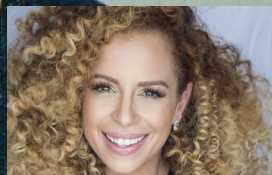


ANBERLIN, JON FOREMAN, PLUMB, JOY WILLIAMS RETURN | SUMMER READING CLUB

CCM

OWL CITY

FAITH-BEATS
YOUNG'S PULSE IS TO
PRAISE GOD ANYWAY



BLANCA
EXPERIENCING
EMERGENCE—AGAIN



KEVIN MAX
LIVE & UP CLOSE

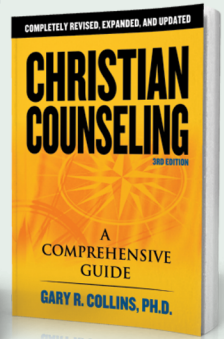
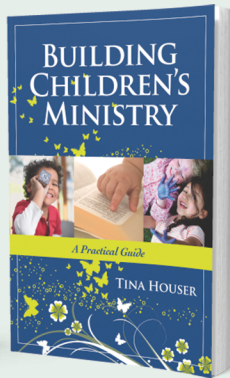
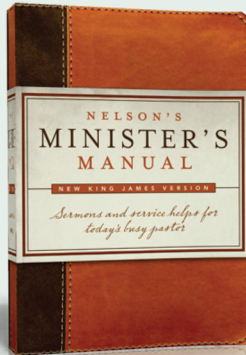
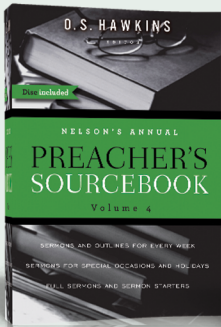
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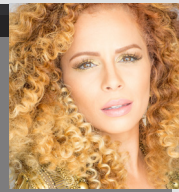
OWL CITY

Adam Young (Owl City) answers why he feels the songs on his versatile new release *Mobile Orchestra* will be useful spiritual tools



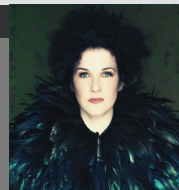
BLANCA

Formerly of Group 1 Crew fame, Blanca expresses her initial concerns about launching into the solo world and balancing a “new” career alongside motherhood



PLUMB

The seasoned songstress unashamedly reveals her recent struggles in music and marriage that has culminated in the release of her comeback, *Exhale*



DAN BREMNES

The Canadian singer-songwriter explains why it's sometimes okay and necessary to “preach to the choir”



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FROM THE EDITOR

PHOTOS

OUT AND ABOUT

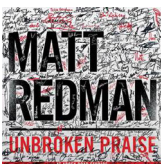
Pics of your favorite Christian artists on the road, off the road and everywhere in between

CONCERT REVIEW

KEVIN MAX

REVIEWS

MATT REDMAN,
JOY WILLIAMS, JON
FOREMAN + MORE!



On the evening of June 17, nine members of the Emanuel A.M.E. Church in Charleston, SC lost their lives when an active shooter opened fire during a weekly Bible Study session. The shockwave that rippled through the country in the days after this horrific event bore a range of emotions, questions, fear, and sadness—but also heightened attention on our only hope as people and a nation, Jesus Christ.

After all, this tragedy occurred in a *sanctuary*, of all places. Although the mainstream media will soon shift its focus from this tragedy, we as a community will not forget the devastation of that day. In honor and remembrance of the lives lost during this horrific event, CCM reached out to Christian artists for their words of grief, reflection, and hope for the future.

This sinful, vicious and most violent act in Charleston, South Carolina, is proof the world needs Jesus now more than ever. **Michael Tait / Newsboys**

It is by the LOVE and forgiveness we show across color, culture and denominational lines, that we prove that although we are in this world, we are not of it. **Nicole C. Mullen**

Going to church, you never expect this kind of thing to happen. You think of church as one of the safest places to be. In a split second, someone's anger changed that. Lord, help us. **Jason Crabb**

I believe that now is no time for fear nor standing back but more than ever, a time for the body of Christ to come together in prayer asking the Lord to be a light in this darkness and to heal our nation. **Blanca**

Events like these should motivate us even more towards the spreading of the Gospel. The Gospel provides the only hope for true change and setting people free from their mental chains. **FLAME**

For more quotes and commentary from more artists and leaders, please **CLICK HERE** for the full story on CCMmagazine.com.

#PrayersForCharleston



Blessings,

Kevin Sparkman
Editor, CCM Magazine
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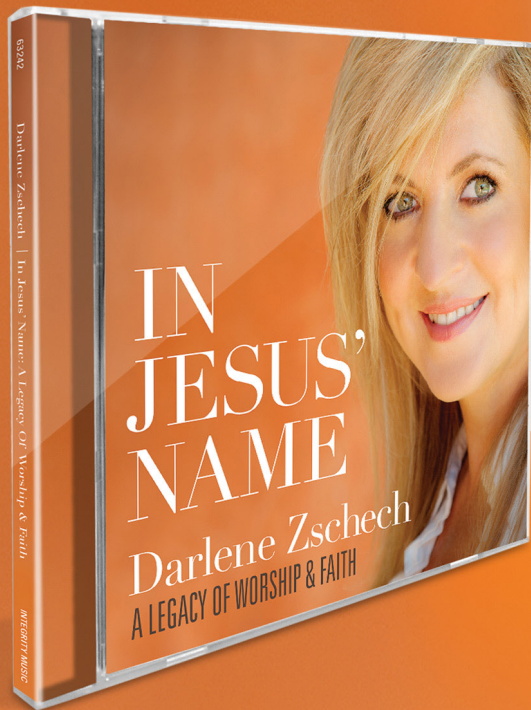
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1



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ANDY ARGYRAKIS

1 Soulful singer/songwriter **Jimmy Needham** (far right) addresses extras on the Nashville set of his new “Vice & Virtue” music video, which serves as the title cut for his new Platinum Pop Records project.

2



2 Country turned pop crossover star **Martina McBride** brings her “Everlasting” tour to the Star Plaza Theatre in Indiana. Not only is the set list stocked with hits and classic covers, but the powerhouse singer’s gospel roots (which include collaborations with Take 6, plus appearances on both Sparrow Records’ **A Country Salute To Gospel** series and the **Amazing Grace** soundtrack) are regularly evident throughout many of her uplifting lyrics.

3





4 & 5 Former **Press Play** singer and current solo artist **Sada K.** completes production on her music video for the song “Live Love Laugh.” The clip was directed by actor **Tyler James Williams** from hit shows such as **Everybody Hates Chris** and **The Walking Dead**, along with the Disney Channel movie *Let It Shine*. Pictured from left to right in the group shot: Williams, **Aaron Grady** (actor), **Trish Ignacio** (actress), Sada K., **Jahmel Holden** (co-director and producer) and **Earl Jenkins** (actor).

6 **The Neverclaim** front man **Jeremiah Carlson** (center with guitar) and guitarist/keyboardist **Mitchell Maldonado** (with red cap) join The Tulip Time Festival “Music Parade” on the JQ99 (WJQK Radio) float in Holland, MI where they also performed songs from the group’s July 17 release, **The Joy**.



