

7EVENTH TIME DOWN | SETH & NIRVA - THE COLOR OF LOVE

# CCM



## NEED TO BREATHE

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JUL 15, 2016

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## From the Editor

## Out &amp; About

The latest industry sightings & events in images.



## NEEDTOBREATHE

Building courage takes time. For the Reinhart Bros. + Company, will time take its toll?



## 7eventh Time Down

One wild ride. For front man Mikey Howard + his band mates, what has life been like to fulfill their childhood dreams?



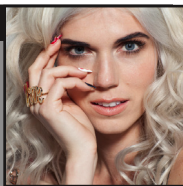
## Seth &amp; Nirva

Andrew Greer's candid conversation with husband-wife duo Seth & Nirva about race, religion, and most of all, love.



## Julianna Zobrist

Where does singer-songwriter, wife of MLB star Ben Zobrist, and mother of three young children gather her strength to get through it all?



## Reviews

New music from NEEDTOBREATHE, Hillary Scott, Leeland, Jesus Culture + much more!



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Christian hip hop was integral to my development as a lover of music, the arts, and ultimately becoming a musician. One of the first songs that spoke to me was “We Are Warriors” by **E.T.W.**, which begins with spoken word from **Ephesians 6:10-20**—putting on the full armor of God. Consequently, this passage of scripture has been one that I’ve read and recited over and over again, praying I would adhere to its message and apply it to my life.

This weekend, my eyes were opened to the realities of spiritual warfare for the first time, and why we need the armor of God in the first place. My pastor, **Grace Chapel’s** (Leipers Fork, TN) **Steve Berger** noted in his sermon, “The armor is a resource that God gives us in order to be victorious in spiritual warfare,” and that warfare is “an undeniable Biblical reality,” continually being carried out among us.

Before continuing, let me stop this editorial letter to offer an apology. In my June 15, 2016 note, I implied that I would refrain from engaging in internet chatter and opinion-ranting on social media. In the aftermath of recent shootings in Louisiana, Minnesota, and Dallas, I let the enemy do his work on me and I, once again, “aimed” my keyboard and typed-out my “arrows.” I’m truly sorry.

As I would often go back to the inspiration of “We Are Warriors” and that passage in Ephesians, Berger also takes a look back to scripture and simply points out the truth—profound for today—stating, “Our warfare isn’t against people, it’s just not!” For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood... **Eph. 6:12a** (NKJV). The enemy had me right where he wanted me. Now I know.

There’s so much division in our world today—it’s truly the work of warring, high-ranking officers of evil at play with it trickling down, playing itself out on earth. I don’t want to contribute to it anymore.

**Prayer:** *Jesus, please forgive me for battling with my brothers and sisters, for placing the brunt of the blame on them, and not bringing You into our battles with what's really at work. Help me to fully understand the all-encompassing responsibility that the devil bears for hijacking our identity, and to love others as You do. Help me to imitate You, and not become heated or offended, even when I'm in disagreement with someone on the surface. Amen.*

Into (the real) battle we go,



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# OUT & ABOUT

july 15, 2016



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# NEEDTOBREATHE

# NEEDTOBREATHE — The Road To Happiness

Love is never easy. It's a lesson **NEEDTOBREATHE** has learned the hard way in recent years. Yet, quoting from their own songbook, the band has come to realize, "There's a reason that the road is long/It takes some time to make your courage strong."

By Lindsay Williams

It's the age-old story that's defined rock 'n roll since the beginning of time:

Friends form band.

Band finds success.

Friends argue over creative differences.

Band breaks up.

And just like that, another incredible talent gets memorialized.

But what happens when something changes the storyline? What happens when you're on the verge of breakup and it becomes breakthrough? If you're **NEEDTOBREATHE**, you change the ending to the story. You don't let the past define you. You move forward with a new perspective. And you write about it, of course.

Hailed by critics as one of the best efforts of their career, 2014's ***Rivers In The Wasteland*** will go down in history as a landmark album for **NEEDTOBREATHE**. Division that nearly led to the band's demise resulted in a stripped-down, vulnerable project that allowed the acclaimed rock outfit to check a massive item off their bucket list: their first-ever GRAMMY® nomination. Moreover, the album garnered the band the highest-charting

single of their career with radio smash “Brother” and a slew of high-profile media appearances. If devoted fans loved them before the album, they were hanging on the band’s every word once the studio set released.

However, while members **Bear Rinehart** (lead vocals, guitar), **Bo Rinehart** (guitar, vocals), **Seth Bolt** (bass, vocals) and **Josh Lovelace** (keys, vocals), were proud of the songs that defined *Rivers*, they weren’t nearly as satisfied as fans.

“I think we felt like we could make a better record, to be honest,” Bear candidly reveals. “What we were able to do on *Rivers In The Wasteland* was really put raw emotion on a record, but we weren’t able to work on it that much because we were fighting so much. It feels like we made a really simple record because we had to, and because of that, a lot of the emotion came across. I think that’s why the record connected with people; but I think in terms of what we feel like we’re capable of, we felt like we were capable of more.”

Anyone who’s seen the band live knows the South Carolina natives are capable of scaling incredible heights. If *Rivers* felt like the insurmountable struggle they almost couldn’t work through, new album ***HARD LOVE*** (Atlantic Records) feels like sweet redemption.

“All of us put our families through that same fight that me and Bo were going through, and that includes Seth and Josh,” Bear says. “It was a really tough time, and I think we just came away with an appreciation for what we do and for the opportunity to do it; and I think that’s what *HARD LOVE*’s really about.”

