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#### From the Editor

#### **Out & About**

Exclusive pics of your favorite artists! In this issue: Marc Martel w/Celine Dion, Jody McBrayer, Kenny Lattimore + more!



### **Newsong & Winter Jam**

After 20-years & thousands of impacted lives, what's NewSong's secret to success with Christian music's biggest show?



### **Britt Nicole**

As part of our JAM-packed issue, check out our conversation with Britt Nicole in this **ONLINE ONLY** feature!



### Thousand Foot Krutch

Headlining Winter Jam once again, what are the foundational elements for TFK front man Trevor McNevan's upcoming tour experience?



### **Tony Nolan**

He's experienced God do amazing things through Winter Jam over his many years as Tour Evangelist—how did this particular story personally impact him?



### Reviews

New music from Colony House, Ellie Holcomb, Grayson | Reed, Zach Williams + more!







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**Web Ad Traffic Coordinator** Kristina James **The Heart Of Winter Jam** It's that time of year...the hustle and bustle of the holidays have ended. A brand new year is about to begin. There's a sense of renewal...a freshness that's upon us during this time. And at this time of year—every year, well, since 1995, anyway—we anticipate what will end up being one of our biggest nights of the year.

I've always held **NewSong** to a high standard. When I was a youth in 19-ninety-something, our group at church performed a drama scene to "Arise My Love," and years later (before **January Jam**, which eventually became **Winter Jam**) I remember seeing them rock a show at **Florida State University** when my sister was a student there. I loved their music, but there always seemed to be a deeper thing going on with those guys.

There are a handful of big tours in contemporary Christian music, most have come and gone, and some of us are aware of others in mainstream circles that may be ongoing crowd-favorites. But there's something different—and special, just like a new year—about *Winter Jam*. Having the privilege to get to know guys like **Eddie Carswell** and **Russ Lee** the past few years, it's evident that they're different, too.

I'll contend that it's their heart, which continues to drive the Winter Jam train to city after city. NewSong may not be the No. 1 featured artist on the bill, but their love for all people has a trickle-down effect, from the tour headliner on down to the youth group kid attending his first concert. Seriously, where else are you going to see a show with production value like this for \$10 (true, **Carman** isn't touring), not to mention getting a chance to see the top names in Christian music yearly? They love putting this show together and delivering it to you, year after year.

When it comes down to it, these guys really love Jesus, and they want to proclaim His name in the biggest way possible. We want to get behind this love, so we're putting as much *Winter Jam* on this issue to foster your anticipation—freshness and renewal, that's up to you. We guarantee that if you go to *Winter Jam* this year, it's going to be a big, big night.



Happy New Year,

Kevin Sparkman

Editor, CCM Magazine KSparq@CCMMagazine.com

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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.

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TOUR SPECTACULAR



### **NEWSONG & WINTER JAM**

A conversation with the creators & hosts of Christan music's biggest show



www.ccmmagazine.com/magazine/issues/jan-01-2017

### NewSong & Winter Jam — Love, On Tour

A conversation with the creators of the largest annual touring outfit in Christian music

By Kevin Sparkman

Chances are, many of you reading this edition of *CCM Magazine*, or this particular article, have experienced *Winter Jam* at some point in your lives. After all, this *Tour Spectacular* has reached more fans in more cities than any other contemporary Christian music tour in history—now, a whopping twenty-plus-years in the making.

Sure, the tour has adjusted over the years to adapt with everchanging trends, a noted mark of its staying power, but it's the stalwart character of *Winter Jam*'s founders, the members of **NewSong**, that have both laid the foundation and ensured its ongoing strength.

Continuously honing in on how God would lead them—a trait that was integral from the very first *January Jam* in 1995—and partnering with some of the most over-the-top talent in music yearly (**TobyMac**, **Newsboys**, **Lecrae**, **Skillet**, and **Third Day** to name just a few), has been the band's recipe for achievement. However, as you'll read in our exclusive conversation with NewSong, accomplishments aren't necessarily defined in record-breaking numbers. Family, fellowship, and fun set the bar for success, and the greatest of all—as tour pastor **Bobby Joiner** once stated—is, "Love."

"Winter Jam can be summed up in just one word: love. And then, joy. One word: love. And joy!"

