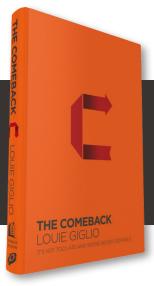


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#### From the Editor

#### **STEVEN CURTIS CHAPMAN**

With 48 No. 1's to his credit, it's hard to imagine a songwriting feat Steven Curtis Chapman can't conquer. Yet, the iconic artist recently surmounted his biggest musical challenge to date, spurred on by a little help from his friends. (photo: Jeremy Cowart)



#### **WOW HITS TURNS TWENTY**

Hear from the executives that brought you the hits that have shaped the past twenty years of WOW compilations—featuring Bill Hearn, Terry Hemmings, and Rod Riley



#### **HOLLYN**

We catch up with newcomer Hollyn and chat with her about touring with some of Christian music's biggest stars, and making #1 records with Toby Mac. (photo: Lee Steffen)



Hillsong Young & Free, WOW Hits, Consumed By Fire, Tracy Randall + much more!







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**Live generously, and love wastefully** | A former colleague permanently planted that quote, "Live generously, and love wastefully," underneath the signature line on his emails. As I prepare for the release of the March 15, 2016 edition of **CCM Magazine**, admittedly, I have just two things on my mind: 1) Getting married this Saturday, and 2) Easter Sunday (March 27).

As my fiance, **Kimberly**, and I have been preparing for our big day for the last several months, it wasn't until this week that I began to think about the correlation between Christ's ultimate act of love, and marriage. Jesus said, (John 15:12-14, MSG) This is my command: Love one another the way I loved you. This is the very best way to love. Put your life on the line for your friends. You are my friends when you do the things I command you.

Thankfully, most Americans don't have to live in a daily reality where we have to think about our spouse in the context of life or death—at least, not yet. But Christ came to earth, and each day He lived, knowing that the cross was on the horizon. This act of love cost Him something (everything), allowing each of us to receive a most awesome gift.

As I think about actively loving my soon-to-be spouse, I want to remember Jesus' reminder, that This is the very best way to love. Am I loving wastefully—is it costing me something? He died so that we may fully live.



Blessings **Kevin Sparkman** Editor, CCM Magazine

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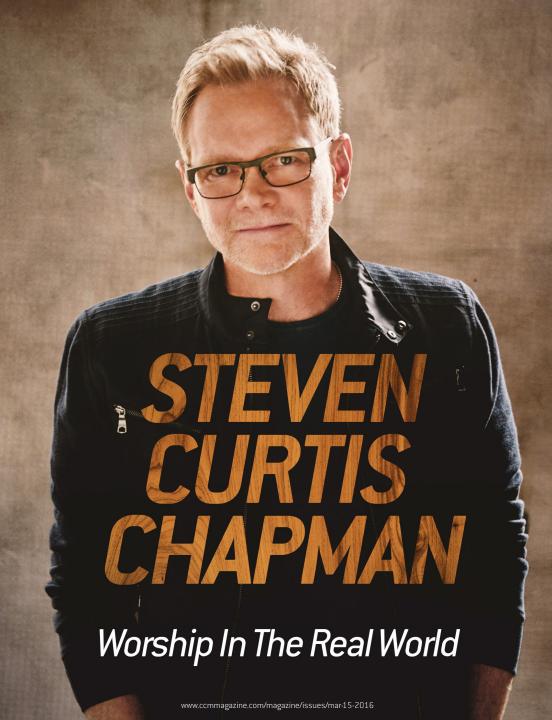






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### Steven Curtis Chapman Worship In The Real World

With 48 No. 1's to his credit, it's hard to imagine a songwriting feat Steven Curtis Chapman can't conquer. Yet, the iconic artist recently surmounted his biggest musical challenge to date, spurred on by a little help from his friends.

#### BY LINDSAY WILLIAMS

**Steven Curtis Chapman** has been Christian music's premier storyteller for nearly three decades. Through the years, his long line of hits has given listeners a glimpse at the man behind the microphone. His signature love song, "I Will Be Here," was written as a declaration of unwavering commitment to his wife, **Mary Beth**, following his parents' divorce. His massive hit, "Dive," was inspired by a sermon at his local church, and the tender "Cinderella" was born from nightly bedtime rituals with his young daughters. If anything, Chapman's vast discography reads like a memoir of his life.

Now, the five-time GRAMMY® winner is unveiling the next chapter in his personal narrative with the release of his twenty-third studio album, *Worship And Believe* (Essential Records)—his first official worship project and his most challenging effort to date.

"To write songs that are just marinating in the truth of God's Word in a corporate sense was a really daunting and intimidating thing for me," Chapman confesses. "I would say, if not the most challenging project, it was definitely up there among the most challenging. I really do think

as far as writing, I challenged myself the hardest on anything, just because it felt so important that it was right."

