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DANNY GOKEY

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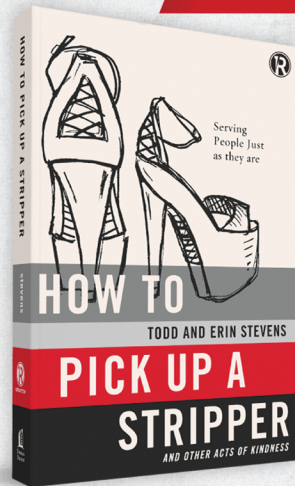
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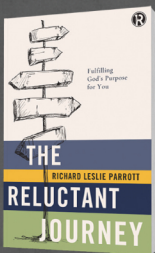
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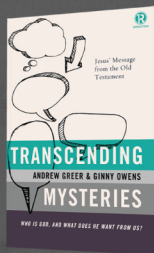
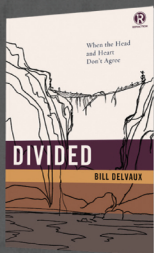
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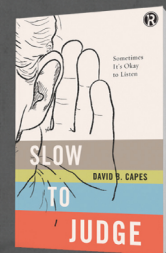
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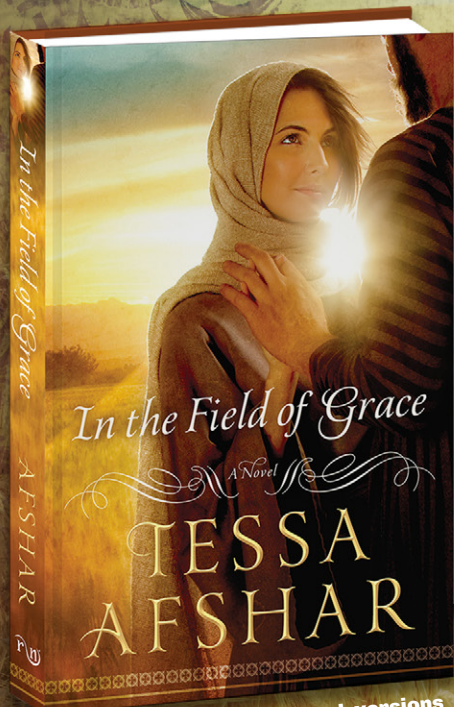
ON THE COVER:

Danny Gokey
Front and Centered**Jesus Culture**

Unstoppable



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Without wealth or family, the widow Ruth left her people and followed Naomi, to rebuild Naomi's home in Israel. Provisions gone and starvation at the door, Ruth gathered grain in a field, abandoned after the harvest. Tormented by others, Ruth is shocked to find the owner of the field helping her. Boaz tells himself his kindness toward Ruth is repayment for the love she has shown to his cousin Naomi. But his heart knows better.

READ AN EXCERPT

Tessa Afshar was born in Iran, lived there for 14 years, and attended an English boarding school before moving to the United States. Her conversion to Christianity in her twenties changed the course of her life forever. Tessa holds an MDiv from Yale University where she served as cochair of the Evangelical Fellowship at the Divinity School.



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DEPARTMENTS

FROM THE EDITOR

PHOTOS

TOUR SPOTLIGHT

Big Daddy Weave, Group 1 Crew,
Tim Timmons



OUT AND ABOUT

Pix of your favorite Christian
artists on the road, off the road
and everywhere in between

WHAT'S NEW
ALBUM RELEASES

SPOTLIGHTS

KB



THE VESPERS

NEW EMPIRE

NATASHA OWENS

DEVOTIONAL
EXCERPT FROM

Excerpt from *Praying Circles
Around the Lives of Your Children*
By Mark Batterson

REVIEWS

ALBUMS, BOOKS AND FILMS

ONE LAST LOOK
THE MARTINS

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Designers
Martina Ahlbrandt
Joshua Jamison

Contributing Editors
Andy Argyrakis
Matt Conner
Andrew Greer

Assistant Production Manager
Paula Rozelle Hanback

Marketing Project Manager
Kevin Sparkman
ksparkman@salemPublishing.com

**Fulfillment & Customer
Service Manager**
Jennifer Evenson

Customer Service Reps
Jessica Hirsch
Heather Smith

**Executive Director of
Advertising**
Kevin Anderson

Senior Director of Advertising
DeDe Donatelli-Tarrant
805.987.5072
dede@salemPublishing.com

Account Executives
Pat McAbee, 972.369.7611
pmcabee@salemPublishing.com

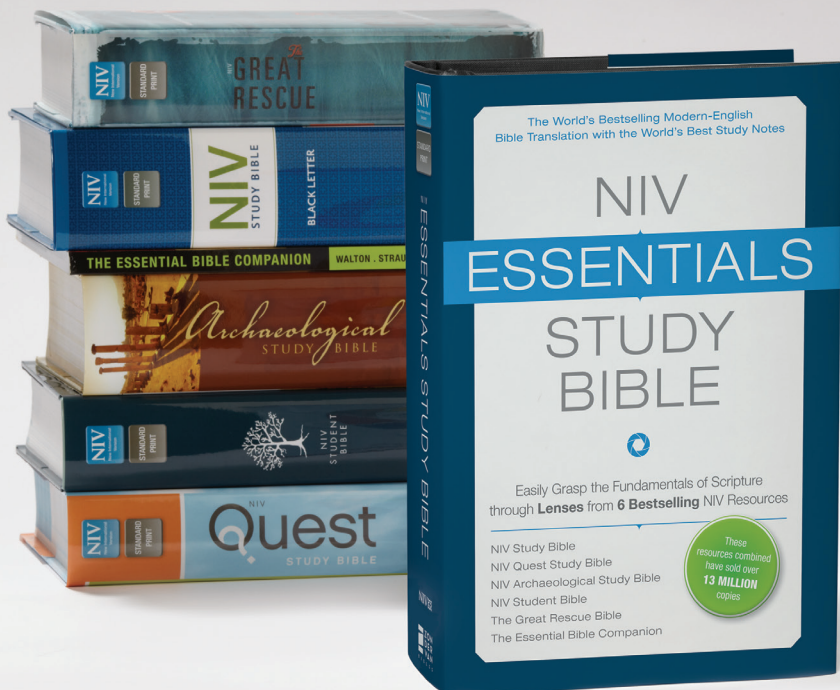
Joel Stombres, 630.584.0213
jstombres@salemPublishing.com

Deborah Ponceti, 727.954.6841
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Do you believe one person can change the world?

