith inform his choice of material and presentation. Most of all, it changed his life. Heaven is walking the line right now."

ASK THE ARTIST: **SILERS BALD** ANSWERS YOUR TOUGH QUESTIONS.



Becca, 17, from Modesto, Calif., asks:

I was reading my Bible the other day, and it talks about being in the world but not of it. I guess what I struggle with is how much is too much? Do I stop listening to secular music? Do I stop going to movies? How can I decide what's too much or not enough to be considered worldly?

"Well, Becca, let me first say that I believe whole-heartedly that all things in life require a great deal of balance. I believe this because the God of the Bible that you and I know is a God of incredible balance. Look no further than the delicate relationship the Earth has with the sun and moon and how it spins on its axis at such a perfect rate that any change—no matter how small or great—would result in a catastrophic freezing or burning of the entire planet. What amazing balance! So where am I going? We have to apply the unchanging character of our Creator to all things, rather than pick and choose what we'd like Him to be like. All that to say, 'All things are permissible, but not all things are profitable.' (I Corin. 10:23, 29) Paul had an amazing grasp on the balance of sacred things, often making reference to the strengths and weaknesses of other teachers of his time, citing even the likes of Confucius to gain voice with those that would not listen to any further 'rabbinical' or Jewish thought concerning their relationship to God. How much, therefore, should we dismiss as 'secular' that which possesses great redeeming power and is even profitable in furthering the Kingdom in our own hearts and the many ministries we have with those around us? I'm glad it's not in God's character to simply send down His list of movies, music, art and books that we can take part in. What moves one man closer to the cross could pull another far away, and the Creator of balance expects us to live lives loving Him and one another in such a way that we know the difference." —**Shane Williams**

Brandon, 20, from Lansing, Mich., asks:

I'm in college and in a fraternity. I make sure that I'm careful to set a good example, but I never really get a chance to witness to the guys in the house. I don't want to scare them off, but can you think of a good way that I could share the gospel with them?

"Brandon, you hit the first part on the head! Live a life that looks different. Value the things that Jesus does, not the world. Be a man of integrity, full of virtue and godliness. When you live your life by the standards God has given, you will be

contrary to the standards of our culture. This gives validity to your testimony and honor to God. You may be approached by your fraternity brothers about your peace, contentment and ability to forgive others. When they do this, your responsibility is to give an account of the hope that lives within you (1 Peter 3:15). However, the gospel is a stumbling block, and there is no way around that. It is promised in Scripture and evidenced on every television channel we watch. In my experience, the best way to approach the subject is by engaging in conversations that make us take account of what we believe and why we believe it. Everyone has an opinion of heaven, what is right and wrong, pop culture, religion and relationships. All of these are vehicles to share the gospel. Watch for the opportunities; they are there. Watch for the hearts God is working in and seek to work alongside the moving of God in people's lives. Speak the gospel knowing the purposes of God will be accomplished, and you can be a part of it."

—**Warren Bazemore**

Stefanie, 19, from Wisconsin Dells, Wis., asks:

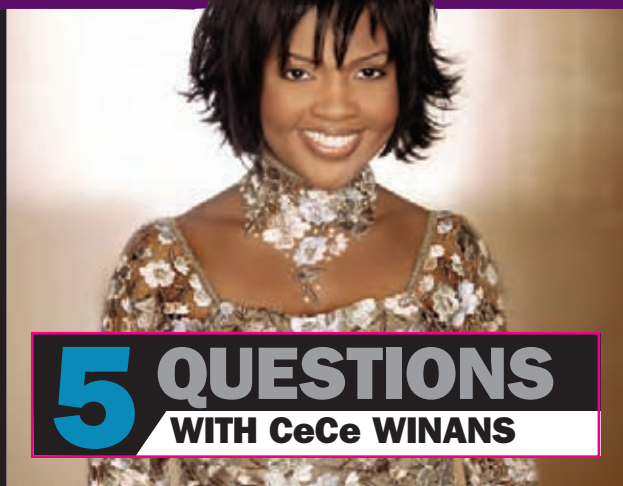
I graduated from high school a little more than a year ago and even after my year off, I still have no idea what I want to do with my life—career-wise. I pray and don't seem to get any direction. Do you have any suggestions for me? The only things I seem to like to do, like pottery and watercolor, really don't provide the kind of future—money-wise—that my mom would find acceptable.

"Here's an idea, Stefanie. Ask your mom what she loves about life. Is it her money? I doubt it. The point is, your mom should be one of your best friends; and if she isn't, then do something about it. I guarantee you that one day, as you both get older and she comes near to passing on, you won't be talking about what job you had and how much money you made. Talk to her about what you love and what's in your heart to do with your life, and ask her to help you follow that passion." —**Marcus Myers**

Daniel, 27, from Bristol, Conn., asks:

My girlfriend and I have been dating for four years, and I still don't feel like settling down and getting married. It's not because I don't love her; it's because I'm just not ready to make that big leap. But she's talking about it more and more lately. Is this something I should be more concerned about? Do I need counseling of some sort?

"Daniel, you need to take inventory of your heart and see what is keeping you from taking the next step. Your ability to make a God-honoring decision is always easier when you are walking in obedience in your personal life. There is no greater aid in this decision than the aid of prayer. We emphasize it in our faith because it is powerful and effective, so take advantage of the tools God has given us to consult with Him. Even in dating you are to provide leadership, so be man enough to confront your doubts and find the reasons for them. There is no greater reward or comfort, I've found, this side of eternity than a good and healthy marriage. Marriage is a good gift and one not to be entered into unadvisedly. Counseling is always a healthy option. To seek the advice and counsel of godly people that love you and want to see your relationship honor God can only enhance your decision making process (Proverbs 1:5, 11:14)." —**Warren Bazemore**



5 QUESTIONS WITH CeCe WINANS

There's really no need to recap CeCe Winans' impressive resumé. She's served as one half of a duo with her brother BeBe. And now she's a solo artist, businesswoman, wife and mother. Basically, CeCe has done it all. With her new worship album, *Throne Room* (Purespring/INO/Epic), she's sounding better than ever and doesn't plan to stop there, as production on a pop CD has already begun. Look for the project to release next spring.

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

CeCe: I would be the president for a day. I'd make the whole country just pray for 24 hours straight. He's the most powerful person, so that's why I'd choose that job—due to the importance of his role in this country and the importance of prayer.

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

CeCe: When I was 16 I realized this was a calling, more than a talent or gift. I remember singing, knowing how I felt and seeing the reaction of the audience.

3. Describe your most unforgettable romantic date.

CeCe: It was the day I got engaged. We were riding in the car, and it was a cold, snowy, beautiful winter day. He proposed to me in the car because we were stuck in traffic!

4. What are you obsessive-compulsive about?

CeCe: The Lord! Also, my daughter's "sweet 16" birthday party is coming up, so I'm really into things matching.

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

CeCe: How real He is.



SHAOHANNAH'S HOPE

STEVEN'S HOPE

The idea of Christian artists encouraging fans to financially support needy children has become prevalent over the past 15-20 years, with many artists supporting relief and development organizations such as Compassion International and World Vision. But several years ago, Steven Curtis Chapman and his wife, Mary Beth, decided to take the idea of supporting a child and make it profoundly personal by actually welcoming a needy child into their home. Now, two trips to China later, the couple has added Shaohannah and Stevey Joy to their family as adopted daughters, bringing their family circle to seven.

Steven and Mary Beth have since become vocal supporters of adoption nationwide and in 2001 were honored in Washington, D.C., by the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute with the distinctive "National Angel in Adoption" award. This September, Steven returned to the organization's annual banquet, along with participants, including actor Bruce Willis and boxer Muhammad Ali, among others, to perform (along with his good friend, fellow adoptive father and artist Geoff Moore).

After they brought Shaohannah home, Steven and Mary Beth founded an organization called Shaohannah's Hope to encourage and support Christian couples seeking to adopt. "It is not just for international adoptions," he says. "It is for any Christian family that wants to bring a child into its home and raise him or her with love." Recently, Steven has been raising awareness and support for the organization by serving as "DJ For A Day" at Christian radio stations nationwide. He has also given a portion of the proceeds from his last two albums, *Declaration* (Sparrow) and *All About Love*, to benefit the foundation.

Adoption is a passion and, Steven asserts, a calling for all Christians to consider. There are an estimated 550,000 children in foster care in the United States and an estimated 30 million orphans worldwide. As Steven recently explained to CCM, "This is not about me; it's about calling attention to a critical need. To me, adoption perfectly sums up the message of the gospel. It's such a visual picture of what God has done for us. I take a very strong pro-life stand, and I believe the best way to take that stance is to overcome evil with good. I believe adoption does just that."

Chapman concludes, "Every one of us, if we are adopted into God's family and take Scripture seriously, are commanded and invited to be involved some way in caring for orphans and widows. So be excited because [if you adopt] God is going to change your life. Adoption is an awesome, miraculous thing!"

MICHAEL CIANI

National Adoption Day is observed on Nov. 22.

GET INVOLVED!

For more information on adoption, you can visit: shaohannahshope.com, nationaladoptionday.org, adoptionnetwork.com, bethany.org

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READER OF THE MONTH

JENNIFER BERNARD from Allendale, MI

AGE: 23

SCHOOLING STATUS: college student at Grand Valley State University where she's studying to be a future elementary school teacher

FAVORITE CHRISTIAN ARTISTS: Third Day, Andrew Peterson, Shane Barnard & Shane Everett and Phillips, Craig & Dean.

RECENT CDS IN THE CD PLAYER: Andrew Peterson's *Love and Thunder*, Third Day's *Offerings II*, and Shane Barnard & Shane Everett's *Psalms*.

"I work in a Christian bookstore and have the privilege of listening to great Christian artists all day long. My co-workers and I are all big fans of Third Day. The article about them in the May issue of *CCM* was a window that gave all of us a glimpse into Third Day's heart. Reading about the days of the '\$3.17 love offerings' and how far the band has come in the last 10 years was such an awesome testimony of what God can do when we are willing to follow His calling."



MUSIC THAT MATTERS

Two years ago this past August, I lost a good Christian friend of mine in a four-wheeler accident. He was only 16. He was an amazing person—even a more amazing example to those of us in our youth group. He didn't just live like a Christian on Sunday mornings at church; he lived a godly life every day of the week—even at school when his peers thought he should act otherwise. When David died, our youth group had a hard time coping with his loss. Amazingly, David's death coincided with the release of MercyMe's album *Almost There* (INO). The song, "I Can Only Imagine" became our anthem, more commonly known as "David's Song." "I Can Only Imagine" not only reminded us of how amazing heaven will be, but it also helped us to realize how David lived his life to the fullest for God every day, and how we need to follow his example because one day we all want to be in the presence of God hearing, "Well done, good and faithful servant." —Jessica Jenkins, Broken Bow, NE



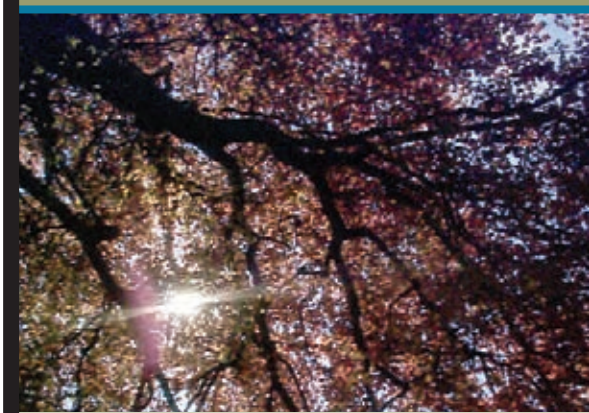
THANK HEAVEN FOR LITTLE GIRLS

Casting Crowns

frontman Mark Hall recently welcomed a new addition to his family. Zoë Sage was born July 28 and joins her big brother and sister, John Michael and Reagan. Pictured are Mark, wife, Melanie, and Zoë Sage.

NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS:

- 08 – Loreen Payne (The Paynes)
- 09 – Donnie McClurkin
- 10 – Tik Tokk (Gospel Gangstaz)
- 16 – Angel Taylor (Trin-i-tee 5:7)
- 17 – Christy Nockels (Watermark)
- 18 – Drue Phillips (Forty Days)
- 21 – Steven Curtis Chapman
- 25 – Amy Grant
- 29 – Mizzie Logan
- 30 – Richard Smallwood



It's football season, the leaves have changed, and the cold has set in. Keeping up with the weather, we've asked your favorite artists for good ideas for fall dates and tips on how to survive Thanksgiving weekend with a significant other with family all around. Here's what they had to say:

THANKSGIVING WEEKEND 101

"If the significant other is a guy: Bring a gift for the mother, and bring a tent and a sleeping bag. If the significant other is a girl: Do the dishes and make sure the boyfriend brings a sleeping bag and a tent."

—Michael O'Brien of *NewSong*

"Everyone relax... survival is eminent. Enjoyment? That might take some work. Don't try to please everyone. Do what works best for your immediate family (remember, the two become one flesh in marriage). Love your spouse's parents. Remember, he/she is a product of them. If that's not working, move to New Guinea! Sure, it's far, maybe hot, but they don't celebrate Thanksgiving." —Jason Anderson from *RE:ZOUND*

IDEAS FOR FALL DATES:

"The Web site digitalcity.com has a great list of events that you can look up (in any city) for a certain timeframe, even if it's the same day. They are great at listing free events like movies in the park. *Chicagoparkdistrict.com* lists all kinds of great events. Local park districts in other towns should do the same!" —Kris Spilker from the Chicago band *Blue Lit Souls*

"Any type of outdoor activity, like going to a batting cage or rollerblading, always makes for a good time and a great date." —Danielle Kimmey of *Out of Eden*

"I am hardly the authority on dating, but I think that a fun fall date would be horseback riding in the morning and then having a little picnic. Then you could split up for a bit, go to see an outdoor symphony in a park somewhere—not somewhere too stuffy but somewhere where you can talk and have coffee but still see and hear the music. I think that the fall is the most romantic time of year." —Jill Paquette

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

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KEEPING UP WITH MONROE JONES



As a professional songwriter and producer, what do you do once the albums you've worked on have sold more than four million copies combined? And what if you've already produced more than 30 No. 1 hits and won multiple Grammy and Dove Awards? Simple: You do more of the same! But if you're the multi-talented Monroe Jones, you keep up the good work *while* launching your own record label.

During nearly 20 years as a music professional, this Huntsville, Ala., native has contributed to recordings by Third Day, Jackson Browne, Caedmon's Call, Stevie Nicks, Chris Rice, David Crosby, Salvador, Michael Martin Murphy, Mark Schultz and Judson Spence, among others. Based in Nashville, Jones recently unveiled eb+flo Records, his joint venture with Universal South

Records. *Me Died Blue*, the debut from Steven Delopoulos (former Burlap to Cashmere frontman), served as his label's calling card.

How do you explain your role as a producer to inquiring music fans?

It's kind of like what a director does with a movie. You've got this project, and you're involved in every aspect—from finding songs, to shepherding the songwriting process, to jumping in and writing a [song] draft, to picking musicians, to choosing a place to record, to finding the tone and attitude of the record... every aspect of big picture things. And I'm a musician (primarily keyboards), so I love to be involved in the recording process.

What's the biggest highlight, so far, of your professional career?

I would have to say winning the Grammy with Third Day for *Come Together* earlier this year. That was an amazing experience.

What's your philosophy on the purpose of record labels now that you're a label head?

I believe labels can exist and really be on the side of the artists—I mean in every way. First and foremost I want to help artists promote their art and have the integrity they feel like they need to have. I want them to have longevity and have a career they can look back on and go, "OK, there's my contribution in a very artful way. And I feel like somebody came alongside me and helped me shepherd that." I think artists should own what they do. I would love nothing more than at the end of the day to go, "Wow. Guess what? This artist made more money than the label on their own project." I'm a crusader for great music that's valuable and moves people.

What projects are you working on right now?

I'm in the middle of the new Ginny Owens record. I'm also in the middle of the eb+flo second release with an artist named Jeremy Casella. He's a singer/songwriter, too. I'm also in the middle of a couple of tracks for Cliff Richard's new record. He's an amazing guy with amazing stories.

What would be your favorite album of all time?

If I can give you two, I would say Radiohead's *The Bends* and The Beatles' *Abbey Road*.

Who do you think are the two or three best music producers in the world?

George Martin (The Beatles, Céline Dion), Rick Rubin (Johnny Cash, Public Enemy) and Daniel Lanois (U2, Bob Dylan).

Who would you most like to work with some day?

I would say (Bob) Dylan. He draws from a very deep well.

How do you know when a song is finished?

A lot of times you don't. I think that you kind of get a sense as you're closing in. But a lot of times you go through this crazy obsessive process where you go over and over it. You sing it, record it and look at it. You may do some rewrites lyrically. Hopefully you get to the point where you know you're finished before you squeeze the life out of it.

