

CCM

COLTON & TERESA DIXON

+ Stories of Moms &
Motherhood from
SKILLET
LAURA STORY
FIREFLIGHT

SPECIAL

MOTHER'S DAY
EDITION

MAY 1, 2015



DAVID PHELPS
CYNIC. THINKER.
MAN OF FAITH.

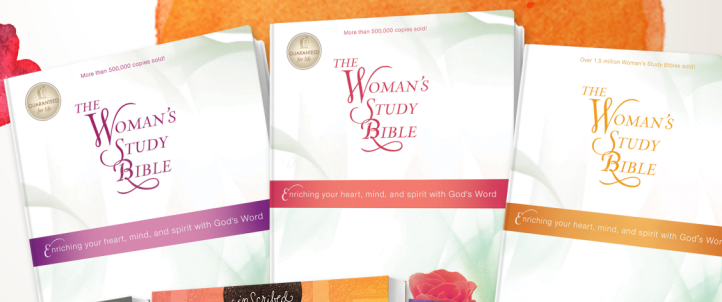


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FEATURES

Mother's Day Special

Featuring Colton Dixon, Korey Cooper of Skillet, Laura Story, Dawn Michele of FireFlight, and Dan Bremnes

Cover photo & Colton Dixon images:
Justin Burns

**David Phelps**

Finding freedom along faith's journey—
Part 1 of a Two-part interview

**Joanne Cash**

Talks about new duets disc, faith, and
her famous family



DEPTS

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

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

IN THE STUDIO
THE NEVERCLAIM**SONG DEVOTIONAL****DAN BREMNES****REVIEWS****NEEDTOBREATHE, CHRISTY
NOCKELS, KB + MORE!**

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For this edition of *CCM Magazine*, we honor our mothers. It's no accident that our Mother's Day stories are the FIRST to be featured in the May 1 issue.

Our mom's should always come first. Yes, they should be the first to be served at meal time (even if they were the ones to have prepared it), first in line—for anything, first to receive a blessing, and first to be thanked—just for being who they are.

1 John 4:19 says that we can love each other because it was God who first loved us. I also have to believe that universally, it is our mothers who have given all of us our first dose of earthly love. Furthermore, the ongoing and nurturing love of our mothers is often evident for many of us. As part of our cover story, Dawn Michele of **FireFlight**, a new mother herself, tells us how her mother Diane has exemplified this type of life-long and unconditional love.

In **Proverbs 31**, King Lemuel delivers a message that was inspired by his mother. I would assume that she also taught him some very practical lessons—such as standing up straight, brushing his teeth, etc. But the messages given in this chapter are what had *lasting* impressions on his character and how he wanted to live his life.

Some have endured the experience of their mothers moving on to a better place—with Jesus. **Dan Bremnes** experienced this many years ago, but encourages us to hold tightly to the wisdom that our mothers have bestowed upon us, perhaps just as King Lemuel did.

Whether the stories herein encourage you to give an extra hug or “I love you”—or a deeper remembrance of your own mom, I hope you enjoy *CCM's* Mother's Day special. *Happy Mother's Day!*

Blessings,



Kevin Sparkman
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THINK.

What do I believe?



ACT.

What should I do?



BE.

Who am I becoming?

It's one thing to **KNOW THE STORY OF THE BIBLE.**
It's another thing to **LIVE IT.**

**31-DAY
READING PLAN**

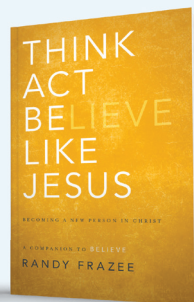
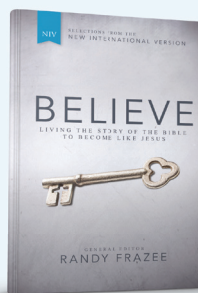
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BELIEVE

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1 & **2** Leading up to the launch of *A.D. The Bible Continues*, executive producers **Roma Downey** and **Mark Burnett** hosted a screening with **All Sons & Daughters**. Pictured from left to right at Focus on the Family in Colorado Springs are **Cara Fax** (cello), **Leslie Jordan** (All Sons & Daughters), **Steve Nicolle** (Integrity Music VP/ Global Sales), Burnett, Downey, and **David Leonard** (All Sons & Daughters). Besides meeting and greeting, the group also performed and can further be found on the album *Worship Anthems Inspired By A.D. The Bible Continues*.



3

ASCAP

CHRISTIAN MUSIC AWARDS

4



Photo: Ed Rode

3 & 4 Chris August opens the 37th annual ASCAP Christian Music Awards at Tennessee's Franklin Theatre with his new single, "The Maker," followed by **Matthew West** accepting the Songwriter/Artist of the Year honor on the same historic evening.

Photo: Ed Rode

5



5 Singer/songwriter/worship leader **Mike Lee** takes a break from recording his upcoming summer release, *All I Need*, with the help of a Dove Award-winning team at Ed Cash Studio. Pictured from left to right: Mike Lee, **Ed Cash** and **Scott Cash**.

6 **Fireflight**'s Glenn and Wendy Drennen, along with their son Phoenix, are pictured with Power 88.5 FM's Kenny Fowler and company while on a radio tour previewing the band's first new album in over three years, *INNOVA*, releasing independently on May 5.

6



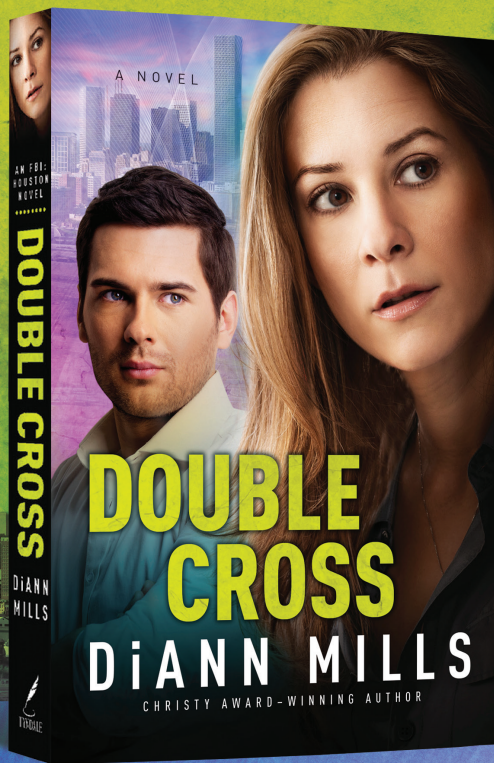
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DIANN MILLS is a best-selling author who believes her readers should expect an adventure. She currently has more than fifty-five books published. Her titles have appeared on the CBA and ECFA bestseller lists and have won placements through the American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

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A photograph of Colton Dixon and a woman sitting on a striped couch against a dark wood-paneled wall. Colton is on the left, wearing a dark blazer over a light blue shirt and dark pants. The woman is on the right, wearing a denim jacket over a grey top and light blue pants. The text 'home base' is overlaid in a large, white, distressed font across the middle of the image.

home base

COLTON DIXON'S
STRONG FOUNDATION

BY CAROLINE LUSK

Most mothers are innately understanding and supportive of their children's ambitions. But when Colton Dixon told his mom, Teresa, he was going to pursue a career in music, her heart sank just a bit.