History tells us it's rare but possible. It's not always easy, however, to attach monumental achievements to our own potential. Something tells me that when Danny Gokey first auditioned for *American Idol*, his mind wasn't necessarily set on bringing a sense of hope and an image of God's sustenance to the world. Yet, week after week, his actions, his countenance, his voice and his story did just that. Now, he delivers a new record full of that same inspiration from that same source—the hope of Christ. Jesus Culture is another case of God's world-changing power. Founded with the intention of revolutionizing culture for Christ, Jesus Culture has worked to achieve that goal, one record at a time.

What do you believe you can do? If the answer isn't "anything," what's holding you back? We've been granted new life from the One who not only walks on water and moves mountains, but invites us to do the same.

So be bold. Be ready to conquer anything because you walk in the grace of the One who has already overcome everything.



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 www.StereoSubversion.com.



Andrew Greer

is a Dove Award-nominated singer-songwriter, respected music journalist and co-creator of the innovative *Hymns for Hunger* tour. www.andrew-greer.com



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Publishers Weekly



DIANN MILLS is a bestselling author who believes her readers should expect an adventure. She currently has more than fifty-five books published. Her titles have appeared on the CBA and ECPA bestseller lists and have won placements through the American Christian Fiction Writers' Carol Awards and inspirational Reader's Choice awards. DiAnn won the Christy Award in 2010 and 2011.

Check out these other titles from DiAnn!



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BIG DADDY WEAVE, GROUP 1 CREW AND TIM TIMMONS

“THE ONLY NAME” TOUR

GRACE CHRISTIAN ACADEMY/ KANKAKEE, IL

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY ANDY ARGYRAKIS

Fresh off the release of *Love Come To Life: The Redeemed Edition* (Fervent Records/ Word), contemporary Christian mainstay Big Daddy Weave is back on the road, turning in new tunes alongside plenty from its Dove Award-winning past.



Recent favorites such as “Overwhelmed” and “The Only Name (Yours Will Be)” provided musically straightforward, lyrically uplifting moments, while the older “Fields Of Grace” and the Jesus Culture cover “Your Love Never Fails” found the fellas jamming with joy for a standing-room-only audience.



Group 1 Crew



Tim Timmons

Group 1 Crew tore through the current faith-fueled party *Fearless* (Fervent/Curb/Word), including chart-toppers such as “Dangerous,” “He Said” and “His Kind Of Love,” easily matching, if not surpassing mainstream contemporaries like Pharrell Williams, Black Eyed Peas and Outkast.

Opener Tim Timmons, a relative newcomer on the Reunion Records roster, presented powerful singer/songwriter material off his debut disc, *Cast My Cares*, along with a moving message of daily, full reliance on the Lord, in spite of living with an incurable cancer.

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1



COMPILED BY ANDY ARGYRAKIS

1 Musician and author David Teems (right), who is currently working on a new music project combining music and Scripture, chats with legendary 1960s pop singer Tommy Roe ("Dizzy," "Sheila"), who is also Teems' cousin, after Roe's show at The Listening Room in Nashville.

2



2 Family Force 5 gets in character on the set of its "BZRK" video shoot, which is a song off a new studio album releasing August 5.

3 Recording artist, actress and one-time Miss Houston Erica Lane appears on *Good Morning Arkansas*, dedicating her single "Burden" to those affected by the devastating tornadoes that hit the area.

4 & **5** Singer/songwriter Holly Spears poses with stars of the new faith-based film *Virtuous* (which features several of her songs) at the movie's world premiere. Pictured in photo one from left to right: Melissa Barron, Holly Spears, Angie Nelson and Brady Allison. Pictured in photo two from left to right: Jessica Lynch and Holly Spears.

3



4



5





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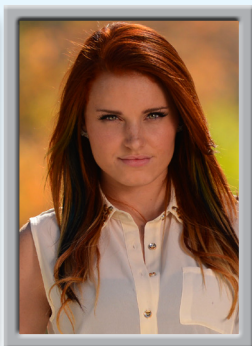
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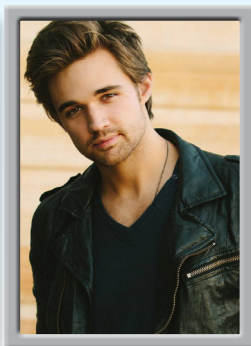
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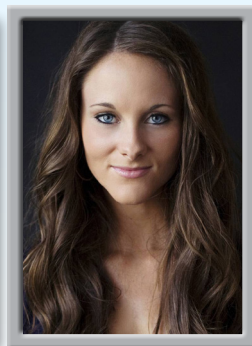
Colton Dixon
Singer



Schyler Dixon
Singer



Kyle Kupecky
Singer



Kelsey Kupecky
Speaker





BY MATT CONNER

It

was a heartfelt story that captured us. It was his tremendous vocal work

that kept us listening.

Danny Gokey will be familiar to many from his long ride on *American Idol*'s eighth season, where he finished in third place thanks to the aforementioned elements. Just weeks after the devastating death of his wife and high school sweetheart, Sophia, Gokey auditioned for *Idol*, where his performances became impossible to ignore. He became a household name in the process.

Several years have passed since that season marked by triumph and tragedy, and Gokey is excited by the new chapter he has entered in his life and career. His latest album, *Hope in Front of Me*, and single by the same name, speak to the joy ahead of him at this stage.

If *Hope in Front of Me* feels a bit more personal than his debut, *My Best Days*, that's because it is. Given the constraints placed on all contestants, it's hard for any finalist to make their mark on their first post-*Idol* release.

"There are many differences from my first album to the second album," says Gokey. "My first album was very rushed because from the first audition you had to sign many different contracts, and the first album I didn't get to write on.

