

CCM

SANCTUS REAL DREAM BIG



LACEY STURM
AN EXCERPT FROM HER MEMOIR,
THE REASON



DISCIPLE
FULL-SCALE ATTACK

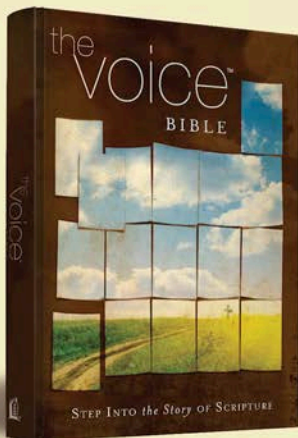
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Sanctus Real

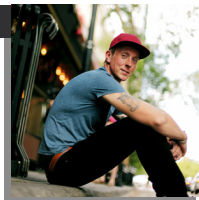
Dream Big

**Disciple**

Full-Scale Attack

**Bluetree**

Branching Out



DEPARTMENTS

FROM THE EDITOR

PHOTOS

TOUR SPOTLIGHT

Rend Collective



OUT AND ABOUT

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



DEVOTIONAL

EXCERPT FROM THE REASON
BY LACEY STURM

WHAT'S NEW

ALBUM RELEASES

MUSICIANS CORNER

IN THE STUDIO

Micah Peacock

GEAR GUIDE

With Jason Ahlbrandt

REVIEWS

ALBUMS, BOOKS AND FILMS

ONE LAST LOOK

FOR THE FATHERLESS

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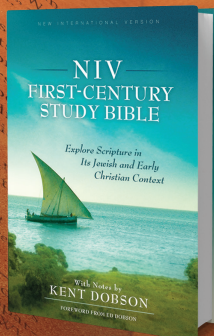


“Adam” named the first of his children.
“The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.”
“The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and live forever.”
“So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken.”
“After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.”
“Adam made love to his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain.”
“Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD.”
“The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.”
“Then the LORD said to Cain, ‘Why are you angry? If you do what is right, will not your face be lifted up?’”
“Cain said to the LORD, ‘My offering was not accepted from you, and I am a sinner.’”
“Then Cain and Abel both brought offerings to the LORD, and Cain brought the fruit of the soil as an offering, and Abel brought the firstborn of his flock and the fat portions. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.”

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At some point, nearly everyone questions their life. Have they done enough? Achieved enough? Are they living the dream?

Sanctus Real knows that place well. After years of making music, they were feeling lost, disconnected and unsure of whether they had achieved something significant. After lots of prayer and contemplation they realized that they had achieved something far more significant than any radio hit or chart record. They had God. He's already achieved it all. He is our dream.

What about you? Are you living your dream? Do you even know what it is? Take time to reevaluate your life and be honest with yourself. Whose dream are you chasing? In which direction are you running? And are you holding His outstretched hand along the way?

Don't be afraid to be real with yourself.

And then give a prayer of thanks, surrender your heart and let God's dream come alive within your heart like never before.

Sweet dreams!



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.



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REND COLLECTIVE

THE ART OF CELEBRATION TOUR

ST. JOAN OF ARC CHURCH/ LISLE, IL

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY ANDY ARGYRAKIS

Fresh on the heels of a major tour alongside Kari Jobe, Irish worship band Rend Collective is making the headlining rounds to showcase a much larger chunk of its new release, *The Art of Celebration* (Integrity), which once again smears the lines between folk, rock and general experimentation.

While the band definitely has its own artistic design, shades of Delirious' initial fervor are apparent, along with the call-and-response dynamism of Mumford & Sons. With possible appeal to those who wouldn't normally listen to Christian music, this male/female collective turned its attention exclusively toward the Lord.

New cuts such as "My Lighthouse," "Boldly I Approach (The Art of Celebration)" and "More Than Conquerors" built off the Celtic-tinged foundation of alluring older cuts like "Build Your Kingdom Here" and "Praise Like Fireworks," all of which exploded with a voracious passion for adoration.



Clearly Rend Collective could captivate on sheer musical aptitude alone; but when paired with its truly refreshing approach to leading concert congregations, the group is among today's most promising, Dove Award-deserving acts within the context of the modern church as a whole. **CCM**





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TOUR CONNECTION

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15

COMPILED BY ANDY
ARGYRAKIS

1 Andrew Peterson visited Parnassus Bookstore in Nashville for a performance and signing of his latest book, *The Warden and the Wolf King*, the fourth and final from *The Wingfeather Saga* series. Pictured from left to right: Bethany Bordeaux, Andrew Peterson and daughter Skye Peterson.

2 Jason Bare chatted backstage with Natalie Grant prior to playing songs from his latest CD, *Love Is Alive*, while opening for her Hurricane Tour in Elizabeth City, North Carolina.

3 Singer/songwriter and violinist Jean Watson called in guitar virtuoso Phil Keaggy to lend his signature sound to her new holiday CD, *Christmas...Not The Way It Seems*, and shoot the video for its debut single, "Do You Hear What I Hear?"

4 & **5** In support of her new album, *Reaching*, Kim Dexter appeared with gospel great Babbie Mason on the set of *Babbie's House!* The singer/songwriter also stopped by TBN's *Praise the Lord* for a duet of "Our Souls Cry Out" with Jason Dunn (formerly of Hawk Nelson).