When you're in the studio, does your cell phone stay "on" or "off"?

My cell phone stays on "vibrate." I want to make sure that if my wife calls, I can answer it. That's the only time I stop midstream and answer the phone.

What would you like to say to those CCM readers who may be aspiring artists?

Pray for clarity that God will help you to see things realistically in terms of whether you need to be in this business or in a ministry at a church. I can tell you God uses people in church music ministries, maybe more than what's going on out in the marketplace. And make the brass ring God's will instead of being successful in the music industry.

JAY SWARTZENDRUBER



• **Flicker Records**, home to **Pillar**, **Everyday Sunday** and **Stereo Motion**, is launching **Big House Kids**, a record label specifically created to produce children's products. Some of these products will include music, videos, interactive games and live tours. The first series, "The Praise Baby Collection: Music for Baby's Spirit and Mind," debuts Jan. 27, 2004, with *Praises & Smiles* as the label's first title.

• **Essential Records**, the creators of the "City on a Hill" series, are teaming up with **Convoy of Hope**, a nonprofit organization serving in the United States and around the world to provide disaster relief and outreach to the poor and hurting, for the release of *City on a Hill—the Gathering*. Consumers who buy this last installment of the series will have the option of donating \$10 to Convoy of Hope and receiving a copy of *Our God of Wonders* (Essential) in return.

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SCENES FROM RADIO

TUNE IN TO THIS RADIO

For more than 38 years a man nicknamed “Radio” has helped the Hanna Yellow Jackets high school football team in a variety of capacities, from serving as a cheerleader to equipment manager. Now Radio’s heartwarming true story is making it to the big screen in a movie with the same title and an Oscar-winning cast.

When Coach Harold Jones (Ed Harris) takes Radio under his wing, he simply tells his players, “He’s the same as everyone else—just a little slower than most.” But the truth is Radio (Cuba Gooding Jr.) is illiterate and mentally challenged—not to mention more than a little unpredictable. The mentoring relationship raises eyebrows and soon takes its toll on his football team and his family, not to mention a community that has never really understood Radio. Despite the criticism, the coach, for reasons of his own, shows consistent support and fatherly affection toward him. As Radio blossoms under Coach Jones’ care, the townspeople’s irritation with Radio eventually turns to admiration.

Preacher’s-kid-turned-actress Sarah Drew, (the voice of “Stacy Rowe” in the animated series “Daria”) who plays the coach’s daughter in the film, describes the story as “a movie about unconditional love, the importance of community and the importance of healing. To me, it’s not really a story about football at all.” Drew says her character is “a girl who has always longed for her father’s attention. But he’s been busy with his career and then with Radio, so they spend a lot of this movie miscommunicating.” Without giving anything away, she adds, “It’s the ending of this movie that really got me when I read the script. I’m not sure if it’s what the audience will expect or not. But I think it says something so important about family. I just loved it.”

Radio opened nationwide Oct. 24.

ELF IS AN EARLY HOLIDAY TREAT

“This movie is ultimately sweet and hopeful. It’s about finding your way in the world and feeling like a misfit but realizing you really do belong somewhere,” promises producer Todd Komarnicki. *Elf* is also a laugh-out-loud comedy guaranteed to put you in a festive mood.

Many years ago, a human child (Will Ferrell) was adopted by one of Santa’s (Ed Asner) elves (Bob Newhart) after the little boy accidentally ended up in one of Santa’s bags of presents. Now fully grown into a very tall human, Buddy tries to find his biological father (James Caan) and family back in New York City. Taken in by his real dad, Buddy tries to fit in with the human world he doesn’t understand.

In addition to *Elf*, the busy producer is also developing an updated version of the comic book character “The Flash” for a series on the WB in 2004. “I love this project because it is very spiritual. It’s all about a man receiving his calling in life,” Komarnicki says. He is also developing a movie called *The Professor and the Madman* based on the book of the same name. But whether he is making a holiday movie that will make you laugh so hard it hurts or a film that will tug at your heartstrings, Komarnicki’s goal is the same:

“We have a saying around the office: ‘We don’t want to do any (projects) unless they break your heart.’ Now, you can touch someone’s heart through comedy as well as drama. I just believe the greatest way I can honor God, as a Christian and as a storyteller, is to tell the truth.”

Elf opens nationwide Nov. 7.



CROSS MOVEMENT BRIDGING THE GAP

Though they have been increasingly successful over the past six years, the name and music of Cross Movement is still new to most Christian music fans. And while the popularity of faith-based hip-hop continues to grow, the genre remains a relatively small niche. With Cross Movement's recent release, *Holy Culture* (BEC), the group is looking to change that.

After John Wells ("The Tonic"), William "Duce" Branch ("The Ambassador"), Brady Goodwin ("The Phanatik") and Virgil Byrd ("Tru-Life") began collaborating, the four solo artists were eventually dubbed "Cross Movement." Now, several years later, their current CD is on pace to double the typical number of copies sold by most hip-hop groups in Christian music.

CCM: How do you feel about what you do, considering so many mainstream hip-hop acts glorify a culture of guns, drugs and sex?

CM: Our chief purpose in using this entire musical genre is to use it as a tool to spread the gospel.

CCM: What's the effect of their message on the youth who buy their records?

CM: You've got a group of people who identify with drug dealing, living in the ghetto, carrying a gun and being willing to use that gun. Then you've got a group of people who can relate to the part of the message that "feels good." The Bible says sin is pleasurable for a season. I think that message is ruining this generation.

CCM: Hip-hop has always been on the fringe for the Christian music industry; yet, it's the leading genre in mainstream music. Why?

CM: We had good people talking a good message, but, traditionally, the musical production just wasn't up to par. Over the years, Christian rap artists have bridged that gap.

We've run into another problem with content. We struggle with the excellence in music so much that we left the content of what we were talking about. When it came to the Christian marketplace, we couldn't get it to support us because we weren't saying anything [the Christian market] could put its stamp on. That's coming around again.

From an industry standpoint, hip-hop has been blocked out in a lot of ways. Gospel radio doesn't necessarily embrace us much. Contemporary Christian radio does a little bit, but there's really no radio or video format. That hurts us when it comes to making our genre widely known.

DJ MAJ MIXIN' IT UP

DJ Maj's name was born after friends watched him work the turntables with David Copperfield-esque dexterity. The mixmaster from Lafayette, La., recently unveiled his third Gotee CD, *The Ringleader*, in the same "mix tape" format he introduced to the Christian music community six years ago. Featuring new compositions and remixes from the likes of tobyMac, Kirk Franklin, Out of Eden, L.A. Symphony, 4th Avenue Jones and GRITS, *The Ringleader* is the closest thing Christian music has to a *WoW Hip-Hop* compilation.

CCM: What inspired you to become a deejay?

DJ MAJ: This deejay friend of mine moved to another city, so I had to pick it up. I was about 17. Another reason I picked it up was to make money and pay my way through technical school.

CCM: What's the most important tool in a deejay's bag, besides a turntable?

DJ MAJ: Knowing basic music theory is a very important thing. Before I was a deejay and doing mixing and production, I learned, while in a [high school] band, what a whole note was. There were piano lessons and learning about tempos and key signatures. You have to have an overall ear for music.

CCM: As a deejay playing lots of clubs and social functions, do you ever get partied out?

DJ MAJ: Sometimes. They want urban music, and, for someone like myself who is an advocate of urban Christian music, it's kind of tricky. Kids may not know the music, so we have to play what's familiar and mix in some of what I'm trying to introduce them to.

CCM: Your job is to get people moving. What happens if the mix just doesn't work?

DJ MAJ: It's really never happened. I've always figured out something to do, down to a karaoke situation if I have to get people involved. There's always been something up my sleeve to get people going—unless it's at a retirement home. I don't do too well there.

CCM: Who's on your remix dream team?

DJ MAJ: I like a lot of what P. Diddy's camp is doing as far as remixes. I've always wanted to work with DJ Premier, and I'd like to see somebody like a Jason Perry (formerly of Plus One) on a song with Verbs, or a Rachael Lampa with a T-Bone. I'd like to see those two worlds—contemporary Christian-based pop acts and the hip-hop acts—collide.

CCM: What's your favorite deejay trick?

DJ MAJ: The beat juggle. You take a copy of one song on two different records and, using back and forth techniques on the mixer and turntable, take the beat of the song and turn it into an entirely new beat.

Plus One's

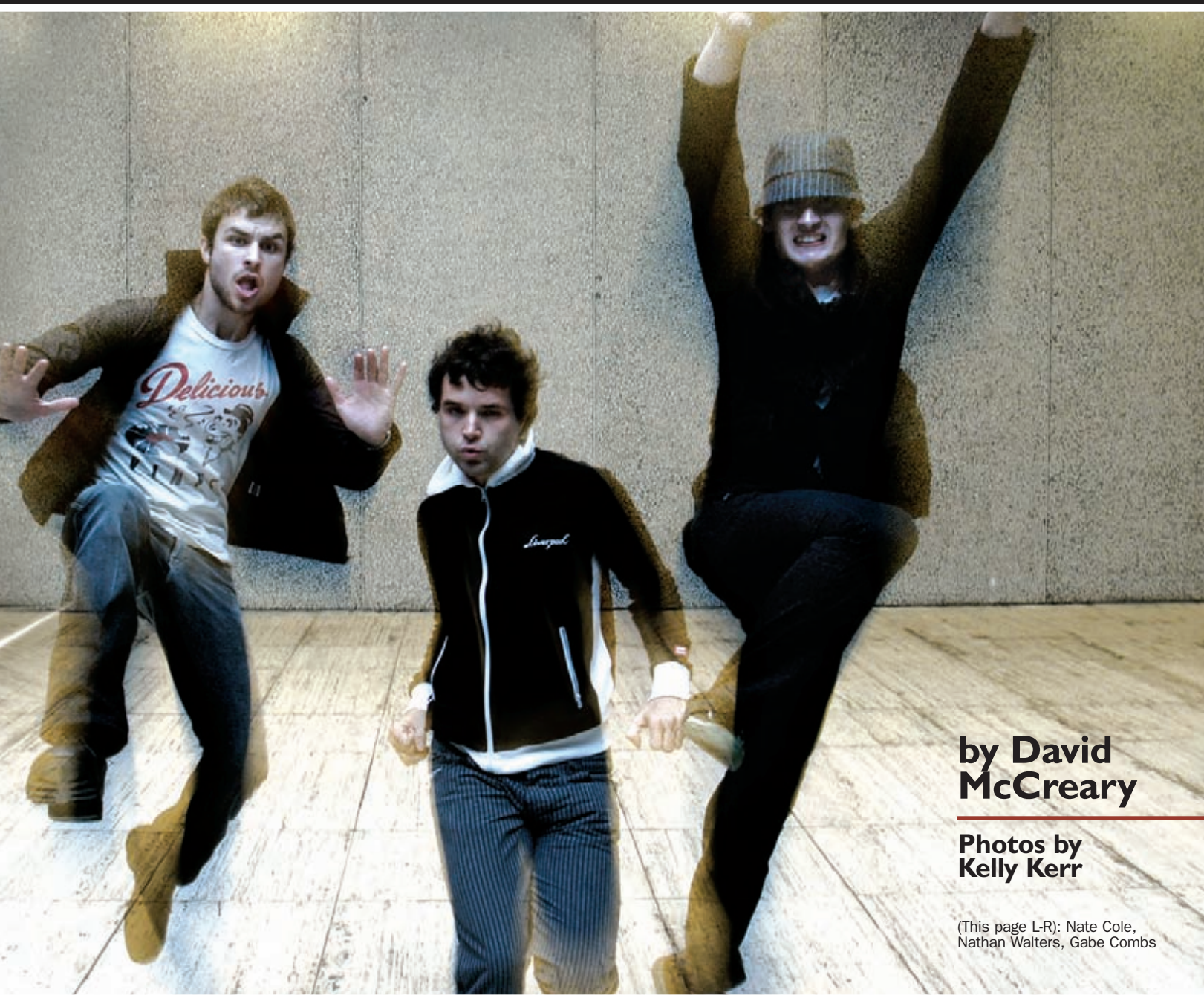


take

What happens when a boy band goes ROCK?

Shucking its boy-band image

and saccharine-sweet harmonies, popular pop music act Plus One returns as a modern rock trio. Considering all the changes these guys have gone through since the group's inception, their story could easily read like a dramatic screenplay. Just picture it: Losing two bandmates along the way, three young protagonists face seemingly insurmountable odds in pursuit of their ultimate goal—to reinvent themselves and forge a new path toward personal and artistic maturity. We now join the action during a recent scene, as the band is only a few weeks away from finishing its latest album.



by David
McCreary

Photos by
Kelly Kerr

(This page L-R): Nate Cole,
Nathan Walters, Gabe Combs

Fade In:

Exterior parking lot near downtown Franklin, Tennessee. (Dusk)

Scene: The three members of Plus One—Nate Cole, Gabe Combs and Nathan Walters—are standing in front of Cole's silver 1997 Honda Civic. The vehicle looks as if it has seen better days, especially considering the rather conspicuous dent in the right front fender.

Cut to Next Frame: Cole, the group's messy-haired, stubble-faced frontman, hurriedly tosses assorted music magazines, CDs and scads of what appears to be junk mail into the car's trunk. Obviously embarrassed, he attempts to make room for everyone to ride to a nearby eatery. Once Cole completes his speed-cleaning session, the ride begins.

Scene One

In many ways, Plus One's intriguing career journey resembles Cole's less-than-perfect automobile. So much has happened with the group in the past year or so—everything from two bandmates leaving, to changing record labels, to abandoning its boy-band *shtick*—that the group's entire existence nearly became a cluttered and confusing nightmare.

Then there's the "body damage" the guys have encountered along the way, like financial woes from a previous tour, issues with their former label and marketing hype that branded them as young heartthrobs rather than accomplished musicians.

If anyone should be granted diplomas for graduating from the school of hard knocks, it should be the guys in Plus One. "If you had asked me a year ago if our group would still be together today, I probably would have said, 'No,'" confesses Cole while eating a pesto chicken sandwich at Nashville's Wolfgang Puck Express.



Sitting in a U-shaped corner booth, the three young men ruminate openly about their lives, music and the future. Dressed in faded jeans and assorted t-shirts that cling to their slender frames, the guys manage to look disarming yet, interestingly, not too comfortable.

Of the three, 22-year-old Cole seems the most self-assured. That's not to say he's egotistical; he simply interacts with a confidence and charm that belies his age. Perhaps even more impressive is his candor.

Asked about the struggles the group has experienced, such as dealing with the departure of colleagues Jeremy Mhire and Jason Perry, Cole glibly answers, "When you hear about personnel changes, no matter how much you try to sugarcoat things, it's uncomfortable. There's always a rub involved... but we're still friends with both guys."

As Cole tells it, Mhire desired to "settle down and have a more simple life," recently marrying his longtime girlfriend and becoming a drama instructor. Perry, currently pursuing a solo recording career, still resides in the Nashville area and is engaged to be married soon. "The running joke is if you get married, you're out of Plus One," Walters cheerfully quips, smiling before devouring several large bites of the double chocolate cake he's supposedly sharing with Combs.

Cut to Live Performance:

It's a humid Sunday evening at Faith Church in New Orleans where a "Summer JAM" event finds Plus One sharing the stage with NewSong, Tait and a number of up-and-coming artists.

Some may wonder why the band would travel across the country virtually every weekend for several months, especially since a deadline looms for finishing its new album. But the guys consider gigs like "Summer JAM" as a chance to introduce their retooled sound to a potentially diverse audience. This particular night, though, the auditorium is only half full, and the collective energy of the crowd is tepid at best.

Despite the largely uninspired audience and a poor sound mix, Plus One delivers a spirited 25-minute set, including one new hard-hitting song titled "Sea of Angels" and fresh renditions of popular favorites like "The Promise" and "God Is in This Place." For most in attendance, this is the first time to witness Cole as primary vocalist, Combs on guitar and Walters on keyboard and piano. Gone are the tightly choreographed dance routines and multifaceted harmonies. That's all been supplanted by powerful piano and guitar-driven arrangements, textured vocals and potent modern-rock melodies. One thing is certain: Plus One's metamorphosis is nothing short of radical.

Concerning the stylistic shift, some may be surprised to learn that the transformation didn't happen overnight. The change, Walters says, occurred gradually, dating back to the group's sophomore project, *Obvious* (Atlantic). "The song 'Start to Fly' reveals a departure from the boy-band vibe, and you could tell we were headed in a new direction," he explains. "There was a time when we had an appreciation for harmonies, but times



change [as well as] our musical tastes; and music itself has changed. Plus, we're getting older."