"He had a full baseball scholarship to Middle Tennessee State University...and then he had this audition for something called ***American Idol***," his mom shares with a laugh.

You probably know the rest of the story. Colton ended up as a finalist on *Idol*. Following the show, he had one of the most successful debuts in Christian music, ***A Messenger***, followed by another smash hit, ***Anchor*** in 2014.

While his mom and dad still lament the ballgames that will never be, you'll never see two parents more proud of their son...or their daughter. Those sentiments were more than obvious at the *CCM Magazine* cover shoot with Colton and his mom at Union Station in downtown Nashville, Tennessee.

Upon greeting Colton, whose hair was higher than ever, I shook hands with the guy standing next to him—with camera slung around neck—assuming he was the photographer, until he kissed Colton's mom. It was clear this was Michael Dixon and this was really a family outing disguised as a photo shoot.

As Colton, his parents, and I gathered for a post-cover shoot snack, I asked if the family entourage scene was typical with the Dixon's.

It is. So, how do they do it?

The short answer is that it's all they've ever done. From the baseball fields to the stages, this family is a living, breathing, and solid foundation for one another. In fact, that's what led Colton to *American Idol* in the first place. It was the constant encouragement from his younger sister Schyler that led to Colton's audition.

Even as Colton's career has reached stratospheric levels, however, not much has changed regarding family. They have continued to remain side-by-side through the years.

"Everybody asks if we are always together," says Teresa. "This is the norm for us. The kids have been performing and leading worship long before gracing the *Idol* stages. It's really all the same, just on a bigger level. It's been awesome to experience them living their dreams.

"The music is great, but it's really the icing on the cake for me. Who they are as individuals is what matters. They haven't given me anything to worry about. We've been very blessed as parents and Colton and Schyler have made our jobs pretty easy."

As Teresa glances across the table at her son, it's obvious that her sentiments are void of any pretense or fabrication. This truly is a family who does almost everything together, and one that is certainly thankful for their many blessings.

"We're not perfect—and we're definitely not saints," adds Teresa. "We do love each other and, as a family, we collectively take a stand for Christ. We're grateful for the lives [Colton and Schyler] have been able to live and for the way God continues to shape their journeys."

"My parents have always been there," Colton shares. "They're my comfort in the chaos and the one thing that's always familiar. I think *Idol* came at a great time for us, but it also presented many challenges.

"I was coming into manhood and beginning to experience life on my own. At the same time, some very unique and life-altering decisions were forced upon me. When I needed to come up for air, I knew that I could always count on them. Through the *Idol* days, there were some things going on that didn't always fall into line with who I knew I was—definitely some hurdling moments."

"But that hurdling moment was short-lived for him," Teresa quickly interjects. "I know as a kid I went through a lot of hurdles and it took me a long time to discover who I was. In some ways I'm still discovering—to a degree I think we all are. Even though I'm a parent, I am still human. We do make mistakes, but we make the effort to keep God at the center of our family."

That effort is paying off.

At the time this article will release, Schyler will also be preparing to release her first single, while Colton is gearing up for another season of touring and ministry—with an emphasis on the latter.

"I meet many kids on the road who aren't as fortunate as I have been," says Colton. "They come from families broken by divorce, some are dealing with depression or cutting, and others are even considering suicide. It breaks my heart. But a lot of those same kids have also told me that my songs have changed their lives. It reminds me of just how good I've had it, and how thankful I am for my family."


With emotion, Teresa responds "To hear that as a mom..." She pauses, "That's what it's all about. That's the character I was talking about. He's so young, but hearing his heart and how he handles situations—he *gets it*. As a mom, what more could you ask for? I look up to Colton in a lot of areas, I have a lot of respect for him."

She also has a lot of stories, ones that only a mom can share.

"When Colton was little he was always wearing a cape and cowboy boots," she says with a laugh. "Then, of course, his little sister had to also wear a cape. She was 'Robin' for a while and then 'Batgirl.' Colton would probably still wear a cape today if it were socially acceptable!"

"Maybe I'll bring the cape back?" Colton laughs.

Whether donning superhero attire or not, it's clear that Colton chooses to take a piece



"My parents have always been there. They're my comfort in the chaos and the one thing that's always familiar." — Colton Dixon

of his childhood, his family, and his home with him everywhere he goes. This summer, as he wraps up his current touring before launching into festival season, you can be sure that a Dixon will be near.

"It's so nice to know that I'll always have people around that will allow me to completely be myself," he says. With that, his mom grabs a shrimp from his plate, he grabs a fry from hers and it's evident that they are the real deal.

It's also evidence that for the Dixon's, it all began in the home. With a mom and dad who couldn't be more proud of both of their kids—on a ball field, a stage, at church, or even at the dinner table.

"I love seeing them do what they love," Teresa says. "It's been awesome to see Colton and Schyler living their dreams, but it's their character that I'm the most proud of. Again, the music is just the icing, I'm complete as a mom."



korey cooper of skillet

MOTHERHOOD FROM A 1 TIMOTHY 4:12 POINT OF VIEW

Salvation | I love my mom. She's the coolest. Right after I was born, my parents made a resolute decision that they wanted to teach their kids about God. They realized they didn't know much about Him—enter salvation and a new miraculous family adventure. It was messy but beautiful, my mom and dad discovering Jesus together with us.

Some of my earliest memories are sitting in prayer meetings with a bunch of adults experiencing the transforming presence of Jesus. They would speak of things they were reading in the Bible and how they longed to see and experience them. And then they did, and they never said I couldn't. So as a three year old, I began to believe I could also know God. This is one of my favorite things about my parents. They brought me along, and I wanted to be there.

Purpose | A purpose driven life was me watching my parents live that life and realizing that God could relate to me and that He wanted to know me. I remember hearing a story about a man whom God would wake up in the middle of the night just to “hang out.” Though I was only ten years old, I asked God if He would do the same for me. Guess who began to suddenly wake up in the middle of the night? That’s right—it would be me sneaking into the bathroom to read my Bible.

