

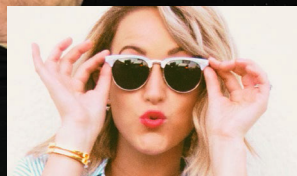
TAMELA MANN | IN REVIEW: REND COLLECTIVE, PAUL BALOCHE, DEREK MINOR

CCM

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NORTH
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MICHAEL SWEET
BATTLE LINES

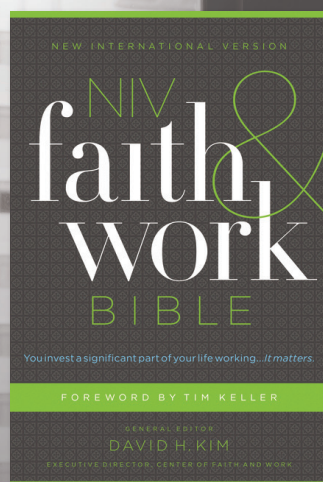


BRITT NICOLE
STRONGER TOGETHER

OCT 15, 2016



God's LOVE in my LABOR



Your work life matters to God. He gives purpose and opportunities to reflect his character in our daily lives – and that includes our jobs! Explore the topic of work throughout the *NIV Faith & Work Bible* with study insights by David Kim of the Center for Faith and Work and editors from Christianity Today. You'll discover renewed strength, encouragement, and joy for this vital aspect of life.

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From the Editor

Out & About

Exclusive pics of your favorite artists!

In this issue: Thousand Foot Krutch, Unspoken, Michael W. Smith, Cana's Voice, Geoff Moore + more!



10th Avenue North

What does it mean to fearlessly pursue God's life for our own lives? Mike Donehey and Jason Jamison of Tenth Avenue North explain.



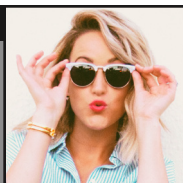
Michael Sweet

We get the rock legend's take from his side of the one sided war battle lines—and, will he really take on any new projects this year?



Britt Nicole

Find out what has kept Britt Nicole so busy since her 2012 release *Gold*, and how it has infused her new music today.



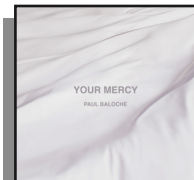
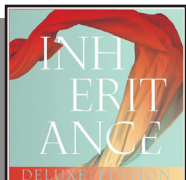
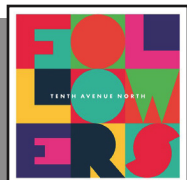
Tamela Mann

What do Celine Dion, Al Green and Tyler Perry have in common? Tamela Mann, of course. In this online exclusive feature, we look at the many face(t)s of the singer-actress-entrepreneur.



Reviews

New music from Tenth Avenue North, Audrey Assad, Paul Baloché, Derek Minor + much more!



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When the answers don't seem to come | Have you been praying, perhaps crying out to God for answers, but all you seem to get in return is silence? Static fuzz? Crickets? Maybe in this waiting it even feels like everything is going to turn into a “No,” anyway?

Something that has broadened the depth of my understanding and trust in God recently is the fact that He simply doesn't have to answer us. In ***The Knowledge Of The Holy***, A.W. Tozer writes, “God is said to be absolutely free because no one and no thing can hinder Him or compel Him or stop Him. He is able to do as He pleases always, everywhere, forever.” And, shocker-of-the-century, here: He doesn't owe us anything!

We can learn so much from Job, here. Like him, choose to trust God. He could have cursed Him, but instead asked, *Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?* (**Job 2:10**). *Though He slay me, I will hope in Him* (13:15). God is always in control, even when the demons have been unleashed on us.

When the answers don't seem to come, as painful or excruciating as it may be, don't assume the worst and please don't give up. Instead, use this as an opportunity to learn even more about the God of the universe—this infinite Father who created and loves you. Spend even more time with Him. He does hear you, and He knows every single thing you want and need. ...and He will answer you! Wait. Trust. Believe. Accept. Worship Him always.

Blessings,



A stylized, handwritten signature of Kevin Sparkman in black ink.

