

JARS OF CLAY | DEREK WEBB | ASHLEY CLEVELAND

# CCM

## 44TH ANNUAL GMA DOVE AWARDS

THE MUSIC  
THE STORIES  
THE FAMILY... WELCOME HOME

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE  
THE **CLASSIC ARTISTS SECTION**



**MANDISA**  
OVERCOME 2 OVERCOMER

**LAURA STORY**  
FORGET HAPPY ENDINGS...

SEPTEMBER 2013

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Ten years after the release of his first solo album, "She Must & Shall Go Free," **Derek Webb** returns with a fresh perspective to the same questions he asked ten years ago. Easily the most *confessional* and *autobiographical* work of Webb's career, "**I Was Wrong, I'm Sorry & I Love You**" feels like a return to strength and a rest from running.

## FEATURES



Photo: Thomas Dahrens

ON THE COVER:

### **Laura Story, Mandisa, The Dove Awards** Family, Faith and Story

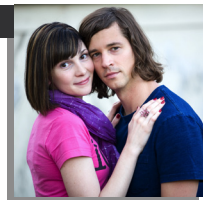
#### **Jars of Clay**

Drawing From a Different Well



#### **Worship**

Kim Walker-Smith and Skyler Smith: Bringing worship home  
Pastor Russell Evans, Planetshakers







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she's back...

# Tammy Trent

## sunny days

"Tammy Trent's 'Sunny Days', lives up to its title. It's a ball full of energetic pop dance tunes balanced by some thoughtful worship ballads. But more importantly, 'Sunny Days' is a Godly testimony that though grief may come for a night, in Christ the morning **always** arrives. And when it comes, we can **dance, sing and worship.**" - BREATHEcast

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## Have you ever felt like you have reached the absolute end of yourself?

And I don't mean the church/spiritual principle—at the end of me, God begins. That's true.

However, sometimes you really do just feel done. And you really don't see anything, God or otherwise, beginning.

It's interesting to see how different people react and cope with those situations. The artists and stories in this issue of the magazine overflow with those who reached an end of a road, relationship, dream, plan, vision... And wouldn't you know, at every intersection of hopelessness and fatigue God has made Himself visible, though it be subtle at times.

Laura Story signed a record deal and learned her husband had a brain tumor within the same 48-hour period. Later, the song she wrote about the trial spent an unprecedented 28 weeks at number one.

Mandisa walked away from American Idol without the title, but over the years has established herself as a powerhouse vocalist and inspiration to women everywhere.

Finally, the Dove Awards... Over the past few years, the Gospel Music Association and the Dove Awards have struggled. However, through prayer, lots of hard work and even more faith, the Doves are returning to their home in Nashville, Tenn., and promise to be the most polished and beautiful event the industry has seen in years.

Long story short...everyone comes to the end of their rope. Some come to the end of several ropes. But even when we don't see the lifeline Christ is throwing our way—we don't see the help that has arrived—He quietly picks us up, carries us through and opens the floodgate of His love to pick up where you left off. That's not rhetoric. That's not church talk. That's truth...that's love...that is life.



*Caroline Lusk*

**Caroline Lusk**  
Editor, CCM Digital



**Andy Argyrakis** is a Chicago-based entertainment writer/photographer who appears in the *Chicago Tribune*, *Illinois Entertainer*, *Hear/Say Magazine*, *Concert Livewire* and more.



**Grace Cartwright Aspinwall** is a freelance writer from Oregon, and the founder of Wonderment Entertainment. She has been in the music industry since 2006.



**Matt Conner** is a music writer for the *Indianapolis Star*, *Relevant* and *Metromix* and the founding editor of *StereoSubversion.com*.



**Andrew Greer** is a graduate of Belmont University. A former employee of Rockettown Records, he now enjoys life as a writer and musician in Nashville, Tennessee.



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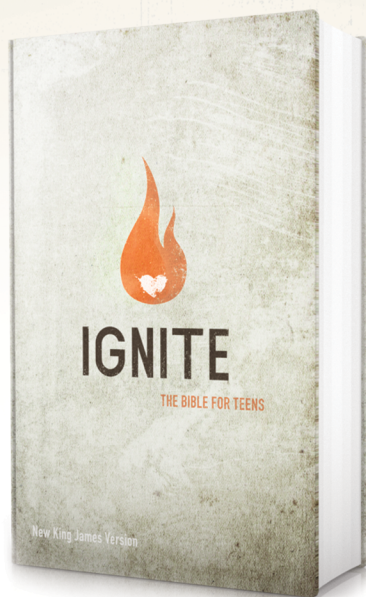


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9.03.2013

DEREK WEBB  
*I WAS WRONG, I'M SORRY & I LOVE YOU*  
FAIR TRADE/PROVIDENT



THE CITY HARMONIC  
*HEART*  
INTEGRITY MUSIC/ PROVIDENT

BETHEL MUSIC  
*TIDES*  
FUEL MUSIC

DEREK HADDON  
*R.E.D. (RESTORING EVERYTHING  
DAMAGED)*  
RCA INSPIRATION/PROVIDENT

LEADERS  
*INDOMITABLE*  
FACEDOWN RECORDS/PROVIDENT

9.10.2013

NEWSBOYS  
*RESTART*  
SPARROW RECORDS/CAPITOL

THE SONFLOWERZ  
*LOVE WALKED IN EP*  
INDIE

DARLENE ZSCHECH  
*REVEALING JESUS DVD*  
INTEGRITY MUSIC/PROVIDENT

DUSTIN SMITH  
*RUSHING WATERS*  
INTEGRITY MUSIC/PROVIDENT



KEITH & KRISTYN GETTY  
*LIVE AT THE GOSPEL COALITION*  
GTM/CAPITOL

DEREK MINOR  
*#MINORVILLE*  
REFLECTION MUSIC GROUP

9.17.2013

7EVENTH TIME DOWN  
*JUST SAY JESUS*  
BEC RECORDINGS/NEW DAY

SARA GROVES  
*THE COLLECTION*  
FAIR TRADE SERVICES/PROVIDENT

HARDIE AVENUE  
*PARTY AT THE END OF THE WORLD*  
INDIE



JONNY LANG  
*FIGHT FOR MY SOUL*  
UNIVERSAL MUSIC GROUP/CAPITOL

MATT PAPA  
*LOOK & LIVE*  
2 CITIES MUSIC/REDEYE

9.24.2013

BREAD OF STONE  
*THE REAL LIFE*  
DREAM RECORDS/CAPITOL

PHIL WICKHAM  
*THE ASCENSION*  
FAIR TRADE SERVICES/PROVIDENT

DARRELL EVANS  
*AWESOME GOD IS HE*  
DREAM RECORDS/CAPITOL

FRANCESCA BATTISTELLI  
*CHRISTMAS* (BONUS DVD VERSION)  
FERVENT RECORDS/WORD



DARA MACLEAN  
*WANTED*  
FERVENT RECORDS/WORD

FOR KING & COUNTRY  
*INTO THE SILENT NIGHT* EP  
FERVENT RECORDS/WORD

SIDEWALK PROPHETS  
*MERRY CHRISTMAS TO YOU*  
FERVENT RECORDS/WORD

DARRELL EVANS  
*AWESOME GOD IS HE*  
DREAM/CAPITOL

GUNGOR  
*I AM MOUNTAIN*  
FUEL MUSIC

THE NEVERCLAIM  
*THE NEVERCLAIM*  
ESSENTIAL RECORDS/PROVIDENT

MATT REDMAN  
*YOUR GRACE FINDS ME (LIVE)*  
SPARROW/CAPITOL

SHERI JONES-MOFFETT  
*POWER & AUTHORITY—LIVE IN MEMPHIS*  
EMI GOSPEL/CAPITOL

DANDRAE EDWARD CROUCH  
*LIVE IN LOS ANGELES*  
UNIVERSAL MUSIC/CAPITOL

MARICA CHISOLM  
*SIMPLY WORSHIP*  
TYSOT RECORDS/WORD

DONALD LAWRENCE  
*BEST FOR LAST*  
EONE MUSIC

## MICHAEL W. SMITH AND JASON CRABB TO LAUNCH TOUR TOGETHER!

For the very first time, Michael W. Smith and reigning artist of the year Jason Crabb will share a stage... several, in fact. Jason will be joining Michael for the final leg of his Worship Around the World tour. Sure to be one of the most dynamic tours in the country, this is not to be missed!

[+ CLICK HERE FOR MORE!](#)

## NEW ARTIST TO WATCH

Ryan Stevenson is the latest addition to the diverse lineup at Gotee Records. The worship leader, singer/songwriter from Oregon brings to the industry a refreshing candor and transparency in his life and in the songs he writes.

[+ CLICK HERE TO READ THE STORY BEHIND THE FIRST SINGLE FROM HIS FORTHCOMING EP, "HOLDING NOTHING BACK."](#)

## MONTPELL JORDAN AND DUCK DYNASTY: THAT'S NOT HOW WE DO IT

Montell Jordan dropped by the Duck Dynasty set to offer his two cents on his career hit, "This is How We Do It." As the DD guys eek the song out painfully on a duck call, Montell let's 'em know what's what. And what's left is hilarious!

[+ CLICK HERE TO WATCH THE VIDEO!](#)

## DOVE AWARD: SPECIAL PARTNERSHIP AND NOMINEES ANNOUNCED

August 21, 2013 marked the press conference for the 44th Annual Dove Awards, officially announcing all nominees and announcing Salem Communications as official media sponsor. Among the top nominees are Chris Tomlin, Lecrae and Matt Redman. Artist of the Year Nominees include Chris Tomlin, Francesca Battistelli, Lecrae, Tamela Mann and TobyMac.

[+ FOR FULL LIST OF NOMINEES GO TO \*\*WWW.DOVEAWARDSVOTING.COM/NOMINEES\*\*](#)

## BRING BACK CCM!

If you've heard the rumors, let us be the first to confirm... yes! We are trying to bring CCM back into print. We'll be launching a Kickstarter campaign mid-September. But until then, click here for more!

[+ CLICK HERE FOR MORE!](#)



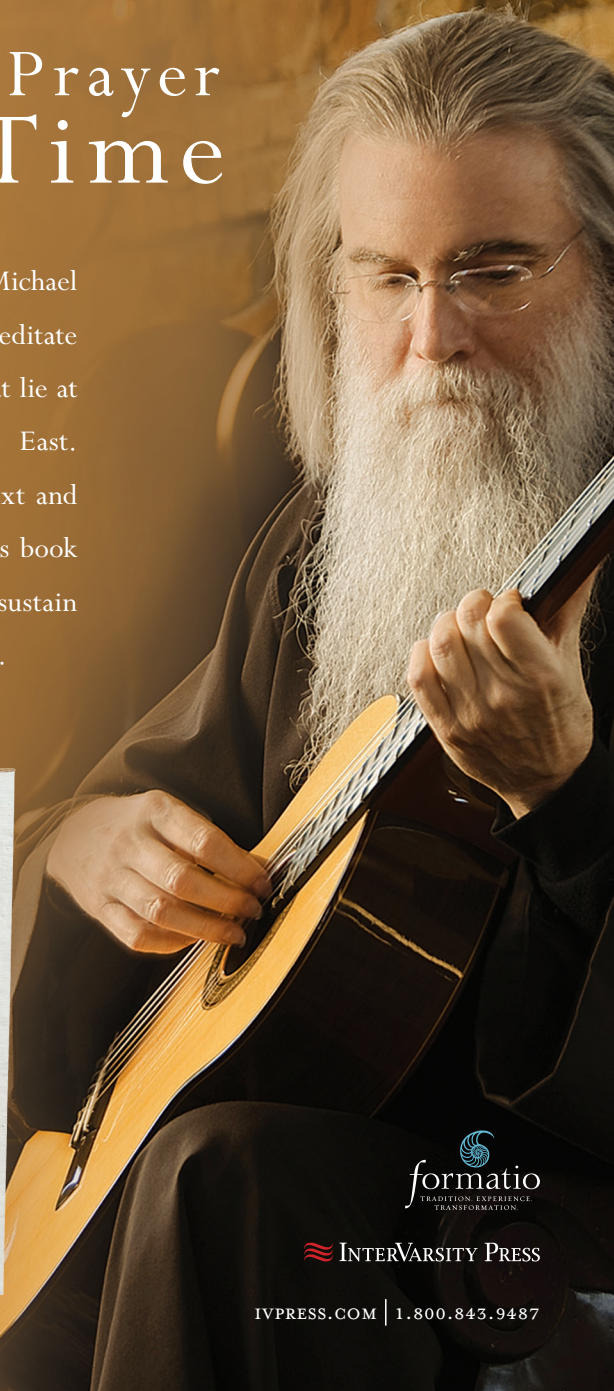
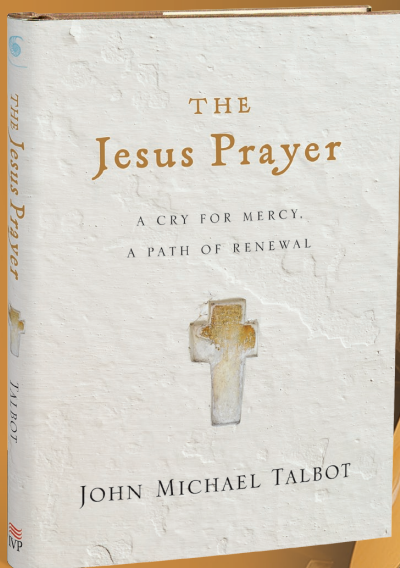
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[New, exclusive photo albums](#)

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# An Ancient Prayer for Our Time

In this new book by John Michael Talbot readers are invited to meditate on the twelve simple words that lie at the heart of the Christian East. Complete with historical context and exercises for self-reflection, this book shows how a single prayer could sustain the spiritual life of a civilization.



  
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# BRING BACK CCM!

## THE HISTORY

The year was 1978 and Christian music was quickly gaining the attention of the entire music world. That summer, a magazine was born that would become the flagship publication of the burgeoning industry, and synonymous with Contemporary Christian Music—CCM. For the next 30 years, CCM led the way with in-depth, exclusive industry coverage and helped launch numerous artists and ministries through the engagement of its community of Christian music fans. Then, as the world became increasingly digital, CCM converted the print publication into an online-only format in April of 2008. Since then, CCM has continued to give voice to the Christian music community, but only through its digital platforms.

That is about to change!

## THE IDEA

Everywhere we go, we hear readers and fans echo what we've been thinking—they miss the printed version. We do too! So we've decided to join forces with the artists, the labels and the friends of CCM to do whatever it takes to BRING BACK CCM in print! We now have approval from the powers that be, that once we demonstrate your desire to again hold a beautifully designed issue of CCM in your hands, they'll give us the additional support we need to BRING BACK CCM.

## THE PLAN

So here we go! WITH YOUR HELP, we will re-launch CCM Magazine in print. We are launching a Kickstarter campaign on September 16th. You can check out what we have in the works and view videos from a few of the many artists who have already jumped on board at [BringBackCCM.com](http://BringBackCCM.com).

Why? Because for those of us at CCM, this isn't just a job. We're fans just like you! Like you, we've been touched by





# WHAT'S NEW

this music and, like you, we want to see the magazine that helped build this industry word by word, song by song, back in the hands of our friends, families and communities.

## THE GOODS

Like you, we think CCM is pretty much the best music in the world. So go visit our new Kickstarter Countdown page at [BringBackCCM.com](http://BringBackCCM.com) and learn more about what we're doing. While you're there, register to win an iPad and discover some of the amazing additional items you might want to get your hands on, including:

- Copies of the Commemorative Relaunch Edition (Autographed by some of your favorite CCM artists)
- The chance to Vote for Your Favorite Musical Artists to be on the Cover of CCM
- Exclusive music and video downloads (Just for our CCM Friends & Supporters)
- Opportunities to receive VIP Backstage Passes to Great CCM Concerts & events
- Exclusive artist merchandise only available through our Kickstarter campaign
- The chance to enter to win special contests and event packages throughout 2014

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

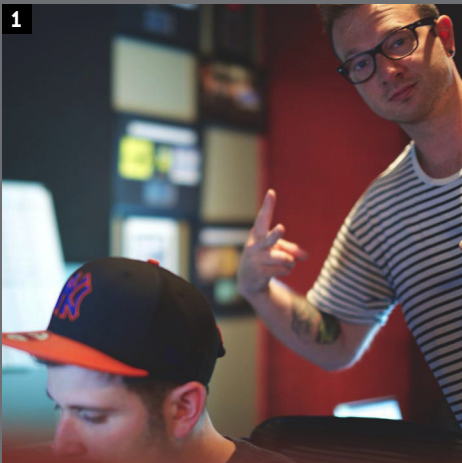
Between now and the launch of our Kickstarter campaign, you can become a Friend of CCM and help us launch! Just share your email address with us at [BringBackCCM.com](http://BringBackCCM.com) and you'll automatically be entered to win a FREE iPad and stay in the loop.

Then, tell everyone else you know! Get on Facebook! Get on Twitter! Let your voice be heard and let's bring CCM back! We can't do it without you!



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**1** Singer/songwriter Chris August works in the studio with David Garcia to record a Christmas song, which requires a little extra imagination in the still-steamy summer!