Combs, 23, likens the group's distinctive progression to dc talk, one of his favorite acts, sharing that it was fascinating to hear how that trio sounded from one record to the next. "The leap stylistically from *Free at Last* [ForeFront] to *Jesus Freak* was huge," he insists. "I've always thought it's a good thing to keep growing musically; otherwise, we'd die of boredom!"

Perhaps the chief question remaining to be answered is how Plus One fans will respond to the band's evolution. While some seem to be taking a wait-and-see approach, others seem to have made up their minds already.

"There was one person who waited in line to say, 'Here's your poster back; I don't like you any more,'" says Walters before adding, "But on the whole, it seems that everyone who has heard it likes our new stuff. We've even had guys who've come to a show ready to make fun of us and ended up saying they looked forward to buying the new record."

Cut back to Main Story: Scene Two

Combs explains that the band was originally signed to a three-album deal with recording monolith Atlantic Records, but after releasing what he and the other guys call a "forgettable" Christmas project, the group decided to look elsewhere for a label that "believed in the band's new artistic direction." Recalls 25-year-old Walters, "Atlantic wanted us to record another pop album and work with Avril Lavigne's and Nick Carter's producers. Everything they wanted us to do was on another page from what we had in mind, so we left and went to Inpop."

These days the guys not only appreciate how God renewed their lease on a recording life but

are supremely thankful to Inpop Records and its co-owner, Newsboys frontman Peter Furler, for providing an opportunity to, in essence, start over.

Since then they've never looked back. The upcoming release (available Nov. 17), aptly titled *Exodus*, is written entirely by the band and sports various influences from Coldplay to U2 to Kevin Max. Thematically, it portrays the reality of life's struggles, including subjects like brokenness and failure, all while reminding listeners that God is in the business of giving second chances.

Nowadays the guys are much more involved in the decision-making process of recording and production, and, even more important in their minds, they are free to experiment lyrically and musically. "It's good to be at a label where they care about us as a band—not just for how many records we sell," says Cole.

On that subject, Cole mentions that the band's first album, *The Promise* (Atlantic), sold extremely well (achieving gold certification and currently nearing platinum status), but the follow up, *Obvious*, didn't meet expectations. "The tour supporting that record really hurt us financially," he says, appearing somewhat reluctant to share too much detail. "That put us in a position where we knew we had to either quit or go for it and work ourselves out of a big hole. We also had some significant problems when it came to [marketing] and promotion."

Cole points out that some of the previous marketing campaigns made the band appear unapproachable. "We want to be known as real guys who are accessible to people, don't take ourselves too seriously and enjoy life," he says. (This desire is fleshed out at the New Orleans concert, where, at the merchandise table, the band members cheerfully sign autographs, chat with fans and graciously take time to encourage several people.)



Through all of the pitfalls and tough learning experiences, each of the band members maintains a positive outlook about the future. "Things that happen in the past can make you better and stronger," Cole says. "We now have a record label, a manager and a booking agency that are willing to give us another chance. We're very grateful for that, and we know it's only by God's grace that this has happened."

Cut to Local Starbucks:

Whether one visits the guys' revamped Web site (plusoneonline.com) or hangs out with them for, say, 15 minutes, it doesn't take long to figure out that four things are considerably important to them:

1. **Music** (not just their own—they're into everything from Michael W. Smith to The Flaming Lips).
2. **Computers** (they prefer Macs over PCs, and they all own iPods)
3. **Friendships**
4. A close fourth would have to be **Starbucks**. How else can you explain the infatuation for Mocha Coconut Frappuccinos immediately after dinner and dessert? But when it comes to what really matters, no doubt, other things beside the coffee of the day are of utmost significance. "Right now I think we're the most content we've ever been, and it's because we're living in obedience to God," Walters says.

Combs nods his head. "A lot of things can bring you down and distract you," he says, "but we are told in Scripture to seek first God's Kingdom. We might not be the coolest band out there, but we always want to do what God desires of us."

Cut to Final Scene:

Perhaps the most enlightening detail about these young men is simply this: When everything else is stripped away—the music, fans, media attention—their genuine and abiding friendship with one another is ever prominent.

Need evidence? How about the fact that Cole and Combs share an apartment together and get along extremely well? Consider also that even when the band is not recording or on the road, all three guys say they enjoy being together. Whether it's going to a record store, watching videos or hanging out reading music rags at Barnes and Noble, these guys are truly the three amigos. "We're each other's best friends," Walters says unashamedly.

For Cole, it's a bond of brotherhood like none he's ever known before. "I could list the 10 worst things I've ever done in my life, and these guys would

know every one," he admits. "This type of trust and accountability may not work for everyone, but it does for us. We have security in knowing that we're not just committed as a band, but, first and foremost, we're committed to each other as friends."

Consider this: Plus One originally formed several years ago when two Nashville music execs decided to create a Christian boy band, bringing together a group of five perfect strangers. Now the three remaining comrades are virtually inseparable.

Sounds like the perfect script, doesn't it?

Fade Out. ccm

BEHIND THE SCENES WITH PETER FURLER



As if it's not enough to front a veteran band like Newsboys, Peter Furler also is quickly making a name for himself behind the studio console as an accomplished producer.

This year alone he's capably handled production duties for Petra on its recent release, *Jekyll and Hyde* (Inpop), and more recently he co-produced Plus One's latest effort, *Exodus*, along with buddy Jeff Frankenstein (Newsboys' keyboardist) and the band.

Furler's recording studio, located in downtown Franklin, Tenn., is uniquely positioned inside a beautiful 100-year-old Victorian home. "It definitely has an old-school feel to it," says Furler in his thick, Australian accent. "The house gives people a more laid-back environment to record than the typical studio."

When it came to working with Plus One, Furler says he was excited to have the opportunity to work with such "good and talented guys."

"The band's new music is very melodic, and it's the first stuff I've heard in a long time that I'm really a fan of," he says. "These guys have a lot of fight in them, and they're coming out swinging." **D.M.**

Three of a Kind



From strangers to best friends, the women of **ZOEgirl** have learned lessons in freedom and standing on their own two feet.

by **Merrill Farnsworth**



Where it All Began:

A few years ago, artist manager Norman Miller surveyed the Christian music landscape and said to himself, "I see a need for a girls pop group." Shortly thereafter, Miller, creator of the award-winning Avalon, and Lynn Nichols, writer, executive producer and former A&R guy for Sparrow, joined forces to create one.

Miller first approached Alisa Girard, daughter of the legendary Chuck Girard who is known for his radical ministry while a member of LoveSong. "I'd known Alisa since she was 2 years old and heard some of her demos, which were great," says Miller, "We decided to build the group around her."

After Alisa agreed to join the as-yet-unnamed group, Kristin Swinford was next. She was discovered in a Nashville coffeehouse where she performed with a group that incorporated jazz into its edgy style. "We started with Alisa's sound," says Nichols. "She had a real writing sensibility. Then we heard Kristin sing and play the piano. She had a pure pop voice, and it was a really interesting mix with Alisa's more gritty style. Then we said, 'Let's just see what unfolds.'" The decision to join was more difficult for Kristin, however. "I felt like I was betraying them [her previous group]," Kristin confesses, "but at the same time I felt a pull to ZOEgirl and felt led to meet Alisa." An instant bond formed between the two, and Kristin made her choice.

Then, the search was on for a third girl. Kristin mentioned to Nichols that a friend of hers had "a friend in Atlanta who was playing in a band and working with some musicians" [who later turned out to be Pink, Baby Face and Boyz II Men]. Nichols laughs at his initial reaction. "It sounded kind of flaky, but I told Kristin to give her a call." When Kristin got Chrissy Conway on the phone, it was a case of spontaneous friendship. "I was on the verge of signing a major record deal," says Chrissy. "My lawyer thought I was crazy for wanting to join a Christian group. He told me I'd never make any money." But, according to Chrissy, she's never looked back.

Creating an Image:

In 2000 the three singers signed on to become Sparrow's all-girl singing sensation. However, the new group needed a name. Several possibilities made the list, but "ZOE" (Greek for "life") was the favorite. When a trademark search revealed "ZOE" was unavailable, "girl" was added, and a new group was born.

Next phase? Imaging. While Britney Spears was the "it" girl of 2000 with her provocative dress and performance style, ZOEgirl purposefully went in the opposite direction. And while these women say they never felt "misrepresented," the sudden rush to project them as the perfect Christian girl group was a bit overwhelming at times.

"Even though it wasn't what I'd envisioned myself doing," Alisa admits, "there was never a moment I felt I was misrepresenting myself before God. I'd change some of the outfits we wore, though. And I didn't like being called 'prissy pop.' Nobody had ever called me prissy in my life." Kristin comments, "Sometimes we didn't sound that great, and you could hear every breath, but we refused to lip-sync. What kept us going were the mothers and kids being touched. If music critics called us 'disposable pop' and didn't get what we were doing, it was OK. It wasn't for them."

With its name and image secured, it was now Nichols' and producer Tedd T's (Jewel, Faith Hill, Stacie Orrico) task to shape the hit-making ZOEgirl sound. The two were thrilled to discover the singing/dancing performers were also great singer/songwriters. "Each girl was really different," says Nichols, who describes Alisa as the "Rock Chick," Chrissy the "R&B Woman" and Kristin the "Luscious Pop Voice." "I wanted Tedd to focus the sound because I was afraid it would get scattered." The result of the first collaboration was *ZOEgirl* (2000), a collection of lighthearted pop songs that showcased each girl's talent. The record was a success, garnering a hit single, "I Believe" and selling more than 350,000 albums to date.

Women at Work

Soon after, ZOEgirl hit the road with Carman and then Avalon. The group hired *NSYNC choreographer Tony Michaels to take its stage show up a notch. "In the beginning it was an adjustment to me. I'd never had to dance and sing at the same time," says Alisa. "It was frustrating. But I was into the 'mission' of it. We even



trained for it, jogging and working out. We could see how much our audience loved it, so it became fun after a while."

And the numbers proved that audiences liked it as well. In 2001, the sophomore album, *Life* (Sparrow), released, successfully selling more than 120,000 albums in 2001 and almost 370,000 to date. Tours with Plus One and Newsboys followed, and, by the end of the next year, the group had released *Mix of Life* (showcasing a new R&B and rock vibe) and won the "New Artist of the Year" honor at the Dove Awards.

Coming Into Their Own:

This year, however, has turned out to be probably the biggest year of change for these three women. They hired a band, which, according to Mike Jay (Proper Management), "was a turning point in their musical style." As the girls began playing guitar and keyboard onstage, the choreography faded away. Worship has also become vital to each concert, and the girls feel more free to reveal deep, uncensored feelings. Audiences have poured out their hearts in return.

In addition, the group's third record, *A Different Kind of FREE* (Sparrow), reflects a new musical direction. "It's true this CD is different," notes Alisa, "but it frustrates me when people say, 'You're a rock band now.' We've stayed true to our pop roots. We don't tour with dancers anymore; but when we did, it wasn't a misrepresentation of who we were." And beyond it being a good representation of three people, Chrissy says it's evidence of growth. "We might have a more live sound now, but just as the second record was a jump from the first, the third is a jump from the second. We wouldn't do anything that didn't reflect who we are. I'd love to keep the same exact audience, but I don't know if we will or won't. For each person we might lose, I think we'll gain new ones."

"On this record they're really reaching out and saying exactly what they want to say," says Mike Childers, ZOEgirl's drummer and Alisa's new husband. Says producer Tedd T: "This is their record from top to bottom. It's a totally honest statement of who and where they are."

And where do they want to go from here? You'll just have to wait to find out. "We've sacrificed so much to be in this place, and we want to keep going," Chrissy says. "We have a lot of plans for the future. It's full steam ahead for as long as God wants us to be doing this." **ccm**



Best of Friends

After four years in the studio and travel on the road, the three women in ZOEgirl will readily tell you they are the best of friends. Here's what they had to say about each other:



Alisa
ACCORDING TO KRISTIN AND CHRISSEY:
Strong, driven, wise, incredibly deep, radical heart for Christ

"I don't feel strong. I tend to be emotional. When someone misunderstands my motivations I can get my feelings hurt."
—Alisa



Kristin
ACCORDING TO ALISA AND CHRISSEY:
Compassionate, genuine, peacemaker, warm, never too tired to minister to others

"Sometimes I feel tired, like there's nothing left to give. I need to learn how to say, 'No.' But there's no way I can leave without that last little girl getting a bug."
—Kristin



Chrissy
ACCORDING TO KRISTIN AND ALISA
Fun-loving, driven, lovable, thoughtful, madly in love with God

"When I first became a Christian I didn't hang out with other Christians or find the right church. I didn't realize how much darkness I was living in. Now I'll never underestimate the importance of fellowship."
—Chrissy



Love Is in the Air

Alisa, Chrissy and Kristin have been through all kinds of changes, musically speaking; but their personal lives have also shifted gears since ZOEgirl's beginnings.

In May 2002, Kristin married her high school sweetheart, Ryan Schweain. "I am blessed because Ryan is so supportive. He knows the desires of my heart. He's so selfless and supportive that I want to do the same for him. His answer is always, 'You're doing what you're supposed to be doing, and that makes me happy.' It's tough being away from him, but Chrissy and Alisa are always trying to help find ways for Ryan to come see me. We're all supportive of each other's home lives. That's what keeps us strong."

Alisa recently married ZOEgirl drummer, Mike Childers. "Since I've been married I've come to the most amazing place of rest. When it's right, it's like your soul comes home. My husband pushes me toward my calling. My marriage has blessed me with two stepchildren, one a 9-year-old girl. I see more than ever how important ZOEgirl's ministry is to that age. I believe more than ever in what we're doing."

Chrissy is currently dating fellow artist James Katina of The Katinas. "It helps that my boyfriend does the same thing I do. James is very encouraging and understands all the traveling and time in the studio. I have no doubt that ZOEgirl could keep up the same pace."





HAPPY ENDINGS

THERE'S A SAYING THAT EVERY SONG BEGINS WITH A STORY, AND FOR MARK SCHULTZ, THAT COULDN'T BE MORE TRUE. FROM THE SONGS ON HIS NEW ALBUM TO THIS INTERVIEW, SCHULTZ OPENS UP ABOUT HIS OWN STORY AND OTHERS' HE'S BEEN GIVEN TO SHARE.

BY STEPHANIE OTTOSEN

Mark Schultz is a stickler for being on time and is prompt, as usual, arriving at 4 p.m. on the dot. Comfortably dressed in khakis, a gray t-shirt and a University of North Carolina baseball cap, this singer/songwriter is still the same friendly, approachable Kansas boy with the Southern drawl fans have come to love... despite his uncharacteristically direct and abrupt launch into everything from the past to a conversation he had earlier that morning.

But since his sojourn from touring and work on his third album has left time for the mundane (such as home improvements on his first house) and the lofty (such as these types of discussions), Schultz has had quite a bit on his mind and an urgency to talk about it.

When asked if the traveling life after four years as an official "artist" has given him this need for camaraderie, mentoring and community, the singer/songwriter replies, "You can write songs and perform them on the road. But at some time, when I'm on my deathbed and someone asks me, 'What do you regret?' I

don't think I'll ever say, 'I should've done one more concert.' I think I'll say, 'Man, there are so many people I didn't get to know. There are so many stories from people's lives I didn't get to hear.'"

Hearing stories may be a pastime but telling them is what fans of Schultz would probably say he does best. Coming straight out of the church after eight years as a youth pastor in Nashville (including the two years when he served as youth pastor *and* artist), Schultz was "discovered" after performing at a self-organized and produced benefit concert at Nashville's famed Ryman Auditorium. From there, Schultz earned a recording contract and was soon churning out hits like "I Am the Way," "He's My Son" and "Remember Me."

But hit songs is the least of what Schultz wants to discuss this sunny afternoon.

"*What will you do with the time that is left?*" Schultz asks in "Time That Is Left" from his Brown Bannister-produced *Stories and Songs* (Word). And that's the question that has seemingly pervaded almost every conversation

since work on the new record began. Take today, for instance. As Schultz settles in with his non-fat latte, he relays a conversation he had with a music industry friend earlier that morning. "He hadn't heard that his dad loved him, and he's [the friend] now in his 40s," says Schultz, shaking his head. Just that day, his friend received a birthday card from his father saying how proud he was of his son and how sorry the father was for missing out on a relationship because he didn't believe in his son.

"So we talked about that—we spent an hour and half talking about that," Schultz says. "And he said, 'You know, it's the first time I've spent time with anybody in the music business where it hasn't been, 'Hey, buddy, how's it going? Everything's cool.' And, man," Schultz says, "I want to be about that kind of stuff. It just seems like there are people that could really benefit from that."

And many have. In the ensuing hour-and-a-half conversation, Schultz relays at least four or five more stories of conversations along those same lines. Schultz says these in-depth

conversations with others, where he's discussed what he and author John Eldridge in bestseller *Wild At Heart* call a person's "story," have resulted in emotional healing or strengthening—whether in himself or the other person.