NEEDTOBREATHE spent the better part of ten days holed up in a secluded cabin in the North Carolina mountains to commence

the process for the new album, which ended up taking them nine months to complete. They hired an in-house chef and filled the multi-story residence with every instrument imaginable, creating a space for them to experiment and dream—no idea too wild or weird, and the more outside-the-box the better. Both Rinehart brothers have small studios in their homes, so they were able to come to the makeshift band retreat with a few rough demos. Fresh songs were also written once the band was gathered.

“We started to make this record as friends again and as people who just didn’t really care about what the results were, which is a very freeing thing,” Bear offers. “That’s just something that would not have been possible the last couple of records... It was just us having fun together again. It feels like we’re in a garage band.”

## ROCK & SOUL

Born and raised in the small town of Possum Kingdom, South Carolina, the members of NEEDTOBREATHE have always prided themselves on the band’s southern roots, preferring to keep their rock ’n roll swampy and their instruments as pure as the terrain of their childhood. But from the very first distorted reverb of *HARD LOVE*, it’s obvious we’re not in the wasteland any more. Banjos, mandolins and steel guitars take a back seat to colorful synth and electric vibrancy.

“The different direction was definitely intentional,” Bear explains. “We went [there], honestly, because we wanted to let people in a little bit more. I think inspiration sometimes for us is, ‘How do we make this just cooler than our audience? How do we make them come to us?’ We get really caught up more in the flavor than just songwriting, so we tried to balance that out on this record. There’s some songs you can like on the first listen, which was very intentional.”

"Happiness" proved to be one of those instantly likable tracks. Yet, choosing the soulful, gospel-tinged single to introduce the band's bold new sound was a risky move.

"It's sort of a lynchpin, because it was the first song we put out, so we felt like, 'Well, if [fans] are into this song, they're going to love this record; and if they're not into this song, we could be in for a long road,'" Bear says, laughing. "We've always felt like we made soul music. If you go back to 'Washed by the Water' and 'Lay 'Em Down,' it felt like that. There was always that vibe, but how do we get more modern with that style? And that's what, to me, 'Happiness' is."



Newest member Josh Lovelace also had a hand in contributing to the new sonic direction. Although Lovelace has backed the band on keys and vocals for several years on live shows, this is the first studio album he's had a hand in creating as an official member of NEEDTOBREATHE.

"[Josh] has really come into his own with that stuff, so we lean on him much more; whereas it used to be he kind of played the parts that I wrote," Bear says. "Now, we really look to him to bring inspiration and new sounds."

## **PERSPECTIVE OF REST**

In addition to slight line-up changes, so much has changed for the band since they first started playing shows in college. All are now married; three out of four are fathers of young kids, and *HARD LOVE* reflects the maturity of four men living out their faith and lessons learned as brothers, friends, husbands and fathers. "I think it's maybe a nod to life," Bear says of the title track, admitting, "All of us are going through a growing up time."

Growth has also come as a direct result of the past few tumultuous years, which have, in turn, changed how they approach their artistry and run their business from top to bottom. Prioritizing the mental, physical and spiritual health of the band and putting relationships first has meant cutting down the number of shows they play each year, a challenge for the hardworking act long known for their due diligence on the road.

"We went from being a band that was doing 150-200 shows a year. We did that seven years in a row, and that just killed us because there's no perspective when you don't rest. That's the key that we've learned," Bear offers. "We started to realize working from 10 a.m. to 5 a.m. every day, you get into this wormhole. You have no idea what you're doing anymore. You

have no 30,000-foot perspective, and so I think that's something we feel like we had to have."

Rest has become imperative for the band, as has time with their growing families at home in Charleston. That's also caused a shift in the recording process. For *Rivers*, the band found themselves recording in the usual creative hubs, spending two months in Los Angeles, two months in Nashville and another two months in New York. That rounded out to six months away from home, in addition to extensive touring.

This time, they made their own **Plantation Studios** home base. "We just made the schedule conducive to our lives," Bear shares. "We made 95 percent of this record in Charleston because we wanted to be around family at night. We needed to go home to our own beds."

Producers **Jon Levine (Melissa Etheridge, Cher Lloyd)** and **Dave Tozer (John Legend, Kimbra)**—who co-produced *HARD LOVE* with the band—both traveled to Charleston to work on the project.

When the band's on the road, their wives and kids travel with them as their schedules allow. Yet, Bear says it's different for every family—depending on their wives' personal preferences and their kids' various ages.

As for the band members themselves, camaraderie on and off the road has become something to be treasured and enjoyed. "I definitely have faith and trust in the rest of the band. I'm not concerned about what's going to happen as long as we're working together," Bear says, adding that they've emphasized the importance of giving every member of the band a voice in the creative process.

"It's tiring, what we do. It's a creative thing, so it's very stressful, and everybody's going to have opinions. You're going to have a wrong opinion. I'm certainly guilty of it," he admits.

"You need confidence in order to create good things, but you have to have people around you who are empowered to say, 'Hey man, you're off you're rocker. You're over the edge now, and you need to come back.' And I think that was probably one of the biggest things that's helped us.

"The other thing that was really key was just empowering everybody in the band to have a say," he continues. "I think, for a while when Bo and I would get into a fight, everybody left the room. So it was important for us to get everybody in the room and say, 'Hey, sometimes I'm going to be wrong; sometimes he's going to be wrong; sometimes neither of us is going to be wrong—it's just going to be muddled; but we need you guys to speak up and be the peacemakers in the situation.' I think that's something that really has changed a lot about what we do."