**2** August also grabs a snapshot with his pal and fellow artist Jamie Grace before the K-Love Fan Awards.

**3** Dove-Award winner Clay Crosse (right) chats with Pat Williams (left), co-founder and senior vice president of NBA's Orlando Magic, at ICRS 2013 in St. Louis.





4



5



Photo: Andy Barron

**4** Grammy, Dove and Stellar Award nominee Freddy Washington (center) is interviewed by Rebecca Blacksmith (left) of *Control Track TV* during ICRS 2013 in St. Louis as cameraman Gil Chavez (right) captures the conversation.

6



Photo: Andy Barron

**5 & 6** Hillsong UNITED leads worship in front of more than 15,000 attendees this summer at the Hollywood Bowl in Los Angeles. The troupe will be back in America this fall for another set of tour dates and to host the first-ever Hillsong conferences in New York City (Oct. 4-5) and L.A. (Oct. 17-18).

**7** Prior to a performance at Nashville's famed Grand Ole Opry, Matthew West practices a rendition of "Two Houses" with Ricky Skaggs.

**8** Artist/author Jeff Slaughter (right) is pictured with Barnes & Noble employee Kate Hastings (left) at the bookstore's Vanderbilt University location in Nashville during a street date signing for his book *It's All True*.

**9** & **10** Sleep for Dreaming stops by "Good Morning Arkansas" to perform a few songs from its debut EP *Memories*.



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Wheaton College has been noted for its academic standard—over 90% of our

faculty hold terminal degrees, we have a top-50 liberal arts science department, our Conservatory of Music offers classically grounded, musically diverse programs and we are ranked 9th out of 900 liberal arts colleges for the number of graduates who go on to earn doctorates.

Yet this holds little significance, unless it is tied to our guiding motto: For Christ and His Kingdom. Through everything we do, we seek to discover Christ's Kingdom in our midst and in the world around us. We are a community dedicated to learning, loving and serving...a community of grace.



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## AS YOU ARE

We are a campus of Christians where we can be ourselves while becoming who God wants us to be. We are students who are ambitious, inquisitive, and loving. We are a faculty committed to rigorous academics and evangelical faith. We are a community dedicated to engaging Christ's kingdom and all it has to offer through scholarship, discipleship, and service.

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# SMOKIE NORFUL, JOHN P. KEE, TAMELA MANN, LECRAE, VICKIE WINANS

## INSPIRATION CELEBRATION GOSPEL TOUR CHICAGO GOSPEL MUSIC FESTIVAL AT ELLIS PARK/ CHICAGO, IL

Photos by Andy Argyrakis

The annual Chicago Gospel Music Festival is always known for hosting the genre's cream of the crop completely free of charge and this year was no exception as the Inspiration Celebration Gospel Tour anchored the weekend event. Hosted by the outgoing Vickie Winans (who also turned in a vibrant rendition of "Shake Yourself Loose"), the marathon event featured a cross section of faith-centered stars representing several different facets of gospel music.

Hometown hero Smokie Norful kicked off the main performance portion of the bill with R&B-infused worship, backed by a full band and even some cameos from his young singer/dancer son Ashton. The Grammy-Award-winning singer most notably revved up the outdoor congregation with favorites like "Say So" and "Celebrate."



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Smokie Norful

When it came to hits that spanned the 1980s through today, John P. Kee & New Life certainly had plenty in its stable, but they put the focus entirely on the Lord. The legendary leader sounded absolutely pristine across standards like “I Do Worship,” “Clap Your Hands” and “Made To Worship.”

Adding another feminine touch to the festivities, Tamela Mann and her band turned in a rousing mix of originals and covers, but no matter where they originated, she took absolute ownership of the material, practically gave fans a direct glimpse of heaven with a mighty interpretation of MercyMe’s “I Can Only Imagine.”

Last but by no means least was Lecrae, who admitted his cutting-edge blend of rap and hip-hop might not be everyone’s style, but Lecrae helped remind attendees of all ages that while gospel music may come in various styles, the message always remains rooted in eternal truth. **CCM**



Lecrae



John P. Kee



Tamela Mann



Vickie Winans



# FOR THE GLORY

THE 44TH ANNUAL DOVE AWARDS HONOR THE OVERCOMERS, STORYTELLERS AND SERVANTS DEDICATED TO THE GIVER OF CREATIVITY, LIFE AND LOVE **BY CAROLINE LUSK**

*Let your light shine before others so they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. **Matthew 5:26***

On October 15, hundreds of people will gather in Nashville, Tenn., for a night of fellowship and worship.

A night of story and song.

A night when the God of creation, creativity, beauty and salvation will be honored.

Most people call this night the Dove Awards. And as this year marks the 44th Annual Awards Show, it's easy to get lost in the accolades, the glamour and the 'red carpet' moments.

But for those who are there—those who have committed their lives to cultivating

their God-given talents and created music that has stirred the hearts of people all over the world, this is not just another awards show.

This is a family reunion—brothers and sisters, linking arms, encouraging each other and honoring their Father.

And despite the challenges that have nearly brought this annual tradition to an end, this year marks a tangible show of strength, story and the songs that have gotten us through.

Committed to honoring the industry we represent, CCM endeavored to present these awards to you through the eyes of family. Laura Story and Mandisa symbolize everything that sets this occasion apart. From their style and their stories to their



music, the two women couldn't be more different. But as "Glam and Granola," as they affectionately call each other, share their hearts, their friendship, their sisterhood with us, the image of God, His family and the Body of Christ comes into crystal clear focus. Their personal journeys of trial, adversity and resiliency parallel that of the Dove Awards. The stories they have poured into their music are the foundation of the Dove Awards. Follow us now as we take a stroll down a red carpet that leads not just to a stage, but to an altar.

## OVERCOMERS

*"What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us." Romans 8:31, 37*

Life is hard. It's overwhelming, confusing and, at times, just too much. However, with the smallest measure of faith, even the hardest of times can become victories.

Mandisa's latest album, *Overcomer*, is a sonic beacon of just that. The former American Idol contestant has literally transformed before our eyes—losing over 100 pounds, coming to terms with and celebrating singlehood, sharing her strength with the world.

Likewise, Laura Story has traveled a path unplanned and, honestly, unwanted. Her husband was struck with a brain tumor that has left him disabled. As Laura navigated the waters of confusion and fear towards total restoration of faith and trust, her heart and her words have invited countless others around the world to do the same

with their own trials and tragedies.

In the same way, the Dove Awards, now in their 44th year, along with the Gospel Music Association that presents them, have encountered mountains of adversity that would have sent most organizations under. Music delivery has become increasingly digitized, changing the economic infrastructure within the music industry itself. Simultaneously, our world has become increasingly secular, posing challenges to those within the community of faith to have their voices be heard and even bringing into question the need and purpose of the Gospel Music Association and the Dove Awards at all. But, just as Mandisa and Laura have both found renewed strength within the arms and the words of the Father, so too has the Gospel Music Association rediscovered its purpose and foundation.

"The future of the GMA lies in the hands of our community," says GMA Executive Director Jackie Patillo. "As long as there is a thriving body of believers who have the same mission, there will be a need for the GMA. This past year has been about the task of assessing how the foundation needs to be re-laid. I believe that together we are going to move forward as a united front in a way that will allow the GMA to be relevant and serve the Christian and Gospel music communities.

"The Dove Awards have long been a time for Christian music to come together under one umbrella and celebrate," says Jackie. "God gave me a scripture regarding this event: 'Let your light shine before others so they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.'"



To be sure—the lights are shining. And just as Mandisa and Laura continue to direct their gaze upon the one who has already overcome the world, the GMA and the Doves have diligently, intentionally fortified its foundation and from their newly solid footing are also looking up with anticipation, faith and a healthy dose of realism that God will honor the heart of the event and see it through not only to completion, but to victory, even when the terrain is daunting.

“It’s a major responsibility for me to be at the helm of bringing our community together to celebrate the diverse styles of music,” says Jackie. “Right now I’m looking at a steep mountain, but trusting that the Lord is going to put all the pieces together. It’s a huge responsibility... I don’t know that I have anything poignant to share. I’m looking at a steep mountain, trusting that the Lord’s going to put all of the pieces of the puzzle together.”

## STORYTELLERS

*“But they went out and spread His fame all over the region.” Matthew 9:31*

When Jesus was on the earth, teaching, healing, living His perfect fully human and fully divine life, He used stories to paint the spectrum of God’s love. The mustard seed, the ten talents, the solid foundation. His imagery brought the eternal and divine down to all of us in a way we could understand and believe.

Since then, others have passed on His love, legacy, truth in the very same way. Unlike Christ, however, the stories of man eventually fade and are erased from the

memory of human comprehension. It’s the story of Alpha and Omega that endures. Generation to generation, the chapters of our Sovereign God graciously include us, lending credence and significance to the briefest tales.

“Every story, mine and yours, only finds its purpose in light of His greater story of redemption,” she says. “Because at the end of the day, they really are all His stories.”

“We all have a story,” Jackie says. “We want to celebrate the impact of those on culture.”

Just as the music within the industry finds its genesis with the stories inside the hearts of the songwriters, those songs are the genesis for faith, hope, healing, restoration and more for people throughout the world. After prayerful consideration, the GMA made a decisive move to include these stories within the arch of the event. Encouraging fans, artists and others to share the stories of how certain songs have impacted their lives, the GMA is removing the veil between artist and listener; theologian and lay person; you and me and everyone else. As people out there in this great big world share their stories of this music, the notion of spreading the fame of God becomes a tangible manifestation of Jesus’ example and direction.

## SERVANTS

*“By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:35*

So here we are—a celebration to honor success.



Gold records to frame, awards to place in a display case, life-long titles bestowed... All the things this world reveres. But that's not what this night is about.

As Mandisa says, "I appreciate the nominations, the occasional win...it makes you feel good as an artist, but the moment I define my life by success, I'll fall in a pit. I try not to put my value in that."

Laura shares a similar perspective particularly in light of the unprecedented success of her song, "Blessings,"

"If you know me at all, you know that what God did through the song 'Blessings' is so much bigger than some yahoo like me could ever make happen, and I love that about God! He calls us to be part of something bigger than ourselves. 'Blessings' was more an adventure God called me to be part of, and I will be forever grateful for that," she says.

Adventure, abandon, compassion... these are the themes, the fuel, the passion behind so many artists in this industry. Full aware that any success they've enjoyed is borne only of God's grace and goodwill, they have committed not only their musical talent to the expansion of His kingdom, but also their time, their hands, their feet. And this year, the Dove Awards are shifting the focus onto those sacrifices and offerings—most notably on the red carpet, which is officially being referred to as the "Doves Care" carpet.

"Our artists are more than just their music," Jackie Patillo offers. "They are giving sacrificially to humanitarian causes. We want to bring those philanthropic endeavors to the fore."

In doing so, the vision behind the event

comes full circle.

GMA, CCM Magazine and Salem Communications, UP Entertainment, Kia and several other generous sponsors have seen the faith come alive within the music and the music makers. And as Matthew 5:16 encourages, they are shining a light onto the good works of these overcomers, storytellers and servants. Not for self-adulation or self-indulgence. With egos checked at the door, arms ready to link to the brother or sister beside them and hands raised to the God who is the only reason any of them are there, The Dove Awards is an inspired kaleidoscope of faith, art and family.

When you see two women as different as Laura Story and Mandisa love each other as sisters, encouraging, inspiring and simply being friends to each other, you see a glimpse of what this whole thing is about anyway...

October 15 will come and go.

The event will be magical, beautiful and inspired. But the internal, eternal purpose, plan and intention set it apart as a city on a hill. As the artists who make the music we love, love and celebrate each other and their Abba as friends and family, it's crystal clear that this event isn't about unveiling the winners—it's about revealing, sharing, shouting the glory of the one who made all, knows all, loves all.

And so, for the glory, the show...the story...go on. **CCM**



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NOMINEE LISTING, CLICK HERE**



# OVERCOME

**MANDISA** CELEBRATES  
THE BATTLES THAT HAVE  
ALREADY BEEN WON

By Caroline Lusk

Spend five minutes with Mandisa and one thing becomes crystal clear—she is utterly incapable of taking a bad picture. The smile, the hair, the eyes (not that I'm jealous!)...plus her svelte figure, resulting from over 100 pounds of weight loss—all were fully on display during our CCM cover shoot with Mandisa and her close friend, practically a sister, Laura Story.

But with Mandisa, it's not the external that draws the attention of everyone around her; it's a joy that is so alive, deep



and bubbling over that captivates people. But if you ask her, it's the love of her Savior, Redeemer, Healer, Father, Overcomer, that in every sense of the word steals the show.

**CCM:** *You and Laura goof around like kids! Which is particularly funny because I don't know if I've ever seen two women more different from each other! Tell us about how you two met and became such great friends.*

**Mandisa:** Laura and I started touring together two years ago. It was an instant friendship. 'Glam and granola, bling and Birkenstocks!' The body of Christ is called to unity. Not uniformity. When I heard about the chance to do the photo shoot with her, I was so excited!

**CCM:** *I don't think that's the only thing making you so happy right now. You seem to have an effervescent love of life...like you're living from a place of joy.*

**Mandisa:** I am! I've never felt closer to the Lord or been in a more secure place. I'm in a place of contentment and am enjoying my life. I'm also enjoying the benefits of being single.

**CCM:** *It's amazing to see your transformation over the years—physically and spiritually. You've lost over a hundred pounds, your music career couldn't be hotter...and you're an inspiration to so many, including Robin Roberts! What is it like to be a part of her journey and that of so many others?*

**Mandisa:** My journey of weight loss has been very publicized. It's not because I've made it, but because I get up every day

and choose to fight. I was in a friendship with Robin Roberts and gave her a copy of my What If We Were Real album. She ended up asking me to sing 'Stronger' on the day she returned to Good Morning America following her cancer treatment. I have another friend who was pregnant and battling breast cancer. Both women faced such battles. But they're fighting. They are overcomers. Everyone is if they have Jesus.

**CCM:** *On that note, the album is amazing and so inspiring! How did you go about finding the songs for this project?*

**Mandisa:** For every album, we hold a writer's breakfast and I prepare a word document with different song ideas and give those to the writers. I share my heart. I'm so analytical! Administration is one of my spiritual gifts!

**CCM:** *I've never heard another artist do something like that but it follows suit. You've got such a unique story anyway. How did you begin this wild ride you're on now?*

**Mandisa:** I became a Christian when I was 16 and joined my first church at 18. I studied music at Fisk University and graduated with a degree in vocal performance. But most of my training has come from listening to Christian music. Coming from American Idol, I've made no qualms about the fact that I'm a Christian artist. The last two and a half years God has pumped up my life in the best way possible. I'm learning and I'm enjoying being with Him. That's enough for me. **CCM**



# FORGET HAPPY ENDINGS

**LAURA STORY SERVES A  
GOD OF EVERY STORY**

By Caroline Lusk

From the beginning of time, God endowed man with something that sets him apart from all other things. Story.

Each breath we take, decision we make, relationship we create is but another page within the ultimate story written with the very finger of God and revealed when man encounters the grace that is a bottomless inkwell of redemption.



Laura Story has encountered such grace. And through her faithful servanthood, she has seen the profundity in this collision of man and mercy.

It's that profundity that she sets to song on her latest album, *God of Every Story*.

"Probably the greatest lesson God has been teaching me over the past few years is to look for Him in every story," she shares.

That search for God's face among the broken pieces of our lives is one that requires courage, trust and faith. It's a journey not to be taken lightly...and it's a journey that has changed Laura's life forever.

"Our story involves disability and joy and struggle," she shares.

Early in their marriage, Laura's husband, Martin, was diagnosed with a massive brain tumor. Countless rounds of treatment later, the scars of the illness have taken the shape of mental disability—an unexpected chapter in their lives together. And one that informed the song "Blessings," which won the 2012 Dove Award for Song of the Year—a testament to Laura's uncanny ability to surrender her life experiences into the hands of God to touch lives she could never reach on her own.

"I'm now learning to look to Him in all the ups and downs, as well as looking for Him in the stories of others," she says.

Her search has yielded a sonic treasure chest, full of seamless, compelling production, guided by living legend Ed Cash, alongside Laura's trademark transparent lyrics and delivery.

"With this project, I tried to write from that same honest place, asking God to use our story yet again to help listeners who

are in the same place I am, trying to trust the promises of God in the midst of the here and now," she says.

Today, Laura's here and now includes an addition to the family...her daughter.

"Becoming a mom has been by far the greatest adventure Martin and I have embarked upon thus far in our lives," shares Laura. "She is an amazing little girl, and a true picture of grace."

"It's that grace gives meaning and clarity to every story. Every story, mine and yours, only finds its purpose in light of His greater story of redemption," she says. "Because at the end of the day, they really are all His stories."

And that is the heart—not of an album or an artist or a musician.

That's the heart of Laura Story—daughter, mother, wife, worshiper, storyteller.

"I hope people walk away encouraged, strengthened in their faith and believing that God can use every story, every trial, every pain, to glorify Himself and advance His kingdom," she says.

The God who created man...set him apart...blessed him with the ability to reason, to think, to share...

The God who ties generations together.

The God who remains the same in joy and in pain, certainty and doubt, triumph and loss.

