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LAUREN DAIGLE
OUR NEW 'IT' GIRL



AMY GRANT
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FEATURES

Hawk Nelson

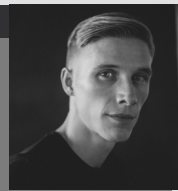
The boys from Canada express how they're able to shine brighter than ever before with the release of their new album *Diamonds*

**Lauren Daigle**

She's got IT. Talent, youth, the looks—but this newcomer shows that she's got faith & humility well beyond her years

**Derek Johnson**

A must-read for all creatives—Derek talks about his approach in creating art for the glory of God and His church

**OrphanSong Music Project**

With the STORYSONG label, Mark Wagner explains his unique approach in marrying music with helping the least of these

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DEPTS

FROM THE EDITOR**PHOTOS****OUT AND ABOUT**

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

REVIEWS

**AMY GRANT, LAUREN
DAIGLE, DAVID PHELPS
+ MORE!**



Just the other day I made a comment to a friend that as of late, I have noticed the lyric “dry bones” being used in several songs. Here are a few examples:

“These bones cry out / These **dry bones** cry out for you / To live and move / Only You can raise the dead...” – Gungor, “Dry Bones”

“I wanna be near, near to your heart / Loving the world hating the dark / I want to see **dry bones** living again / Singing as one...”
– New Life Worship, “Great I Am”

“You can take my **dry bones** / Breathe life into this skin / You called me by name / Raised me to life again...” – Hillsong United, “Bones”

There are several others out there—maybe you’re familiar with them? Although imitation can be the sincerest form of flattery, I’d like to think that we’re all really trying to *say something* here.

As the world transitions out of the Easter season and into spring and summer, themes such as “living again” and being “raised to life” are ones that I don’t want to see fading until next year comes around. In this edition of *CCM Magazine*, our cover artists **Hawk Nelson** and featured artist **Lauren Daigle** continue these notions.

Daigle cites **Ezekiel 37:1-14** (Valley of Dry Bones) in her feature story *So Be It*, as it inspired her song “Come Alive” as she prayed for physical healing of a friend that suffered from a bone disease. **Daniel Biro** of Hawk Nelson was touched by **Psalm 34:20** (“For the Lord protects the bones of the righteous...”) as he dealt with a tumor in his knee.

God’s not dead, He’s surely alive—and in either a big or small way, I hope the stories in the pages to follow can provide encouragement in kicking off our post-Easter seasons to live like we’re *alive!*

Blessings,



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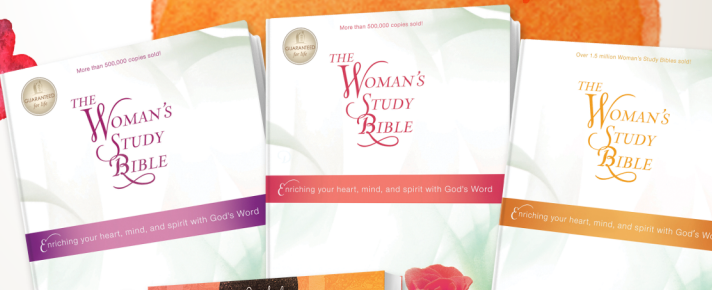


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1



Photo: Andy Argyrakis

COMPILED BY ANDY ARGYRAKIS

1 Country chart-topper **Wynonna Judd** and her husband/multi-instrumentalist/ Highway 101 member **Cactus Moser** shared the harrowing story of his near fatal motorcycle crash and how the massive amount of prayers from family, friends and fans helped carry them through the horrific loss of his leg.

2 **Wynonna** let her remarkable musical diversity and unshakeable faith shine during the Indiana stop on her "Stories & Song" tour, where she tackled everything from The Judds' "Grandpa (Tell Me 'Bout The Good Old Days)" to Eric Clapton's "Change The World" and Avalon's "Testify To Love."

2



Photo: Andy Argyrakis

3



4

3 & **4** Singer/songwriter **Ginny Owens** visited several of Israel's most historic sights, including the Garden Tomb (where Jesus is believed to have been buried) and the Mount of Olives with friends (from left to right) **Andrew Greer**, **Kyle Buchanan** and **Andrew W. Lyon**.



5



Photo: Stuart Dill

5 After previewing *Directions Home (Songs We Love, Songs You Know)* at the Grand Ole Opry, **Point of Grace** posed with concert/album collaborator and all-around bluegrass legend **Ricky Skaggs**.

6 Pictured in Nashville while putting the finishing touches on the May 5 release of *Outback Worship Sessions* are **BJ Pridham** from Australia's **Planetshakers Band** (left) and four-time Gospel Music Association "Producer of the Year" **Ed Cash**.

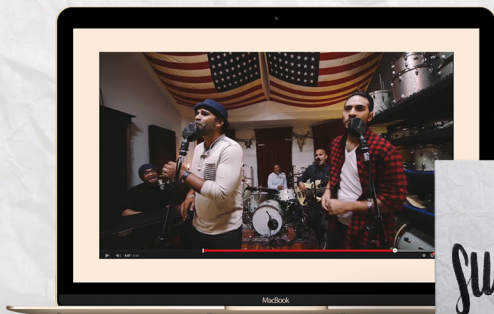
6





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- The Katinas



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Artist: The Katinas
Album: Sunday Set
Radio Single: 10,000 Reasons

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ROCK SOLID





HAWK NELSON TACKLES TRIALS, THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD, AND WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE WHEN A 'BOY BAND' GROWS UP.

