

FINAL BOW, THE CITY HARMONIC | SOLVEIG LEITHAUG | ANBERLIN'S STEPHEN CHRISTIAN

CCM

**'002  
KEVIN'**

YOU ONLY LIVE TWICE—SO WE ASK  
**KEVIN MAX** ABOUT DC TALK,  
NEW MUSIC & WHAT LIES AHEAD

JUL 1, 2017





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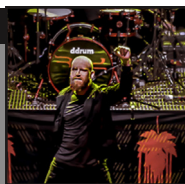


## From the Editor

### Out & About

Exclusive pics of your favorite artists!

**In this issue:** Matt Maher, RED, Bernie Herms, Audio A + more!



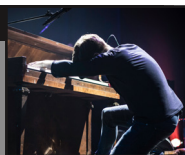
### Kevin Max

The famed singer is unfaltering in his spirit to continuously evolve, create, & live in the moment—so, what's next?



### The City Harmonic

Taking their final bow as a band, we can all learn a lesson from the boys from Hamilton on how to live out our faith.



### Solveig Leithaug

The award-winning Norwegian singer-songwriter reminds us that 'time' is simply about just showing up & trusting in God to do the rest.



### Reviews

New music from Seventh Day Slumber, Stephen Christian, Tauren Wells + more!



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**Just show up** | I am continually amazed at how more often than not, issue by issue, the subjects we cover—as random as all of it can be (and often is)—seem to intersect each other, as if God had a plan all along.


In this issue, we rediscover longtime contemporary Christian singer-songwriter **Solveig** Leithaug. Known more recently for her involvement with Bill and Gloria Gaither (***Women Of Homecoming*** DVD, ***Finding Home*** album, 2014, to name a few), Leithaug—a Norwegian native—enjoys a long standing and decorated career in the Christian music business. In her interview with Andrew Greer, Leithaug, also drawing parallels from her most recent album title, eludes to the subject of time, and how we are all ultimately *not* in control of it—to just “show up,” be present, and invite Jesus to do His beautiful thing.”

Our current cover artist, Kevin Max, is releasing a new single this month called “Plans.” The song itself completely embodies the fact that God is in control, and He really knows what He’s doing. Max explains in our cover Q&A that the song was only intended as a gift to a friend, a rough demo for their ears only. “If you fight the idea that He’s got a plan, then it’s going to become *your* plan, and it’s not going to be as amazing,” added Max.



So, if you're consumed with the burden of having to be in complete control, figuring it all out, coming to the rescue, or making yourself available to be the hero... Relax. Just show up with all-faith, and He will do the rest.



Blessings,  


**Kevin Sparkman**  
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# OUT & ABOUT

July 1, 2017



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A close-up portrait of Kevin Max, a man with long, wavy blonde hair and a grey beard. He is wearing a black cowboy hat and a black zip-up shirt with a large, ornate metal pendant hanging from the zipper. His right arm is visible in the foreground, showing a large, intricate black tattoo. The background is dark and out of focus.

*Kevin Max*

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## Kevin Max — ‘00-Kevin’

Proving ‘you only live twice,’ the famed multi-talented artist is unfaltering in his spirit to continuously evolve, create, and live in the moment—yet, his ‘tomorrow never dies’ approach with dc Talk keeps fans’ (and ‘Freaks’) hopes alive

By Kevin Sparkman

With his latest album **Serve Somebody** (smlxl/Gotee, July 7, 2017) comprising other’s material, some might question the warrant of a CCM cover... To that we ask, “What better covers project to represent a cover than our current cover artist, **Kevin Max**?!”

After all, with one of (if not the) most recognizable, talented, and distinctive voices in the history of our industry, Max makes any song his very own. Whether belting out **dc Talk** classics, crooning his 80s-infused pop-rock, or recording his own takes on everything from **David Bowie** to **Bob Dylan** to **Rich Mullins**, Kevin does things *his way* (thank you, Mr. Sinatra), and for that we’ve always been thankful.