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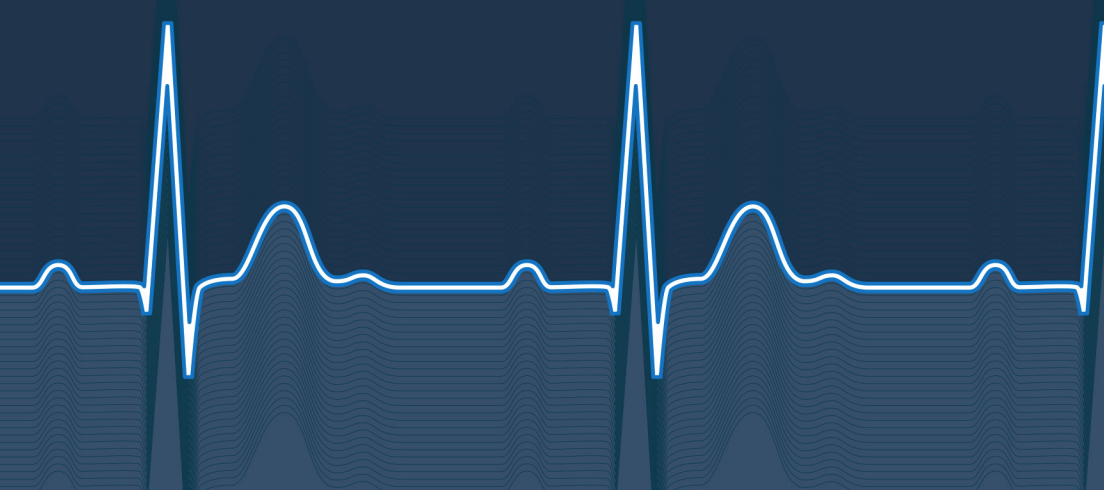
The Pulse of Orrville City

BY ANDREW GREER





Photo: Pamela Littky



Since 2009, **Adam Young** has been enchanting the auditory sensibilities of music buffs across the world. As the think tank that popularized under the moniker **Owl City**, his major label debut spawned the sensational single, “Fireflies,” registering five-time platinum status and topping the charts in twenty-six countries. But the beats virtuoso requires more than a laptop and samples to spur on his creative heart. Young is a man of deep, authentic faith, who believes music has true transformative spiritual power.

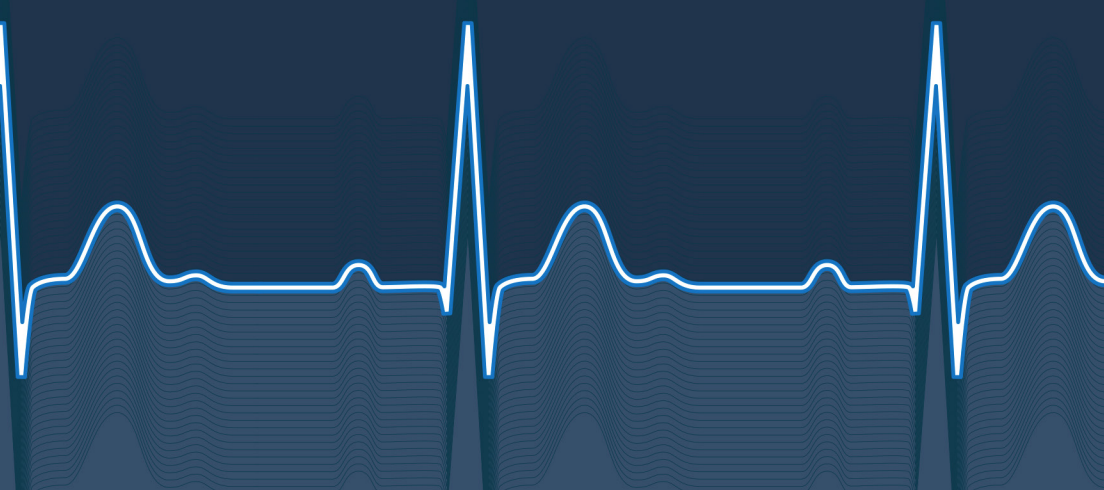
To help frame this hope-filled conviction on his latest aural adventure, **Mobile Orchestra** (Republic Records), the singer-songwriter-multi-instrumentalist opens up his phonic palette to incorporate genre-bending layers, with an equally distinctive guest roster featuring country superstar **Jake Owen**, urban music’s **Aloe Blacc**, pop trio **Hanson** and Christian music radio powerhouse **Britt Nicole**, orchestrating a diverse—and perhaps purer—track list of musical styles directly influenced by his personal playlists.

Without further ado, a one-on-one conversation with the one-man band from Owatonna, MN, Owl City.

CCM: *First things first. Why Owatonna? With the level of success you have achieved in multiple formats of the music industry it would be easy for you to take up residence in Los Angeles, Nashville or New York. What’s behind staying in Minnesota?*

ADAM YOUNG: It’s a fair question. And it’s one I asked myself a lot early in my career when I didn’t know what being a musician meant, whether I needed to be able to meet face to face with my manager, label and lawyers. All of them are either based in New York or Los Angeles.

I also didn’t know exactly who I was at the beginning of my career, specifically how introverted I am and far more suited for a small town atmosphere. Owatonna is the perfect place for me. Comparatively, against New York or L.A., there is no traffic, no crime, no smog or litter. Again, compared to a city with four to eight million people in it. Owatonna is a wink of a town in the grand scheme of things as it relates to entertainment in the music industry, but it’s home and I love it. So for now, I’m not too interested in looking elsewhere.



CCM: *With your last efforts being a cohesive listening experience, what prompted the color of Mobile Orchestra?*

ADAM: Well, I listen to music from all over the map in terms of genre, and I tend to jump around a lot when I'm listening to music. For example, I will listen to a country song then I will listen to a hip-hop song or a punk rock song. And because my interests as a fan of music vary pretty drastically, so do my creative influences that inspire my decisions as an artist. So I wanted to embrace that a little more with this new album. I feel like it has a good mix of variety, and some of the songs veer off into uncharted waters. But I still feel like every song on Mobile Orchestra is at home.