The God of every story. [CCM](http://CCM)



# JARS OF CLAY

## Drawing From A Different Well

by Matt Conner





**Ten albums in twenty years. It's a legacy well beyond the reach of most artists, and as Jars of Clay rounds the two-decade mark, the achievement is not lost on the band. From chart-topping hits and platinum albums to numerous Grammy wins and Dove Awards, front man Dan Haseltine says the band is grateful to fans for the chance to make music.**

Yet if Jars of Clay was going to continue into another decade of writing, recording and touring, they had to chart a new course. From the expectations of their many fans to the familiar terrain of Nashville, Haseltine says they had to rid themselves of the elements that brought them to this point.

"We've listened to so many voices over the past 20 years, let so many influences into the process, that it's not really a sacred space anymore," says Haseltine. "It's not where we can be vulnerable enough to get out what we want to, personally. You're always worried about a market or shaping things to fit a demographic. You lose some of that heart and



passion. So I think for us, it was always getting back to that truest voice, stripping away a lot of that."

*Inland* is the final result of that "stripping away," an album influenced by the titular journey taken by Odysseus in Homer's epic poem "The Odyssey." In the story, the hero is instructed to take an oar from his boat and head inland until he finds "land that knows nothing of the sea." For Jars of Clay, it's a meaningful metaphor for changing course.

To that end, the band left Nashville for the first time in their storied history. Ever since their self-titled, double-platinum debut, they have stayed in Music City for each and every release. For *Inland*, the band flew to Portland, Oregon to work with famed producer Tucker Martine, whose résumé includes R.E.M., Spoon and The Decemberists.

"We didn't want to go with the traditional, Jars of Clay default style, just because that's how we write songs," says Haseltine. "We just wanted to give ourselves a bit more freedom. I think it's hard to be in the space that we've been in for so long where everything had to have this strong tinge of hope attached to it, when sometimes it doesn't really feel like that's true."

Haseltine says the combination of a strong veteran producer and the band's own experiences to this point led to their ability to craft songs from new perspectives.

"I think we wanted to give ourselves some space to write from a perspective that just felt a bit more like it was talking about a moment," he says. "It wasn't like panning out at, say, the full trajectory of a relationship or that kind of thing. It was, in this moment, things feel really dark, really hard. And I think that, married with letting go of some of our production senses and letting Tucker take over in that regard, we were able to come away with something really beautiful."

Haseltine says it was vital for the band to follow the muse since, at this point, the band simply isn't interested in going through the motions. Jars of Clay, in other words, isn't a given as a career vehicle at this point, and Haseltine says the band's kept the subject on the table.

"These last few years, that was sort of a main topic," says Haseltine. "It's one of the reasons we made *Inland* and fought so hard to make this record and to get the record made as an independent band. We wanted to remove all the other players from the table for a while was because we wanted to honor those relationships that we had stuck together.

"We built these relationships over 20 years—longer than that really, because we were friends before we starting making music," he continues. "And although we've had various kinds of life experiences, they all still seem to come together in this thing called Jars of Clay. They all somehow seem to find a resonance within that space. But how long do we want to do it?"

It might sound odd for a band as successful as Jars of Clay to consider moving on. Yet Haseltine insists they only want to continue as long as there is something meaningful to say. To that end, they're committed only as far as they feel inspired.

"We've kind of set up this thing where it's like, we do it until we decide we don't want to do it," says Haseltine. "If we break up, it's going to be on our own terms; it's not going to be because of some stupid guitar part. When we decide to call it quits as Jars, it will be because we've honored the relationships and the friendships between the four of us, and said, 'You know what? There are better things for us now. We've said what we've needed to say and we've let this thing called Jars be what it needed to be, and now we can do something else.'"

"We're not there yet, but we've said, 'Let's look at it every three years.' Every time we make a record, we'll tour it and do that cycle and get back together and go, 'So how are we feeling?' So at this point we don't really know what the future for Jars is, as much as we're just going to honor those relationships. And as long as there's more for us to say, collectively—which it feels like there's a lot more for us to say—we'll just keep at it."

Their ability to appreciate where they've been and thoughtfully focus on the next step is what sets the band members apart from their contemporaries. Haseltine says the depth of relationships within the band and with their fans is what will likely keep them moving forward.

"It's an amazing thing at this point to look at it and think, 'There are 20 years behind us. These are songs we couldn't have written 20 years ago that we can write today. There is perspective now that we didn't have then.' I've always likened it to when a boyfriend, a girlfriend or a recently engaged couple says they love each other. It means something different for the couple that says it 20 years into their marriage, you know? There's

different weight to those words. Life has filled their buckets and they've got a lot more to draw from. I feel like that's the gift we have, to still be making music and to still have that bucket to draw from." CCM



**FOR MORE INFORMATION,  
VISIT [JARSOFCLAY.COM](http://JARSOFCLAY.COM)**



# KIM WALKER-SMITH & SKYLER SMITH

## *BRINGING WORSHIP HOME*

*“Home is the one place in all this world where hearts are sure of each other.” –Frederick Robertson*

**It** happens all the time. A young woman and a young man meet, fall in love, get married and settle into a brand new life only to discover that ‘home,’ like love itself, is more than can be measured by a feeling. It’s not something you can build with four hands. It’s not four walls with a roof and a door with a key. It’s not a floor plan or a mortgage or a comfy, cozy chair by the fireplace. It’s not even always a physical place.

For Kim Walker-Smith and Skyler Smith, best known for their ministry with Sacramento, California-based Jesus Culture, an international outreach movement with over 70 conferences and seven full-length recordings to date, the concept of ‘home’ has always held great personal and spiritual meaning. They’d grown up in the same small town, had even known each other as children, but when they reconnected at a worship conference in 2008, boom!, it was



love. Eight months later, it was marriage. But coming together as one has been a journey of faith and patience.

Eighteen months in the making, The Smiths are finally ready to birth their first musical collaboration, a worshipful, modern folk-pop collection called **HOME**. Carved out of their unique love story, the worship life they've aspired to as individuals and the ministry they've shared as part of Jesus Culture, **HOME** explores the intimacy of time alone and together in the presence of God, and that sense of belonging as a universal metaphor for the relationship God pursues with his children.

"Calling this album **HOME** took on so many meanings as the project progressed," explains Skyler. "We've always traveled so much, we've known that 'home' would have to be wherever we found ourselves. We didn't want to force anything, but we wanted to come together as a couple and say something personal and honest about our lives in relationship with each other and in relationship with God."

In that sense, **HOME** couldn't be more opposite than the live, corporate worship experience captured on the Jesus Culture records, with which Kim's voice is most often associated. "From the beginning of our marriage," Kim says, "we've been very intentional about blending our lives, taking every opportunity to be 100% completely together, so this album really is a defining moment for us, a creative endeavor that represents who we are as a couple and as worshipers who desire intimacy with our Creator."

Produced by Jeremy Edwardson and Jason Borneman, **HOME** is a labor of love, fusing together two very different

approaches and personalities into one unified sound. Kim, who had recorded two solo records, has long been a pop fan, with a big voice and bold, dynamic on-stage presence, a songwriter who pens lyrics faster than most people can sing them. Skyler, a creative visual designer who plays guitar and serves as an executive team member on the Jesus Culture staff, is most at home in an Americana/folk vein, a meticulously poetic songwriter who writes and rewrites and rewrites some more.

So, much like a couple of creative newlyweds attempting to merge her floral tapestry curtains with his ripped leather armchair, Skyler & Kim Walker Smith pushed through the frustration of creative barriers to craft a fresh new sound all their own. Not only is the breadth of Kim's vocal gift more obvious in a studio environment, but the beauty of the couple's harmony is essential to the mix. "Looking back over the past almost two years, it's so easy to see now how the Lord was in it," Skyler says. "God had put this in our hearts, and even when it wasn't quite happening, we knew he would create a blend that was distinctively us. He directed us when to start it and inspired the worship content in it, and we've come out on the other side with something we're super happy about."

From the soothing, acoustic opener of "Your Voice" to the benediction of "My One & Only," **HOME** is a finely tuned marriage of songs that speaks to the kind of love that always pursues, always trusts, always shows up.

"...In your arms, my heart is resting, I have found my home in you, the One I was made for..." —from "Home"



Here, themes of human love and God's love are woven so organically, it's often impossible to see the seams. "Unstoppable Love," a dramatic, multi-layered effort intensified by Kim's bold voice, began as a love song but grew into a worshipful acknowledgement of the length of God's unrelenting mercy toward his beloved. In "My One & Only," what started as a worship song became an intimate song of devotion between a husband and his wife.

Eleven of the twelve tracks were written collaboratively by Skyler and Kim, the one exception being "Christ the Rock," a hymn-like declaration that builds to a crescendo of "Holy, Holy, Holy," penned by a dear friend of Kim's who had gone through a rough season in her life. In these and many other intimate moments on **HOME**, Kim and Skyler open the door of their life together and invite listeners inside, hopefully to discover what is possible when your heart can be sure that it is unconditionally loved.

"I've always felt like part of the cost of being a worship leader on stage is in living that vulnerability out loud, showing people what it's like to be real in worship, that what they see on stage is what they'd see of me at home in worship," explains Kim Walker Smith, who is expecting their first child in September. "When you're vulnerable in that way, it can be scary, it's a risk, but that's what people look for and it's what they need to see and experience, that freedom. So the outcome is so much greater than the risk.

Ultimately, she says, "That's what we've tried to do on **HOME**. These are the messages of our lives, our marriage, the songs of our hearts... We believe that realness and vulnerability is contagious and that it brings freedom." **CCM**



**FOR MORE INFORMATION  
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# MATT GILMAN AWAKEN LOVE

Featuring “Holy,” “As The Deer,”  
“Eyes of Mercy” and “Fairer”



Produced by Dove Award-Winning “Producer of the Year” Ed Cash

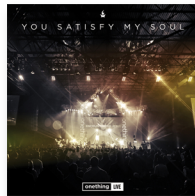
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# SET THE CAPTIVES FREE

*Luke 4:18 NLT: "The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free."*

Jesus was making an amazing statement here that the Spirit of God was on Him to release the Kingdom of God on earth, which would bring release from earthly and demonic situations. This leads me to a thought for our church services and times of worship. When we come together to worship our Lord many people bring different things with them into our worship services. They may be depressed, discouraged, sick and in desperate need. On the other hand they may come not looking for anything. They may think they don't need to receive from The Lord but are simply fulfilling their "religious" service to God. We don't always know how people come, but we can determine the environment they are entering to encounter Him. We can welcome them into a building where people, who are filled with faith and expectation, who carry the SAME SPIRIT that raised Christ from the dead, are waiting to bring the freedom of God through His spirit. People can walk in one way, but with one encounter with God, walk out changed.

David is a great example of what the Spirit of God can do when one carries His presence and plays their instrument under His anointing.

1 Samuel 16:23 NLT: "And whenever the tormenting spirit from God troubled Saul, David would play the harp. Then Saul would feel better, and the tormenting spirit would go away."

We see here King Saul was tormented and as David played the tormenting spirit would go away and Saul would feel better.

This is incredible and encouraging to all those who are faithfully serving in worship teams across the world. Every time we come and worship God in Spirit and truth we release the power of God to bring Jesus' power to the broken, the bound, the blind and the prisoner so they can be set free. Because of the Spirit of the Lord that abides in us, and the Holy Spirit that comes upon us, we can all sing "my chains are gone, I've been set free." Our times of worship should lead to people experiencing the freedom and life of God's kingdom. The next time you strum your guitar (or harp) unto the Lord, you quite possibly could see people in torment leave feeling better and free. It's more than singing; it's the Spirit of Jesus setting the captive free. [CCM](#)





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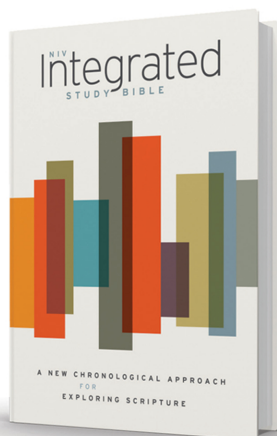


ISAIAH 52:13

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# Welcome to the Classic Christian Artist's Section



Is anyone out there...anyone that still loves the music and ministries of the Christian artists from the 70's, 80's and 90's? Am I the only person left that loves early Christian music? I grew up listening to CCM artists like Clay Crosse, Keith Green, Twila Paris, Steve Green, Rich Mullins, Sandi Patty and so many more. Collectively these musicians strengthened my faith as a young Christian and helped form my early belief system. And I know that I am not the only one for which this is true.

Christian Artists Group created this Classic Christian Artists Section and was started to give people like me the inside scoop on these amazing artists. We pay special attention to those artists who significantly impacted the industry and continue their ministries today. Many of the great artists of days gone by have moved on to other jobs or in the case of Keith Green and Rich Mullins to a new heavenly address, but there are still many who long to use their God-given gift to encourage you and me.

We'd like to provide you an opportunity to engage with these amazing artists again. If you will email and tell us a true story about one of these artists of the 70's, 80's or 90's whose music impacted your life in a significant way, with 200 words or more, then we will send you a random Free Digital Download of one of these artists new songs. We'd hate for you to think that they stopped recording 20 plus years ago.

Send your story to [Info@ccmforever.com](mailto:Info@ccmforever.com).



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## ARTIST SPOTLIGHT

## CLAY & RENEE CROSSE



# GOD FLIPPED THIS HOUSE

Kayla  
Fioravanti

### Clay and Renee' Crosse Follow God's Lead

***It's no wonder that Clay Crosse's new CD is titled *reDedication*.***

Since Clay and Renee Crosse rededicated their lives to Christ in 1998, the idea of rededication has significant meaning in their household. When their focus became living for Christ every moment of every day, it changed the direction, focus and even the very fabric of their marriage and family. Clay's new song, "reDedication" is a testimony to the power of thoroughly surrendering and dedicating their lives to Him.

In the 1990's, Clay Crosse was at the top of the Christian music charts. Suddenly, he seemed to disappear from the radio. Clay walked away from recording and touring in 1999 and the Crosse's left the center of the Christian music industry in Nashville, to focus on Christ, their marriage and family in Memphis, Tennessee. According to Clay, "It was a refreshing season to refocus on the important things in life. It was really a season of growth for our marriage and for each of us spiritually. I'm very thankful for the perception of Christ in my life during those years and how that grew."





## HOLY HOMES

Holy Homes was born out of the sin, repentance and forgiveness following Clay's confession about his battle with pornography. Clay was still performing at concerts when he decided to get honest on stage about what he was struggling with. Clay was always the one on stage singing and telling his story of redemption and hope, but suddenly they both felt God's prompting for Renee to join Clay on stage. Their ministry Holy Homes was born out of their obedience to God's call.

Clay and Renee will both tell you that they were not trained as teachers, speakers and counselors. As Renee puts it, "We just started walking with God. We started reading the Bible. We started praying, individually, as a couple and as a family. We started serving together. Here we were, a Christian couple in church, yet we were missing it. We were doing church on Sunday, but we were neglecting God Monday through Saturday. We were calling Him when we had an emergency, but neglecting that walk. As we began

to walk with the Lord, we just wanted to tell others about that."

Clay and Renee are dedicated to being real on stage because it breaks down barriers. According to Clay, "Every opportunity we have, we just go out there and honestly share with people. We just say; that's my story, that's what God has done in my life. We always tell people, we know His grace doesn't stop here. He wants to extend it to your home, to your situation, to whatever you're going through, and to whatever challenge you may have in

your life."

Holy Homes is fueled by Clay and Renee's heart for ministering into the lives of married couples. They understand how easy it is for a Christian couple to start living separate lives – for each person to get so immersed in their career and in the lives of their young children. It is easy for a husband and wife to drift apart and to "phone-in" on their relationship with each other and with God. Clay says, "We have fallen prey to that in the past, and we could again tomorrow if we lost our focus. So we basically just tell people, 'We get it.' We just encourage them to determine what the foundation of their life is – not their career, not the success of their kids, not the way their home looks from the street. It absolutely has to be God. He is the foundation of their life. He secured their eternity. And everything else is built on that. It's a healthy place to always stay in your marriage."

It's not only important that families get plugged into a Bible-believing, Bible-teaching church that believes in the power of prayer. Clay and Renee teach couples that our Christian families must be plugged into the same power at home. The mission of Holy Homes is to encourage others to live their faith every single day. As Renee puts it, "Every day we're getting up and we need to refocus and say, 'Okay God, you've got my whole life today.'"

## FAMILY

The Crosse's have been married for 23 years. They have four kids Savannah (16), Shelby (20), Garrett (13), and Sophie (8). In 2004 Clay and Renee were content with their family, until God began to challenge them. After much prayer and research, the Crosse's decided to adopt through America World Adoption Agency. Clay and Renee adopted Sophie from China in 2005 at the age of 10 months, followed by the adoption of Garrett when he

was 8 years old, also from China. The call to adopt was never about their desire to have a little baby; they both felt a call to help others – the less fortunate, the orphaned.

The family's adoption stories could be titled "The Tale of Two Adoptions." Sophia quickly bonded with the entire family. Garret was 8 years old when he was adopted and had never experienced a home setting, family love and discipline. As Renee puts it, "Yes there is the rescue of a child, but in both adoption stories so much of it is about obedience. God has taught us so much about loving these children. It's a picture of Him. With the older child adoption, there's the rejection of love, and you have to really break down some walls. That's a picture of us with God sometimes; how He's pouring out His love on us, and yet we turn our back. It's a process. We're still undoing some of the damage. But we felt called to both of those adoptions, and that's the peace we have, even though the difficult encounters."