Celebrating his golden birthday this year, the almost-fifty year-old Max admits that he feels like he’s never been more creative (scary), and he, for sure, won’t be missing the boat this month as dc Talk, along with other founding members **Toby McKeethan** and **Michael Tait**, briefly interrupt their fifteen-plus year intermission to perform on their own **Jesus Freak Cruise**. But even the most enigmatic of artists in their gifted prime had to stop and reflect upon his life, and the role of the One who has the world in His hands.

**“Frank Sinatra’s “My Way”** is one of my favorite songs. I love the idea, but that’s not how God created us. God created us to need Him,” says the now father of four. “Surrendering to that need has definitely brought out a lot of great material for me.” Perhaps its fitting, then, that his newest single, an original song called “Plans,” will lead the charge surrounding the release of this latest covers collection. Max explains the timely meaning of that song, his new EP—yes, *dc Talk*—and what may lie ahead in this cover Q&A with Kevin. Kevin Max.

***CCM Magazine: You’ve stated, “I don’t have an agenda for what I do from project to project. I write a lot of what comes to my head, but that is taking from life experiences...” So, why a strictly covers project for right now?***

**Kevin Max:** This is my third covers project. I made a covers album back in mid-2000s called ***The Blood***. That was a full album of gospel and blues covers. Then I did a record just two years ago called ***Starry Eyes Surprise***. That’s a full album of 80s songs, classic crooner songs. I like to mix it up. I’ve got so much original music happening right now in my own studio that I’ve written the past two years, I could release four or five different albums right now [*laugh*], but I just have to pace myself. I go off of what I’m feeling like in the moment.

When we did “Serve Somebody,” **Dan Pitts** from **True Artists** was like, “Man, you’re getting on this boat. What if you made an album of some of the songs that you like to play live and put it together?” Then we started talking about, “How about an album of spiritual songs that are relatable to rock ‘n roll?” That’s kind-of how we came up with a small list of songs that, in my opinion, were a perfect balance between spirituality and rock ‘n roll. We had tons of songs we could choose from, but I didn’t have a whole lot of time to record these. That’s why we were a little



limited on the amount of songs on there. I had several chosen that we never did. I had a **David Bowie** song called “Word On A Wing.” I wanted to do a **Leonard Cohen** song. I wanted to do a **Beatles** song. I was actually looking at a **Keith Green** song. We just got down to the deadline and I was like, “Here are the ones that make the most sense to me right now.”

**CCM:** *We were wanting to get your take on the music community losing some pretty influential artists over the last few years—Bowie, Cohen, Merle Haggard, Glenn Frey, etc...*

**KM:** Yeah. I covered Cohen on my second solo album ***Between The Fence & The Universe***. I also covered Bowie, but never released it. I did “Scary Monsters (And Super Creeps),” I think maybe six years ago? I put it out on my website at the time. It’s actually on Soundcloud, but I never released it into the marketplace. There are so many artists I’d love to cover, but at the same time, there’s so many songs that I’m creating on my own that it becomes a conundrum. It’s definitely a balance that I have to make. If I could call myself anything, I’d probably be “the Christian music **Ryan Adams**,” where I’ve got three albums under my belt at any time. It’s tough, but you don’t want to put out too much music that people don’t know what to choose from.

**CCM:** *You covered Rich Mullins’ “Creed,” a song we just premiered at CCMmagazine.com. It’s a very obvious, black and white, cut-and-dry declaration of faith. What was the thought behind putting this track on the album?*

**KM:** Yeah, definitely. The funny truth about how we came to that song, is I asked **Jimmy Abegg**—who was playing on the record—“Of all the songs that Rich liked to play live, what was his favorite song?” He said, “Beyond a doubt, ‘Creed.’” I asked, “Why?” He said, “Just because of the feeling of the Holy Spirit every night

when they performed that song.” I said, “Man, I want the Spirit on this album. Let me cover ‘Creed!’” That’s how we made that decision.

There’s so many great Rich Mullins songs that I love. I was on two projects with him, and he produced me both times. I had a great industry relationship with Rich. I wanted to do him right by this song. I felt like we really did a great job of doing our own version of it, and keeping it simple.