# CCM Magazine: What do you remember about the very first Winter Jam, more than 20 years ago?

**Eddie Carswell:** The first *Winter Jam* was actually called January Jam and it was held in Greenville, South Carolina. I still remember seeing the amazing crowd—more than 6,500—and knowing it was "a God night."

**Billy Goodwin:** When we did the first concert in Greenville, we were in awe of what we felt God was doing. Our prayer at that point was, "God, please don't let us miss what you are trying to tell us tonight!" We had no idea that He would take that one concert and turn it into the biggest Christian tour in the country. We just tried to be obedient with what God had given us to do.

# CCM: Eddie, why is the mentoring that goes on between artists an important facet of Winter Jam?

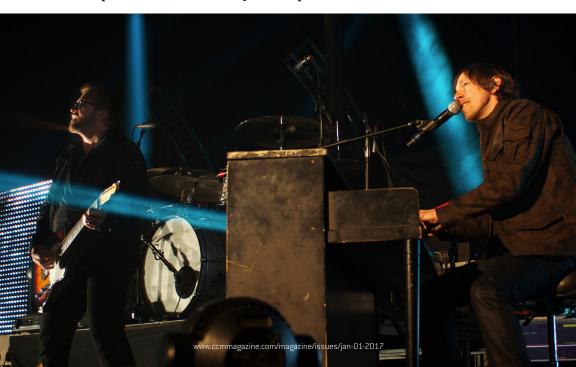
**EC:** The mentoring that happens between artists backstage is really wrapped up in how we share life together when the tour is on the road—we eat together, have hundreds of conversations, and worship together at "Jam Church." Pastor Bobby [Joiner], our long-time tour pastor, is always ready to talk with anyone, helping them through whatever might be happening in their life. It has been amazing to see so many artists begin as an opening act for the *Pre-Jam Party*—**Francesca Battistelli**, for **KING & COUNTRY**, **Sidewalk Prophets**, **Chris August** and others—become leaders in our industry.

### CCM: Tell us about Jam Church.

**Matt Butler:** Something a lot of people may not know is that touring musicians often don't get to be part of their local Sunday church service as much as we'd like to. Enter Jam

Church ... the *Winter Jam* version of a regular Sunday gathering. Jam Church is held in a random side room in the arena where the show is being held that evening. All who are able to attend (artists, bands, crew, catering, drivers, staff, etc.) squeeze into the room, and on any given Sunday, a different group of artists lead worship. Our two road pastors take turns teaching each week, and it becomes our Church family on the road. It is one of my favorite things about the entire tour, and not only represents what the tour is all about, but prepares us well to represent Who the tour is all about.

**Russ Lee:** I believe that Jam Church is where many artists find their moment of refreshment and community during a challenging tour schedule. It catches a lot of artists by surprise, and it becomes not only something they enjoy, but a time that is vital to their spiritual growth and survival through the rigors of the tour. Jam Church is the place where Christian family and community is formed and nurtured—it ends up being everyone's favorite part of the *Winter Jam* experience.





# CCM: Billy, your family has been very directly impacted by Winter Jam...

**BG:** My family has been especially blessed and touched personally by *Winter Jam*. Several years ago, my son **Matt**, who was playing with NewSong at the time, met Francesca Battistelli on tour when she was an opening artist. They started dating, fell in love, got married and have given us three beautiful grandchildren.

CCM: Matt, through the years you have played with a many of the artists taking the stage, besides your role with NewSong. What have you enjoyed about these opportunities?

**MB:** As a musician, there's nothing I like more than playing different styles of music, on different instruments, with different artists. Being the music director and band leader for NewSong has prepared me well to work with and for other artists. Another one of the highlights of the *Winter Jam* tour for me has become who I will end up playing with. Sometimes it's something that is planned months in advance with many rehearsals, other times it has been a last minute, "Hey Matt, could you fill in for us, or play 'this' or 'that?" I've always been happy to say yes, and get in the mix with dozens of artists over the years.

I have found that my various roles on stage have led to being able to serve as a mentor to younger musicians. I find us talking less about music, and more about real life—less about how to get to the next level in the industry, and more about the struggles of being a touring musician. The biggest honor comes from watching young musicians grow in their maturity as Christ followers, and become greater men, husbands, and fathers. That's the real reward for me.