"Although I enjoyed doing the first album and it was a great album, I feel like the



second album has more of my DNA and fingerprints, in the sense that I got to write the songs. I got to feed my thoughts in to the producers. It's almost like I was able to co-produce some of these songs by just being able to share my visions and ideas."

Perhaps nothing is as personal as the album's title track and first hit single, "Hope in Front of Me." It's a song that speaks to the well-documented changes in Gokey's life, including the establishment of a charity that honors his first wife, Sophia's Heart Foundation.

"That song was directly written about my experience," he says. "Lyrically it shares the story from the beginning of tragedy and loss. A lot of us face different storms, but the song talks about hanging onto that hope because hope will not disappoint. I'm so glad

I hung onto that hope. *American Idol* was a part of that hope. Sophia's Heart is a part of that hope. Getting remarried and having a child is a part of that hope that was in front of me.

"My family was a chapter of the book that I didn't know existed yet, but hope pulled me through and told me to keep believing and keep pressing forward. So when I sing this song, I sing it from a place of conviction, a place of 'I've been here,' and as I sing it, I hope the listeners get that message deep into their soul and heart."

Sophia's Heart has emerged as another important facet of Gokey's ministry, a charitable foundation that reflects Sophia's love for children.

"Sophia's Heart was founded after the loss of my first wife, in honor of her memory

and her heart for children and families,” says Gokey. “We take homeless families off the street, and we house them. We give them a beautiful place to stay. We provide them with clothes, food and shelter. Not only that, but we help provide them with the counseling, the therapists, the resources and the jobs to help get them back on the right track. We have a great team that has developed a program that helps them get back on their feet.”

Sophia’s Heart has branches in both Milwaukee and Nashville. Gokey says the organization remains committed to not only serving the immediate needs of people but nurturing their long-term goals and dreams as well.

“Most importantly, our job is to get people connected to their destiny,” he says. “We took in our first homeless family in November of 2011 and have been able to help more than 60 families in our program. Our building is an old 77,000-square-foot hospital that was given to me in East Nashville. It has the capacity to help more than 100 families a year once we’re completely renovated and staffed. We also have a thriving inner city music and arts program in Milwaukee that has been going for several years. The kids are great and have performed with me at the Grand Ole Opry and Summerfest.”

Gokey is now a family man with his wife, Leyicet, and son, Daniel Emanuel; and while Gokey says he’s always been a family man, having his own child brings a new perspective as a man and artist.

“I’m a family man; and even though this is my first child, I’ve always been a family man,” he says. “I come from a large family of six, and between all of us we have about twenty-two nieces and nephews. I’ve always put family first. As an artist, it gives me a little different perspective of what being a father is. I thought I understood what it took to be a father, but I really know what it’s like now that I have a child.

“I guess the biggest change that’s taken

place is that when I’m on the road, I’m always thinking logistically about how I can bring my family. If they can’t come with me, it’s about how I can spend the most time with them over Skype and telephone.”

In addition to the album, Gokey’s biggest fans likely already know about his new book, *Hope in Front of Me: Find Purpose in Your Darkest Moments*. Gokey’s story was always ripe for book format, and the singer says the offers came immediately after *Idol* was finished. However, it’s only now that Gokey is able to tell the story the way he always wanted.

“I’ve thought about writing a book many times since going through what I went through with the loss of my first wife,” says Gokey. “You know, when I came off the show, I immediately had so many offers to write a book, through this publisher and that publisher, but I put it on hold because I knew that the story wasn’t finished yet. I knew God had put it in my heart to write a book, but I knew that there were pieces of the puzzle that were not yet released.

“So it was about four years after the show went by when I finally started pursuing the book again because so many things had happened. We found a publisher, and it was a good fit. The book has made an impact on so many people’s lives and has changed people’s lives. You know, I’m just so glad that I never gave up and I never quit because now other people who watch my life are inspired to not give up and not quit, and that means everything.” CCM



FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT
DANNYGOKEY.COM.



TO LEARN MORE ABOUT SOPHIA’S
HEART, VISIT SOPHIASHEART.ORG.



JESUS A CULTURE OF POSSIBILITIES

BY CAROLINE LUSK



Unstoppable: Impossible to stop or prevent

Jesus replied, "What is impossible with man is possible with God." Luke 18:27

On June 3, Miranda Lambert, 50 Cent, Coldplay, Lucy Hale and Birdy released new projects. Miranda took the No. 1 spot on iTunes overall albums. The rest fell in line as one might expect...but for one caveat. The No. 2 spot went to Jesus Culture's *Unstoppable Love*.

A worship band besting 50 Cent, you say? Impossible.

Fortunately, as Jesus tells us in Luke 18:27, impossible is God's specialty.

And Jesus Culture has been riding high the wave of God's unstoppable love and power since its inception in 1999. Charged with a vision and mission to not only make music and lead people in worship but to truly change culture from the inside out, each of Jesus Culture's twenty-one albums has been



an offering of excellence, an act of faith and a tangible example of surrender.



The latest offering, *Unstoppable Love*, is comprised primarily of primarily original worship songs delivered by Jesus Culture's second-to-none band—Chris Quilala

(lead vocals and rhythm guitar), Kim Walker-Smith (lead and background vocals), Brandon Aaronson (bass), Josh Fisher (drums), Jeffrey Kunde (lead guitar), Ian McIntosh (keyboards and programming) and Skyler Smith (acoustic guitar and percussion).

The album comes full circle with a stirring message from Jesus Culture Director Banning

Liebscher, called "Answering the Call to Prayer."

"Our prayer for this album is that you would encounter the unstoppable, over-the-top, zealous, extravagant love that God has for you," says Liebscher.

That prayer has resonated through Jesus Culture's entire ministry—from 1999 to 2014. The annual Encounter Conferences, at which this record was recorded, were created to give a young generation an opportunity for an authentic encounter with God. This year marked 14 years of conferences, as well as the addition of a second location in Jesus Culture's new home of Sacramento. With events also happening in Minneapolis, Los Angeles and Atlanta, it's fair to say that Jesus Culture is stronger than ever and poised to be stronger still year by year.