**CCM:** *You also covered “Red Letters” [dc Talk], which is like akin to “Creed.” Was there any intention to the correlation of both of those songs being on the same album?*

**KM:** Very cool. Yeah, Dan [Pitts] and I talked about it. I said, “Man, wouldn’t it be great for me to do a dc Talk song on this thing?” He asked, “Which one are you performing on your solo set on the cruise?” I said, “I’m not really doing any because the band is doing all the great songs.” I thought about it.... Then was like, “Which song would I want to do if I had the chance to do it?” It came down to “Red Letters” because that was one of those songs that I felt like really never got as big of a listen from the **Supernatural** as some of the other songs. I love the musicality of “Red Letters,” as well as the lyrics. We thought, “Hey, let’s tackle this. Let’s try to make it sound like a **James Bond** soundtrack.” That’s what came out.

**CCM:** *We’d love to know, from one of the sources, the genesis behind the whole cruise-thing...*

**KM:** [The idea] was told to me after it had come up through Toby and management and a few other people. They asked Michael and I what we thought. At the time, and I still do, I think it’s brilliant because it’s a great way to be able to come back after a

long period of time and not have to throw a bunch of pressure on ourselves to come up with a full show, production, new album and everything.

The cruise scenarios are great because the production is limited. It's very intimate. The sound quality is always great. It's just a great place to entertain and put a package together. When I saw everybody [posting on social media, etc.] immediately responding with, "Oh, man, this is going to be the only thing they ever do...this stinks." I kind-of wanted to respond with, "Hey, you guys have to realize, you've been waiting for fifteen years. At least this is the beginning of something, as opposed to nothing at all."

I joked around on social media a little bit because I got why people were frustrated, but from my point of view, it's literally an opening door. Since talk of this started, I have always thought that it would be the catalyst that could open the doors for other things. I've always been really hopeful about it. We'll see what happens after this. It's got to start somewhere. Why not out on the sea in the Bahamas? Maybe we'll hit the Bermuda Triangle and never be heard of again [*laughs*]. Who knows?

**CCM:** [*Laughs*] *Maybe there you'll discover three or four more dc Talk albums that were recorded that you guys didn't know anything about?*

**KM:** Exactly. I'm a cup half-full kind-of guy. I just always think the best of things. After the rehearsal, I felt amazing. We're still doing all the stuff we did back in the day. Michael and I are still hitting the notes. Toby sounds great. The band sounds incredible. It's almost like we just stepped right back into it. It was a very familiar feeling, it just moved seamlessly—Toby and I were just talking about that. We had no idea what it would sound like.



After the second day of rehearsals, we were like, “My goodness, this sounds just as good, if not better than what we were doing in the 90s.” I’m extremely hopeful.

**CCM:** *Can we expect anything official to come out of the cruise for the fans at-large who won’t have a chance to be present on the ship?*

**KM:** At the rehearsals, Toby expressed how he’s just happy to be in the moment right now, not looking too far behind, not looking too far into the future—just happy to be doing this with his friends. I couldn’t agree more. The reason dc Talk was even together in the first place was friendship. The fact that we’re all doing this together on the boat somewhere in the middle of nowhere is a testament to our friendship. Our friendship is still intact. I feel like there will be something in the future. I can’t speak about what’s specifically right around the corner, because there’s nothing definitive yet, just some ideas. There’s definitely some really cool opportunities.

We’re all kind-of looking at it like, “What makes sense for us right now?” Toby and I both have really large families. Obviously, Michael Tait is on the road all the time. It’s just [the challenge of] putting all of those things together. I’m making albums every four months [*laughs*]. Toby is continuing to make albums, in fact, he’s making his new album now. It’s just a scheduling scenario, but all agree, “Let’s come together when we can, and make something cool work.” That’s why I’m hopeful, because after these rehearsals, we felt like we were a band again—which is awesome.

**CCM:** *We noticed that you're making an acoustic version of Stereotype Be, but you're also talking about making a lot of new music...what's the game plan on new original music?*

**KM:** Yes, definitely. I'm probably about halfway through with writing a brand new album, completely original. I do have a single that's going to radio stations on July 7, 2017 called "Plans," a song I had written that song a couple of years back with **Seth Mosley** and **Mia Fieldes**. It's a real pop-radio type song that was birthed out of sending it to a friend as a gift—just a demo I was never going to release. She said, "The Holy Spirit spoke to me when I heard that song. The meaning behind that song is very obvious that God has plans for us, plans to prosper us, plans not to destroy us but to help us."