I love that my mom and dad exposed me to these possibilities: destiny, purpose, life with God—I was all in. I always hoped I was destined for great things, world-changing things like David-slaying-Goliath kind-of things. That seemed glamorous. You know what’s not glamorous? Living in a van with a bunch of boys. Driving 8-10 hours a night, hoping today would be the day you’d get a shower. Did I mention this is how my marriage began? One week after I said “I do,” we entered the Skillet van years. We made a vow that we’d never have kids on the road. After all, this lifestyle would not be fair to them.

Dreams | I would repeatedly have dreams of a baby time and time again. Other people told us that they had dreams of John and I having a baby. It’s hard to explain, but I knew that having a child was God’s will before I even committed it to prayer. Then, it seemed it was time for Him to entrust this special little person to us. We were convinced that we were going to have a boy, until another dream, where God told me she was a girl, gave me her name, and spoke to me about who she was and what she’d do. My little Alexandria Christine.

Selflessness | Sometimes “great things” for God don’t look like we thought they would. Jesus said unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it won’t bear fruit—and

if you want to be the greatest, learn to be the servant of all. I understood the beauty in this truth as I entered motherhood. I’ve realized that being a mom is the greatest thing I’ll ever do.

The facts that God knew my kids even before He formed them in my womb, that He orchestrated my marriage—not just for me but for them, that He saw fit to entrust those precious lives to me... I still can’t wrap my head around this! And sometimes it looks unconventional, like raising a family on the road, but the best thing I can do for my kids is live a life of obedience and faith. I want to be like my parents, who led by example and who never discounted me because I was too young.

FROM ALEXANDRIA:

My mother is the best mom I could ever ask for! She sacrifices so many of her comforts, often just to help me. When I get scared, I can always talk to her. For example, she is willing to wake up at 3:00 a.m. to comfort me after a nightmare.

She is a hard worker and rarely complains. My dad and I also love making my mom laugh. We enjoy repeating the same jokes around her and she is a good sport by laughing each time (knowing that mostly, this just annoys her)! Mostly, I just love being with my mom.

Furthermore, mom makes sure that I will grow up living a life for God. She gives me great advice about what and what not to do in hard situations. For this I will be forever grateful. My mom is the best mom in the world!



Laura story

GIFTS OF GOD, MEANS OF GRACE

Long before becoming a mother, I knew from the scriptures that children were a gift from God. Only since becoming a mother have I realized that they are so much more; they are a means of grace.

The other day Josie (my little bundle of energy who has discovered that I'm somewhat distracted with her twin brothers) was playing in her room. I had warned her repeatedly not to play with her lamp. It had one of those cool, swirly light bulbs in it, and she kept gravitating toward it and messing with it, as kids often do when their fascination has been so thoroughly captured. It could not have been more than five minutes after I left her room that I heard breaking glass. I came back in to see the bulb in a thousand pieces covering the floor and Josie, teary eyed, awaiting my response.

I gave her a quick hug, assuring her mommy would clean it up and then asked her to take a few steps back. I picked up the big pieces, and then cleaned the carpet with the Dustbuster. But I knew that I needed to make sure there were no small shards of glass that were still embedded in the carpet. So I pressed my hands into the carpet. Sure enough, one drove straight into my palm. It was painful, but my pain was quickly replaced with delight when I realized that Josie would not suffer that pain in her little feet while going to get a drink of water in the night.

Instances like this remind me that being a parent is less about me imparting my vast body of knowledge to my offspring and much more about my children being a means of grace. Yes, I am called by God to train up my

children in the way they should go, but it doesn't stop there. God is constantly using Josie, Ben and Griffin to shape me into His image. In parenting, God allows me to learn from Him by giving me the opportunity to emulate Him.

As silly as it seems to compare "God the Father" with "Laura the mother," parenting is an adventure that God calls us to join in Him. He teaches us more about ourselves as His children and more about Himself as our father. It's in these frantic mom moments that I catch glimpses of the character of God that I might have missed otherwise. He "blesses" me with a colicky baby to teach me patience. He gives me tiring days of changing diaper after diaper on minimal sleep to remind me that His strength truly is perfect when mine comes to an end.

Sometimes, He allows parents long seasons of thanklessness, maybe even with rebellious prodigals, to remind us how long suffering he is with us each day. He uses children to show us how important gratitude and respect are, in both our homes and in our spiritual lives. He even allows little shards of glass in our hands to remind us of the much greater sacrifice our Savior made for us, tasting death that we would never have to.

Children are a gift from God... and a means of grace. I know this is true because I see God through them everyday. And in the midst of potty training, baby spit up and broken bulbs, God delights to meet us in our mess, literally and figuratively - and we are held in His arms as His children. Thank you Jesus for the gift of my three children and the means of grace they are to me each day.



dawn. michele of fireflight

A MOTHER'S DAY CHALLENGE

I never truly understood how much our mothers give of themselves until a few months ago when I became one for the first time. After nine months of anticipation and anxiety (and back pain, heartburn, swelling, and sleepless nights), the joy I felt when I first embraced my child blew my mind. This was shortly followed by the pain and struggle of recovering from a C-section, coupled with shouldering the responsibilities of caring for this precious new life.

Then it hit me that the exhilaration and anguish is what each and every one of our mothers have faced in order to bring us all into this world. They gladly paid the price in order to give us life and to keep us safe.

As I sat in exhaustion during recovery, my own mother was there by my side at the hospital—still caring for me. Without the continued help of this wonderful woman, I could not have made it through the weeks preceding and following this both joyous and difficult experience. As I think of her, I continue to be in amazement and awe of how she once fought these very same battles, and then some, so that I could one day have this experience.

The more I pondered, the more the weight of the meaning of motherhood took shape. I could feel what my mom must have felt—overwhelming love and passion for a fragile life in addition to borderline terror at the prospect of that responsibility. It was as if someone handed me a tiny paper box that contained the secret to the future of all

humanity—like it's all up to me to keep it safe, cultivate it, and ensure its survival. In a way, each of our mothers accepted that when we were born. We owe them for every single breath of life that you and I take every day.

How can we ever repay our mom's? From my own personal experience, not very well! Sadly, many of us are likely guilty of allowing our mothers to become an afterthought when it comes to our daily lives. How are you going to honor your mother on Mother's Day?

Remember that our mothers are tireless. They continue to dote upon us and care for us with all of their hearts. We are always at the forefront of their attention. As I approach my very first Mother's Day as a mother, I want to see a change in my own life—I want to honor my mom year-round, as she truly deserves. Will you join me as you honor yours?

"Having had the honor of Dawn being my first born, I am thankful for the many things she has taught me over the years. Since Dawn's marriage to Matt, I have dreamed of her being able to experience the happiness and amazing depth of love within a mother's bond with her child. As our family grew and Dawn was a big sister, it became obvious that maternal instinct is a strong part of the many gifts with which God has blessed her. Becoming a Grandmother, able to witness and share this most precious time welcoming this child into our family, has been the most wonderful Mother's Day gift I ever could have dreamed of!"