## COMPADRES FOREVER

Moving forward, the band is focused on allowing their creativity to emanate from their unwavering bond as brothers and band mates. And on *HARD LOVE* the group is reinventing itself with an aggressive new sound filled with smoky choir vocals and flashes of brass. They'll hit the road August through November on their second annual ***Tour de Compadres*** with friends **Mat Kearney**, **John Mark McMillan** (leg 1 only), **Parachute** (leg 2 only) and **Welshly Arms**. Their fellow compadres' high regard for the band is only further evidence that while the members of NEEDTOBREATHE may have evolved through the years, the integrity with which they approach their craft has remained unchanged since the release of their debut in 2006.

"I love their raw electricity, honesty, and the way they seem to revel in the moment," remarks *Compadres Tour* mate John Mark McMillan, a longtime friend and fan of the band. (Bear was featured on "Monsters Talk" from McMillan's *The Borderland Sessions* in 2014.)

The highly-anticipated outing will mark Mat Kearney's first time to tour extensively with the band, though they've been friends for some time. "When we were both starting out, NEEDTOBREATHE and I opened for an artist in really small rooms playing for just a few dozen people a night. Back then I quickly could tell that they were humble, genuine guys. A lot has changed for both of us since then, but they are still the



same,” Kearney reflects. “I think they are amazing songwriters and even better live than their records. I’m excited to finally play some shows with them in some rooms a little bigger than when we first started.”

Those “rooms” will include a 10,000+ capacity venue in their hometown of Charleston and a second stint at Morrison, Colorado’s infamous **Red Rocks Amphitheatre**, one of the band’s favorite show’s from 2015’s *Tour de Compadres*.

“We’re just incredibly inspired right now and excited about playing again,” Bear shares. “I feel like this record is going to change a lot of things for our band, even though we’re



completely comfortable with the success level the band is at in our career. We don't need it to be anything else."

Fans will undoubtedly show up to concerts across the nation in droves eager to hear the new songs from *HARD LOVE* live. But even if they don't, NEEDTOBREATHE will play to the crowd as if the venue's sold out. They'll be giving it their all every night, because they're intent on living a bigger, better story. Together. [CCM](http://ccm)





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# 7EVETH TIME DOWN



# 7eventh Time Down

## Catch Them If You Can

Following Childhood Dreams And The Move Of God, Mikey Howard and the Members of **7eventh Time Down** Are Currently On One Wild Ride

By Matt Conner

**Mikey Howard** is living his childhood dream. He's sharing the stage with his favorite artists and musical heroes while his band sits atop the *Billboard* charts. Never mind these achievements, however, as the front man of **7eventh Time Down** makes it very clear he's only playing the smallest of parts in all of this.

If you've tuned in to Christian radio for any amount of time in recent weeks, you've undoubtedly heard 7eventh Time Down's new chart-topping single "God Is On The Move." It's the latest and greatest measure of success for a small town band on the rise for some time. With two previous albums making waves, especially 2013's ***Just Say Jesus***, and tour dates with **Newsboys**, for **King & Country**, **Family Force 5** and **Matthew West**, it's not surprising that **7TD** has kicked things into a higher gear.

Yet if you ask Howard about it, he's quick to correct you: God is the only one on the move here, not the band. "If this was just me, I would have never gotten to this point," says Howard. "I'd have screwed it up in some way. I do appreciate all of this, but in the end, none of this means anything. This interview or the charts—none of it means anything. I just want to be able to look the Lord in the eye and hear Him say, 'Good job.' That's all I can hope for.

“I think central to keeping this whole thing in perspective is keeping this very small thing in perspective: It’s got nothing to do with me,” he proclaims. “I just sing songs with the voice that the Lord has given me. My role in this is so small. Some people say it sounds harsh or that I should give myself some credit, but I don’t need to. That’s a dangerous and slippery slope that I don’t want to go down.”

Maintaining such a humble spirit and God-ward focus can prove difficult when you’re the one in the spotlight night after night. The members of 7eventh Time Down have become road warriors in recent years, leaving families for weeks on end to play dates coast to coast. It’s a recipe that keeps even the best of men from being grounded, which is why Howard and the rest of the band—guitarist **Eric Vanzant**, bassist **Cliff Williams** and drummer **Austin Miller**—stay focused on the bigger picture as much as possible.

“It can be hard. We play 150 shows a year, and every single night you have everyone in the whole room coming up afterward wanting your autograph or telling you that your songs have changed their lives,” Howard explains. “The thing I keep in the forefront of my mind is that there’s never, ever going to be power in this music or in my voice to literally change someone’s life.

“When I say change, I mean the type of change that Jesus does. My voice won’t bring someone to life. It just won’t work. I think my responsibility and the only thing I can do with these simple songs I write is to point people to the cross and Jesus. He’ll take care of the fixing and the changing and the transforming.”

The aforementioned crammed concert calendar is a dream come true for Howard, a man whose dreams to make a living at Christian music can be traced back to a feeling of being called at

the tender age of thirteen. Howard's youth pastor subscribed to **Interlinc**, a service that delivered a new box of Christian music every month to youth groups around the country. This ongoing contemporary Christian music education brought a deeper spiritual connection for Howard that eventually led to him wanting to participate himself.

"Whether at a concert, listening to the radio, or those Interlinc CD's, I remember the Lord making me more aware of His presence in my life through those songs. I remember feeling closer to Him because of Christian music. I made a choice at that age that the Lord was calling me to share this experience that I had through Christian music with everyone I came in contact with in hopes to further the kingdom.

"In the South and the way I was raised by my mom and dad, if you say you're going to make a commitment, then you better do it. I had to follow through. Now having this 'success,' I look back and think, 'Maybe I wasn't crazy like everyone thought when I left college to start a band? Maybe I wasn't crazy when I told my friends that God wanted me to be in a band full-time, and to travel to tell people about Him?' Now it feels like I did hear a voice. I did feel a tug on my heart."