"So much of my story is like the guy who thought he was a screw-up his whole life and [who was] finally able to pull that out... And that's the lesson I've learned over the last two years. I'm the kind of guy growing up that got my validation from other people. I hope people think I'm funny; I hope they think I'm interesting; I hope they think I'm a great songwriter." As if to illustrate his point further, Schultz reflects on his own healing after John Eldridge exhorted the audience (at a "Wild At Heart" retreat) to stop getting their validation from others.

"My normal thing when I get home is I walk in; I put my keys on the counter; I get a drink of water and sit on the couch," Schultz explains. "About three minutes pass, and something inside of me goes, 'You've got to go write a song.' The reason why, I figured out, is because something inside of me was going, 'You've got to write a song because that's what makes you special. You can write songs that move people. And if you don't do that, you're not special anymore.'"

"I remember thinking about what John [Eldridge] said when I came home from that retreat. And I put my keys on the counter, got a drink of water and sat on the couch. About three minutes later, tears were rolling down my face, and I thought, 'Oh my gosh, is this what it's like to be free? Is this what it feels like to know who you are?'" Schultz says, with tears in his own eyes.

While people like Eldridge and Schultz's friend/counselor Al Andrews have made an impact on his life, he says Nashville's First Presbyterian youth minister (and Schultz's former employer) Mark DeVries is the person who's left the most significant imprint on him. As with every point he makes, Schultz explains the statement with a story.

There's a scene in *Les Mis[erables]*," says Schultz, "that describes what Mark DeVries did for me. Jean Valjean [the main character] goes into that house where the priest is; and the priest says, 'You can eat here and sleep here.' If you remember, they're sitting there at the table, and [Valjean] is telling the priest how bad he's been—that he's a thief and that's all he'll ever be. He ends up stealing the priest's silver and when the priest catches him, Jean punches the priest, knocks him out and leaves.

"The next morning the priest is out working in the yard. And the police officers have found Jean Valjean and all the silver with the priest's name etched in it. [The priest] thanks the police for bringing him back, and the police say they're going to put Valjean in jail. But the priest says something like, 'Jean, we gave you

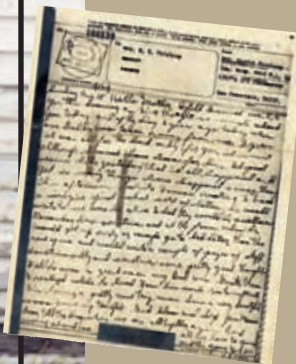
all this silver to take, but why didn't take the most expensive stuff?' [After the police release him] Jean Valjean asks the priest why he did that for him. And the priest comes over and removes Jean's hood because it's just kinda dark in there. And there's light on Valjean's face, and he says, 'Jean Valjean, my brother, I've bought your soul with this silver. I've bought your soul for good. You're no longer your own man. You're God's man now, and your purposes are for Him.'



"And that's what Mark DeVries did for me," says Schultz with emotion. "I wasn't a thief or stealing anything but, if the thief part would be living for yourself—being selfish, worrying about yourself and asking, 'What can I get out of this world?'—then that was me. And he threw off the hood and said, 'No you're done with that life. You've got a new one.' ccm



Mark's great grandmother and uncle



Mark's uncle that wrote the letters.

LETTERS FROM WAR

While Mark Schultz may worry about not hearing enough of other people's stories, he has heard quite a few that have changed his life. On his third release, *Stories and Songs*, he recorded "Letters from War," a song based on the experiences of his great grandmother and her son. Here's the story, in Mark's own words, of how that song came to be:

I was doing a show in Portland, Maine, and I was surprised to see my Cousin Ed and his family, who live in Boston, at the concert. Ed and my Great Aunt Dolly had been compiling information about my great grandma. They wanted to put together her life story through her diaries, letters and even some stories that she told to Ed that he had a chance to videotape before she passed away.

One section of her diary that really struck me was from 1943 when she had three sons out of four who were serving in World War II. I read the letters that she wrote back and forth to her sons. They were extremely grateful to be a family and loved each other very much. My mind kept drifting to the movie *Saving Private Ryan* with her having three sons in the war and with one of her son's actually in the middle of Germany.

My great grandma was a strong and independent woman who loved God with her whole heart and instilled that in her children as well. She wrote how she would pray every night that God would keep her boys safe and until that day, God willing, that everyone of them would make it home again.

When my Cousin Ed was leaving the concert he told me: "Your great grandma lived an incredible life. I think you will find some inspiration in these diaries to write an amazing song."

He was right and not only was I inspired to write "Letters From War," but I also got to discover who my great grandma really was down deep inside; and it made me even prouder to be a part of my family.

skillet's musical
collision course

The road to finish its new album was not an easy one—complete with a few head-to-head battles with the producer. Now on the other side, this hard-rock outfit has a sound all its own and songs that confront tough realities such as fear and teen suicide.

by Dave Urbanski





That's when the fighting started. It wasn't your knockdown, drag-out sort of WWF drama. It wasn't some ear-splitting catfight between red-carpet divas and a truckload of handlers. It wasn't even nasty. Rather, the fighting was the intense studio interaction between artist and producer that's often inevitable when more than a single creative mind is at work.

John Cooper, leader of the veteran hard-rock quartet Skillet, was under the proverbial microscope for the first time in a while, courtesy of Paul Ebersold, his producer for the current Skillet creation, *Collide* (Ardent). Cooper has garnered a few hit songs as well as some best-selling albums that he has produced, including his own, and Ebersold has worked with the likes of 3 Doors Down, Spacehog and Sister Hazel.

"We had 28 songs written for this album," Cooper notes, "but as we filtered through them, Paul said we needed more rock songs. I thought the album was going in a certain direction, but Paul changed that. I was truly being influenced by the kinds of songs he liked."

That, naturally, frustrated Cooper a bit, and things were somewhat tense between him and Ebersold. (Truth be told, Cooper acknowledges, Ebersold forced him to explore uncharted territories in the studio and with his songs. "He was just pushing me and pushing me, and I really came into myself on this album. That's due to Paul.")

The breakthrough moment happened when Cooper, tired and frustrated, attempted yet another approach to the chorus of "Savior," a moody, multilayered tune with breakneck, staccato grooves—and a standout track on the CD.

"Something clicked," Cooper said, "and Paul loved it. I told him I could do the same thing with the other songs, too. And we went back and rerecorded six songs because we loved our new sound so much."

Chalk up yet another ambitious, chameleon-like chapter in the life of Skillet, one the most ambitious, ever-evolving hard-rock bands in Christian music.

It's a rare thing, indeed, for any band these days—Christian or mainstream—to successfully explore new territory from album to album. Most simply choose not to since the career-minded, financially responsible move is to stick with formulas that have proven track records. Fans get what they expect, labels and artists continue to stay afloat—everybody's happy.

But Cooper and his compadres would not be satisfied with that monotony.

"I think this album kicks our other albums' butts," Cooper says matter-of-factly amid preparations for a short promotional tour in support of *Collide*. "I have a feeling that once people get used to the sound change, they'll like it."

The "sound change" could be described as a dramatic turn to an aggressive, heavy, ultra-distorted guitar attack... minus the techno-ish, keyboard-programming element employed on previous albums.

Put the emphasis on dramatic. From the opening salvos of "Forsaken"—with its sandpaper, staccato riff born from what's surely a dozen or so guitars wringing out the ultimate anvil chorus—all the way to the slow-building, melodic shredding of "Cycle Down," *Collide* is a mighty sonic force.

And if you start hearing and naming potential musical influences—a little bit of Korn here, a splash of Bush there (especially Cooper's brillo-pad vocals), a smidgen of P.O.D. over yonder—don't forget Ebersold. (A short historical note: Ebersold and Skillet go way back—they teamed up on the critically

acclaimed, self-titled 1996 debut. Turns out that ever since doing time behind the glass for Cooper's outfit, Ebersold's been itching to get back in the producer's saddle with them.)

"He's grown loads and loads as a producer since our debut," Cooper says. "And he came to us and said, 'We've got to do an album together.'" Ebersold even tried to get Skillet some major-label backing that would afford the combo much-needed quality time in the studio. But when that didn't work out, Cooper notes, Ebersold told Skillet he loved the songs so much that he wanted to produce the album anyway.

"If it only sells 10,000 units, I'll still be proud of it," Ebersold told Cooper.

Other sonic elements that made the cut—and that Cooper also hadn't planned on—are the strings and piano embellishments. "We tried it because that's really more of our thing," he says, adding that since the strings are sampled through the keyboard, there actually is some keyboard on *Collide*—just not the heavy-duty throbbing found on previous releases.

On that note, one song unabashedly stands out from the field: Skillet's first love song. "A Little More," with its smoother approach, shameless melodies and all-around air of positivity, is a far cry from the pulsating distortion display on the rest of *Collide*.

Another crucial element that's different on *Collide* is its focus. "I'd been sensing God's telling me that this album should be different—not so geared toward the church," Cooper reveals. "I'm pretty excited that this album could speak to non-Christians."

That meant including universal themes that those outside the church could relate to, yet would still point to God in cool, subtle ways. Not an easy task. But Cooper "went for broke," even exploring the issue of teen suicide in "Imperfection."

"That's a song for everyone who feels like they have nothing to offer, nothing good in their lives," Cooper explains. "There are a lot of bands

out there selling records to insecure teenagers because they play into their tendencies to not feel good about themselves. And when you look at the teen suicide rates, they're astounding!

"We want to let teens know they're worth something, that they're fearfully and wonderfully made," Cooper declares. "Everybody needs to understand that."

Cooper also infused his recollections of Sept. 11 into the album title itself. "It's the idea that there's a war out there between two worlds—faith and fear," he notes. "Since the events of 9/11, it's so much easier now to submit to fear in our lives. But God created us for more than that—He wants us to have faith in Him."

Now that the band is targeting the mainstream listener with its songs, does that mean you can catch the band at your local club? Ironically, don't plan on it.

"I'm content doing whatever God has told us to do," Cooper explains. "But I want the freedom to say why I wrote a particular song, and if playing in a club means I can't talk about that to the audience, then I'm not going to do it. We never play clubs. I'm not interested in *not* being a Christian band, you know? I love the Christian market and the audience."

Wherever they end up in concert, Cooper is just happy that his band personnel (wife, Korey, on keyboards and guitar, Ben Kasica on guitar, and Lori Peters, who Cooper gushes, "is just an animal on drums!") has stayed intact since the last album. Skillet has always seemed to be losing and gaining new band members. But now, he says proudly, "We've become more of a band than just the 'John and Korey project.'"

Funny how the more some things change, the more some things stay the same... **ccm**



"We want to let teens know they're worth something, that they're fearfully and wonderfully made. Everybody needs to understand that."

—John Cooper

(L-R): Korey Cooper, Ben Kasica, Lori Peters, John Cooper

after 20 years of plugging away as a successful group in the Christian market, NewSong suddenly made huge waves in 2001 with its smash hit, "The Christmas Shoes." Spotlighted on mainstream and Christian radio alike, the song also inspired a book and a movie. But even after its steady and successful history, does this unexpected turn of events label the group as a Christian novelty act?

"I'm grateful, and I'm not ashamed," founder and frontman Eddie Carswell says of NewSong's success. "In light of eternity I'm thankful to have something to be identified with. It's something I appreciate. We've had a lot of great things happen to us. That was just another chapter of God's entrusting us with something He wanted to happen. I'm praying that the movie is going to play this year and that the song will play on radio again so we can use that as a platform to represent Christ to whoever is out there. I don't want to get past that, but I don't want to get stuck there either."

Three years ago, NewSong—comprised of Matt Butler, Billy Goodwin, Michael O'Brien, Scotty Willbanks and Carswell—was preparing to release its 12th disc, *Sheltering Tree* (Reunion), when Carswell and former bandmate Leonard Ahlstrom penned "The Christmas Shoes." Although *Sheltering Tree* was not a holiday album, the tune was added to the disc anyway. The following year, the cut was released as a single to Christian stations and, thanks to its poignant message, crossed over to mainstream radio, landing at the No. 1 spot on *Billboard's* Adult Contemporary Singles chart. The song also inspired author Donna VanLiere to write the novella *The Christmas Shoes* (St. Martin's) that was translated into a movie of the same name starring Rob Lowe ("West Wing") and Kimberly Williams (*Father of the Bride*, "According to Jim"). "We were getting different opportunities through the song and movie," says Carswell. "We received so many letters and e-mails from people who were touched by what they heard on that record and saw on television.

"Before *Sheltering Tree* came out," Carswell continues, "people in the industry said, 'These are some awesome Christian songs to encourage the body [of Christ].' But we found that the unsaved were buying it for the Christmas song and getting all of our other messages. They were hearing things like, 'Nothing Without Christ.' That was the most exciting thing to me initially."

if the shoes fits

by Steven
Douglas
Losey



Shifting to the present, despite the rapid way that music trends change, NewSong is still making music that's both musically and lyrically viable—most recently on its 15th release, *More Life*. "Lyrically we're living in this world. I'm out there involved in the circumstances of everyday life, and that's what most of these songs are about—asking God to speak to my heart and then living my life and watching what's going on around me," Carswell explains. "We're like magnets. All the stuff of the world just clings to us. I think the whole CD is just God's giving people more of that peace, love and joy that they really want to see in their lives and less of, 'I don't know if I can make it through the day.'"

And how does a group like NewSong, with two decades and 16 albums to its name, continue to make this music relatable to generations of music listeners? "We started our ministry in the church service," Carswell confides. "You have to be able to do a lot of different musical things because there are all kinds of people there. God has had an impact on our lives and changed how we approach things, but the heart of it is the same. We produce other things, help young bands and listen to what we enjoy. That all affects what we do and how we approach things musically and lyrically. As God speaks to us, we try to distinguish what He's saying to us and, hopefully, it touches other people as well."

Another way NewSong has reached out to a broader audience is through its "Winter" and "Summer JAM" tours, founded by the band in 1995. The concerts feature a variety of music and styles, and for every veteran act on the stage, there are also newcomers like Detour 180, Todd Agnew, Royal Ruckus and Mizzie who were most recently on the bill. "Six or seven years ago nobody else was touring in the winter," says Carswell. "It was a great thing God gave us to do. We'd usually have five or six buddies out with us. It was typical to have crowds of 5,000 or so in the winter. We've had 15,000 before. You show up and pay \$10. If somebody doesn't have it, we let them in anyway."

When asked about the crowds that come to hear NewSong's music today, Carswell says, "It's just like our record. I think people are looking for a little *more life*. They're stressed, they're pulled, and they're torn. Rick Warren says in *The Purpose Driven Life* that, 'God puts enough time in our life to do His will.' Everything else is just stuff we're throwing in there. We just need to base our decisions on God's will and allow Him to put more of Himself in our day and less of the chaos." **ccm**

N e w S o n g
is grateful to have
written the song that
audiences can't seem
to get enough of. Now,
the group is ready
for the next step
as they unveil
its latest
effort,
*More
Life.*

(L-R): Matt Butler, Michael O'Brian, Eddie Carswell, Scotty Wilbanks, Billy Goodwin



KELLY MINTER —VS.— HERSELF

WHEN SHE MOVED TO NASHVILLE, KELLY MINTER HAD NO IDEA HER MUSICAL JOURNEY WOULD BE ANYTHING BUT SMOOTH SAILING. BUT AFTER THREE YEARS AND COUNTLESS “ROUNDS” WITH HER OWN EXPECTATIONS, KELLY IS FINALLY AT PEACE WITH HERSELF AND HER PLACE IN MUSIC. BY ELIZABETH IDLEWOOD

For Kelly Minter the Fourth of July in 2000, was a time of celebration on many levels. She had just arrived in Nashville from her native D.C. after inking a deal with Word Records. Back then, her enthusiasm resembled that of a child entering a McDonald's Playland for the first time. Standing before her were limitless places to explore and perfect opportunities for climbing. She was like a sponge, soaking up every ounce of music-related insight she could uncover—with good reason.

At the time, Minter was poised to be one of Christian music's next big female artists, walking in the shoes of her most admired predecessors: Kathy Troccoli, Margaret Becker and Kim Hill. That year, Minter stood on the threshold of releasing her debut album, *Good Things*—a title, which, by all indications, was the appropriate omen to begin her dream-come-true music career.

But like so many brink-of-success stories in entertainment, suddenly and without much warning, the bottom fell out.

Not long after *Good Things* released, Minter became the victim of a trimmed roster as her label was restructured. Just as magically as things had come together for the burgeoning young artist, they as unexpectedly unraveled. By 2001, Minter found herself alone in a vaguely familiar city with a new collection of songs and no record deal.

Today the determined Minter seems as enthusiastic as she was three years ago, though slightly less green behind the ears. She talks openly about what her life since then has meant: sacrifice, soul-searching and learning to be faithful.