The idea of that is exactly where I am in my life. I've gone through a lot of doubt. I've gone through a lot of, "Why is my life going the way that it's going?" Now I feel like for the first time in a long time, I'm resting in the fact that God has a plan for all of this, and I can just rest in the knowledge that he's going to take care of it all—His ideas for me...if I surrender to them. If you don't, if you fight the idea that He's got a plan, then it's going to become *your* plan and it's not going to be as amazing. I hope that song touches people like it did for me.

That's kind of the idea for *Serve Somebody*, too. I don't want to use throw away songs. I want to put out songs that mean something to somebody. [CCM](#)



# *The City Harmonic*

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# The City Harmonic — It's How You Finish

Front man Elias Dummer admits this is a 'boring break-up,' but the way in which this band of brothers faithfully walked through their finale is the real story

Eight years ago, a handful of worship leaders in Hamilton, Ontario were commissioned to form a band and bring their songs to the masses. In that moment, **The City Harmonic** was born and in the ensuing years, the world took notice, awards were bestowed, hit records were released and ministry opportunities abounded in cities coast to coast.

Now front man **Elias Dummer** says the popular Canadian worship band is calling it quits in the healthiest way possible—when things are still going strong and the band members all still love each other and the music. ***Benediction Live*** is their fitting farewell, their first-ever live album that showcases the dynamic band doing what they do best in front of a hometown crowd who have been involved all along.

Before Dummer and company step away from the music and back into ministry roles in their respective local churches (yes, each of them), we asked the vocalist to tell us about the emotions behind saying farewell and what makes this the perfect time to do so.

***CCM Magazine: Benediction Live is your first live record. As a worship band, is this something you've wanted to do for a while?***

**Elias Dummer:** Oh, yes. We have only seen ourselves as a worship band. If there is a distinction between contemporary Christian music and worship music, in our heads, we've only ever landed on the side of worship. When we would write songs, we would do so as worship leaders wondering, "Will my church sing this song?"

Now, we did push the boundaries at times. What's cool is about being an ecumenical or interdenominational worship band is that we're leading worship in a context that is different from a regular Sunday morning sometimes, so I think that allowed us to push the boundaries a bit and people would respond.

For us, we always imagined people singing along to these songs. Certainly some of them were more congregational in focus and some of them we songs we'd never expect someone to sing in their church, but in our head, that's what we were—a worship band. We also saw ourselves as worship leaders because of that.

We've come back to the conversation several times with the label, wondering if we could ever revisit some of our songs in a live setting, and it's just never worked out for one reason or another. But now, with us deciding to close the book, so to speak, with the last season of our band, nothing else makes sense. We had to do this live worship thing and give a lot of these songs the context we'd wanted them to have anyway. We love studio records too, but doing the live worship thing has its own flavor and quality. It's great to end with this.

**CCM: What are the emotions around a release like this knowing it's the final statement, so to speak?**

**ED:** We have the most boring break-up story ever, because the truth is that there's just no drama [laughs]. We're good friends. Everyone is looking for each other to succeed. There's a real sense of it being the right time and being faithful to what God called us to do. That's why we called it *Benediction*, and some people might see that as "goodbye" but we're thinking of it as a sending. We've always tried to communicate that worship music in any setting should spur us on to be the hands and feet of Jesus in our neighborhoods. For me, this album is, in a sense, us sending each other on to do good work and be faithful to Jesus in the midst of that.

So the mix of emotions are very real. We've decided that it's right for us to do our own things separately even though we're still good friends. I think for a lot of bands, there are practical things that happen where someone leaves for a new season or they're called to something else. The options are to keep pushing because it makes business sense, and those sorts of options were all on the table as we talked things through. But it's all about how you define success. Just because something is working doesn't mean it's successful. We probably need a more kingdom-minded definition for that. We could have kept going, I think, but we didn't feel it was the right thing to do in being faithful to God.