Kevin Sparkman

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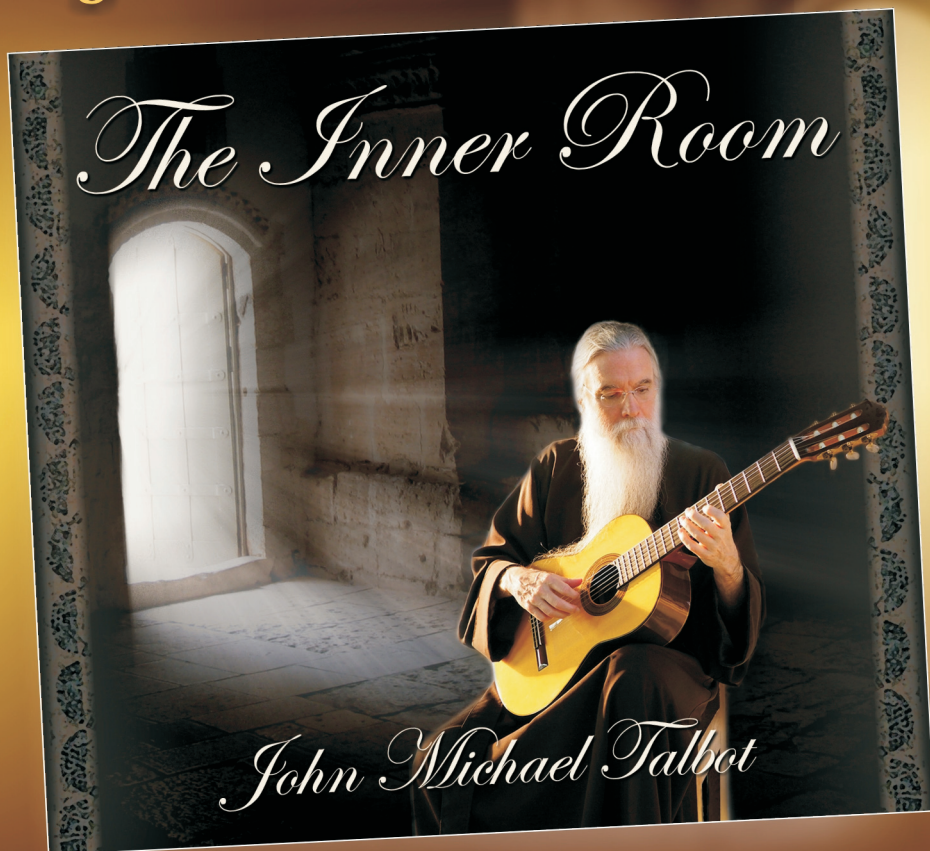
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OUT & ABOUT

oct 15, 2016



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Explore the world of Aethasia™, and join the Resistance in their fight against the tyrannical emperor and his army of mechanical men!

Once a beautiful land, Aethasia is now covered by a sickly pervasive fog that corrupts everything it touches. But all is not lost. Rumors are spreading of a fledgling Resistance, who have the courage and audacity to try and restore Aethasia to its former glory, and to reinstate the The Great Engineer back to the throne of Aethasia.

And that Resistance needs you!



TENTH AVENUE NORTH



Tenth Avenue North — Fearless Followers

Boldly following God's life for their lives vs. leading the charge in search of His will

By Andrew Greer

There is no denying it: Americans are obsessed with politics. Turn off the television, close your laptop, silence your phone, and you are likely to still be buzzing from the swarm of public conversations on who will occupy the oval office this January. Whether opining on their policies, platforms, or personal lives and convictions, culture is staking their claim and taking sides.

And the Church is anything but immune to the conflict.

Feeling the pull between a nation divided and a Kingdom united, Christians are feeling the cultural sway to trump (pun intended) faith in the Eternal to place our hearts in the alluring vices, yet flaky positions, of politics. As thirty-something husbands and fathers and responsible citizens who strive to pattern their lives after the example of **Jesus**, the members of **Tenth Avenue North** understand living in the twenty-first century tension between God and country.

After the band's last recording performed less-than-expected commercially, the thoughtful collective pushed pause to beg the question, "Why do we make music?" Having long been respected as a band willing to plunge beneath the surface of radio hits, industry achievements and sales successes—all of which have been awarded to the band several times over—to utilize music as a channel to provoke thought in the Church, the band emerged from their motivations with a revival in their hearts and a refreshed definition of "success."

Lead less, follow more.

And so amid a season where culture is channeling all of its energy into promoting the next leader of the free world, **Mike, Jason, Jeff, Brendon and Ruben** are focusing their efforts on cultivating followers, presented on the band's brand new, and aptly titled, playlist—***Followers (Provident)***.

CCM Magazine: It seems the genesis of Followers directly correlates with the band's redefinition of success. Is this true? How?

Mike Donehey: When we first entered the scene, we had a lot of success. Our first three records did really well at Christian radio—a lot of people purchased them. Then our last record fell into obscurity. It threw me, and I thought, “Is this defeating for me? And if so, why?”

Whenever we go through levels of success, we can say that our identities are in Jesus, and that I'm loved by Him, and that's what gives me confidence. But you don't really know if the stage is where you get your value from until people don't applaud you anymore. So we began asking ourselves, “Are we making this music because it's successful, or are we making this music because we believe in it and it's affecting people?”

Matt Maher was telling me about people meeting with the Pope. The Pope said that he's not interested in meeting with people who don't understand that we seek relationship, not opportunity. In the music business, sometimes, you feel people seeking you for the opportunity you might provide and not for the relationship itself. Same with God. Am I seeking God because he's going to create opportunity for me and because He's going to make me successful in the world's eyes—or am I seeking God for God Himself?

