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Switchfoot

HOW THE WEST WAS SUNG



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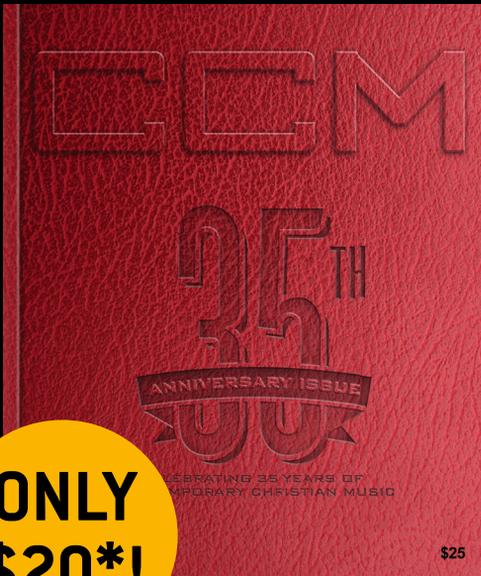
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Switchfoot How the West was Sung

Switchfoot hits the big waves and the big screen.

Photo: Brian Nevins

Collector's Items

Best of Sara Groves

Sara Groves reflects on the best of her storied career.

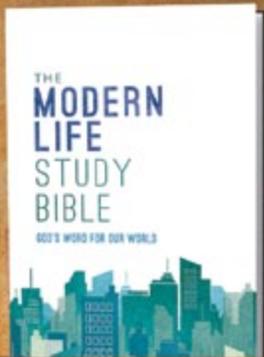


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Casey Darnell

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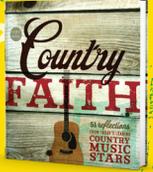
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The start of a new year is exciting, but can be intimidating and exhausting. You're coming off Christmas and family visits, presents, your budget has gone out the window and now, you have to think about how you're going to better yourself over the next twelve months. (No pressure!)

Perhaps the entire idea of "bettering ourselves" kind of flies in the face of Christianity anyway. After all, if we could really do that, why would we have needed the Cross? If just a little more focus and grit could elevate us from one plane of living to another, we'd probably be a pretty self-sufficient race with no need of a savior.

Fortunately (ironic though it seems), there is no way on heaven or earth that we can better ourselves. We're fallen, broken, human... And it seems the moment we really grasp that is when life and love begin to open up and wrap themselves around our hearts, enabling us to do the same those around us in need. Switchfoot has grasped the frailty of mankind more explicitly and completely than many bands in Christian music history. It is their fundamental understanding of humility that has allowed them to reach people far beyond church walls. It's that kind of humility that Sara Groves has so eloquently explored through her pen throughout the years. It's that kind of humility that made a man like Rich Mullins a legend, with his music a lasting tribute to God's grace.

So as you approach 2014, ease up on yourself. Dig deep into Him. And lower your expectations of what *you* will accomplish this year. Rather, nestle in with your Savior, learn what He wants to see develop and grow in you, and then let Him do His thing.



Caroline Lusk

Caroline Lusk
Editor, CCM Digital



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THE OAK RIDGE BOYS

40TH ANNIVERSARY TOUR

STAR PLAZA THEATRE
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STORY AND PHOTOS BY ANDY ARGYRAKIS

For forty nonstop years, The Oak Ridge Boys seamlessly navigated between gospel, country and pop without ever losing sight of lyrical meaning or pitch-perfect harmonies, which is on full display on their current tour supporting *40th Anniversary: Celebrating Faith, Family & Freedom* (Gaither Music Group).

With so many years to revisit, the foursome got right down to business, delivering all their meaningful southern-fried staples such as “American Made,” “I Guess It Never Hurts To Hurt Sometimes” and “Touch A Hand, Make A Friend,” accompanied by a sizzling six-piece band.

All the while, the guys shook hands, autographed albums and even saluted a 104-year-old in the audience, while also dedicating “Thank God For Kids” to the children sponsored by Compassion International.

Following those sentiments, the Oaks dazzled with the closers “Elvira” and “Bobbie Sue,” two more ageless classics, with the fellas sounding as sharp as they did four decades ago. **CCM**

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TOUR SPOTLIGHT





1 & **2** Worshipful innovators, The City Harmonic, perform music from the band's sophomore album, *Heart*, during a recent taping for Crossroads 360 in Ontario, Canada.



3 Newsong helps former tourmate David Glenn (third from left) celebrate the release of his new worship album, *Relentless*, at the Chesapeake Christian Music Fest.



4 & **5** Hard rockers Stryper take the stage at Stryper Fan Weekend in Nashville, followed by a group picture with fans from all across the globe.

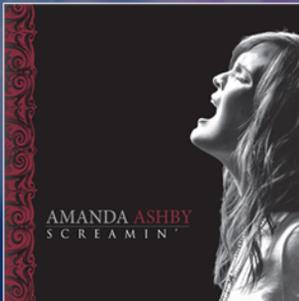


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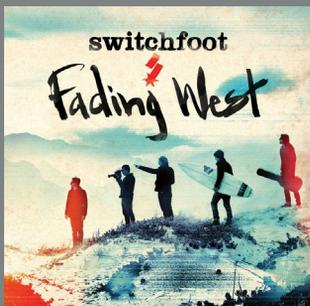


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NINE LASHES
FROM WATER TO WAR
TOOTH & NAIL/NEW DAY

PAPA SAN
ONE BLOOD
INDIE

KYE KYE
FANTASIZE
INDIE

HEESUN LEE
STEREO TYPES
IN MY CITY RECORDS

J. MOSS
THE VERY BEST OF...
RCA INSPIRATION/PROVIDENT

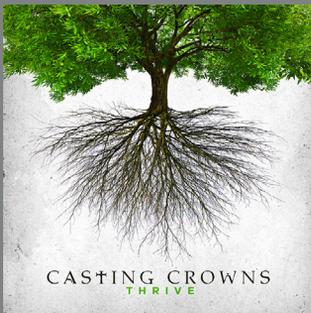
DOUG ANDERSON
DRIVE
STOWTOWN RECORDS/
PROVIDENT

HOSKINS FAMILY
A GATHERING
DAYWIND/NEW DAY

JAKE HAMILTON AND
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LIVE, LOVE, LEAD**
WORD RECORDS/WORD



SAVING GRACE
THE URGENCY
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How the West was Sung

A person in a black wetsuit is seen from the side, carrying a white surfboard with a colorful logo down a narrow, rocky path on a cliffside. The cliff is dark and textured. In the background, another person is visible further down the path. The ocean is visible below, with waves breaking on a sandy beach. The sky is blue with some clouds. The overall scene is dramatic and scenic.