Bold, unfettered by convention and unashamed of the One they elevate in each song, at each conference and in each act of ministry, Jesus Culture continues to fully immerse themselves in the business of changing culture. They challenge the status quo and dare to be misunderstood. Most of all, they dare to dream the impossible—to awaken a culture that has been asleep in the dark for far too long. Their success isn't contingent on rankings or charts. Their success is measured by Kingdom standards. And given their track record, it's safe to say that Jesus Culture's mission and passion will continue to reflect their unstoppable God. **CCM**



**FOR MORE INFORMATION
VISIT JESUSCULTURE.COM.**



KINGDOM COME

Some have said that Heaven must be colorful different cultures and ethnicities uniting with one voice before the one and only King. The vision is beautiful but rarely actualized in the here and now. At Covenant Church in Dallas, Texas, the vision is alive and well. From conception, the church has embraced and celebrated multiple cultures throughout their many campuses. They are, in a word, colorful. Thus it's fitting that their most recent worship album, which they created in partnership with Integrity Music, bears the name *Kingdom*.

Recorded live at the 10,000-member church, the album contains 12 new songs and the energy of a congregation that is as beautifully disparate as it is united. Worship pastors David and Nicole Binion join Covenant's worship leaders Joshua Defrene and Colin Edge throughout the powerful event. Five-time GRAMMY Award winner Israel Houghton produces and provides guest vocals, lending a cohesive element to the experience. The result is colorful, powerful and Kingdom-worthy—perhaps a glimpse of heaven on earth. **CCM**



**VISIT COVENANTCHURCH.ORG AND
INTEGRITYMUSIC.COM FOR MORE INFORMATION.**

KB

HOPE THROUGH HIP-HOP

BY ANDREW GREER

When his latest collection of rap tracks, *100* (Reach Records), claimed the top position on *Billboard's* Christian chart and debuted at No. 22 on the *Billboard* 200 earlier this spring, KB quickly became the next big thing in a long line of success stories in the ever-expanding niche of Christian hip-hop. But his sales spike is merely an indicator of the redemptive power of Christian rap. In an exclusive interview, KB gives CCM readers an intimate glimpse into his poignant story of hope through hip-hop.

CCM: *As a teen, you went from the suburbs to the inner city in one day. How did that transition play out in your growing-up experience?*

KB: When I was thirteen years old, my parents divorced, and my mother and I moved to Southside St. Petersburg with my grandmother. That was the first time I was confronted with fatherlessness in the inner city, meaning an environment where a boy

feels like he must be a man without knowing what it is to be a man. So I turned to rappers, neighborhood drug dealers and derelict fathers as examples. I had this identity crisis that put me in a place of darkness. I tried to medicate with fighting and drugs. I became overwhelmed, feeling unsafe, exposed and fake.

At the same time, I excelled in school and was invited to enter a new program where select high school students could start college early. In the program, I met a guy named Jeremy. He was a year older than me and was into rapping. I asked him if he wanted to battle. He said he did Christian rap. I was struck by how unashamed he was of being a Christian. He had a CD with a guy on the front cover who



looked like me. I immediately assumed it wasn't Christian, but Jeremy said it was; and he gave me the CD. I took it home and loved every song. The eighth song had a message about God, sin and His Son's sacrifice. It really impacted me, and I've been walking with the Lord ever since.

CCM: *And now you are a trend-setting artist in Christian rap. How does that feel, knowing you were your audience, desperate and in need of help?*

KB: It's a great honor! It keeps me tethered to the reality that no matter what happens in my career, I

am no different than the people I'm trying to reach. That gives me a special love for my fans. It also reminds me to put accolades in their proper place because, although recognition is awesome, there's no greater trophy than duplicating the experience I had with Christian hip-hop in people around the world. Changed lives is the goal.

CCM: *What is the meaning behind the title 100?*

KB: The meaning of 100 is simply to give everything in everything! Because God cares about what we do and how we do it, any job has tremendous value. We can't be underrated or overlooked.

CCM: *You have often said you want your rapper platform to be about more than good music. How do you hope your career influences others?*

KB: Ten years from now, I hope the way Christian hip-hop changed the way I saw God and the world will be apparent in thousands of people because of my music. When my music is out of style, I hope the heart of my music will be relevant and alive. **CCM**



**FOR MORE INFORMATION,
VISIT WHOISKB.COM.**

THE VESPERS

NOT LOST IN TRANSLATION

BY MATT CONNER

The Vespers are done with the gimmicks. They're past the talking points. As the now-veteran act prepares to release their third album, they're simply focused on the music at hand.

When the foursome first broke onto the folk scene, the narrative was all about the band's make-up—two sets of siblings, all of whom were teenagers. Their music and story drew rave reviews from *Huffington Post* and Sirius XM, among other outlets. All in all, it was a nice introduction to the band, but their memorable pop arrangements and folk instrumentation are enough to carry the conversation these days.

That conversation also includes a focus on the band's faith. The Vespers are all Christians and are very open about their faith in God and commitment to Christ. As Taylor Jones details, it's the potential to bring the gospel message across to a new audience captivated by

their music that excites him the most.

"The thing that I'm personally excited about is that the people who are hearing these songs are saying they could hear this on pop radio," says Jones. "That makes me smile because there's still so much of the gospel playing out in each song. To me, each song on the record has a little situation or sample of what Scripture is saying in it. Since we're getting older and learning lessons and applying the gospel to it, it is coming out in the songs.

"In a perfect world, it will get played on pop radio and will have a crossover kind of vibe," he continues. "That would be awesome to hear the gospel on pop radio. That'd be a breath of fresh air, I think. That's what we're excited about."

While the band's faith clearly resonates on these new tracks, Taylor also explains that it's not a hit-you-over-the-head approach that has the potential to turn

people off. Instead, it's about making music as an honest expression of the band's beliefs and lifestyle.

"I think a lot of Christian bands haven't been presented very well, or were presented in a polarizing way," he says. "They could come across as if saying, 'You're wrong if you're not like us.' If that's in your heart, then that's going to come out. That's a bad thing.

"We're a bit more subtle about it all. We're not trying to hide what it is, but you can have music that is born out of your relationship with Christ without just saying 'Jesus, Jesus, Jesus' in your hook. That doesn't have to happen."