So the big redefine of success for us as a band has been thinking about people's stories, not about the charts.

CCM: Was there a collective sense of this within the band, or was it a spark in one individual that influenced others?

Jason Jamison: We never sat down and said, "This is what we're going through and this is what we're all feeling right now." It was more of a spark, a sense of life, like what you're going through at that point in time. And it's slightly different for everyone.

For me, it is asking, "'What is it that's motivating me to walk out this door?'" Because that's different now than it was ten years ago, when I didn't have a bunch of kids running around the house. And if we're looking at cold hard cash, it's fleeting and all over the map. It's always been about interacting with people, hearing their stories, and hearing how God is using music in a way that I never could have imagined. We write a song, and it may not [perform well] at radio, but then at a show we're playing, someone says, "God used this song to change my life."

MD: Two weeks ago, a girl at a fair in Michigan told us, "I was going to take my life six months ago, and your song came on my Spotify." It wasn't even a radio single, it wasn't commercially viable, and I think, "Well, if that's not success..."

JJ: ...and those are the stories I'm going to share with my wife on the phone that night. That's what fuels us to keep going. So maybe it's even just a gut check of, "Is that still what keeps us motivated to keep doing this?"

CCM: *There's a lyric from the song "Control," that says, God, you don't need me, but somehow you want me / Oh, how you love me / And somehow that frees me to take my hands off my life. We live in a culture of surface affection and I believe it has begun to diminish our understanding of who we actually are. Do you feel like there is this identity crisis, not only culturally, but inside the church?*

MD: We're all trying to feel valuable and loved. If you don't [find] that in God, then you're going to look elsewhere. Ironically, with social media, we never think of ourselves as a follower—everyone else is our follower, and we start obsessing about how many followers we can get to give us the value that Christ has already offered us, but we haven't received. So you're trying to create this value, and Christ is saying, "I want to give it to you."

When we look at people as followers, we start looking at them as a commodity. People become usable goods to trade and sell. When we start using other people that way, we can't help but escape the nagging feeling that that's what they're using us for. And so it's this cycle. That's why I wrote that song, because we see God that way, that as our usefulness rises and falls, so does our value.

Acts 17 says, "God's not served by men's hands if He needed anything" (Acts 17:25). So the great truth is that God doesn't actually need you, which means your loveliness to God doesn't rise and fall with your usefulness. Can you be of more or less use to God? Sure. Can He use anybody? Absolutely. Does He need to use anybody? Absolutely not. And if God doesn't need us, then He's free to want us, and I think that's true of our relationships with one another. We need each other, we're built for community, but I don't need [others] to fill my deepest longings. That's when I'm able to want [others] as a true friend.

CCM: *Mike, you have said, “My treasure is my life. As soon as you let go of your life as the treasure, then suddenly you find freedom. I don’t have to be afraid because fear is the belief that God is not going to get it right.” Culturally, we have this need to control. But what has the reality of surrender looked like in your life?*

MD: Christ says, “I’m going to give you joy,” but we control and compare our way out of joy. God’s says, “I want to give you rest and joy and peace,” yet we open up our Instagram and think, *Oh, my life isn’t as good as this person’s life. Or, Oh, I don’t have it together like this person. Or, Why don’t we have more sales like that person?* We compare ourselves out of joy. But then I think, *God, I don’t need to be considered a leader; I just need to follow you into joy and into peace and into love.* Then life doesn’t have to go a certain way because you already have the things that you need.

CCM: *It sounds like you are talking about control. And control is a derivative of fear. Right now, Americans are obsessed with who our leader in the free world will be. For those of us who are disciples of Christ, if we aren’t cautious, we begin to trump spiritual kingdom with American kingdom out of fear. What are you discovering is your role as a follower in this seemingly fearful season as Americans?*

MD: It’s funny how bent out of shape people get over politics. People say, “It’s our Christian duty to vote.” I would say before it’s your Christian duty to vote, your Christian duty is to not live a life of fear. The most repeated command in the Bible is, “Do not be afraid.” If that’s the most repeated command, then it is of utmost importance to God because it shows who He is— that you can trust Him in the turmoil of a political climate.

The Pharisees tried to get Jesus into [politics], too. They asked, “Who do you pay taxes to?” And Jesus said, “Render to Caesar what’s Caesar’s.” In doing so, you pay your taxes and you go vote, but you don’t rest your hope in [government]. I don’t rest my hope in democracy. To borrow from **Derek Webb**, “My hope is in a king and kingdom, not a man, a country, or a flag.”

JJ: Who has your trust? Are you trusting in a government that’s made up of humans? I know the deepest secrets of my heart. As much as I try to follow and model my life after Christ, I still find those times in my life where I’m just a fallen man and I need a Savior.