We were all feeling called to invest in our local church communities and I think that's exactly what we've done. That's a very big factor here, feeling like aliens in our land and wanting to be faithful to the calling that God has for each of us in our own neighborhoods. So it's bittersweet, but it's also exciting because, yes, we'll keep making music, albeit separately, but we're also



again feeling invested into the part of the church that matters the most—the people who can hold us accountable.

We were on our farewell tour in Canada and the promoter—who is the main promoter in Canada for Christian music, and has been for a long time—was sitting at the dinner table. He said, “I’ve been a part of a few farewell tours, but I’ve never seen one where the band is sitting at dinner joking like it’s their first tour.” It was an awesome reminder that we’re healthy. We haven’t been the most popular band. We haven’t had the most chart-topping singles. But at the end of the day, I don’t care. We have some incredible stories and friendships and I think God has done for the kingdom exactly what He wanted to.

***CCM: How vividly do you remember the feelings and experiences of that night in Hamilton?***

**ED:** The whole night was incredible. We had family and friends and really anyone that ever had anything to do with us there. The string players there were the same ones who tracked on most of the records. So the players on violin and cellos on ***I Have A Dream*** and ***Introducing*** were literally on stage playing with us that night. A lot of the friends we’d get together to sing gang parts on our records were also there. The guy that recorded the live record owns the studio where we recorded our first two records anyway. So it was just this really cool full circle. We didn’t leave a trail of bodies behind us. We’re leaving with friends and incredible relationships, which to me means that whatever we did, we did it right.

There were moments where we got teary and stuff on stage, but none of that makes the record because no one wants to listen to someone yammer on in a recording. However, the rawness of the feeling is definitely there. You can hear it in

everybody's performances. You only get that moment once, and I think you can hear it.

Everyone keeps asking about our favorite moments and I don't mean this to say the middle was boring, but nothing beats your first tour and your last tour. You only get to do the first time you fly somewhere once. You only get to have your first drive up the west coast once. And you also only get to end it once, so the vividness of that, you just can't beat it.

***CCM: Musically, did you plan some surprises or special things knowing it was your final show and you were recording it?***

**ED:** Yeah, we definitely did. We added more live players than we normally would. We normally tour as a four piece, but we decided we wanted this to be a little more free flowing. We wanted to fill things out live in a bigger way. We added a friend of ours to play keys, synth pads, organs and some extra guitar as an auxiliary guy. We have a guy who plays bass with us a lot, **Steve Lensink**, and we also brought in his wife, **Brooke**, who is a worship leader. It was a spectacular feeling because it was all very live. [CCM](#)



*Solveig Leithaug*

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# Solveig Leithaug

## Showing Up (Time And Again)

The award-winning singer-songwriter returns again to offer her unique brand of timeless messages of grace, mercy, and peace

By Andrew Greer

The songs of **Solveig Leithaug** (pronounced *Sol-vey Light-houg*) have traveled the world over, literally. Having lived half of her life in Norway, the other half in the United States, the Dove Award-winning singer-songwriter has spent a lifetime heartening audiences across the globe with strains of faith surrendered through chords of hope. And on her most recent studio recording, ***Time***—masterfully produced by **Steve Hindalong (Sara Groves, Andrew Peterson)**—the multi-faceted, multi-cultural folk-songstress enlists music to wrestle with one of humanity's greatest fears ... the passage of time.

Harnessing her gift for words to reflect upon messages appropriate for all-times—but, oh-so-needed now—perpetuated throughout the breadth of her musical career, Solveig sits down with **Andrew Greer** for this poignant conversation with one of gospel music's most unique voices.

***CCM Magazine: Time is your fifteenth solo studio recording. This many years into songwriting and recording, do you ever fear you will run out of things to say through singing?***

**Solveig Leithaug:** I haven't been afraid of running out of topics nearly as much as I have battled fear of writing poorly. Fear is



my worst enemy when it comes to creating. It makes my thinking narrow. I'm familiar with the fear of sounding cliché and of wasting someone's time, and will rewrite, and rewrite again, in the earnest search for a fresh angle that resonates with others.