BY CAROLINE LUSK

"You can find yourself and lose yourself in both music and surfing," says Jon Foreman of **SWITCHFOOT**. "It's kind of a religious experience. You stare at the horizon long enough and realize, 'Wow. I'm pretty small.'"

Small isn't a word that's usually associated with for a band that's sold 5.5 million albums worldwide. But here, the obvious becomes... well...obvious. Switchfoot isn't your typical band. Nor was it the primary goal for Jon or any of the other band members.

"The plan was to be a pro surfer," says Jon. "But that didn't quite work out so I'm in a rock band instead."

But, 17 years into the backup plan, the men of Switchfoot are seeing another dream realized, as their two passions—music and surfing—collide in a sweeping cinematic experience that captures the beauty of the work of the Creator, the humanity of a group of men—more father, husband and brother than rock star—and the convergence of the two, set to a backdrop of waves, sunsets, triumphs, tragedies...life.

Fading West is yet another dream realized for the band.

"We've always wanted to score a film. We thought, what if we made a film and scored it?"

Which is, of course, anyone's natural inclination...(or not). And leave it to Switchfoot to take that idea to such a level, the viewer starts to think that perhaps their true calling was in film...or, maybe, they're just really, really good at everything they endeavor. But don't tell them that. Though they have become known for their thought-provoking lyrics and intelligent approach to matters of philosophy and spirituality, they are equally known for their humility.

"Take everything I'm saying with a grain of salt," says frontman, Jon Foreman. "It's probably been said better. I'm just honored you'd want to hear my answer."



Photo: Brian Nevins

Considering their latest single from the new project, “Love Alone is Worth the Fight” garnered play from every *Billboard* Christian Hot AC/CHR reporting station, making it the only song to do so since the chart launched in 2006, it’s definitely safe to say that, yes, many do want to hear what Jon and the rest of the guys have to say.

Fading West allows people to do just that, more intimately than ever before. Part rock-documentary, part surf-film and part travelogue, the film follows the band to some of the most breathtaking places in the world—Bali, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, among others.

Each location offered enviable waves, of which the band took in plenty, but also lent a diversity to the overall project in sound, texture and color.

“We wanted to make a record that sounded like nothing we’ve done before,” says Jon. “We wanted to make music that would emote the same images and connotations of what we were seeing in our ears. That was the goal. And we had a rule—guitars only as a last resort. The landscape we were seeing didn’t look like rock ‘n roll. We knew we needed to find new instruments.”

As the music, the film, the tour and other components coalesced into what Jon calls, “the most outrageously challenging project we’ve ever done as a band,” they began to take on the shape of a piece of art as intimate as it was epic, and as timely as it was timeless.

From their formation, Switchfoot has been intentionally and consistently private about their families, wishing to shield them from the public eye. But in a few scenes, the audience watches Jon Foreman, the rock-star surfer become a worried, even scared, daddy. The screen shows intense phone calls home from the other side of the world, and as Jon leaves the Australian leg of the tour to get home to California with his family, the view-

ers, especially those with children sleeping or playing in the next room, now see a brother.

For Jon, though family issues have not previously been a common topic of discussion, transparency has been his trademark.

“I don’t do anyone any favors by trying to hide those struggles,” he shares. “God doesn’t need a lawyer. That’s not my job. I’m called to write songs.”

It’s his crystal-clear grasp on that truth that has propelled the band to the top of Christian and secular charts.

It’s his passion for it that has kept them there.

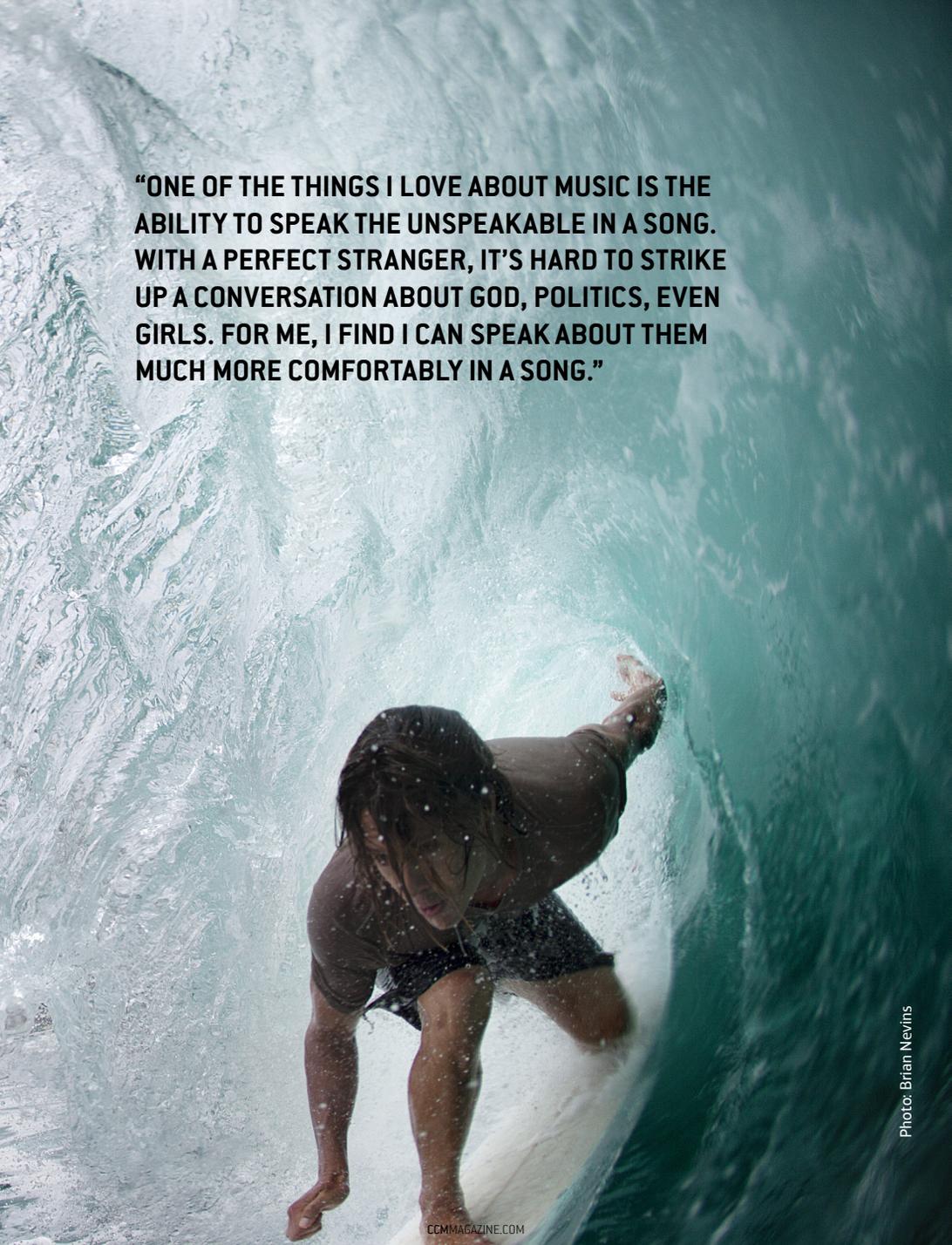
“One of the things I love about music is the ability to speak the unspeakable in a song,” he says. “With a perfect stranger, it’s hard to strike up a conversation about God, politics, even girls. For me, I find I can speak about them much more comfortably in a song. A lot of our songs are places not only to express what we believe, but the things that are challenging to our beliefs. The hardest thing for me to believe in times of doubt is that the Creator of time and space, Author of the infinite, loves me. Those are the things I wrestle with.”