Renee went on to reflect on a story she heard from Rich Mullins many years ago where he told a couple that had lost a child, "Wow, God must love you all a lot." Rich explained that for God to allow them to walk through that, He trusted that they would come through and handle what God had put on their lives. "So on the hard days, Clay and I just look at each other and say, 'Wow, God must love us a lot!' The challenge is real, but He trusts us with that. He entrusted these little lives to us. We have the privilege of the struggle," said Renee.

In recent years Clay and Renee have shifted their roles in the lives of their two older daughters, Savannah and Shelby, from manager to consultant. The transition from micromanaging their kid's to standing by to act as consultants has been smooth due to the trusting, open and respectful relationship they have with their kids.



## NEW MUSIC

Clay Crosse's new CD "reDedication" is his first album with new songs in over a decade, and it is being met with rave reviews and chart climbing results. Clays said, "I'm really thankful for how the CD came out, but I can't take credit for it. God did this. I'm a part of it. I sing these songs from the bottom of my heart. But when I think of the team that came around me to help get it done – Christian Artists Group, the producer Reggie Hamm, the songwriters, the musicians, my family who supported me during this time, all those trips to Nashville to get it done – I'm extremely grateful. It's a real team effort. I think the project is really anointed."

The new single, "When I Lift My Hands" climbed the charts over the summer. The first words Clays sings are "Jesus, You are the reason that we're gathered here today." There is no question who Clay is singing about and to. The message of the song resonates with listeners. According to Clay it is a pleasant surprise to be back on the radio. He says, "I kind of thought I had gotten to that point in my life and career that I wouldn't be on the radio anymore, except stations that play songs from the past. So this is kind of surreal – to hear my songs, to talk to radio personalities

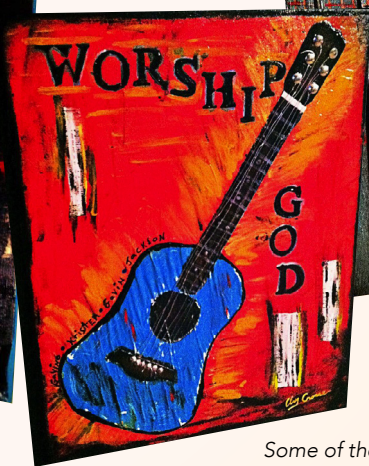


about the song, that they're excited about it, to have a team promoting it to radio. It's all very humbling to me. The cool thing about it is, I really believe in the song. If I didn't, it wouldn't be the same."

## MULTI-TALENTED

Clay has not only been blessed with a gifted voice, but also as an author and artist. He wanted to be an artist before a musician, but after music took over he set his dream aside. In recent years, Clay started noticing folk art, and that stirred his desire to try his hand at painting. Clay said that it was a very vulnerable act for him to buy supplies and paint on canvas without an inkling of how it would turn out. Clay eventually started posting pictures of his creations on his Facebook page. He started getting offers to buy his pieces and even took commissioned work. Clay recounts, "It was amazing, because it was something I was just toying with, and suddenly I was really doing it. I have a desire to really develop this, beyond raw folk art into something even better. It will always be folksy. I've heard it called outsider art. It's coming from somewhere else, and people really resonate with it."

The Crosse's have a very youthful vibe about them which goes hand in hand with their ministry outreach on Facebook. They have embraced Facebook as a new way of communicating about how God is working in their lives. Clay encourages other Christian artists to use social media to, "use this for God's glory. There are a lot of people listening to what we're saying. Artists of all ages need to embrace it. There's no going back. The Internet is the Wild Wild West, and it's gone beyond just trying to get your songs on the radio or a television show. The Internet is it. So we as Christian artists have to embrace our social media, because it's our voice." Clay has discovered Facebook is like the old-fashioned prayer chain on steroids. Clay says, "That's one of the more powerful things about Facebook. People are always telling me that they're praying for us. And if I go on there to ask for prayer, the response is overwhelming. We are so thankful for our prayer partners out there, all around the world."



*Some of the original paintings by Clay Crosse*

## WORSHIP PASTOR

In recent years, Clay discovered that there is a vast difference between being a Christian singer and being a worship leader. As a singer, he simply sang from stage, but never led anyone into worship. When he had the opportunity to become a Worship Pastor at The Love of Christ Church in 2002, Clay found God transforming him from a musician on stage to something much bigger as he led others into worship with him.

Rene mentioned, "It's interesting to me the difference between artist and worship pastor, and watching Clay in both of those roles. There's a difference between performing a song and leading worship. We were in Canon Beach a couple weeks ago, and there was a sweet lady who came up to us the first evening and said that she was a huge Clay Crosse fan and had been so excited when she found out that he was going to be leading worship when she was going to be there. But she said, 'I didn't see Clay Crosse tonight. I saw Jesus.' That's what I see when I see my husband lead worship. It's a man of God leading God's people in worship."

Clay was most recently the Worship Pastor at First Baptist Church plant in Arlington, TN. Just a few months ago First Baptist Church in Bentonville, AR contacted Clay out of the blue. Clay and Renee have already packed up their family from their lifelong home state of Tennessee and moved their family to Arkansas. They both feel an overwhelming peace and confidence that God is calling them there.



"Anything that God brings through our ministry, through Clay's music, through the worship position, we just see it all going hand in hand, and that this is what God created Clay and Renee Crosse for. Anything that is going on in our lives, we can just say, 'This is God. This is what He's doing through us. This is what He's taught us. He loves us so much.'"



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kayla Fioravanti is a wife, mother and seasoned author of several books, and an active conference speaker. Kayla's books include, *How to Publish: The Author-preneur's Guide to Self-Publishing*, *The Art, Science & Business of Aromatherapy*, *DIY Kitchen Chemistry* and *When I was Young I Flew the Sun Like a Kite*, all published by Selah Press, LLC.



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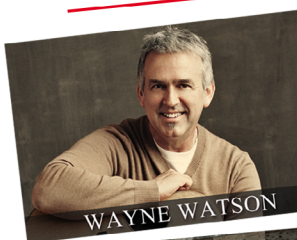
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## STORY BEHIND THE SONG

B. J. THOMAS

# A POP MUSIC ICON COMES TO CHRIST

— Stan Moser

Imagine the biggest pop star of your generation. Frank Sinatra? Michael Jackson, Celine Deon, Huey Lewis, or Prince? The Civil Wars? Justin Bieber? Feel free to fill in the blank with your favorite.

Now, imagine what might happen if that pop star became a Christian in the midst of a long string of #1 pop hits. And then, of course, you walk into the conference room at your office, and he/she is there wanting to record an album of Christian music for you! That's exactly what happened to me in 1976.

Without warning, I walked into our Word conference room and met B. J. Thomas. B.J. told us about his amazing encounter with Christ. His pastor and wife Gloria were there to back up his story. His testimony led us to the obvious question, "Would we like to record a Christian album (with one of the



most recognizable voices in popular music history)?" The answer was, "Yep. I believe we do."

B.J. was not just another choir director turned Christian artist. His string of #1 songs already included, "Raindrops Keep Falling On My Head," and "Another Somebody Done Somebody Wrong Song." and many more. I checked a few years ago, and he is credited with twenty #1 songs. Not bad for a country boy who started playing the bar circuit in South Texas.

Of course, we knew the story of B.J.'s life and his battle with drugs and alcohol. We met with B.J., and he didn't hide anything about his past. Isn't it interesting how God redeems even the most difficult cases? Somehow, I can relate. After leaving that meeting with B. J., I immediately called Chris Christian. He quickly agreed to produce our first B.J. Thomas Christian album. I think the budget was about \$40,000. We headed toward the contract negotiation phase with B.J. and I met one of the most interesting personalities (to me) in the music industry, a lawyer named Joel Katz. Although we never became friends, Joel was always friendly. And frankly, I liked him.

As the recording process began, I found myself at the office late one night trying to clean off my desk. I was really busy in those



days. My schedule included up to 35 weeks each year on an airplane visiting sales reps and accounts or going to conferences, concerts, and conventions. This particular night I found myself reviewing a test pressing of a new artist we had signed. I rarely listened to test pressings. We had plenty of staff to handle that chore. But for some reason, I put our new Pat Terry Group album on the turntable that night. You remember turntables, don't you?

Before long, I noticed a song that was buried on side two of that test pressing. I began to play it over and over, and it moved me to tears. The next day, I called Chris Christian and told him I had found "the" song for the new B.J. Thomas record. Just a few months later, we released B.J.'s first album that flew to the top of the Christian music charts. The title was "Home Where I Belong" of course. The Lord used B's distinct signature vocals to deliver truly great expressions of God's grace and love. "Home Where I Belong" will always remain a favorite song of mine. It impacted me so deeply and moved me closer to the moment—not that far away—where I would finally surrender my life to Jesus Christ.

I saw B.J.'s concert seven times in various settings over the first year following the release of his first Christian album. It was unbelievably inspiring to watch him sing to gamblers and drunks in a Vegas lounge and suddenly tell them about his new life with Jesus Christ at the center. Unfortunately, not all the Christians who brought B.J. in for concerts remembered to show him the same grace and love. Some Christian audiences simply didn't understand that this man had spent a lifetime singing pop songs, and that Christian music was completely new to him. His concerts were built around his hit songs with a three-song testimony section in the middle. That is basically all the Christian music he knew.

I hope they will play that song at my funeral. I won't be there of course, but I'm confident that song will impact everyone who hears it. If you happen to be there that day, don't worry about me. I won't be homesick anymore.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Stan Moser is a leading consultant in Christian ministry, music and publishing. He has held executive positions at Word Inc., StarSong Communications and Maranatha! Music. Stan lives in Brentwood,

Tennessee, is the Founder & President of Kingdom Men Ministries and serves as Men's Pastor at The Gate Community Church.



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## OFFSTAGE | SUSAN ASHTON



# Calling Out the thief

Susan Ashton's  
Ode to Overcoming

The Thief has robbed Susan Ashton one too many times and the veteran artist isn't going to take it anymore.

With her new six-track EP aptly named *Thief*, Ashton has returned to the recording industry after an intense season where Satan stole her marriage, her recording contract, her financial stability, and much of her hope.

But she won't let him take her voice.

After battling her way through years of trials, Ashton recently released a new record and set

out on tour. In July, she returned from a radio promotional tour in unbelievable pain due to an issue with a disc in her neck. Ashton posted a self-portrait showing off her home traction unit and rallied her prayer warriors, who responded with an outpouring of support.

On August 15, Ashton had to cancel a few concert dates when she began developing vocal problems. After an appointment at the



Vanderbilt Voice Clinic revealed the singer has “some very angry vocal chords,” she immediately took to her Facebook page to ask her friends and fans for prayer. “The doc said they look like they have ulcers on them,” wrote Ashton. “So, another round of steroids, complete vocal rest for two weeks, then back to the doc again to see if something more serious is going on.”

The recent challenges, while frustrating, haven’t daunted the feisty Texas native. But her story didn’t start out that way. In fact, Ashton’s early days seemed to sparkle with a fairy-tale-like quality.

### **FAST TRACK TO FAME**

Born in Irving, Texas, Susan Rae Hill grew up in Houston. Her mother claimed that she could sing before she talked. The little girl began singing in the church choir at age 7. By the time Ashton was in high school, she was singing in a band, musicals and competitions.

At the same time, she experimented with a little teenage rebellion: hanging out with a rowdy bunch, smoking and drinking. Her love of singing ultimately won out though. When her choir director convinced her that smoking would ruin her voice, she quit. Her return to Christianity was also connected to music. Ashton’s parents asked if she and her sister Julie would try joining a church youth group. There, Ashton discovered the music she came to love.

She was only 19 when she was invited to sing background vocals on Wayne Watson’s number one song, “Watercolor Ponies.” Not long after, Dallas Holm asked her to sing backup harmonies on an album he was making in Nashville. The engineer at the session mentioned her to the people at Sparrow Records. Ashton had dinner with a label executive and was amazed when he

offered her a contract on the spot. She was 20.

Her 1991 debut, *Wakened by the Wind*, was the biggest selling album in the history of Sparrow/EMI Records and brought Ashton a Dove nomination for New Artist of the Year. Her second release, *Angels of Mercy*, yielded four CCM number one hits and a Grammy nomination. In 1996, Ashton worked alongside Sheryl Crowe, Alison Krauss, Amy Grant and Michael W. Smith on *Distant Call*.

Ashton later worked with pianist Jim Brickman on “The Gift,” which became a number one Billboard Adult Contemporary hit. She also opened for Garth Brooks: “I did a leg of his ’94 European tour. We weren’t playing to his largest crowds, but there was still something very special about his audience. Initially I was a little nerve-wracked, worrying they’d boo me off the stage, but I got a wonderful response.”

In 1999, Ashton recorded a country album, *Closer*, which yielded the top 40 country hit “You’re Lucky I Love You.” The album itself never really sold and instead stalled her career. “My perspective is that it did not turn out to be what I wanted it to be,” she said during an interview in 2005. “I wanted it to be a great country record because I’m from Texas and I love that music. But the producers I was working with—who wholeheartedly wanted the best for me—loved my Christian records [with Sparrow], and they were trying to emulate those a little bit. I’m proud of those records, but they aren’t country records.” During that time period, constant touring drained her soul and negatively impacted her marriage, which ended in divorce by the end of the decade. Ashton did record a second project for Capitol, but it never saw the light of day. She was dropped from the label in early 2004.

Upon losing the deal, Ashton decided to



step out of the music business and become a nanny. "I spent my time sitting, waiting and hearing what God wanted me to do with my life," she says. "It was really difficult, but at the same time I needed some healing and clarity.

The succession of blows shook her core beliefs. "Initially, I think I lost my faith, not entirely, but to a large degree. I was very broken and, as a result, everything about my faith was challenged. I didn't believe that there could ever be anything good for me in life. But God is so good, and faithful, and He put me back together."

Naturally, healing took time. "It really has been a process of me having to surrender everything to The Lord," says Ashton. "I'm pretty strong-willed, so some of that has not been easy."

Music played a part in restoring her soul, as did her love for horses. Prior to ever stepping into the world of music, Ashton wanted to study large animal veterinary medicine and longed to become a topflight equestrian competitor. Even now, feeding her horses, Serena and Lucy, and watching them from her perch in a quiet pasture brings Ashton peace. A season spent repairing fences, cleaning stables and talking to God gave Ashton a clear sense that He wasn't finished with her.

## REDISCOVERING HER VOICE

The process of finding her way back to the studio unfolded naturally, Aston says: "After years of not doing anything musically, I started writing again and eventually things started to fall back into place."

The end result was Thief.

Ashton describes doing a solo record after 14 years as "Crazy. Surreal. Like starting all over again and I am very excited." In the past decade, she had a couple of chances to make another record but never felt it was the right time or the right direction. "It was very hard for me to say no," she recalls, "because I would have much rather preferred to be making a record than being a nanny, but it didn't feel right. This coming together like it did feels right."

Thief, says Aston, represents a major personal accomplishment. She co-wrote five of the six songs, and the lyrics are a personal reflection of the journey she has traveled over the past 13 years: "Every song is personal and bears the marks of a life still standing after weathering the storms."

"I've always known who I am artistically," Ashton continues, "but I think the biggest change I notice is that I am more confident now as a writer. I think there is a common thread between my past music and this record, but the production has more space in it, which I really like."





The title track is one of three songs that former FFH member Michael Boggs co-wrote. Though the word "Satan" is never mentioned, Ashton did tweet that the song was inspired by John 10:10 where Jesus calls Satan a "thief." The lyrics tell of his serpentine nature and how he often leads us into temptation.

"Love is Alive," is a remake of the song by Gary Wright, who reached number two with it in 1976. "I've always wanted to do a cover and [producer] Wayne [Kirkpatrick] had a really cool idea on how to rework the production," says Ashton. "So, there's a whacked-out banjo part and acoustic guitar with a funky, swampy sound. I'm really excited how this one turned out. It's really fun."

"Moonshine" compares human nature with the moon, which only lightens up when it reflects the sun's rays, while "Become Myself" serves as a prayer, calling on God to save us from the lies that make us inauthentic. When she cries out to God not to overlook the forgotten in "Not Small," you realize she knows what she is singing about. "We all want to be seen and heard and not overlooked or diminished. Just recognize me."

"Wrong Well" features the keyboard work of Gordon Mote while her lyrics have been lived first-hand. It was one of the very first songs she wrote for the record. "For me, that song is about wrong choices," says Ashton. "I found myself in a relationship, where everything about it felt like life to me. I thought it just had to be the right thing. But, now, looking back and being honest with myself, there was a little something in the center of my core that knew it wasn't the truth, and it wasn't right."

Being in the studio again reminded Ashton that her fondest memories with Sparrow Records were during the recording of her first album: "That was so special and since I was so young and green, there was a real innocence in that process that's still beautiful to me. And the guys I worked with are all brilliant musicians, quality men and very funny. So I have a lot of good memories of being in the studio making music of which I am very proud."

The crowning achievement for this survivor is the way her music has impacted her fans' lives. "At the end of the day," says Ashton, "I am most proud of the way my music has seemed to be able to help people through very difficult times in their lives."



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Janet Chismar has combined her love for the Lord with a passion for telling stories for some 20-plus years. She has been blessed to travel the world with the Billy Graham Association and work for

Salem Web Network, in addition to earning her stripes as a newspaper reporter, magazine editor and media relations specialist.