That's quite a statement considering Chapman is the most awarded artist in Christian music history with fifty-eight **Dove Awards** to his name. Yet, the beloved songwriter is far more comfortable penning a lyric from personal experience than he is creating a chorus that's a vertical expression of praise.

"As a craftsman of songs, I love poetry; I love story. I love to put those to music. The songs that have impacted me deeply are often just the songs that allow me to take a journey with someone in their story, which is, I'm sure, why I write the kinds of songs I do. They're more story songs. They're little pages from my journal," he explains. "Trying to craft [songs] in a way that makes them simple enough to sing, but not simplistic in a way that they're not communicating all the depths of [God]—that's what's so hard. If anything, [worship] songs need to be the richest in theology."

Chapman candidly admits he's been reluctant to spearhead a worship record because there was a time when he felt like he wasn't connecting with worship music personally. "If I was really honest, at times I've felt with some worship music that, as much as I want to be on the inside, I feel like I'm sometimes on the outside looking in," he shares. "There was that part of me that would feel like I'm looking around [at church], and I don't know if I'm getting what everybody else is getting from this experience. And it's not that there's anything wrong with them or with the experience; it's something wrong with me. I'm not spiritual enough. I'm not going deep enough. I'm not doing it right. I felt like, I don't know what I'm missing in this, but I feel like there is something missing."

And then May 21, 2008 happened, and everything changed.

#### **MARIA**

At five years old, **Maria Sue Chapman** was the youngest of the singer's three adopted children, and one fateful afternoon in May, a tragic accident took her life in the family's driveway. To say that Chapman's life was transformed from that moment forward would be an understatement. His youngest son was driving the car that accidentally struck Maria, and his other young daughters were outside playing and witnessed it. In that moment, he immediately felt the overwhelming responsibility of leading his family through this unspeakable tragedy.

"The weight was, as you can imagine, just crushing," he says.

At the time, Chapman wasn't sure he'd ever sing again. Eventually, he found his voice and poured his heart out on 2009's *Beauty Will Rise* (Sparrow), a raw collection of gut-wrenching songs that found Chapman in the throes of unanswered questions, suffocating sorrow and unfathomable grief.

"I never ever want to write another *Beauty Will Rise* record again," Chapman admits. "It cost too much."

Eight years later, the gaping hole in the Chapman family left by Maria is still acutely felt. Unable to live in the house filled with so many memories of their little girl, they tore down their home and rebuilt it. Eventually, the family entered some brighter days marked by celebratory milestones. The oldest Chapmans—Emily, Caleb and Will—all got married, and Steven and Mary Beth became grandparents for the first time. Today, the Chapmans have four grandchildren—three

girls who belong to Emily and one boy who belongs to Caleb. Like their dad, Caleb and Will set their emotions to music and embarked on a new journey with their alt-pop band **Colony House**, and experienced massive success behind their debut, *When I Was Younger* (**Descendent Records**). Meanwhile, Chapman's youngest daughters—**Shaohannah** and **Stevey**—have blossomed into teenagers; and Steven and Mary Beth continue to serve as tireless advocates for orphan care through their organization **Show Hope**, which extended its 5,000th grant last year.

Chapman is back to touring and recording, yet Maria's loss lingers. There's no escaping the loss of a child at any age, and the singer still can't recount the day's events without tears collecting in his eyes. "We're still on the journey," he concedes, "and we're not through it and it's not behind us and we're not over it."

#### WHEN WORSHIP BECAME REAL

It was in the days following Maria's death that worship began to take on a whole new meaning for the father of six.

"In those early moments, it was like a black hole," Chapman recalls. "I literally felt like sinking into this dark, dark place that had no bottom and had no end. It was just darkness, and it was all the questions of my family: What about my son? What about my little girls? What about my wife? What about our marriage? Most marriages don't survive a loss like this. What's the implication of all of this? And somewhere in the midst of that I began to hear myself whisper—because I really couldn't sing at that point—the song my friend **Matt Redman** wrote coming from **Job** just saying, 'God, You give and You take away. Blessed be the name of the Lord."

Redman's song became an anthem for the entire family as they navigated those first stages of grief. In fact, Chapman reached out to his friend after loosing Maria to ask if he could come and sing "Blessed Be Your Name" at her funeral. Redman was at the airport on his way back home to the U.K. when he got the call. He immediately left the airport, got a car and drove back to Nashville.

"I'll never forget my family and I standing there. It was not a super look-how-spiritual-we-are-in-this-moment thing. It was out of absolute desperation that we put our hands in the air and, in essence, handed our little girl and everything that we understood over to God," Chapman says, reflecting back on the memorial service as he gathered with his family singing the lyrics to Redman's song, among others.

"We would sing, 'It is well with my soul,' and it wasn't well with anything in my world at that moment," Chapman recounts, "but [we were] dropping an anchor, driving a stake in the ground saying, 'But I'm going to declare this.' To get from here to here, I've got to hear my mouth say, 'God's faithful'"

In the long months that followed, he says, "I would take a breath and say, 'Blessed be the name of the Lord' and worship Him, and then I found I had more oxygen for the next breath and I was a little stronger."