"Spiritually, it was a really trying time because I felt very strongly that [music] is what the Lord had put on my heart to do," Minter recalls. "I never felt like this was something I had pushed, so it was a little bit like, 'OK, You told me to come out of Egypt and now I'm standing at the Red Sea. And it's not parting. What am I supposed to do now?'"

What she did was persevere. Minter promoted her first album despite the lack of label support, playing shows with Bebo Norman and Sonicflood, and set to work writing her first book, *Water Into Wine: Hope for the Miraculous and the Struggle of the Mundane* (Waterbrook), set to hit shelves next July. And, most significantly, she just released her long-awaited second album on her new label home, Cross Driven Records.

According to Minter, the album's title, *Wrestling the Angels*, was inspired by her reading of Jacob's struggle in Genesis. The story resonated with Minter. After she parted ways with her first label, the experience left her with a sudden loss of identity. "I remember coming to a point where things were so difficult and painful," Minter explains. "I looked at Jacob's prayer, and he was in the middle of this fight; but he asked the Lord not to let him out. That was monumental for me because I felt God was saying to me, 'Are you willing to stay in the wilderness until I use you, until I give you what I desire?'"

It's funny how things tend to come full circle. Not only did Minter's diligence result in a head full of knowledge and a slew of song material enriched by her misfortune, but an opportunity presented itself to come under the direction of Margaret Becker, an artist whose musical altitude Minter had long aspired to reach.

Wrestling the Angels, the organic-pop recording produced by Becker and Paul Buono, paves the way for Minter to pick up where she left off—this time more weathered and content to follow the simple advice Kim Hill offered her close to a decade ago: "Bloom where you're planted."

"When I got [to Nashville], I was looking on the surface at how God could bless me: Am I going to be successful as an artist? Will people respect me? Those were the things I was looking for God to show up in," Minter admits. "Instead, He stripped me dry of all those things. I realized that those were just the externals and that God wants to go deep in our lives. It's funny. Now I don't even know what's going on in our industry—not because I don't care about it, but because I'm more focused on issues of character and intimacy. My perspective is a lot different now." **ccm**

Sonicflood Cries Holy



Since the debut of **Sonicflood** four years ago, the band's name has become synonymous with modern worship. With its focus on the church, Sonicflood is committed to establishing this as its legacy.

by Michael Fernandez

Purpose.

It is defined by the dictionary as "the reason for which something is done or for which something exists," coupled with "resolve or determination."

Record-breaking athletic achievements, the most successful business ventures and humanitarian efforts aiding the sick and hungry in third world countries are all accomplishments realized because of the men and women who understood their purpose—and resolved to achieve it.

A reason for being—and a determination to fulfill the dream—are not mutually exclusive to the world's greatest athletes, the most powerful corporations or the compassionate entities that end its Web addresses with 'dot-org.' They also apply to the musical entity known as Sonicflood, who espouses living a life of purpose.

"The basic calling of Sonicflood is to lead people in worship," says the band's frontman, Rick Heil. "Our intent is to edify the church and to deepen its relationship with God. We really want to see the church on fire for the Lord."

It's a goal that Sonicflood, who rose to prominence with the self-titled 1999 debut, has carried into the 21st century with the group's most recent effort, *Cry Holy* (INO). With the proliferation of praise bands and the burgeoning number of worship CDs covering familiar tunes of adoration, there's always a temptation to either veer in a different lyrical direction or reinvent the praise wheel. Heil, along with lead guitarist Todd Shay, bassist Tom Michael, keyboardist Dave Alan and drummer Brett Vargason, didn't take the bait.

"We just tried to make the best worship album possible with songs from the heart that move the heart," says Heil. "We're not trying to woo someone from the world with mysterious word pictures. Time is too short to be ambiguous with our lyrics—as Christians we need to be bold in our faith."

And for Sonicflood, that means overt measures in its outreach to the church. In the midst of a concert replete with worship, voices raised and arms stretched skyward, hands are laid on those who seek spiritual and physical

"We're not trying to woo someone from the world with mysterious word pictures. Time is too short to be ambiguous with our lyrics—as Christians we need to be bold in our faith." —Heil

healing. Merchandise sales wait. Slick production and tight harmonies will resume momentarily. Right now, the boys in the band are leading the altar call—and fulfilling their vision.

"Rick's heart has been to see a band called to meet the needs of the church," says Vargason. "When we join people at the altar and pray for them, it breaks down that barrier between the audience and the group on the stage. All of a sudden, each of us are just brothers and sisters in Christ."

Breaking down barriers... building up families. That's Sonicflood's presentation in concert and in their recently created SonicPraise gatherings (weekend worship events merging artists and speakers who focus on the principles of praise from an

emotional and intellectual perspective).

"It's a time to educate and demystify what worship is all about—to know what the Word says about it, then take it back home and practically apply it as a family unit," states Heil.

In the midst of birthing new CD projects and Praise gatherings, Heil continually faces the challenges of Crone's disease (which he was diagnosed with at age 11), a chronic inflammation of the intestines.

"It's had a profound effect on my life, but [as the saying goes], 'What doesn't kill you makes you stronger,'" says Heil. "In dealing with this illness, I've learned I must trust the Lord completely."

Heil points to Romans 8:28, which affirms: "And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose for them."

"The only reason this band continues is that God wants it to continue," says Vargason. "...as He keeps it moving forward, we'll go along for the ride." **ccm**



Life Beyond Jesus Freak

Michael Tait & Co. prove once again that Tait isn't just a dc talk side project.



File under: Pop/Rock
For fans of... redemptive rock that resonates with spiritual truth.

Grade: B+

TAIT

Lose This Life ForeFront

A steady stream of live shows leads to sophomore success.

In the grand tradition of artists recording solo projects apart from the band that made them a household name, Michael Tait's first effort under the Tait moniker wasn't the usual exercise of artistic vanity. Rather, it comfortably reflected the diverse pop/rock musical sensibilities that dc talk embraced on its last studio project, *Supernatural* (ForeFront), with

catchy songs seemingly tailor-made for Christian radio.

While these songs could've been viewed as a safe choice to please the dc talk faithful, it was Tait's dynamic live show that upped the ante and really brought these songs to life. With Michael's incredible stage presence as a frontman, his remarkable ability to work a crowd and a stellar backing band that wasn't afraid to flex its musical muscle, Tait took an adequate group of songs and made them extraordinary in true rock 'n' roll splendor.

Now on the band's sophomore project, *Lose This Life*, it seems Tait has taken note of this musical memo and made an album that aptly showcases the strength of its live sound. With gutsy guitar punch, stronger arrangements that don't predictably bury the music beneath the vocals and a frisky, impromptu integration of tasteful electronic elements to keep things fresh, this project is a sonic quantum leap from its predecessor. Giving the best credence is the U2-esque buildup on the title track and the yearning guitar wail of "Wait." There's also the playful cover of Eddy Grant's '80s club mainstay "Electric Avenue," a rendition that's actually more fun than the original and even socially relevant as the lyrics are actually discernable. Before hearing this version, I had no idea what Grant was mumbling about. Now, everyone can rest easy.

Musically speaking, *Lose This Life* largely excels with Michael's trademark vocal delivery and the aforementioned musical progression. Lyrically, listeners can't help admiring that Michael and his fellow bandmates—namely drummer Chad Chapin—have stepped up to the plate with handling the bulk of the songwriting chores. But the occasional instances of simplistic lyrics and common takes on familiar Christian subject matter on tracks like "Free Will," "Fallen" and "Holding Out For Grace" leave room for continual songwriting growth on future endeavors. **CHRISTA FARRIS**



File under: Pop
Grade: B-
For fans of... inspirational songs with tight vocal harmonies.

4HIM Visible Warner/Curb
4HIM gets back to the basics with a few new frills.

On *Visible*, 4HIM's 11th studio album, there's a new musical flavor as the group enlisted the help of producer Pete Kipley, who has helped shape the sounds of MercyMe, Salvador and GlassByrd, among others. The musicianship on these tracks is outstanding, ranging from modern rock-influenced guitar chords to gorgeous string arrangements and even

some fun horns to mix things up.

Yet it's the selections produced by longtime collaborator Michael Omartian where the guys showcase their trademark vocal prowess. The lofty ballad "Candle in the Rain" and the mid-tempo "Bigger Than Life" feature impressive solos and harmonies, but it's "The Final Word" that arguably stands as the strongest track on the record. The lyrics build on the statement in 1 Corinthians 13 that "the greatest of these is love," and the top-notch vocals soar over a tight pop soundtrack. While *Visible* doesn't exactly break new ground for its genre, it is a consistent release that will find favor in the ears of 4HIM's faithful following. **JESSICA ROBIN**



File under: Hip-hop
Grade: A-
For fans of... rhymes with a spiritual conscience.

MARS ILL
Backbreakanomics Gotee
Tough issues tactfully tackled through smart rhymes

Hip-hop remains an underground phenomenon in Christian circles, which is unfortunate given its ability to deliver incisive social commentary. Take Mars ILL's second full-length, for example. Over circular beats and sinuous melodies, the Atlanta duo delivers rhymes on topics like domestic abuse, crass commercialism and

finding God in prison. It's not your typical suburban youth group fare; but, then again, hip-hop has never shied away from tough issues.

Emcee manCHILD and deejay Dust garnered attention with indie releases and an appearance on the 2001 multi-artist Deepspace 5 album *The Night We Called It A Day* (Uprok), but *Backbreakanomics* should propel them farther. On the key track "Alpha Male," which contrasts abusive and loving husbands, Dust shows a keen ear for dialogue and detail: "Honey, I'm home! Where's my dinner? And this place is a mess."

Add guest appearances by L.A. Symphony's Pigeon John, Ill Harmonics' Playdough and others, and *Backbreakanomics* finds itself as one of the year's top hip-hop discs. **ANTHONY DEBARROS**



File under: Rock
Grade: C-
For fans of... music with a rough, alternative rock feel.

DAKONA Perfect Change Maverick
Matchbox Twenty admirers will find lots to love here.

The true test of whether someone will like Dakona's debut from a musical perspective may lie in his or her opinion of pop rockers Matchbox Twenty. If there ever was a dead ringer for Rob Thomas & Co., it would be Vancouver-based foursome Dakona. So if you're a fan, you'll appreciate the scruffy vocals of frontman Ryan

McAllister and the post-alternative melodies supplied by his cohorts.

In some cases, Dakona comes off sounding more like a garage band, rarely breaking away from songs with few hooks. But deep down, it sounds like McAllister has some bravado he's itching to let loose. Just look to the moody intonations of "Beautiful Thing." Hopefully this album points to the band's potential since riff-heavy tracks like "Soul 4 Sale" and "Trust" are enjoyable musical diversions. **DAVID MCCREARY**



File under: Acoustic pop
Grade: A
For fans of... confessional songs with deep spiritual roots.

WARREN BARFIELD
Warren Barfield Creative Trust
Scott Krippayne proves to be an adept talent scout.

North Carolina native Warren Barfield unveils a disc full of radio-friendly acoustic music on his debut. The charismatic 24-year-old sings and plays his six-string guitar with lots of heart on songs that are well written and resonate with warm acoustics and Barfield's pleasant vocals. The song arrangements

are comprised of pretty standard guitar, drum and bass tracks, though each instrument is nicely layered—not cluttered—by producers Brown Bannister and Mark Hammond. Like the upbeat "My Heart Goes Out" that has hit the Christian radio charts, the catchy number "Beautiful Broken World" should follow suit, although "Whisper to Me" is a personal favorite with its plaintive, gently-picked guitar and breezy melody.

For the past five years Barfield has honed his chops in the coffeehouse and sanctuary scene as an indie artist. When he opened a show last year for songwriter Scott Krippayne, Krippayne was so impressed with the young singer that he brought him to Nashville and helped him score his first record deal. Comparisons to Bebo Norman abound with Barfield's same boyish good looks and simple story songs rooted in relationships and stripped-down sound. But he's no clone, so expect to see more of this unique, talented musician in coming months. **LIZZA CONNOR**

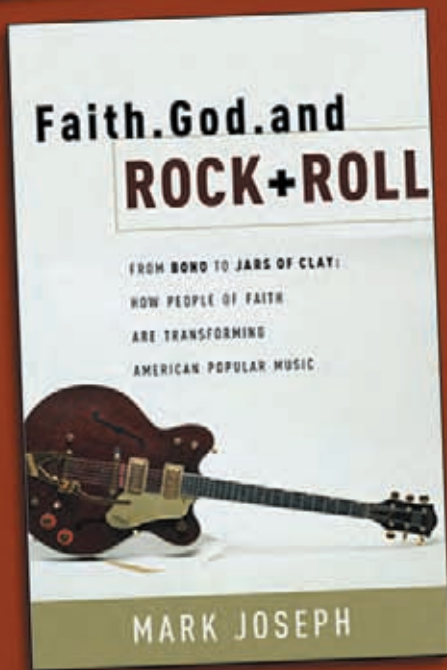
MAKING THE GRADE

See where your favorite artists rank as our panel grades this month's CDs.

Title	Artist/Band	Reviewer Grade <i>CCM Magazine</i>	Christa Farris <i>CCMmagazine.com</i>	Brian Mansfield <i>USA Today</i>	Andy Argyrakis <i>Chicago Tribune Contributor</i>	Robin Parrish <i>CMcentral.com</i>	Michael Herman <i>Christianitytoday.com</i>	John DiBiase <i>JesusFreakHideout.com</i>
<i>Lose This Life</i>	Tait	B+	B+	—	—	—	—	A
<i>Visible</i>	4Him	B-	C+	B-	D	B+	B-	B+
<i>Backbreakanomics</i>	Mars ILL	A-	B	B-	B	A-	A-	A
<i>Warren Barfield</i>	Warren Barfield	A	B	B-	B-	B	A-	A+
<i>Illuminate</i>	David Crowder Band	B	B+	C+	C+	A+	A	A
<i>Surrounded By Mercy</i>	Kim Hill	B+	B-	B	B-	B-	B+	B
<i>Phenomenon</i>	Thousand Foot Krutch	B	B	B	B	A	—	B+
<i>Becoming</i>	Christine Denté	A-	B	B+	B	A	A	A
<i>More Life</i>	NewSong	B	C	B-	D-	B+	B-	C+
<i>Perfect Change</i>	Dakona	C-	C-	—	C	A	A+	C+

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Jars of Clay, Lenny Kravitz, U2, Creed, Lauryn Hill, Sixpence None the Richer, Destiny's Child, P.O.D., and Lifehouse are just a few of

the artists profiled in *Faith, God, and Rock & Roll* who signed with secular labels, but still make music that speaks of faith in God.

Get a sneak peek into the stories of their unique journeys of faith—and at how they are changing music and changing lives.

"Can Christian musicians effectively approach the thriving places of rock and roll with godly passion and cultural relevance? In the face of continued debate, Mark Joseph provides us necessary fuel to perpetuate this important dialogue."

—Dan Haseltine, lead singer, Jars of Clay



File under: Praise & Worship/Acoustic rock
Grade: B
For fans of... inventive worship songs with varied instrumentation.

DAVID CROWDER BAND
Illuminate Sixstep/Sparrow
The spotlight shines bright on Crowder's sophomore disc. Perhaps the first characteristic listeners will notice on *Illuminate* is how vulnerable David Crowder's voice sounds. His is not a big, bold instrument of authority, like that of so many other contemporary worship leaders. Instead, he comes off sounding more reverent. Musically speaking, this release falls in the primarily acoustic modern-rock vein with electric guitar and keyboard adding colorful touches. While the album features Crowder's unique compositions, there are also some familiar tunes. Highlights include the slightly tripped-out version of the hymn "Heaven Came Down," which rides over blipping keyboard and stuttering percussion, and "All Creatures #2" (a renamed "All Creatures of Our God and King") with a catchy, modern soundtrack. Some of his songs bring Delirious' work to mind, which is best demonstrated by the breathy vocal and chirpy keyboard work of "Revolutionary Love." But ultimately it's the diversity of songs and creativity in arrangements that set *Illuminate* apart as a shining example of modern praise & worship. **DAN MACINTOSH**



File under: Praise & Worship
Grade: B+
For fans of... live worship with Kim Hill's trademark vocal flare.

KIM HILL
Surrounded By Mercy Fervent
Kim Hill's comeback couldn't have come sooner. After a four-year absence from the recording scene, Kim Hill releases her third live worship album. And this is, by far, Hill's boldest musical offering from the "Renewing the Heart" series. Fresh arrangements on standards mixed with a few new tunes co-written by Hill and notables Rita Springer, Scott Krippayne, Judie Lawson and Jamie Kenney make this album a necessary addition to anyone's worship collection. This latest live experience is highlighted by Ashley Cleveland's arrangement of "Revive Us Again." A bluesy version of this enduring hymn is classic Cleveland and is molded to fit Kim Hill's Memphis-rock roots to perfection. Another shining moment comes with Hill's arrangement of Chris Tomlin's "Famous One." Also consistent with this album's intrepid sound is an unfamiliar but viable medley between two familiar titles: the hymn "My Jesus I Love Thee" with Waterdeep's popular praise chorus "You Are So Good to Me."