BY GRACE CARTWRIGHT ASPINWALL

The shimmering facets of a diamond do not appear without a fight—the making of these precious gems takes excruciating time through heat, pressure, and stress. When **Hawk Nelson** dubbed their latest project ***Diamonds***, they already knew about all of that. After all, it was from the heat and pressure of devastation where *Diamonds* began to take shape, and then ultimately bloom. We catch a glimpse into the lives of Hawk Nelson members **Jonathan Steingard** and **Daniel Biro** and hear how they've taken the last few years to fight for the joys they're able to experience today.

The two band mates had just arrived to Nashville, TN on the morning we were able to chat, and would leave again the following day. Jonathan and Daniel were both eager to share some of the stories that inspired these new songs in addition to reflecting on how far they have come as a band, in now their eleventh full year since their debut release.

FORMATIONS IN THE ROUGH

“When the record was finished and we sat back and listened to the entirety of it for the first time, I was once again struck at how every song dealt with a different aspect of our relationship with God,” explained Steingard. “When you leave the walls of the church and go beyond theological conversations, you know, in the day-to-day—

how do we relate with God on a daily basis? How does that relationship impact our lives in a tangible way?"

Their hope in *Diamonds'* impact on others both comes from their own personal struggles individually and collectively, as well as the ability of its contents to pierce the heart of someone affected by a difficult situation.

Steingard's questions above came from a place of sincerity, born after a season in which he calls "the most difficult in my life." A few years ago, during the making of Hawk Nelson's previous record *Made*, Steingard's youngest sister was diagnosed with Hodgkin's Lymphoma. "My sister was in the middle of her second trimester, but the pregnancy made everything more complicated. She went through radiation and chemo, and ended up successfully giving birth to her child. The baby was completely healthy, and she's even had a second infant since then.

"Thankfully, she's completely healthy now, but that season of trial drew our family closer together," continued Steingard. "We have always been pretty close, but she is the 'baby'—the youngest—it was a reminder that we don't have forever and that we shouldn't take one another for granted. For me, experiencing that event encompasses the themes throughout *Diamonds*.

"When we talk about diamonds, it's a metaphor for how God uses the struggles and pressures of life to refine us and make us stronger. That's what happened with my family—we are now closer than ever before. I don't wish for things like that to happen, none of us do, but it is comforting to know that God will do His work through all things."

PRAYING PAST A BREAKING POINT

Since the release of the previous album, Biro also faced some significant health issues. "A while back when we were on the road with **Building 429** and **The Afters**, I had to take some time off to go home and deal with a tumor that had been discovered on my knee," he explained. "I had an initial operation, waited three months for it to heal, and then rejoined the band. Almost as soon as I got back into rhythm with everything, the tumor came back and I had to leave again." During both absences, **Finding Favour** member **Dustin Daniels** subbed on bass, which naturally worked as his band was opening for Hawk Nelson at the time of Biro's relapse.

"From a practical standpoint I was very gracious with all of the support and how everything fell into place for Hawk Nelson. On a spiritual level I knew that I needed to be closer to God," admitted Biro. "All of us in the band have generally been healthy, but sometimes things come up in life and it catches us off guard. When you're young you expect these things to happen much later on, so discovering and then rediscovering my tumor was just as scary as it was all so unexpected."

When asked about reactions from Hawk's friends and fans, Biro stated "I remember thinking that a lot of people didn't really know what to say. I could see [the concern] on their faces and could hear it when they spoke, I got it and that was enough for me." He paused and thoughtfully added "I had a friend at home who was suddenly confined to a wheelchair— you don't ever have the perfect words, but I don't think its really about that.

"The scripture passage that my wife and I clung to





was **Psalm 34:15-20**, as it talks about the Lord coming to our rescue and that we as followers should expect His good promises. In verse 20 it states that ‘the Lord protects the bones of the righteous,’ and we took the literal interpretation of that and prayed that my leg wouldn’t break. To this day we still pray for this!”

FINDING PURPOSE THROUGH PRESSURE

“My wife and I talk about that all the time,” added Steingard. “Take any relationship or marriage for example, they all go through the good times and the bad. For us, it sometimes seems that God does so much more work through the harder times. Maybe it’s because

we end up learning so much from them? Looking back, I wouldn’t trade for, or ever wish that those trials never happened.

“Think about all of the things that God did in those hard times, and how we’ve been made stronger and better through those high-pressure situations. I choose to remember that they happen for a reason—for *something*. God is always at work, seemingly behind the scenes to us, but I can take rest in knowing He’s still working.”

Biro continued “It’s often a reality that we get closer to God in times of struggle. I try not to say the ‘right thing’—but letting people know you’re praying helps them to know that you’re seeking out Christ for



answers and strength. Those notions helped me through my situation. I also want to point people to God's promises that are in His Word, and as mentioned, I take those quite literally.

"I have no real answer to the age-old question 'Why do bad things happen to good people?' I honestly can't answer that."

Psalm 34:15) The eyes of the lord watch over those who do right;

his ears are open to their cries for help.

16) But the lord turns his face against those who do evil;

he will erase their memory from the earth.

17) The lord hears his people when they call to him for help.

He rescues them from all their troubles.

18) The lord is close to the brokenhearted; he rescues those whose spirits are crushed.

19) The righteous person faces many troubles, but the lord comes to the rescue each time.