The singer also found solace in David's **Psalms** in his darkest hour. "I began to go back and read the beginning of those chapters, and so many times those Psalms that end with these great celebration songs start with 'How long, Oh Lord? God, are you going to forget me forever? I'm going down in the mire. The world is closing in around me. I'm done for," Chapman observes. "I began to realize the Psalms [are God saying],

'Pour your heart out to Me. Pour it all out. Pour out the questions. Pour the doubt. Pour the fear. Pour all of that out. Be honest about it.'"

The truth of Scripture rooted in many worship songs began to be the very thing Chapman clung to. "Belief has to start in unbelief. It's got to start with, 'God, this is what I don't understand right now.' And God doesn't ever tell us not to do that," Chapman offers. "We have this hope as an anchor—that's what Scripture talks about. We drop anchor in the promises of God, and here comes another wave of doubt, or wave of pain, or wave of confusion; and those waves keep hitting and keep knocking us loose, but we keep dropping anchor. And for me, that's what some of these worship songs became."

#### THE STORY

In 2013, Chapman embarked on *The Story Tour* along with several other high-profile artists and author and speaker **Randy Frazee**, who serves as the co-pastor alongside **Max Lucado** at San Antonio's **Oak Hills Church**. As he and Chapman developed a friendship, he began to tell the singer about a new curriculum project he was working on called *Believe*. As Frazee revealed his own doubts and questions surrounding the mysteries of God, Chapman felt his heart ringing like a bell. He thought it might finally be time to try his hand at writing a collection of corporate worship songs as the soundtrack to Frazee's Believe project.

"[I was thinking], 'Now I have the perspective of my own journey to where if I were to sit down and write corporate worship music, it would be coming from a very different place of how powerful that's been for me to have those truths to declare and to anchor to," Chapman says. "So, that's really where the Worship And Believe project began and how the songs began to come together."

Considering himself a worship rookie, the award-winning artist began writing with a lack of confidence and a lot of trepidation. "[I thought], 'I don't know if I can do this. I don't know if I have the tools to craft these songs as good as they need to be,' because these aren't the kinds of songs that I naturally write. This isn't what I've spent years and years honing. This is, in many ways, a different kind of craft," Chapman maintains.

Thus, he called in the "trained professionals" for co-writing sessions. **Chris Tomlin**, **Redman**, **Matt Maher** and **Rend Collective** were just a few of the A-list worship writers Chapman enlisted to help bring the songs on *Worship And Believe* to life. "I did call some of those guys and go, 'Help! Tell me if I'm crazy... Tell me if I'm anywhere even close to doing this well because you do this regularly," he shares.

In addition, Chapman led worship at his local church several Sundays in order to try out his new material with a live congregation. This led to numerous rewrites and often ditching songs altogether.

"There were songs I rewrote about fourteen different ways until I finally got to the right version," he reveals. "There were definitely ideas that would get scrapped along the way."

During the recording process, Matt Maher, who co-wrote and guests on "Hallelujah, You Are Good," offered the multi-platinum artist some welcome advice. "He just sat and listened and cried with me as I shared my story and was taking notes the whole time," Chapman recalls. "He was a great encouragement [and said], 'You know what, I believe in this process and what your heart is in this, and I think people will connect with that. I want to encourage you to release yourself from the rules

or the formula... Just write these songs from your heart and trust that people are going to connect with those in the way that God wants them to' ... That was a real gift."

Chapman also looked to the late **Rich Mullins** as a model for how he desired to approach this worship recording. "I think what I loved about Rich's version of corporate worship is that there was just this honesty in his songs that I think always kind of drew me in," he offers. "You felt like you were looking into the heart of the guy leading you. He wasn't just giving you a song to sing, but he was taking you into his own journey. There was that honesty and that kind of frailty and weakness and brokenness of the ragamuffin that he was. I could relate to that. I could connect to that."

Chapman's unsure how the songs on *Worship And Believe* will play out in his set list. After Maria passed away, he began ending his nightly concerts with a time of worship, so integrating them feels natural. Admittedly, he acknowledges longtime Steven Curtis fans come to hear the hits, but these new tracks will undoubtedly make their way into his set list each evening. He'll share the stage with **Third Day** on the *SCC3D Tour* beginning April 2016.

Despite the fact that he's officially dipped his toe into the worship pool, don't expect Worship And Believe to propel him on the paths artists like Tomlin tread (and have paved). Chapman feels a sense of satisfaction with the songs on the new album, but he's content to stay in his lane and continue his tradition of storytelling—one song at a time.