Politics are made up of a bunch of humans who are also fallen and in need of a Savior. If all my trust goes into whoever our next president is, then I’m bound to be disappointed. But if I can fix my eyes on Christ, I know this is a sure foundation, this isn’t going to be rattled, that God’s going to be with me whether it’s **Hillary** [Clinton] or [**Donald**] Trump or a third party. The presidents [change], the government [changes], but God’s still the same. Does that mean we don’t have responsibility? Not at all. But first and foremost, where’s your trust?

CCM: *This circles back to facing real decisions of who we follow these days. There is this passage in Philippians 2 about adopting the mindset of Jesus, the Anointed. Paul ends the passage with, “So you may shine like stars across the land.”*

MD: And what would make you shine? If you fought for the issues and your guy won and you celebrate? That doesn’t make you shine. You know what will make you shine? Even if the person that you hoped for didn’t get elected, if you were still confident and joyful and loved the people on the other side of the issue. That’s what makes you shine.

CCM: Anything else you want to add or feel like we omitted?

MD: When we say, “follow,” some people will probably assume we are thinking action—these are the actions that Jesus requires of you. I just want to be certain people understand what I mean when I say, “following.”

We talk about finding God’s will for our lives. He’s like this cosmic pirate who’s hidden His will for my life and I have to go through all these booby-traps to find it. [But] I think following is more like finding God’s life for your will, not finding His will for your life. In other words, instead of thinking of following God as making all the right choices so that you go down the right paths, to me, it’s more like I need to let God’s life into my choices. I need to let His life in. I need to let His peace in. I need to let His joy in.

So His will for our lives is this daily “Yes” to God. And the reason I can say that is because I believe God is way more interested in our hearts than He is in our careers. I really hope people walk away from this [conversation] believing that his or her loveliness to God doesn’t rise and fall with their usefulness to Him. **CCM**

MICHAEL SWEET



Michael Sweet

A view from the *One Sided War* battle lines

By Andy Argyrakis

Between solo, **Stryper** and his other band **Sweet & Lynch** (with guitar great **George Lynch**), Michael Sweet has thus far released an astounding seven studio albums in this decade alone, and no matter the category, he always evokes the hunger of an artist who still has something to prove.

It's a pretty impressive approach considering he could easily coast on more than 10 million album sales, **MTV** airplay galore, Dove Award-winning and GRAMMY-nominated status, plus a stint co-singing and guitar slinging for classic rock legends **Boston**. Nonetheless, he's diving right back into the well of inspiration on his seventh individual offering, ***One Sided War*** (**Rat Pak Records**), which is already becoming a cornerstone of his catalogue thanks to a guitar-charged fusion of hard rock, metal and melodies galore, accompanied by a striking album cover reminiscent of a still shot from *The Passion Of The Christ*. *CCM Magazine* recently sat down face to face with Sweet to catch a closer glimpse from the front lines of battle.

CCM Magazine: You might hold the record for churning out the most records in the 2010s so far. How are you maintaining this streak at such an optimal level?

Michael Sweet: The record for most records (laughter). It's just my personality to take on as much as I can these days, though

I don't know why. I don't pass up opportunities and I have the energy to do it, but I think I drive everyone around me crazy. I know I do. My daughter, my wife, my dog, my cat all wished I would not take on another project. And I'm starting on another new project in a few months with George Lynch [Sweet & Lynch, Dokken, Lynch Mob]. That's what I mean. Instead of saying, "Hey, let's wait a year," it's like, "Yeah, sure, let's do it in two months," so it's just who I am right now. I can't really explain it. I have this drive to want to do it all, whatever all may be.

CCM: How do you know where the line stops and ends between Stryper, solo, Sweet & Lynch and any other collaboration?

MS: That gets kind of tricky. Some of the Sweet & Lynch songs could be Stryper songs. Some of the Stryper songs could've been solo. Some of the solo songs could've been Stryper. It's difficult to kind of separate that, but I just write what comes from the heart. For example, there's a song on this album like "Golden Age," which some people said could've been a Stryper song. I didn't think about that when I wrote it. I didn't think, "Wait a minute, this sounds like Stryper or this sounds like Michael Sweet." I just wrote it and I liked it. I felt good about it, so it went on the solo album. But it certainly could've been on a Stryper album too. So I guess what I'm trying to say in a long, drawn out way is I don't really think about it. I just write for whatever record I'm working on at the time, and if it sounds similar to other albums I've been a part of, that's hopefully just a testament to my style of writing and performing.

CCM: How did the seeds to One Sided War come about?

MS: You know what's weird about that album is I did a deal with [mainstream hard rock label] Rat Pak Records and there was

a time frame in the contract when to start it, but I didn't think about it until it was time to start it. Then once that time came, I frantically stressed out. "Oh my gosh, it's time." I started writing songs and they all came, thank God. One of these days maybe that's not going to happen. Maybe I'm going to get bit in the tail and I'm gonna have egg on my face, but with that album, same thing—there have been Stryper albums like that. I don't want to say it was rushed, but it was certainly last minute and I think sometimes when I'm under pressure like that, it's a good thing because it helps to drive me and pull the best out of me. So I don't think it's a negative necessarily.