20) For the lord protects the bones of the righteous; not one of them is broken! (NLT)

REAL-THING OVER RHINESTONES

As individual members of Hawk Nelson may have seamlessly matured through trial, the band's collective growth has not been as harmonious. "The shifting point happened when I became the lead singer three years ago," said Steingard. "We attempted to redefine Hawk Nelson. I think there were some things that worked right away, and of course some that didn't. In a lot of ways we were a brand new band and we were just finding our way.

Around the ten-year mark in Hawk Nelson's timeline, both Steingard and Biro looked in the mirror and posed the important questions:

What are we doing here?

We love what we do—but is all of it worth the wear and tear?

Steingard recalled "We arrived at a place where had found total enjoyment in what we were doing, but wondered if that alone was enough. We asked ourselves 'If it's just about a good time, is this truly fulfilling?' We came to the conclusion that even if what we were doing became successful, every success



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WOULD EVENTUALLY
BECOME HOLLOW IF THERE
WASN'T SOMETHING
BIGGER BEHIND IT.”**

—JONATHAN STEINGARD

would eventually become hollow if there wasn't something bigger behind it."

Perhaps the title *Diamonds* is a foreshadowing as Hawk Nelson moves forward—being the real thing—an embodiment of true worthiness to their pursuits versus the unfortunate possibility of shining like an empty rhinestone.

Biro admitted, "Sometimes the progression of that development is clumsy—at times on previous albums it's us just trying to 'figure it out'" when asked about the message behind their music. "As time has gone on that has become the most important thing—the thing that really gives us our purpose and drive. On every succeeding record you can hear it become more and more intentional, more message-driven."

This depth is ever more evident on *Diamonds*. Despite the increased radio-friendly appeal, songs like "Thank God For Something" and the lead single "Drops In The Ocean" showcase Hawk Nelson's growth and wisdom through the fire. "Thank God' [For Something]' is a simple prayer of gratitude," stated Steingard. "'Drops' [In The Ocean] focuses on the vast expanse of God's grace, mercy, and forgiveness—He is for us, not against us."

REFINED THROUGH TIME

So, have the boys left their core fan base? Steingard responded, "As we get older the teen-band increasingly becomes less genuine. It made sense at the beginning when we were in our twenties. We're in our thirties now and we aren't interested in the 'teeny-bopper' thing. That's no longer us.

"Our main goal now is to just create songs that will resonate with people at a moment in time when they need to hear it the most. That is what really matters to us." Biro added, "Hearing stories from people who have been

impacted by our songs is what is lasting, and to be able to do that—like other artist's music has done for me—that's substantial and that's what really matters."

Steingard then reflected and questioned, "You know, there has been an interesting question hanging around in my mind for the last ten years-or-so: 'How does it look for a band like us to grow?'" We think he, and the three other men that comprise Hawk Nelson, have answered that question with *Diamonds*—and can't wait to see them shining brightly into the future. [CCM](#)

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AN INTRODUCTION TO
CHRISTIAN MUSIC'S NEW
'IT GIRL' PROVES SHE'S
GOT TALENT, DEPTH, AND
HUMILITY WELL BEYOND
HER YEARS

BY MATT CONNER

SO F



BEIT



LAUREN DAIGLE grew up imitating some of the greatest voices the music industry has ever heard. With her new album, she's making her case to be included among them.

Lauren Daigle makes her full-length debut this month with the inspirational **How Can It Be** after releasing an EP that showed hints of her tremendous vocal power, a talent that's earned numerous comparisons to **Adele**. If that sounds like a stretch, take one listen to songs like "I Am Yours" or the title track to hear the similarity between the two performers.

Daigle grew up in Lafayette, Louisiana, singing along to the memorable choruses and unrivaled voices of **Whitney Houston** and **Celine Dion**. Her mom called her house "The Music Box" because Lauren was always singing.

"I would walk around at 5 years old singing Whitney and Celine," says Daigle. "[My parents] would always know I was awake—not from seeing me but hearing me in the mornings."

Daigle credits her parents for two particular facets of her musical make-up that made a strong impression at an early age. One being a game her father developed

simply by guessing songs and artists that would play on the radio, resulting in a strong musical vocabulary for young Daigle.

"My dad used to play this game with us called 'The Dollar Game,'" she says. "When we were in the car, he'd turn the dial to a classic rock station—he loved **Led Zeppelin**—and would say things like, 'If you can guess who sings this song, I'll give you a dollar. If it's really hard, I'll give you five dollars.' It taught us as at a very young age to listen for different sounds, tones and styles of music, which proved valuable in a lot of ways."

When it comes to her earliest musical memories, Daigle remembers another particular moment where her mother helped instill in her the value of documenting a particular moment and metaphor.

"This story involves a planter, one that we used for a tree, that was placed at the front of our house. One particular day when it rained, it filled up with mud and looked just like chocolate milk," she recalls. "After telling my mom about it, she suggested that we make a book about 'my day with the chocolate-milk-rain.'"

"[MY] HEALING WAS ROOTED IN BELIEVING THAT GOD IS THE SAME GOD TODAY AS HE HAS ALWAYS BEEN. IF GOD HAD [HEALING] POWER THEN, HE CERTAINLY HAS IT TODAY. SO WE WERE INSPIRED TO WRITE A SONG TO SAY THAT THE LORD IS OUR REVIVAL—HE RESTORES THE DEPTHS OF OUR SOULS, AS WELL AS OUR PHYSICAL SITUATIONS."

—LAUREN DAIGLE (ON THE WRITING OF "MY REVIVAL")



“So I remember putting together this book complete with pictures I painted. My mom stapled it all together, which then gave me a tangible memory of my day. I think that creativity eventually trickled into my songwriting. It was taking a moment to look at a story or a picture that God had shown me and then incorporating that into a song.”