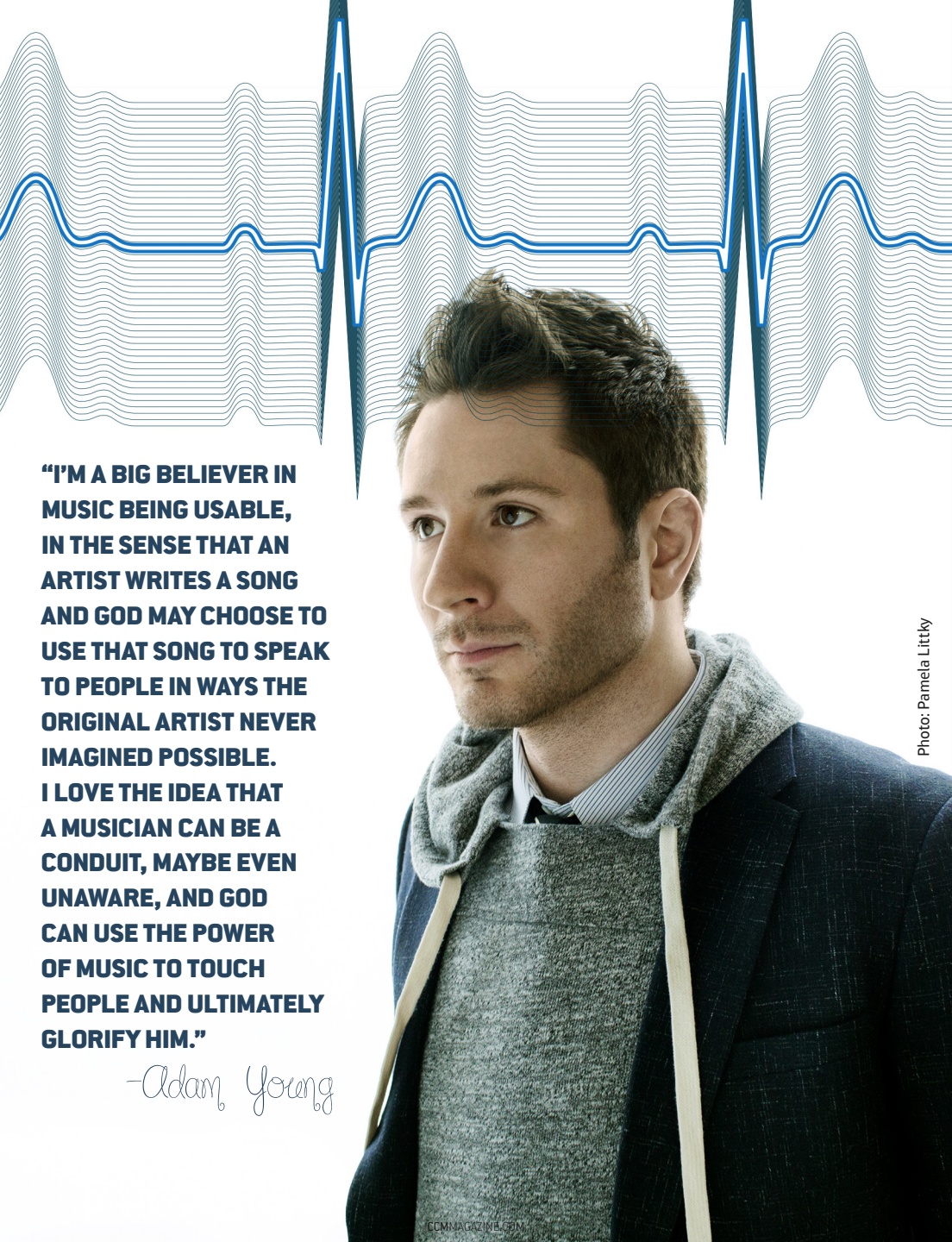
CCM: *About the song "My Everything," you have been quoted as saying, "There is something so powerful about the moments in life when you are at such a loss for words, all you can do is fall to your knees and sing hallelujah to God ... it feels beautifully sacred to say it over and over again as a verbal praise to the Lord." What scenarios or circumstances in your personal life have elicited this response?*

ADAM: It goes both ways for sure—good or bad. I try to make it a priority in my life to praise God either way. Which, sometimes, if the scenario is bad or unpleasant, praising God can be difficult when you don't understand exactly why things are happening they way they are. For instance, before I started doing music I used to worry a lot about money. I never had enough and I was barely scraping by, living from paycheck to paycheck.

I recently had a family member become very ill and I remember saying, "God, if you do not wish for this person to recover, then that's okay. I praise you."

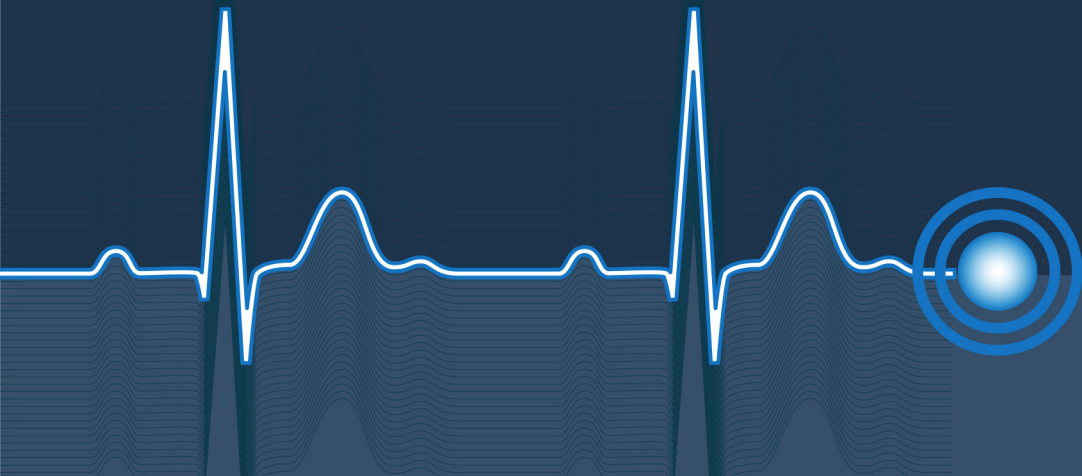
Then there are scenarios for which it's easier to thank the Lord. Selling a car. Buying a house. The accountability of good friends. All things I've found myself over the years falling to my knees and thanking God for. That is what the song is all about.

CCM: *Music has obvious power to speak universal truths to individuals in specific circumstances and seasons of their life. For instance, I have discovered your music translates in a big way in Australia. Why is music so mysterious and imbued with such human and spiritual connectivity?*



**"I'M A BIG BELIEVER IN
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GLORIFY HIM."**

-Adam Young



ADAM: I'm not sure. But I'm a big believer in music being usable, in the sense that an artist writes a song and God may choose to use that song to speak to people in ways the original artist never imagined possible. I love the idea that a musician can be a conduit, maybe even unaware, and God can use the power of music to touch people and ultimately glorify him.

I also really love the idea that music can be an encouragement to people in a way that only they know they need to feel. Everyone has deep dark places in their lives that nobody else knows about, and I feel like music can be that soothing medicine that can bring relief to people's emotional or spiritual ailments. If my music is ever something like that to somebody out there, I feel totally humbled and honored to be part of that process, because what a gift that is.

CCM: *Lastly, out of all of the collaborations on this record, the linkup with country music artist Jake Owen is the most intriguing. What inspired the pairing? Has country music inspired your own musicianship or songwriting, and if so, how?*

ADAM: Well, not a lot of people know this about me, but I'm a big country music fan. You wouldn't be surprised to know that country music is very popular where I grew up, so that instilled a natural influence in me as I inspired to be an artist myself. That being said, Jake Owen is a legend to me. Nobody does it better, and I've been a huge fan of his for a few years now.

So because of that influence, I wrote a song that had a country-pop hybrid vibe going for it and I simply just went out on a limb and sent Jake the demo. I introduced myself and said I'd be thrilled to work with you if this is something that sounds appealing to you in any way. I was amazed when he wrote back and said he was familiar with my work, which blew me away, and that he was down to work together. So it was really surreal to work with somebody I look up to so much as an artist. And lo and behold, the song is my favorite on the entire album. **CCM**



READ CCM'S REVIEW OF *MOBILE ORCHESTRA* IN THE JUNE 15, 2015 EDITION OF CCM MAGAZINE ON CCMAGAZINE.COM

ACT TWO CREW

A New Mother, BLANCA Credits Family For Helping Realize Her Dreams As A Successful Solo Artist

BY MATT CONNER

The butterflies are present. So are the fears. There's no way around the elements that come with a debut, even if experience is on your side.