Being a lifelong fan of Christian music means that many of Howard's current experiences as a performing artist are surreal ones. When you're standing on stage next to the artist who sang on the CD you grew up with, according to Howard, it produces a feeling that can be difficult to get over.

"The craziest thing happened just after we'd had my second daughter," he explains. "About five days after she was born, we were out with the Newsboys again at a show 40-minutes or-so from my house. I find myself standing on stage hugging **Michael**





**Tait**, rapping the ‘Jesus Freak’ verse that **Toby [McKeehan]** did. I probably butchered it, but I was a total kid in that moment. No one was going to stop me. All the times I sang along in the mirror with a hairbrush just came flooding back. Mike asked me if I wanted to practice. I said, ‘No, I don’t need to practice. I’ve been doing this in the mirror since I was thirteen. It’s all good. Let’s go.’”

What has made the band’s success even more impressive is their small-town beginning. Howard says that he and drummer Austin Miller formed their first band at the ages of twelve and eleven-years old, respectively, in their home of Mt. Vernon, Kentucky. With a graduating class of approximately 150 people, Howard says it’s uncommon for anyone to make a living as an artist, let alone to have someone hit the top of the *Billboard* charts.

“Growing up in Mt. Vernon is interesting, because the entire county probably only had around 14,000 people when I was a kid. We have a McDonalds and a Rite-Aid. We just got a new stoplight, so I think that makes a total of four?”

“Everybody’s cheering for us, which is really nice. It’s fun to represent your hometown in a way that impacts church culture and hearts of people. It’s cool that Mt. Vernon gets to play a small part in that. I’m also playing only a small part in this. I’m just the singer. We have such a great team of people who make all of this stuff happen—flights, shows, getting around. I just do the singing, so my own part is small.”

Even the story behind the hit song “God Is On The Move” hints at the same smallness that comes up again and again when talking with Howard. The song was penned shortly after the band

returned from a mission trip to the Dominican Republic. Song-writing sessions gave way to the songs on the band's new album of the same name, and while it was clear they'd stumbled upon a decent melody, no one was aware then of the power of the track.

"When we first wrote it, we thought it was cool but we didn't think much else about it. We actually named the album something else at first," Howard says. "Then I went in to do vocals on the song and we got the first mix back, and I called up producer **Ian Eskelin** and said, 'Are you hearing what I'm hearing in this song?' He said, 'Dude, this is unreal.' It felt anointed. It felt different. It felt like God wanted to do something with this song, even though we didn't recognize it at first. We knew the Lord would do something with this through the hearts of people."

Howard says the power in the song is found in its two-fold purpose. It's a song that's both inspirational and challenging, and it moves the listener beyond the scope of his or her own perspective.

"The song is a challenge for people that asks, 'Are you going to stand up and be the person God wants you to be in the world?' Yet it's also a reminder in case you have forgotten that He is working all around you. We hoped that people would listen to the song and become more aware of the presence of God all around them. We want people to recognize that, because the Lord is working all around us every single day. We often miss it."

Howard says the band themselves didn't see the path ahead—from the success of their hit single to the spiritual impact behind their new album. It's all part of a greater plan that continues to remind 7eventh Time Down of their own smallness—and God's greatness—in the grand scheme.

“At first we didn’t see it, but when God reveals something to you, it knocks you off of your feet,” says Howard. “It all came together and we just knew. This was no doubt the path and plans that God had for us, for our ministry and for this record. He wanted to tell people that He was moving and working in the world despite all of the stuff that’s going on. We had no idea there would be shootings or so many crazy things happening in the world. Now I’m hoping people hear this song in [Orlando] and other places that might be in a dark place, and I hope they say, ‘Wow, God is moving in all of this.’ I don’t have answers for all of this stuff, but I trust that this song is meant for this time and this culture and let it be. [CCM](#)



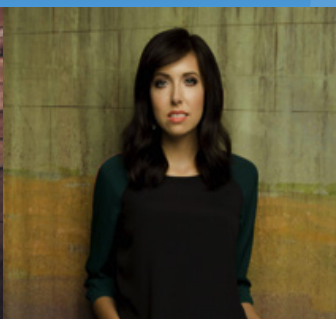


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# SETH & NIRVA

# Seth & Nirva — The Color Of Love

Andrew Greer 's candid conversation with husband-wife duo Seth & Nirva about race, religion, and most of all, love

By Andrew Greer

Over the last couple of weeks, we Americans have been disheartened and dumbfounded by the discord in our nation, the violent displays of discrimination threatening to divide our communities and culture. The roots of racial tension especially run deep. While the colorful nuances of living in a diverse country can be beautiful, the challenge of living peacefully in the midst of our differences is complex, and painful.

Musical husband-wife duo, **Seth** and **Nirva Ready**, intimately understand the difficulties of diversity. An interracial couple, Seth was introduced to the music business while singing night after night for predominantly African-American audiences as a member of **Kirk Franklin's** elite background singer crew. Nirva has showcased her vocal shine and magnetic performance energy in front of hundreds of thousands predominantly Caucasian concertgoers as a longstanding member of **TobyMac's DiverseCity** touring entourage. But when it comes to loving people, the kind and keen twosome hardly have a preference. And they have taken to the medium of music, together, to message God's love to all people, in hopes that as we understand how much God loves us, we might then begin to love each other better.

Featuring its own diverse set list of collaborations (think **DJ Maj**, hip-hop's **Shonlock** and Nirva's favorite front man, TobyMac), Seth & Nirva released their major label debut, **Never Alone (Integrity Music)** to widespread critical acclaim in May. After

Seth's commentary on the recent attacks near his Orlando, FL home, *CCM Magazine* sits down with husband and wife to continue the discussion.