CCM: What would you say is the source of your drive to keep writing and recording? At this point in your career, you could easily rest on your laurels.

MS: I just have something inside that's eternal. It's just an ever-flowing fountain of songs and ideas and the passion to want to fulfill those songs, so I can't explain it. I have a deep faith and I know that God's blessed me with those abilities, so I can only credit Him for it. It's just something that comes. I don't know how else to explain it. It's not like I hear another song and get motivated to write or I see someone and through that there's an experience or a story. I don't write like that. I just write what's in my heart and mind at that moment, and then once I start writing that first song, it's like the floodgates open. I'll literally write a song in a couple hours, and say "alright, [to my wife] Lisa, I'm going on to the next song until there's twelve songs." It's kind of weird and some people might say, "You could be much more creative if you spent more time and took the time in between," but that's just not how I work. I'm an obsessive-compulsive-type guy as well as a bit of an attention-deficit-hyperactivity personality. I joke about it all the time, but it's true and I think it motivates me to do more and to try to perfect more.

CCM: The album cover is a very striking picture that reminds me of The Passion Of The Christ with the crown of thorns. How does that imagery correspond with your message?

MS: A label guy named **Joe O'Brien** came up with that. It's as simple as that. I sent him the songs and said, "Dude, have at it." You get what I'm doing and where I'm coming from. He sent me that imagery and I thought, "Wow, that's really cool." It says a lot. Some people thought it was me, but it's not me. It's supposed to be Christ and to me it says Christ is often fighting a one sided war because the [message] falls on deaf ears or people don't want to hear it. It's kind of an odd way to describe it, but it's true. I also feel like our lives and our experiences are sometimes a one sided war. You're trying to convince somebody to do this or not do that and they don't ever take your advice. That's a one sided war. Or you get into a dispute with someone online and you let it go but they don't. Our families, our friends, our neighbors—there are a lot of one sided wars that we all experience.

CCM: Tell us about this all-star band you have on the record.

MS: I worked with George Lynch, **Brian Tichy** [Whitesnake, Foreigner] and **James LoMenzo** [White Lion, Megadeth] on [Sweet & Lynch's *Only To Rise*]. After working with them, I just thought, "Gosh, this is really nice working with guys of this caliber."

Things are smoother, faster and better. I'm not referring that to Stryper. I'm just saying working with other musicians—studio musicians and what not—it's great to work with the best because you get the best. After doing the Sweet & Lynch album and working with the best, I wanted to do the same thing on this solo album. Not that I didn't do that before—on the last

solo album I worked with **Kenny Aronoff** [John Mellencamp, John Fogerty, Chickenfoot], who's one of the best drummers—but I just really wanted to go the extra mile. I got crème of the crop guys: **Joel Hoekstra** [from Whitesnake and Trans-Siberian Orchestra on guitar], [“East Coast shred-master”] Ethan Brosch [also on guitar], **Will Hunt** [from Evanescence on drums] and **John O’Boyle** [from Tom Ingram Band and Screaming Souls on bass]. Those guys are just stupid-good and everything was perfect. You just call them up and say “absolutely brilliant.”

CCM: What do you hope the public is going to take away from this record?

MS: My goal is always to inspire people, encourage people and help people. That's always my desire when somebody hears a Michael Sweet album or a Stryper album. And then you hear a story two years later like, “I was going through a tough time and I heard this song or album and it helped me through it,” or, “It changed my life. I used to be a drug addict now I'm a pastor.” Stories like that really make it worthwhile. It puts meaning to it instead of being just a rock band cranking amps, playing loud and running around. That's fun, but there's no real depth to it. When I hear stories like that, it gives it depth. [CCM](#)



BRITT NICOLE

Britt Nicole — Stronger Together

By Jen Rose Yokel

A lot of life can happen in just a few years, just ask beloved hit-maker **Britt Nicole**. Her songs have struck the balance between catchy hooks and vulnerable songwriting for almost a decade, and in 2012 she released **Gold**, a collection of positive pop tunes that earned acclaim from contemporary Christian and mainstream audiences alike.

But a bigger audience isn't the only thing that's changed. A few months after *Gold*'s debut, she married producer **Joshua Crosby**, and is now a mom to three year-old **Ella** and twenty month-old **Adin**. With so much on the family calendar, it's not surprising that it's been so long since we heard new music, and maybe that's what made July's debut of new single "Through Your Eyes" such a pleasant surprise.

Nicole's fourth record, simply titled **Britt Nicole**, is in some ways a reintroduction and a continuation of what she does best. We had a chance to chat with her about the past four years, the power of collaboration, and the reinvention of the "same Britt" we've come to love.