As the band continues to live lives that reflect Christ and makes music that reflects their lives, chances are there will be no need for interpretation, gimmicks or sound bites. Their music does and will speak for itself. [CCM](#)



**FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT
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NEW EMPIRE

THE AUSSIES LEAVE AMERICA BREATHLESS

BY ANDREW ARGYRAKIS



Nearly a decade of ruling the road in the land Down Under has paid off in some pretty impressive experiences for pop-rockers New Empire. Besides touring alongside major players like Switchfoot, Anberlin, Owl City and Neon Trees, the foursome also became a major festival and headlining attraction, even luring the likes of Tooth & Nail Records in America. These days, the international imports are

introducing their label debut disc, *In A Breath*, to the world at large; though besides simply boasting massive beats that could easily fit alongside Imagine Dragons, guitarist Kyle Lane suggests to *CCM* there's something much bigger in the band's contagious concoction.

CCM: *What type of sound are you specifically going for throughout In A Breath?*

KYLE: I guess we are going toward a more reflective and eclectic vibe for this album.

We wanted it to sound epic, and personally I think we nailed it—haha!

CCM: *Congrats on scoring more than one million YouTube views of the single "Relight the Fire." What's the story behind the song?*

KYLE: The song is written as though you are writing in a journal. You write all the faults about you and all of your experiences that make you who you are with the climactic question of "would you relight the fire?" It's a



cry out to God to say, "This is who I am; now would you use that and relight the flame within me?"

CCM: *What message do you hope listeners will take away from the record overall?*

KYLE: What we sing about and what we believe in is that there's hope in every situation. This album came from a time of loss and change. Both those things make life seem harder than it really is. We hope that

you can take away a sense that things will always get better and there is always something to live for.

CCM: *What's the Australian pop/rock scene like compared to America right now?*

KYLE: The Australian scene is like the tides. It comes and it goes. Bands don't seem to last very long in this country. It feels like in the States bands stay around forever and have a lot of opportunities to play music and do what they love.

CCM: *What have you learned from such high-profile tours and do you have any specific highlight?*

KYLE: I guess the main thing we have learned from these kinds of acts is that they are all just regular guys. They were all up for a chat and keen to hang out as much as they could. We really appreciate those moments. The greatest memory that I have from those tours is being invited up with the rest of the band to sing "Lifestyles Of The Rich and Famous" with Good Charlotte. It was awesome. **CCM**



**FOR MORE INFORMATION,
VISIT NEWEMPIRETOUR.COM.**

NATASHA OWENS

MAKING IT THROUGH

BY CAROLINE LUSK



If you've not yet heard of Natasha Owens, you will. The worship leader/singer-songwriter from Dallas has been making music since she was three years old. This year, she's sharing a stage with Michael W. Smith and Jason Crabb and recently released a new project, *I Made it Through*. Capturing a journey of grief and redemptive peace, following the loss of her father, the project is inspiring and healing. **CCM**

spoke with Natasha about her past, her pain and her peace.

CCM: *You've been singing since practically since you could walk. How did you know or when did you know that God was calling you to use your gifts in a ministry capacity?*

NATASHA: After my dad passed away, it took me about a year to deal with the grief. When it caught up with me, it absolutely knocked

me off my feet. I spiraled into a tailspin that threw me into depression. God laid it upon our church pastor's heart to offer me a music ministry position. When he approached me, I laughed at him. I told him that I was in survival mode. I couldn't help myself, so how was I going to help someone else? He said, "Sometimes you have to reach out to others in the midst of your pain in order for God to heal you."

I took the position; and, looking back on it, it was the best decision I could have made. God knew what I needed and was calling me into a ministry to help the brokenhearted. After I accepted the position, I entered into a long and very hard stage of anger. I was so mad at God for taking Dad. It was very hard for me to get up and motivate people into worship and tell them how great God was when I felt He was anything but great. I felt like such a hypocrite, and the guilt of that ate me up. In hindsight, every time I led worship, I found songs of restoration, songs of hope and love and the greatness of God. Those songs were the key to my healing. I really felt like God was calling me into another level of ministry, but I didn't know what. I prayed that God would give me an answer and a sign as to what I was really being called to do for Him. The next morning, I received a text from a producer in Nashville that I had met a couple of times that simply stated: *Have you ever thought about doing a CD?* I immediately knew that the text was my answer from God. Since that day, God has opened up so many doors.

CCM: *What was it like learning that your father was not in this world any longer?*

NATASHA: In life, we have moments that happen so

quickly and change our lives forever. This was one of those moments. Within the second of hearing of my dad's death, I knew that life as I knew it would no longer exist. My life was forever changed, and I was left with a gaping hole that could never be filled. Time absolutely stood still for me.

On that day in May, I began a road of survival, a road that began with pain, sadness, anger and suffering. But God continued to lead me down a path to healing, peace, joy and ministry. God showed me that I could not die in my circumstance, looking at what I had lost. I had to keep living for what I had left. I had a husband and two boys who needed me and a world filled with hurting people who needed to hear my survival story. When people go through something faith-shaking, they either get closer to or further away from God. My burden is to reach these people at their crossroad and give them hope to hang on until God can restore them—to get closer, not further away from God.

CCM: *The record has beautiful songs of restoration and hope. Was that hope easy to come by?*


NATASHA: No, that hope was not easy to come by. The road to recovery was long and was the hardest thing I

have ever been through. But I came out on the other side so much stronger and with such a testimony. God never left me. He was with me every step of the way. I want people to feel and hear God, not my voice, in the music.


CCM: *How has it been to perform alongside Michael W. Smith and Jason Crabb?*

NATASHA: It is truly amazing to see Jason communicate with the audience. He is so humble and anointed, and it amazes me to see how he is able to connect to the crowd. He absolutely loves people, and it shows in every action and every word.