With such a strong musical background, Daigle eventually developed hopes for a professional career, which resulted in auditioning for *American Idol* three times. She experienced relative success, making it all the way to the cut line below the twenty-four finalists. After she recorded vocals for a worship demo track back at home, **Centricity Records** invited Daigle on an artists’ retreat; and the rest is history.

Centricity has slowly nurtured the rising star, allowing her the chance to cut her teeth with label mate **Jason Gray** the last two Christmas tours before releasing a simple, four-song EP in 2014. She also provided vocals for Gray’s own hit “Nothing Is Wasted,” so it’s likely you’ve heard Daigle’s talents before, even if you couldn’t recognize the source.

Now the stage is completely hers, and she’s already making a strong impact. Currently she’s on the Beautiful Offerings Tour with Gray, **Big Daddy Weave**, and **Citizen Way**, a perfect slate that allows her music to shine while surrounded by seasoned performers continually showing her the ropes.

“The tour has been incredible,” she says. “The Big Daddy Weave gang is just unprecedented. First of all, they have a team that constantly shepherds and guides us. Every night we spend time in the Word in

addition to praying for each other and the preparation of each event, which is really unique. It’s a really special time. It’s not often that a team can come out to specifically minister with you—pretty crazy. It’s just a very kingdom-focused and driven outfit, so it’s an honor to be a part.

“Jason [Gray] and I have been good friends for a while now,” she continues. “He was the first artist I ever toured with. I call him my father-brother; and then somebody will say, ‘Hey, that’s more like an uncle!’ [Laughs] So I guess that’s correct, but father-brother is more fun to say! He is a riot and has become a dear family friend. It’s also been great to meet Citizen Way.


“Everything has been really wonderful. We go out and pray with people in the audience, almost like an altar call. Those are very worshipful moments. [This tour is] focused on leading people into the presence of God, so it’s super-sweet to be in the lineup.”

Even though she’s new, Daigle says she’s learning important lessons from the veterans around her who are quick to help or provide insight.

“Some of my favorite conversations have been the ones that have intended to shepherd me with the business side of things,” she admits. “Jason has stepped in to that role for my family and me, for sure. Our personalities are very similar, so he has felt comfortable being a sounding board for those topics and has helped to answer ongoing questions.”

Some of that shepherding also took place in the studio, where the young artist worked with experienced songwriters to help shape





“[SHE] HEARD THE SONG ‘HOW CAN IT BE’ [ON THE RADIO] AT JUST THE RIGHT TIME, AND GOD USED IT TO SHOW HER HIS LOVE AND CONCERN FOR HER LIFE. THAT BLEW ME AWAY—HOW GOD USED A SONG TO SAVE A LIFE AND THAT HE ALLOWED ME TO BE A PART OF THAT. I WAS PERSONALLY BLESSED BY THE BLESSING SHE RECEIVED.”

—**LAUREN DAIGLE**

the songs featured on *How Can It Be*. She says her favorite tracks from the album can change depending on the day; but the new single “My Revival” is definitely a stand out, which was heavily influenced by co-writers and producers **Jason Ingram** and **Paul Mabury** (Brooke Fraser).

“The song comes from when I was diagnosed with lupus and Lyme disease this past December,” she continues. “Jason [Ingram], Paul, and I were still in the writing process at that time; and through those struggles a song came directly out of Scripture that says, ‘I will run and not grow weary. I will walk and not faint. I will soar on the wings like eagles.’

“Not long after I was being prayed over I was completely healed. It was quite a moment, but the healing was rooted in believing that God is the same God today as He has always been. When the little girl was sick with a fever in the Scriptures, Jesus didn’t even lay a hand on her and the fever left immediately.

“If God had the power to do that then, He certainly has the same power today,” she states. “So we were inspired to write a song to say that the Lord is our revival—He comes and restores the depths of our souls, as well as our physical situations.”

With such an incredible testimony set to moving refrains, it’s no surprise that Daigle’s tremendous talents and message are finding a meaningful home in the lives of her listeners.

At the time this article shipped to print, the title track to both Daigle’s EP and forthcoming full-length album (available April 14, 2015) spent eight-weeks at the No. 1 slot on Nielson SoundScan (January 21 through March 25, 2015) as well as top-fifteen placements on the vaulted *Billboard* Christian charts for several weeks.

“My favorite part is watching God work in the lives of people through the music,” she

says. “What’s great [about that] is it’s nothing I can ever do. I can’t reach through the airwaves and convict someone’s heart and soul, but God can.”

The most common response is a simple hug and nothing more—what Daigle calls the “silent story”—but two audible stories resonate when asked about her favorite responses to her music.

“A radio station once read a letter on air from a girl who was thinking about committing suicide,” says Daigle. “As it stated, the girl heard the song ‘How Can It Be’ at just the right time, and God used that song to show her His love and concern for her life. The song inspired her to have a purpose to live as never before. That blew me away—how God used a song to save a life and that He allowed me to be a part of that. I was personally blessed by the blessing she received.

“Another favorite response is from the song ‘Come Alive,’ which is based on the passage in **Ezekiel 37** where Ezekiel speaks to the dry bones and an army is raised because God breathed on them. I was recently made aware that song was being used as an anthem for a daughter who suffers from a bone disease. The song was actually written from a completely different perspective, but I was blessed to hear that it has helped give life to another’s deteriorating physical bones.”