9.30.2014

VARIOUS
WOW HITS 2015
WOW/CAPITOL

MICHAEL W. SMITH AND FRIENDS
THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS
SPARROW/CAPITOL

HILLSONG WORSHIP
NO OTHER NAME
(DELUXE EDITION/DVD)
HILLSONG/CAPITOL

DESPERATION BAND
BANNER
INTEGRITY MUSIC/PROVIDENT

GUY PENROD
GUY PENROD CHRISTMAS
GAITHER MUSIC GROUP/CAPTIVOL

ALL SOULS ORCHESTRA
SYMPHONY OF WORSHIP
INTEGRITY MUSIC/PROVIDENT

OBB
BRIGHT SIDE
CURB RECORDS/WORD

JUSTIN JARVIS
ATMOSPHERES LIVE
JESUS CULTURE/NEW DAY

PAT BOONE
LEGACY
LAMB & LION RECORDS/NEW DAY

10.7.2014

JE'KOB
THIS SIDE OF THE STORY
SAVE THE CITY RECORDS/PROVIDENT



PETER FURLER
PETER FURLER CHRISTMAS
FEATURING DAVID IAN
PF TOURING/NEW DAY

VARIOUS
BEFORE AMEN: A WORSHIP
COLLECTION
INTEGRITY MUSIC/PROVIDENT

1 GIRL NATION
A MERRY 1 GIRL NATION CHRISTMAS
REUNION RECORDS/PROVIDENT

CHUCK WAGON GANG
MEETING IN HEAVEN
NEW HAVEN RECORDS/PROVIDENT

THE COLLINGSWORTH FAMILY
WE WILL SERVE THE LORD
STOWTOWN RECORDS/PROVIDENT

JASON NELSON
JESUS REVEALED
RCA INSPIRATION/PROVIDENT

BRIGHTWORK
HOPE FOR LOVE
INDIE

DREAM BIG



SANCTUS REAL IS LIVIN' AND LOVIN' IT

BY CAROLINE LUSK

Living the dream...
Chasing the dream...
In America, perhaps more than anywhere in the world, we're very dream-oriented. We grow up hearing stories of people who defied every circumstance in the world and became rock stars, movie stars, cured diseases, walked on the moon...made their dreams come true.

Sanctus Real went from playing to twenty people, traveling in minivans and lugging their own gear, hoping for a break to No. 1 radio hits, sold-out shows and, occasionally, still lugging their own gear.

By all accounts, they achieved the dream. Yet just last year, they found themselves questioning how far they'd really come.

"Almost twenty years ago we were these punk-pop kids making music with no idea what the future looked like," says Matt Hammitt, lead vocalist. "Then we were getting married and having all these kids, and we're still making music but have started asking what it looks like for a band that's been doing this for so long. How do we remember why we started doing this? When we were kids, we saw big bands on huge stages and started molding our idea of 'the dream' around what we saw someone else do. If we don't do what they did, then we haven't achieved a dream."

Like many thirty-something's with young families in the throes of career, albeit a really cool career, this whole concept of, "Have we done enough?" plagued Matt and the rest of the band—not to a depressive state but to a disconnected one.

"I got to a place where I felt so disconnected from God," Matt says. "I was disconnected from the church because I was gone every weekend. I felt burned out. I was in my writing studio in the middle of the night one night and remember feeling nothing at all. I was thinking, *What is all this for?* It was one of those times you just want the whole world to stop around you so you

can get some rest. I remember praying, 'God, help me.'

"That night, what you always hope will happen happened," he continues. "The Holy Spirit flooded my whole heart and being and gave that fresh feeling about what it was like when I was first inspired, when I was first in love with Jesus. I stayed up all night and wrote the song 'On Fire' that's now the last song on the new album.

"I thought about my friends who got out of youth group, went off to college, went into the world and are disconnected or who aren't even walking their faith anymore. I hope this record speaks to those people and inspires them to pray that same prayer—'God, help me.'"

That night was a launching pad, of sorts, for all the guys. While none of them were complacent in their faith or their call, the need for a fresh fire was imminent; and when it came, it raged in all the right ways, clearing the forest, revealing the truth that had been there the whole time.

"The one simple, solid truth is this—the only thing truly worth pursuing is to make Him the ultimate dream. Everything else has a way of falling into place," Matt says confidently.

Case in point, the album. Once the theme was actualized and the passion reignited, it was blazing, full-speed ahead with a vigor and creative aggressiveness (in a good way) they hadn't experienced in years, complete with a new band lineup, new producer and new recording location.

Mark Graalman, the band's drummer from day one, shares a thoughtful word about how the band's past has uniquely prepared them for the present.

"I think the reality, sometimes, even when you're on record three or four, you have to think of how not to do the same thing over again," says Mark. "God did something special on this one. Everything became new all at the same time. We had a couple guys



leave the band, and a couple new guys with fresh musical perspectives and fresh talent who love the Lord came on board and really refreshed us all in a lot of ways.”

For the first time, all the band members, who are primarily based in Ohio, were in close enough geographical proximity that they could write together, play together, practice together whenever they wanted. When it came time to record, that cohesion already in development extended to the recording and production phase with the partnership with producer Pete Kipley, with whom the band hasn’t previously recorded.

“Pete is so full of energy and was amped to get into the studio with us,” Mark shares. “It was his idea not to record the album in Nashville.”

Instead, the guys convened with their gear in Matt’s backyard.

Conveniently, his backyard contained a

garage in the process of being finished with a studio. Happy to have a roof over their heads that required no rental fee or time frame whatsoever, the recording became fun.

“The process of making this record felt as exciting as making our first record over ten years ago,” adds guitarist, Chris Rohman. “We spent the first day pulling gear together and screwing it all in place in the studio. It was a complete group effort. There was no stiff studio time to conform to, and I think you can really hear that in the tracks.”

The freedom was ubiquitous and the joy unanimous among the band members.

“For the first time ever, there were no restraints, we weren’t on the clock,” Mark echoes. “We were free to have the whole place to ourselves, to work all night some nights and then go home and sleep in our own beds. Everything about the experience was new and fresh again.



“THE ONE SIMPLE,
SOLID TRUTH IS
THIS—THE ONLY
THING TRULY
WORTH PURSUING
IS TO MAKE HIM THE
ULTIMATE DREAM.”

—MATT HAMMITT

journey has been exhausting. But at the end of the day, it's a righteous fatigue. And one that God has been relieving one day at a time, one faithful step at a time, one new song at a time. Today, Matt, Mark, Chris, Jake Rye (bass) and Seth Huff (keys/guitar) are tested, tried and the wiser and more grateful for it.