"I have a sense that this is one of the chapters God had me to tell and to write... [worship has been] an important part of my journey, and I'm very thankful that for as long as my music is around, that will be a part of what I was able to offer and encourage people with," Chapman shares. "I feel like if this is one volume of how God would use this instrument of Steven Curtis Chapman, then tune me up and pull me off the rack and say, 'I'm going to tune this guy up and use him."



tuenty years.

# Twenty Years of WOW

With such an impression on retail and culture, it's hard to believe we've only been WOWED for just the past twenty years. Since 1996, the WOW franchise has been the definitive model for compiling the best in Christian music—now that's what we call, impact.

#### BY KEVIN SPARKMAN

For Christian music fans—even ones that have been around as long as me—it seems that the *WOW Hits* brand of compilation albums have always been there, kind-of like a life-long friend of sorts. So, late last year, when **Provident** announced that in March 2016 they would be releasing the *Wow Hits: 20th Anniversary* edition, I sat back in my chair and said to myself, "Has it really only been twenty years?"

The answer, is obviously, "Yes," but perhaps the indelible mark this partnership has had on our musical conscious is due to the release of dozens of titles that have happened every single year since the inaugural **WOW 1996** debuted in late 1995. These include spinoff's featuring the best in gospel, music, rock, and the occasional

Christmas, jazz, DVD, and decade-themed projects. Time flies when you're having fun—and putting out tons of records.

In celebration of this milestone, *CCM Magazine* wanted to hear from a few of the musical (marketing) geniuses that have brought us these memorable pieces that have, at some point or other, entered most our lives. We'll also offer a track-by-track commentary from the songs that comprise this year's anniversary release, listed by class year of release.

# When the WOW partnership initially formed, what were the original goals?

Bill Hearn, President/CEO of Capitol Christian Music Group:

The WOW partnership was established in the summer of 1995 with the first release, *WOW 1996* in November of 1995. Our goals were to introduce more people to the genre of Christian music by mirroring the pattern of the hugely popular pop compilation series in the United Kingdom, *Now That's What I Call Music*, which combined the best songs and artists from across the industry. Compilations were not a big part of the U.S. market at the time and many people doubted the consumer would respond as they did in the U.K. Quite to the contrary, WOW 1996 was a huge success and the beginning of a

When WOW began twenty years ago, did your expectations of the brand envision thirty-plus million units sold?

series of products that would help grow the Christian and eventually

Gospel category of music significantly.

**Terry Hemmings, President/CEO Provident Music Group:** It would be hard to say anyone's expectations were as high as the results as they have been extraordinary. Our hopes were that

we would see comparable results to what NOW was doing in the United Kingdom but there was no known market for compilations of this nature and we were still working to get Christian Music into some mainstream outlets. That said, I am not surprised at the success WOW has experienced given that the consumer receives all of the big CCM songs for the year in one high value package. More importantly, WOW became a trusted, reliable brand for both casual and committed Christian music fans who became repeat buyers for themselves and others.

## How do feel that the WOW brand has impacted the Christian music industry as a whole?

Rod Riley, President/CEO of Word Entertainment: The WOW brand has been a powerful, consistent, and dependable discovery tool for fans, putting the best Christian music in front of listeners for two decades. The music that fans have heard on WOW over twenty years has deepened their connection with artists they already loved, and simultaneously introduced them to others. The impact of WOW on the Christian music industry as a whole is positively staggering.

#### Why is the WOW brand important to the music buyer?

**Hearn:** The WOW compilation series is important to the music fan for two important reasons among many others, first it serves as an annual collection of the best of the best songs and artists of that particular year curated in one physical or digital package with a very affordable price. Second, the high value and best of the best songs in one package makes the WOW series an incredible gift or introduction to the genre of Christian and Gospel music to a friend or family member.

# As you reflect on the songs and artists included on the WOW Hits 20th Anniversary project, is there a particular memory or story that stands out to you?

Hemmings: I certainly remember the day Bill [Hearn] shared the idea of WOW. It wasn't crazy, but it was untested, and we initially faced some skepticism. That said, I am not surprised at the success WOW has experienced given that the consumer receives all of the big CCM songs for the year in one high value package. But perhaps the most important impact of WOW is the work that has been accomplished utilizing the charitable funds generated. Over the years, numerous ministries and care organizations have been the beneficiaries of grants created specifically from WOW earnings. Additionally, the WOW partners have sponsored industry events and opportunities to gather and give back. I remember a day spent filling bags with food being sent to feed children in poverty stricken areas. Hundreds of members of our community participated and enjoyed a time of fellowship together. This all grew from Bill's idea, which turned out to be a good one.

#### Where do you want to see WOW going in the next 20 years?

**Riley:** As we reflect on the first twenty impactful years of the WOW brand, I am excited about the enormous potential that lies ahead for the next twenty years. I would love to see the WOW brand itself continuing to expand where fans live and breathe, ultimately continuing to connect our artists and their music to existing and new consumers. The depth and breadth of the creative community within Christian music is undeniable; I see the WOW brand continuing to be an effective vehicle in reflecting this to music fans everywhere.