As in many of life’s trials, God is using Daigle’s own story of hope and healing to inspire and provide the same in others. All things are certainly working together for the good of both this burgeoning artist and her ministry. CCM



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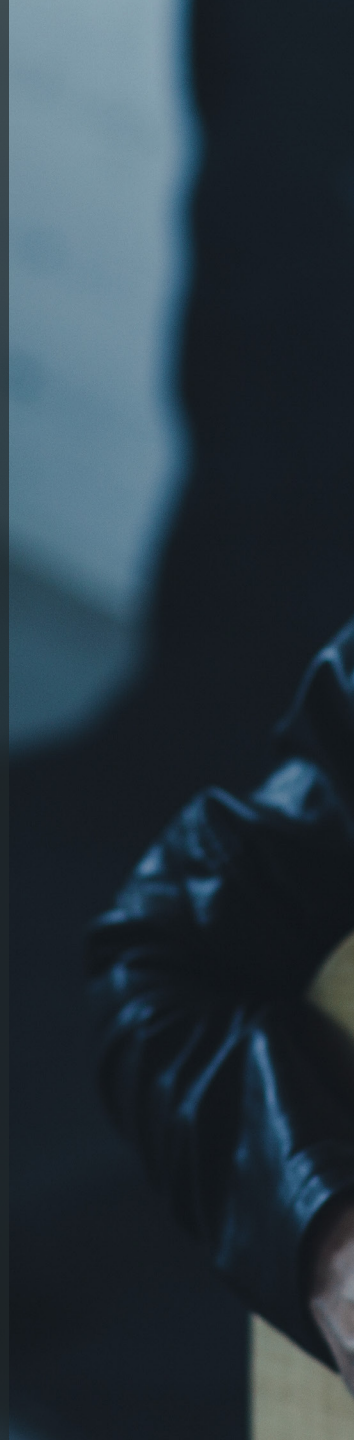
A man with short, light-colored hair is shown from the chest up, playing an acoustic guitar. He is wearing a dark leather jacket over a black t-shirt with a floral pattern. The background is dark, and the lighting is focused on the man and his guitar. The text "BY DEREK JOHNSON OF JESUS CULTURE" is overlaid in the center of the image.

BY DEREK JOHNSON OF JESUS CULTURE



It feels as though there is a cloud of hesitation that hangs over the issue of creativity in church culture. We fear that if we fail to clearly define our meaning and our intentions, our work and art could be misunderstood. Within my own heart to create, there is also a desire to communicate. So protecting the message makes perfect sense and there must be safeguards. It provokes me to ask a few questions, "Are we sometimes losing part of the real grit within our creativity by compartmentalizing it before it's completed?" for example, and "Can we invite our fellow believers to bring their own perspectives and interpretations to our creations, instead of fearing that others will misunderstand the work?"

For me, it can be hard to shut off my own critical thought process when I'm



writing songs. I often try to imagine every angle from which they could be perceived. Even after I've combed over the lyrics, I find myself convinced that some people are going to get thrown off or confused by the words or phrases I've decided to use. It is exciting to think of a new analogy or phrase that helps express my love for Jesus. Part of my passion in songwriting is to experience that moment when the light bulb goes on and I feel the excitement of a fresh idea. So when I find myself trying to shave back those moments to make a song go down easier for the listener, I feel as though I've taken away or watered down some of the best parts.

I could say to my wife, "I love you," and that does express some of how I feel about her. I could also say to my wife, "I love you because..." and begin to explore, through language, the different ways I feel about her. Sometimes the simple, "I love you," says it all. Other times I actually need to further explore the reasons why I feel those things and in doing so, I find there was more to say and express. In the same way, I think I want to continually challenge myself to keep exploring new depths of creativity. In expanding the words and phrases we use to express love to Jesus, I think we open ourselves up to experience more of God. We find ourselves going deeper in our own love and devotion to Jesus. It may not mean that every phrase has never been written or said before, that's an unlikely goal to attain, but it could be new to you or new to your congregation? What if, through your desire to expand and grow creatively, you open the door to an even deeper relationship with Jesus for yourself and those around you?

I reference songwriting when I talk about creativity because it's the expression I am most familiar with. The concept of feeling freedom creatively applies to any area of our lives. We each have a role in this family of believers. We need to feel that freedom to create and inspire because in that, we are being who we are created to be, as well as serving the body of Christ.

Keeping all that in mind, I still have a personal hierarchy of my priorities on matters like this. My need to serve those that the Lord has entrusted me trumps my need to feel creative. If a song I write doesn't feel like the most groundbreaking anthem I've ever written, I am still okay in knowing that the simplicity of its message could serve the church well. I personally would never want my desire to feel more creative overshadow the core value of servanthood. I believe with those two ideas working in tandem, we can find a way to meet people where they are and take them



**“I NEVER WANT MY
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OF SERVANTHOOD.**

- D E R E K J O H N S O N



somewhere they have never been in new and creative ways.

I worked to marry this concept of creativity and servanthood in my album, **Real Love**. I wanted to express myself in a creative way and write songs that I'd actually want to sing and want to listen to. Still, the vision was bigger than just my own personal needs as an artist. I also wanted to write songs that others would want to sing and listen to, as well as songs that would serve the church. For me that has been one of the most rewarding aspects of the creative process for this album. I wrote from my own experiences and passion for Jesus, while maintaining the awareness that these songs could bring someone into a moment with Jesus that marks their lives forever.