That fighting spirit extends beyond the music and has shaped their entire approach to music and ministry.

“Deep down I’m a scrapper,” Jon says. “I love a good fight. I love feeling that there’s something pushing back. Preaching to the choir doesn’t really interest me. I’m much more excited about a challenge.”

Which is why the band has consistently sought secular venues and opportunities.

“I would hope that we would be a band that would be asking questions, bringing inquisitiveness, opening doors and windows. The movie ends with opening doors and windows to the soul. Music does that in ways very few things in my life can,” says Jon. “You can hear a song and it will change the scaffolding of the way you think about life. I would love to be the man asking the bigger questions.” 



“ONE OF THE THINGS I LOVE ABOUT MUSIC IS THE ABILITY TO SPEAK THE UNSPEAKABLE IN A SONG. WITH A PERFECT STRANGER, IT’S HARD TO STRIKE UP A CONVERSATION ABOUT GOD, POLITICS, EVEN GIRLS. FOR ME, I FIND I CAN SPEAK ABOUT THEM MUCH MORE COMFORTABLY IN A SONG.”

**CCM EXCLUSIVE: INSIDE SWITCHFOOT'S
FEATURE FILM, *FADING WEST*.**



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SARA GROVES SHOWS OFF HER BEST

BY CAROLINE LUSK

Sara Groves is distinguished as a thought-provoking writer and an advocate for the voiceless. Over the years, the mom and activist has crafted albums that invite listeners sit back, take stock and reassess their own faith and life. In 2013, she took on the daunting task of culling the “best” of her body of work on *The Collection*. *CCM* had the chance to catch up with Sara for the album, her family and her inspiring commitments to community and justice.

CCM: Dad the idea of pulling together a “best-of” seem overwhelming at all?

I think the most overwhelming part was writing *new* songs for a “best of.” I ended up abandoning trying to write the “best” songs ever, and wrote reflective songs about our life on the road, like “Kindness of Strangers.” We have literally lived off the kindness of strangers for the better half of each year for 16 years. That seemed like a worthy topic for a record like this.

CCM: What was it like to wander back down the roads of previous projects?

It was fun, a bit strange. I hadn’t listened to some of those records in years. It is bizarre to hear yourself grow up over ten records. It gave me good perspective on where I have been, and where I am now.

CCM: Are there any songs on this project that hold a different meaning to you now than when they were originally cut?

In *Painting Pictures of Egypt*, I say, “it’s not about losing faith/it’s not about trust/it’s all about comfortable/when you move so much.” Now I see that it is all about faith, and it is all about trust. I was trying to tell God, “trust isn’t my issue,” but trust was definitely my issue. It still is. I had more layers when I started, and thought I was writing songs for “them.” Now I can see that I was only ever writing to myself—convincing, encouraging, enjoining—in hope of real-life courage.

CCM: What were your criteria for these? How did you possibly choose?

We had room for about two or three songs per album, which I thought would end up being pretty obvious, but it didn’t work out that way. It was strange that there would be songs that I played for five years straight in concert that wouldn’t make the list. In the context of everything else, a lot of must-haves got bumped, but we tried to take a consensus from the people closest to us.

CCM: Update us on family! You juggle motherhood, marriage and a million other things. How are things with your family and how do you keep it all going?

The kids are amazing, and so generous. They are doing great in school, and in all of their activities. Personally, I stripped things down these last two years as we made a big move back into the city, and renovated



an old house. I stepped back from all volunteering and just put work and family on my plate. I am just now feeling the margin to reenter things, but I'm trying to be careful. I want to invest in this community.

CCM: Your work with International Justice Mission has always been so inspiring. What is the latest regarding your role with them?

You know, we have just entered the "long obedience in the same direction." It is my hope to advocate for IJM as long as I am able, and the conversation now is about perseverance. What does advocacy look like when you have moved past the entry-level and the fad phase? It is important to look at justice with a long view. Currently, I continue to work on different music projects supporting their work, and am so grateful to be a part of the Global Prayer Gathering in the spring.

CCM: Last time we spoke, you were opening an Art House (with Charlie Peacock) in your part of the country. Is that ongoing?

Yes, the Art House North has been a great surprise. We treat it like an extension of our home, and see it as an opportunity to have great conversations with people here in our community. We have been so grateful for the people that have volunteered and come alongside us, and feel like the yolk is light. I think an important factor in its sustainability is that we don't have a growth strategy or business model—it is what it is. CCM



CASEY DARNELL PRESENTS...

CASEY DARNELL

BY CASEY DARNELL

*THE ATLANTA-BASED SINGER/
SONGWRITER/WORSHIP LEADER
LEADS US THROUGH HIS LATEST
SELF-TITLED OFFERING.*

Recording and releasing a new record can be a daunting task. For me, this time, it was a process I thoroughly loved and couldn't release the album fast enough. Many of these songs have taken

shape over the last two years from just day-to-day life and were not the product of songwriting sessions to kick off or complete a record.

From songs inspired last Christmas watching the tragedies of the Newtown school shooting ("What Will You Do?") to other songs like "I Will Stand by You," written while serving at Lighthouse Family Retreat

(for families living through childhood cancer), the record kind of discovered itself in a natural and authentically inspiring way. I didn't conjure up emotions or try to search for something to write about; I just looked around and watched God at work.