As a seasoned veteran of the recording industry, Hill's foray into the wide world of worship has proven to be a territory in which she flourishes. *Surrounded By Mercy* firmly entrenches Hill as one of Christian music's leading ladies of worship. **KEVIN SPARKMAN**



File under: Pop/Adult Contemporary
Grade: B
For fans of... well-blended harmonies delivered in reverent style.

NEWSONG More Life Reunion
The next chapter of life is still evolving. Following the extraordinary success of its album *Christmas Shoes*, which received a 2003 Grammy nomination and captured a Dove Award for Musical of the Year, NewSong returns with *More Life*, the group's 15th career disc. Replete with NewSong's trademark lush harmonies, pop-imbued power tracks and richly melodic ballads abound. Ear pleasers worth noting include the bouncy number "Life in My Day," reminding listeners to seek Christ even when times get chaotic, and the breezy "Cherish," expressing gratitude for God's mercy and grace. While few tracks disappoint, the quintet's rendition of Keith Green's classic "Love Broke Through" isn't as imaginative as one might hope. But high expectations are met on the well-known worship tune "You Are My King," with spine-tingling layered vocals that will send folks searching for the "repeat" button.

Overall *More Life* resonates with enough spiritual and musical depth to make for a worthwhile listen. **DAVID MCCREARY**

Ask for it in the book section of your local bookstore.

story behind the song

'YOU ARE SO GOOD TO ME' by Waterdeep

You may be familiar with "You are So Good to Me" because you've sung it in church or you've heard it on Third Day's *Offerings II* (Essential) project. What you may not know is that it was actually written more than eight years ago by Don Chaffer of Waterdeep.

Though the group is currently concentrating on "straightforward rock 'n' roll," its roots lie in worship music. Chaffer, one of the founders of the band, regularly lead worship at a weekly Bible study. The backbone of "You are So Good to Me" took shape on one of those evenings.

"I started strumming these two chords that make up the verse and chorus and improvised the lyrics for all three verses. I would repeat the verse after I made it up, and everybody sang along. The verses never changed from that night when they just popped out under inspiration of the moment," Chaffer remembers.

It wasn't recorded until about five years later. When Ben and Robin Pasley of the group 100 Portraits asked Waterdeep to record *Enter the Worship Circle* (Grassroots) with them, Chaffer sent them some ideas for songs, including the improvised "You are So Good to Me." The Pasleys added a bridge and a different chorus to create the version known today. Chaffer found that the new lyrics "helped tie it all together." He continues, "The song is about the Trinity, and the

Pasley's chorus about God being a song compliments the bridge "You are my strong melody, my dancing rhythm, my perfect rhyme." The three aspects of the song metaphor relate to the last lines of each verse "You are my Father in heaven . . . Spirit inside me . . . Jesus who loves me."

Created out of an intense and intimate time of worship, the song continues to affect people in a great way, even around the world. "We've actually had translations sent to us in Spanish and other languages," says Chaffer, and missionaries have reported hearing it in other languages.

And all it took to make the Third Day rendition happen was a simple phone call. "Mac [Powell, Third Day frontman] called me one day and left a message on my cell phone saying, 'Hey, we're wanting to cover your song. Is that OK?'" Chaffer recalls. "I called back to say, 'Absolutely,' and that was that. The song has been through several permutations—the original recording was just acoustic, the second one was our band [on the album *You are So Good to Me*], and they've done it in their style."

Chaffer believes the song's strength is its simplicity. "It's a striking thing to me that a lot of worship music is extremely simple, but it's in the simplicity that we are able to settle our minds enough to focus." A simple tune which focuses on a perfect and complex song.

JESSICA ROBIN



"It's a striking thing to me that a lot of worship music is extremely simple, but it's in the simplicity that we are able to settle our minds enough to focus."

DON & LORI CHAFFER



File under: Rock **Grade:** B
For fans of... modern rock with maturity and depth.

THOUSAND FOOT KRUTCH

Phenomenon Tooth & Nail
Emerging as leaders of the rock 'n' roll pack

It seems that rap-rock as "the latest thing" has finally gone the way of the buffalo, and Thousand Foot Krutch thankfully got the memo. On the band's latest release, TFK—now a trio—shows a level of musical and lyrical maturity needed to distinguish them from the pack.

Full of energy and well-written songs, TFK's album still captures a modern rock feel, loud and heavier sounds and punk rock swagger ("Last Words"). But despite this bravado, the trio is still unafraid to softly sing the hidden fears and desires of regular kids ("Rawk First"). For this genre, *Phenomenon* is a treat and far surpasses anything TFK has recorded to date. **ANTHONY BARR-JEFFREY**



File under: Pop **Grade:** A-
For fans of... Out of the Grey with a strictly feminine perspective.

CHRISTINE DENTÉ

Becoming Rockettown
Come see the softer side of Out of the Grey.

Christine Denté and husband Scott have been creating depth-filled, artful albums as Out of the Grey for more than a decade. Here we get that same distinctive songwriting approach (Scott did produce, after all)—just with Christine's lyrics and point of view, as well as some classy piano flourishes.

Among the highlights are "The Only Thing that Counts," a catchy take on Galatians 5:6; "Summer," a lush, otherworldly celebration of being carefree; and "Take it from Here," a magically melodic and climactic plea for worldwide sanity. While *Becoming* was created from the perspective of a wife and mother, its appeal is universal.

DAVE URBANSKI



THE ACCUSED
Craig Parshall

Harvest

As attorney Will Chambers sweeps his new bride, Feona, to Cancún for a romantic honeymoon, their marital bliss quickly crumbles when Will learns of a new development in the unsolved case of his first wife's brutal murder. At the same time, an international disaster thrusts Will into a new legal case. A secret U.S. team botches an ambush against a terrorist cell in Mexico, and Will must defend a decorated Marine colonel against charges of war crimes and the murder of innocent civilians. As Will confronts the demons from his past and the evil of the present, he learns about sacrifice and God's healing power through forgiveness.

Action, mystery, treachery and romance will whisk you through the pages of this legal

thriller. While some of the plot connections feel a bit far-fetched, the references to current events make the story seem plausible and relevant. This third book in the "Chambers of Justice" series will surely captivate veteran and rookie Parshall readers with likeable characters and exciting plot twists. **KAREN LANGLEY**



BETRAYAL IN PARIS
Doris Elaine Fell

Howard

Two methods of storytelling produce a successful piece of fiction: One keeps the reader turning pages to find out how it's going to end; the other motivates page turning by slowly unveiling pieces to the puzzle until the image begins to take shape. Doris Elaine Fell utilizes the latter with *Betrayal in Paris*.

The first few chapters may not automatically instill interest and curiosity, but as more characters are introduced and time goes by, a compelling story is revealed. Fell is a master at intertwining real people and actual events with those from her imagination. Ultimately, *Betrayal in Paris* is a portrait of how terrorism affects one family over three generations. The spiritual perspective is there, but Fell lets it develop naturally as the characters discover the truth.

One challenge to reading this book, however, is the frequency at which the point of view changes. It may not always be obvious who is thinking what at some intervals. But once the story is told and the puzzle is complete, the emerging representation will leave a lasting impression. **JESSICA ROBIN**

Lord of the Rings spotlight

As "Middle Earth" enthusiasts gear up for the 3rd installment with the release of *The Lord of the Rings: Return of the King* at a multiplex near you on Dec. 17, discussion of J.R.R. Tolkien's books still remains all the rage. And now several books relating to the series' spiritual elements are also gaining popularity. Read our reviews of two recent releases right here:



**WALKING WITH FRODO:
A DEVOTIONAL JOURNEY
THROUGH THE LORD OF
THE RINGS**

Sarah Arthur

Tyndale

For the unacquainted, *The Lord of the Rings* (LOTR), is an epic tale (by one of the Christian community's literary giants) that's spawned a \$300 million movie trilogy. Like the popular "Harry Potter" series, the books are thick with the story told in minuscule print, yet the younger generation (and just about everyone else) can't seem to get enough.

In contrast, *Walking with Frodo* is a slim "LOTR for Dummies" of sorts that helps connect the dots between Sunday school and Middle Earth. It's a noble idea to analyze the choices LOTR characters make and help teens see the good, the bad and the ugly and apply the appropriate lesson. The book explores positive and negative choices like pride vs. humility and despair vs. hope and offers Bible verses and study questions. The writing is conversational, and the lessons are backed with examples from Tolkien's world, though there's not always a lot of meaty takeaway value. But as a companion to the largely successful series, this book will certainly pique curiosity about the books' deeper messages and practical applications. **KEVIN D. HENDRICKS**



**FOLLOWING GANDALF:
EPIC BATTLES AND MORAL
VICTORY IN THE LAND**

Matthew Dickerson

Brazos

Thanks to Peter Jackson's film-adaptation of "The Lord of the Rings" trilogy, Web sites, books and college classes, among other things, have sprung up to assuage the fascination with J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle Earth. Add to that list *Following Gandalf: Epic Battles and Moral Victory in The Lord of the Rings*, and you have an excellent resource for the college student with an upcoming paper or simply a *Rings* enthusiast.

Important to know before reading *Following Gandalf*, however, is the need to be well-versed with plotlines and characters. Also, one must read the book—not just see the movies—since many of the nuances author Matthew Dickerson refers to can only be understood with the text in mind.

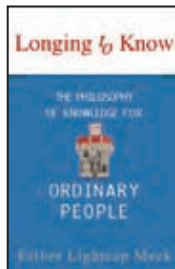
To that end, via detailed explanations and specific examples, Dickerson theorizes about how Tolkien portrays war, the importance of moral over military victory and the importance of moral responsibility that pervades all of Tolkien's writings.

The result is a well-documented, in-depth study for *Rings* lovers looking for more than just entertainment. **STEPHANIE OTTOSEN**

**LONGING TO KNOW:
THE PHILOSOPHY OF KNOWLEDGE
FOR ORDINARY PEOPLE**

Esther Lightcap Meek

Brazos



How do we really know something? This philosophy professor/author tackles Polanyi's theory of knowledge, or epistemology, and argues that knowing God is often like knowing your auto mechanic. Intriguing.

Starting with a short history of philosophy, the author analyzes the knowing process and applies her auto-mechanic theme to how to respond to doubts, faith, reason and even making mistakes. Using many personal experiences, she also references popular movies and books, including *The Hunt for Red October* and C.S. Lewis' *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe*. But these illustrations are the exception rather than the rule in this scholarly work. In fact, Meek herself suggests reading a chapter at a time because of the denseness of her subject.

While a gallant effort is made at simplifying this heady theory, the end result will probably appeal more to theology students and deep thinkers than the average reader. But an average "Joe" could learn a lot in the process if he/she is willing to accept the challenge.

TRACY & C.J. DARLINGTON



SHOO FLY PIE

Tim Downs

Howard

Kathryn Guilford does not believe her childhood friend could have possibly committed suicide, so she calls on the help of

Dr. Nick Polchak, the only person she trusts to be objective. Nick, a forensic entomologist whose moniker is "The Bugman," has an intriguing past, as he's had difficulties with the law. While investigating the case, Nick and Kathryn uncover many secrets Kathryn is not sure she is ready to confront.

Shoo Fly Pie is an entertaining introduction into the world of forensic entomology that is informative, educational and entertaining. Those who are fans of the hit television show "CSI" (especially fans of the character Gil Grissom and his fascination with bugs), should enjoy Tim Downs' first novel that could become the first in a series of books to keep readers eagerly turning the pages. **SUZIE WALTNER**

**IF SINGLENES IS A GIFT,
WHAT'S THE RETURN POLICY?**

Holly Virden

with Michelle McKinney Hammond

Thomas Nelson



If you're a single woman, the catchy title alone will pique your interest. But don't get the wrong impression; this book does more than commiserate with singles. It declares that "going solo" can actually be fun.

Serving the usual fare about dating, frustrations, loneliness, self-worth, sex, etc., it also offers lots of encouragement, using stories (both personal and biblical) and a hefty dose of humor. Who couldn't love a chapter entitled "I'm Fishing with a 'Jerk Bait' Lure"?

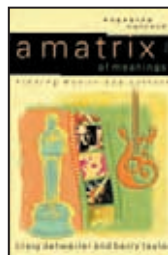
At times, Holly's rants about her singleness grow a bit tiresome (Michelle seems more content with her single life), and it would have been nice to have even more discussion on the many benefits of singleness. But, overall, this is a fun and inspiring read every single female should enjoy. Michelle hits a home run when she says, "There's a huge enjoyment factor in singleness. No, every day is not a picnic but neither is every day of marriage."

TRACY & C.J. DARLINGTON

**A MATRIX OF MEANINGS:
FINDING GOD IN POP CULTURE**

Craig Detweiler and Barry Taylor

Baker Academic



What do U2, Tony Soprano, *The Matrix* and *Harry Potter* have in common? They've all become fodder for Christians striving to be "relevant" in a postmodern world. *A Matrix of Meanings* hopes to validate that

desire, diving into pop culture to find God beneath the surface. It can serve as a basic introduction and defense of postmodernism. But it's more of a call for the church to be discerning, thoughtful and adaptive, rather than hopping on the latest bandwagon.

The analysis is deep and wide, covering "The Simpsons," extreme sports, *Fight Club*, body piercing, Moby, celebrity idolatry, reality TV and even the world of advertising. While the academic approach can kill the fun of reading about pop culture and the broad categories make for easy oversights, the discoveries are clear. Religion, spirituality and, yes, God are hovering beneath the surface of

pop culture. The question is: What are we going to do about it? **KEVIN D. HENDRICKS**

DARK HORSE

John Fischer

Revell



In *Dark Horse*, John Fischer spins an allegorical tale of a multi-colored stallion who longs to be white, which is what he thinks all good horses are supposed to be. He lives on a ranch where he's taught good white horsemanship, and he strives

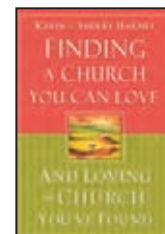
harder and harder to be the good white horse that everyone expects him to be—until the Dark Horse comes and shows him the way to the one true White Horse. The journey is filled with difficulty, danger and many dilemmas, but ultimately it frees him to become who he was created to be. He even begins leading others in the way of the White Horse!

Revell is re-releasing this contemporary classic to celebrate the 20th anniversary of its original publication. At just 80 pages, *Dark Horse* is a quick and easy read, but it contains deep spiritual insight that will stay with you long after you turn the last page. **AARON KING**

**FINDING A CHURCH YOU CAN LOVE AND
LOVING THE CHURCH YOU'VE FOUND**

Kevin & Sherry Harney

Zondervan



Church hopping? Church shopping? This book may become your new best friend. The Harneys have written a book that is easy to read, with a practical yet personal approach.

Steeped in Scripture, *Finding* first lays the foundation for what the church is, what its purpose is and why we should be a part of it, then covers core doctrinal beliefs that a congregation must hold onto in order to truly be considered "Christian." The authors also raise other controversial issues that ought to be considered before one joins a church, such as method of baptism, style of worship and expression of spiritual gifts.

Throughout the book, the Harneys wisely encourage the reader to be prayerful while looking for a church home. User-friendly questionnaires and evaluation forms are included as well to help the reader apply topics covered to his or her own experience.

Those in need of a church home who wish to have a methodical and organized plan for their search will benefit from this book. **AARON KING**

DRIVING RHYTHMS AND CRUSHING CYMBALS

FROM GEAR TO THE GREATEST KITS AVAILABLE, WE HIGHLIGHT DRUM NEWS OF NOTE

YAMAHA CUSTOM OAK KIT

"Solid as an oak tree" means something here. In drum world, "oak" translates into "loud" since the density and fine grain of oak are perfect for creating a big sound. Yamaha has refined the "loud" to include impressive tone and quick response. With its seven-ply kick and six-ply toms, this kit will stand up to garage-band abuse and dozens of trips in the back of the van. Oak's natural beauty combined with Yamaha's reputation for quality results in a kit that is as easy to look at as it is to play. It's available in a superb, natural finish or an even more amazing matte Sedona red that imbues the entire kit with an air of sophistication far beyond what its price should warrant. Want to be heard above the Marshall stacks or, perhaps, just annoy the neighborhood? Then buy these drums.

\$2599

yamaha.com



TAMA SWINGSTAR 522DT KIT

Yes, Tama is still making the Swingstar line, and it still rocks after all these years. You won't, however, find the Swingstar playing on oldies stations. It, like Sean Connery, just keeps getting better with time. From the Accu-Tune hoops on the kick, through the Omniball tom holders, to the mahogany shells, Tama keeps improving the line without cutting back on features or raising the price. For instance, the hardware is now double braced for rigidity and has a new thicker tube and lowered tip point for greater stability when holding heavy cymbals. Additionally, the tom shells are now built exactly like the more expensive models from Tama, and the finishes are almost as ornate. In summary, the root word for "Tama" must be the same as the root for "value."