I believe that if we anchor our hearts to servanthood as creatives, we will create with greater compassion and authenticity. I want what I create to feel honest, heartfelt, and authentic. That is the journey I'm on, and that's the journey I'd want to invite for others. Take your talents and gifts and use them to serve the Lord while impacting people with fresh ideas and creations. I think this is how creatives in the church can love and serve others well. I believe that as we anchor our hearts in the concept of servanthood, there is a greater level of freedom in our creativity with endless possibilities. CCM



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TELLER'S
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BY MARK WAGNER

After years of traveling and meeting new people, I've learned that everyone has an interesting and unique story to tell. We may not think our stories are special because we've been living them every day since we can remember, but we all have a story, and every story needs to be heard. We all fit into God's tapestry, weaving our lives together like a quilt. We are the Body.

Music is a powerful way to tell a story. Emanuel Katongole, a pastor from Uganda who now teaches at the University of Notre Dame, has written about the impact of telling stories. He believes the job of artists and storytellers is "to offer people better stories than the ones they live by." He believes a new future for Africa, and for the world, rests on the shoulders of the storytellers.

Our world is broken, and as a follower of Christ, I have a responsibility to "...loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke" (Isaiah 58:6 NIV). God's *command* to care for the orphans, the widows, the poor and the hungry is not a suggestion. We are all called to love God and love others. The hard part is to understand how. How can I make a difference?

My friend Larry says it doesn't do much good to share the Gospel message in a poor community and then ignore the physical needs of the people who live there. Jesus loves you, and He doesn't want you to go hungry. He has a plan for your life, a hope and a future for you.



I was playing music for young children at a preschool in a Township in Cape Town, South Africa. We had just finished handing out a pair of new shoes to each child and I was sharing songs and a short message with the help of their teacher.



WHY MUSIC MATTERS

BY ANDREW GREER

If you were to ask any creative—a musician, a painter, a graphic designer, an architect—what compels them to exercise creativity as their profession, most of their replies would probably center around one word, “people.”

The heart of art has always been relational. Yes, it is aesthetic. Art is beautiful to behold. But it is not just a trophy on a shelf designed to elicit reaction from distant observers. Art has hands and feet. It moves in close to provide people a mutual ground; to inspire communities to connect and to ignite redemptive conversations among people of faith across the world as we, together, seek God amid the many mysteries of life.

Quite simply, art changes lives.

Mark Wagner, a respected singer/songwriter, seminarian and creator of **STORYSONG**, a movement connecting people to Jesus through the art of storytelling, is one such artist who understands the power of artistic mediums in creating physical, emotional and spiritual change in the lives of communities across the globe.

On the **OrphanSong** (Lucid Artist) project, the movement’s latest artistic endeavor available exclusively at Family Christian and benefitting the poignant work of **STORYSONG**, some of Christian music’s most known mission-minded musicians—TobyMac, Newsboys, Jamie Grace, Jars of Clay, Nicole C. Mullen and Mark Schultz—join Wagner in his melodic plight.

As you read his first-person feature on these pages of *CCM Magazine*, the socially and spiritually sensitive entrepreneur explains the potency of marrying story and song. Here, Mullen and Schultz join me in this conscious conversation:

MOTIVATED BY MUSIC:

Q&A WITH NICOLE C. MULLEN

CCM: You contributed the song “My Shepherd” to the OrphanSong project. Give me a little background on the song, how it is lyrically important to you and how you hope it influences others?



Nicole: I wrote “My Shepherd” based on the favorite Psalm 23. In it, King David, who was once a shepherd and a giant killer, reminds

us of a great promise. David knew first-hand what it meant to protect and care for sheep. When the lion and the bear came to destroy what was entrusted into his care, he risked his own life, went after them, and conquered them both. In the same manner, it is written, “The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want,” or “lack.” This is what He does for me. He is my protector and provider. He keeps my heart safe from enemies seen and unseen and takes care of and tends to my needs.

I have been able to sing this song with believers all over the world. My heart has been overjoyed as we have worshiped together while declaring in our circumstances, to our foes and in our own hearts, that God is who He says He is—our Great Shepherd!

CCM: How can music motivate us to love God and others better?

NCM: Music has the ability to sway hearts and opinions. We have all experienced this in life. It was even true back in biblical times. Music should be used as a tool to encourage people to act and live in a loving way. Ways that incite behaviors of loving the Lord and loving your neighbor as yourself. This is what I have endeavored to live by.

CCM: How has music motivated you?

NCM: Music affects us spiritually, emotionally and physically because its origins are Heavenly—even though some forms and uses of it



We were spending an afternoon with the students we sponsor, and our National Director, in Nairobi, Kenya.



We had just finished recording a new song from a young hip hop group at a school we sponsor in Nairobi Kenya. These students are from the Huruma slum, and they had written a new song they wanted to share with us.

Orphans in Africa are among the most vulnerable people groups in the world. They have nothing. They have no access to education, public resources like foster care or public school, and they have little hope for a bright future. We wanted to start a movement. We wanted to call artists to action, to share Jesus through music and share our lives with others.

STORYSONG is an answer to the prayers my wife Kalle and I prayed asking how we could channel these desires to help people in real ways. We didn't want to just talk about Jesus anymore; we wanted to be Jesus. STORYSONG is about sharing God's story: a story of redemption and reconciliation where every person matters. It's about using music to share the Gospel and to create a channel of blessing to help vulnerable children around the world.

Three years ago we also started praying about a project that would help us launch STORYSONG as a music company that's about more than making records and turning a profit. Selfishly, creating a non-profit music label has always been a dream of mine. Years ago I believe God planted a seed in my heart and He has been secretly watering the soil ever since.