WOW Hits: 20th Anniversary track listing by class, with commentary from CCM managing editor, Kevin Sparkman (some factual information found with the creative use of an internet machine, and Wikipedia):

#### **Class of 1995**

Jars Of Clay, "Flood" (from self-titled album)

Game changer. For me, personally, this song—and entire album—plunged me completely into a life-long love of Christian music (and by "completely," I mean fully immersed, pun intended). I can (only) imagine there are many of you that can claim a similar experience. If this album came out in the cassette era, I probably would have had to buy multiple copies (we can explain why later, if you're confused).

DC Talk, "Jesus Freak" (from Jesus Freak)

Okay, so, 1995 was BIG for Christian music, no wonder WOW was birthed during this year! Not sure DC Talk will enjoy a bigger hit than "Jesus Freak." The group disbanded after their last album, Supernatural (1998)—which was their best, IMHO. The trio have done okay for themselves since, with TobyMac and Kevin Max enjoying huge and creative solo careers, and Michael Tait now fronting one of the biggest bands on the planet (Newsboys, see Class of 2011).

#### **Class of 1996**

Point Of Grace, "Keep The Candle Burning" (from *Life Love & Other Mysteries*)

Y'all, these gals were HUGE, and they killed it with this memorable track. I contend that in sea of a lot of really BAD music in 90s, there were some truly groundbreaking songs released in the Christian

market during this decade that are unrivaled by any genre at the time. Between 1995-2001, Point Of Grace released sixteen consecutive No. 1 singles. This deserves a resounding, "wow!"

Jaci Velasquez, "On My Knees" (from *Heavenly Place*)
What. A. Song. This is the kind of song that will ALWAYS stop you in your tracks, and compel you toward a personal moment of worship with God, when and wherever you might be. Velasquez was recently a featured performing artist and co-host on CCM United's We Are United, where she performed this hit, and she can be heard every morning on the syndicated Family Friendly Morning Show with Doug & Jaci on FISH Networks nationwide (plus, her office is just down the hall from mine...so cool!).

#### **Class of 1997**

If you don't remember this song being EVERYWHERE in the late 90s, you were either not yet born, too young, or living under a rock. Former member Jody McBrayer released his latest solo project just this year, Michael Passons has recently been playing for Class of

'96 artist Point Of Grace, and Greg and Janna Long are still leading worship and recording projects of their own.

#### **Class of 1999**

Steven Curtis Chapman, "Dive" (from Speechless)

Avalon, "Testify To Love" (from A Maze Of Grace)

Heading into a new century, Steven Curtis takes a dive, and has one of his biggest hits of all time on probably his most memorable album to date. However, with his brand new, and first-ever worship album, Worship And Believe, releasing just one week ago to critical acclaim, perhaps we're now all witnesses to the next successful era for SCC?

#### Class of 2000

Nicole C. Mullen, "Redeemer" (from self-titled album)
A landmark song by a classy artist, who happens to be an even more classy person. In my opinion, one of the most important Christian songs to be written in our lifetime, it's a no-brainer to be included here.

#### Class of 2001

MercyMe, "I Can Only Imagine" (from *Almost There*) Might be one of Christian music's biggest singles of all time, but do you remember that it as just the fifth track (but leas single) on Almost There in 2001? Its crossover into mainstream radio in 2003-04 propelled the song, and the band, to enormous new heights, and they haven't looked back.

Michael W. Smith, "Above All" (from Worship)

Recorded live in Lakeland, FL, this album marked the CCM pioneer's foray into the worship market, making a gigantic splash along the way. In addition to this leading song, the album is full of genuinely passionate moments of praise that will live on...forever.

#### Class of 2003

Switchfoot, "Dare You To Move" (from *The Beautiful Letdown*) If Jars Of Clay was the album of the 90s, The Beautiful Letdown is the album of the 00s. This song has transcended genres and formats—I'm amazed at the number of times I hear this being used on network television sports montages (or similar mediums), still to this day.

#### Class of 2004

Casting Crowns, "Who Am I" (from self-titled album)
One of the band's biggest hits, it is now certified RIAA Gold (more

than 500,000 copies sold). Co-written by Class of '99 artist Steven Curtis Chapman, this single was featured on Crowns' debut album. Lead singer, Mark Hall, has recently chronicled his fight with cancer via social media (something that was in its infancy at the time this song became a hit), and we're happy to report that he continues to improve, sing, and tour.

#### Class of 2005

Chris Tomlin, "How Great Is Our God" (from *Arriving*) You've heard the stat: Chris Tomlin is the most sung songwriter in the world. In a 2013 article, Relevant Magazine worded Tomlin's status, "Earth's most sung artist." To that, we just say, appropriately enough... "wow."

Third Day, "Cry Out To Jesus" (from *Wherever You Are*) Billboard listed this hit as the #15 Hot Christian song of the 2000s, it reached to #1 on the Billboard Christian Songs chart in 2005. The song won a Dove Award for Best Pop/Contempoary song, and the album where it resides won a GRAMMY.