\$1099

tama.com

MAPEX V-SERIES KIT

In about a decade, Mapex has gone from jobber-issued acceptable to first-tier desirable on most drummers' wish lists. The V-Series explains why. First, the drums sound great, with a forward, aggressive attack that stops sweetly short of brittle. Thanks to some good tech details like wooden hoops, self-dampening heads, low-mass lugs and low-tolerance machining, the V-Series reacts as if it costs twice the price. Secondly, the team at the factory is made up of actual drummers whose passion is evident in the packaging, finishes and layouts. Finally, the company is small enough to turn quirks into trends yet large enough to develop reasonable economies of scale to achieve competitive pricing. Drummers are a conservative lot whose cling to the past is vise-tight; yet they are being persuaded to try something new by the incredible value and quality of the Mapex line.

\$899

mapexdrums.com



PEARL SOUND CHECK KIT

They're real "Pearls," not a knock-off, and they sound and play like the real thing. Getting a full drum kit to sound like drums for less than \$800 isn't easy, but Pearl has done it. From the nine-ply mahogany shells to the double-braced hardware, nothing here smacks of cheap. Backed by a three-year warranty, the Sound Check kit is easy on the wallet, easy on the ears and even easy on the eyes with its exclusive black-wrapped finish. For anyone wanting to get started drumming or for a second kit in the rehearsal hall, Sound Check is worth checking out.

\$799

pearldrums.com



GATOR CASES GP-22

There are other hard-shell molded cymbal cases on the market, but most have to be carried to the gig. Gator has equipped the GP-22 with wheels and a handy telescoping handle that makes toting eight cymbals (up to 22 inches in diameter) easy. Standard locking clips hold the cymbals in place, and ergonomic moldings ease the placement and removal of the precious cargo while protecting it from roadie gorillas and other unsavory life forms found backstage at gigs. The price is right, and the wheels mean you'll have enough energy left to play "Wipeout" twice in one night.

\$109

gatorcases.com

SABIAN XS20

Cast bronze is the correct way to construct a quality cymbal. Unfortunately, it is also far more expensive a process than simpler yet aurally inferior sheet-bronzing techniques. Sabian has found a way to deliver castings at sheet prices. The XS series is a tremendous value in cymbal kits and is as superior to cheap "pie pan" cymbals as a Jaguar is to a Yugo.

Complete four-piece sets start at \$509

sabian.com

new releases in music

pop

snapshot



Jars of Clay,
Who We Are Instead
November 4
(Essential)



Gracefully balancing themes of joy and suffering, Jars of Clay maintains its distinctive harmonies and signature guitar sounds while musically exploring gospel, blues, rock and organic influences on *Who We Are Instead*. Primarily self-produced in Jar's own Sputnik Studios, the project also employs the talents of Ron Aniello (Lifehouse, Guster, Barenaked Ladies) as well as friends Ashley Cleveland, Ken Coomer (Wilco) and Ben Mize (Counting Crows.)

rock

The Insyderz, *Soundtrack to a Revolution*
November 11 (Floodgate)

After a three year hiatus, The Insyderz are back with its own fun brand of punk-ska-rock. *Soundtrack to a Revolution* gets the band back to its roots with fun music that focuses on ministry.

Skillet, *Collide*
November 4 (Ardent)

Produced by Paul Ebersold (3 Doors Down), *Collide* sees a departure from keyboard-driven sounds and delves into a grittier, guitar-dominated pedigree.

new releases in books

feminine insight

Beside Every Good Man: Loving Myself While Standing by Him, Serita Ann Jakes (Warner Faith)

How to stand by your man in a godly way is the key to this enlightening book by the founder of the Women's Ministries at the Potter's House and wife of Bishop T.D. Jakes.

snapshot



Plus One, *Exodus*
November 18
(Inpop Records)



With more than 1.5 million records sold in less than three years, the award-winning, record-breaking band returns with its fourth project, *Exodus*. Produced by Newsboy's frontman Peter Furler, *Exodus* features ten songs written or co-written by Plus One members Nate Cole, Gabe Combs and Nathan Walters.

snapshot



Tait, *Lose This Life*
November 4 (ForeFront)

The guys in Tait are focusing on one thing with the release of its new album—to make a record that connects, both musically and lyrically with fans. Following up the hit-filled debut *Empty*, *Lose This Life* not only challenges listeners with its lyrics but also stirs the soul.



snapshot



Jennifer Knapp,
A Diamond in the Rough: The Jennifer Knapp Collection
November 4 (Gotee)

Disc one of this two disc set features the very best of Jennifer Knapp as selected online by her fans. Disc two is comprised of rare tracks including a special duet version of "Say Won't You Say" featuring Michael Tait. Disc two also includes out-takes, Knapp's contributions to various compilation albums, demos and other rarities.



Do You Think I'm Beautiful? Bible Study and Journal, Angela Thomas (Nelson)

Excerpts from *Do You Think I'm Beautiful?* are paired with in-depth Bible study questions and ample space for recording thoughts and responses.

Keep the Candle Burning: 24 Reflections from Our Favorite Songs, Point of Grace (Warner Faith)

Based on the 24 No.1 hits from popular contemporary Christian artists Point of Grace, this inspirational collection is sure to translate across all generational lines and help readers grow personally in their own spiritual lives.

Irrepressible Hope, Women of Faith (W)

A 60-day devotional from the Women of Faith

worship oriented

Michael Gungor, *Bigger Than My Imagination*
November 11 (Vertical)

At 22, worship artist and songwriter Michael Gungor is carving a niche for himself in worship music. His lyrics and innovative music style are captured on his latest release, *Bigger Than My Imagination*, co-produced by Gungor and Dove Award nominee Israel Houghton.

Kathryn Scott, *Satisfy*
November 11 (Vertical)

Kathryn Scott, writer of "Breathe," makes her solo album debut with *Satisfy*. Recorded in Northern Ireland where she and her husband co-pastor a church, *Satisfy* offers 12 songs including six new songs penned by Scott.

speakers that identifies the emotions that come from a life void of hope and directs readers to the source of all hope—Christ.

True Images: The Bible for Teen Girls, Paige Drygas, General Editor (Zondervan)

The only NIV Bible specifically for girls ages 13-16 who are learning to better understand themselves and their relationships with God, family, friends.

going deeper

The 10 Building Blocks for a Happy Family, Jim Burns (Regal)

Centered around 10 principles for successful, happy families, this book gives hope to parents who need a

little encouragement to gain confidence in their ability to create a loving, nurturing family atmosphere.

40 Days Beyond the Veil, Alice Smith (Regal)

This 40-day devotional journey springs from the subject matter contained in the best-seller *Beyond the Veil*.

Approaching God: Daily Reflections for Growing Christians, Paul Enns (Kregel)

A year's worth of devotional reading that uses explanations of key Christian doctrines to open new vistas of God's call for intimacy.

Hard to Believe, John MacArthur (Nelson)

Best-selling author John MacArthur gets to the heart of Christian faith and discipleship by revealing the challenging things Jesus had to say about being His true follower.

Holiness, Henry Blackaby (Nelson)

Author Henry Blackaby urges believers to look inward to see sin from God's perspective and to live to the standard He has set in Scripture.

How Jewish Is Christianity? Two Views on the Messianic Movement, Stanley N. Grundy, Series Editor and Louis Goldberg, General Editor (Zondervan)

Contemporary contributors present informed arguments and counter-arguments focusing on whether Messianic congregations are necessary or if Jewish believers should be incorporated into the Gentile church.

Life Unlimited: When Average Just Isn't Enough, John Bolin (Multnomah)

Looks at ways to develop your health, leadership skills, relationships, and devotional life in a simple yet integrated fashion—the way Jesus did.

Lights, Drama, Worship! Plays, Sketchings, and Readings for the Church, Karen F. Williams (Zondervan)

A diverse collection of dramas, skits and recitations, complete with production and staging instructions, this four-volume collection is especially appropriate for multicultural churches.

The Pursuit of Holiness 25th Anniversary Edition, Jerry Bridges (NavPress)

In this special edition of *The Pursuit of Holiness*, Jerry Bridges sheds light on anew perspective on holiness.

Reading the Bible for the Love of God, Alan Reynolds (Brazos Press, a division of Baker Book House)

Focuses on the Bible being invitation to enter into a relationship with God, not simply an object for study, collection of documents, or abstraction of religion.

Selling Ourselves Short: Why We Struggle to Earn a Living and Have a Life, Catherine M. Wallace (Brazos)

A call to stop selling ourselves short and instead create lives shaped by personal integrity, stable personal relationships and moral commitments.

The Seven Sins of Highly Defective People, Rick Ezell (Kregel)

Award-winning author Rick Ezell takes an unconventional look at seven besetting sins, their debilitating effects, and how to break their power in our lives.

Thinking Against the Grain: The Biblical Worldview in a Culture of Myths, N. Allan Moseley (Kregel)

In a world of relativism and ambiguity, this highly readable book answers the question "What does it really mean to be a Christian?"

Unashamed: A Burning Passion to Share the Gospel, Floyd McElveen (Multnomah)

With contagious passion and personal authority from a lifetime's work of evangelism, Floyd McElveen shows why evangelism is your highest priority as a Christian.

What Does God Know and When Does He Know It? The Current Controversy over Divine Foreknowledge, Millard J. Erickson (Zondervan)

This book investigates both Classic theists and Open theists beliefs about God, and presents a definite conclusion at the end.

A Year with C.S. Lewis: Daily Readings from his Classic Works, C.S. Lewis (Zondervan)

Provides 366 daily readings comprised from Lewis's celebrated Signature Classics, including *Mere Christianity*, *The Screwtape Letters*, *The Great Divorce*, *The Problem of Pain*, *Miracles* and *A Grief Observed*.

intotheword

31 Days of Power: Learning to Live in Spiritual Victory, Ruth Myers (Multnomah)

Every day for just one month, this trustworthy 31-day devotional will give you the strength from God to overcome.

Arabs in the Shadow of Israel: The Unfolding of God's Prophetic Plan for Ishmael's Line, Tony Maalouf (Kregel)

A compelling call for Christians to rethink the role of Arabs in the plan of God. Foreword by Eugene Merrill.

Christian Basics: An Invitation to Discipleship, John Stott (Baker)

An introduction to the Christian faith that provides a refresher course in the fundamentals.

Favorite Psalms: Growing Closer to God, John Stott (Baker)

Gain a better understanding of 38 favorite Psalms with Stott's scholarly exposition and practical application.

The Kregel Pictorial Guide to Solomon's Temple, Peter Pohle and Tim Dowley (Kregel)

This colorful book includes fascinating information about Solomon's ancient wonder and includes a model to assemble.

Life in Christ: A Guide for Daily Living, John Stott (Baker)

Profound yet practical help for daily life that explores phrases in Scripture that speak of a Christian's relationship to Christ and his power.

Living the Message, Eugene Peterson (HarperSanFrancisco)

Living the Message is an engaging yearlong reader with 366 selections from Peterson's lifetime of reflection on prayer, Scripture, spirituality, and community.

Christian Pop/Rock

Christianity Today says REV21 is one of America's "10 Indy Artists You Should Know"

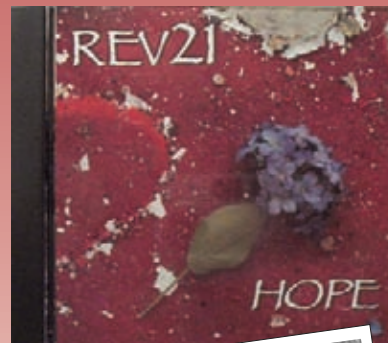


Photo of Rick and Tim Hammond by Mark Lang 615-354-1930

Listen for their recently released single, "Forgiven"

and hear it now at:
www.SlingshotRecords.org



"It's Yahweh or the highway."

For concert and/or testimony booking call 615-302-1162

www.Rev21.org

otherscentered

Revolution: The Bible for Teen Guys, Christopher D. Hudson, General Editor (Zondervan)

The only NIV Bible specifically for teen guys challenges young readers to honor God, respect girls and provide positive changes in the lives of other young men, while offering them God's message. **Crazymakers,**

Paul Meier, M.D., and Robert L. Wise, Ph.D. (Nelson)

Doctors Meier and Wise offer sound advice for recognizing and dealing with the difficult, narcissistic people we each encounter.

The Heart of Mentoring, Dave Stoddard and Robert Tamasy (NavPress)

Authors Dave Stoddard and Robert Tamasy demonstrate through The Heart of Mentoring that

through opening your life to others, you can instill in them a confidence to pursue their dreams and motivate them to develop character in every aspect of their life.

thepowerofastory

The Faith of George W. Bush, Stephen Mansfield (Strang)

Are all the email urban legends true about the president? This book researches the facts behind the story to bring a picture of the president and the role his faith has played in his life.

Jumping In Sunset, Dawn Ringling (Multnomah)

When her husband of twenty years leaves her, Pamela begins to question the faithfulness of a God who seems to act contrary to His Word.

Summer's End, Lyn Cote (HeartQuest)

When Dr. Kirsi Royston takes on a practice in Steadfast, Wisconsin, strange things begin to happen, and it's up to Dr. Doug Erickson to protect Kirsi from the danger that pursues her.

thegiftofwords

Praise in the Presence of God, Jack W. Hayford (J Countryman)

A collection of 365 daily devotions that focuses on the majesty of God, and discovers His hand in the midst of a culture calling us away from His peace.

The Search for Significance—Student Edition, Robert McGee (Thomas Nelson)

The teen edition of the million-seller by Robert McGee, with updated practical application points for teenagers.

Wild at Heart Journal, John Eldredge (J Countryman)

John Eldredge revisits the concepts of the best-selling book Wild at Heart and invites men to explore their hearts and journal their adventures.

thenewgeneration

Bloom: a Girl's Guide to Growing Up, Susie Shellenberger, General Editor (Focus on the Family/Tyndale House)

Written from a "big sister" perspective, *Bloom: a Girl's Guide to Growing Up* addresses issues from changing bodies to dating and sex and responds with straightforward honesty.

Boom: a Guy's Guide to Growing Up, Michael Ross, General Editor (Focus on the Family/Tyndale House)

Boom: a Guy's Guide to Growing Up uses a low-profile approach to tackle all the issues guys face, from physical changes to money management.

Living Extreme for Jesus Devotional, Tony B. Rhoda (Transit)

This devotional offers daily readings, Scriptures and action points challenging teens to live for Jesus completely and totally, whatever the cost.

The Transit Student Prayer Journal (Transit)

A timeless keepsake in which teens can record their conversations with God.

Walking with Frodo: A Devotional Journey Through The Lord of the Rings, Sarah Faulman Arthur (Tyndale House/Thirsty)

A devotional book for young adults that looks at the biblical themes found in the best-selling epic, The Lord of the Rings.

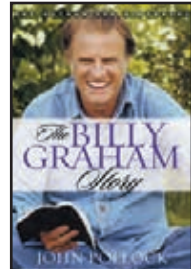
Christmas

Seeking the Christmas Lamb, Tamara Buchin (NavPress)

In *Seeking the Christmas Lamb*, daily readings for each day of Advent reveal the meaning of this holiday for your family.

snapshot

The Billy Graham Story, John Pollock (Zondervan)



This official biography of Billy Graham includes inspiring stories from the evangelist's life, including Graham's controversial visit to Moscow.

are YOU willing to risk everything?

You'd better be.

Break out of complacency and live an authentic faith.

Dark Horse

JOHN FISCHER

Revell

www.bakerbooks.com

Available at your local bookstore.



NIGHT OF JOY
WALT DISNEY WORLD'S MAGIC KINGDOM
ORLANDO, FL—SEPT. 5

Let's just say it's not a tough gig to review concerts from the "happiest place on Earth." Sure, there are sudden, unpredictable bursts of rain showers when an umbrella is nowhere in sight; but that's just life in Orlando. As long as a potentially bad hair day isn't a concern, you simply can't beat hearing some of Christian music's brightest talent with such a breathtaking backdrop. And because it's impossible for one person to make it to all the shows the Disney folks have scheduled, consider this a brief highlight reel of the evening's events.

Starting things off in fine form was none other than recent MTV favorite **Stacie Orrico**, who, void of the tight choreography and background dancers of touring days past, focused on promoting her rich, pop vocal stylings. Rolling through a high-energy mix of songs from her current, self-titled release, the crowd hung on every word and joined in loudly during "Stuck," her hooky ode to the joys and heartaches of relationships.