CCM Magazine: *It really has been a while since we've heard any new music from you, but maybe that's just part of adjusting to marriage and mommy life?*

Britt Nicole: Yeah, it's funny, 'cause everyone's like, "So, you took a break!" And well, I put out a remix album last year, we continued touring, and I did two tours with TobyMac. So I kind-of haven't really stopped? [Laughs]

But after Gold came out I had [my daughter] Ella, and when she was a year old we found out we were pregnant with my son. So over these four years so much life has happened! We have been working, but making this new record was definitely a process. It just took time.

CCM: Why did you decide to call your fourth record Britt Nicole?

BN: We were living with the songs and asking ourselves, “What is that one song that jumps out? What is that theme?” But it kind-of felt like every song was different in their own way. My husband said to me, “Why don’t you let it be your first self-titled album?”

The more I lived with that thought I felt like, “Man, this record—more than any other—has a piece of my heart in every single song. With so much life happening—getting married, having kids—obviously I wrote about all of those things. It feels like it’s me, from the lyrics to the style of the songs and the melodies, everything about it feels like who I am!

CCM: Does it feel like a reinvention?

BN: It really does. When you’re coming back with new music after four years, it’s kind of like a blank slate. People consume music so fast now that four years seems like a long time, but even though so much has changed, nothing has changed in my heart and who I am. I’m the same Britt.

It feels like a fresh start in so many ways, even with the imaging and the creative style. I love the music I’ve made before, and this feels like a continuation of that, still with a very pop sound and songs written from my heart. But this feels like a new stage of life for me.

CCM: In the past, you've been very involved in the writing process for your music. Did this record come from a lot of collaboration, or mostly from your personal writing?

BN: There was a ton of collaboration, actually. I felt like this year God was speaking to me about the word "together," the power of coming together with people and the impact that can make. Sometimes I can be the kind of artist who's like, "Okay I got it, I can figure it out," and I can try to do things on my own. All of my records have been written with other people, but it's usually only like five writers total and two or three producers at most. But I just felt like God was talking to me about coming together with people.

So I went to my label and said, "What if we opened up this record to other songwriters, let them pitch songs," and we ended up putting two songs on the record that I didn't have any part in writing. I'm excited because I don't even know how many people total are on this record. There's probably thirty songwriters and at least ten producers, five different mixers... So many people that are involved!

CCM: Is it challenging or freeing for you to put your music in other people's hands?

BN: In the past, I've always wanted to write on every song so that they show my heart, because I feel like I can sing something with more conviction if it's something I walked through, you know? But this time it did feel freeing. Like, "What if someone else has something to say that resonates with me?"

CCM: *Was there a particular song you really made your own?*

BN: Yeah, I was pitched a song called “Pave.” It was a really cool song, and I liked what it was talking about. It was originally an acoustic ballad, but my husband started working on it, and now it’s an upbeat, fun pop song. It’s totally different from how it was given to us, though all of the lyrics and melody is the same.

For me, “Pave” is all about adventure. I don’t know what the songwriter was thinking when they wrote it, but some of the lyrics say, *If you want to jump from the top of a waterfall / climb up a mountain just to hear the call / swinging through the jungle, running for tomorrow / anywhere you wanna go I can pave the road.*

My husband and I had taken a trip to Hawaii, and we actually had a day without the kids and decided to just go have fun. We ended up jumping off of these amazing cliffs and waterfalls, things we never get to do in real life. And I felt like God was speaking to me, saying, “I created you to live your life and enjoy what I have given you.” So many times we get busy with our families and work, and we end up doing that same routine but forgetting to make room in our lives for adventure.

So when I heard the song I thought, “Oh my gosh, this reminds me of our trip to Hawaii!” So that’s one way that it was so much fun to invite other people into making this record and using their gifts to create something amazing.

CCM: *“Through Your Eyes” just seemed to come out of nowhere and is really resonating with people. What’s the story behind that one?*

BN: I wrote that song with my friend **Ben Glover** (“The Lost Get Found,” “All This Time”). We usually come together in the re-

coding process and write at least one song together. We wrote some songs, but we didn't love them...didn't feel like they were right for the record. When I was almost finished, I felt like there was something left that I wanted to say and thought maybe Ben and I should write together one more time, because we've always written really strong songs before.

I noticed for a couple weeks I'd been walking with my head down, literally looking down, not living in God's truth of what he says about me. The morning I was going to write with him, I was getting my kids ready for the day, and I felt like I wasn't doing a very good job balancing everything. When we were getting in my car, I just sat there in the garage for a few minutes. I had my head down and I was pulling on the steering wheel, and I started to say these things to myself like, "Britt, you gotta get it together. You've gotta do better." For some reason I put this pressure on myself, to be the best mom and the best wife and the best artist, almost trying to reach this perfection.