# CCM: Russ, is there a Winter Jam story that is especially meaningful to you?

**RL:** A few years ago a friend of mine brought his foster teenage son to *Winter Jam* in Nashville. The boy had grown up very troubled and in a difficult situation and because of it, had become very hardened toward anything encouraging or positive. He did not want to come to the show. When **Skillet** got up to play at the end of the night, the boy started to pay attention. **John Cooper** made a comment about algebra and how hard it was, and that registered deeply with the boy who was struggling in school.

He literally broke and turned to his foster parents who had brought him, saying, "I need Jesus! I need what you have! What can I do to become a Christian?" Right then and there he bowed his head and prayed a prayer and his life was changed in an instant. That was two years ago and he's still an amazing young man with the wonderful Light of Jesus in his eyes. His life was changed that night and it reminds me of the hundreds, maybe thousands of other similar stories we've heard through the years.

# CCM: Eddie, as the visionary behind the tour, why has it been important to keep admission at \$10?

**EC:** Through the years, we have heard story after story from fans during in-stores and other appearances share with us that they didn't have the money to bring their family to concerts. So from the start, we were determined to make *Winter Jam* affordable to families, youth groups—anyone who wanted to come. If people aren't able to pay \$10, we want them to be able to come on in anyway.





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# THOUSAND FOOT KRU

A conversation with front man Trevor McNevan







### Thousand Foot Krutch & Winter Jam

### Community Service

Rekindling relationships and encouraging community – foundational elements for Trevor McNevan's upcoming Winter Jam experience

By Kevin Sparkman

As **Thousand Foot Krutch** has been busy globetrotting of late, the boys from Canada now look forward to rockin' round the States for the next three-months as they co-headline this year's **Winter Jam Tour Spectacular**. But for front man **Trevor McNevan** (whom also speaks for his mates **Steve Augustine** and **Joel Bruyere**), it's more than just another gig.

The trio are currently finalizing their *Winter Jam* set, details of which McNevan couldn't share with *CCM Magazine*, but what he's looking forward to the most aren't just the notes he'll play on his guitar, but the one's he'll be jotting down in his journal during the tour's Jam Church each and every Sunday. Emphasizing what makes this tour such a special experience for both fan and artist, McNevan tells us that the moments among friends that happen in and around *Winter Jam* are most important.

CCM Magazine: First thing's first, how stoked are you guys to be co-headlining this tour this year?

**Trevor McNevan:** It's such a blessing. This is our second time on *Winter Jam*. Our experience from the first time was fantastic. It's such a unique and one-of-a-kind tour. When I think about

the immense amount of touring we've done through the years, I've never really seen anything like it—it's special. Regardless of age, from young to old, when you come to *Winter Jam* you leave feeling a sense of community. They create a pretty amazing culture there.

CCM: They love to mix it up and add hard rock acts like yourselves to the billing. This year, you're carrying the torch for bands like Skillet and RED that have been featured recently. Is there anything special in the works for what you guys are going to be doing on stage?

**TM:** Yeah, we have a few tricks up our sleeve. I can't tell you much about that, but we're very excited. It's going to be a pretty high-octane moment of the show, that's for sure. We're currently putting our set together.

CCM: We're also curious to know what Winter Jam-specific memories you might have—either being a part of it or experiencing it as a fan?

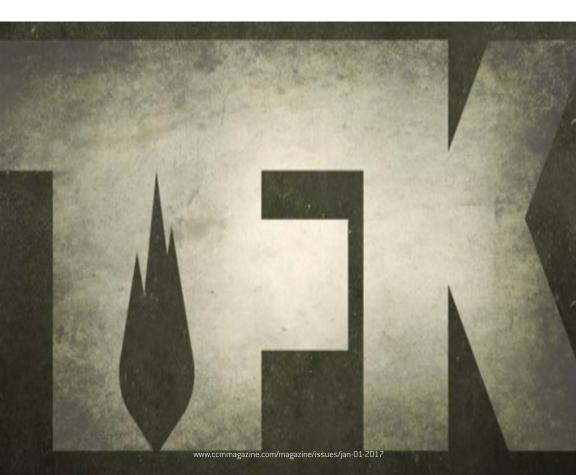
**TM:** Absolutely, man. I've never seen a tour have church before, and when you sign up for something like this, where it's threemonths long, it's a big commitment as a band-family, but also for our own families. You're away from your home church and you're away from your home community for pretty immense amounts of time. This particular tour has a thing called *Jam Church*, and every Sunday morning, we have church. Different artists switch up leading worship, and it's just such a cool, special thing.