Switching gears from pop to rock, with Stacie's songs still stuck in my head (pun intended), **downhere** was next on the musical agenda. Filling in for **Daily Planet** at the last minute since frontman Jesse Butterworth was sidelined with a broken leg, the boys from Canada excelled with a robust rock sound devoid of the usual rock 'n' roll gimmicks. That's not to say the

Clockwise from top left: Smitty waves the flag, fans worshipping, outside the famous castle, Stacie Orrico, Marc Martel of downhere, Rebecca St. James, Jars of Clay

performance lacked *panache*. Rather, the showmanship focused on the music, instead of the guys themselves, which led to a great live representation of what the band's two CDs have to offer.

As a steady stream of rain inserted itself into the evening, San Diego rockers **Switchfoot** didn't let the precipitation get them down. Showcasing crowd-pleasers like "New Way to Be Human" and "Dare You to Move," they also spotlighted several tracks from this year's mainstream breakout album, *The Beautiful Letdown* (Sparrow/Columbia). "Gone" and "This Is Your Life" were included in the set, demonstrating the striking performance evolution since the members' modest college beginnings.

With adrenaline in full force following Switchfoot, the tone turned worshipful for **Michael W. Smith's** closing set. Leading the crowd in popular praise anthems like "Above All" and "Open the Eyes of My Heart" in front of the Disney castle, Smith simply plucked out the notes on his colorful piano or quietly strummed his guitar as thousands of arms were raised in worship. A slight diversion from his praise offerings came in the form of a revamped version of "Breakdown" that built to a crescendo with Smith's enthusiastic waving of an American flag as he followed with U2's anthemic "Pride (In the Name of Love)." All things considered, it was a fascinating ending to what was indeed a joyful evening. —**CHRISTA FARRIS**



KATHY TROCCOLI
CHRIST UNIVERSAL TEMPLE AND UNITED CENTER
CHICAGO, IL—AUG. 22

Aside from planning her brand new *Greatest Hits* (Reunion) project, vocal diva Kathy Troccoli has hopped on the "Women of Faith" conference tour as of late to showcase her singing and speaking talents in a series of weekend engagements. Whether warming up the pre-conference afternoon crowd or revving up a stadium full of women, the distinguished performer could slap a smile on even the saddest of faces and remind the most beaten-down believer of God's unconditional goodness. Following a brown bag lunch, Troccoli kicked off her church concert portion with a medley of top '60s and '70s tunes reworked with a Christian message. Burt Bacharach's louny "What The World Needs Now Is Love" was turned into a chorus about Christ's goodness, while the Dionne Warwick hit "I Say A Little Prayer" became a captivating cut about accountability. And Gloria Gaynor's "I Will Survive" was transformed into a rally of empowerment for faith-focused females. Original cuts, including the stunning prayer of surrender, "Break My Heart," and the Broadway suitable "Goodbye For Now" (inspired by the death of Troccoli's mother) were woven together with personal stories that could top even Barbra Streisand at her most engaging. Later that evening, Troccoli

revisited the main conference in an arena setting, again touching on decades past in a memorable melody.

Whether uniting the thousands of ladies for an explosive karaoke session of Sister Sledge's "We Are Family" or swaying to The Beatles' "Eight Days a Week," Troccoli left spirits high. —**ANDY ARGYRAKIS**



TOUR TIDBITS:

- The rhythmically and culturally diverse "I Have a Dream" tag team of **Kirk Franklin** and **tobyMac** will be hitting mainstream clubs and theatres with a focus on promoting equality in the spirit of Dr. Martin Luther King's groundbreaking speech.
- **Five Iron Frenzy** will be saying farewell forever in the paradoxically titled "Winners Never Quit" tour, also featuring **Bleach**, **Holland** and **Cameron Jaymes** for support.
- After performing in front of an estimated 300,000 fans on **Third Day's** "Come Together" tour, **Paul Colman** and his eponymously titled trio are in the midst of its first ever headlining jaunt, appropriately titled "The One Tour."

Photos by Andy Argyrakis and courtesy of Walt Disney World Company

20 THINGS YOU PROBABLY DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT: CARMAN

BY MICHAEL NOLAN



After a three-year hiatus from the studio, Carman is raising a holy ruckus with his just-released *House of Praise (Cross Driven)*. Never one to be at a loss for words, we tried to shake loose some information that just might be news to you.

20. ONE-TWO PUNCH

Carman fans know he's a fan of boxing, but what are his favorite flicks on the subject? "*Raging Bull* was a greater artistic achievement, but *Rocky* was able to connect with more people. Everybody understood it and identified with a character who was up against the odds."

19. THE FAT LADY WON'T BE SINGING

Although he's tackled a plethora of musical styles from hip-hop to country, count on him to eschew one genre: "Opera," he laughs, "because I can't hit the notes."

18. OBEYING THE WRITE OF WAY

When Carman is in a creative mood, he often hops in his SUV and takes a long drive. "There are no distractions. I develop most of my ideas when I'm driving," he observes. He frequently uses the voicemail on his cell phone as a tape recorder to capture a melody or lyric.

17. NO PLACE LIKE HOME

Although he's a master onstage, he's a mess at home. "I can't keep my house clean," he admits. "It comes from living in hotels so much of the time. I have to remind myself that no maid is going to come."

16. SELF AWARENESS

"I never really consider myself anything more than a razzle-dazzle praise & worship leader."

15. UNSUNG HERO

"If I had to pick one person as my hero, it would be my brother, Mario, who died two years ago of a heart attack. At age 29, he became the youngest police chief in New Jersey and was honored many times for his service during his career. I've always emulated him," he reflects.

14. SAY UNCLE

The notion of "Uncle Carman" may be hard for his fans to picture, but he, in fact, has five nieces ranging in age from 9 to 33. "I'm the uncle they call when they need to talk things out," he confides. "They come to me and say, 'I'm in a mess. Can you fix this?'"

13. CARMAN'S MAMA SPEAKS

His best advice from his mother: "'Don't pay attention to what anybody else says. Do what you know you're supposed to do.' She was a child prodigy on the accordion, but she never got to fulfill her passion of going into the entertainment world. I have kind of carried on the torch and maybe overachieved," he chuckles.

12. WORLD-WIDE CARMAN

Along with all the features you'd expect to find at an artist's Web site, Carman writes a daily devotional for carman.org. "Writing 365 devotions—a lot of work," he notes wryly.

11. THE GOOD OLD DAYS

Although Carman has performed in many of the nation's largest arenas and stadiums, he has never lost his fondness for small venues. "I had the most fun when I was going to theatres with just a six-man crew. I'd walk onstage with just me, a guitar, background tracks and a Bible. After the concert, I would go out and sit down, sign autographs, shake hands and talk to people face to face."

10. PICTURE PERFECT

To view Carman's favorite picture in his home, you'd need to head to his workout room. Displayed there is a shot of Sugar Ray Leonard and Roberto Duran from the 1980 boxing match dubbed "The Brawl in Montreal." The appeal is the story of the underestimated underdog from the streets of Panama who succeeded in defeating the unbeaten Leonard.

9. INFORMATION PLEASE?

To stay in touch with what's going on in the world, Carman follows "Headline News," "CNN" and "Entertainment Tonight" on television. At airport newsstands, he'll grab a variety of magazines ranging from *People* to *Jet* to *Country Music Today*.

8. VISUAL AIDS

Few Christian artists have embraced television and music videos as enthusiastically as Carman. "If you take it back to the principle Jesus gave to John the Baptist's disciples when they came to him, he told them to tell John 'not only what you hear but what you see.' We're a sight and sound generation. When you couple the visual with the audio, you have much greater impact on delivering the message."

7. CURIOUS MINDS WANT TO KNOW.

For his Halloween special, Carman interviewed illusionists. For his Independence Day special, he talked with people who were in the Pentagon when the plane crashed on Sept. 11 or lost friends they ate lunch with every day. "I want to find out what the real story is. I like to talk to the doers, not the talkers."

6. CATEGORICALLY SPEAKING

When he was first establishing himself as an artist, contemporary Christian music wasn't sure how to embrace his style. "Now praise & worship has developed into its own genre, so now I fit into a category although I'm doing what I've always done," he replies with a smile.

5. ELVIS AND CARMAN?

In a departure from standard recording practices, Carman recorded the basic tracks for *House of Praise* in a studio, then invited groups of 20 or so people to don headphones and worship with the songs while he spoke into a live mike. "I like the interaction with the small audience. It's like what Elvis did with his '68 comeback concert," he observes.

4. BOOKWORM

Although he's written novels, Carman is a voracious reader of biographies. "It'd be easier to tell you who I haven't read a biography on," he observes. "If it's real life, I'm in."

3. BASED ON THE SCREENPLAY

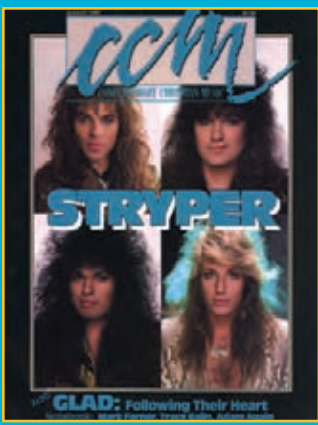
Working in reverse of standard procedure, Carman is currently rewriting a screenplay about the heart changes of a Brazilian bare-knuckles boxer into a novel at the urging of a publisher. The book should be out next spring.

2. SCENES FROM THE BOOK

The aforementioned novel will include photos presented as "scenes from a movie that never was" with Carman playing the main character. To portray the boxer in top shape, he will undergo four to five hours a day of intense physical training for several weeks.

1. INTO THE FRAY

"My passion has always been to go where Christian music isn't accepted or expected," he states. To that end, he's hit the beaches of Florida during Spring Break, the streets of New Orleans during Mardi Gras and the heart of gang territory in the Bronx. Up next is a February 2004 beach concert in Brazil during Carnival, a national holiday infamous for its decadence.



Then & Now

From big hair and spandex to hip-hop urban chic, CCM Magazine has covered it all for you.

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Charlie Peacock: Everything That's On My Mind



So Much More

Currently, Switchfoot, a great young band, is on Christian and pop radio with a song titled "Meant to Live." The chorus goes: "*We were meant to live for so much more, have we lost ourselves?*" This is a question that begs—actually demands—a proactive response. It's a question that reminds me of the cellist of Sarajevo and his compelling story.

At 4 p.m. on May 27, 1992, in the war-torn city of Sarajevo, people hungry for bread lined up outside a bakery. Without warning, a bomb fell and split the line into pieces, killing 22 people. Not far from the scene lived a musician named Vedran Smailovic. Before the weight of war crushed Sarajevo's music, Vedran had been the principal cellist with the opera. At his wit's end and sickened by the slaughter, Vedran made a choice that day. He decided to "breathe life" into the rubble of war.

According to author Paul Sullivan, "Every day thereafter, at 4 p.m. precisely, Vedran put on his

full, formal concert attire, picked up his cello and walked out of his apartment into the midst of the battle raging around him. He placed a little camp stool in the middle of the crater that the shell had made, and he played a concert. He played to the abandoned streets, to the smashed trucks and burning buildings and to the terrified people who hid in the cellars while the bombs dropped and the bullets flew. Day after day, he made his unimaginably courageous stand for human dignity, for all those lost to war, for civilization, for compassion and for peace."

This is a picture of what the new Kingdom way of Jesus might look like in the wild world we live in. Through this one daily act, Vedran illustrated the calling to do good to all people and Jesus' command to "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you."

I have no idea whether Vedran professes to follow Jesus or not.

Still, there's something to be learned through his storied living. He preached through the gut, wood and horse hair of his cello, musically communicating: "People of Sarajevo! People of Bosnia! We are made for so much more than this! Listen, we are made for beauty! Listen, we are made for truth! Listen, we are made for peace! Listen, be renewed, inspired and cared for."

In the way he knew best, using the resources and talent before him, Vedran exercised "dominion" over the crater in his neighborhood and pushed back the effects of the fall. This was no neutral choice. It affected everyone around him, and its influence spread throughout the world. In fact, two years later, on the stage of the Royal Conservatory concert hall in Manchester, England, world famous cellist Yo Yo Ma performed David Wilde's composition, "The Cellist of Sarajevo." Vedran was there to hear it.

This kind of story should be the norm for followers of Jesus. I should rise each day and ask God, "What rubble do you want me to breathe your life into today? Where do you want the Kingdom rule to be made visible? How can I help to make something or someone beautiful?" This kind of lifestyle is world-changing, and you never know how far or how long a story will travel on its trajectory of good. The Jesus story of good is still traveling the world today, isn't it?

"*We were meant to live for so much more, have we lost ourselves?*" In the spirit of the cellist of Sarajevo, Switchfoot is touring through the rubble of the church and the broken world, busting up our apathy and indifference with strong statements and questions about what makes up a life. This is good stuff. Everyone who claims to follow Jesus has to be in this business. The whole journey of life is learning the "so much more" that you are meant to live for.

If, like Switchfoot, you "*want more than this world's got to offer,*" then base your life on the new Kingdom opportunity that Jesus invited people to participate in. Don't settle for anything less than a full and vibrant life of following Jesus, living out the way to be human He modeled for you. Simply put, what is the Jesus way? Announce that there is more to this life, and then show people what the "more" is. Not easy but definitely the way you were meant to live.



The Art House

In Nashville, Tenn., we have a group of students/followers of Jesus who gather to promote the storytelling and storied living this column talks about. We're called The Art House. Our mission is to be a place where the best thoughts on what's really important are sought out and communicated and where imagination and creativity are encouraged to take shape for the good of Jesus' followers and the world that watches and listens.

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. He and his wife, author Andi Ashworth, founded The Art House in 1991.

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Keith Green

Many CCM readers undoubtedly remember exactly where they were and what they were doing when they heard the news of Rich Mullins' tragic death in September 1997. An unorthodox and outspoken individual, Mullins was considered by many to be the most prophetic artist of his generation, and his loss was felt deeply by Christian music lovers everywhere.

Sadly, Mullins' death eerily echoed the loss of another unconventional but revered Christian artist—Keith Green. Green died at the age of 28 with two of his young children when the small plane they were in crashed on July 28, 1982. He was survived by his wife, Melody, and their daughters Rebekah and Rachel (who was born eight months after his death).

By just about any standard, Keith Green was unusual. He had grown up Jewish but wandered into drugs, Eastern mysticism and the "free love" movement during his spiritual

search. But when he became a Christian, he was so passionate and "on fire" that he took risks and ruffled many feathers with his radical and outspoken beliefs. Keith used his music to admonish and exhort the body of Christ to "completely sell out to Jesus." Shunning the stardom of being a "Christian celebrity," he even gave his albums away for "whatever people could afford."

Green passionately embraced the idea that the gospel should be available to everyone, regardless of their ability to pay, and he carried that belief to its logical conclusion.

Despite the fact that many viewed him as a prophet and a mighty man of God, Green often struggled profoundly in his own spiritual journey. At times he deeply questioned his own salvation when he failed to live up to biblical standards of holiness, and he wrestled with his own failures and sins like any mere mortal. He was, as the saying goes, his own worst

critic. To much of the church, however, Green remains a legendary figure from the early days of "Jesus Music," and his legacy remains through his music and the words he left behind, such as these words:

"I repent of ever having recorded a single song, and ever having performed one concert, if my music—and more importantly, my life—has not provoked you into Godly jealousy or to sell out more completely to Jesus... The only music minister to whom the Lord will say 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant' is the one whose life proves what their lyrics are saying, and to whom music is the least important part of their life. Glorifying the only worthy One has to be a minister's most important goal!"

Keith's legacy is also continued through Last Days Ministries, which he started along with Melody (and is still run by her, though the stroke she suffered in March of 2003 has slowed her down a bit).

In 2001, along with Elvis Presley, Larry Norman and several others, Keith Green was inducted into the Gospel Music Hall of Fame. Like the CCM Hall of Fame induction, it is an honor that Keith himself may have been uncomfortable with were he still alive, but nevertheless it is an honor he deserved.

To learn more about Keith Green, check out LastDaysMinistries.org or pick up a copy of *No Compromise: The Life Story of Keith Green* by Melody Green and David Hazard (Harvest House, 2000).

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

The Ministry Years Vol. II, 1980-1982 (1988)
The Ministry Years Vol. I, 1977-1979 (1987)
Jesus Commands Us to Go (1984)
I Only Want to See You There (1983)
The Prodigal Son (1983)
Songs for the Shepherd (1982)
So You Wanna Go Back to Egypt (1980)
No Compromise (1978)
For Him Who Has Ears to Hear (1977)

VARIOUS ARTISTS TRIBUTE ALBUMS

Your Love Broke Through: The Worship Songs of Keith Green (2002, Sparrow)
Start Right Here: Remembering the Life of Keith Green (2001, BEC)
No Compromise: Remembering the Music of Keith Green (1992, Sparrow)

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 "Your Love Broke Through"
 "Grace by Which I Stand"

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