After years of success, **Blanca** is now a solo artist, stepping out on faith and into a new season after years as the powerful vocalist in the celebrated hip-hop/pop collective **Group 1 Crew**. The experience serves her well in some ways—tour miles logged, industry experience, etc.—but Blanca still feels emotions reminiscent of a first go-around. 'Tis the nature of a debut.

“When you press that reset button, there's a fresh start as a new artist,” says Blanca. “You might have that familiar backdrop, but there's also the predetermined expectations that come from it. People know what you can do in one place, but they're also waiting to see if you can do it again in a new place. I'm still nervous, and it feels like a challenge.”

Shortly after admitting her nerves, Blanca is quick to acknowledge her gratitude for the success and experience of Group 1 Crew. It was, after all, a home for her in numerous ways—a safe community as a brand new Christian and artist that allowed her to blossom in her own time.

“When I was seventeen, I gave my life to the Lord,” explains Blanca. “I hadn't been to church before that, and immediately I got plugged in to this family called Group 1, a group of friends that was like a Bible study. We'd get together throughout the week and on Sundays after church, and we'd read the **word** and be accountable with one another. We all were individual artists, so that's why it was named “Group 1 Crew” when we started as a band. It was a group of individuals, but we all had one common goal.

“The idea of doing solo music was at the forefront in the beginning, but God worked it out that Group 1 Crew ended up getting signed,” she continues. “It was a good season in my life. I was really fearful of being myself and had these







insecurities, so being able to travel with the guys was so helpful for me to grow into my dreams—whether a clothing line, writing a book or a solo career.”

Group 1 Crew was indeed fertile creative soil in which an artist could grow. The group’s own success was substantial with five Dove Award wins, television placements, hit singles and tour opportunities. Blanca also appeared on a number of high profile projects during that season, including

Mandisa, TobyMac, Audio Adrenaline, Hawk Nelson and others.

However, the last couple of years have brought about an ever-occurring shift. Settling into a family life of her own, Blanca began feeling the familiar stirrings she had even as a young girl—to take the stage under her name alone.

“Fast-forward to now, I am married and we just had our first child, a boy named London,” she says. “I feel like that was a turning point

“Who am I in this? What do I have to say? In [Group 1 Crew], I was able to fill in the gaps. Now it’s all on me. I feel like that’s the underlying message on this record—being real to yourself and who God has called you to be.”

for me in life. This feels like a new chapter, not just physically by having a baby but also the birth of a new season musically. It’s something that’s been working within me, and the Lord has said that it’s time to now bring those things out.”

Blanca’s initial step was an EP released last winter titled **Who I Am**, a perfect summation of the struggle and growth to find her voice in this new solo skin.

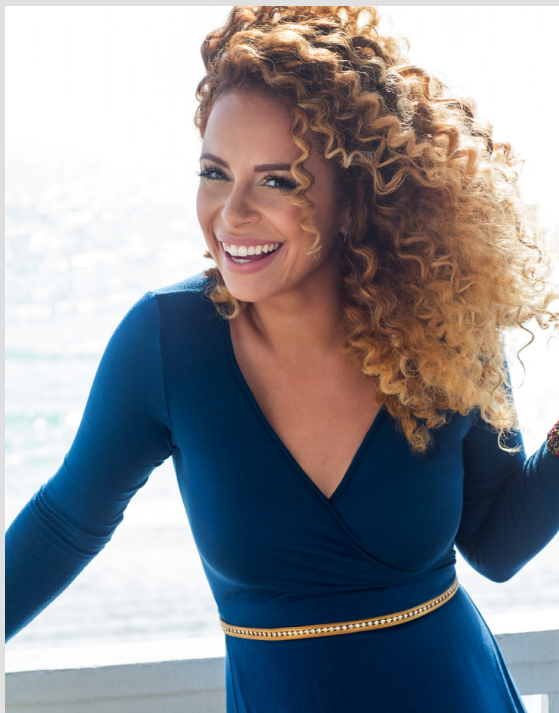
“I remember asking big questions heading into this like, ‘Who am I in this? What do I have to say? What is this all going to be about? What do I want to leave with people?’ In the group, I was able to fill in the gaps. Now it’s all on me. I feel like that’s the underlying message on this record. It’s

about being real to yourself and who God has called you to be. It’s being authentic and not being afraid of allowing people to see who you really are.”

Blanca also received some much-needed advice from a friendly face in **Toby McKeehan**. As a former member of **dcTalk**, his transition from playing a role within a group to burgeoning a successful solo career has been highly documented. Understanding the nerves that come with these changes, McKeehan reached out to Blanca.

“I remember sitting with [McKeehan] in the studio. Before that point, I had just barely written some songs. I’d shown him the few things I’d worked on and he said, ‘Continue to pull from that place. The moment you’re in now, you’ll never be in again. Let that inspire you. Let that come out in these songs.’

“That impacted this process to talk about stepping out in faith and what it is to be afraid.





To feel like God is calling, but you cannot see the full picture. To want to have control, but being forced to surrender. That was the fuel behind the message of this new music.”

Blanca admits that her husband is the dreamer and she is the realist, which has kept her guarded through this time. However, now with a Number One single, “Who I Am” already under her belt, she’s beginning to understand that the nerves, butterflies and hesitations will all begin to disappear. As with Group 1 Crew, it’s clear Blanca is going to stand tall on her own.

“Going into this, I was a little guarded and hesitant,” says Blanca. “It’s vulnerable to release songs that speak your heart and

story, so you want people to connect with them. With the album finally releasing and as we have experienced how well people have been receiving it, everything begins to make a little more sense. So far, everything has surpassed my expectations. It’s been cool to watch God doing what He does, especially when you’re putting all of your trust in Him.” **CCM**



+ CHECK OUT OUR REVIEW OF BLANCA'S FULL-LENGTH ALBUM IN THE MAY 15, 2015 EDITION OF CCM MAGAZINE



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What should I do?



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It's another thing to **LIVE IT.**

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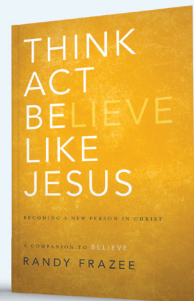
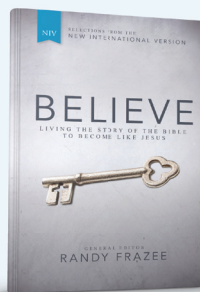
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*OVERCOMING SUFFOCATING DARKNESS,
PLUMB BREATHES IN LIGHT AND EXHALES HOPE*

BY CAROLINE LUSK



For singers, breath support is everything. Shallow breathing doesn't go very far, while deep breaths and controlled exhalation allow for expanded range and endurance.

Proving she's a master of her abilities, to date **Plumb** has sold over 500,000 albums plus two million singles, and counting. Lately, the "singer's singer" has been applying these principles to other parts of her life.

The personal revelations she has had are now woven into her latest studio project, aptly titled **Exhale**.

"The last few years of my life have been the hardest," she says. "However, I've now reached a place at which I'm completely surrendering to God, letting Him breathe into me so that I can breathe out. I've been holding my breath for so long, attempting to control everything around me. Now, I can finally exhale."