Natalie Grant, "Held" (from Awaken)

Grant won the Dove Award for Female Vocalist of the Year when "Held" and Awaken were both nominated for Song and Album awards that year. Since then, she has one of the largest social media followings in Christian music, has hosted a television reality series, is a spokeswoman against human trafficking, has had three children ... and has made a lot more great music, too!

Amy Grant, "El Shaddai (2005)" (from *Rock Of Ages... Hymns Of Faith*) Amy's in a class all her own. Her 80s mega hit gets revamped in 2005, proving that some songs really can, and will, stand the test of time.

#### Class of 2008

Jeremy Camp, "There Will Be A Day" (from Speaking Louder Than Before)

The title of this album eventually led to Camp launching his own ministry, Speaking Louder Ministries, which has taken he and teams to all parts of the world in the name of Jesus Christ. To date, they have been to Guatemala, India, Kyrgyzstan, and Ukraine.

Francesca Battistelli, "Free To Be Me" (from *My Paper Heart*) The ultimate Christian, top down, windows down, speeding away from work on a Friday afternoon (at only 5 MPH over, of course) freedom song! Yeah, we imagine this one is on more than a few "road trip" playlists.

Tenth Avenue North, "By Your Side" (from *Over And Underneath*) Guys all over Christian college campuses in the late 00s thought they finally had the most appropriate break-up apology song, complete with permission to "have hands that are holding you..." That is until the second verse kicks in. Oh well, I guess they had to keep holding on to their More To This Life cassettes until Dave Barnes' "God Gave Me You" came along.

Brandon Heath, "Give Me Your Eyes" (from *What If We*) As the second-most played song at Christian radio in 2008, with its swingy beat and poignant message, it's safe to say this was on the top of many "theme song" lists that year.

#### Class of 2009

NEEDTOBREATHE, "Something Beautiful" (from *The Outsiders*) We'll just ask one question: Name another artist/band that creatively uses their name as part of a lyric in their own hit song? Note the use of the word, "creatively," here (hip hop artists, Monkees, The Who, Queen, and The KLF won't count!).

David Crowder Band, "How He Loves" (from *Church Music*)
Do you remember the first time you sang the lyric, "And Heaven meets earth, like a sloppy wet kiss?" Admit it, you did a double-take—it's okay, we know you're personally not responsible for its more G-rated upgrade, "unforeseen kiss."

#### Class of 2011

Newsboys, "God's Not Dead (Like A Lion)" (from *God's Not Dead*) As CCM Contributing Editor Matt Conner recently asked, "Will anything ever slow the Newsboys?" Apparently the answer is, "no," but do we really want them to? As long as they continue to release ground-breaking, needle-moving, movement-shaking music like this song—now considered an anthem for a generation—we say, "full speed ahead."

#### Class of 2012

TobyMac, "Me Without You" (from Eye On It)

Problem is, which song do you really choose from this album? We're guessing the people at WOW Hits only had one TobyMac slot to fill, and this wasn't a bad choice. Makes us wonder...how many McKeehan tracks will there be on subsequent forms of the 20th Anniversary compilation albums to come (seriously, we don't know anything...just wishful thinking)?

Big Daddy Weave, "Redeemed" (from *Love Come To Life*) This stirring song is a CCM classic, will forever be, and a theme song for salvation stories the world over. Thank God for this song, and thank the Lord for all of our redemption stories.

Matthew West, "Hello, My Name Is" (from *Into The Light*) West has the uncanny ability to express in song what so many of our hearts are already singing. This particular song seems to culminate into so many of the things that distract us from the truths about God's defining love—so much of what makes Matthew West so great are all wrapped up into this one, we think that's why it's here.

#### Class of 2013

Mandisa, "Overcomer" (from Overcomer)

We love Mandisa, and fondly remember her documented and Christlike reaction to American Idol judge Simon Cowell's rude remarks of her during the nationally-aired 2006 competition, as she forgave him, lovingly, in Jesus' name. Leaving an impression on Cowell, her music continues to touch the lives of people the world over.

Hillsong UNITED, "Oceans (Where My Feet May Fall)" (from *Zion*) Can't imagine anyone who has attended church since the release of this song has yet to encounter it during worship at some point. This very well may end up carrying the banner for the modern worship movement experienced since the mid-90s.

#### Class of 2014

for KING & COUNTRY, "Fix My Eyes" (from *Run Wild. Live Free. Love Strong.*)
The "youngest" song on this list ironically comes from a couple

of guys who have been doing music a long, long time. If you're not jamming out to them in arenas across the country at a Winter Jam show, you're enjoying them on television being featured on the likes of Jimmy Kimmel Live and TODAY Show on NBC, to name a few.