***CCM Magazine: I don't think we've ever talked about how you guys met. How did the union of Seth & Nirva come to be?***

**Seth Ready:** Do you want her version or the truth? [*Laughs*]

**Nirva Ready:** A mutual friend introduced us. I was singing for **Toby** [McKeehan], and he was singing for **Kirk** [Franklin], and we became buddies. A real friendship began to develop. He was the kind of guy that you could talk to about anything, go as fun or as deep as you wanted.

I was in this phase of, "You know what, God? For real this time. I'm giving You my whole heart, my whole person." All the while, we were talking and hanging out, and he liked me. So he explained that to me one day, and I was like, "Yikes. How did I not see that coming?"

**SR:** "Yikes." That's the word you want to hear. [*Laughs*]

**NR:** "Yikes," as in this friendship is so awesome. He was really dear to my heart, and so I declined from moving forward.

**SR:** She told me, "No," twice—stuck in the friend zone for months.

***CCM: Twice? So he's a persistent fella?***

**SR:** I had to be persistent.

**NR:** That's true. He was persistent and consistent. He never played with my heart. The friendship was real. But later, God began to show me how handsome and awesome he was. I had cool mentors in my life that said, "Just see what God does." And so here we are.

***CCM: You guys began your careers in very diverse settings, with Kirk and Toby. Your own records reflect that musical diversity—elements of worship, pop, R&B and hip-hop. Is this also reflective of you as people?***

**NR:** No doubt. Music has such a powerful influence. It gets into your soul without permission. I grew up in a very urban community in inner city Chicago. I listened to a lot of pop, hip-hop, and a little bit of gospel, but I didn't get saved until college. When you get saved, you begin to learn the difference in content, but you still enjoy the sound and style of music. So I appreciate being able to express worship to God in different styles.

Gospel music is life-changing. It takes you out of your situation and lifts your eyes to the throne where God is ruling and reigning. It reminds you of the truth. And so to be able to enjoy music and have it edify your soul at the same time—that's a gift from God.

***CCM: There is such diversity under the banner of "Gospel music." Isn't that an indicator of God?***

**NR:** Come on, somebody! You're preaching.

***CCM: To help reflect the color and character of God that is so broad, is that a part of the inspiration for why you do what you do?***

**SR:** We feel like what God creates is so beautiful. We don't want to stifle one expression and highlight another as better just because it's different. We didn't intentionally say, "Oh, we've got to [appeal to] 2.3 Asian persons." We naturally appreciate other cultures and experiencing their approach and their art and their beauty.



I traveled with Kirk, she traveled with Toby, we traveled with **Chris Tomlin**, and **Travis Cottrell** for **Beth Moore** events. We have experienced such beauty in all of those areas. It's become part of who we are.

**NR:** When we did our first EP, I remember people advising us not to be so all over the place. But these are the songs that flow from us. We love all styles of worship, and when you keep the substance, it's good.

**SR:** As long as it's biblically grounded in its beauty, then let's do all the palettes we can.

**CCM:** *The kickback to diversity is usually rooted in fear. How is this set list of songs a response to that?*

**SR:** I like **Dallas Willard's** definition, to love someone is to be set toward his well-being. Even if they disagree with me, even if they push me, they are made in God's image. I might disagree with them, but I don't have to stand against them as people. That's really hard.

In our culture, people tend to take their ideas into their ego, so if you come against their idea, they feel like you're coming against them as a person. Part of the education process is being close enough with someone where you can help them make a distinction between their idea and them as a person, and that has to come in the context of love.

On the album, we'll have a song like "Brother." *When I look into the face of my enemy, I see my brother.* But we also have a song that says, *We won't back down.* That combo takes time because we [culturally] start from the disposition of, "If you disagree with me, then you don't love me."

***CCM: We're all bearing the image of God. That's a radical way of thinking, to see everybody as having the imprint of God. How do we respond and relax into that?***

**SR:** For us, it's like restraining from knee-jerk reactions. Pausing and praying first. If you go into these conversations with the utmost of humility, it helps.

I like how Jesus did it—He just asked questions. He was wise about when He said what He said. He was getting the person to think through their own point of view a little differently. Be really good question-askers. Because we're so distracted in our culture, take time to get more than a few sound bites to take somebody down on Facebook, and actually wrestle with things. Let's take time, pause Netflix for a little bit, and be thoughtful people, think biblically, prayerfully test this stuff out. Then as we grow in our understanding, we can [communicate what we learn] as a helping mechanism rather than an opposing mechanism.

***CCM: The song, "Brother," from the new record, seems to reflect this idea of really loving others, no matter our opinions. My favorite lyric from the song says, Forgiveness is the garment of our courage/The power to make the peace we long to know.***

**NR:** When we first heard the song, we were haunted by the conviction, as well as the beauty of it. It's scriptural to pray for those that persecute you and hurt you and harm you. God's always at work in our hearts. He's always digging and shining light on areas that He wants to take hold of. So it was good for me, too, to not respond or react, but to just make sure that I love and forgive. Was it **C.S. Lewis** who said, "Forgiveness is a good idea until you have someone to forgive?" It's one thing to talk about something, and it's another thing to actually do it and apply it to your

life. I think that's what Christ wants. It's better for us.

***CCM: Dialogue is relationship, and God has created us to be in a relationship with each other and Him. So it seems He's encouraging the conversation.***

**SR:** He's even chatty with people in the Old Testament. God's not just this floating, powerful spirit, but He's really wise. He knows the nature of people and how to help them come to true belief and repentance, which is a change of the mind. He knows how to use His kindness to help people see, "Maybe this approach to life that I'm taking is not leading to my well-being." The kingdom of God is available, and in it is wellbeing in every sense of the word.