As she breathes out, she's taking account of God's mercy on her family in these last few seasons of life. This perspective doesn't always come easily.

Plumb has been incredibly forthright when it comes to sharing the story of her marriage, which was on the brink of ending. In retrospect, however, she can now see that many of the issues that drove she and her husband apart happened over an expanse of time.

"I've been so blessed to have had my career play out so well," she says. "There was a time when we were doing great professionally. We were traveling a lot, winning awards and making a mark in mainstream music alongside our work in the Christian market. Admittedly, there was a time when I felt that I was better than just a CCM artist. I even stopped listening to Christian music, for the most part."

That changed when things at home began going south.

"I didn't like who I was," she says. "I was frail, weak and sad. Darkness had invaded my heart, my life and my home. Eventually, I reached the point of complete brokenness." It was at this impressionable time when hope would spring



from a familiar source. "I remember one particular day at home, I overheard some Christian music playing in the background. Even to my own surprise, the lyrics of the songs provided the very hope that I needed."

That event alone began to repurpose Plumb's heart, as she gained an entirely new perspective of Christian music, and felt "an overwhelming sense of gratitude to be a part of it."

As she was experiencing this musical and purpose-driven realignment, God was at work repairing the home front. Their own diligence notwithstanding, through individual and couples counseling, both Plumb and her husband worked hard to rebuild their relationship. Once on the brink of divorce, God restored



**“EVERYTHING
HAS CHANGED.
I BELIEVE IN
RESURRECTION
NOW MORE THAN
EVER. GOD HAS
TAKEN WHAT WAS
DEAD, BROUGHT
IT BACK TO LIFE,
AND CONTINUES TO
MAKE IT BETTER.”**

—PLUMB

their marriage and the two are opening a new chapter of life together.

“I’m in a new head and heart-space,” states Plumb. “Everything has changed. I believe in resurrection now more than ever. God has taken what was dead, brought it back to life, and continues to make it better. *Exhale* is intended to reflect all of this.”

“I’ve never felt more free or grateful in all of my life,” she says.

With gratitude and humility coursing throughout, this new project will continue to be an intended source of inspiration and hope for others. The official music video of the title track has already clocked over 100,000 views on YouTube featuring dozens of comments from people touched by its redemptive

message—a message that Plumb first heard at her home church in Nashville, Tennessee.

“Our pastor was talking about the community of the church and how we don’t exist for ourselves,” she explains. “We exist to share that love that changes us all, a love that is freely given to all of us. The change occurs as we breathe it in, and we fully live by breathing out in love and service—*exhaling*. I wrote [the title track] the very next day. God had done something so miraculous in my life by healing my heart and our home. I wanted to exhale all of that into this record and in these love letters.”

Today, life is once again promising for Plumb. In addition to singing, she and her husband are homeschooling one of their three

children and are continually involved with the Montessori school they established a few years ago. As for what's next, Plumb is committed to sharing the story of God's miracle in her family.

"I pray that opportunities continue for my husband and I to share our story and to give others hope," she says. "If God can redeem ours, He can redeem any other home. I feel completely blessed with the respon-

sibility that my platform gives me to breathe out this renewed sense of purpose."

Moving forward, Plumb will continue to surrender her heart, her home, and her breath to the One who breathes into us the very life and hope we all need. CCM



+ READ THE ALBUM REVIEW OF "EXHALE" IN THE MAY 15, 2015 EDITION OF CCM MAGAZINE





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LIGHT SPEED AHEAD

A Long, Dark Road Leads DAN BREMNES Back To The Light, Propelling A Fast-Forward Journey Into Faith And Surrender

BY MATT CONNER

It is exactly 2,397 miles from Salmon Arm, British Columbia to Nashville, Tennessee, a 36-hour drive if you're up for the trek. **Dan Bremnes** has, by all measures, come a long way.

The Canadian singer-songwriter, one of Capitol CMG's latest roster additions, boasts powerful vocal abilities, indelible melodies, and vertical lyrics on an already loaded lineup. His talent and testimony offer proof that the cream does rise to the proverbial top, as a hopeful musician from such a small town fulfills his dream of making music for a living.

"The first time I was ever paid to play was for a festival in eastern Canada," says Bremnes, as he remembers his early performing days. "They paid me by paying for my flight, which was really expensive, like a thousand dollars. I remember getting the invite, and I was so pumped. I was like, 'Someone is going to fly me across the country?' Honestly, I probably would have paid for my own flight, I was so excited about the opportunity.

“One thing I want to always have is the excitement to perform and to share the messages that are within these songs,” he continues. “I still get giddy when people ask me to come and share my music. It’s such an honor and a privilege to do that, and I don’t take it lightly. Getting into music feels like a one-in-a-million shot. Your mom will like your music, and your friends will, too, but what about other people? It’s a big question.”

Bremnes’ musical aspirations come honestly, as they were his only aim even as a young child. He was drumming at his home church by the age of ten, and soon began to experiment with the guitar which led him into songwriting. He was soon leading worship and writing songs of his own, but it was during a pivotal six-month season with Youth With A Mission in Australia when Bremnes truly honed in on how he wanted to use his gifts.

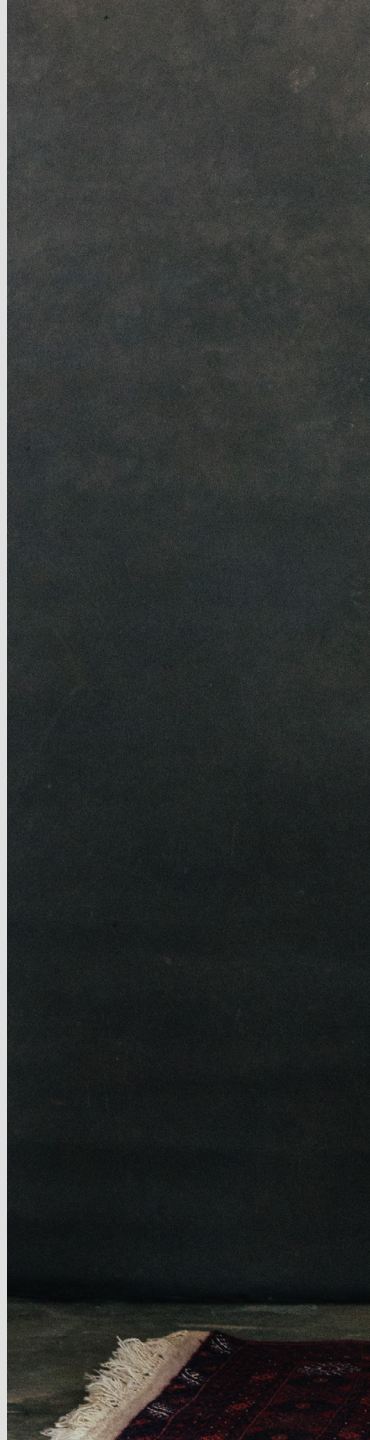
“While I was there, something happened in my life and God began working on my heart. I dug much deeper into my faith,” says Bremnes. “Something sort of clicked in me. After gaining more experiences to lead worship and share my faith, I began thinking about making my own music that was intentional on reaching people on a spiritual level. I wanted to come right out and speak about God and my relationship with Him.”

Unfortunately, Bremnes also endured an unexpected season of major trial that would shape his faith and his calling in very significant ways.