## NEWS & HAPPENINGS AUGUST 2013



### New Michael Card Video Series

As iconic CCM artist and author Michael Card wraps up another book in his Gospel series, Matthew can now be seen in a video series as well. Jesus, Messiah, Savior, A NEW IDENTITY: The Gospel of Matthew is a book that will surely help the reader connect with the person of Jesus which is the goal of the author as he labor even today on the next book called, John. You can see the video series on Google TV here.

<http://tinyurl.com/matthewseries>



### Petra Releases Most-Loved Songs

Celebrating their 40th anniversary, Petra released "Holy Is Your Name", an exclusive CD project on July 30 featuring the band's most-loved songs. The CD will include 27 of Petra's hits, and a deluxe edition will include 37 songs. Compiled by Bob Hartman, the project displays Petra's four-decade career of music and ministry featuring hits like "This Means War," "Beyond Belief," & "Creed."

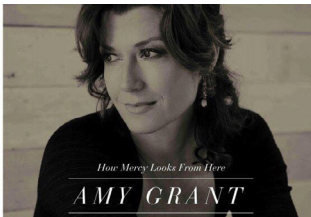
<http://tinyurl.com/NewPetraCD>



### Sandi Patty announces Everlasting

This September, Sandi Patty will release Everlasting, her newest album. The new music will release exclusively through Target stores. The new music will feature hymns and worship songs performed on acoustic guitar, white a bit different from Patty's full orchestral setting. Sandi has sold more than 11 million records.

<http://tinyurl.com/SandisEverlasting>



### Amy Grant releases new project

Although Amy Grant cannot claim to have invented the contemporary Christian music (CCM) style of gospel music, she did the most to popularize it in the 1970s and 1980s before successfully crossing over to pop music in the '80s and early '90s. Fans of Amy have followed her through the ups and downs and even today are rejoicing with her latest project.

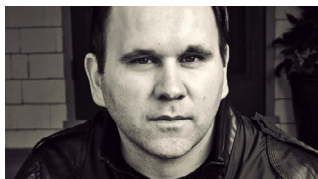
<http://tinyurl.com/amysings>



### Tour the Holy Land with AudioA

Fans of Audio Adrenaline are invited to join the band on a 10-day tour of the Holy Land. The tour will feature band members Kevin Max, Will McGinnis and Jason Walker, plus founding member Mark Stuart of Hands & Feet Project. Travelers will follow in the footsteps of Jesus, explore ancient ruins, experience the Western Wall and the ancient city of Jerusalem and float in the Dead Sea. Registrations are being accepted now.

<http://tinyurl.com/AudioHolyLand>



### Redman Creates New Music

Matt Redman has announced plans for his forthcoming CD, "Your Grace Finds Me" due out September 24th. This release follows on the heels of his 2011 Grammy winning, "10,000 Reasons".

<http://tinyurl.com/RedmanNewMusic>





### Steve Green announces Christmas

One of the most prolific Christian music artists is releasing his brand new Christmas album just in time for the holidays ahead. A collaboration of work from one of the top tenors ever recorded, Steve Green and award winning producer/arranger David Hamilton, this new album is sure to be a holiday favorite year after year.

<http://tinyurl.com/stevegreenchristmas>



### Mylon's New Book

Mylon recently released his autobiography, "Live Forever". The GRAMMY and Dove Award winner is telling his own story, for the very first time, in this exciting new book which is available now. "This is my story," Mylon says, "From playing stadiums, coliseums and getting high with some of the biggest rock stars in the world to being strung out on heroin and cocaine and trapped in a seemingly hopeless pit of depression and loneliness, it's all here, the good, bad and the ugly."

<http://tinyurl.com/NewMylonBook>



### Whiteheart announce Spring 2014 Tour

Next Spring the legendary Christian rock band Whiteheart will be doing a 12 city tour in North America. They will be performing many of their hit song along with a few new ones. They are planning a Kickstarter campaign for a brand new album with lots of amazing prizes yet to be announced. The new album will feature several of the groups past members and will be coming out in a collectors limited edition signed vinyl too. This is a tour you will not want to miss. Stay connected with updates on the tour and album.

<http://tinyurl.com/whiteheartband>



### Wayne Watson & Andrew Greer Tour to Israel

Fans of legendary CCM artist Wayne Watson and singer songwriter Andrew Greer can sign up to enjoy a 10 day tour of the Holy Land. See the scriptures come alive like never before when you embark on this trip of a life time. Take a walk through the Garden of Gethsemane and visit the Garden Tomb. See Jerusalem like you have never seen it before.

<http://waynewatson.com/israel-tour/>

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## REVIEWS | MUSIC



### Susan Ashton

their

*(Be Music & Entertainment)*

The lyrical force underpinning Susan Ashton's brilliant six-song EP *Thief* at once demonstrates a fervent dependence on God and flat-out pull-no-punches honesty—fitting for her journeys through divorce, financial hardship, and record-label rejection.

The album covers a wide spectrum of emotions, from the quietly harrowing "Moonshine" to the stark title track which is dominated by a treble-toned fingerpicked acoustic guitar with splashes of pedal-steel country flourish and lyrics like: "Yet it's just like you/it's who you

are it's what you do/And you took mine but there'll come a time when you get yours/You'll see...thief." Ashton does let in more sunshine with "Become Myself," singing with a declarative defiance that God "makes all things beautiful" and that "I'm on my way to get there some day."

The cover of Gary Wright's 1976 smash single, "Love Is Alive," would sound like an Ashton original if not for the staccato riff that will always be the tune's calling card. Still the emotions in the lyrics reflect the hope the singer is leaning on these days. *Thief* is a great listen and leaves you wanting more. — Dave Urbanski



### John Elefante

On My Way To The Sun

*(Elevate Entertainment)*

In John Elefante's latest release - "On My Way To The Sun" - he shares words of encouragement to Christians who are struggling or facing challenges to their faith. He delivers a Christian message wrapped in a lively, rock-and-roll sound as he laments, singing "Why do we dim the lights?" Then in "We All Fall Short," the seventh of 10 songs in the album, we find a real amen moment as he sings, "We say we trust. We say we have faith. But then we find ourselves in the rain." Elefante presents us with a real challenge as Christians, to let our light's shine

and not to lose faith or hope. In another poignant song in this album - "The Time" - Elefante sings to a young pregnant girl, "don't throw your child away."

An award-winning singer and composer, Elefante shares a message of conviction that will draw you closer to God. This is music definitely worth picking up. — Gail Woods



## LESSONS FROM THE CROSSE | RENEE CROSSE

# FAR FROM HOME

There is a lot of activity going on in the Crosse house right now. We are in the midst of an out of state move, there is packing with boxes stacked everywhere and school is starting back. So in the midst of this craziness, what do I do? I drop everything and go to Cannon Beach, Oregon.

How could I, you ask? My mom couldn't believe it. She assured me I had way too much going on to leave town, but I went anyway. It's been many years in the making but I decided to take a week for me. You see, Cannon Beach is a little slice of Heaven. Clay has been going to Cannon Beach Conference Center to lead worship for a week each of the past four summers. He always asks me to join him for a week of worship, teaching and relaxation. Every year up until this year, I've been 'too busy.'

As moms, wives, and women in general, we are all admittedly so busy. Seems we take care of everyone but ourselves. I'm so thankful that in the midst of all I had on my 'to do list' I took the time away to be refreshed and renewed this year. There were many moments of solitude for me on the beach of the Pacific Northwest Coast. Just me, my God and my thoughts. There were naps, alone, in our room that faced the ocean shore. I'm thankful for every moment I spent there.

Jesus tells us in Mark 6:31 - "And He said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a lonely place and rest a while." For there were

many people coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat."

As a mom, I can identify with the last sentence of that verse. There are moments where I feel like I'm finally sitting down to eat just as everyone else is almost done! Or the times I don't even have time to eat. Those days where you grab the bag of pretzels to munch on in the car, or in line, because you haven't sat down to eat breakfast or lunch.

Cannon Beach was such a refresher for me. I know a week away is a dream for most people, but I encourage you to find 'your moment.' That moment for you might look like an afternoon at a local park, or it could be a weekend get-a-way. Whatever it is, find your Cannon Beach, even if it's just thirty minutes away from everyone but God. I assure you that you will feel refreshed, alone...yet far from alone.



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Renee Crosse is an author, speaker, and co-founder of HolyHomes Ministries with her husband, four-time Dove Award winner Clay Crosse. Renee and Clay have been married since 1990, have 4 children, and live in Bentonville Arkansas where Clay serves as worship pastor at First Baptist Church, Bentonville.

[www.holyhomes.org/AboutUs/Renee](http://www.holyhomes.org/AboutUs/Renee)



# May I Speak A Truth?

As a married couple, we feel like we get to know each other better every day, but (there's always a "but" right?), there are still some surprises that seem to pop-up along the way. God knew this when he put us together with our spouses. He knew that we would be on a journey together, and that there would be great times but also real difficulties.

Lately, Renee and I have added to our "conflict control toolbox" five little words that can change everything. They're simply, "May I speak a truth?" It's biblical to speak this way. Ephesians 4:15 points to "speaking the truth in love." It's most helpful when you are talking to your spouse in potentially stressful situations. We'd heard about this idea before, but saw it in action recently on a popular sitcom. In that show, a couple attending marriage counseling was given these five little words to insert into their dialogue. The key to success was that once those words are spoken, the other person must listen without interruption and reply, "I acknowledge your truth." While the thought of parroting these words may seem formulaic and robotic – and they did make it very funny on the TV show – I'm telling you, it works!

For example, I enjoy running after a long day in the office, just to get outside and clear my head before dinner. I would often

leave for a run as Renee was in the middle of cooking dinner and, when I returned, I'd immediately head to the shower. One night, as I was walking into the kitchen after my shower, Renee uttered those five little words. Well she added one more, "Clay, may I speak a truth?" She then told me that she was glad I liked to run and was all for it, but, her "truth in love" was that it was upsetting to her that she had to wait to serve dinner when I took runs so close to the mealtime. I told her that "I acknowledge her truth," and would start timing my runs where the family wasn't waiting on me to eat.

By introducing this new tactic into our marriage, we now give the other person a moment to prepare themselves for what is about to be spoken. On top of this, we have also seen that our kids are intensely aware of what is going on when we speak those words. Handling conflict appropriately is very rewarding, and many times our kids are brought in to the conversation and see us handle these situations with "truth in love."

Our hope is that by modeling this in front of our children, they will be inspired to deal with verbal conflict in their lives with self-control, with truth and with love.



## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Clay and Renee Crosse, through HolyHomes Ministries, challenge Christian homes with a simple and straightforward message to

be set-apart for God's glory. The Crosse's have been married for 23 years, have four children, and live in Arlington Tennessee. For more info visit [www.claycrosse.com](http://www.claycrosse.com) and [www.holyhomes.org](http://www.holyhomes.org).



## A DEEPER LOOK

WENDY FRANCISCO

# Magnificent Wings

I once had the opportunity to watch a pair of Canadian geese living in a nearby lake. The female was a domestic bird which the Department of Wildlife had required to be pinioned at hatching. (Pinioning is the removal of a small part of the flesh and bone of the wing, and it permanently prevents the bird from flying.) She had bonded with a wild gander and each year he remained with her, rather than migrating.

The wings of a bird are one of the most breathtaking combinations of beauty and function in all of creation - a gift to be used.

A strange principle sometimes promoted in Christian circles suggests that we bury our God-given gifts, and do nothing with them, and that we can take pride in suppressing these things as a measure of how well we've "died to ourselves".

Man-made doctrines that pinion people have tragic effects. The Bible does teach us to leave behind works of the flesh - pride, anger, jealousies, unforgiveness, out of control sexuality, and the like. These are things that hurt everyone. But dreams, callings, gifts, and abilities are not works of the flesh. God never tells us to die to these, but to believe in them!

I gave my life to Jesus as a teen and right away I began to hear people talk about limitations for women. It took me many years to realize that God's plan for me was in accord with His basic design of me. It is true - what you love to do, He loves to see you do. I remember the day when I realized this with a

shock. Life was quite different after that.

When Christians suppress their strengths, then unhealthy things begin to pop out everywhere. Our relationships become jealous, tense, judgmental, and unpleasant. If a community, church, or family limits people, there is a shared impoverishment. But the more we each tune into God's still small voice in us and follow it, and the more we encourage others to do so, the richer in life we will all be.

God does not desire you to be someone you are not. He doesn't give you magnificent wings that can carry you into the heavens and then pinion you. God's is richly glorified by whole individuals who are active in their gifts, shining their lights, and mounting up with wings like eagles.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Wendy has a passion for art, writing, photography and especially music. In 1979, was signed to Christian music label Sparrow Records. Wendy helped edit "Wesley The

Owl" which became a New York Times best seller, created the You Tube video, GoD and Dog - her first video animation - which received a million views in it's first 40 days and was later published as a book. Wendy resides with her husband, singer/songwriter Don Francisco, in the mountains of Colorado.

[www.wendyfrancisco.com](http://www.wendyfrancisco.com)



# Steve Green **BACK TO NORMAL**

## Paul's Epitaph

On a recent trip to Rome I took time to visit the Mamertine prison, an ancient dungeon that is said to be the place Paul was held just before his execution. If true, that is also where he wrote the last of his epistles, his second letter to Timothy. Knowing his death was imminent; Paul offered Timothy a poignant summary, a statement that could be Paul's own epitaph. "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." (2 Tim. 4:7) Over the next couple of months I'd like to invite you look at each phrase.

First he says, "I have fought the good fight." Paul was not boasting about his record (that would contradict the gospel he preached), nor was he raising the bar for the rest of us. Instead, he was describing the hope of every believer. All of Paul's circumstances pointed to defeat. He was in prison, about to be beheaded, and despised or ignored by most of the world. In spite of every imaginable hardship (2 Cor. 11:24-27), Paul declares that serving Jesus Christ is the good fight.

At the beginning of the last century, William of Borden lived a privileged life as part of the Borden dairy empire. His high school graduation gift was a trip around the world. While on that year long voyage, William could not escape a growing concern for those he encountered, people who had never seen the

light of the gospel. Upon returning home, he announced to his family that he would be enrolling in seminary to prepare for a mission endeavor to China. He wrote two words in the cover of his Bible, "No return."

Just before completing his studies, his father passed away and the rest of the family pleaded with him to come home and run the business in order to safeguard their fortune. William graciously tried to explain the urgency he sensed. In the end, his siblings gave him an ultimatum. Either return to help them or be cut off from any inheritance. That day William wrote two more words in his Bible, "No reserves."

After graduation, William made the final preparations and boarded a ship for China. During a brief stop in Egypt, he contracted meningitis and within a few weeks died. He never made it to his destination. When his body was returned home, family member discovered his Bible. He had written two more words in the cover, "No regrets."

Paul was telling Timothy that regardless of anyone else's assessment, his struggle and the contest he had been engaged in for the sake of the gospel was the good fight. When he said, "For me to live is Christ", he was saying there is no other way to live. Fighting the good fight does not involve a particular vocation, but it is the call to every follower of Jesus.

How about you? Are you engaged in the only worthwhile contest?

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Steve launched his solo career in 1984 and has since sold more than five million albums. He has been honored with four Grammy nominations, 18 Number One songs, and seven Dove Awards. Steve continues to tour extensively nationwide and internationally. He is currently tour in the God of All Glory Tour along with Twila Paris, Larnelle Harris and Wayne Watson. You can connect with Steve by visiting:

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## END NOTES

# The Love of the Vinedresser

## DON FRANCISCO

Recently, Wendy and I watched a YouTube video of a pastor berating his hapless flock. He called people by name, then alternately verbally abused and proclaimed his love for them, often in the same sentence. We sat there, stunned. How could he be so manipulative? Then it dawned on me: That's exactly what we've been taught that God is like! He loves us, but then He threatens us. That pastor was just a fleshed-out cartoon of the schizoid god many of us have in our heads.

Unfortunately, our translations often support this bizarre idea of God. When you "read it in the Bible", it tends to stick in your head as true, even when your heart is not in agreement.

I used to believe in a god very much like that. Then, thirty years ago I heard a Bible teacher in England say that the King James Version (and consequently most of the others) had translated the beginning of the fifteenth chapter of John's Gospel completely wrong. I was horrified, and I nearly got up and left. This was The Word of God that he was talking about! I decided to stay and listen, though, and eventually realized he was right. Here are the verses in question:

*"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of*

*the word which I have spoken to you."* John 15:1-3 NKJV

In other words, those who aren't productive will be cut off altogether, and those that are productive will be mutilated. (Oh, but don't worry—God really does love you. It's just a strange kind of love.)

To begin with, "takes away" in verse two is wrong. The Greek verb *airo* can mean to take away, but its primary meaning is 'to lift up'. When a branch of a grapevine is lying in the dirt, it cannot bear grapes and must be lifted back up onto the trellis before it can do so.

There is a similar error in the next phrase, saying that the branches that bear fruit will be "pruned". The Greek verb *kathairo* can mean to prune, but its primary meaning is "to cleanse". If a grapevine's branches are pruned before the season is over, it will send the whole vine into shock, ruining the crop.