We even think through issues together. Nirva's perspective, coming from inner city Chicago, is so different than mine, and a lot of times, she helps me to see things through different viewpoints. And that will influence my conclusion. It is important, before we approach people, to step in their shoes.

***CCM: God seems interested in us. I feel like Jesus is God saying, "How do you feel?" To me, that still blows my mind. It feels like a very drastic measure of God's interest for us.***

**NR:** His interest and His love for us. CCM



# JULIANNA ZOBRIST



# Julianna Zobrist — All She Needs

To have a job description of ‘singer-songwriter’ can be enough for just one person—but when you’re also the wife of a Major League Baseball star and mother of three, Julianna Zobrist’s needs ultimately come down to the One

By Kevin Sparkman

Growing up in a musical home is a common story for many would-be artists. For **Julianna Zobrist**, her house was filled with such playlists from the late **Michael Jackson** to classic symphonic favorites. As diverse as her family’s tastes in music, so was her upbringing—as young Julianna enjoyed a wide range of interests from reading through her father’s pre-med text books (he later went to on seminary and became a preacher), to writing poetry, and diving into the worlds of fashion.

Ultimately, it was music that won-out, and as she made the trek from Midwest farm girl to big-city college co-ed, little did she know that living diversified would end up paying huge dividends. Since 2006, in what most would deem a whirlwind-kind-of-world, she launched her solo singing-songwriting career, married **Major League Baseball** star **Ben Zobrist** (2015 World Series champion with the **Kansas City Royals**, now playing for the **Chicago Cubs**), and has become a mother to three children.

Juggling isn’t a talent Zobrist claims on her one-sheet, rather, she welcomes life’s challenges while simultaneously looking to the Savior as the source—her sole need in a life complete with repetitions of diapers, airports, rehearsals, baseball games, and hotels. In fact, as she was planning to release her first LP **Shatterproof** last spring, God was preparing baby



Zobrist #3—but, “rolling with it” is the norm for this family on the move, as the album’s birth was moved to July 1, 2016 while the first two singles saw *Billboard* chart exposure.

Adding “album release” to the list of ongoing events in her life (remember, we’re in the throes of baseball season!), we jumped at the first chance to chat with Zobrist and learn more on how this up-and-coming singer-songwriter-wife-and-mother-of-three relies on her heavenly source, and why she translates her experiences into her indestructible message aimed for young women.

***CCM Magazine: What was the experience of moving to Nashville, TN—“Music City, U.S.A.”—like for you?***

**Julianna Zobrist:** I remember very well the little-fish-in-a-big-pond feeling. Attending **Belmont University**, it really took no time at all for me to realize I was NOT the best singer or songwriter that had ever lived. In fact, there were many others who were much more naturally gifted than me. But one of two choices comes along with that awareness—give up, or work harder. I spent hours in the practice rooms because I enjoyed the work and the challenge.

My husband and I have always told people, “You can’t control your opportunities, but you do control what you do with them.” For me, as a mom of three, this means taking the little moments to continue to work on my craft. This is a daily decision to sit down at my piano and practice during nap-time instead of taking a nap myself, or turning on the television. I want to be prepared for the opportunities that God may put in my path.



***CCM: How would you encourage inspiring artists who are thinking about a similar move, or leap?***

**JZ:** I would advise anyone to know why they want to do what they do, and to consider their end goal. There are endless ways that music is used in this world for income and for ministry. There's not one "right" or "wrong" goal as an artist...don't get caught up in the lie that if you're not on tour with a radio single, you're not successful. For me, my idea of a successful life is having a husband that I'm still crazy about, kids and family that are unified, and working hard at my job that I love in whatever capacity I am still able to do with my family.

***CCM: Tell us more about the juxtaposition of having a heart for music, but also growing up in the shadow and influence of a father who worked in medicine.***

**JZ:** The struggle wasn't what I desired to do, as much as it was what I had built up in my head that I "should" do. Writing music and performing were always my first love, but I battled with all of the what-if's that come along with pursuing a creative degree. Being a musician means that your livelihood is dependent upon the opinions of other people and whether or not they connect to your music. It was a risk. And honestly, I think that was part of the draw for me.

***CCM: Obviously, your current theme is "shatterproof," and more specifically, how that applies to the qualities of women. Unpack that a little more for us.***

**JZ:** A shatterproof woman finds her identity, her security, and her authority in the person and work of Jesus Christ. We often live in fear of what others think of us (or as moms, in fear of what other moms will think of our parenting), and we allow

their approval or disapproval of us to weigh into who we are. But being shatterproof is resting in God's approval because of what Christ did on our behalf!

A shatterproof woman is comfortable in her own skin, not incessantly comparing. A shatterproof woman is freed from expectations—the expectations other people may have of you, and the expectations you put on yourself. A shatterproof woman is liberated by LOVE to “do.” Fear and obtaining approval of others is no longer the motivator behind serving our family or sacrificing for our kids or doing good...A shatterproof woman is set free to love because she is known and loved by God.

***CCM: You've been described as a “straight shooter” and “transparent”—are these intrinsic or learned personality traits?***

**JZ:** Most definitely learned. I grew up very shy and, quite honestly, lived a good portion of my younger years afraid of what other people thought of me. This is why the concept of being *shatterproof*—knowing my security, identity, and authority are found in Christ as opposed to the approval of man—was so liberating to me. Part of my journey to becoming a “straight shooter,” as you said, is due to becoming a mom. The more kids I've had, the less time and energy I've had to be worried about what other women think of me. To live a life of fear, tiptoeing around other people—being consumed with being understood—takes a lot of energy. And I don't have that capacity. But more importantly, I am accepted by God because of the work of His Son! What else is worth living for?!