The human experience offers vast angles for poetry. I was eager to fill the new record with words I need to hear myself. It mirrors my own longing for peace, for true connection, my aim to not take my loved ones for granted, appreciate the simple things, remind myself of the need for a higher call to empathy, compassion and to listen better to others—songs that help me lift my eyes to God, where I invite Him into my situations. I have a great respect for my non-believing friends and family, and also how hard it can be for some to hear a song about God. This pushes me to work even harder to find ways that don't turn people off unnecessarily to what I may want to try to convey.

***CCM: Your history in music is astounding. Parliament dinners. Major airtime on international radio and television. Performances around the world in venues ranging from churches to prisons. In your opinion, what about your music has spawned these diverse invitations?***

**SL:** I'm not sure. I've stayed flexible. I've been willing to try new things, to do things while being scared, and to love the people who come and hear me. I've seen that heartbreak is no discriminator of titles, status, religion, paycheck or position. In my view, we've all got stuff to overcome. We all need a little kindness—a little grace. I bring that with me to the work and stages I'm given.

Music has the powerful ability to be therapeutic. To bridge. To heal. To lift. To change an atmosphere. To restore. I go in and out of many different denominations, networks, and "worlds," and work with people from all kinds of backgrounds. I get to be

around people who have no faith background, and many who do. My mom taught me respect for others who are not the same as me. *Music is a leveler. Jesus is a leveler.* Our human desire for connection is the same, and music bridges all of it. As I see it, Jesus does too.

**CCM: *All of my hurries / All of my worries / I just keep running out of time. The new record's title track is enchanting. Give me the background on the lyric, and talk about the thing we are all a bit fearful of ... time.***

**SL:** I first started to write this song thinking about how my youngest son, sixteen now, will soon be grown, and how fast time goes by. I brought the draft to a writing session with **Reba Rambo-McGuire**. As we were digging into the subject the song found its form. I guess few things touch closer to the heart than questions like: How am I treating my nearest loved ones? Am I rushing so hard, working so much, that I miss out on the moment within reach—to connect with a loved one?

**CCM: *As someone who has so much international experience, in a culture that is so divided and rife with tension, is there a solution? Is there a way to diminish our differences so we can connect on a heart level?***

**SL:** That's a great question. We are living in a world of increased tension. My husband **Jim** and I have a wide circle of friends who represent a lot of opposing political viewpoints. I often read articles on the same news story, seen from a European perspective alongside the American media. I've challenged myself to pause and listen.

I made a phone call recently to a friend whose views made me mad and genuinely sad. I thought, *Is there a way to actually*





*discuss this?* We decided to give it a try. I told her my guns weren't loaded, [and] I would like to try to understand why she takes the stands she takes. In return, she asked me the same. It was hard, but after an hour or so we had found renewed common ground. Our friendship deserved it. It was an hour well spent.

### **CCM: *What about music?***

**SL:** Music has an incredible power to bridge, to heal, and transform. Musicians have a unique platform to bring our hearts a little healing, help us forget our pain, or help change someone's day for the better. We all can do something wherever we have our places of influence. Sometimes all we can do is "show up" and be present, offer our melodies and lyrics, and invite Jesus to do His beautiful thing. [CCM](#)

# REVIEWS

July 1, 2017



SEVENTH DAY SLUN  
FOUN



WILDFIRES  
STEPHEN CHRISTIAN



DELUXE EDITION  
HILLS  
AND  
VALLEYS  
TAUREN WELLS

TAUREN WELLS



HERE COMES TROUBLE

THE NEW RESPECTS

**Seventh Day Slumber**

***Found***

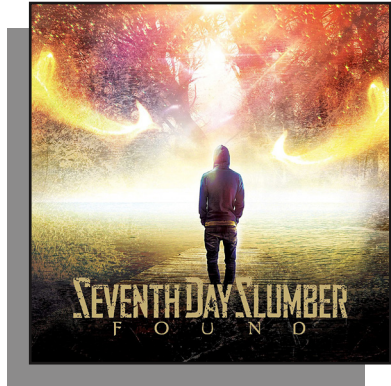
(BEC Recordings)

**FOR FANS OF:**

*Day Of Fire, Kutless*

**WE LIKE:** "Sky Is Falling"

★★★★☆



**Seventh Day Slumber's** catalog spans an incredible twenty years, a testament to the band's passionate fan base, melodic instincts and powerful testimony. Specifically front man and principal songwriter **Joseph Rojas** has never shied from an authentic lyrical approach that spills the details of his own life into meaningful acoustic ballads and intense electric anthems.