– Diane Graumlich, Dawn's mother



dan. bremnes

THE VALUABLE AND OFTEN UNDERESTIMATED ROLES OF OUR MOTHERS

For a number of years, Mother's Day was a tough one for me. In 2006, I lost my mother in a car accident and it led me into one of the darkest seasons of my life. As difficult as it was, God truly led me by grace into another season of healing and understanding.

My mother was a fun-loving, joy-giving person with a contagious personality. I always picture her with a huge smile and a laugh! She knew how precious each moment was, but most of all, the importance of people. She was a pastor's wife and had a special way of being a mother and a friend to many people. Somehow, however, I never felt she was less of a mother or a friend to me as her son.

While growing up, I experienced many of my friends feeling the pressure to go to college, get a degree, and "become something." Although those aren't bad things, they weren't what I was feeling God leading me. My mom would always encourage us to pursue what we felt He was leading us into, even if it wasn't the norm. After she passed, I realized just how short life was and that I needed to stop waiting around and start stepping out.

I can honestly say that her words literally shaped the next nine years of my life. Her encouragement still resonates in my heart as I hear her saying, "Go for it Dan!" I am so thankful for that.

A mother fulfills a role to her children that no one else can. This role is so valuable and often underestimated. The countless hours, prayers, and tears that a mother invests into her children's lives are beautiful and unmatched. To those who still have your mother around, give her a big hug and consider every moment precious.

For those who have lost your mom, keep remembering the good things she has passed down to you and let it shape who you've become. For all the mothers out there, remember your words and love can steer the course of your children that has the ability to echo far into the future. CCM

DAVID PHELPS

FINDING FREEDOM ALONG FAITH'S JOURNEY—
PART 1 OF A 2-PART INTERVIEW



BY ANDREW GREER

David Phelps is a man of faith. He's also a self-declared cynic. A doubter. A person who sometimes works out the facts in his head before the truth seeps into his heart.

This tug-and-war of faith might initially sound strange. Considering that Phelps' platinum-plated voice has motivated a vault of hair-raising renditions of some of history's most faith-affirming songs as one of the most famous and fan-favored members of the legendary **Gaither Vocal Band**. Add his own discography of spirit-laden solo tracks to the mix and it may seem he is a person who, at least in terms of his faith, has it all together.

But after the heartache of losing his sister and long-time musical partner to a battle with cancer in 2012, the commanding musician says backstage faith is still a day-to-day practice of hope by focusing on Jesus. And on his latest solo record **Freedom** (Gaither Music)—

his first true singer-songwriter effort in a decade—Phelps put pen to paper as an effort to work through his spiritual journey with fear and trembling...and with melody.

Here, the GRAMMY and Dove Award-winning artist shares the personal nature of his most recent musical process in this *CCM Magazine* exclusive conversation.

CCM: *This new project, Freedom, possesses a darker tone, darker than many listeners will anticipate from a David Phelps record. How does this song list reflect your place in life?*

David Phelps: I have had the opportunity to record amazing songs throughout my career.

Songs of hope like “No More Night.” Songs of desperation like Sarah McLachlan’s “Angel.” Songs of longing like “I Want to Know What Love Is.” Songs of victory like “End of the Beginning.” Art pieces like “Nessun Dorma.” Love songs, survival songs, joyful songs, they all in some way have reflected where I was at that moment in time.

I certainly didn’t intend this project to be dark, just a snapshot of where I am on my journey. We all have dark moments, and maybe some of the songs relate in that way—but that’s real life and faith. Not the absence of trouble, just the ability to be led through it by our loving Savior. For me, these songs are like the rings of a tree telling its story. Some years were plentiful. Some were dry. But in the end they all speak of life.

CCM: *You wrote or co-wrote nine of the fourteen songs on Freedom. What compelled you to invest in the songwriting process more than ever before?*

DP: I hadn’t written anything for a couple

of years and I guess the dam just burst. I didn’t decide to record a project and then start looking for songs, I just began to write and write and write. At some point I realized I had more than enough material to put on one recording. After the process began, a few writers began to pitch some other material my way that really fit with what I wanted to say. To get the song list down to fourteen was a chore.

My first two projects, *David Phelps* and *Revelation*, were filled with contemporary songs of faith. I will always sing those songs, but when I think of them I’m struck at how bright-eyed I remember them. That’s clearly

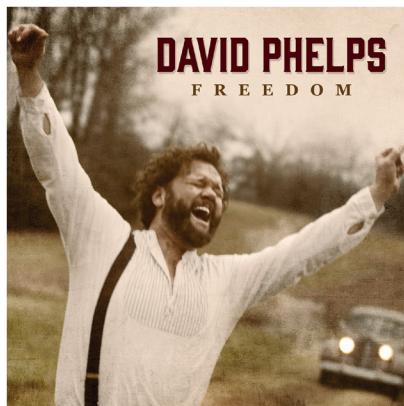
a reflection of where I was in life. On *Life Is a Church* I made the conscious effort to step-up the emotional honesty a notch. My songwriting and song selection were more reflective of my faith, fears, hopes and doubts.

Since then, I’ve recorded two albums of classic songs, a Christmas CD, a Family Band CD, five live concert DVDs, plus too many projects to count with the

Gaither Vocal Band. *Freedom* is truly my first songwriter-artist project since *Life is a Church* in 2005. It was time. If there was a conscious effort in molding this project, it was to fill it with reflections of real faith in the style that “brought me to the party,” so to speak.

CCM: *“So you’re a cynic / Oh well I get it / It’s hard to trust what you can’t see / You’ve been broken / How can you hope in or believe in a mystery.” Are these lyrics from “Who Do You Say I am” autobiographical?*

DP: The thing is, I relate to the cynic. I don’t take things at face value. I question and I





"IF THERE IS ONE THING FOR WHICH I FIND MYSELF CONTINUALLY GRATEFUL AS I STEP ON STAGE NIGHT AFTER NIGHT, IT IS THE WIDE RANGE OF MY AUDIENCE. OF COURSE, THIS PRESENTS CHALLENGES AS I ATTEMPT TO WEAVE A THREAD THAT UNITES US ALL IN THOSE MOMENTS. WHAT I HAVE FOUND TO BE THE MOST EFFECTIVE ELEMENT IS HONESTY." **—DAVID PHELPS**



ponder. I have a heart to reach those who have embraced doubt instead of faith, who have come to believe that you can't be a thinker and a Christian, who have accepted the assertion that science contradicts faith.