“I was working as a full-time carpenter around the time of the housing market crash, so when that hit I rapidly began to lose my main source of income,” Bremnes recalls. “It forced me to think about a lot of things, but God also used that time to remind me of my life-long passions for music. I realized that I had been given a window of opportunity, and I wanted to give it everything that I had.”

From that point forward, Bremnes made an all-in commitment to himself, and to God, to continue pursuing music as his primary vocation. As clarity seemed to have come out of chaos, even darker days were just around the corner for Dan Bremnes. While attending a friend’s wedding in another country, he received a phone call informing him that his mother had been killed in a car accident.

“That was the beginning of a very difficult season,” he says. “It was actually the darkest season of my life. I remember it being such a shock, and in the midst of all of that deep darkness, realizing just how much I needed a Savior. The Bible says Jesus is the light of the world, and it was through this I realized no matter how far away I was,







or how dark the shadows grew, there was nothing that could separate me from Jesus. He alone pulled me out of the darkness, and back into the light.

“Romans 8:28 says *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.* If anyone would have quoted that verse to me during those extremely dark times, I would have said there was no way any of that could be good. However, I can now attest to how God does bring beauty out of those situations. I don’t think tragedy is ever in God’s plans, but His timing for things can only be perfect and there isn’t anything that God can’t redeem.”

Those experiences gave birth to some of the most powerful tracks on Bremnes’ debut

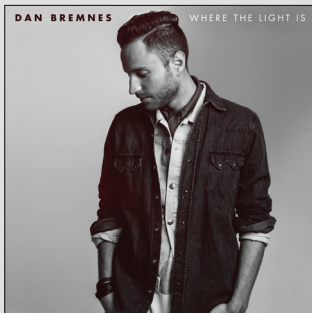
album, **Where The Light Is**. Many fans have already heard the hit single “Beautiful,” a memorable prayer to God where Bremnes sings, “*You’re making this life so beautiful.*” The title track and “In His Hands” are similarly powerful refrains that speak of God’s love and faithfulness.

Such subjects have always surrounded Bremnes, after all he did grow up in the church as the son of a pastor. However, he says it wasn’t until he endured trials of his own that these concepts became real and meaningful to him. After four dates with **The Afters** and **Hawk Nelson**, he’s finding out that his message and experience is resonating with others who feel the same way.

“It’s awesome to always be surrounded by Christianity, but there’s also another edge to it,” says Bremnes. “You grow very accustomed to it. You take it for granted. I didn’t know what true darkness was—I never really had to struggle. I would see a lot of people come from dark backgrounds and Jesus would save them, and I always thought, ‘I wonder what that’s like.’”

“After a while, I came into the realization that Jesus isn’t just for people outside of the church. Jesus also came for me. It may come across as sounding backward, but my experiences led me to my need for the gospel, my desire to live in and for the light. In a unique way, I feel like I get to represent a certain group of people that has felt jaded with church, who feel like the gospel isn’t alive or real. The journey that I have been on has become

very real for me, and I want to keep on living out that example for others.” **CCM**



+ **READ OUR REVIEW OF “WHERE THE LIGHT IS” FROM THE JUNE 1, 2015 EDITION OF CCM MAGAZINE ON CCMMAGAZINE.COM.**

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MINI TO THE MAX

Vocal Giant KEVIN MAX Proves That Big Talent Comes To Small Venues

BY LAYLA VELASQUEZ

It was a moderately sized room in a strip center in a semi-rural Houston suburb. Floodwaters had ravaged the metropolis for the last several days, and the fifty or so people in attendance were happy to talk about something other than the rain.

We sat restaurant-style at long oak tables in front of a tiny stage. Wait staff darted about, offering drinks, coffee and snacks, and hurried along before the lights dimmed.

The night opened with **Mike Roe**, front man for Christian alt rock pioneers, **The 77's**, and a patron saint of sorts for the second generation of alternative Christian music artists. Roe helped give a voice to an entire movement of gen-ex musicians aching to play a sound for which the church, at large, wasn't ready.

Roe performed three 77's songs including, "Hey Mama" while **The Choir's Steve Hindalong** joined on drums. After a short intermission, **Derri Daugherty** joined Roe and

Venue: The Dosey Doe Coffee House

Location: Conroe TX

Date: May 28, 2015



Hindalong for The Choir's set. The short set included hits like "Blue Sky," and the crowd-pleasing "Circle Slide." After another short intermission, **Kevin Max** took the stage.

Anyone expecting the enigmatic hipster that lit up every CCM bill through the 90s was curiously surprised. During The Choir's set, he sat politely with his band at a back table, a simple audience member enjoying good music. On stage, he was relaxed, humble, and genuine.

Far from exclusively being relegated to coffee-house-sized venues, Max's recent move toward a smaller stage is strategic. "House shows," he announced on his Facebook page, "whether you find them invasive or alluring, are becoming the future of artists. [They are] a bit awkward, a bit joyous, a lot of fun and really a great communal environment based on *music*. I have decided to open up the floodgates and do more of these." He has also expressed admiration for the house

church as it allows people to comfortably connect and engage rather than be a spectator, which is how some feel in traditional church settings.

His unpretentious nature made it hard to imagine that the man spent over a decade playing sold-out arenas. That Kevin Max seems to be a thing of the past. Instead, the audience met a mustached “stranger” in a suit, with a familiar crisp Michigan accent and a distinctive voice.

From the stage, Max admitted a certain feeling of disconnect from his old music—“I’m just not there. I look back at some of that stuff and I think, ‘I was so full of myself’”—then launched into the **dc Talk** favorite “What If I Stumble.” While performed masterfully, it seemed a bit of an odd choice. Against the backdrop of the low-key venue, one must wonder if it was an implied apology or perhaps remorse for not wholly conforming to the perceived CCM image.

Next up was “That Was Then And This Is Now,” a feel-good pop number from his new album, ***Broken Temples***. He followed it with “Stranded 72.5,” from the EP ***Between the Fence and the Universe*** (2004).

A Kevin Max show would not be complete without a recitation of his poetry, which he read directly from his MacBook. The first installment was an unnamed tongue-in-cheek call to redraw the image of Christian fundamentalism, and the second, a worship piece entitled “Landscape.”

The show reached its climax with Max’s rendition of **U2**’s “40,” an ever safe choice for any artsy church musician. “This is not a rebel song,” he joked (quoting **Bono**’s line in “Under the Blood Red Sky,” referencing the hesitance of many Christians to accept bands like U2). Roe joined the band on bass for this tune, and Max soared, matching Bono stride for stride.