We wanted to make music with a purpose, and we wanted to partner with lots of different artists to do that. The problem was, neither Kalle nor I were famous. So we knew we needed some other folks on board, but what kind of artist would volunteer to give away their music for a compilation CD released by a brand new label? We thought it was impossible. God knew better.

I met with my friend **David Mullen** who has been producing records in Nashville for years. We began to dream about a project like this. After two cups of coffee and a couple of hours at Starbucks, we decided to contact some artist friends to gauge their interest. As it turns out, everybody was pretty excited about this idea. Buddy Greene was the first to volunteer. He said, "I'm sure we can get more musician friends on board for this." And **OrphanSong** was born.

Proceeds from *OrphanSong* support the work of STORYSONG, blessing children around the world, including paying the school fees of hundreds of children in Zimbabwe and Kenya. We believe education is empowerment because when kids are educated they are employable and they are equipped to make better choices throughout life.

have been twisted. This is all the more reason that we who are blessed enough to be sacred carriers should shine the light brightly and let it not be dimmed by compromise. The world needs to see and understand the God that we have met and know through Jesus is a God who loves. And love does! But without the light, people will stumble in darkness.

For the past two decades, when I am not on a stage or doing artist-related activities, a lot of my time and resources have been poured into youth mentor and discipleship. We have small discipleship clubs ("Babygirls" and "Champions") here in Tennessee, in Belmopan, Belize, and a model in the country of Zambia. I have seen music and its influence may earn us the right to speak into the lives of others, but the real work and heroes are in the trenches living it out day by day.

CCM: Music has this unique ability to bring together people from all walks of life. How have you experienced the unifying power of music in your own life and career?

NCM: I have been blessed to travel to many countries and worship with different cultures. Every time I sing before a non-English speaking audience and I begin to sing songs like "My Shepherd," "Call on Jesus," and "Redeemer," I'm amazed that suddenly we are singing the same song, in the same language, at the same time. What a beautiful moment of unified musical harmony it is!



LEARN MORE ABOUT
NICOLE C. MULLEN HERE.

MUSIC AND MISSION: Q&A WITH MARK SCHULTZ

Andrew: OrphanSong seeks to raise awareness about the importance of providing international orphans with education. You contributed the hymn "Doxology." Why did you choose to record this hymn? And how does it fit the music and mission vibe of OrphanSong?



Mark: I think of this hymn has a kind-of “call to worship.” Doxology literally means, “a praise to God.” I can’t think of a more genuine way

to praise God than to take care of His children. In the book of James we are called to “look after orphans and widows in their distress” (James 1:27 NIV), what James calls “pure religion.” It’s important to remember that taking care of orphans isn’t just something for Christians to check off a list, it’s a form of worshipping God.

STORYSONG also has African National Directors in Zimbabwe, Kenya, Ghana and South Africa building relationships with pastors and children in local communities. Our efforts in the USA, which include a monthly donor support program, allow the directors to continue to work hard to support local ministry and send kids to school.

As an artist, I have a choice to make: I can either share songs and stories that speak Hope and love into the lives of my listeners, or I can simply entertain. I knew from an early age that God was calling me to share His Truth, and I knew he had given me this gift of writing songs and sharing stories. Now I’m going one step further, and in addition to speaking Truth, I’m hoping to make a difference in the world. I want to change lives, make great music, and encourage other artists to make great music.

The bottom line: it’s not about us. It’s not about becoming famous, selling albums, or headlining a tour. Our only hope in the end is that we know God’s love, and our only job in the meantime is sharing that love with others, in word and in deed.

CCM: How has the marriage of music and mission impacted your career and your personal life?

MS: Music and mission have always been one and the same to me. My music is a way to witness to the world, through stories and melodies, of the amazing love of God. As an adopted child myself, taking care of orphans has become one of the more important outward parts of my music ministry. And, while I don’t remember being adopted (I was just two weeks old), being raised by a loving adoptive family has impacted every part of my life. It’s also brought me closer to the awareness of how we’re all adopted by God. We are literally His children. No matter our worldly family situation, we are all children of the King. I want people to embrace that and feel the truth of that in my music.

CCM: Music is a mysterious medium with the power to connect and motivate people profoundly. Have you experienced that spiritual power through music in your own life?

MS: There is something spiritual about music’s ability to touch our hearts in a way that other things can’t. I know for sure that when I’m writing a song I love, I can feel God’s presence all around me. To me, some of my songs have felt like God just dropped in my lap and I had very little to do with them. So, I think music may be a way that God speaks to us, calling us to higher things in ourselves and a greater mission in the world.

STORYSONG is a movement. We all have a story, and every story needs to be heard. I hope the *OrphanSong* project will inspire people to share their own stories of transformation. God is doing amazing things in each of our lives and around the world. Let’s tell the story! **CCM**



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IN THIS ISSUE



HAWK NELSON

Diamonds (Fair Trade)

FOR FANS OF: *MercyMe,*

Remedy Drive, The Lumineers

★★★★☆

Despite several lineup changes in recent years, Hawk Nelson continues to write and release infectious, positive pop/rock tracks destined to remain in your head long after the songs are over. After suffering through several off-the-road adversities since 2013's *Made*, the boys from Canada—with newest additions David Niacaris and Micah Kuiper—additionally offer their most substantially written album to date. With title track “Diamonds” and “Drops In The Ocean” they have, once again, loaded an album with one radio hit after another. Hawk Nelson continues to reveal their strong backbone as an outfit that can not only survive the post-punk thirty-something’s, but thrive among its ongoing adaptations. Music fans of all ages just being introduced to the band affectionately known as *Hawk* will find *Diamonds* as an extremely easy entry point, while its pop sensibilities yet sophisticated song crafting will appeal to their lifelong fans. Hedge your bets on *Diamonds* to be among the year’s bigger successes.