England in the early 1600's was ignorant of viticulture; the climate was inhospitable to it. (The French, even today, often make fun of British attempts at winemaking.) The translators on that rainy island didn't realize all that was involved in caring for a vineyard, especially in a dry climate such as Israel's. Without much rain, the leaves would get covered with dust, all but stopping photosynthesis. The branches had to be washed regularly by the vinedressers.

Katharos, in the last part of verse three,

is an adjective from the same verb, kathairo, and is correctly translated "clean". Notice the complete thought now, "...every branch that bears fruit, He cleanses... You are already clean..."

So, here's a better translation:

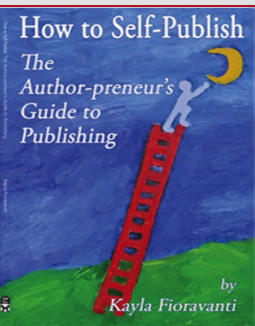
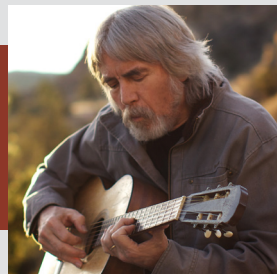
*"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He lifts up [to its proper place]; and every branch that bears fruit He cleanses, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you."*

I had an unsettling thought after realizing the error in the KJV that day: If the translation of the very words of Jesus in the most revered version in the English language was that wrong, how many other verses were there in the same condition in our Bibles? How badly have we been misled by our translations? I began to study, and after many years I can answer that second question confidently: Pretty badly. Many words that were intended to show us a loving Father have been interpreted to do the opposite.

But be encouraged, there is also much good in our translations. And remember: you are part of the eternal vine, and you won't be cut off if you don't perform. Your loving Father will help you and lift you up.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Don is one of the early pioneers of contemporary Christian music. His story song of the resurrection, "He's Alive", has been a standard for over 30 years. [www.rockymountainministries.org](http://www.rockymountainministries.org)



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## THE CHARTS | SEPTEMBER 2013

# Today's TOP 15 Classic Christian Artists

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Special thanks to Christian Concert Alerts for helping us compile this list of the Most Requested Classic Christian Artists for the month of August 2013.

- 1 Steven Curtis Chapman
- 2 Michael W. Smith
- 3 Phillips Craig and Dean
- 4 Amy Grant
- 5 Point of Grace
- 6 Carman
- 7 Newsong
- 8 Avalon
- 9 4HIM
- 10 Sandi Patty
- 11 Twila Paris
- 12 Bebe and Cece Winans
- 13 Kathy Troccoli
- 14 Steve Green
- 15 Classic Petra

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- 9/29 - COLUMBIA, SC
- 10/18 - COOPER CITY, FL
- 10/19 - LAKE CITY, FL
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## ADULT CONTEMPORARY

## MUSIC

**MANDISA*****Overcomer*** (Sparrow Records)

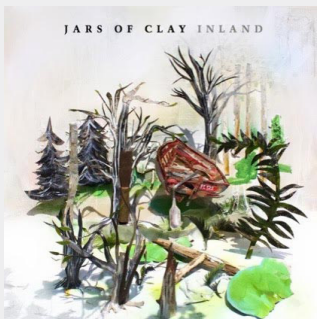
FOR FANS OF: Natalie Grant, Mary Mary

★★★★★

As an anthemic project, this one soars. Mandisa's strong and powerful vocal launches songs like "The Distance" and "Overcomer" to great heights. She shows even more vocal prowess and dexterity on "Dear John," which was a refreshing change from the all-powerhouse vocal she normally delivers. Overall, an encouraging and hopeful project.

—Grace S. Aspinwall

WE LIKE: "The Distance"

**JARS OF CLAY*****Inland*** (Gray Matters)

FOR FANS OF: The Civil Wars, The Decemberists, Sixpence None The Richer

★★★★★

Almost 20 years have passed since Jars Of Clay exploded with *Frail*, but the group continues pushing creative and lyrical boundaries eleven albums later. Rather than taking the safe and easy radio route, the group turns to producer Tucker Martine (My Morning Jacket, The Decemberists) for a hipster-friendly journey of melodic pop treasures that candidly discuss life's many emotions during uncertain times.

—Andy Argyrakis

WE LIKE: "After The Fight"

**LOVE AND THE OUTCOME*****Love and the Outcome***

(Word Entertainment)

FOR FANS OF: Britt Nicole, Owl City, Superchick

★★★

Happy and full of life, the label debut from Love and the Outcome is versatile and smart, clean-cut pop. Fans of cheery music like Britt Nicole will like this release, particularly on the up-tempo songs like, "When We Love." While the songwriting lacks the depth demonstrated by contemporaries like Matthew West, in general this is a promising start from this husband and wife duo.

—Grace S. Aspinwall

WE LIKE: "Heart Like You"

# WORSHIP

## MUSIC



### THE DIGITAL AGE

#### **Evening: Morning**

(Fairtrade Services)

FOR FANS OF: David Crowder\* Band, Chris Tomlin, OneRepublic

★★★★

The David Crowder\* Band may have technically split, but there's still plenty of music to come from that camp courtesy of the front man's solo album and the remaining players' new project The Digital Age. Clad in a similar electro-pop/modern-rock cloth, the foursome takes a complex musical route toward an album of praise anthems sure to resonate with the digital generation and beyond.

—Andy Argyrakis

WE LIKE: "Captured"



### THE CITY HARMONIC

#### **Heart** (Integrity Music)

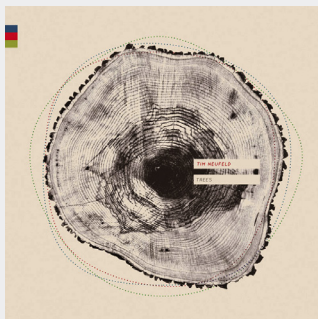
FOR FANS OF: All Sons and Daughters, Gungor, Rend Collective Experiment

★★★

This folk-infused album has little splashes of country and bluegrass within it, and is a joy to hear. The pretty and cheery, "A City On A Hill" is fun and packs a great message, while "Long Walk Home," is reminiscent of Mumford and Sons. The project is relevant and delightful, albeit safe ground for the band.

—Grace S. Aspinwall

WE LIKE: "Long Walk Home"



### TIM NEUFELD

#### **Trees** (Independent)

FOR FANS OF: Hillsong, David Crowder Band, Kristian Stanfill

★★

Tim Neufeld's strong and nuanced vocal lends itself to new and old worship favorites on *Trees*, and it will find a home with fans of the Passion worship albums and Hillsong United. *Heart Starts Beating* and *Glorious* really show off his voice and the smart musical arrangements, but we would have loved to hear more original content.

—Grace S. Aspinwall

WE LIKE: "Glorious"



## ROCK

## MUSIC

**PETRA****40th Anniversary** (Starsong)

FOR FANS OF: Stryper, DeGarmo & Key, Foreigner

★★★★

One of Christian rock's most groundbreaking bands turns 40 with a retrospective featuring 27 hits on two CDs (or a 37 track deluxe digital version). Both feature plenty of melodic rock staples like "This Means War," "Beyond Belief" and "Creed," plus the new worship ballad "Holy Is Your Name," though the download edition is the best bet thanks to the inclusion of fellow key cuts like "More Power To Ya" and "The Coloring Song."

—Andy Argyrakis

WE LIKE: "Creed"

**STELLAR KART****All In** (Inpop)

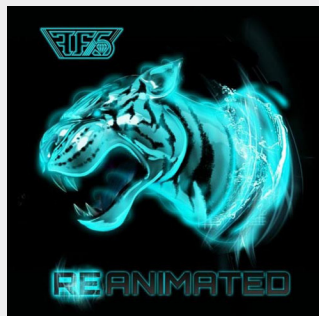
FOR FANS OF: Everyday Sunday, Hawk Nelson

★★★★

Whether cranking up the amps or slowing the proceedings a bit, Stellar Kart's new album *All In* keeps things arena-ready song after song. That's good news for both the up-tempo punkish anthems and slower radio fare. "My Surrender" and "Before and After" stay earnest despite slowing things down, while "Nowhere To Go But Up" and "Criminals and Kings" will satisfy the band's frenetic fan base. Front to back, this is a strong release sure to satisfy.

—Matt Conner

WE LIKE: "My Surrender"

**FAMILY FORCE 5****Reanimated**

(ReAnimated Music)

FOR FANS OF: McSwagger, Toxic Avenger

★★

Family Force 5 spread their EDM wings on their latest EP, *Reanimated*, with numerous remixes from several DJs, the biggest of which is Toxic Avenger. Riley Friesen also returns once again with a couple of entries, but the strongest material is among the few new tracks. "Chainsaw" features Tedashii and kicks off the album in style. Unfortunately it's all downhill thereafter.

—Matt Conner

WE LIKE: "Chainsaw"



## RELIENT K

With four years having passed since Relient K released its last studio album, it was only fitting to find *Collapsible Lung* (Mono Vs. Stereo) shooting straight up to the top of the iTunes overall album chart. The project marks the band's seventh long-player in a two-million-album-selling-career, and has also attracted additional momentum as of late thanks to front man Matt Thiessen's co-writing on hits like Owl City's "Good Time," Kelly Clarkson's "Long Shot" and "When Can I See You Again" from the movie *Wreck-It Ralph*. Given those infectious associations, the new record naturally overflows with even more pop sensibility than usual, though there are still plenty of the guys' witty social commentaries and personal reflections of faith. Catch more from Thiessen's friendly chat with CCM, including the curious meaning behind the new collection's title.

**CCM: What were you doing the moment you heard the new record hit number one on iTunes and what's the first thing that popped into your mind?**

**Matt Thiessen:** We were at the venue in Nashville kicking off our current tour. It was actually a hometown album release show. I thought it was nice and I hope it happens again sometime!

**CCM: What prompted so much musical experimentation on this project?**

**Thiessen:** I have been collaborating with a bunch of artists and writers for the last few years writing for other records. We wanted to surprise ourselves and get out of our comfort zone.

**CCM: What inspired the *Collapsible Lung* title?**

**Thiessen:** Every breath is precious. Our lungs are collapsible...and our hips are replaceable. Over a year ago, my brother was hospitalized shortly after finishing a marathon. He's running again. I try to jog every day. I think all of those things made *Collapsible Lung* feel good to me. It's a celebration of God's creation.

—Andy Argyrakis

**FOR MORE INFORMATION CLICK HERE**

## INDIE

## MUSIC

**SARA BETH GO*****Wish It Had***

(Blue Plate Heiress Records)

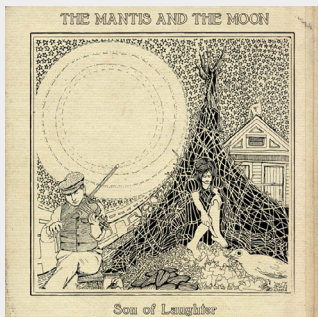
FOR FANS OF: Madi Diaz,  
Elizabeth and the Catapult

★★★★

The fourth studio release from Nashville songwriter Sarah Beth Go, née Geoghegan, fits snugly at home within the current fem-pop scene of artists like Madi Diaz, Sara Bareilles and the like. In fact, the quirky, smart pop gems on *Wish It Had* stand as tall as those of her peers, with “Fly To Venus” and “Kids in the City” serving as succinct, memorable tracks that deserve a much greater audience.

—Matt Conner

WE LIKE: “Kids in the City”

**SON OF LAUGHTER*****The Mantis and the Moon***

(Independent)

FOR FANS OF: Andrew Peterson,  
Fionn Regan, Keegan Dewitt

★★★★★

Masterfully helped to life by producer Ben Shive (Andrew Peterson, Sara Groves) and prestigiously released by thoughtful folks at The Rabbit Room, Mantis defines the singer-songwriter genre to a tee. With intriguing acoustic instrumentation, dreamy storybook lyrics and poignant takeaways (“I don’t want to be someone who doesn’t want to be who they are”), Mantis may be the most affective Nashville singer-songwriter EP in recent history.

—Andrew Greer

WE LIKE: “The Mantis and  
the Moon”**MICHELLE LYNN THOMPSON*****Words That Fell*** (Independent)FOR FANS OF: Julie Lee, Over the  
Rhine, Sarah Masen

★★★★★

Having sung in the Chicago-based roots band The Wayside for two decades, Thompson enlists co-writes with Nashville songwriters Julie Lee and Kate York, plus producer Kenny Hutson (Over the Rhine), to explore Americana’s multi-faceted landscape on her debut EP. Infused with traditional country instrumentation—pedal steel, mandolin, accordion—Words’ old-time balladry and Country-ready cuts house simple but poignant verses in a songwriter’s paradise.

—Andrew Greer

WE LIKE: “On the Other Side”



A portrait of Nick Flora, a man with a beard and glasses, wearing a dark cap and a red shirt, looking directly at the camera against a stone wall background.

# INDIE SPOTLIGHT

## NICK FLORA

Nashville singer-songwriter Nick Flora is hardly the acoustic-slinging type that occupies most of the Music City map. Instead, Flora's pop/rock compositions are clever and careful, a mix of Jon Foreman, Matt Nathanson and Randy Newman that sticks as soon as it plays. And his latest is easily his best yet, a mature and confident collection aptly titled *The Reintroduction of Nick Flora*.

**CCM:** *What made you term this album a "Re-Introduction"?*

**Nick:** A couple different reasons, actually. For one, I feel like every new album is a chance to "reintroduce" yourself to your audience. So much happens in between records. You get older, perspectives change, etc. And personally, I felt a shift in feeling more confident in who I was as an artist and as a person. The title seemed fitting.

**CCM:** *With a few albums under your belt, did you enter the studio more confidently than before?*

**Nick:** Actually this time was a bit harder for me than previous times. I had full confidence in [producer] Andrew Osenga and the players, but it took a little longer for the songs to come around for me personally. I've never been as raw and honest as I am on this record and that can be a scary thing. There's always a fear when you speak from an honest place that your ideas will be rejected or your words will be seen as cheesy.

I have the tools in my songwriter tool belt to twist emotions or mask honesty with clever turns of phrases or abstract and vague lyrical content, but I knew that I needed to be completely real, honest, and straightforward with my approach. Andrew was a huge component in helping me get to that point. This record is so much a collaboration with him.

**CCM:** *What about your approach to writing the songs?*

**Nick:** When I approach a song or an album as a whole I try to push myself to write in a way that I haven't before. Maybe less lyrics this time, more space between verses, or a song from different perspective than I'd heard before. I love songs about somewhat-cliché topics like love, loss or God, but coming from a different point of view than perhaps has been written about before.

—Matt Conner

**FOR MORE INFORMATION [CLICK HERE](#)**

## URBAN

## MUSIC



**DEITRICK HADDON**  
***R.E.D.: Restoring Everything Damaged*** (RCA Inspiration)  
 FOR FANS OF: Michael Jackson, Lenny Kravitz, Israel Houghton  
 ★★★★★

Part retro funk. Part modern gospel. All soul. The Dove Award-winning singer-songwriter-producer infuses his definitive “gospel soul” brand with gritty tracks, throwback horns and Motown-esque background vocals to perfectly accentuate Haddon’s vintage vocal vibe. Assuaging the ’70s soul fan while appeasing modern gospel’s slick expectancy, Haddon is a truly unique progressive mastermind in today’s gospel music profile.

—Andrew Greer

WE LIKE: “Feel A Breakthrough”



**SHERI JONES-MOFFETT**  
***Power & Authority: Live in Memphis*** (EMI Gospel)  
 FOR FANS OF: Karen Clark-Sheard, Mary Mary, Yolanda Adams  
 ★★★

Taking the live route for her sophomore set, the skilled soprano channels her history as a Tri-City Singer to charter a song set properly hearkening gospel music’s traditional, choir-backed past. Matching Moffett’s hyper-vocal prowess with crazy horn licks (“No Failure”) provides insight to her experienced musicianship, while songs like “Grace” proclaim the singer-songwriter’s abiding faith convictions.

—Andrew Greer

WE LIKE: “Shine”



**TYE TRIBBETT**  
***Greater Than*** (EMI Gospel)  
 FOR FANS OF: Fred Hammond, Hezekiah Walker, Israel Houghton and New Breed  
 ★★★★★

Harboring the past to channel the future, Grammy-nominated Tribbett invests in a new generation of gospel fans with bold modern takes on traditional elements. Slick programming, arena-ready vocals and dance floor electronica amp up classic two-beat romps, hit-heavy horns and spirit-filled balladry. Add a corporate twist with a stylized cover of Jeremy Camp’s worship hit, “Overcome,” and Tribbett continues to pioneer today’s gospel music.

—Andrew Greer

WE LIKE: “Nobody”

A close-up portrait of Tye Tribbett, a Black man with a beard and glasses, wearing a dark suit and white shirt. He is looking slightly to the side with a serious expression.

# URBAN SPOTLIGHT

## TYE TRIBBETT

Rather than rest on his list of laurels, which includes multiple Grammy nods, #1 singles and *Billboard* sellers, plus industry-stirring performances with Faith Hill, Stevie Wonder and Elton John, Tye Tribbett continues to pave the way for Gospel music's new generation with his latest solo release, *Greater Than* (Motown Gospel). Here the singer-songwriter-producer extraordinaire gives CCM a glimpse into the heart of his industry-defining recording career.