Dr. Francis Collins, one of the world's leading scientists and head of the Human Genome Project responsible for mapping human genetics, and a believer, wrote in his book *The Language of God* that using science to prove or disprove God is akin to attempting to unlock a door with a potato. Science is the study of the natural. God is supernatural. In a world where we are constantly bombarded with the message of anti-faith, those are encouraging words. This song really sprung from a desire to spread that message. Long-time collaborator **Cindy Morgan** came out to my farm one afternoon. With her on mandolin and me at the piano, we wrote from our desire to tell everyone that they are not alone in asking those questions. In the end, the song repeats one of the most poignant questions Jesus ever asked anyone in the midst of doubt, "Who do you say that I am?"

CCM: "I am walking wounded, broken / I want back the joy I knew / I need something real to hope in . . . I've been such a great pretender / But it's wearing on my soul / I have no terms for my surrender / Help me Jesus, make me whole." *This is a very vulnerable lyric. I will guess many of your fans—perhaps from the southern gospel world—will not know what to do with this song at first.*

DP: If there is one thing for which I find myself continually grateful as I step on stage night after night, it is the wide range of my audience. Young, old, hip, not-so-hip (to whom I relate), critics, fans, Christians and even a few atheists from time to time. Of course, this presents challenges as I attempt to weave a thread that unites us all in those moments. What I have found to be the most

effective element is honesty. Whether that's directly in a lyric, in the way it's sung, a story or even just body language—honesty is the key ingredient.

This lyric is about as vulnerable and honest as I can get. Incidentally, it's been the first song on listeners' favorites list so far. This is who I am at any given moment these days, and the path from the verses to the chorus could easily represent a day in my life. On the first verse, I'm pretending. In verse two, I'm a mess. The chorus, I need Jesus. Verse three I'm pretending I'm not a mess. The chorus, I need Jesus. In verse four, I'm tired of pretending I'm not a mess. Closing chorus, I need Jesus. It's encouraging to hear from listeners that I'm not alone on this roller coaster.

CCM: *David Phelps the solo artist. The southern gospel singer. The classically trained, musically proficient vocal (and producer and songwriting) technician. No matter the platform, what does David Phelps—the human being—want to share with others through his music?*

DP: For me, music is a vehicle. Though that vehicle can be wonderful in and of itself, I find it is best suited as transportation for a message. And every message is wrapped in emotion—passion, anger, resolve, revenge, hope, need—take your pick. Early on I was drawn to the emotional connection that I was able to make with listeners. There is power and responsibility in that. So I've decided that if I can leave my audience more hopeful than before the song began, then that is my goal. If a song can inspire, sign me up! **CCM**



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



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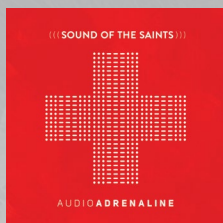


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-Adam Agee, of Audio Adrenaline

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BREAKING DOWN THE BARRIERS

*JOANNE CASH TALKS NEW
DUETS DISC, FAITH AND HER
FAMOUS FAMILY*

BY ANDY ARGYRAKIS



T With thirty albums to her credit, an autobiography, a documentary, endless Grand Ole Opry experience and co-founding Nashville Cowboy Church in 1990 (where she continues singing to this day), **Joanne Cash** is one of the most prolific and respected artists to ever blur the lines between gospel and country music.

Her latest project is a duets disc split between sacred and secular covers, and considering she's a member of that famous Cash family, perhaps it's no surprise ***Breaking Down The Barriers*** (Proverbial Excellence) is stocked with so many familiar family members and friends. Besides collaborations with **Rosanne Cash**, **Tommy Cash** and a previously unreleased tune written by The Man In Black himself, the collection includes **Larry Gatlin**, **George Hamilton IV**, **Kevin Max**, Jars of Clay's **Dan Haseltine**, Petra's **John Schlitt**, amongst many others.

CCM: *After releasing so many albums over the years, how are you able to keep your selection of material so fresh?*

JOANNE CASH: After recording thirty albums, it sometimes is a challenge to find just the right songs. However, [I feel] music and songs are about life, love, heaven, and our journey to get there through trials and the testing of our faith—so there is always another song to sing. I have so enjoyed this album. It has been a fun adventure and a dream that has come to pass. My producer, **Chad Randall Crow**, has worked with my husband [Dr.] Harry [Yates] and I for quite some time. We've done some traveling to Memphis, and to our recently restored Cash family home in Dyess, Arkansas to record the different songs that we selected.

CCM: *What are your goals musically and spiritually with *Breaking Down The Barriers*?*

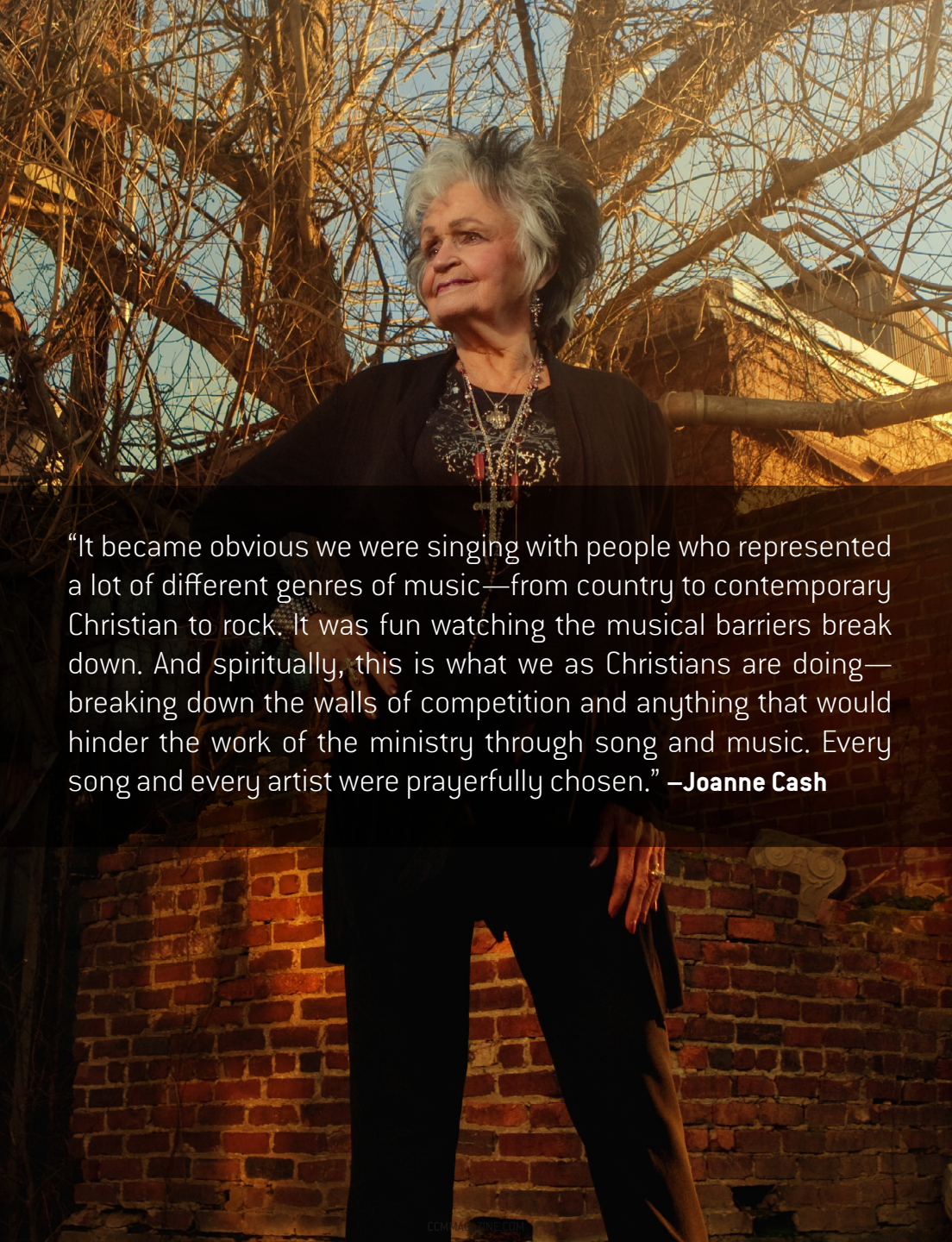
CASH: Musically, the goal was to sing some songs with friends that would touch people's