But when it came time to title it, we got stuck for a minute. The record explores a few styles and genres, venturing away from what some would consider a worship record. I wanted to approach again what a "worship record" actually is and let people decide for themselves what songs are for the large gatherings or are better suited for the ride home from work or for going for a run.

So, we self-titled it.

These songs are me, and I love a variety of styles.

One song I wrote for my wife, "When You Smile," and it's meant to encourage the glory of God in a marriage that honors Him and each other.

Other songs like "We Believe" and "All the World" are fast-paced and created for high-energy gatherings to motivate us toward being the love others will see and that God desires us to live out, not just sing about.

In this record the overarching theme is that no matter what, from the happiest moments to the depths of heartache and pain:

God is good.

God is faithful.

God is awesome and marvelous.

I can trust Him.

As the song "Over and Over" proclaims with confidence, *"You keep proving to me, over and over, that you are in control, never caught off guard or shaken, unwavering, and worthy of all my devotion."*

I've learned so much from leading people in worship, but the greatest lesson is how unqualified and incapable I am apart from the Holy Spirit.

And if I'm not connected to Him, then I'm in danger of potentially missing it and being used in spite of myself.

I don't want to stand before God one day and feel as though I only talked about Him in front of people, and not to Him one-on-one.

I desire for the large gathering to be an overflow of what I'm personally experiencing, be it joy or pain. Moving us toward His thoughts, His ways, and His glory that draws us in and gives us new perspective.

Leading people "corporately" is humbling and I don't take it lightly, but that doesn't mean I'm perfect. If anything, I'm leading from a place of grateful hope and joyful brokenness.

Growing up, I didn't have any idea I'd be doing what I'm doing today. And, honestly, even after 13 years, I still don't believe it sometimes.

I started out wanting to teach or coach and be a part of something that ministered to people and helped inspire the next generation to reach their world "for the sake of the call," as a Steven Curtis Chapman song put it.

I ended up in youth ministry for five years or so, all the while singing. But when I met my wife, the vision I had for my life infinitely expanded.

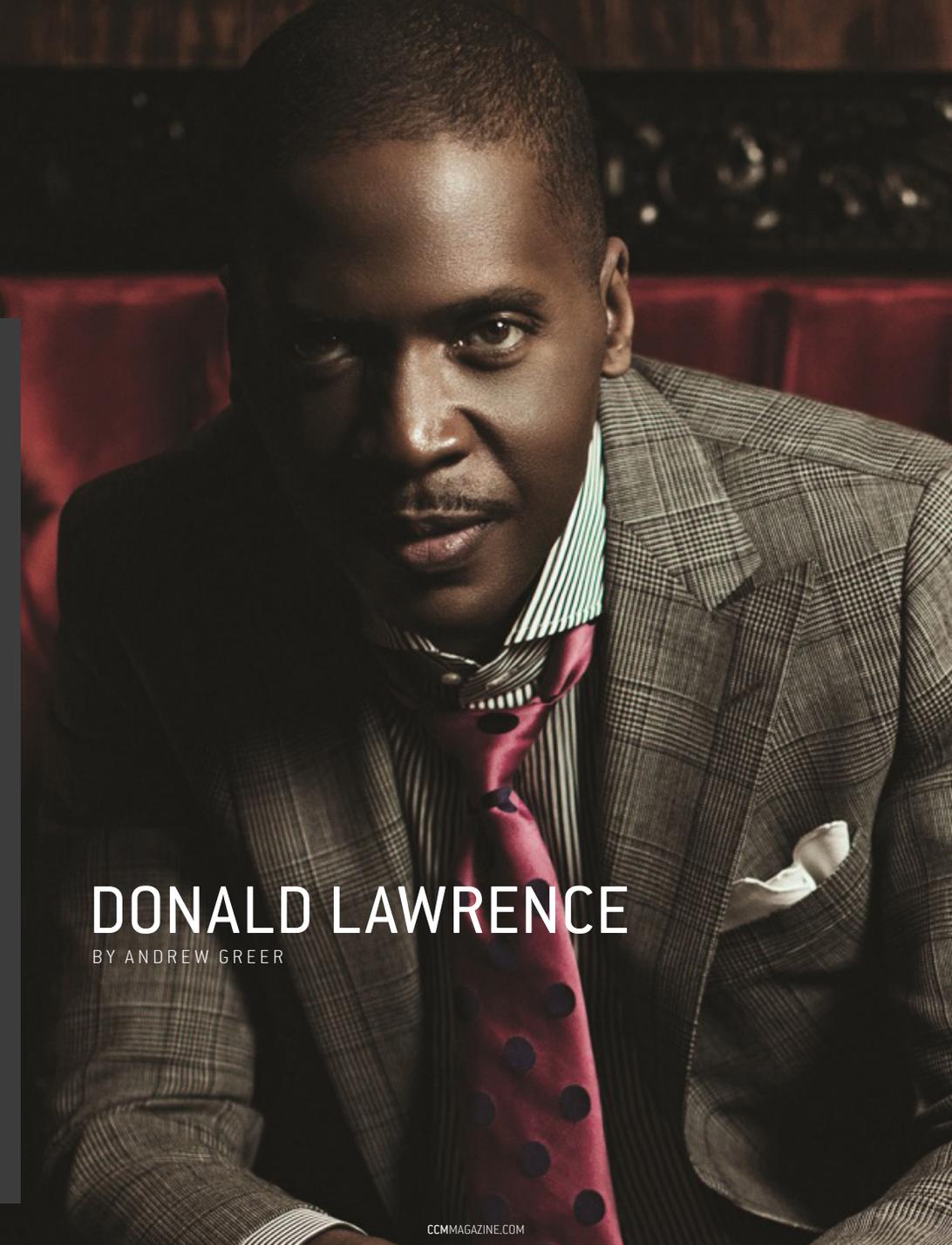
The road has had many unexpected turns since then, but every step has been worth it, and I've found Jesus to be as worthy of following today as He was back then!

For me, leading worship begins at home—serving my wife and leading our family and our two (plus one on the way) kids!

Being available to serve our home church and being in community there is just as important as any ministry I have outside the home.

I see this as a growing need in the worship-leader community in the coming years, as more people take on the calling to engage others with our Creator.

We are not more special or more qualified. If anything, we should be first in line to serve others and make sure we are modeling what Jesus did when He gave up His life. **CCM**

A close-up portrait of Donald Lawrence, a Black man with a mustache, wearing a grey plaid suit jacket, a light blue and white striped shirt, and a red tie with black polka dots. He is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. The background is dark with red velvet seating.