And Michael W. Smith—what can be said about this legend? Michael W. Smith has made an indelible mark on Christian music, and his legacy will live on forever. To watch this man perform songs that he has written every night is a blessing, and I am honored that he would allow me to share the stage with him. [CCM](#)

 **YOU CAN CATCH NATASHA ON THE SUMMER LEG OF JASON CRABB'S LOVE IS STRONGER TOUR, AND ONLINE AT [NATASHAOWENSMUSIC.COM](#).**

 **HER PROJECT, I MADE IT THROUGH, IS AVAILABLE ONLINE AND ON ITUNES.**



Andrew Peterson has long been regarded as one of Christian music's premiere songwriters. Always reflective, emotive and eclectic, his words have both challenged and comforted... and that's just his music. Also an esteemed author, Andrew releases the fourth and final installment of *The Wingfeather Saga*, *The Warden and the Wolf King* July 22. The fantasy-fiction series is smart, funny and addictive. Below, check out an excerpt from Chapter One. CCM

THE WARDEN AND THE WOLF KING

AN EXCERPT FROM CHAPTER ONE

BY ANDREW PETERSON

THE SLOG OF WAR

"What happens next?"

"How am I supposed to know? I've never been in a war."

"But we've been here for three hours at least. And we haven't eaten a thing."

"Look, all I know is we're supposed to sit here and be quiet until the tribes are finished pledging—or whatever it's called. And we're all hungry, but at least you don't get cold."

"How many tribes are left?"

"You can count."

"Wait, how many tribes did we start with?"

"Kal, can you just find some way to be interested in what's going on? Mama said this hasn't happened in decades. And they're here for you, after all. The least you can do is show some interest. Shh! Here comes a tribesman."

Janner and Kalmar sat on a wooden platform overlooking the Field of Finley, now covered with snow. These were the fields, Janner remembered, where many years ago Podo Helmer had won the heart of Wendolyn Igiby by competing in the games of the Bannick Durga against the roughest and rowdiest of the Hollowsfolk. But there were no games today. Today was about war. Which meant boredom.

That morning, Nia had woken the brothers in their bedroom at Chimney Hill with the reminder that the day of tribute had come, and that as High King and Throne Warden of Anniera, their presence was required. After a quick breakfast prepared by Podo and Freva, Nia presented the brothers and their sister Leeli with formal attire.

Leeli got a white dress lined with burble fur and a gray speckled coat that fell about her like a blanket. It was held around her shoulders by a silver brooch in the shape of a beaming star. When Leeli emerged from her bedroom with the dress and robe on, her hair draped over one shoulder and her cheeks burning with the hope of her own beauty, the

boys were speechless. Podo, who was wearing an apron and clapping one-legged around the table collecting dirty dishes, looked up and whispered, "Mother moonlight, she's pretty."

The brothers got no such compliments, but they felt handsome in their royal clothes. Kalmar needed no coat since he was already covered with silvery brown fur. Instead he wore a black leather vest lined with blood-red fabric, fastened down the front with shiny silver buttons, each of which bore the Annieran dragon—the same insignia Janner had seen on Uncle Artham's journals back in Glipwood. Nia draped a black cloak over his shoulders and fastened it at the neck with a silver sun. She tried to put a crown on Kal's head—not an official Annieran crown, she told them, but something she had commissioned from a smith in Ban Rona, a circlet that would at least make him look kingly enough for the ceremony. But after several failed attempts to secure it over his wolf ears, which constantly twitched, Nia decided to forego the crown, much to Kalmar's relief.

Finally, Janner was given a black coat of polished leather, with boots and gloves to match. When he pulled the gloves on and wiggled his fingers, he noticed on the back of each hand the same Annieran dragon stitched into the leather with crimson thread.

"Here," Nia said as she draped a black cloak over Janner's shoulders. He noticed when she drew near to fasten his brooch—which was in the shape of a crescent moon—that instead of looking up at her, they were eye to eye. "When did you get so tall?" Nia asked quietly. She adjusted his cloak and her hands lingered on his shoulders. "You look like a Throne Warden. Tall and handsome and humble. Keep an eye on Kalmar today. This ceremony is exactly the kind of thing he loathes."

Janner glanced at Kal, who was hunched

over the table, brushing crumbs from breakfast into a little pile, then licking them up.

"Kalmar!" Nia snapped, and he jerked upright and wiped his hands on his cloak.

"Kalmar!" Nia said again, and he grabbed a napkin from the table and cleaned his hands and cloak with a nervous laugh.

"Kalmar!" Nia said, snatching the napkin from him. He hadn't noticed that it was soiled with sweetberry jam—jam that was now smeared all over his new cloak and his hands, which he absentmindedly wiped on his vest.

"Out!" Nia ordered.

Janner bustled Kalmar and Leeli through the door, where Oskar N. Reteep waited with the sled hitched and ready. Kal bounded into the wagon. "In the words of Chanco Phanor, 'You three look magnificent!' Is that sweet-berry jam?" Oskar pointed at Kalmar's cloak.

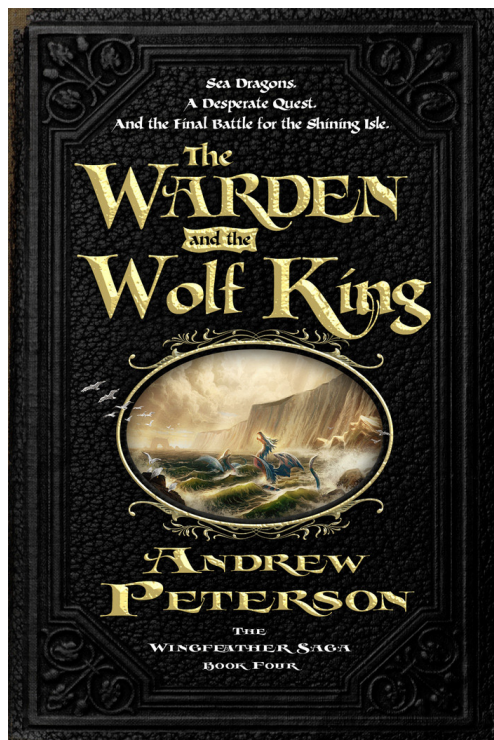
Somehow, even though his face was covered in fur, Kal's cheeks seemed to flush as he reached down and lifted Leeli in behind him. Janner clambered up the other side.

"It's going to be a fine day, Jewels!" Oskar clicked the horse into motion and pulled his scarf over his mouth. He was already a big fellow, but the many layers of coats, cloaks, and blankets made him look enormous. All Janner could see of the old man was his bright red nose and spectacles peeking out from between the scarf and his cowl; the rest of him was a mountainous pile of blankets.