I really appreciate that about this tour as well, that kind-of unique heart of worship throughout the night—everybody's worshiping in their own ways, in different styles of music

maybe—but music communicates and resonates with us the way that it does individually. It's a really cool thing to come together—to share church and life together outside of the music [business]. Getting everyone to take their "stuff" off and checking it at the door, and just kind-of coming in there with open minds and hearts. It's a very cool thing to share together, it's done some really amazing things.

## CCM: When TFK leads worship for Jam Church, what does set list look like?

**TM:** You know, I don't think we [led] last time? We actually love the acoustic thing. Maybe this time, we'll have to see!



CCM: Speaking of off-stage stuff, it's no secret that there's all kinds of antics that go on that are now kind-of a tradition on Winter Jam. What are some of those things you're looking forward to getting back into the most this time?

**TM:** You know, I need to play a little more ping pong this time around. **Eddie Carswell**, one of the founders of the tour, he's always playing ping pong! Every time you walk in he's challenging someone, so I've got to step up to the *table* this time.

**Colton** [**Dixon**] was on the last one with us too, and so was **Tenth Avenue North**, so it'll be a blast to hook up with those guys again and just get back with our tour family. We've toured with **Crowder** before on the West Coast version of *Winter Jam* and have played a bunch of shows with **Britt Nicole**, but never with **Andy Mineo**, so I think it's going to be a lot of fun.

CCM: Have you built really strong, lasting friendships from participating in Winter Jam in the past?

**TM:** Yeah, absolutely. I think like anything else—like a men's group or a Bible study—with this sort of tour, being out there consistently this long, it gives you a chance to do [more of] that. To have some real talks, real relationships, and like most of those things end up doing, it kind of helps you realize that we all go through the same stuff. You do, you make lasting friendships and relationships.

We've been blessed to tour with some great people over the years. But you have to be intentional about building relationships and spending that personal time together, because everyone has lots on the go, and it's easy to just go from the bus to the venue to the meetings and not really get to live much life together. We definitely spent some time doing that on the last

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the costs were so low, we thought, are they really going to support our family? Since then we've come to the conclusion that for us, there is no other option.

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—Tonya and Mark



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*Winter Jam,* just getting to know people better and walking out life together. We serve a big God—He's immense.

CCM: Lately, you guys have been doing a lot of international touring. Coming from Canada, what unique opportunities present themselves on this side of the globe for you?

TM: Yeah, we have done a lot of touring abroad, and have pockets of family all over the world. We've been blessed to kind of been able to do that over the years and been doing it long enough. With *Winter Jam*, there are so many amazing cities on this tour—60 cities and over 600,000 people is what they're telling me. It's just a pretty broad scope and spectrum, but this type of show is a blast to play—it's a whole different type of energy.

There's something cool that happens when you're in an intimate room and everybody can see each other's faces, and that's a beautiful thing. But this is a whole different type of energy and adrenaline that happens when so many people come together, love music, and love God—it's a powerful thing. Whether it's a new song, belting out an amazing worship song, or whether it's us just turning the amps to "11" and cranking out something on that level, everybody's worshiping in their own way and it's a very cool, contagious kind-of atmosphere.

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WINTER THING

Winter Jam first-timer? OBB's got you covered...



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### First-timer Tips for future Winter Jam fans

By OBB

**Zach**, **Nich** and **Jacob Oswald**, the pop-rock trio better known as **OBB**, were catapulted into the national spotlight on 2013's *Winter Jam* tour. Their first outing on the *Tour Spectacular* proved life-changing for the Atlanta-based brothers. With an album and two EPs now under their belt—not to mention a brand new single, "Sweater," currently making waves at pop radio—OBB is excited to once again take the *Pre-Jam Party* stage on *Winter Jam 2017*.