DONALD LAWRENCE

BY ANDREW GREER



#1-selling record, *Volume 1: Best for Last* (Quiet Water/eOne), Lawrence sat down with CCM to discuss his celebrated past, his present commemorative, and his future goals.

CCM: *At this point in your career, why did you pause and reflect with new recordings of your most popular past hits?*

DONALD: I was not sure I would have the same desire and energy to pull this together at twenty-five years due to my focus shifting to some other academic things. Also, having done so much music on so many different CDs with so many artists, it felt like thirty years! [Laughs] I felt the twenty-year landmark was pivotal and my gut said this was the time to do it.

CCM: *How did you choose the new songs, "The Gift" and "Best For Last," to pair up with the older songs?*

DONALD: I always pick songs based on what they are saying and if they will resonate. It's always all about the lyrical content. I anchored this CD around three connecting themes: the "gift of grace," "the rest that remains" and "your latter will be greater than your past," which stems from the belief that, if living a life of grace, life will continue to get better as we age.

CCM: *This collection includes guest spots by Yolanda Adams, Faith Evans and Lalah Hathaway. But the pairing with Natalie Grant was most intriguing. How did that collaboration come about?*

DONALD: I had worked with all of the guest artists before. Natalie and I share the same manager, Mitchell Solarek. This collaboration was his idea. I had also been the musical director for the "Grammy Salute to Gospel" when Natalie sang her tribute to Sandi Patty. One of my singers, Latrice Pace, is a big fan of Natalie's and suggested she sing on my song, "God," and she definitely did an amazing job with it!

CCM: *After all this time, still producing, still recording, still contributing, what is the motivating factor to continue a career in the music industry?*

DONALD: I enjoy motivating people, using my gift to place a demand on their potential and causing them to show up. It's one of the reasons I have chosen to go back to school and study spiritual psychotherapy/spiritual psychology with the goal of becoming a music psychotherapist to "lyrically and musically change lives one word and one note at a time." **CCM**

An in-demand producer, musician and collaborator, Grammy-winner Donald Lawrence's musical influence ripples beyond his historic gospel music beginnings with the Tri-City Singers into the modern music industry at large. Celebrating two decades of musical charge on his latest

+ FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT DONALDLAWRENCE.COM

AC



RYAN STEVENSON
Holding Nothing Back EP

(Gotee Records)

FOR FANS OF: Jonny Diaz,
Chris August

★★★

All four songs on this EP are strong, fueled by Ryan Stevenson's stalwart vocal. The radio single, "Holding Nothing Back," stands out in creativity. "The Human Side" is also strong and warrants a comparison to tobyMac, though he doesn't quite reach far enough lyrically. Overall, enough good material to make listeners eager to hear what's next for Stevenson.

—Grace S. Aspinwall

WE LIKE: "The Human Side"

WORSHIP



HILLSONG
YOUNG & FREE

We Are Young & Free

(Hillsong Church T/A Hillsong Music Australia)

FOR FANS OF: Hillsong United,
Passion

★★

There are a few good moments on this mostly live project, including the beautiful, energetic "Love Goes On," and the soothing "Sinking Deep." However, the frenzied arrangements of "Wake" and "Alive" feel disconnected, resulting in a lack across the entire project. The studio versions shine, best capturing the emotion of the music.

—Grace S. Aspinwall

WE LIKE: "Love Goes On"



JON THURLOW

Stand In Awe (Forerunner Music)

FOR FANS OF: John Tesh,
Justin Rizzo

★★★

Jon Thurlow is a gifted worship leader, but his full potential wasn't realized on his latest, *Stand In Awe*. The vocals lack his usual depth and the arrangements somehow fall flat. His strong voice, while not consistent across the record, shines on "Fully In Love." While a pleasant listen, the overall production and lyrical content don't quite deliver the "awe."

—Grace S. Aspinwall

WE LIKE: "Before Your Eyes"



THE LETTER BLACK

Rebuild (Tooth & Nail)
FOR FANS OF: Fireflight,
Skillet

★★★★

When The Letter Black was selected to open for Skillet's *Awake and Alive Tour* in 2010, it signaled the arrival of another strong, diverse rock band with a solid chance of following a similar career arc. *Rebuild*, the band's second LP, is another riveting mix that will make a star of vocalist Sarah Anthony.

—Matt Conner

WE LIKE: "Shattered"



NINE LASHES

From Water To War
(Tooth & Nail Records)
FOR FANS OF: RED,
Anberlin, Red Hot Chili
Peppers

★★★★

Touring with the likes of Skillet, Thousand Foot Krutch and RED over the past year has taken Nine Lashes to the next level on this compelling sophomore collection. Besides expanding upon its alternative rock experimentation with electronic enhancement, the group's songwriting captures intense spiritual growth, sure to resonate with anyone seeking authenticity.

—Andy Argyrakis

WE LIKE: "Never Back Down"



THE NEON AMBIENCE

B (7Core)
FOR FANS OF: Nils
Frahm, Olafur Arnalds
★★★

The Neon Ambience is a collaboration between producer Trevor Michael and songwriter Ian Yates. The British duo planned a trio of instrumental albums and *B* is the second entry. Fans of Icelandic composer Olafur Arnalds will appreciate the brighter electronic compositions like "B3 (Brilliance)," while "B8 (Blazon)" showcases a sparser, experiment-al edge.

—Matt Conner

WE LIKE: "B3
(Brilliance)"



DYLAN ARMS

Take Me Higher
(Independent)
FOR FANS OF: Matt
Hammitt, Chris August
★★★

Dylan Arms might be familiar to *American Idol* fans after making it to the Hollywood round. The 21-year-old captivated with his voice, but his heart is also clearly on display on his latest, *Take Me Higher*. Songs like the tender, hope-filled title track and the sweet sing-along melody of "Forever Changed" shows solid potential of an artist-in-bloom.

—Matt Conner

WE LIKE: "Take Me Higher"

**MICAH STAMPLEY****Love Never Fails**

(Motown Gospel/
Interface)

FOR FANS OF: Tye Tribbett, William McDowell, Tamela Mann
★★★★

On his sixth recording, Stampley—first-class worship leader, singer, songwriter and producer—delivers a potent blend of worship and modern standard songs like “Our God” and “You Raise Me Up,” along with some well-crafted contemporary gospel originals. But it is Micah’s understated piano-vocal delivery of Chris Rice’s “Untitled Hymn” that most exquisitely expresses his worshipful artist heart.