After an hour of riding through the snow they crested the hill and saw what seemed to be the entire population of the Green Hollows gathered around the perimeter of the Field of Finley. Out of the silence of the long ride came the sudden racket of the multitude, the whinny of horses, the snapping of many flags in the wind. The aroma of campfires mingled with that of meat roasting on spits and the odor of horse manure. Each tribe had erected its own main tent and surrounded it with smaller ones, between which were

wagons, horses, and campfires. Thousands of Hollowsfolk stood in groups around the fires. Others had struck up games and were rolling in the snow or chasing one another out beyond the tents.

But the center of the Field of Finley was immaculate, a smooth circular blanket of white as long and wide as an arrow shot. Not a single footprint marred the snow, though the path around it was muddied with traffic. At the section of the field nearest the road, a platform had been erected, and a man standing beside it raised a hand in greeting when he saw the Wingfeathers. Even at a distance Janner recognized the tall, bearded figure of Rudric, Keeper of the Hollows.



CLICK HERE FOR THE REST OF CHAPTER ONE.

FALLBACK POSITION

AN EXCERPT FROM *PRAYING CIRCLES AROUND THE LIVES OF YOUR CHILDREN*

BY MARK BATTERSON

PUBLISHED BY THOMAS NELSON

Let me offer a word of encouragement for those times when you face discouragement as a parent. When you are in the depths of parenting despair, when things look hopeless and you feel helpless, you need to keep circling the promises of God. I have a handful of Bible verses that I call fallback positions. When I am at my weakest, they are the promises I fall back on with my full faith. One of those particularly helpful fallback positions for parents is inspired by Isaiah 61:3:

[Put on] the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. (NKJV)

Nothing can produce pure joy like our children, but they can also break our hearts by the things they say or do. Whether it's a toddler who discovers the word *no*, a teenager who rebels against everything you believe in, or an adult child who goes through a painful divorce, you will experience "the spirit of heaviness" that the prophet Isaiah referenced. And that's when I pray in the Spirit because I'm not sure what to pray on my own. I also put on "the garment of praise" because that's what Isaiah prescribed.

Over time, the garment of praise will become like your favorite pair of jeans that fit like a glove. You will need to pull them out of your prayer closet often. And don't take off the garment of praise until the spirit of heaviness evaporates like morning fog. CCM



Pastor and best-selling author Mark Batterson has a surprising secret weapon to parenting: prayer. Batterson shares a perfect blend of biblical yet practical advice that will revolutionize parents' prayer lives by giving them a guide describing seven important ways to pray for

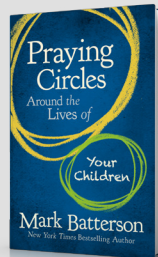
their children, such as praying for a hedge of protection and forming prayer circles.

As Batterson says, "I realize that not everyone inherited a prayer legacy like I did, but you can leave a legacy for generations to come. Your prayers have the power to shape the destiny of your children and your children's children. It's time to start circling."



LEARN MORE AT
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AC

WORSHIP

**SANDI PATTY*****Everlasting****(Lifescapes)*

FOR FANS OF: Kathy Troccoli, Twila Paris, Barbra Streisand

★★★★☆

After a limited release last year, Sandi Patty's *Everlasting* reaches the masses, and the veteran vocal treasure still sounds superb. She has no trouble tackling several modern worship regulars ("God & King," "Revelation Song") and comes across equally angelic on the occasional standard. Patty even reunites with Wayne Watson to recreate the ageless "Another Time, Another Place" backed by contemporary production.

—Andy Argyrakis

WE LIKE: "Another Time, Another Place"

**DANNY GOKEY*****Hope In Front Of Me****(Danny Gokey/BMG Rights Management)*

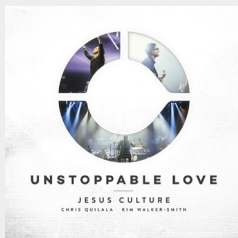
FOR FANS OF: Jonny Diaz, Kris Allen

★★★★☆

Former *American Idol* contestant Danny Gokey shines on his second full-length album, featuring a country-tinged pop sound that showcases his range and tone. "Better Than Gold" is creative and well-arranged; "Love Will Take You Places" is also exceptional. The odd addition of "Take It To The Limit" is the single fault on this record.

—Grace S. Aspinwall

WE LIKE: "Because of You"

**JESUS CULTURE*****Unstoppable Love****(Jesus Culture Music)*

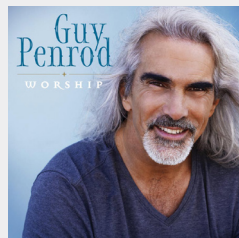
FOR FANS OF: Hillsong United, Vineyard Worship, All Sons and Daughters

★★★★☆

Unstoppable Love is filled with passionate, soaring vocals, especially on the female-led version of "10,000 Reasons" and "Surrender All (Give You Everything)," a fresh and re-imagined version of "I Surrender All." "Your Name Is Glorious" is the only misstep, with a choppy vocal and a chorus that lifts in all the wrong places. The rest of the album makes up for the brief departure and is worth a listen.

—Grace S. Aspinwall

WE LIKE: "Unstoppable Love"

**GUY PENROD*****Worship****(Gaither Music Group)*

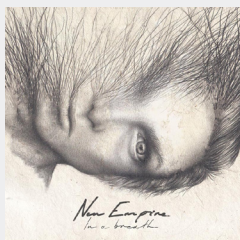
FOR FANS OF: Joey + Rory, Gaither Vocal Band, Michael English

★★★★☆

Replacing arena electrics with tender pedal steel bends, soft-rolling banjo and lilting acoustic shuffles, gospel music's favorite country vocalist lends his unmistakable chops to a library of church music favorites. Retrieving the bulk of the list from the last two decades ("10,000 Reasons," "Amazing Love"), plus a smattering of classics ("Through It All"), the veteran singer utilizes his warm vocal to make his own artistic stamp on modern worship.