***Greater Than was recorded half in Miami, half in Los Angeles. How did that affect the creative process and the final sound?***

**Tye Tribbett:** It gave *Greater Than* an extra edge because I had the advantage of choosing from two different energies—the West Coast flow and the East Coast flow—for the final album cut. Both were amazing!

***Greater Than covers a lot of musical ground. From Jeremy Camp's "Overcome" to the black gospel lead single "Same God." How do you keep these song-by-song changes from being disjointed?***

**Tribbett:** I feel like I understand both sides of the spectrum. I understand and love a CCM Jeremy Camp record as well as a gospel Donnie McClurkin record. Because I am influenced by both, I try to marry them in my music.

***This is your first record in recent memory without your backup crew "G.A." Did that change the way you approached the project, as well as the final product?***

**Tribbett:** Yes. It changed how I approached the recording of the project and the final product. Different singers and band provided a different sound. The new members bring a new energy, anointing and sound which I love and am grateful to have on this project.

***As a gospel artist, what do you feel is the main goal you want to achieve through your music?***

**Tribbett:** To spread the message of hope and turn the hearts of those who hear it towards God.

—Andrew Greer

**FOR MORE INFORMATION CLICK HERE**



## CROSSOVER

## MUSIC



**ROBERT RANDOLPH & THE FAMILY BAND**  
**Lickety Split**

(Blue Note Records)

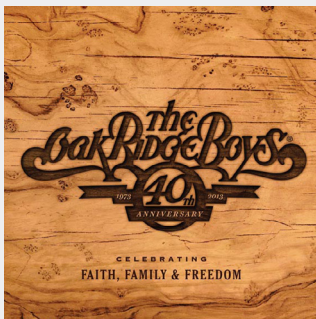
FOR FANS OF: *The Black Crowes*,  
*Ben Harper*, *Eric Clapton*

★★★★

Every album into his celebrated career, Robert Randolph and company continue to stretch deeper into an electrifying spread of rock, funk, gospel and R&B, all centered around the leader's pedal steel guitar prowess. Though there's plenty to devour musically from this prodigy, his talented backers, plus guests Carlos Santana and Trombone Shorty, the songwriting remains rooted in the sacred, even as the troupe's audience expands like lightning in the mainstream.

—Andy Argyrakis

WE LIKE: "Born Again"



**THE OAK RIDGE BOYS**  
**40th Anniversary**

(Gaither Music Group)

FOR FANS OF: *Bill Gaither*,  
*George Jones*, *Kenny Rogers*

★★★

Subtitled *Celebrating Faith, Family & Freedom*, this latest compilation from the kings of gospel-infused country music certainly touches on their most beloved popular, spiritual and patriotic songs. But considering their influential career has spanned four decades, a mere dozen tunes on a single disc seems much too short, even if everything contained therein sports plenty of sweet southern harmonies and meaningful messages.

—Andy Argyrakis

WE LIKE: "American Made"



**THE ISAACS**

**The Living Years** (Spring Hill)

FOR FANS OF: *Gaither Vocal Band*, *McCoy Grass*

★★★★

Despite recent changes in the band's long-standing lineup, The Isaacs' latest release, *The Living Years*, features the same intricate and intimate compositions as before. The familiar title track (originally by Mike & The Mechanics) leads off an album filled with delicate instrumentation and lush harmonies, a dynamic combo that demonstrates The Isaacs show no signs of slowing down.

—Matt Conner

WE LIKE: "Grandpa (Tell Me 'Bout The Good Old Days)"

A portrait of Andrew Belle, a man with light brown hair and a beard, wearing a white shirt, looking slightly to the left. The background is dark and textured.

# CROSSOVER SPOTLIGHT

## ANDREW BELLE

Andrew Belle went from fledgling artist playing bars and coffee shops to songwriting sensation in a hurry once the masses got ahold of his last album, *The Ladder*. After numerous placements, the Chicago native toured non-stop and made fans anxious for more. Now he's back with a brand new album entitled *Black Bear*.

Belle's latest is inspired by deeply personal changes in his life—from becoming a newlywed to finding faith for the first time. Yet the record also reflects inspiration from some of the most noted authors of the last century: C.S. Lewis and Flannery O'Connor. It's a moody mix that trades the lighter tone of his debut LP for heavier, more substantive content.

"The lyrics stem from a lot of personal growth in my own life," says Belle. "Everything I write is autobiographical in nature. I never write fictional stories, so it's always drawn from personal inspiration. I've gone through a lot relationally since the last album. I got married last year, so that's a major component in my writing. Also I talk a lot about my faith and discovering that for the first time. Those things played a part in the record."

When it comes to the analogy of *Black Bear*, Belle says it stems from a quote from O'Connor in her famous book *Wise Blood* that reads, "Later he saw Jesus move from tree to tree in the back of his mind, a wild ragged figure motioning him to turn around and come off into the dark where he might be walking on the water and not know it and then suddenly know it and drown."

For Belle, such wild imagery about the person of Jesus and the faith journey kept calling him in the form of *Black Bear*.

"I was writing lyrics and the whole black bear thing kept coming back. It was the same with *The Ladder*, where that image kept popping up. I love writing albums with a common thread, so it was my own notion or experience from a couple years back where I felt God was coming after me. It's hard to explain and I don't know what was going on, but I just couldn't even resist it. In a lot of ways, I felt like I was being hunted down and sought after. So the whole black bear analogy is that pursuit."

Belle has clearly matured in every way and fans are likely to do a second take when they hear "his latest" offering for the first time. But Belle's ability to craft a memorable melody remains and the resonant lyrics are likely to take fans deeper into their appreciation than ever before.

—Matt Conner

**FOR MORE INFORMATION CLICK HERE**

## FILMS

## ENTERTAINMENT

**THE WAY WAY BACK**

**Starring:** Steve Carrell, Toni Collette, Sam Rockwell

**Director:** Nate Faxon, Jim Rash

**Studio:** Fox Searchlight

★★★★

For those looking for a heartwarming turn before the summer goes away, *The Way Way Back* provides an awkwardly endearing movie in the mold of previous summer hits like *Little Miss Sunshine* and *Juno*. Two of the screenwriters from the 2011 hit *The Descendants* come together to write and direct this cinematic gem of a painfully blended family who get away to a condo for the summer. Centered around the gawky adolescence of 14-year-old Duncan, *The Way Way Back* is hilarious, inspiring and, most of all, painfully true in its exploration of the human heart.

**PLANES**

**Starring:** Dane Cook, Brad Garrett, Julia Louis-Dreyfus

**Director:** Klay Hall

**Studio:** Walt Disney Studios

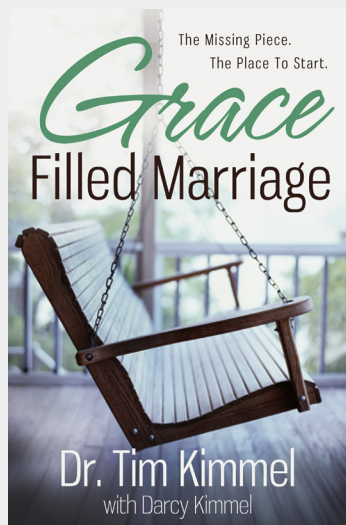
★★

After the success of Disney/Pixar's *Cars* series of movies, the folks at Disney were apparently moved to explore other vehicular possibilities even if it's nothing more than the lame derivative offered in *Planes*. While some of the animation sequences are imaginative and the characters enjoyable, the plot about a plane named Dusty Crophopper (Dane Cook) who is afraid of heights never gets off the ground. While families with younger children will undoubtedly find ways to get on board, *Planes* is simply an uninspired and unnecessary release.



# BOOKS

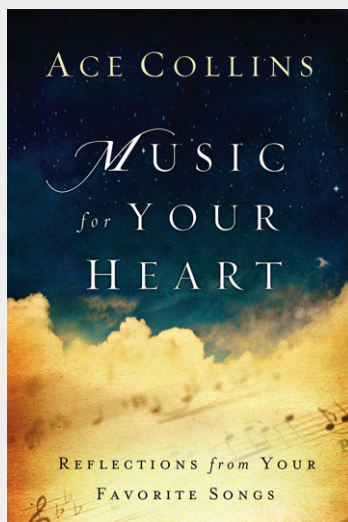
## ENTERTAINMENT



### GRACE FILLED MARRIAGE

Authors: Dr. Tim Kimmel & Darcy Kimmel  
Publisher: Worthy Publishing

Beginning with the idea that very few marriages would be classified as “truly happy,” Dr. Tim Kimmel and his wife, Marcy, begin to explore the places of pain and frustration modern couples experience as they fail to extend a proper understanding of grace to one another. While grace is often present in conversations about God and salvation, Kimmel argues that grace is also the centerpiece in a happy and healthy marriage. Keen insights and helpful illustrations illuminate what it means for a husband and wife to truly love and serve each other with grace.



### MUSIC FOR YOUR HEART

Authors: Ace Collins  
Publisher: Abingdon Press

Sometimes the story behind the song is more compelling than the actual composition. In *Music For Your Heart*, author Ace Collins unveils the background behind some of the biggest hits in music history. From “Yesterday” to “You Are My Sunshine,” Collins gives the incredible experiences and tremendous heart behind each tune, unveiling interesting and inspiring layers with each new chapter. With 80 songs in all, there’s something here for every music fan to appreciate.

## STORY BEHIND THE SONG

## SPECIAL EXTENDED EDITION

## HEART

ARTIST: CITY HARMONIC

**CCM:** *What have you discovered on the road to fully becoming human?*

**ELIAS DUMMER:** Well, we certainly don't mean to suggest that we've got everything figured out! Far from it. But I would suggest that in many ways we've allowed some of the assumptions that drive Western culture to shape the way we view the world; what we think it means to be a human being, what it means to worship and what it means to be a Christian. And if we don't respectfully question those assumptions, we run the risk of devaluing the very life Christ has given us to live. I mean, as a band, we've had a very interesting couple of years. In a lot of ways, everything about our lives is different than what it once was, and in a sense, what's surprising about all of that is how much we could potentially stay the same. And yet the challenge before us is always to pursue discipleship—Christlikeness in our lives and thoughts and actions. And while we've had total highs and unexpected opportunities and reasons to celebrate, we've also been met with our close friend Eric [The City Harmonic bassist Eric Fusilier] literally being moments from death with cancer, sidelined and being powerless to do anything about it. So, with that said, it's fascinating how much our character could stay the same if we don't allow Christ to shape us through the circumstances we find ourselves in by the Grace of God.



As Eric and I were writing one of the songs for this album ("Strong"), we found ourselves challenged by some of what Paul had to say in 2 Corinthians 12—which tells us that when he found himself with a thorn, which may or may not have had anything to do with sin at all, he begged Jesus to take it away—and Christ's answer was, "My grace is sufficient for you." Yet, I think in a lot of ways it can be hard in our cultural mindset to think through grace outside of a transaction with Jesus regarding my personal sins. It's clearly much more. Perhaps it's by grace that we awake in the morning at all, and with air in our lungs. I can tell you that some of the time that's exactly how someone who is on the other side of what Eric has been through would feel. This is very challenging because it flies in the face of any attempt to control God in a sense. If I'm to pursue Jesus with all I

## STORY BEHIND THE SONG

## SPECIAL EXTENDED EDITION

have, it means not limiting him to the role of a symbolic figure on a cross. I mean, we may not intend to, but in many ways we could come close to making Jesus a means to an end—while it seems to me that the Bible tell us two pretty important things about him: If we want to know what it means to be truly human, we should look at Jesus, the life He lived, the way He died and the implications of His resurrection all the way from my sin to what it means to be made in His image. And on the other hand, if we want to know what God is like, we should also be looking at Jesus.

So that's kind of why we say this album is a concept album about being, and becoming, human. As we discover the

incredible role Christ has given us, and pursue Christlikeness through the ups and downs of real human life, we aren't meant to be escaping our human shells, but rather becoming more fully human. Like Irenaeus said, "the glory of God is man fully alive."

**CCM:** *Sonically you've always pushed the envelope in terms of creativity... What do we hear on this album?*

**ELIAS:** When we set out at the beginning to record songs within this theme it made for a really neat recording process where we'd be talking about the mood of the song arrangement, all of that—then while someone recorded something, we'd run upstairs and hammer out lyrics based on





## STORY BEHIND THE SONG

## SPECIAL EXTENDED EDITION



what we had just decided. We're a diverse group of guys and it isn't a formulaic process so much as a collaborative and focused effort to do something we all love. This was just a very fun record to make. We recorded in Nashville and were intentional throughout to use the rooms that made sense and really chased down the sounds we wanted. For example, we had an amazing day cutting pianos and using Ben Folds' studio in Nashville. It was a semi-circle of seven different pianos! If we didn't like how one sounded on a song we moved on to the next. We also spent time and experimented more with dynamics and some sonic textures that are new to us thus far.

We had a lot of fun throughout the process too in just trying to do creative things. Recording a piano lead while

manually muting the strings for example, or recording different drum elements multiple times and getting creative with how they would work together, spending a ton of time just getting the right guitar tone for the right moment, and stuff like that. The goal for us was really to just write a worship album that was honest, and meaningful for us—and hopefully then for others too.

At the end of the day, our heart is to write worship songs. To help people in their discipleship through all the little things. We just happen to record them in a way that's kind of our own thing. That's intentional. We're absolutely a worship band at heart, but we're not some mega church movement that churches should try and replicate. We're four guys who are connected because a group of smaller churches came to see that they were better working together for something bigger than themselves. So, in a way, we kind of see ourselves as having been born as a creative microcosm of that movement. Better than the sum of our parts and, for that reason, we'll continue to push ourselves creatively. I pray that's what comes across on HEART. We're just trying to write honest songs for the Church, and when it comes to style, if it works out that the songs we write are able to connect with church communities, I pray that in some small way it's because they were truly able to make them their own. CCM



**CLICK HERE FOR A FREE DOWNLOAD OF CITY  
HARMONIC'S PRAISE THE LORD, PLUS A FREE  
CHORD CHART!**

## CREATE

# SONGWRITING RETREAT

## INSIDE CINDY WILT COLVILLE'S SONGWRITING INTENSIVE

with Cindy Wilt Colville

**CCM:** *Cindy, I've heard amazing things about your songwriting retreat, not to mention all the wonderful info that's available on your website. Give us the rundown—who, what, where, when?*

**CWC:** This October 24–27, I am leading a retreat for 25 songwriters from across the country, just south of Nashville at the Lodge at Deer Run.

**CCM:** *What will these songwriters gain while there? How does this experience benefit them?*

**CWC:** More than anything, every writer wants to develop his or her craft and creativity. I think there are five major challenges songwriters face. How these challenges are met determines whether they will be barriers to creativity and career or rich sources of inspiration.

Time is the greatest challenge. There are so many things vying for our attention and distracting us from investing the time that is required to get better at songwriting. Rarely do great song ideas come without giving them focused attention and they will never develop on their own. Once a songwriter has written a song they want to know if it is working. And if it isn't working how can they specifically make it better. This is where credible, productive feedback comes in. Being held accountable to the work of songwriting is where a songwriting community can be a tremendous benefit to the songwriter. Songwriters cannot thrive outside of a creative community.

Prior to the retreat, writers will have five of their songs reviewed and will be given rewrite assignments as well as an evaluation of their strengths and weaknesses. Going into the retreat they will know the areas of growth they need to be focusing on.

The Songwriting Intensive Retreat is built around writing, co-writing, rewriting and then writing some more. Songwriters spend three days and three nights immersed in the work of songwriting. Creative direction is continuous with key focus given for developing the big ideas needed for successful songs. Immediate feedback is given on all new songs. Accountability through co-writing, strategic pairings and the opportunity to build a creative community with twenty-five songwriters from across the country make this weekend a valuable investment for songwriters wanting to take their songwriting to the next level. **CCM**

*Cindy Wilt Colville is a music publisher and songwriting consultant. She will be leading a **Songwriting Intensive Retreat October 24 – 27** where you will have the opportunity to join a community of songwriters for a weekend of songwriting development, writing, co-writing, rewriting and more writing! The retreat will be held at the Deer Run Lodge in Nashville, TN. Space is limited to 25 so sign up soon! **Click here** to see Video Testimonials from the Spring 2013 Retreat.*



**FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE  
SONGWRITING INTENSIVE RETREAT  
PLEASE VISIT [CINDYWILTCOLVILLE.COM](http://CINDYWILTCOLVILLE.COM).**

# IN THE STUDIO WITH THE DIGITAL AGE

**Album Title:** *Evening:Morning*

**Release Date:** August 13, 2013

**Label:** Fair Trade Services

**Release Date:** August 13, 2013

**Recording Studio:** Asterisk Sound, Waco, TX

**Producers:** The Digital Age ["Break Every Chain"  
co-produced by Seth Mosley]

**Number of Songs:** 12

**DIFFERENT:SAME:** In the studio we did not have deadlines and we own our studio, so we could go on day-long tangents that worked sometimes and failed other times. But because we are two-thirds of the David Crowder\*Band, The Digital Age sound is extremely similar. We still have the same tendencies to make things sound the certain way that we like. —Mark Waldrop

**CORPORATE COLLABORATION:** We try to write songs that articulate the faith of our local congregation, University Baptist Church in Waco, TX. We wanted *Evening:Morning* to be a concept record loosely based on the Creation story—the idea of coming out of the darkness into the light. We each worked on little ideas, and as we played them for each other we all started to pitch in what we heard. Sometimes someone only had a line or two, but that sparked something in another person. The whole process was very collaborative. —M.W.