—Andrew Greer

WE LIKE: “Untitled Hymn (Come to Jesus)”

**JOSHUA ROGERS****Unconditional**

(Music World Gospel)

FOR FANS OF: Fred Hammond, Le’Andria Johnson, Fantasia
★★★★

From the modern Motown vibe of “More Than Enough” to the glassy R&B soul of “So Glad” and guttural vocal tributes of organ-led throwback “Draw Me Nearer,” the baby-faced winner of BET’s *Sunday Best* gives gospel music fans a vocal-frills feast of urban delicacies. Rogers’ fantastic thirteen-song set-list illuminates gospel music’s storied history and promising future.

—Andrew Greer

WE LIKE: “I Got Joy”

**ANBERLIN****Devotion: Vital Special Edition**

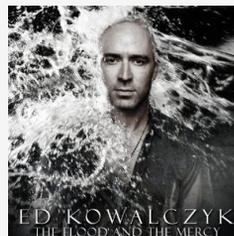
(Big3 Records)

FOR FANS OF: The Smiths, Aaron Sprinkle
★★★★

Rather than simply tossing a few bonus tracks on the end of its latest studio project *Vital*, Anberlin turns in a massive expansion of the alt-rock epic on this extensive deluxe edition. All the *Vital* songs do indeed reappear, as does a bounty of new anthems, b-sides, a complete disc of dance-floor-friendly remixes, plus an acoustic tour DVD that finds Stephen Christian and company connecting on matters of life, faith and relationships like few others.

—Andy Argyrakis

WE LIKE: “City Electric”

**ED KOWALCZYK****The Flood and the Mercy**

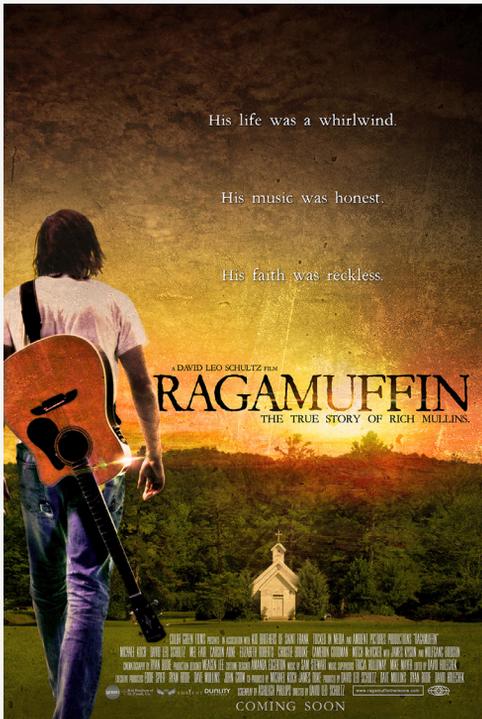
(Soul Whisper/
Harbour/Caroline Records)

FOR FANS OF: Live, Bush, Creed
★★★

On his second solo effort, former Live singer Ed Kowalczyk again explores his singer/songwriter side, turning in reflective lyrics that periodically showcase his faith. Though there are glimpses of the past act’s grungy foundation, his musical edge has clearly softened since the ‘90s. Still, Kowalczyk’s vocals remain immediately recognizable, and easily take charge in these stripped-down settings.

—Andy Argyrakis

WE LIKE: “The One”



RAGAMUFFIN

THE TRUE STORY OF RICH MULLINS

Director: David Leo Schultz

Rich Mullins' life and music have far outlived this true original. Since his death at age 41 in 1997, his countercultural message, authentic lifestyle and exemplary songwriting talents have coalesced into a meaningful ministry anchored by songs that remain popular today. He was, for many artists, a hero and friend, prophet and example.

Ragamuffin (Millenium Entertainment) tells the story of the man behind such timeless songs as "Awesome God," "Hold Me Jesus" and "If I Stand." Director David Schultz (producer) recently took some time to talk about the forthcoming feature film.

CCM: Why a Rich Mullins film? Can you talk about your own connection to Rich and his music?

DAVID: God has always used Rich's music to draw me back to Him, and I don't fully even get why. I can tell why Rich is my hero, for sure. That's the easy part. I always loved his life of simplicity. But the experience for me with Rich has been more about the idea that I am the prodigal son and God continues to chase me down with his love. For whatever reason, he's chosen Rich Mullins to do that in my life.

CCM: You also had the chance to interview Brennan Manning [author of *Ragamuffin Gospel*] for the film, right?

DAVID: I was fortunate enough, before we started making the movie, to interview Brennan, and even in his sickly, half-senile state, he was preaching the Gospel and I was just bawling.

CCM: For those who wonder about Rich as the subject of a biopic when he was known for shying away from the spotlight, what would you say?

DAVID: Rich never really felt like a guy who was like, "Hey everybody! I'm here!" There was a level of that, but if you ask his closest friends and family, he definitely still struggled with ego. But I think the reason he became heroic for so many people isn't because he was like, "I don't like money; I'm going to give it up," but it was because he loved money and he gave it up. It wasn't that he had no ego; it's that he had a very big ego, but recognized that, and was scared of that and fought against that.

—Matt Conner

Dare to be

LIMITLESS

AN EXCERPT FROM *DARE TO BE*
BY **NATALIE GRANT** AND **CHARLOTTE GAMBRILL**

“Go around and ask all your neighbors for empty jars. Don’t ask for just a few.”
2 Kings 4:3 NIV



The story of the widow in 2 Kings 4 is one of my favorite pictures of how God is not just enough, but is always more than enough. In this story, a woman who has been widowed finds herself faced with crippling debt and in fear for her future. Creditors are coming to take her sons away due to non-payment. The story doesn’t make clear how long this situation had been going on, but clearly the circumstances had worsened over time. Her life had become suffocated by fear and now,

in desperation, the widow cries out to the prophet Elisha to help her in her plight. This cry for help marks the first time the widow dares to admit the shame that her debt had fostered within her for so long. She allowed her limitations to shackle her spirit, and became crippled and intimidated by debt. Just like her, we can also become limited by circumstances that interrupt our lives—situations that seem to shut us down and confine our destiny.