“That’s been the most exciting thing in the last two to three years—to see real growth in the fruit of the band as a ministry,” he continues. “There are so many examples of songs that legitimately are effecting people. ‘Lead Me’ blew the roof off of everything. Then we had ‘Pray’ and ‘Forgiven.’ All these songs came at a point in our career when we were more weary and tired than ever. It’s a pretty great demonstration of how God makes His strength perfect in our weakness. Knowing the ammunition of this record makes us so excited to think about hearing the same kinds of stories from people whose lives are being changed.”

As a band who has acknowledged, wrestled with and confronted the challenges of staying relevant—a killer live show, a relentless tour schedule, a fresh sound—Sanctus Real has sacrificed. Time away from family has been lonely; the hours have been grueling; the

“Things are so good right now,” Matt affirms. “God has used so many things to put the winds back into our sails. This is the first season in a while when I felt really rested, ready, excited and confident. We’re going to take a big step forward with this record. If it gets big sales, great! If it does well at radio, great! But that’s not the most exciting stuff. We are trying every day to be the men who we say we are onstage. At the end of the day, I feel like God put this truth inside of me—I was born to write songs. We were born to make music that can touch deep inside someone’s heart and start a change to bring him closer to Him. That’s the most important thing. God and family. It’s all about making Him the desire of your heart. That’s living the dream.” [CCM](#)



FOR MORE, VISIT SANCTUSREAL.COM.

DISCIPLE LAUNCHES FULL-SCALE ATTACK

FORWARD MARCH

BY ANDY ARGYRAKIS



To

know the story of Disciple, you have to place yourself in Kevin Young's shoes. Like Kevin, Disciple's singer and bandleader, let's say you've recorded ten albums, played thousands of shows worldwide, headlined tours since the late '90s, and opened multiple times for the biggest artists in Christian music. You've sold hundreds of thousands of records and you've got fourteen No. 1 singles. Add to that the fact that you are done with your most recent recording contract and your band needs a lineup change. You've been on the road for twenty years, and you've seen more hotel rooms than a Gideon Bible. Most people would probably say, "Hey, I've done a lot and maybe it's time to walk away." Most people are not Kevin Young.

"Disciple started when I was 16," says Young, "so I'm somewhere between old and young. I know Disciple's been around for a long time; and sometimes when I wake up, I can feel every mile, but I can't wait to see what's ahead. It honestly doesn't FEEL like it's been as long as it has, and in a lot of ways I feel like we're just getting started. The process, where I've been and the new stuff we're doing right now as a band is a gift. We chose to be who we are AND embrace the new."

In a six-month period around the end of 2013 and the beginning of 2014, Kevin rebuilt Disciple, as well as his own approach to the band's future. "We added Josiah Prince from Philmont and Andrew Stanton from I Am Empire on guitars, Jason Wilkes from High Flight Society on bass and vocals (since the guy was an amazing lead vocalist for his band), and Joey West from After Edmund on drums. It's Disciple's best lineup ever. They have the perfect combination of being great players and performers and are ridiculously talented songwriters," says Young. "One of my favorite things about these guys is that they have embraced where Disciple has been and love to play the classic songs for our fans, as well as have put every ounce of their souls into trying to take Disciple higher than we've ever been. I think our fans have embraced them for that in return.

"We decided that we would really give ourselves to our fans. It's one thing to have a record deal, make a

record, and see if folks will buy it. It's a whole different level to engage your fans—really talk to them, tell them what you want to do and why, embrace them and then hope that they will embrace you back. We created a bunch of really cool packages that the fans could buy and put them all up on Kickstarter, hoping that our fans would buy things ahead of time to help us make a record. We were scared to death. But then our fans met our goal in seven days, and it just kept going up until the forty-day funding process finished. We were stunned and just so thankful.

Nobody has fans like we do," says Young.

"So with the lineup solidified and plans for a new record in place, all we had to do was write the album. No big deal right? I was a little nervous—excited but nervous. I had more freedom than I've ever had to make the music and say the things that I really wanted to say. We had the support of our fans. But what really energized me was the music that was being written by the band members. It somehow felt very Disciple-esque and was somehow new at the same time. I think we all were really inspired by it."

The first order of business was to bring back Travis Wyrick to produce. Young states, "I hadn't worked with Travis in six years, but we knew this was going to be a hard, aggressive record. Travis recorded all of our hardest albums, and working with him was like going home." The finished album is called *Attack*, and it is the band's most ambitious project to date. It's bold, it's hard, it's experimental, and it's sweepingly atmospheric. *Attack* gives a nod to long-time Disciple fans with "Radical" and "The Name"; and the album will intrigue new listeners with offerings such as "Dead Militia," "Lion," and "Angels And Demons."

"We wrote this record as a new band. *Attack* is the right album title because that's what we did with every song. Every band member contributed in a huge way to this album. Everybody brought songs to the



table that we all worked on and made each other's songs better. It was definitely a well-coordinated attack on all sides," says Young.

"You know, rock music isn't the most popular music genre right now, but it's also the music genre that will never die. Rock music always comes back around. And with that, I know what we've been called to do, and that's to do our best to show Christ to people with our music and with how we interact with them, both on and off the stage. I thought about this new album for a year before we started in the studio, and I knew that the lyrics would be the boldest Disciple has ever put on a record. I wanted to talk about Jesus loudly and without shame. That's why 'Radical' is the first track and our first single. It sets the tone for what we want people to hear. We talk about Jesus openly at every show. We do an altar call. That is who we are, and that is what Disciple is called to do; and we hope that people hear the new music and say, 'Yeah, now THAT'S Disciple!'" CCM



FOR MORE, VISIT DISCIPLEROCKS.COM



A LITTLE MORE

Q & A WITH KEVIN YOUNG

BY ANDY ARGYRAKIS

CCM: What's the story behind the new album?