lives. As we recorded more songs, it became obvious we were singing with people who represented a lot of different genres of music—from country to contemporary Christian to rock. It was fun watching the musical barriers break down. And spiritually, *Breaking Down The Barriers* is what we as Christians are doing. [We're] breaking down the walls of competition and anything that would hinder the work of the ministry through song and music.

CCM: *How would you describe the process of tracking down the guest stars? Are they all family/friends/mutual admirers, or just folks you had on your wish list?*

CASH: Most of the artists on this project are family and friends. My brother Tommy Cash was happy to sing with me, as I am with him. My niece Rosanne Cash recorded "Anchored In Love," an A.P. Carter song, with me. Larry Gatlin, a close friend, sang a song he wrote years ago, "The Good Earth." **T. Graham Brown** is a special friend of ours. I love the way he sang "God's Gonna Cut You Down." **The Fox Brothers** are friends of ours who sang "My Ship Will Sail." I love that song! Every song and every artist were prayerfully chosen.

Chad has worked in the music industry for years and knows some of the contemporary artists who are on the album, like Dan Haseltine ["All My Tears"], John Schlitt ["Dust In The Wind"], and [Whiteheart's] **Rick Florian** ["Time Of Your Life"]. **Ranger Doug** sings a song with me that sounds like we are sitting around the campfire, "The Touch Of God's Hand," and he has become a good friend. Kevin Max has been a friend for years and I have worked with him [many times]. "Love Rescue Me" is a great song and he *had* to be the one to sing that one with me! "Fair Weather Friends" with **Razzy Baily** is a great song from an even greater friend, and I love the way he did it. Everyone did a great job!



“It became obvious we were singing with people who represented a lot of different genres of music—from country to contemporary Christian to rock. It was fun watching the musical barriers break down. And spiritually, this is what we as Christians are doing—breaking down the walls of competition and anything that would hinder the work of the ministry through song and music. Every song and every artist were prayerfully chosen.” —**Joanne Cash**



CCM: *Did you have any indications this would be George Hamilton IV's final recording and what were your impressions of him?*

CASH: George accompanied my husband and I on a trip to Ireland a few years back and we both became close friends with him. He has always been a special person in our lives, and that is why we asked him to be a part of this album ["On The Rock Where Moses Stood"]. Little did we realize that it would be his last recording. We gave his family a copy of the CD.

CCM: *How did you go about discovering the lyrics Johnny left behind to "My Lord Has Gone?"*

CASH: Johnny brought the lyrics to one of his final recording sessions. As he was leaving, his engineer asked if he would like to record the song but Johnny didn't have a melody for it yet. He left the lyrics there with the engineer. So we asked a special friend to put music to it and I recorded it with Tommy. It was Johnny's way of saying we all need to be ready when Jesus comes.

CCM: *Speaking of Johnny, what did it look like on a day-to-day when you worked at his House of Cash studio?*

CASH: The House of Cash was an office and museum that had a studio in the back.

I worked in the office as a secretary, and read and answered the mail. It was a big job because he got a lot of mail. Later he had his own studio on his property, which is still operating, called the "Cash Cabin." It was there where he wrote, meditated, and recorded many songs. When I record there, I feel very peaceful as if he is watching over me.

CCM: *The whole world knows Johnny as a superstar, but what was he like as a brother?*

CASH: Johnny was the middle child of seven brothers and sisters. He was a wonderful brother to me as well as the others. He even called me "Baby" because I am the youngest girl.

CCM: *What did you take away from your years of singing at the Grand Ole Opry?*

CASH: As I sang on the stage of the Grand Ole Opry at Grand Ole Gospel Time every Friday night, I thanked God for the opportunity to reach the world from one of the most important stages in the world. That experience helped me to learn about handling myself in front of audiences of all kinds. **CCM**



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THE NEVERCLAIM

BY KEVIN SPARKMAN



Album title: *The Joy*

Label: Radiate

Release date: July 17, 2015

Producers: Ian Eskelin

Number of tracks: Currently 10 tracks, final total could be 11

Studio(s): Holiday Ian's and Ben Phillip's studio (drum tracking)



For this version of ***In The Studio***, *CCM Magazine* finds out what is going on from Oregon natives **The Neverclaim**. After creating quite a buzz in the northwest with three independent offerings, then following that momentum with their nationally released self-titled album in 2013, we had to know a little more of the story behind all the noise happening at **Ian Eskelin's** south Nashville studio. We catch up with lead singer **Jeremiah Carlson** on the heels of their second major release ***The Joy***, and have a chat about the current recording process and of course, coffee.

WHAT THE JOY MEANS TO YOU: This project seems like the most divinely influenced one for us to date. Not that our other records didn't feel led by God, but with *The Joy*, we have had more prayer, words of encouragement, and what just seems to be God speaking His heart into us while we make it. I think this will be our most influential album to date, in regards to how it ministers to people.

PRINCIPAL WRITERS: Myself, and a number of amazing song writers collaborated on *The Joy*. Ian and I wrote about half of the songs, but some other great writers that contributed to this record were **Tony Wood**, **Allen Salmon**, and **Steve Jones**.

CREATIVE STRETCHING: Ian was a stickler with my vocals—he wanted them to be perfect, and I love learning and being stretched by those who are more seasoned. I think I spent four days recording vocals on our last record. In comparison, it took us almost two and-a-half weeks on *The Joy*. I definitely came out of it a better vocalist.