***Found*** is a perfect example with a title track that marries "The Old Rugged Cross" with Rojas' own redemptive turn alongside arena-ready burners like "Sins Of Our Fathers" and "Sky Is Falling."

—Matt Conner



**Stephen Christian**  
***Wildfires***

(BEC Recordings)

**FOR FANS OF:**

*Leeland, The Afters, Anberlin*

**WE LIKE:** "Atmosphere"

★★★★☆



For the last fifteen years, **Stephen Christian** has been synonymous with his popular rock band **Anberlin**. Stepping out as a solo artist for the first time, fans might be surprised by the straightforward worship nature of his new album, ***Wildfires***.

However, given Christian's occupation as a full-time worship pastor in New Mexico, it makes sense a new record would include congregationally-ready tunes like "Gloria" and "Hope Has A Name." Other highlights include **Sarah Reeves'** guest turn on the beautiful "Atmosphere" and the ballad "Undone."

—Matt Conner

**Tauren Wells**

***Hills And Valleys***

(Reunion Records/Sony)

**FOR FANS OF:**

*The Weeknd, Bruno Mars, Usher*

**WE LIKE:** "Hills And Valleys"

★★★★☆



Fans of the group **Royal Tailor** already know the name **Tauren Wells**, but on this solo debut, chances are the rest of the R&B-infused pop world will get acquainted with the ultra-smooth singer.

Not only is ***Hills And Valleys*** so contagious that the groove-saturated tunes stick within a listen or two, but its themes of using faith to overcome obstacles and also celebrate victories is destined to meet listeners wherever they are at. And the singer-songwriter will have a chance to do exactly that when he scores the support slot of a lifetime behind **Lionel Richie** and **Mariah Carey** later this summer.

–Andy Argyrakis

**The New Respects**  
***Here Comes Trouble EP***

*(Self-released)*

**FOR FANS OF:**

*ZZ Ward, Alabama Shakes*

**WE LIKE:** "Money"

★★★★☆



The upward snaking bass from the first few measures of "Money" moves all the way up to your ear, pulling you in for the rest of **The New Respects'** musically irresistible parable about wealth.

From there, the funky Nashville foursome will have no problem keeping your attention through modern and throwback soul tunes with more swagger than any group of rookies should have. If there's a band with a brighter future, we've not met them. The New Respects already have us hooked and they're just getting started.

—Matt Conner



**Jim Daneker**

**AD ALTA**

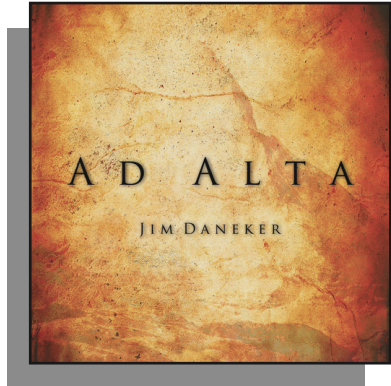
*(Self-released)*

**FOR FANS OF:**

*James Newton Howard, Alan Silvestri*

**WE LIKE:** "To the Summit"

★★★★☆



Jim Daneker's work will be familiar to most even if you've not heard his name. As the musical director and keyboard player for **Michael W. Smith**, Daneker can already boast a significant platform for his talents, but his work as a composer and arranger is also very impressive.

Most recently, Daneker has carved out the time to compose and release **AD ALTA**, a project twenty years in the making. The beautiful instrumental album plays like the score to an unseen dramatic film that evokes a wide range of emotions. From the somber tones of "Letting Go" to the rapturous movement of "To The Summit," Daneker's vision is splendidly realized with an emotional scope that syncs well with all rhythms of life.

—Matt Conner

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