Kevin Young: *Attack* is the first album created by Disciple's new band members, so the album definitely has a "new feel" to it since all of the writers are new to Disciple. But what is interesting is that the most common comment we get from people who hear the new album is that it sounds like we returned to our roots both musically and spiritually. We are lyrically very bold about our faith on this album, not shying away from the name of "Jesus" at all. I think one of the greatest challenges that most of us have in the Christian music community is that if we are too blatant about our faith or if we say the name of "Jesus" too much, it may come off as cheesy and not acceptable to the mainstream. But we just went in with an "I don't care about that anymore" attitude. We just tried to stay true to who we are and not try to "mold" our songs into what we think other people would want. But instead, we made an album that we really like. It is the first time in the history of the band that every member likes every song on the album. That is extremely difficult to do, but I'm so thankful we pulled it off.

CCM: How has Disciple managed to maintain continuity in spite of line-up changes?

Young: Honestly it's a miracle. God has blessed us with amazing musicians from the beginning up to now. It amazes me to think about how every time there was a space to fill, God brought along the right person for the job at the right time. And of course every album has my vocals on it, so that helps. I can't really change up the way my voice sounds, so I'm sure that provided some continuity as well.

CCM: Why has evangelism remained so important in the band's equation?

Young: Well, that's what God has called all of us as Christians to do. We all do it in very different ways. The gospel comes in many different packages; but the gospel is the gospel and it never changes. The message that we can be reconciled to God because of what Jesus Christ did on the cross for all of us is still relevant today. And we are still seeing it change people's lives firsthand. That's why we do what we do. The other stuff is nice; but we understand album sales, awards, and big concerts are only temporary things. Someone becoming a child of God is forever.

THE REASON

AN EXCERPT

BY LACEY STURM



Lacey Sturm is widely known from her days as the voice behind the rock band Flyleaf. Her rise within the music industry was a testament to her powerhouse vocal cords. Her rise to life is a testament to the God who saved her from a world of abuse, depression and suicidal inclinations. A long-time speaker with the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, she has shared her powerful story and offered hope to people around the world. Recently, she released a book chronicling her journey. *The Reason: How I Discovered a Life Worth Living* is penetrating, unapologetic and mesmerizing. Below, enjoy an excerpt, provided exclusively to CCM from publishing house Baker Books.

Be inspired. Accept hope and **click here** to read the rest of this inspiring tale.

THE REASON I STEPPED DOWN FROM FLYLEAF

CHAPTER 17

“Ohmygodohmygodohmygodohmygod!” I yelled as I ran from the bathroom, across our bed and stopped just before the hallway where Josh was looking at me with big eyes.

“What?!” He demanded.

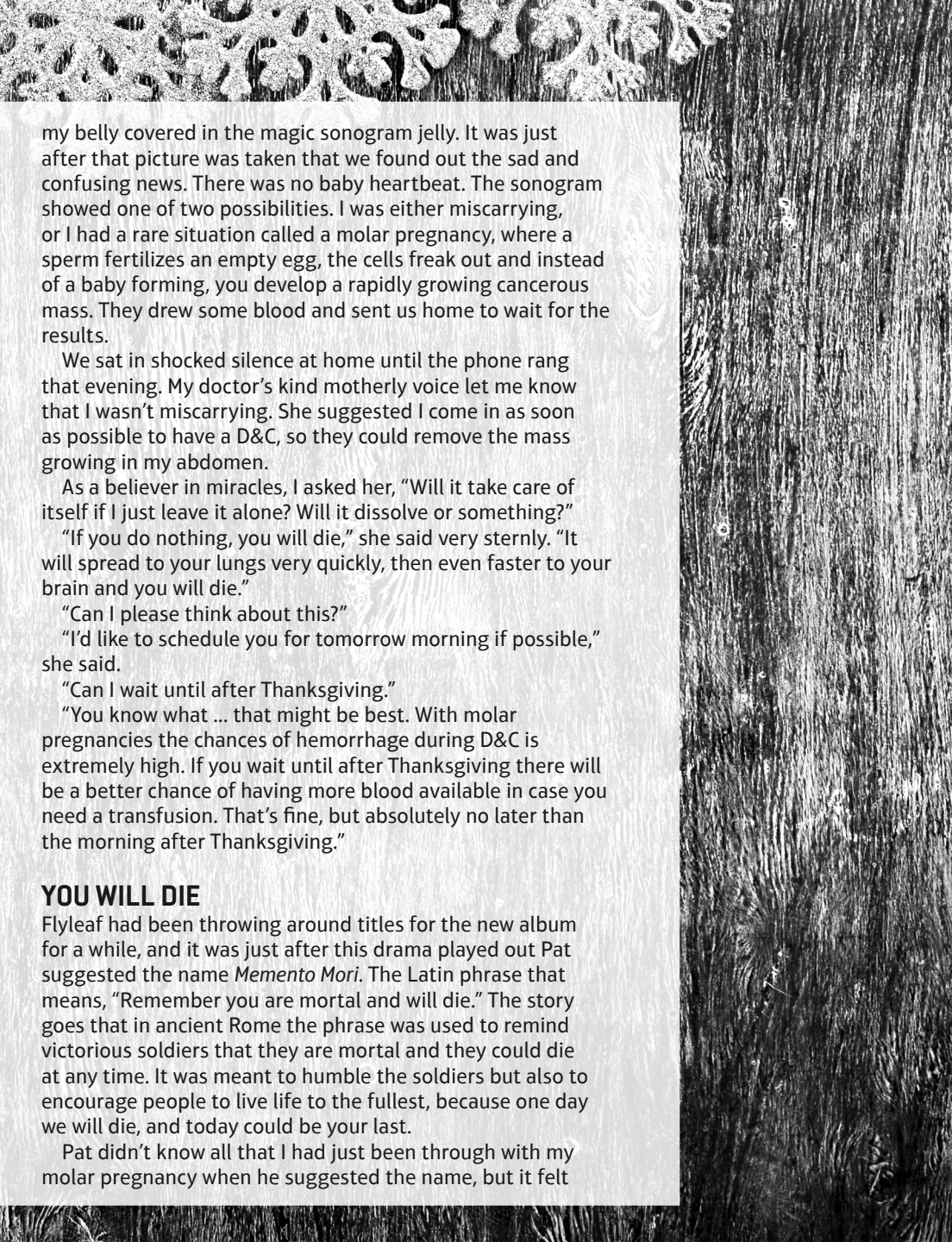
“Ohmygodohmygodohmygodohmygod!” I answered pointing to the bathroom. He ran to the bathroom and picked up the pregnancy test to find a very dark plus sign on its screen.