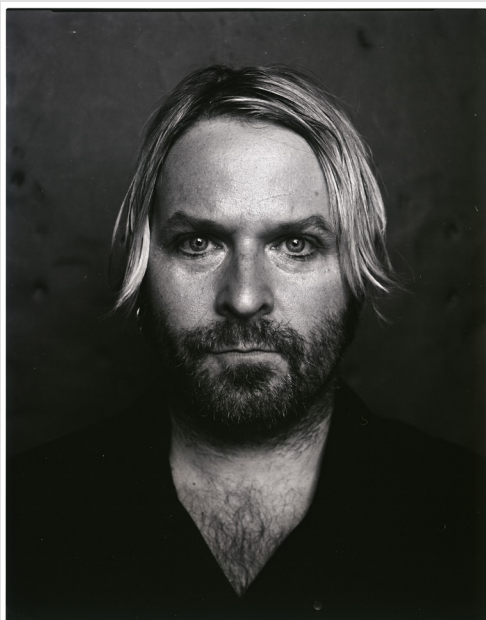
He then performed a rousing rendition of dc Talk’s “In the Light.” The magic of dc Talk

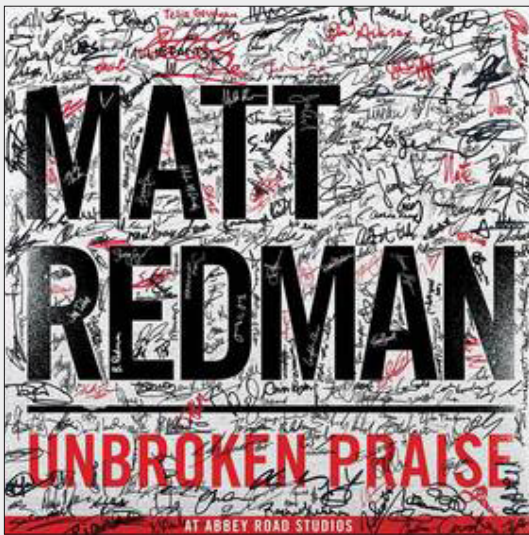
was their onstage collaboration, but Max carried it well on his own, allowing him to freely showcase his iconic vocal prowess that is a must-hear in person. After closing the show with the **Leonard Cohen/Jeff Buckley** classic, “Hallelujah,” Max exited the stage to mingle with the audience.

With the shift to smaller, more intimate spaces, one thing is clear: Max knows what he’s doing. In a world of big-budget, glitzy Christian concert extravaganzas, he is bucking the trend—again. Fusing stadium-sized talent with up-close-and-personal, Max is delivering a singular experience that is palpably warm, yet pulsingly electric. Avail yourself of any opportunity to experience it for yourself. You won’t soon forget it. **CCM**



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MATT REDMAN

Unbroken Praise (sixstepsrecords)
 FOR FANS OF: Chris Tomlin

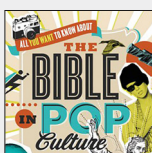
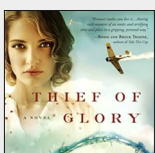


Matt Redman is nearing the 25-year mark as one of the world’s most recognized worship leaders, which makes every new release a greatly anticipated one. From “Better is One Day” to “10,000 Reasons (Bless the Lord),” Redman’s compositions have become anthems in the church for an entire generation, his reach spanning numerous continents while continuously growing.

Redman’s latest is *Unbroken Praise*, recorded at Abbey Road Studios, and is anchored by the single “It Is Well With My Soul.” What makes this project unique is that it was recorded live, as guests were brought in via special invitation (hence the attendee’s signatures on the official album cover). While the totality of it lacks a specific theme or direction, it is a solid set of eleven vertical songs that stand on their own. Along with the lead single, the title track, “Unbroken Praise,” and “King of My Soul” seem especially poised, to join his impressive catalogue of songs as widely-sung favorites.

—Matt Conner

IN THIS ISSUE



WE LIKE: “Unbroken Praise”



THE NEVERCLAIM

The Joy (Radiate)

FOR FANS OF: *Building 429, Sanctus Real, Audio Adrenaline*

★★★★☆

The Neverclaim's new indie pop-rock album, *The Joy*, reminds listeners that, through Christ, true joy can be found amidst the ups and downs of life. "Almost every song on this new project is centered around the joy of the Lord as our strength," says front man Jeremiah Carlson. The band leader worked alongside mates Chuck Hill (bass), Mitchell Maldonado (guitar/keys), and Beji George (drums) to create songs such as the upbeat medley "Our God Wins," the celebratory ode "Through Christ," and the rock-infused title track. The band's pop-rock style is fresh, energetic, and compelling—filled with songs that fans will want to listen to time and again.

—Rebekah Bell

WE LIKE: "Our God Wins"



JOY WILLIAMS

Venus (Sensibility Music)

FOR FANS OF: *The Civil Wars, The Lone Bellow, Kristine DiMarco*

★★★★★

Prepare to be wowed. Joy Williams' new album, *Venus*, blazes a new trail for the now-solo artist after a surprising break with John Paul White and their GRAMMY-winning duo, The Civil Wars. Even more, her return to making music on her own doesn't even resemble the pleasant pop structures of years gone by. Instead, *Venus* is a strong, confident statement of her own womanhood that stands among the year's most diverse pop releases.

From the tribal rhythms of "Woman (Oh Mama)" to the stadium-level energy of "Until The Levee Breaks," *Venus* is a powerful presentation of a very vulnerable journey inward to rediscover her artistry. She'll abandon all for this mission, including any hint of the acoustic accouterments from her recent success. It won't please all fans, but Williams seems content setting her own course.

—Matt Conner

WE LIKE: "What A Good Woman Does"

Anberlin—
**Never Take
 Friendship
 Personal**
 Live In
 New York
 City

ANBERLIN

**Never Take Friendship Personal -
 Live In New York City** (Tooth & Nail Records)
 FOR FANS OF: Emery, Copeland, Paramore

★★★★☆

Any longtime Anberlin fan is sure to recognize *Never Take Friendship Personal* as a crown jewel in the alternative rockers' catalogue. It only makes sense for its tenth anniversary to be commemorated with this concert captured at The Gramercy Theatre. Not only does the collection boast the pleading vocals of charismatic front man Stephen Christian alongside the band's anthemic delivery, but it also brings a slew of spiritually-probing, modern day classics to life, including "The Feel Good Drag" (which spent 29 weeks on the Billboard Alternative Songs Chart and eventually reached #1). And considering Anberlin officially called it a day in 2014 (after seven albums and a dozen groundbreaking years together), this souvenir of sing-a-longs is likely to fill a sizeable fan void, until of course an inevitable reunion comes to fruition.

—Andy Argyrakis

WE LIKE: "Paperthin Hymn"



MORGAN HARPER NICHOLS

Morgan Harper Nichols (Gotee)
 FOR FANS OF: Switchfoot

★★★★☆

Over seven years have passed since Jon Foreman last stepped into solo waters. Now *Sunlight* wades out as the first of four seasonally themed EPs that will give the Switchfoot front man a proper home for songs set apart from the band. With 24 tunes in total, Foreman is matching his previous offerings in quantity and quality with the vulnerable series, *The Wonderlands*.

Opening with the aforementioned *Sunlight* and closing with *Dawn*, Foreman's new solo sets show a deep consideration of a life lived in both darkness and light. "Terminal," the lead track, is an enchanting treatise on mortality and might just be among the best songs Foreman's ever penned. "Caroline" is already a viral hit, and "All of God's Children" provides a powerful unifying reminder that "all of God's children shine underneath."

—Matt Conner

WE LIKE: "Terminal"



SADA K.
Long Story Short
 (Self-Released)
 FOR FANS OF: Blanca,
 Press Play, Britt Nicole
 ★★★★★☆

Chances are Christian music fans first became familiar with Sada K. as a member of pop group Press Play, though after being dealt a debilitating, career-shattering knee injury, the singer/songwriter was forced to take a four-year hiatus. Now solo, the fully recovered survivor covers themes of testing, surrender, triumph and thanksgiving on a colorful collection that volleys between soulful ballads, rhythmic pop and danceable celebrations, enhanced all the more by cutting edge collaborations with Jonathan Thulin and Chief Wakil.