—Matt Conner

WE LIKE: “Drops In The Ocean”

**AMY GRANT*****Be Still And Know...Hymns & Faith***

(Sparrow Records/Capitol Christian Music Group)

FOR FANS OF: Emmylou Harris, Sheryl Crow,
Steven Curtis Chapman

★★★★☆

Having grown up singing hymns in church and at home, it's understandable why Amy Grant is still attracted to those timeless treasures today. On *Be Still And Know...Hymns & Faith*, Grant cherry picks her favorites from previous projects *Legacy...Hymns & Faith* and *Rock of Ages...Hymns & Faith*, along with two new tunes. Previously released highlights include a pared down rendition of "El Shaddai," a seamless medley of "What A Friend We Have In Jesus/Old Rugged Cross/How Great Thou Art" and "Rock Of Ages" (a duet with country star Vince Gill). Speaking of her hubby, he produced the earthy additions "Power In The Blood" and "Be Still And Know" with Grant continuing in her soft-spoken yet moving interpretative tradition.

—Andy Argyrakis

WE LIKE: "Power In The Blood"

**LAUREN DAIGLE*****How Can It Be*** (Centricity Music)

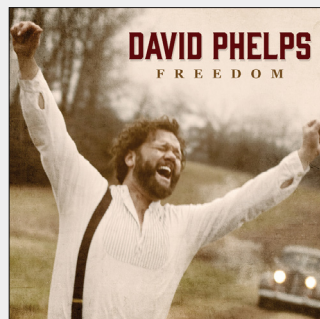
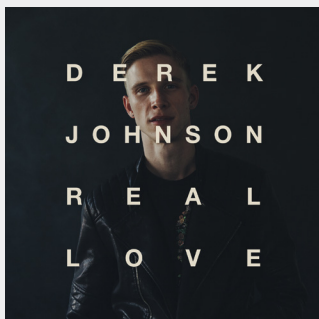
FOR FANS OF: Kari Jobe, Nichole Nordeman,
Sara Groves

★★★★☆

There is something so pure about newcomer Lauren Daigle, it is hard to believe she is even new at this at all. Welcome, now, the full-length version to her successful EP of the same title that released last year. Continued on new material, her voice is organic and grounded in angelic, earthy tones. In case you missed it the first time around, Daigle soars on her single "How Can It Be," and offers perfect harmonies on "Power To Redeem" (with guests All Sons and Daughters). "I Am Yours" is rich with smart musicality and vocals—right in her range. From top to bottom, this project showcases one of the best and brightest young voices in Christian music with the skills and prowess of a veteran songstress.

—Grace S. Aspinwall

WE LIKE: "Power to Redeem"



DEREK JOHNSON

Real Love (Capitol CMG)
 FOR FANS OF: *Jesus Culture, Kristian Stanfill, Bethel Music*
 ★★★★★☆

As member of Jesus Culture, the Sacramento, CA based worship collective, Derek Johnson has been an integral part of the global modern worship movement since 2011. His first full-length solo effort is fueled by a compelling gospel-driven feel and shines on tunes “My Great Love” and “The One We Love”—reminding us why he makes for such an engaging leader. A bit more innovation would have been nice, but his performances are passionate and moving.

–Grace S. Aspinwall

WE LIKE: “The One We Love”

JARED ANDERSON

Where I Am Right Now EP (Centricity)
 FOR FANS OF: *Chris August*
 ★★★★★☆

Worship leader Jared Anderson’s songs are familiar to congregations around the country, but his role as a performing artist is a fairly new one. Making his Centricity debut with the five-song EP, *Where I Am Right Now*, Anderson has given fans a solid, diverse set of songs. The title track is a bit straightforward and formulaic, but the impressive a cappella style of “Sweet Salvation” is definitely a nice highlight, as is the powerful “Almighty” upon which Anderson’s worship roots come alive.

–Matt Conner

WE LIKE: “Sweet Salvation”

DAVID PHELPS

Freedom (Gaither Music Group)
 FOR FANS OF: *Josh Groban, Michael English, Gaither Vocal Band*
 ★★★★★☆

With longtime mentor Bill Gaither in the producer’s chair, classically trained tenor David Phelps may take a more organic musical approach throughout *Freedom*, but still manages to stun with his glorious three-octave range. Whether soulsearching his way through nine originals or taking total ownership of classics like “Ain’t No Grave,” “When The Saints Go Marching In” and “We Shall Behold Him,” Phelps consistently makes the case he’s one of the strongest voices in modern music (Christian or otherwise).

–Andy Argyrakis

WE LIKE: “Ghost Town (Freedom)”

ADDICTION

Hope & Help Line

A hand is shown hovering over a glass of dark liquid, possibly alcohol. In the foreground, an orange pill bottle is tipped over, spilling white and yellow pills. A white pill cap is also visible. The background is slightly blurred, showing a green bottle and a white label.

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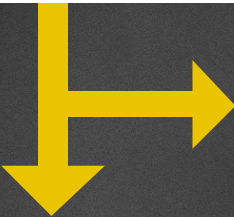
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