“What does it mean?” He asked still not sure.

“I’m pregnant!”

It was Halloween 2008. We went to the hospital that night to confirm the news. A handsome black doctor dressed as a cowboy shook our hands to congratulate us. He told us to come back in a month. Then we would be 10 weeks along and they could make sure everything was normal.

It was the Tuesday before Thanksgiving. Josh had just snapped a picture of my joyful face looking up at him with



my belly covered in the magic sonogram jelly. It was just after that picture was taken that we found out the sad and confusing news. There was no baby heartbeat. The sonogram showed one of two possibilities. I was either miscarrying, or I had a rare situation called a molar pregnancy, where a sperm fertilizes an empty egg, the cells freak out and instead of a baby forming, you develop a rapidly growing cancerous mass. They drew some blood and sent us home to wait for the results.

We sat in shocked silence at home until the phone rang that evening. My doctor's kind motherly voice let me know that I wasn't miscarrying. She suggested I come in as soon as possible to have a D&C, so they could remove the mass growing in my abdomen.

As a believer in miracles, I asked her, "Will it take care of itself if I just leave it alone? Will it dissolve or something?"

"If you do nothing, you will die," she said very sternly. "It will spread to your lungs very quickly, then even faster to your brain and you will die."

"Can I please think about this?"

"I'd like to schedule you for tomorrow morning if possible," she said.


"Can I wait until after Thanksgiving?"

"You know what ... that might be best. With molar pregnancies the chances of hemorrhage during D&C is extremely high. If you wait until after Thanksgiving there will be a better chance of having more blood available in case you need a transfusion. That's fine, but absolutely no later than the morning after Thanksgiving."

YOU WILL DIE

Flyleaf had been throwing around titles for the new album for a while, and it was just after this drama played out Pat suggested the name *Memento Mori*. The Latin phrase that means, "Remember you are mortal and will die." The story goes that in ancient Rome the phrase was used to remind victorious soldiers that they are mortal and they could die at any time. It was meant to humble the soldiers but also to encourage people to live life to the fullest, because one day we will die, and today could be your last.

Pat didn't know all that I had just been through with my molar pregnancy when he suggested the name, but it felt



prophetic to me after my experience. We all loved it for our own reasons and settled on the name *Memento Mori* for what we didn't know would be the last album that we would play live together.

It took a full year of monitoring and tests before the doctors could be sure the cancerous mass remnants were not still growing somewhere in my body. We were scheduled to go to Los Angeles and record during the year while I was recovering, so my doctor suggested I visit the cancer ward of a Los Angeles hospital for my weekly blood tests. If you want to know the depth of the meaning of *Memento Mori*, I suggest visiting this cancer ward in Los Angeles. It changed my life forever.

LIFE, OUR SPECIAL GIFT

I didn't know at the time that I would survive that process and move on. I didn't know that I would become pregnant with my first child around the same time that next year. I didn't know that I would go to a very painful, unexpected funeral the year after that. I didn't know that *Memento Mori* would mean so much more to me than I could ever read about or philosophize about.

Memento Mori came to life in tragic ways, with my molar pregnancy and the death of my friend Rich Caldwell, and it came to life in beautiful miraculous ways, with the birth of my two sons.

To remember we are mortal means to live one day at a time.

It means we must do the most we can with every day. It means we must learn to truly be alive right now. We must love people while we can. To love others doesn't mean we should try to be God for people. If we try to be God for others, we will always let them down, and we will always be crushed under the weight of trying to be more than is possible for us to be. It means to point to the God who is our only Savior. It means to look to God to find out where He wants us to go and how He wants us to live and to love. It means we must make the most of every opportunity—that might look like standing on stage in front of thousands and singing your heart out, or it could be bringing some fresh-baked cookies to a cancer ward waiting room. Both are equally important. It's just a matter of what your highest purpose is for each day.

We don't know if we will have tomorrow. Sometimes it takes the scary prospect of cancer for that to really sink in.

Sometimes it takes a healthy loved one dying in a car crash. Sometimes it takes going through a complicated pregnancy and giving birth to a healthy baby anyway. But it doesn't have to take the experience of trauma for us to wake up, listen, believe and truly live like our lives are precious, fragile gifts. The lives of the people around us are precious fragile gifts.

All life is a gift from God.

So if you know you should leave home and tell the world about hope by being a musician, lawyer, doctor, missionary, businessman, educator or whatever; or if you are supposed to go home and be a mom, a daughter a friend, or a plumber at your dad's plumbing business, then don't neglect what you know you should do with the short time you have here on earth.

For me, the season for being in Flyleaf was coming to a close, and I could feel it. When my son Jack was born, I wasn't certain how having a baby would affect me being a full-time musician, but I knew my priorities were already changing.

I remember lying beside my baby boy, looking at his innocent face and wishing that my only job was to be his Momma. But I wasn't sure this was what I was meant to do or not. I remember crying and praying and telling the Lord, "I'm willing to trust You, if You want me to hire help and keep touring. But if You honor me by calling me to go home, then I will be so happy."

It took a full year of praying and watching for the answer before Joshua and I would make one of the hardest decisions we've ever had to make. But finally, the answer was very clear. This new season for us was best served at home, learning what it meant to be parents.

It was hard for a lot of people to understand (especially if they didn't have children), how changing diapers was more important than trying to spread hope into the hearts of suicidal teens through Flyleaf music. The truth is, it isn't more important. It is just as important. What matters is knowing what season it is for you and knowing what you are meant to be doing today. That is where you will be the most fulfilled and where you will be the most effective at changing the world. **CCM**



READ THE REST OF THE STORY HERE.