This widow’s story provides us with great insight as to how our God deals with our frequently limited perspective of life. We, like this widow, have to be willing to dare to break limitations by being obedient to God. We have to take some of the same steps this widow took in 2 Kings 4. First, she had to push past the restrictions of her own pride and embarrassment. When she cried out for help she was breaking the silence and removing its limiting power. Often, it is our refusal to cry out that keeps us locked up. We need to be willing to seek help from those who have the ability to move us forward. This woman cried out to a prophet of God—a man who had seen many limitation-removing miracles take place. When faced with a mountain challenge, we need to ask for help from those who have mountain-climbing experience.

After the widow cried out, there came the challenge of reevaluating her limitations as Elisha asked her in verse 2, “What do you

have in your house?” The widow was confused by the question. She had become so aware of what she didn’t have that she had overlooked what she did have. Her reply to Elisha: “Your servant has nothing except a little oil.” The truth is, limitation makes us question every area of our lives. We often devalue any contribution when we feel overwhelmed by life. Yet we have to dare to look again. Don’t believe the lies of the limitation. If you are lacking in one area, look for what you have in another. She may not have had money, but she had a little oil, which until Elisha had asked her, she had overlooked.

Elisha then instructed her to find more empty jars, to add to her emptiness. This seems a strange instruction, to add more lack when the widow was already overwhelmed with need. But God’s answer was to increase the need. Elisha was about to demonstrate

to this widow that the only limitation is our ability to trust Him. His supply only ended with the widow’s inability to find more emptiness to fill.

We have to dare to remove our limitations—to not allow life and all its complexities to remove our ability to keep pushing our faith to new places. We have to determine we will stretch further and believe for greater. When limitation is telling us to quiet down, we, like this widow, have to dare to call out, dare to present God with our little, knowing He is our more-than-enough. We must commit even in times of need to still be willing to find more needs for God to fill. If the widow hadn’t cried out, it would have been a death sentence for her family. So what about you? Where do you need to remove limitation for your limitless God? CCM





TWO BECOME ONE

JODI AND CHRIS KING FROM LOVE AND THE OUTCOME SHARE HOW THEY HAVE MERGED THEIR LIVES IN MARRIAGE, AT HOME AND ON THE ROAD

CCM: *Lots of people joke that married couples end up pitching his stuff, keeping her stuff, and adding on new stuff. How did you merge your two lives, both in a physical, visceral sense and an emotional, spiritual one?*

CHRIS: Jodi is definitely more design-oriented than I am (although I think my tastes are improving), so our first two homes had her special touch all over them and I've really come to appreciate her style! Our home in Nashville is nothing fancy, but she has a gift of adding a few things here and there

that make it seem magazine-worthy! When we sold our home two years ago we tried to only keep what we thought was valuable to us personally; when we moved all that stuff down to Nashville we realized so much of it didn't matter anymore considering how much time we spend on the road. It has made me really appreciate little things in life a lot more. Little moments that can only happen while sipping coffee on the porch together... The crazy thing about our life is that those moments happen on stage as well. You can't really describe it; it's a personal connection between us and God.

JODI: We are both pretty minimalistic people. I guess that comes from life on the road, and learning what you need in your suitcase and what you can do without. Plus, selling everything we owned and rebuilding our home in Nashville was a great chance to gain new perspective. We realized we don't need a lot to be happy, and we don't have a lot to spend so it works out! One day, if and when we have more resources in this area, we will try our best to hold on to these values. When you have space in your

life, there's more room for the Lord to speak. We tend to live so cluttered in North America, which can make it hard to see, hear, sense the Lord when you don't leave any room for Him to move and prompt. We're trying to create space for Him. It's nice to be on the same page when it comes to our core values as a couple, but we are very individual people which makes it a rich relationship. The last thing I would ever want is for Chris to lose who he is or for the two of us to merge into one personality. Unity doesn't mean you lose your individuality! **CCM**

UNSPOKEN

BY ANDREW GREER

Album Title: TBD

Label: Centricity Music

Release Date: March 25, 2014

Recording Studio: Full Circle Music, Franklin, TN; Beech Creek Studios, Franklin TN

Producers: Seth Mosley

Number of Songs: 12

MUSIC MATTERS: We really didn't feel any pressure [when recording]. As we live our lives and walk with God, He teaches us and gives us inspiration. Life seems to dictate the themes and ideas from which our songs are born. With the great musicians in our band, a great producer and the hard work and input from our support team, we ended up with a record that we feel matters. –Chad Mattson

SONG TENACITY: We are constantly writing, so we had a lot of songs to choose from. We selected the songs that moved us the most. We are usually prepared with songs [before recording], but we are always looking for ways to make songs better, right up until the end. –C.M.



INTERNATIONAL

INFLUENCE: One of the things I love most about the guys in our band is that we come from all over the world, so we have different influences that spill into our sound. People who have listened to us in the past will definitely see our fingerprints on this record, but we've added a few new elements to keep it fresh. —C.M.

NO PLACE LIKE . . . Because we travel a lot, it is nice to be home in Nashville with our families each night when we record. The comfort and peace of being home allows us to be focused and creative in the studio. —C.M. CCM

+ FOR MORE INFO, VISIT UNSPOKENMUSIC.COM.



STRYMON OB.1

OPTICAL COMPRESSOR AND CLEAN BOOST

BY JASON AHLBRANDT

I usually don't take new pedals out on the road before testing them, but I decided to take a risk with this one because I was running low on time. I stuck it on my pedalboard and headed out for some road dates. On the first gig, I used the Strymon through a '65 Fender Vibro Champ and a '72 reissue Custom Tele. At first, I couldn't tell if it was actually on! This pedal is very unassuming and truly transparent. I love compressors on electric guitar and have been through a ton of them. Most are pretty good but always seem to change the sound of the guitar and/or squash the attack into oblivion without any way to modify the attack speed. With the Strymon OB.1, you get sustain and a modest amount of compression without the guitar sounding completely squashed. This puppy is incredible! Turn up the compressor knob, more sweet sustain and built-in boost. There is a switch for boosting the overall gain in a flat EQ, Treble or Mids. I found it useful to gain my neck pickup slightly but add a little chime to a muddy humbucker with the switch on Treble. Really nice feature... If you're looking for a well-built compressor pedal with all the right features in the right places, look no further. **CCM**

Jason Ahlbrandt is a guitar soloist and session musician. He currently travels with Guy Penrod and has two solo acoustic guitar albums. He lives in Nashville, Tenn., with wife, Martina, and daughter, Alianna.