#### Class of 1992-93

4Him, "The Basics Of Life" (from *The Basics Of Life, 1992*)
Audio Adrenaline, "Big House" (from *Don't Censor Me,* 1993)
The release of these songs predate the compilation's "twenty year"
theme, but we say, "Why NOT include them?" We recently heard
4Him perform at 2015's CCM United We Are United homecoming (for CCM artists,) and this quartet STILL has it! One of, if not THE best contemporary Christian vocal groups of all time. Audio A front man Mark Stuart has since stepped away from the limelight of the stage due to chronic vocal issues, but still oversees the Hands And Feet Project, as well as the band's legacy, as Audio Adrenaline has enjoyed recent success since the release of Sound Of The Saints last year. □□M

"Our family has a wilderness lodge in Alaska where I've worked as a guide for about twenty years. Basically, I keep people safe all summer while I show them big furry bears and whales bigger than our boat. Two years ago I was on the job when my doctor called....

# Being told you have stage-four cancer changes your life. It was no joke what we were faced with.

The survival rate is less than twenty percent. I prayed, 'God, how do I do this? You will lead me.

You will direct me. You will guide me.'

My wife and kids rallied around me. We spent time in daily prayer and worship, and they prayed scripture over me. It was five months of chemo, six weeks of radiation on a daily basis and then a tenhour surgery involving two specialists.

In total, the bills came to more than \$160,000, and our fellow Medi-Share members shared nearly every cent! I felt incredibly supported through it all.

Medi-Share is family—people who stick with you through the hardest times of your life. I don't know how we could have done it without them."

-Jordan and Jennie



See their video at mychristiancare.org/stories

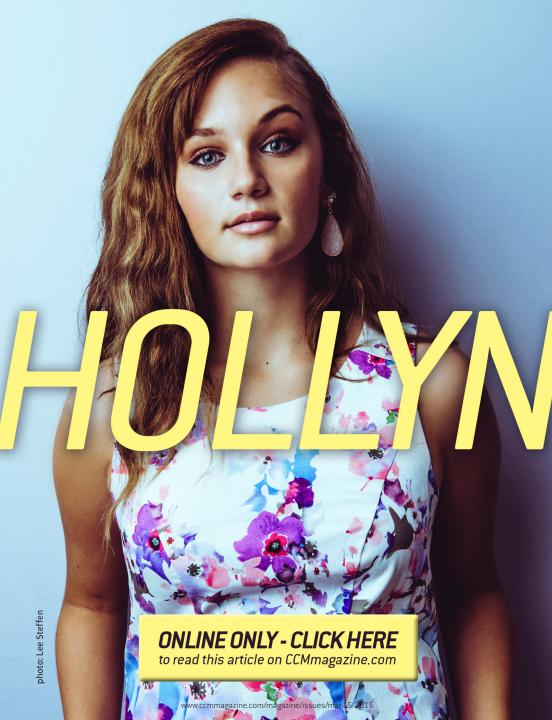
- Over 189,000 members sharing your medical bills
- Affordable options for singles, families, and seniors\*
- No enrollment period—you can join any time



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\*Seniors must have Medicare parts A and B to qualify.



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#### **HILLSONG YOUNG & FREE**

Youth Revival

(Capitol CMG/Sparrow)
FOR FANS OF:

Hillsong United

WE LIKE: "Passion"





For the uninitiated, **Young & Free** is the baby in **Hillsong Church**'s musical family, a toddler in musical years steeped in synths and energized with the same worshipful heart as its siblings. **Youth Revival** is Y&F's first full-length in three years, a spirited live recording that captures the blips and bloops, pulses and praises of an impassioned worship gathering.

Young & Free's electronic brand is straightforward and joyous, a la **Röyksopp**'s catalog or Susanne Sundfør's last album. "Where You Are" and "Falling Into You" are bouncy pop examples. When the mix slows, the youngsters borrow heavily from their older siblings to establish a familiar emotional tone on heartfelt songs like "Trust" and "To My Knees."

Despite a varied instrumental palette, Young & Free is undoubtedly a Hillsong kid. There's no mistaking the members of this family.

-Matt Conner

## VARIOUS ARTISTS WOW Hits 20th Anniversary

(Capitol CMG/Providen/Word)
FOR FANS OF:

DC Talk, MercyMe, Chris Tomlin

WE LIKE: "Jesus Freak"





Believe it or not, it's been twenty years since the **WOW** compilation series came as Christian music's answer to the general market's **NOW** blueprint. And given the momentous occasion, it's only fitting to find this two disc compilation chronicling the best of the CCM scene from the past two decades, including such cross genre landmarks as **DC Talk**'s "Jesus Freak," **Jars Of Clay**'s "Flood," **Switchfoot**'s "Dare You To Move" and **MercyMe**'s "I Can Only Imagine."