Photo: Bliss Katherine



Photo: Bliss Katherine





Photo: Bliss Katherine



Photo: Bliss Katherine



Photo: Bliss Katherine



Photo: Bliss Katherine

**WORKING IT OUT:** When the four of us decided to stay in Waco and continue playing music together, we bought an old boxing gym near downtown that was a perfect shell for a new studio. The Digital Age now calls Asterisk Sound home. We spent three months as construction workers building a studio in the gym's place. We quickly learned that our skill sets are better served to music. [Laughs] Asterisk is a great place for us to hang. And sometimes boredom becomes a catalyst for creation. —M.W.

**AMPED UP:** We spent a lot of time playing with plug-ins on *Evening:Morning*. We are big fans of tracking a part, bouncing it,

chopping it up then adding effects. We learned a few Dr. Luke (Pink, Kelly Clarkson) tips that we applied to drum programming sounds, as well as some guitar layering techniques. We definitely doubled and tripled things much more on this record than on DC\*B albums. Technically, we used the Native Instruments Complete Ultimate package for synths, strings and other random sounds. Nexus, Sylenth and old Korg synths like M1 are used to make big, layered synths. For effects, we love all of the Sound Toys plugs, especially "The Decapitator" and "Devil Loc." —M.W.



FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE DIGITAL AGE,  
VISIT [THEDIGITALAGEMUSIC.COM](http://THEDIGITALAGEMUSIC.COM)

## **RUBIN'S VASE AND THE GOD-SHAPED HOLE** **AN EXCERPT FROM ASHLEY CLEVELAND'S MEMOIR,** ***LITTLE BLACK SHEEP***

**I was recently providing music at a conference** where one of the speakers, a noted professor of theology, remarked that we are in the “Experiential Age” of the Christian faith, an age that is defined by a professed personal relationship with Christ. Then she threw up her hands and said: “What does that mean?” Initially I thought she was distinctly in the wrong line of work, but then I found it to be a provocative question and thought: Yes, what does it mean? I reflected on the idea of the God-shaped hole, the empty space in us that longs for the Lord and can only be satisfied with His Spirit. You could say that this concept is too small, that God wants to inhabit

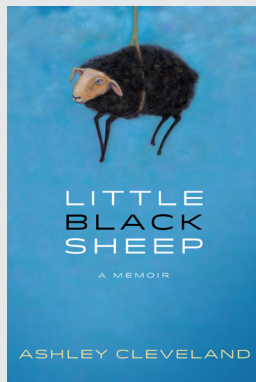


Photo: Ben Pearson

our whole being, not just our Sunday-morning best. But I think of it as negative space that, like Rubin's vase, reveals an entirely new subject. The God-shaped hole in me was the portal of my longing to be named, to be claimed, and to be loved. I could not find satisfaction for my desire anywhere else in this world. I did, however, give it my best shot. But my solutions led me to alcoholism, drug addiction, lying, cheating, stealing, promiscuity, and really bad moods. I spent years heaping shame upon shame.

Today my knowledge of Jesus is an abiding presence that is marked, often, by an overwhelming experience of the love and sense of place that I yearned for. Here I find acceptance and welcome, and over time, I have been changed. I see the evidence of transformation most vividly in my desire to love and serve others. I have been exclusively devoted to all manner of self-interest, self-will, and selfish living for the better part of my life, so the emergence of this outward gaze and concern—both at home and at large—is truly supernatural. Of course, I am not completely over myself, not by a long shot, so I expected to see the changes in my life spelled out in victorious living and attributes. Or as Jim Carrey's Grinch would say, I expected to be "joyful and triumphant." But that is not what happened. The path I have taken is the low road of the gospel where I live as a broken person among the broken and where repeated failures have provided the Ebenezer stones for the things that I most cherish. I assumed that in coming to faith, my cracks and splits would be

sewn together again in a seamless, saint-like fabric, but such is not the case. Much like the Velveteen Rabbit, I am a series of threadbare patches, irregular stitches with the stuffing poking out, and one button eye displaced and downcast. I have serious issues with this. I have despised my brokenness and cry out to God regularly and petulantly, particularly after a public display of contempt, shame, greed, gluttony, grandiosity, or insensitivity: "Would it be such a big deal to relieve me of some of this? Could You make me just a little less broken?" The answer that I perceive is always the same: "No. More broken."

Over time I have come to understand that out of this ruined place comes every valuable thing that I have to give away. Here I see the foolishness of thinking that I should be in charge of anything, including, and perhaps most notably, myself. Here my notion of goodness is off the table, and I can only cling to Christ. And in the clinging I become teachable; I gain compassion and empathy; I am forgiven; I am free. This is the story of the groundwork that paved the way to my faith. It is not an easy story to tell, but I have made my peace, and I do not "regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it." Or, as the apostle Paul puts it: "By the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain" (1 Cor. 15:10). To that I would add: I am what I am and most of the time I would not be otherwise. CCM



FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT  
[ASHLEYCLEVELAND.COM](http://ASHLEYCLEVELAND.COM)



# KEITH AND KRISTYN GETTY

## BRIDGING THE PAST WITH HYMNS FOR TODAY

### **I began writing songs for the church**

when contemporary worship was the music of choice in most Sunday morning services. Yet my own background in classical instruments and orchestration aligned my writing style more closely with the traditional hymn format. I wasn't sure where this would lead me as a budding musician. Still, I decided to give songwriting a try.

One of the first pieces I co-wrote was "In Christ Alone." It became the catalyst that demonstrated I could blend what I'd grown

to love and respect from the past with new music for the church today. After Kristyn and I married and began writing music together, we didn't set out to become hymn writers as much as we found ourselves simply desiring to write songs we'd want to sing and hear in church.

For more than a decade now, we've focused on that same goal. With each song we've written, two ideas are central. We want the word of Christ to dwell richly in the believer's heart through the lyrics, and we want to craft melodies attractive and easy to sing for all generations, churches and different cultures.

The interest in modern hymns has grown remarkably in recent years, and as songwriters we have a unique opportunity to strengthen the balance of all we could be singing about in church. For example, if you look at the index in an old hymnal, you'll see songs that bring worship to Christ through a variety of categories, whether it's theological concepts, Christ's death and resurrection, the mission of the church, and so on. We have the privilege of reaching to all of this and unearthing the riches of what Scripture gives us to explore when it comes to worship.

In addition to singing songs of praise and adoration, the church needs music that holistically requires personal introspection, community building, action, and fresh reminders of the glorious truths of the gospel. The songs we sing on Sunday greatly



shape how we feel, think, pray, communicate with others, and approach our work. As songwriters, it's a phenomenal chance to be part of creating a feast of thought, imagination and beauty that can help in feeding the body of Christ all week long.

Our new project, *Live at The Gospel Coalition*, features more than 5,000 voices from 40 countries who joined us in worship at The Gospel Coalition's 2013 national conference. The leaders of

The Gospel Coalition (led by Don Carson and Tim Keller) are longtime supporters and friends, and we were honored to partner with them in this project. The multitude of voices on the album are the true artists. The 17 hymns featured all were written with the congregation in mind. We figured, "What better way to share these songs than to capture a congregation singing them?"

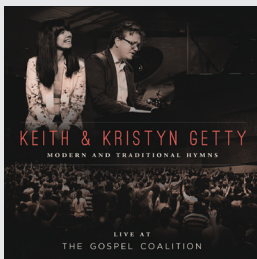
I'm often reminded of C.S. Lewis' thought that the eternal things in this world are neither symphonies, sculptures nor architecture, but the people beside us on a bus. Our churches are made up of people created in the image of God. They are the ones we have an opportunity to reach through music. Congregational music should be just that—congregational.

Ed Cash brought a keen understanding of this to the table as producer of this project. His goal wasn't to create the ultimate listening experience but rather relay the spontaneous and authentic moments of our worship and preserve them for the listener. During a live recording, we as musicians

feel a unique joy and responsibility when we know our best work must be captured in the present moment. When singing, we look into the eyes of our brothers and sisters in Christ, each of us proclaiming the lyrics, internalizing their meaning, and prayerfully deepening our understanding and love of the Lord. These are the experiences we want the album to convey.

Truly effective church worship is when people of every generation, cultural background, social status, and stage in life can sing melodies together as a family to their Creator and Redeemer. It is a microcosm on earth of what we look forward to in heaven. It's also what the Lord commands. As Tim Keller, pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City, often says: "God directs his people not simply to worship but to sing his praises 'before the nations.' We are called not simply to communicate the gospel to non-believers; we must also intentionally celebrate the gospel before them.

Kristyn and I are encouraged to keep writing when we hear about the hymns being sung, or in some cases whispered a cappella, all over the world. From the United Arab Emirates to Australia and even North Korea, believers are joining together to worship and align themselves with God's truth and purposes. We experienced a taste of this once again when we joined our voices to record *Live at The Gospel Coalition*. We hope and pray that through this album the songs might refresh the hearts of those who hear and sing along with them. CCM



FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT  
[GETTYSMUSIC.COM](http://GETTYSMUSIC.COM)

# SETH CONDREY

*INTO ALL THE WORLD...*

Seth Condrey has one of those stories you read about in books—most of them fictionalized. His however, rings with the truth of a saving and merciful God. He has served as the Spanish worship leader at the prolific Northpoint Church, as well as leading in other capacities. Today, his passion for Christ, Spanish-speaking cultures and music is creating a melody that's clearing the noise of the world and giving him clarity and focus as he continues to seek the face of the one who saved Him.

**This is his story...**

I was born in South Carolina. I was raised in a Christian home. My dad was a youth pastor... I grew up going to church and really involved with anything that had to do with church. Overall, I had pretty good childhood experiences. My church





# “THE MORE CLEARLY I CAN SEE GOD THE MORE I CAN GLORIFY HIM.”

experiences were characterized by trying to stay out of trouble. I was a bit of a wild heart. Ironically a lot of the worst influences in my life were church friends. That defined a lot of my experiences growing up. Good influences, bad influences...

In ninth grade I started smoking pot with some church buddies and experimenting with some stuff. They became influential in my life, even with music. I had played drums, but learned how to play guitar and write on guitar. During my freshman and sophomore years of high school, I went on a couple mission trips to Argentina and New York. Both were really impactful. The trip to Argentina spawned my desire to learn Spanish and dive into a new cultural experience. At an orphanage in Argentina, I got frustrated I couldn't communicate with them so I decided I was going to learn Spanish.

On the New York trip, I had a real awakening and desire to know God and surrender my life to him. For a season, my life really changed. I had to start over again. I had a lot of good influences in my life. I moved to Argentina. I spent a year down there studying the Bible and Spanish. When I came back from Argentina, I went to college for a few semesters, but had a restless, burned out feeling. I got involved with guys who smoked weed and was an on-and-off Christian. It was a constant battle. I knew there was a God

and He loved me. I wanted to do the right thing but struggled. There were little things—whether it was having one drink or other things like that. The people at my church were not okay with it. Things started unraveling for me there. Some guys thought I shouldn't be involved in any kind of ministry. I was pretty much asked to leave. I just got so frustrated and hurt. I felt like I didn't want to have anything to do with church or God or any of it anymore. I decided I wasn't going to come back... But the deal was I was seeing God through the lens of the church. So I left and decided I was going to go figure it out.

I ended up staying with a couple of uncles. Both of them were drug addicts—methamphetamines. I found myself in the middle of all that and began a long dark road to the end of everything good. Everything almost came to an end, including my life. I knew if I was going to save my life I had to get off of those. A friend from home called me and I felt like I could be honest with him. I almost wanted to shock him at how bad I was. He invited me to come to a youth camp. He told me I was a worship leader and he wanted me to come do his camp. I told him I would screw his kids up and he'd regret it but he insisted.

So I go do this camp. It was awkward and uncomfortable, but he just loved me and brought me under his wing. On the last day, I went out to the beach and they were



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taking communion. At that moment in my life I looked over the ocean and the stars, took a deep breath and felt a loud voice say, ‘You’re my child and I love you.’ It was almost like God had always been with me. He hadn’t forsaken me. At that moment He was calling me to choose who and how to love. God changed my heart and my life that night. All I wanted to know was Jesus.

The next six months I came home and spent time making relationships right, asking for forgiveness from a lot of people. In the process of that, a guy invited me to

lunch with another guy from Nashville. I told them I played a little guitar and spoke Spanish. I ended up playing a Spanish song for him. He had a connection with a Spanish label in Houston. So I went down and based on my one Spanish song, they gave me an opportunity to record with their label.

That was early in 2006. At the same time, I reconnected with this girl I had gone on the New York mission trip with. We reconnected on MySpace on May 22 and got married two months later. Our first son was born March 2007. In 2008 I got a call and learned that the record I’d made was up for a Dove award. It won! That was a turning point. I was kind of refusing to play live until then. But that was a moment of surrender.

I got a call from Northpoint in 2008 and became the Spanish worship leader there. Over time, I eventually started leading worship in English. We were really growing inside the community there and beginning to understand the power of mentors. Today, our mission as a family is to raise our kids well and share the Gospel with the world. So...we just moved to Costa Rica and have committed at least two years to help rebuild the church in Latin America. Our vision is to create an environment that people want to be in and grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ. It’s definitely challenging for anyone who’s grown up in comfort, but the more you step outside of that and meet new people, new culture, you gain more clarity. The more clearly I can see God, the more I can glorify Him. **CCM**



# THE 3 THINGS EVERYONE SHOULD LEARN TO SAY

Derek Webb has been somewhat of an anomaly in Contemporary Christian music. He first made his mark with the uber-successful band Caedmon's Call, but has spent the last ten years solo, as has his wife, singer/songwriter Sandra McCracken. Never one to shy away from ideas that may make some uncomfortable or feel threatened, Derek has acted with utter consistency and intentionality about each song, each project he has put together.

His latest falls in line with that. *I Was Wrong, I'm Sorry, I Love You* is more of a dialogue with others about the very core of human relationship. Read on for Derek's thoughts on the project and just why these three little phrases are cornerstones of the human experience.

**CCM:** Tell us more about the title of this project. Is this an expression of some wrong you feel you need to right? Or is the concept broader than that?

**DEREK:** It felt like a good title for the album. It feels very much like my first record in a way. At that time, I had spent ten years in Caedmon's Call and had success in church culture. But it left me with a lot of question. Do I have a role in the church? What is the church's role in culture? I answered those on the first album. Coming up on the tenth anniversary of that project, I was surprised to find out that my opinions hadn't changed in ten years.

I figured if I'm making an album about the church, what better posture to have?

The posture of repentance, love...I wanted to sum it all up in these

three things. If we're going to do this life together, we have to learn how to say these things to each other. Imagine the healing, the restoration that could happen in culture. What a tremendous disruption.

**CCM:** Why do you think these three things are so hard to say for most of us?

**DEREK:** I think it's because our instinct is to defend ourselves and to justify ourselves, which is why Christianity is so difficult. We're justified by another. We had to be vulnerable and weak so that another could come and justify us.

Think of a fight at home. My wife and I have great fights. But when the most persuasive case wins, the result is never intimacy. You'll be the victor on the couch. The moment one of us softens and quiets, to say, 'I was wrong, I'm sorry, I love you,' it immediately diffuses the situation. It's not just a good idea. It really works. It's counterintuitive in the midst of battle to lay your arms down, but if you can do it, you win. The only way to truly destroy an enemy is to make him a friend. **CCM**



FOR MORE ON DEREK WEBB AND HIS  
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# JUST DO IT!

AN EXCERPT



To some, “Just Do It” is a catchy phrase for a sports apparel company. To Robert Griffin III, that phrase has more meaning and purpose. When it was announced that Robert Griffin III was the 2011 Heisman Trophy winner, Baylor fans erupted in cheers of great joy. The man known as “RG3” is the first Heisman winner in Baylor history. In leading Baylor to its first nine-win season since 1986, RG3 threw passes for a new school record of 3,998 yards and 36 touchdowns. He also rushed for 644 yards with 9 touchdowns.

Since, ESPN pundits have called him “the Most Interesting Man in College Football.” A model student athlete and an obedient, loyal son, RG3 is one of the truly great stories to come out of football in the past decade.

Robert is the youngest of three children whose parents were both Army officers serving overseas. The discipline and commitment to excellence modeled by his loving parents set the stage for his faith, ideals, and family values and contributed to the development of his great character.

When Robert’s dad, Robert II, was suddenly deployed to Iraq on the eve of his well-deserved retirement from the Army, it set in motion a series of events that pushed RG3 to become a great student-athlete. Some people take the lemons life gives them and cry over them—others find a way to make some sweet lemonade, which seemed to be the standard RG3 applied to his father’s deployment.

The discipline of working hard and studying well prepared RG3 for the task of leading the Baylor Bears in their quest to become a top-ranked team. Robert’s practices and study of the game became a model for other aspiring athletes. It was reported that RG3 probably studied more film than most of the coaches. His dad taught him to deal with the unexpected and to prepare himself fully for the challenges life brings. Many of the drills his father invoked challenged RG3 to think outside the box and develop a calm instinct to alarming situations.

Somehow throughout all of this RG3 endeavors to keep a perspective by pointing to heaven after each touchdown.



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