2 FAVE'S FROM THE JOY AND WHY: “Our God Wins” and “Rules And Reigns.” “Our God Wins” has a special place in my heart because it speaks of the ultimate victory that we have in Jesus. We can face anything and because He is for us, nothing can be against us. To me, that’s one of the greatest truths on which we can stand. “Rules And Reigns” is probably one of my favorite worship songs I have ever written. It speaks of the greatness and holiness of God, in addition to His nearness and friendship. So far, it has been a favorite live song in churches.

1 TUNE THAT DIDN'T MAKE THE CUT: We have a song called “**Alive In Me**” that won't make it on *The Joy*. I personally think it is an amazing song, but when it comes to choosing tracks for the final cut, my opinion isn't the only one that counts.

JUST PUSH PLAY: Everyone in this band listens to different genres of music. During this recording process, I have been listening to a lot of different types, ranging from hardcore bands like **Sleeping Giant** and **Gideon**, to worship like **Bethel**—plus some good tunes from **Jonny Lang**, **Haim**, and **John Mark McMillian**.

‘NEVERCLAIM’ MEANS: The Neverclaim to us is the lifestyle in which God has called us. We never want to claim our lives as our own, but rather give them away for God's glory and for the sake of others. The very heartbeat of this band is allowing God to minister through us to the people He places in our path. The music is just a medium to help anyone lower their guards so that they may be more open for God to do His work in them.

HAPPY HOUR: Being northwestern boys, there is some serious coffee drinking in this band. We enjoy a lot of different types of roasts and there wouldn't be enough room on this interview to name them all, but the most important thing with most of the guys in this band is that we take our coffee black. If you want to try one of the best, I suggest **Jojo Coffee**. They are in Longview, WA.

THE JOY IN 5 WORDS OR LESS: Joyful, fun, victorious, worshipful, anthemic. CCM



Producer: Ian Eskelin



**FOR MORE, PLEASE VISIT
THE NEVERCLAIM.COM.**



“HEART ON FIRE”

BY DAN BREMNES

Do you remember when you first came to Jesus? There was passion, determination, excitement, love. You were on fire. I'll never forget the day I gave my life fully to Him.

In the Bible, our relationship with God is often compared to a marriage relationship. Whether you've been married or not, have dated or not, we see a picture of our relationship with God through this analogy. Even if it's from a distance for some, it's usually not something beyond what we can understand. It's not based on a certain criteria or points system—it's love, it's personal.

When I first gave my life fully to God, I couldn't stop from thinking about, talking to, or spending time with Him. Then slowly and gradually it started to fade. I would find

myself concerned about what I was doing for God or how much I knew about Him, and I all of a sudden I found myself lukewarm, bitter, and at a distance. As Rev 2:4 says, I had “left my first love.”

Beyond anything we can do for God, He has first called us to Love him. In fact, it's the greatest commandment (Matt. 22). I love how in Luke, Chapter 10, Jesus comes for a visit. Martha is in the kitchen, “getting things done,” but Mary is just sitting at Jesus' feet. Martha is upset and probably thinking something like “Why isn't Mary helping me? I'm the one who is truly serving Jesus!” Jesus' response is powerful. He says, “Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.” I believe Jesus' words were reaching far beyond that moment in time so that it could grab our hearts today and remind us of what is truly important.

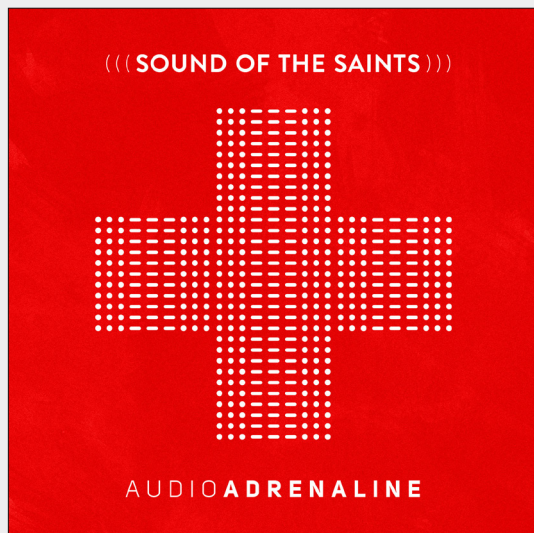
May our hearts come back to our first love. May we never lose sight of what matters. May we be set on fire and burn for Him! CCM

Dan Bremnes' full-length debut album will be available June 9, 2015 from Capitol CMG.

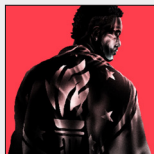
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RELATED SCRIPTURES

John 15:5, Rev. 2:4, Matt. 22:36-40



IN THIS ISSUE



SOUNDS OF THE SAINTS

Audio Adrenaline*(Fair Trade Label Group)**FOR FANS OF: Mercy Me, Stellar Kart, Hawk Nelson*

Continuing a legacy of championing the cause of the orphan, as well as good-old-fashioned rock and roll, Audio Adrenaline is back with a new lineup and a new album. You'll notice more of a pop-pep in their step compared to previous versions and recordings of the band, but the foundations are still there. New front man Adam Agee (Stellar Kart) brings a brighter vocal and a crispy musical feel to *Sound Of The Saints*. This is most evident on "Love Was Stronger," with a buoyant chorus and distinctly pop-driven melody. The streamlined sound is definitely aimed at a younger audience, as experienced on the opening track "Move"—but its ESPN highlight infused timbre will catch their core fans in addition to tunes "So Can I" and "World Changers." Though this is a departure from their grittier, earlier works, producer Seth Mosley has crafted a collection that's got a lot to love. Above all, the new editions intend to carry the torch for who and what Audio A has long stood for, and that's a great thing.

—Grace S. Aspinwall

WE LIKE: "Love Was Stronger"



NEEDTOBREATHE

Live From The Woods (Atlantic/Word)

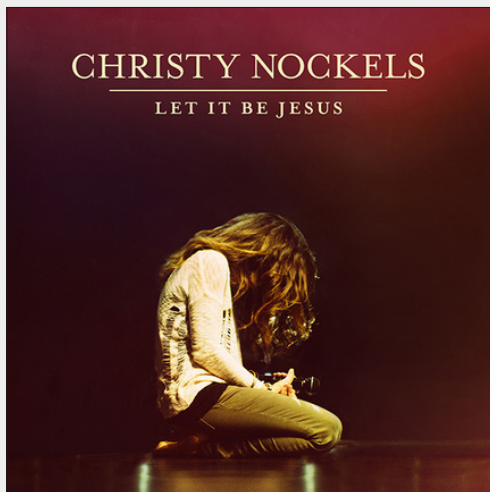
FOR FANS OF: Mumford & Sons, Kings Of Leon, Drew Holcomb & The Neighbors

★★★★☆

From its developing days through touring with Taylor Swift and becoming a major headlining attraction, Needtobreathe's always been a seasoned and dependable concert attraction. The evidence more than speaks for itself throughout these 17 tracks split across two discs, which were recorded during last year's Nashville show supporting *Rivers In The Wasteland*. Though there's plenty from that roots rockin' collection of impassioned introspection (including the dusty stomper "Oh, Carolina" and the hearty acoustics of "Brother"), the band makes sure to deliver prior favorites like "Keep Your Eyes Open" and "The Outsiders" doused with an extra degree of gritty aggression. In other words, this isn't Needtobreathe's most cleanly produced project, but the raw and spontaneous feeling provides an accurate and engaging snapshot of what took place on the tour, while also allowing the group's redemptive lyrics to come across loud and clear.