Along the way, there are also career-defining smashes from **Steven Curtis Chapman**, **Chris Tomlin**, **TobyMac**, **Casting Crowns**, **Francesca Battistelli** and **Brandon Heath**, though not every selection is quite as spot on. **Amy Grant** had mounds of '90s hits, yet is oddly represented by a 2005 remake of "El Shaddai," while **Michael W. Smith** also penned countless chart-toppers throughout the same time frame, yet is simply shown covering "Above All." Those choices may leave more dedicated aficionados scratching their heads (especially considering Amy and MWS were unquestionably two of the most influential artists during this range), though it's not enough to spoil the otherwise sensible and celebratory overview.

-Andy Argyrakis

#### **CONSUMED BY FIRE**

**Giving Over** 

(Inpop Records)

FOR FANS OF: Third Day, Needtobreathe,

Green River Ordinance

WE LIKE: "Walk Through The Fire"

\*\*\*



Outside of last year's EP *Lean On Me*, Oklahoma's **Consumed By Fire** are basically brand new faces to Christian music at the national level, though with four independent albums under their belt, the band comprised of the Ward brothers are certainly seasoned.

On *Giving Over*, front man/guitarist **Caleb**, guitarist **Josh** and drummer **Jordan** further demonstrate an instinctive chemistry and naturally knit harmonies, kicked up by production from veteran **Scotty Wilbanks** (Third Day, Needtobreathe), who discovered the band on YouTube. In keeping with those credits, the project is loaded with foot-stompin' and roots rockin' romps, plus several stripped down ballads, while the heartfelt lyrical spread ranges from the valley of struggle through the apex of victory.

—Andy Argyrakis

#### TRACY RANDALL

No Judgment

(Lavish Records)

FOR FANS OF: Donny Hathaway,

Marvin Sapp, The Isley Brothers

WE LIKE: "Able"

\*\*\*\*



If it sounds like **Tracy Randall** is singing like his life depends on it throughout **No Judgment**, that's because he very well could be. Currently battling terminal cancer (for the second time no less), the R&B meets gospel mainstay candidly addresses his obstacles, but also offers just as many tales of surrender, trust and praise with smooth delivery, inviting grooves and an all around knack for songwriting.

Even if the cards may be stacked against him medically, this collection proclaims a greater purpose in his suffering, and given an unwavering reliance on the Lord, chances are this won't be the last time we hear from this inspirational talent.

-Andy Argyrakis

# OCEANS OF GRACE Oceans Of Grace

(Self-released)
FOR FANS OF:

Third Day, Casting Crownss

WE LIKE: "Your Voice"

\*\*\*



**Oceans Of Grace** is a brand new worship band comprised of family and friends from Calera de Tango, Chile. It's not surprising then that the group's self-titled debut album features a robust twenty tracks, with ten original congregational worship songs in English and Spanish.

Produced by **Jason Hoard** (Shane & Shane, The Museum, John Waller), **Oceans Of Grace** is a simple, straightforward album of scriptural songs and basic faith tenets—the grace, love, and greatness of God. Third Day's **Mac Powell** is instantly recognizable as the notable guest on "I Know That You Love Me," but it's closing track "Your Voice" that serves as this album's highlight.

—Matt Conner

### PEARL CITY WORSHIP We Won't Be Silent

(Radiate)

FOR FANS OF: Planetshakers

WE LIKE: "Still"

\*\*\*



**Pearl City Worship** from Hyderabad, India, a discovery of renowned producer **Ian Eskelin**, has already made waves in their home country with their debut album, **We Won't Be Silent**. The album landed atop the iTunes charts in India already, and now they're looking to make a similar impact in the U.S. From the outset, one may wonder if the upbeat, electro-pop vibe is true to Pearl City or whether Eskelin's influence found its way in?

Even though we've confirmed that the sound is intrinsic to the band, it doesn't matter, as songs like "The Answer" and "The One Who Saves Us" are irresistible nonetheless. Other tracks like "Still" and "His Love (Hallelujah)" fit comfortably alongside your congregational favorites. If you're looking for a new worship release with an interesting story to tell, Pearl City Worship is a nice find.

Matt Conner

#### **WEST OF HERE**

The Journey

(Self-released)
FOR FANS OF:

Daughtry, Scott Stapp, 3 Doors Down

WE LIKE: "Right Here With Me"

\*\*\*



North of where we're based—way north, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada to be exact—we meet the Brothers Adams from the band **West Of Here**. The rock trio, flashing shades of **Nickelback** and **Linkin Park**, spent much of the last two years recording the album **The Journey**, of which, we're not sure was the actual intended title? Regardless, the long, hard work paid off, as they recently earned their first **GMA Covenant Award** (Canada's equivalent to U.S. **Dove Awards**) for the song "Run."

Bastille and Imagine Dragons fans will appreciate this project's striking lead vocals and haunting harmonies. Although some of the production elements and a few rough edges on performance techniques could use a little polishing (however, nothing too distracting from confidently cranking up the volume), West Of Here is certainly headed in the right direction.

—staff





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