***CCM: Other than the likes of Michael Jackson, what kind of music did you grow up on and what influenced you?***

**JZ:** Both of my parents were musicians in college, so my exposure to music was vast. We listened to everything from **Mendelssohn**, the **Beatles**, **Beach Boys**, **Gloria Estefan**, and **Brooks & Dunn**. In college, as I began writing my own music, I listened to and was influenced by **Portishead**, **Imogen Heap**, **Suzanne Vega**, and **Radiohead**. I was very inspired by artists that were unconventional and unique, and still am today.

***CCM: Your husband Ben—total jock, or does he possess some creativity?***

**JZ:** Total jock. He does possess some rhythm, but the look he gives me when I talk about songwriting is similar to the look I give him when he talks baseball kinetics.

***CCM: We could ask a hundred questions about being “married to Major League Baseball,” please give us a little insight into your unique life!***

**JZ:** Being an MLB wife, in a nutshell, is basically like being a secretary, travel agent, hotel manager, personal assistant, physical therapist, realtor, foundation representative, and fan liaison... on top of being a wife and mom and having your own career. We live in Nashville from November until February, and then move down to Phoenix for spring training. I find a place for us to rent for the six weeks we are in spring training, and then we pack up again to move back up to Chicago. In years past, I have always had to find a place to rent for the season as well, but we got to buy a house in Chicago—that was a game-changer, for sure!

We live in our home in Chicago during the season, and the kids and I travel with Ben throughout the season. So at least once a week, I am packing our suitcases and hopping on a Southwest flight to meet Ben in whatever city he is playing. We all get to stay in the hotel room together as a family, which is a blessing. We basically have two hours together in the morning before Ben leaves for the field, and then I try and find something fun for the kids and I to do before we go back to the hotel to take naps and then head out to the game. My kids have taken more plane and Uber rides in their childhood than most people do in a lifetime! But it's all part of what I call our "adventure!"

The travel can be tiring, but I try and make it fun. When we get back home, we usually have people staying with us, so my assistant helps me prep the guest rooms and stock our fridge for their arrival. **Zion** and **Kruse** are homeschooled so we can keep up with our nutty schedule, but it works. It's important for us to keep it all in perspective...we do the planes and taxis and travel to keep the family together.

***CCM: What was the one thing you learned the most about recording Shatterproof?***

**JZ:** I learned so much about God's love for me during this project. I strive and fail and try again—and get prideful and fail and repent, and around and around I go on my hamster wheel of performance. But I have learned that, just as inevitable and just as consistent, is my Savior's pursuit. He tells me He loves me over and over, and that I am His child over and over—and that He has saved me over and over. I am learning that His love for me, and His acceptance of me, is all I need. CCM



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**HARD LOVE**



PEARL JAM

# REVIEWS

july 15, 2016

MARY SCOTT  
SCOTT FAMILY

## WE REMAINS



L E E L A N D



I N V I S I B L E

JESUS CULTURE  
**LET IT ECHO**  
UNPLUGGED

**NEEDTOBREATHE**

***Hardlove***

*(Atlantic Records)*

**FOR FANS OF:**

*Kings of Leon, OneRepublic,  
Mumford & Sons*

**WE LIKE:** "Money & Fame"

★★★★☆



For its sixth studio album, **NEEDTOBREATHE** switched up the sounds yet again, this time injecting bursts of electronics and swampy soul into its usual classic/southern/modern rock cross section. It may come as a bit of a surprise to some, but makes for a welcome expansion that's feels particularly relevant to radio's turning tides without ever losing sight of the band's artistic integrity.

Perhaps some of it has to do with the guys' road-tested tightness, or maybe even more likely, the album's unflinching honesty as it traces everyone's personal struggles and sacrifices to keep NEEDTOBREATHE firing on all cylinders after more than a decade together. In the process, the group not only shows its solidarity, but also provides a soundtrack of deliverance and perseverance for all, featuring a full-fledged anthem for every introspective moment.

*–Andy Argyrakis*

**Hillary Scott & The Scott Family**  
***Love Remains***

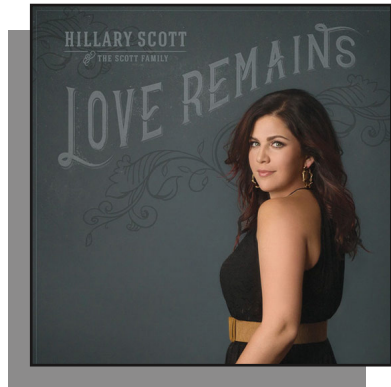
(EMI Nashville/Capitol CMG)

**FOR FANS OF:**

*Lady Antebellum, Linda Davis,  
Martina McBride*

**WE LIKE:** "Thy Will"

★★★★★



As a member of country superstars **Lady Antebellum**, **Hillary Scott** has thus far scored seven GRAMMY Awards and sold over 11 million albums. However, this side step steers away from her regularly scheduled recordings to dive deeper than ever before into her faith and family foundation. Along with mother **Linda Davis** (a frequent **Reba McEntire** and **Kenny Rogers** collaborator), father **Lang Scott** and younger sister **Rylee**, the singer/songwriter splits this inspirational project between originals, contemporary covers and old time hymns, some of which were selected in response to her grandfather's passing and Scott's sudden miscarriage.

In spite of that grief, there's a tone of hope, healing and redemption, additionally enforced by everyone's emotive delivery and tightly knit harmonies that can only be explained by blood. Beyond the family's obvious vocal talents, the collection benefits from top-notch production by **Ricky Skaggs**, who helps intertwine a gospel, bluegrass, country and pop combination that's nothing short of flawless.