BRANCHING
OUT

BLUETREE TAKES WORSHIP AND JUSTICE AROUND THE WORLD

BY MELISSA RIDDLE CHALOS

When a band of church musicians finds itself lying flat in the back of a fish truck, smuggled across a dry river bed and into Burma—one of the most dangerous places in the world for Christians these days—you know it's not about playing another gig.

A few days after that adventure, having been protected by an unlikely militant ally, Bluetree played for four hours straight, live in front of 15,000 refugees in Mae La, a refugee camp on the border of Burma and Thailand—the only band to ever play there.

Clearly, for the band best known for its song “God Of This City,” written spontaneously while ministering in Thailand's red-light district, it's never been a “music for music's sake” proposition.

Leading worship around the world since 2005, the trajectory of Bluetree's ministry made a dramatic shift in 2008 after their experience in Thailand.

They went back home to Belfast, Northern Ireland, cleared their touring schedule, plugged back into their local church, and began to reconnect to the big-picture meaning of *avodah* (Hebrew for “worship and work”). They began to reconsider the boundaries of what is and can be worship.

Bluetree's founder and primary songwriter Aaron Boyd explains: “We went back home asking, ‘How does this all work? Whose responsibility is it to see these girls released from prostitution and transformed... because if I just pray over the city and nothing happens, then it's God's fault, right?’ It's very easy to push that over on God, but Scripture tells us to go into the world and love people.”

Released in August, *Worship & Justice* fleshes out in music the *avodah* (worship and work) perspective Bluetree has gained from leaning in to hear the heart of God.

“Worship is justice. The two are inextricable, really,” Aaron says. “We can't do it all—end world hunger, end poverty, stop human trafficking—but what's the bigger plan? What can we do?”

As revolutionary as it sounds, Aaron says it really isn't. “I think the church finally understands that our entire lives are an act of worship in the Kingdom of God. When we sing on Sunday mornings, that's an expression; but when we go to work, when we go to school, when we are smuggled into a country to go and encourage the underground church, or minister to prostitutes—that is all an act of worship. We carry it everywhere we go. When we love God and we love our neighbor, we understand that worship is justice.”

Toward that end, Bluetree—who through partnership with Integrity Music—continues to focus on corporate worship songs that awaken the spirit of worship in action, songs that speak of new life in Christ and the impact that should have on those yet to find it.

Songs like “My Redeemer Lives,” “New Creation,” and “It Is Finished” are passionate



**“WORSHIP
IS JUSTICE.
THE TWO ARE
INEXTRICABLE,
REALLY.”**

—AARON BOYD, BLUETREE



reminders of the permanence and power of God's grace in our lives.

Aaron takes issue with the oft-used Christian adage, “I’m just a sinner saved by grace.”

“No. We are the righteousness of Christ,” he says. In the middle of your deepest darkest moments, you are still righteous. When God looks at us, He sees Jesus... As sons and daughters in the kingdom of God, we fall into grace not out of grace.”

From the album openers “Each Day” and “God Is Good” to “Jesus Healer,” *Worship & Justice* is personally and spiritually significant to the band, especially to Aaron, whose young daughter has cystic fibrosis.

“That first moment when you hear the words cystic fibrosis, when you find out about the CF world, I felt completely numb,” Aaron says. “I didn’t understand anything. And that was the thing that made me think, ‘Our relationship with Christ has to be based on something so much deeper than what we feel because we can feel emotionally bipolar at times...’ ‘Each Day’ declares that even in the middle of chaos, we can still hold on to the

promises and God will never leave us alone.”

In these and all the tracks on *Worship & Justice*, Bluetree is committed to pouring everything—their lives, their travels, their music—into building up the church for the glory of God. “Coming from Belfast and playing in the local church, having the ability to travel, my eyes have been opened to how transient and fluid worship is,” Aaron says. “There are massive sacrifices and massive rewards when we all buy in, and it genuinely never stops.”

As God continues to open desperate doors, as with those in Cambodia’s child brothels recently shown in the band’s “Shine” video, this band is determined to walk through. “You can be among the most hideous pedophiles, in the middle of an active crime scene, but when you help people lift up truth over their lives, it is a complete joy and honor,” Aaron says. “It has little to do with us, and that’s the beauty of it.” **CCM**

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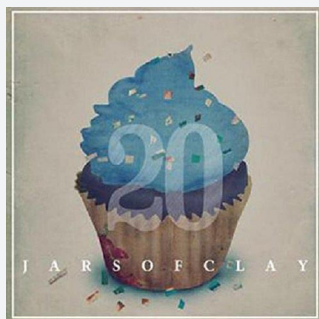
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JARS OF CLAY

20 (Gray Matters)

FOR FANS OF: *Sixpence None The Richer*, *PFR*, *Toad The Wet Sprocket*

★★★★☆

Twenty years into a career as one of Christian music's most thought-provoking bands, Jars of Clay called upon its most loyal fans to curate a double-disc retrospective featuring two tracks from each of its studio albums. Rather than simply slapping the original versions together, the envelope-pushing act completely re-recorded a combination of classics, rarities and a pair of new tunes, each cut entirely live with intimate string ensembles that are nothing short of spine-chilling.

—Andy Argyrakis

WE LIKE: "Worlds Apart"



VARIOUS ARTISTS

Ragamuffin: Music Inspired By The Motion Picture

(Capitol Christian Music Group)

FOR FANS OF: *Jars of Clay*, *Caedmon's Call*, *Andrew Peterson*

★★★★☆

On the heels of the intensely emotional film chronicling the life of extraordinary singer/songwriter Rich Mullins comes a collection of beloved remakes by both established and burgeoning Christian artists. Jars of Clay, Sidewalk Prophets, Andrew Peterson and Leigh Nash (among others) pay reverential tribute; plus there are two never-released demos dating back to the early '70s by Mullins himself, both of which foreshadow the greatness that was to come.