Jacob Oswald offers first-time *Winter Jam* attendees some helpful tips for navigating Christian music's biggest annual tour:

- **Tip 1** | If you can, sit by the soundboard. The engineer is mixing the show to sound best to his ears.
- **Tip 2** | If you want to dance and jump around, find a seat near the front of the arena floor. If you just want to sit and watch the concert, the sides of the auditorium are best.
- **Tip 3** | Get to the venue early! You'll not only get a better seat when the doors open, but sometimes a few of the artists will come out to meet fans while they're waiting. Plus, you can make friends with people before the show—there's a lot of camaraderie.
- **Tip 4** | When you buy merch, ask if the artist will be signing later so you'll know where to meet them after the show.
- **Tip 5** | Get there early to see the new bands on the *Pre-Jam Party*! You'll most likely end up loving them as much as your favorites.



### Tony Nolan & Winter Jam

### — Eternal Connections

By Tony Nolan, Tour Evangelist

Withering in pain, **Gene** lay in a cold, silent hospital bed, dying of liver disease. The window he had been lifelessly staring out began to vibrate from the powerful, rhythmic whips of helicopter blades. Life Flight was making a landing on the hospital roof, carrying the body of a 19 year-old boy named **Brandon** who had just died in a tragic car accident. Gene's eyes raised, along with the sound of his wife's voice, "Maybe this is your chance, Gene?" Moments later, Gene was rushed into surgery for a liver transplant.

Recovery was painful and exhausting, but Gene pushed through. And thanks to a young organ donor, a middle-aged man had a new chance at life. His heart full of gratitude, Gene reached out to the boy's parents. He just wanted to thank them and perhaps encourage them during their time of great loss. He made a call to Brandon's parents, and they were so encouraged they decided they wanted to meet Gene, in person.

On the day of the meeting everyone's nerves were on edge. What would the mom and dad say to the man, whose body now held their son's liver? This isn't something parents do every day. What would Gene say to them, whose son's death gave him life? The doors of the meeting room opened. Parents and patient locked eyes, and every question they had melted away in the warmth of sheer joy. Hugs and tears transformed interrogatives into exclamations. Oh, the joy of discovering a bubbling river-of-life-dancing along the Valley Of The Shadow Of Death!

Their meeting place was in an arena where *Winter Jam* was being held. The parents thought this would be a great place to connect. A year earlier, the other victims in the accident with Brandon—Ashlee and Alex—had just attended the concert. Later that night, they picked up Brandon, but before they made it back to their driveways, they were walking on streets of gold. While the parents were meeting backstage with Gene, I was preparing to walk on stage to share the Gospel. I had no idea they were connecting. Brandon's father, Ron, invited Gene in to hear the message I was sharing. Something extraordinary was about to take place.

**Skillet** had just finished their thunderous set, and I stepped into the spotlight and up to the mic before a massive, sold-out audience. I recall starting with a quote from **Louie Giglio**'s book, I *Am Not But I Know I Am*. Giglio said, "Life is short. Our time on earth is brief. We better make sure we are living for the stuff that lasts forever." I then told the audience about Alex, Ashlee and Brandon.

I spoke about Brandon and his prodigal son experience; how his parents were blessed to see him come back, and they were certain his soul was now in heaven. I told them about Alex and his outstanding testimony of being a follower of Jesus. Then, with tears welling up in my eyes, I shared about Ashlee, how she came to the concert and heard me preach the Gospel of Jesus. I exclaimed how she repented and believed, then told her friends at the concert how the massive weight of her sins had been lifted off of her heart! Two hours later she met her Maker, face-to-face. I proceeded to tell the crowd that's why *Winter Jam* shares the Gospel every night and operates from a very deep conviction that everybody is going to spend forever somewhere. There are only two options: Heaven or Hell. I, then, invited all of them to embrace Giglio's wisdom and to be prepared for eternity.

Gene fell under deep conviction and awe of God's grace that night. He was swept up in God's love for his own soul. He had not known of Christ. The only time he could remember praying was when he heard the helicopter landing on the roof, "God, let this be the one." Now God was clearly answering his request, "Gene, you have no idea about the life I want to give to you!" Gene buckled under the news: God didn't just want him to live, He wanted him to live forever. A year earlier, God gave him a new liver and now He was giving him a new life! Gene was swallowed up by the Gospel, repented, believed in Jesus, and was raised to new life in Christ!