Follow Jason Ahlbrandt on **Instagram**, **YouTube**, **Twitter**, and **Facebook**



Be sure to check out my video demo of the Strymon OB.1 in action

PROS

- durable
- simple two-knob design
- smooth compression, less squash
- boost with switchable options

CONS

- larger pedal than most
- boost only works when compression is also engaged

RATING ★★★★★☆

PRICE \$199.00

“AWESOME GOD”

ARTIST: RICH MULLINS

ALBUM: *WINDS OF HEAVEN,
STUFF OF EARTH*

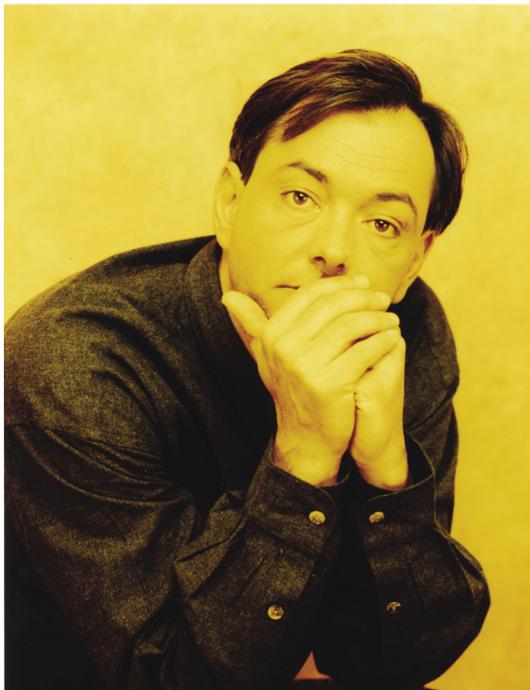
WRITTEN BY RICH MULLINS
(REUNION RECORDS, 1989)
PRODUCED BY REED ARVIN

ADAPTED FROM *CCM PRESENTS 100
GREATEST SONGS IN CHRISTIAN MUSIC*

We've been busy around here pulling together our CCM 35th Anniversary Tribute Edition. Along the way, we unearthed some treasures! Rich Mullins is considered a legend in many respects—as a songwriter, teacher, follower and lover of Christ. When we happened upon the story behind his timeless, “Awesome God,” we thought it was the perfect way to kick off a new year, complete with Rich's own version of a New Year's resolution. We hope you enjoy this excerpt from the Tribute Edition.

There is an irony in honoring a Rich Mullins' song as among the best in Christian music. He's likely the one artist least likely to consider it an honor at all. “Actually,” chuckles his brother David Mullins, “it would probably tick him off. I can just hear him, ‘It's foolish to try to rate art! Art is not a contest!’”

But for the millions of Rich Mullins fans who still keenly feel his absence since his death in a car accident in 1997, the choice of “Awesome God” as one of the top Christian songs is actually no contest at all. Years before praise & worship songs were the mainstay of most artists' repertoires, Rich's simple hymn acknowledging the awesome power of our



Creator became one of his signature songs.

“The story about that song, according to what I've been told,” says David Mullins, “is that Rich was driving late at night by himself to a youth concert in Colorado and was having trouble staying awake. He said he was thinking about southern preachers, the kind that say short sentences, real strong. So he rolled his window down and started yelling these statements into the night, trying to stay awake: ‘There is thunder in His footsteps and lightning in His fists!’ He thought it was funny, and then when he got to the concert he taught the kids the song.” Almost every Rich Mullins concert after that included a point in which he started singing that song and then stopped, closed his eyes and let the gentle, a cappella response of the crowd wash over him.

“‘Awesome God’ creates a magic moment,” Rich once remarked. “It reminds you that this world is not your home.”

Rich Mullins never seemed to feel completely at home anywhere, even in the contemporary Christian music field in which he chose to make his living. Restless, eccentric, enigmatic Rich was not an easy fit in an industry that prefers its artists a little more presentable—and a lot less abrasive. Amy Grant, whose recording of Rich’s song “Sing Your Praise to the Lord” brought him to the attention of the industry.

“Rich was the uneasy conscience of Christian music. He didn’t live like a star. He’d taken a vow of poverty so that what he earned could be used to help others.”

Rich’s longtime view of Christianity as something you do, not something you talk about, was evident in his writing and his travels. He journeyed to Guatemala, Japan and Korea and spent time in Thailand helping farmers dig septic tanks and plant fruit trees. At the height of his growing career, and much to the chagrin of his record label, Rich left Nashville and moved to Wichita, Kansas to pursue a degree in music education at Friends University. After he graduated from Friends in 1995, he moved to a Navajo reservation in Window Rock, Arizona to teach music to the children there. However, in typical Rich fashion, his brother David says he actually went there to learn, more than teach. “Everybody always thinks, ‘Oh what a wonderful thing, this Christian music artist moving to a reservation to help those people.’ But what I heard Rich say about it was, ‘I also went to the Navajo reservation because they are traditionally a shepherding culture, they work with sheep, and so many scriptures were written from that perspective. I went there to learn from them what I could about the Lord as our Good Shepherd.’”

Rich always kept one foot in the music business, however, and continued recording,

writing and performing concerts. At the time of his death, he was about to begin a new project, which was eventually released posthumously as *The Jesus Record*. The 41-year-old singer’s death on September 19, 1997 left the industry reeling, in much the same way that fellow Christian music rebel Keith Green’s fatal plane crash had, 15 years earlier. Rich’s unflinching honesty, startling intellect and wide-open heart are what his friends and fellow artists remember most. And his quirky, self-deprecating humor is what they will miss the most.

Just days before his death, Rich faxed *Sound and Spirit Magazine* his goals and resolutions for 1998 for an upcoming feature. Here is what he wrote:

“My goal is to stop being grumpy.

My resolution is my plan of attack:

- A. Get up before I have to so I can have a half hour at least before I have to talk to anyone.
- B. Spend an hour each early evening working out—do not hurry.
- C. Unplug my phone—use my answering machine as a dartboard. Throw ice cubes at it when I’m frustrated instead of making cutting remarks to people I love.
- D. Stop expecting big successes and start celebrating the little ones.
- E. Chart the movements of the Big Dipper and soak in the sun as much as possible. Live in a world that is bigger than my calendar—more permanent than my feelings, more glorious than my accomplishments (that should be easy).”

At a memorial service held in Wichita, Rich’s favorite former professor, Dr. Stephen Hooks, concluded his stirring remarks with this: “There’s a Ragamuffin loose in heaven. There are bare feet on the streets of gold. And I tell you, heaven will never be the same!” CCM

**COMING
NEXT
ISSUE**

CASTING CROWNS

- CITY HARBOR
- JAKE HAMILTON AND THE SOUND
- DAVE BARNES