—Andy Argyrakis

WE LIKE: "Peace" by Andy Gullahorn



AARON SHUST

Unto Us (Centricity Music)

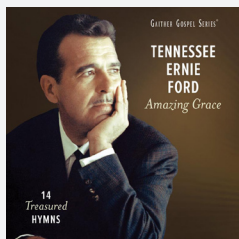
FOR FANS OF: *Michael W. Smith*, *Todd Agnew*

★★★★☆

Although this is a Christmas album, the signature sound of worship leader Aaron Shust peeks through the cinematic feel and beautiful tapestry of the record. The opening overture immediately brings Michael W. Smith's holiday albums to mind, with its sweeping musicality. Shust provides the perfect soundtrack for Christmas festivities with songs such as "Keep Silent" and "Sanctuary." The intricate strings and lovely movement of the record will secure it as a favorite for years to come.

—Grace S. Aspinwall

WE LIKE: "God Has Come to Earth"

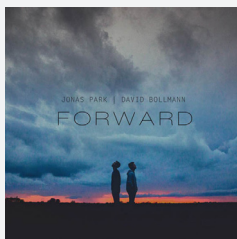


TENNESSEE ERNIE FORD
Amazing Grace, 14 Treasured Hymns
 (Gaither Music Group)
 FOR FANS OF: George Beverly Shea, Roger Miller, Oak Ridge Boys
 ★★★★★

As an artist, radio personality, actor and TV host, Tennessee Ernie Ford was an all-around American institution, whose legacy garners additional prestige with every posthumous project released. The 90 million album-seller scores a concise re-issue of his most-beloved hymn interpretations, all of which find the gospel great delivering glorious vocals over traditional arrangements that still stand up in today's worship world.

—Andy Argyrakis

WE LIKE:
 "Peace In The Valley"



JONAS PARK & DAVID BOLLMAN
Forward
 (Forerunner Music)
 FOR FANS OF: Cory Asbury
 ★★★★★
 Jonas Park and his songwriting collaborator David Bollman are leaders in the worship ministry at The International House of Prayer in Kansas City. For those unfamiliar with Forerunner Music releases, *Forward* is a great six-song introduction. "Needless" is a tender, acoustic song that longs for Eden; but the opener, "I Remember," is the inventive cornerstone, with a moody melody that's immediately striking.

—Matt Conner

WE LIKE: "I Remember"



FOR KING & COUNTRY
Run Wild. Live Free. Love Strong. (Word)
 FOR FANS OF: Chris August, Mikeschir
 ★★★★★
 for King & Country burst on the scene in 2012 with *Crave*, an album celebrated by critics and fans alike. A Dove Award for New Artist followed, along with a *Tonight Show* appearance and Winter Jam run. Capitalizing on that momentum, *Run Wild. Live Free. Love Strong.* doesn't disappoint. Life experiences like marriage, fatherhood and a life-threatening illness have seeped into each cut, taking these world-class musicians to another level, particularly on ingenious, inspired tracks like opener "Run Wild," featuring Andy Mineo, and "To The Dreamers."

—Matt Conner

WE LIKE: "Run Wild"



DISCIPLE
Attack (The Fuel Music)
 FOR FANS OF: Pillar, Decyfer Down
 ★★☆☆☆
 Disciple is a veteran band; but the band's tenth album, *Attack*, features a completely revamped line-up behind founding front man Kevin Young. Former members of After Edmund, Philmont, I Am Empire and High Flight Society comprise the reworked band; but unfortunately the new chemistry is a bit lacking. *Attack* is a straightforward rock release with hands-up anthems ("Radical") and heartfelt anthems ("Unbroken"). Sound familiar? It should.

—Matt Conner

WE LIKE: "Dead Militia"



THE LIKES OF US

Time Traveler

(Independent)

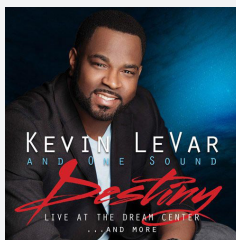
FOR FANS OF: *The Civil Wars*, *The Secret Sisters*, *The Lone Bellow*

★★★★☆

Benj Heard and Katrina Stone were already successful musicians on their own; but together as The Likes of Us, they are one of the most versatile and impressive duos to come along in some time. “We are explosive,” they sing on the wonderful ballad “Fallout,” and that’s a true statement. From the red-hot stomp of “Train’s Comin’” to the emotion of “Fallout,” *Time Traveler* spans decades and genres in a more-than-satisfying musical package.

—Matt Conner

WE LIKE: “Fallout”



KEVIN LEVAR AND ONE SOUND

Destiny – Live at The Dream Center

(One Sound Ent)

FOR FANS OF: Marvin Sapp, Earnest Pugh, Duawne Starling

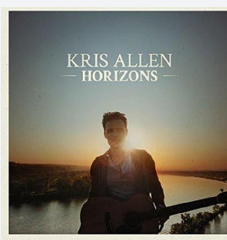
★★★★☆

This mostly live performance shows LeVar to be a strong communicator well able to deliver a diverse cross-section of styles. With tracks touching contemporary gospel and praise & worship, with a bit of rap, blues and rock, they cover a lot of ground. Honest, sometimes confessional, often inspirational, LeVar might spread himself a little thin stylistically; but, for the most part, it’s all good.

—Bert Saraco

WE LIKE:

“I Wanna Be Close”



KRIS ALLEN

Horizons

(DogBear Records)

FOR FANS OF: Jason Mraz, Ed Sheeran, Colton Dixon

★★★★☆

On his third full-length record, former *American Idol* winner Kris Allen leaves major label life behind for a more experimental artistic approach and a highly relatable songwriting style. With his smooth voice in top form, the former worship leader puts a little extra soul into his melodic pop/rock/folk footsteps, enhanced all the more by production from Charlie Peacock (The Civil Wars, Switchfoot).