—Andy Argyrakis

WE LIKE: "Devil's Been Talkin'"



CHRISTY NOCKELS

Let It Be Jesus (sixsteps)

FOR FANS OF: Passion Worship, Watermark

★★★★☆

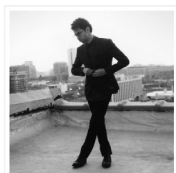
Christy Nockels is already familiar to many after years in the duo Watermark and as a prominent vocalist for the Passion Worship movement, but solo albums released over the last few years have yielded her best work yet. Both *Life Light Up* and *Into the Glorious* were powerful, personal releases that stand alongside the best releases of female vocalists in the last decade.

Let It Be Jesus, her latest, is her first live offering, recorded at Passion City Church in Atlanta, Georgia. Featuring familiar tracks like "Let It Be Jesus" as well as several originals like the wonderful opener "Freedom Song," Nockels' latest is another must-have for church leaders and congregants alike.

—Matt Conner

WE LIKE: "Freedom Song"

J O N G U E R R A



L I T T L E S O N G S

JON GUERRA

Little Songs

(Provident Label Group)

FOR FANS OF:

Chris August, Vertical Church Band, Ed Sheeran

★★★★☆

Jon Guerra, who boasts an impressive resume and has written with acts like Vertical Church Band, now roars with his very distinctive vocal (think Chris August with a hint of Ed Sheeran croon) on *Little Songs*. The introspective collection is faith-based, but also insightful with abstract ideas. "I Will Follow" showcases his soothing vocal and worshipful songwriting. "Stained Glass" features a seamless and memorable musical interlude. "Rolling, Rolling, Rolling" and "Speak" provide for a few nondescript and weary moments, but the overall intrigue is well worth the listen.

—Grace S. Aspinwall

WE LIKE: "I Will Follow"



ALEX FAITH & DRE MURRAY

Southern Lights:

Overexposed (Collision)

FOR FANS OF: Trip Lee, Swoope

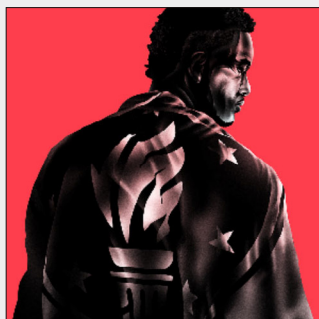
★★★★☆

Alex Faith and Dre Murray collide on a new collaborative LP that, five years ago, would have warranted much more praise. However, when artists like Lecrae, Derek Minor and Propaganda are serving up tracks with a bit more substance and style, it places releases like *Southern Lights: Exposed* in an unaccustomed shade. That said, the pair deserve credit for speaking truth to important and often ignored topics, but the hooks aren't as refined and the depth less dynamic than a hip-hop album is allowed to be anymore.

—Matt Conner

WE LIKE:

"Takin' Time (feat. Young Noah)"



KB

Tomorrow We Live

(Reach Records)

FOR FANS OF: Lecrae, Trip Lee, Andy Mineo

★★★★☆

He may have attained a Dove Award and a number one spot on Billboard's Christian Album Chart thus far, but rather than additional earthly achievements, hip-hop hit maker KB has his sights firmly set on heaven with this comfort zone-shattering endeavor. Even though his lyrics address struggle and hardship, he always leaves listeners with a Christ-centered promise that hope's right around the corner, not to mention some seriously global grooves gleaned from travels spanning South Florida to South Africa.

—Andy Argyrakis

WE LIKE: "Always & Forever"

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**WINSOME:
A LIFE THAT
LEADS THE WAY**
Author: Louie Giglio
Passion City Church
Resources
★★★★☆

Pastor and innovative church leader Louie Giglio launches his *Winsome* DVD, a collection of five "talks"

that are boiled down to one simple thought: for viewers to confidently tell others about the gospel in and around their communities. On the expansion of the message of Matthew 28:19, and the series' namesake, Giglio states "What people need most is Jesus. The challenge is simple, live a life that proclaims the gospel in order to 'win some' to Christ." It's difficult to put a rating on something like this—the message is both crucial and timeless. Giglio himself is an anointed communicator and his sermons are always engaging—for this he consistently scores high in our opinion. In terms of this particular product, if you're going for something in the *Nooma* genre, this isn't it. *Winsome*, although rich in content, has a lot of it—each talk is presented as it was recorded, a la Sunday morning-style preaching, all at around fifty minutes in length. We encourage all church leaders to add this resource to their library, however there might be better alternatives for small group/congregational presentations.

—Kevin Sparkman



LITTLE BOY
Director: Alejandro Monteverde
Metanoia Films,
Universal Studios
Home Entertainment
★★★★☆

Little Boy is a BIG movie in that its potential appeal is far reaching. Anyone with

children, and even kids (big and smallish) old enough to understand the family dynamic, will instantly relate. It's also a *big-little* film from the standpoint that director/writer Alejandro Monteverde (*Bella*) and Metanoia Films spared no expense for stellar on-screen talent. Although it may lack the marketing punch of the latest action blockbuster, seasoned actors like Michael Rapaport, Emily Watson, Tom Wilkinson, and comedian Kevin James allow easy access for even the most casual moviegoer.

Lead character Pepper Flynt Busbee played by Jakob Salvati delivers a smash hit performance in his silver screen debut. Its PG-13 rating is accurate, in that the subject of racism set in World War II America is interwoven into the film's storyline. Caution: Do not over-analyze (or criticize) the spiritual implications that hover along the surfaces of this unique story. Rather, sit back and enjoy *Little Boy* for its cinematic beauty, challenging messages, and the simple fact that a night out at the movies can once again be a positive and heartwarming experience.

—Kevin Sparkman

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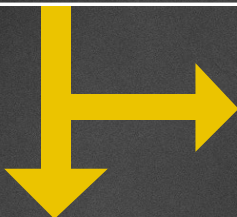
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