I've never made a record while being a mom and being a wife, so this has been a brand new process for me. Even with my walk with God I've been putting pressure on myself. And right then, I felt like God walked into my car and literally lifted up my head. I could feel Him saying to me, "Britt, you're okay. Take the pressure off. Give me your heart and I'm gonna meet you and help you." In that moment I saw myself through his eyes.

I think about my kids and how I love them. I'm not looking at them every day thinking, "Well, you guys are not perfect enough." They're going to make mistakes and learn, but I love them and help teach them. And God loves us way more than we can even love our kids!

So I went to the studio, and Ben and I wrote this song. I just want people to let that message speak to their hearts and minds, and to see themselves as God sees them. I think we live in a time where—especially with social media—people want to portray perfection. I think people resonate with us when we say, “I’m not perfect. I need Jesus.”

CCM: So your debut came out almost ten years ago...

BN: Oh...I hadn’t realized that!

CCM: Yes, 2007! So what would you say has been the biggest thing you’ve learned in the past ten years doing music?

BN: Wow...ten years since ***Say It!*** I’m realizing now that I want to always be thankful for every opportunity, and be grateful I get to do this. As I’m putting out a new record it’s easy to get caught up in the work of it, but I want to stay in that place when I heard my song on the radio for the first time and I was so grateful and excited and humbled that my music would even be played.

And I think I’ve learned to have fun with what I do. I’m a perfectionist sometimes and take this stuff pretty seriously. But I’ve learned to lighten up a bit and have fun, and I think I’m enjoying it more than ever. CCM

TAMELA MANN

A full-page photograph of Tameela Mann performing on stage. She is wearing a vibrant red, long-sleeved, form-fitting dress with a dark red, shiny, corset-style bodice. She has short, blonde, curly hair and is holding a black microphone in her left hand. She is looking upwards and to the right with a joyful expression. In the background, a drummer is partially visible behind a drum kit, and the stage is lit with blue and purple lights.

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REVIEWS

oct 15, 2016



YOUR MERCY

PAUL BALOCHE



Tenth Avenue North

Followers

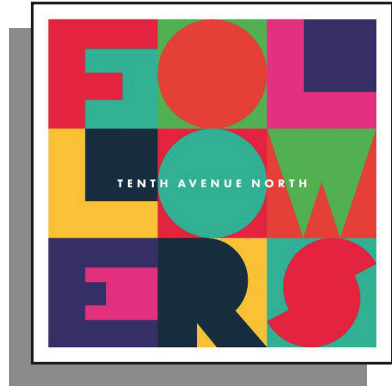
(Provident)

FOR FANS OF:

Brandon Heath, Building 429

WE LIKE: “Afraid”

★★★★☆



Writing remarks about how solid and smart the synth pop/rock compositions are on **Tenth Avenue North's** new album, ***Followers***, feels like a pointless exercise. Rather, the point has already been made so often, on each of the band's previous four albums.

Followers features **Mike Donehey's** killer vocal work on honest, relatable lyrics paired with the aforementioned strong songwriting. If that makes Tenth Ave sound like one of the most dependable bands in the industry, it's because they are. From the pulsing “What You Want” to the Fray-like “Sparrow (Under Heaven's Eyes),” there's plenty here to appreciate and absorb for the faith journey forward.

—Matt Conner

Audrey Assad

Inheritance Deluxe Edition

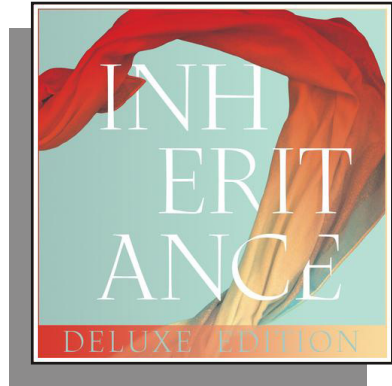
(Fortunate Fall)

FOR FANS OF:

Sara Groves

WE LIKE: “New Every Morning”

★★★★☆



If it's hard to get excited about reimagined takes of reimagined takes, we understand. We'd be suspect of such projects normally, but we're always interested with **Audrey Assad** at the helm. Her February hymn release, ***Inheritance***, has received the “deluxe” treatment, adding new audio and video content, including four new takes on classic hymns with cellist **Cara Fox**.

“Be Thou My Vision” will always pull the heartstrings, but “New Every Morning” is the most captivating new song of the bunch. If you've yet to pick up *Inheritance* for some reason (there's no good one), then at least grab this deluxe version. Both meaning and beauty are abundant here.

—Matt Conner

Paul Baloché

Your Mercy

(Integrity)

FOR FANS OF:

Brenton Brown, Brian Doerksen

WE LIKE: “Your Mercy”

★★★★☆



Paul Baloché is synonymous with the modern worship movement as an artist whose songs have been sung all over the world and recorded in ten languages. ***Your Mercy***, his latest recording, brings multiple co-writers into the mix—from **Aaron Gillespie** and **Meredith Andrews** to **Aaron Shust** and **Matt Redman**—but the guests aren’t needed considering Baloché’s catalog stands strong on its own authentic merit.