—Andy Argyrakis

WE LIKE: “In Time”



RAY STEVENS

Gospel Collection, Volume One

(Gaither Music Group)

FOR FANS OF: Tom T. Hall, Roger Miller, Jerry Reed

★★★★☆

Two-time Grammy winner Ray Stevens may be one of country music’s most colorful and comedic personalities (“Mississippi Squirrel Revival”), but he’s always kept his faith in focus, even recording periodic gospel releases throughout a discography that dates back to the late 1950s. Fans from his mainstream and Christian careers are sure to find common ground on this uplifting batch of hymns and inspirational songs that retain his energetic delivery around sublime southern styling.

—Andy Argyrakis

WE LIKE: “The Preacher And The Bear”

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MICAH PEACOCK + MICHAEL OMARTIAN

BY ANDREW GREER

Album Title: *Shadow to Sunlight*

Label: Independent

Release Date: September 2, 2014

Recording Studio: SoundHouse, Franklin, TN

Producer: Michael Omartian

Number of Songs: 12

WAKING UP: I have been thinking about the phenomenon of sleepwalking. On the outside, everything looks normal—the body functions as it normally would—going through motions that are natural and expected. But in reality there's a complete lack of real *presence*.

So many of us live life, or parts of life, as if we are sleepwalking. On *From Shadow to Sunlight*, I used imagery and phrasing that communicates coming into a true awareness of the depth and beauty we often miss. If we put on a new lens and start to be awakened to the reality that the eternal is breaking into the temporary, a natural outcome would be the “abundant life” Jesus came to give us. The potential of finding, encountering, and engaging God in the midst of our everyday lives is limitless. – *Micah Peacock*

STRAIGHT TO TAPE: This record is characterized by the fluidity of tracking live. You can almost visualize the band playing it together at a venue. There's a strong piano presence, the vocals are clear but not overpowering, and, being a guitarist, there is plenty of electric presence. Michael Omartian's producing handiwork is all over the record – from the piano styling, the orchestral arrangements, the more uncommon contributions like accordion and different percussion instruments, to subtle hints at



eras past like the Beatles and Rod Stewart. I'm really pleased with the overall tonal quality and the balance between multi-layered sections and more spacious ones. —M.P.

VERSE VALUE: When I first met Micah, what struck me most was his incredible guitar chops. He eventually made a trip to Nashville and played me a bunch of his songs. I learned he was not only a great musician, the man could sing! I loved the quality of his voice and his songwriting. Micah's lyrics seem steeped in prose and poetry and at times takes on an almost "high church" attitude. I found it completely refreshing. —Michael Omartian

PRODUCTION NOTES: A friend once said to me, "Don't fall in love with your own ideas." This simple advice has been very important to the way I interface with an artist. It creates an environment of openness and creativity. As a producer it is important to me that the artist is feeling satisfied with what is happening to his or her music. I have watched many producer/artist relationships strained because a producer viewed himself to be more important than the artist. —M.O.

MUTUAL ADMIRATION STUDIO: I have such a profound respect for Omartian and the amazingly tasteful ways he puts all the sonic ingredients together. There's such a fluidity and efficiency in the way he and his team work. I would be hard-pressed to find such chemistry between coworkers and friends in any profession. Yet his humility and down-to-earth nature is so apparent in his "Love you, bro" and old-Chicago-man smirks. His faith, his family, his friends, his calling—without a doubt, that's what he's all about. —M.P.



FOR MORE INFORMATION,
VISIT MICAHEPEACOCK.COM.

HOTONE OCTA

OCTAVE PEDAL

BY JASON AHLBRANDT

I've been intrigued by the "mini" effects pedals coming out lately. There are quite a few companies popping up making these space-saving effects. Lately my pedal board has been a bit crowded, since I like having a lot of different effects at my disposal at all times. You just never know when you're going to need them. I've had my eye on a couple companies that make these mini versions, and Hotone Audio stood out to me. They have everything from a tuner to fuzz, overdrive and delay. They even have a looper pedal. It's so tiny!

I've been playing with Hotone's Octa pedal lately. Finally, an octave pedal on my board that tracks well! I've been having a hard time finding something at a decent price and size that doesn't get garbled when I'm playing. What makes the Octa work so well is its ability to do polyphonic processing. You can play chords, and it's as clear as it should be. Of course, if you want the classic, single-note processed sound, one push of the "dirty" button sends this pedal into a classic analog mode. The two front knobs control the low and high octave blends. The top knob (which also lights up when the pedal is engaged) is a dry-mix blender. I like having my dry signal almost all the way up. I also noticed that bar jutting out just above the switch keeps your foot from hitting the knobs when engaging the pedal. Great idea! To me, this octave pedal stands up to the most-touted, commonly used octave pedals out there. The only difference is, it takes up a fraction of the space. You'll be seeing a lot more from Hotone on my pedal board for sure. Big sound, less pedal board real estate... I'm in! **CCM**



PROS

- Fast tracking
- Can switch to classic analog single-processing mode
- Polyphonic processing
- Small
- True bypass

CONS

- You may want to fill your pedal board up with all of Hotone's pedals. That may not be a bad thing.

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE \$79.99

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 his wife, Martina, and daughter, Alianna.

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FOR THE FATHERLESS *OFFERING HOPE TO ALL OF US*

BY CAROLINE LUSK

"Every day we have a choice to remain in the shadows and let our pasts define us, or we can trust God to raise us to life," Brian Yak says, his words grounded in the weight of personal reality. But living in the shadows simply isn't an option for Brian and his wife, Christa—singer/songwriters together known as For The Fatherless. Though heartache has profoundly touched each of their lives, listening to the joyful harmonies and strong, memorable pop hooks of their self-titled debut, it's obvious grace and hope have triumphed in a new season.

"We both know the feeling of growing up fatherless," Christa says. "It's something that needs to be addressed in the Church. We all share the same Father who loves us more than we can understand, regardless of our experiences with our earthly fathers."

See more of their story in the video below. **CCM**



VISIT FORTHEFATHERLESSMUSIC.COM FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE DUO.



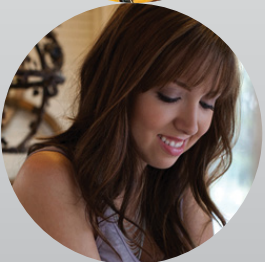
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