There are more stories. I have been the *Winter Jam* tour preacher for eight years and none of the stories get old. They are moments that mark a minister, like when you get to see joyful tears roll down the cheeks of forgiven sinners, a face long with low self-worth, now beaming with the news that he or she is priceless! A soul, soaked in the sea of past regrets, now rescued and sailing in the ocean of God's mercy! *Winter Jam* has set my faith ablaze by seeing the ferocious activity of God's redemptive intervention. I'm not alone. Hundreds of thousands that have gathered around the *Winter Jam* stage, in a rave of worship to the King of Kings, leave with their hearts on fire for His Kingdom come, His will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven!



Colony House
Only The Lonely

(Descendant/RCA)

FOR FANS OF: Leagues,

NEEDTOBREATHE, Cold War Kids

WE LIKE: "Lonely"

\*\*\*\*



Since their initial release *When I Was Younger* (2014) and big breakout on *Tour de Compadres* in 2015, *Colony House*—now a foursome with the addition of bassist *Parke Cottrell*—have been laying the foundation for new music and avoiding the sophomore slump. With a new year comes a second LP, and all indications are that Colony House will continue to build upon its ever-increasing reach.

Returning with their familiar harrowing vocals (**Caleb Chapman**) and guitar-whiz work (**Scott Mills**), *Only The Lonely* will solidify the band and further entrench their residency on the mainstream stage. A la **NEEDTOBREATHE**'s mega-hit "Brother," and eluding to a potential house divided among the Chapman brothers (yes, they're **Steven Curtis**' boys), we'll just chalk up "You And I" and its companion video to a mere spoof or simple sibling rivalry satire—good stuff, nonetheless.

Ellie Holcomb Red Sea Road (Full Heart Music)

**FOR FANS OF**: Sara Groves, Meredith Andrews, Colbie Caillat

WE LIKE: "Find You Here"

\*\*\*\*



The 2014 Dove Award New Artist Of The Year returns with her anticipated sophomore set, *Red Sea Road*. As a response to a period of trying times for the singersongwriter, *Red Sea Road* emanates hope from tracks like "He Will," "We've Got This Hope," "You Are Loved" on down to the title track inspired by, "An unseen Hope [making] a Red Sea Road when there seems to be no way (**Ann Voskamp**)."

Piercing the doldrums of so much publicity given to darkness, *Red Sea Road* parts the way with a positive palette, while simultaneously dealing with serious subjects—etching an indelible mark on Holcomb's journey as an artist with obvious staying power. She's got music in her veins, and then some, but how refreshing is it to listen to someone willing to expand upon and stand out in her uber-talented environment?

Grayson | Reed Walk

(Centricity Music)

**FOR FANS OF**: Seth & Nirva, Hillary Scott, Love & The Outcome

WE LIKE: "Bloom"

\*\*\*\*



To call **Grayson** | **Reed** a "new" act would be like saying **Chris Gaines** walked right out of obscurity... You already know them well—former **MIKESCHAIR** lead **Mike Grayson** and **City Harbor**'s **Molly Reed**—who also know each other fondly, as the two married in 2013. But given their long-standing relationship (Mike and Molly met as college freshman more than a decade ago) they had yet to write one song together when considering this particular working partnership.

The couple pull it off as if they've been singing duets as long as **Johnny** and **June**, and we think this initial EP is a mere glimpse into what's in store for the **Centricity Music** duo. Combining influences from pop-rock to country-pop, **Walk** brings a lot into a small package. Keep an eye on Grayson | Reed, their music and message are both worth the attention.

Zach Williams Chain Breaker (Provident)

**FOR FANS OF:** 

Third Day, Consumed By Fire

WE LIKE: "Survivor"

\*\*\*\*



If anyone could withstand the gusts of a whirlwind, it would be Arkansas' **Zach Williams**. Not only is he physically imposing (as a former college basketball player), Williams has withered the strongest of storms life could throw at him, only to bounce back in the name of God's redeeming grace. His debut album, **Chain Breaker**, is a soundtrack to his comeback story, and is the (rushed) culmination of a title track gone wild—which has already received a GRAMMY nod.

Although the LP was released earlier than expected, you won't notice any lacking, especially in supporting tracks such as "My Liberty," "Song Of Deliverance," "Fear Is A Liar," and "Everything Changed." Relatively new to music in general, it's scary-good to think just how much is on the horizon for the now GRAMMY nominated singer-songwriter.



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