Fans will be looking for sincere congregational worship expressions, and *Your Mercy* delivers several beautiful songs to fit that mold. Our favorites include “Found in You,” “We Come To You Jesus” and the title track.

—Matt Conner

Derek Minor

Reflection

(Reflection Music Group)

FOR FANS OF:

Swoope, Canon

WE LIKE: "Believe It"

★★★★☆



Derek Minor's latest inspired effort, ***Reflection***, deals heavily with themes of identity and he's delivering the truth boldly in both style and substance.

His oft confrontational style work is challenging and encouraging on songs like "Look at Me Now" ("They said we'd be nothing, but they lyin' / See I believe what God say and I suggest you try it.") and "Believe It" ("I got truth that they need to know / Lemme talk about it"), but Minor's compositions are so strong that you give him all the credibility he needs to proclaim his truth.

There's no reason why Minor shouldn't be as ubiquitous as his friend **Lecrae**, and *Reflection* is proof positive of that.

—Matt Conner

Rend Collective

Campfire II: Simplicity

(Reflection Music Group)

FOR FANS OF:

All Sons & Daughters, Crowder

WE LIKE: “Every Giant Will Fall”

★★★★☆



Campfire II is exactly what it sounds like: a campfire recording. It’s also an idea that would fall flat if not for the inventive joy in charge of its execution. **Rend Collective** has earned the right to chase any sonic idea at this point after releasing two jubilant, imaginative worship albums over the years.

This unplugged album brings those favorites into the campfire sing-along setting along with two new songs and a cover of **Hillsong UNITED**’s uber-favorite “Oceans (Where Feet May Fail).” The style works best with the collective’s own compositions, but you can’t blame them for trying. It’s always in good fun when they’re involved.

—Matt Conner

Ron Block & Jeff Taylor

Trouble Go Down

(Self-Released)

FOR FANS OF:

*T Bone Burnett, Alison Krauss,
The Time Jumpers*

WE LIKE: “Come Away With Me”

★★★★☆



Between **Ron Block**’s record-breaking run with **Alison Krauss + Union Station** and **Jeff Taylor**’s work in the super group **The Time Jumpers** (featuring Vince Gill), there’s been a groundswell of anticipation leading up to their debut collaboration. On the resulting ***Trouble Go Down***, the pair of co-vocalists/multi-instrumentalists clearly live up to their pedigree, mixing present-tense acoustic originals, “new hymns with old souls” and cracking open their hymnals for reinterpretations from the 1800s.

Though bluegrass, folk and gospel are at the core of this collection, the proceedings also get pretty eclectic with retro guitars, whistles, a bouzouki and a bodhran. The duo even calls on several of their familiar friends for vocal contributions (**Ellie Holcomb**, **Suzanne Cox**, plus a periodic backing cast of all-star indie artists), all bonus assets within an already masterful body of work.

–Andy Argyrakis

Jonathan Cain

What God Wants To Hear

(Identity Records)

FOR FANS OF:

*John Elefante, Michael W. Smith,
Journey*

WE LIKE: “Deeper Than Deep”

★★★★☆



Longtime Journey keyboard player/rhythm guitarist/co-writer **Jonathan Cain** has released several solo albums throughout his illustrious career, but ***What God Wants To Hear*** marks his first full-fledged Christian record. The legendary rocker who once even considered being a priest recently reconnected with his childhood faith in the wake of his marriage to **Pastor Paula White**, whose influence is apparent throughout a collection overflowing with joy and healing.

Of course, Cain’s musicianship and production is also as pristine as ever, and while his voice is no match for **Steve Perry** or any of Journey’s subsequent substitutes, there’s an instant connection that comes from getting this intimate of a glimpse into the soul of a genuine superstar.

–Andy Argyrakis

One Way Home

Front Porch

(Self-released)

FOR FANS OF:

Hillary Scott, Alison Krauss

WE LIKE: “Crossroads”

★★★★☆



Somewhere between the mixed harmonies of **Lady Antebellum** and the bluegrassy tendencies of **Rend Collective** and **Mumford & Sons**, we find **One Way Home**. The earthy tones on this project make it a perfect soundtrack, say, for a long, windows-down trek along the Blue Ridge Parkway. The musicianship on **Front Porch** is nothing short of stellar, no need for auto-tuners and Roland TR-808's for an excuse to turn it up—let the silky-smooth vocals and percussive thumps confidently guide your way.

The title track, “Crossroads,” and “Truth” provide the fuel for momentum, while haunting tracks like “Beautiful Heart” and “Hopeless” will be pleasing to the ear of **Alison Krauss** fans across the board. From their front porch to your car stereo or headphones, no matter where you're jamming to this album, it's sure to get your feet a-stompin' and your heart a smilin'.

–Staff

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