—Andy Argyrakis

**Leeland**  
***Invisible***

(Bethel Music)

**FOR FANS OF:**

*Phil Wickham, Starfield 59*

**WE LIKE:** “King of My Heart”

★★★★★



**Leeland's** first new album in five years represents a slight departure from their previously acclaimed worshipful releases. For the first time, front man **Leeland Mooring** has invited others into the songwriting process on ***Invisible***, including familiar worship leaders like **Darlene Zschech** and **Steffany Gretzinger**. What remains entrenched from previous offerings, is Leeland's rare melodic touch and emotional delivery.

Songs like “King of My Heart” and “The Lion and the Lamb” (co-written with **Brian Johnson**) are Christ-centered anthems awash in synth waters. “Dead of Night” sounds a bit **Owl City**-esque with its starry synth sky. After an album built upon laptops and layers, acoustic closer “For Your Glory” grounds the album with a beautiful, intimate refrain. Taken as a whole, Leeland's latest proves itself well worth the wait.

—Matt Conner

**Jesus Culture**

***Let It Echo Unplugged***

(Sparrow Records)

**FOR FANS OF:**

*Bryan & Katie Torwalt, Passion,  
Bethel Music*

**WE LIKE:** “Fierce (live)  
featuring Chris Quilala”

★★★★☆



Worship collective **Jesus Culture** follows up their January 2016 studio standout ***Let It Echo*** with a seven-song live album featuring **Kim Walker-Smith, Chris Quilala,** and **Bryan** and **Katie Torwalt**. No new tunes here, however, the spirit of why these songs were created—for the congregation singing its praises to Jesus—is captured well, and offers the listener (or fan) another dimension to their worship experience.

With a flood of live worship collections readily available, better pick up this offering as few deliver with the skill and precision like Jesus Culture. That being said, it would have been nice to have heard from members **Chris McClarney** and/or **Derek Johnson**.

–Kevin Sparkman

**Mark Lowry**

***Dogs Go To Heaven***

(Gaither Music Group)

**FOR FANS OF:**

*Guy Penrod, Chonda Pierce, GVB*

**WE LIKE:** "Mary, Did You Know?"

★★★★☆



Singer-songwriter-comedian **Mark Lowry** merges his many talents throughout this brand new live CD (that also comes as a stand alone DVD) from the First Baptist Church in Hendersonville, TN. Musically speaking, his southern gospel and soft pop stylings sound just as uplifting as ever spanning the classic "Mary, Did You Know?" through his current single "Everybody Wants To Go To Heaven," while all-star guests **The Martins, Stan Whitmire** and **TaRanda & The First Baptist Church Choir** further amplify the appeal.

As far as the funny bone goes, colorful musings such as "Old Age" (he's now 57) and "Dogs Go To Heaven" also keep right in step with Lowry's ability to split sides, though no matter his method of creativity, this collection is always supported by a sturdy spiritual backbone.

—Andy Argyrakis

**Silent Planet**

***Everything Was Sound***

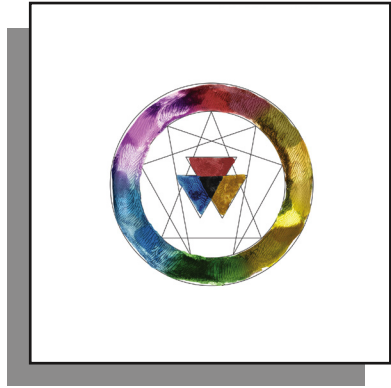
(Solid State)

**FOR FANS OF:**

*Underoath*

**WE LIKE:** “Nervosa”

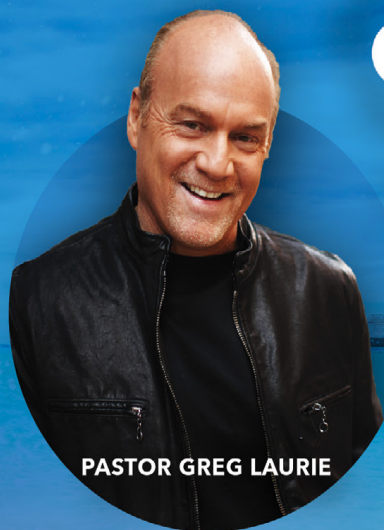
★★★★★



**Alternative Press** already named **Silent Planet** as a band to watch in 2016, but there’s likely no amount of buzz that could have forecast the growth from SP’s debut, ***The Night God Slept***, to their brand new album, ***Everything Was Sound***. From a strong lyrical focus on mental illness to **Garrett Russell**’s emotional vocal to guest spots from **Cory Brandon** and **Spencer Chamberlain**, *Everything Was Sound* is a killer metalcore album.

If you want to jump straight to the highlights, “Nervosa” and “First Father” are about as good as the genre gets, but then again you’d be missing a cohesive, semi-concept record that’s good from beginning to end.

–Matt Conner



**PASTOR GREG LAURIE**



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**MATTHEW WEST**

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OCTOBER 27, 2016
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OCTOBER 28, 2016
- HALF MOON CAY, BAHAMAS  
OCTOBER 29, 2016
- CONCLUDING IN FORT LAUDERDALE, FL  
OCTOBER 30, 2016

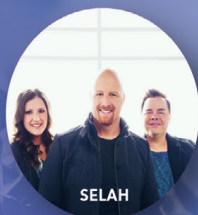


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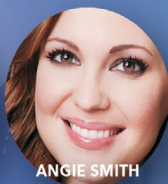
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