—Andy Argyrakis

WE LIKE: “Live Laugh Love”



MIKE LEE
All I Need
 (Self-Released)
 FOR FANS OF: Leeland,
 Matt Redman, Charlie Hall
 ★★★★★☆

Singer/songwriter/worship leader and even mixed martial arts master Mike Lee makes another artistic and spiritual leap forward on this impressive EP produced by Cody Norris, Scott Cash and Ed Cash (Chris Tomlin, David Crowder). Though written during a season of change and restlessness (including newfound fatherhood, his own dad’s cancer diagnosis and balancing two careers), the vertically-tinted project overflows with a peaceful confidence in Christ, conveyed though Lee’s rousing vocals and his longtime band’s understated but tastefully framed instrumentation.

—Andy Argyrakis

WE LIKE: “Awaken Me”



THE ONGOING CONCEPT
Handmade (Solid State)
 FOR FANS OF:
 Fit For A King, Exiting The Fall
 ★★★★★☆

The Ongoing Concept made an immediate impression with their fresh approach and instrumentation on the Western-tinged *Saloon* in 2013. The Solid State band has significantly upped their game from an already elevated platform with *Handmade*, an album that stays true to its name with handmade instruments and an even greater imaginative slant. Lest you think they’re too left of center, the intensity of “Trophy” shows they’re rooted even as they branch out.

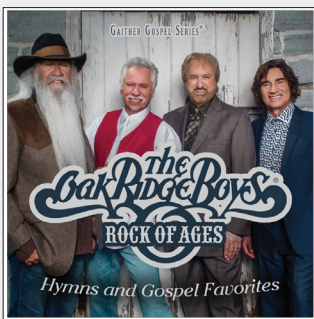
—Matt Conner

WE LIKE: “Trophy”

WORSHIP

SOUTHERN

POP



CHRIS MCCLARNEY
Everything And Nothing Less

(Jesus Culture Music, Capitol CMG)

FOR FANS OF: Crowder, The Brilliance, Paul Carrack

★★★★☆

OAK RIDGE BOYS
Rock Of Ages: Hymns & Gospel Favorites

(Gaither Music Group)

FOR FANS OF: Gaither Vocal Band, Alabama, Johnny Cash

★★★★☆

VARIOUS ARTISTS
Living Hope (Pizza Ranch, Inc.)

FOR FANS OF: Christian music across all genres
★★★★★

From the writer that penned “Your Love Never Fails” (a Top 25 CCLI most popular), nine originals are featured on Chris McClarney’s live album *Everything And Nothing Less*. The vocals are the biggest star here—passion seems to drip off of every performed lyric, making it impossible to ignore McClarney’s anointing in addition to expected worshipful responses from its listener. If you’re looking for both a current, yet intimate worship collection, you will find it here.

–Kevin Sparkman

Seek the definition of a successful crossover act and there you will find the Oak Ridge Boys. For their latest offering in an ongoing and illustrious career, they once again take it back to their gospel roots on *Rock Of Ages*. For those needing an “Oh Brother, Where Art Thou” flavor on hymnal favorites, look no further. With a collection of songs that rival any Gaither homecoming, the ‘Boys provide for a proper Americana feel on gospel favorites and more.

–Kevin Sparkman

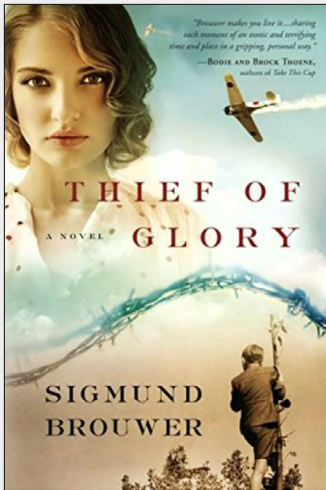
We like pizza (who doesn’t?), but love Christian music more. When we heard about the *Living Hope* compilation, the brainchild of Christian-owned restaurant chain Pizza Ranch, Inc., it sounded too tasty to be true. It delivers, however, featuring new music from Michael W. Smith, Francesca Battistelli, Bart Millard of MercyMe, and an acoustic version of “Day One” by Matthew West. As with the variety of toppings you can enjoy on pizza, there’s a little something for everyone on this unique collection of Christian music.

–Kevin Sparkman

WE LIKE: “God Of Miracles”

WE LIKE: “Hold To God’s Unchanging Hand”

WE LIKE: “Panic Button” by Kevin Max



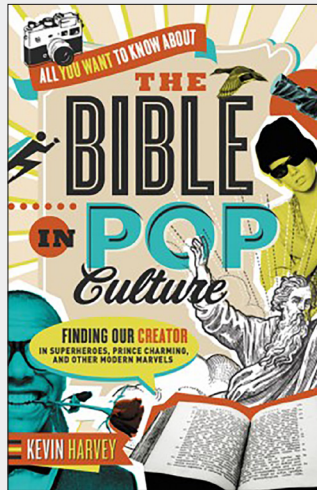
THIEF OF GLORY

Sigmund Brouwer (Waterbrook Press)

★★★★☆

Sigmund Brouwer has remained a household name among readers of all ages for over two decades. With thrillers like *Out of the Shadows* and 2011's chilling *The Canary List*, Brouwer has gripped his adult readership with a consistent diet of hair-raising suspense novels resulting in nearly four million books in print. For his most recent, *Thief of Glory*, Brouwer pens from a more personal perspective. Centered by ten-year old Jeremiah Prin, the wartime dissolution of his family and the budding love story between he and his young friend Laura, this breathtaking tale poignantly documents the physical, emotional and psychological trauma of war while exposing slivers of light from the main characters' persistent hope cultivated by deep spiritual perspectives from the heart. *Thief of Glory* is a most-compelling novel. And the story it births will fortify even the most desperate of souls with eternal hope.

—Andrew Greer



ALL YOU WANT TO KNOW ABOUT THE BIBLE IN POP CULTURE

Kevin Harvey (Thomas Nelson)

★★★★☆

With razor-sharp wit and spot-on observations about Christianity in modern culture, Kevin Harvey delivers a critical commentary that's as entertaining as it is thought provoking. Making it clear he's not endorsing pop culture as theological foundation, he identifies Biblical themes, ideas and principles from films (*Noah*, *Son of God*, *The Avengers*, *Spider-Man*, etc.), television (such as *Lost* and reality-based shows), and music (Christina Perri, Mumford & Sons, etc.). While some of the analogies may seem a bit of a stretch, Harvey's recurrent observations are sound. Because of their display of human emotion, depravity, and the God-created need for a Savior, the aforementioned examples have mass appeal and often conjure spiritual thought despite the creator's intentions. The takeaway for Christians is that the proliferation of Biblical ideas, portrayed accurately or not, has value as a conversation starter. As Harvey implies, pop-culture offers partial truths and it does ask poignant questions. However, it's up to the church to deliver the whole truth.

—Caroline Lusk



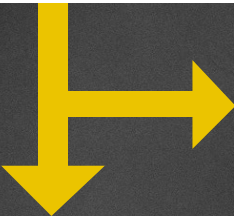
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