—Andrew Greer

WE LIKE: "When Love Was Slain"

**NEW EMPIRE*****In a Breath****(Tooth & Nail)*

FOR FANS OF:

Neon Trees

★★★★☆

The synth-pop sound of Australia's New Empire has already garnered significant attention on YouTube with songs such as "Relight the Fire" eclipsing one million views. With a proper label debut, the sky is the limit for Tooth & Nail's latest addition. "Say It Like You Mean It" and "Relight the Fire" anchor an album that takes an artificial sound and gives it depth.

—Matt Conner

WE LIKE: "Say It Like You Mean It"

**ABOUT A MILE*****About a Mile* (Word)**

FOR FANS OF:

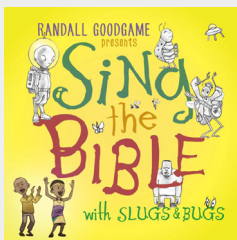
Josh Wilson

★★★★☆

About A Mile might be a band making their full-length debut, but their self-titled LP sounds as seasoned as any veteran release this year. Celebrated producers Howard Benson (Skillet) and Ian Eskelin (Sidewalk Prophets) help bring a radio readiness to the sibling trio's pop/AC hooks. A bit color-by-numbers, but it's a pretty picture nonetheless.

—Matt Conner

WE LIKE: "In With The Out Crowd"

**RANDALL GOODGAME****WITH SLUGS & BUGS*****Sing the Bible****(Independent)*

FOR FANS OF:

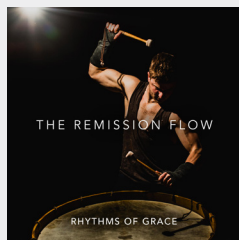
Paul Simon

★★★★☆

The global feel of the latest Slugs & Bugs release, *Sing the Bible*, brings a world music feel à la Paul Simon's *Graceland*. With some of Nashville's finest session players and the African Children's Choir joining Goodgame's signature silly-yet-earnest tunes, the result is another win for meaningful children's music.

—Matt Conner

WE LIKE: "Alien"

**THE REMISSION FLOW*****Rhythms of Grace****(7Core Music)*FOR FANS OF: *Gavin**DeGraw, Kings of Leon*

★★★★☆

The second release from Ireland's The Remission Flow is reminiscent of mainstream favorites Gavin DeGraw and Kings of Leon. *Rhythms of Grace*, the worship band's latest, brings a fresh flavor to familiar refrains of God's grace and biblical images, with the mid-tempo opener.

—Matt Conner

WE LIKE: "Grace and Truth"



TEDASHII
Below Paradise
 (Reach Records)

FOR FANS OF:

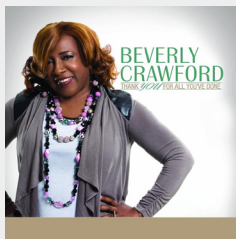
Sho Baraka

★★★★☆

The fourth album from Tedashii, *Below Paradise*, opens up both the hip-hop playbook and the artist's soul for a meaningful mix that's bound to find the rapper's biggest reach to date. The guests are many (including Lecrae and Britt Nicole), but it's Tedashii's vulnerable message and dynamic production that will hook the listener first.

—Matt Conner

WE LIKE: "Nothing I Can't Do"



BEVERLY CRAWFORD
Thank You For All You've Done
 (Echo Park/JDI Records)

FOR FANS OF: Tamela Mann, James Fortune, Vickie Winans

★★★★☆

From the presidential campaign trail and national TV to collaboration invites from R&B legend Natalie Cole, the Grammy-nominated pastor is known across the country for transmitting hope to the masses through her ministerial music. *Thank You* continues the trend, enlisting Crawford's impassioned vocalizations, inviting her loyal legions to praise despite the circumstances.

—Andrew Greer

WE LIKE: "Thank You For All You've Done"



DOLLY PARTON
Blue Smoke
 (Sony Masterworks)

FOR FANS OF: Loretta Lynn, Emmylou Harris, Linda Ronstadt

★★★★☆

One of the most famous faces in all of country music (and a lifelong believer) continues her popularity resurgence with another rootsy record consisting of many personally penned tunes. Parton's cheer, humor and candor continue on this stripped-down, catchy collection that also benefits from charming duets with Willie Nelson (the beautiful ballad "From Here to the Moon and Back") and Kenny Rogers (the fittingly-titled "You Can't Make Old Friends").

—Andy Argyrakis

WE LIKE: "Unlikely Angel"



THE FRAY
Helios (Epic)

FOR FANS OF:

OneRepublic, Imagine

Dragons, The Script

★★★★☆

Even with monstrous mainstream fame, The Fray never shies away from matters of faith ("How To Save A Life," "You Found Me"), and there's once again plenty of uplifting and contemplative lyrics throughout this fourth long-player. Though the group's signature piano pop surfaces on occasion, there seems to be a greater gravitation toward gang-styled choruses and massive electronic beats, which sometimes succeed but periodically appear too derivative of today's top 40.

—Andy Argyrakis

WE LIKE: "Love Don't Die"

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THE MARTINS TAKE IT ALL AWAY

BY CAROLINE LUSK

Eight-time Dove Award-winning siblings trio The Martins have enjoyed astonishing success and a dedicated fan-base around the world since the 1990s. In 2003, they decided to pursue solo projects but reunited in 2010 better than ever. Under the guidance of producer Jay DeMarcus (Rascal Flatts), their reunion record, *New Day*, reminded everyone just how special the harmony of a family can be. On their latest record, that harmony between Joyce, Jonathan and Judy takes center stage. *A Cappella*, the first such release from the trio since 1996, does what every record of this nature does—strips away all the supporting structure of orchestration and instrumentation, leaving nothing but the voices, in full display.

“This new music is something that has challenged us beyond our expectations,” says Joyce. “We had to work harder than ever and strive for the excellence that we believe God expects from us.”

“A cappella music is the purest form of vocal music,” adds Jonathan. “It keeps you on your toes and makes you sing better. To perform it live you have to be on your ‘A game.’ To attempt it is humbling; to accomplish it is exciting and rewarding.”

Below, the trio visits WKRN, Nashville’s ABC affiliate, to talk music, life and all things *A Cappella*. **CCM**



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- ABOUT A MILE

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