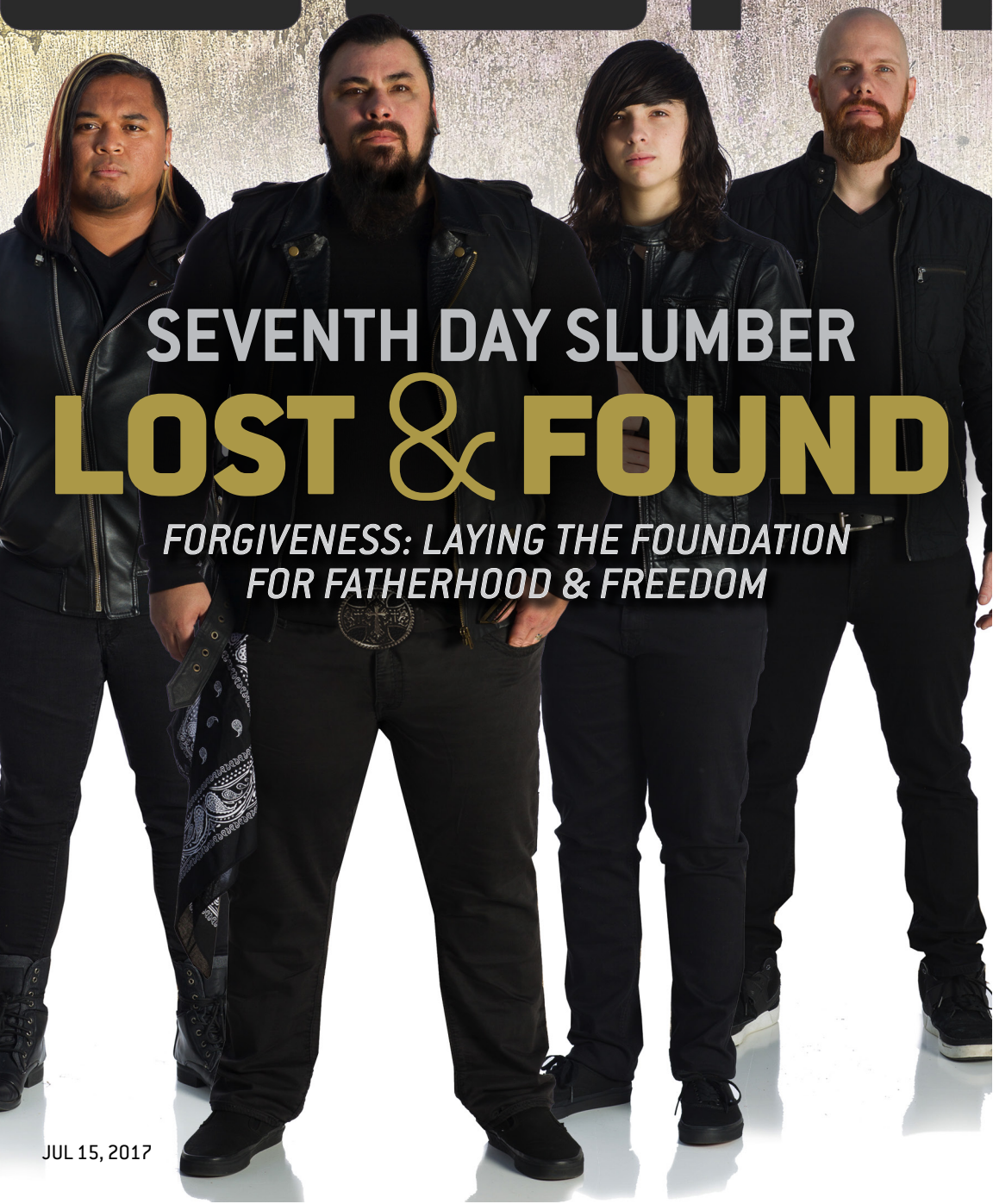


1-ON-1 W/ STEPHEN CHRISTIAN & TAUREN WELLS | NICHOLE NORDEMAN RETURNS

CCM



SEVENTH DAY SLUMBER **LOST & FOUND**

*FORGIVENESS: LAYING THE FOUNDATION
FOR FATHERHOOD & FREEDOM*

JUL 15, 2017



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From the Editor

Out & About

Exclusive pics of your favorite artists!

In this issue: Colton Dixon, Skillet, Mandisa, Ricardo Sanchez, John Waller + more!



Seventh Day Slumber

How forgiveness found front man Joseph Rojas on the fast track to freedom...



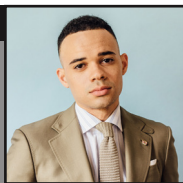
Stephen Christian

Will fans fuel a flameout with the former Anberlin front man's new sound?



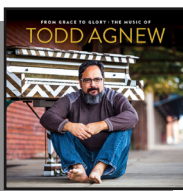
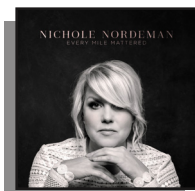
Tauren Wells

Will band-member turned solo-act thrive in the spotlight, or hit another valley?



Reviews

New music from Nichole Nordeman, Fernando Ortega, Todd Agnew, Cory Voss + more!!



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Sore cruisers | At the time of this issue's publication, the official **Jesus Freak Cruise** will have just ended. Well, actually, we're super late at getting the issue out (my most sincere apologies to everyone covered herein), so by all accounts that I've been able to see now, it was a huge success—fun times were had, lifelong memories were made, and, apparently, much food was consumed.

For the members of **dc Talk** themselves, it seems that this was the best of...everything. The whole, "getting the band back together" thing, uh—being in the Caribbean, sharing a boat ride with close tour mates and colleagues (past and present), friends and family, and getting the chance to engage on deeper levels with fans. **TobyMac** tweeted, "Full circle love. Prayin God does Nu thangs all over again." **Kevin Max**, along with a pre-boarding picture of he, Toby, and **Michael Tait**, whimsically tweeted in **Christopher Cross** quotes, "Sailing...all caught up in the reverie, every word is a symphony."

The inter-and-post-cruise social castings by artists and lucky attendees have only served to roughen the waters for those who weren't happy about the whole idea of a cruise to begin with. As Max stated in his recent *CCM Magazine* cover story, "You've been waiting for fifteen years. At least this is the beginning of something, as opposed to nothing at all." (Oops, mic drop! Nope...wait, he's still holding it—and singing alongside Toby and Michael.) Officially, dc Talk has not announced a reunion, comeback, or even a new or reissued project. They're still on intermission, folks.

So, don't be a sore cruiser. As the boat has now docked, who knows what kind of future launch pad awaits? ...Yes, you heard it here, first: July 20, 2019, dc Talk rocks the moon!



Paging Mr. Musk,

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

Kevin Sparkman

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OUT & ABOUT

July 15, 2017



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Photo: Annette Holloway



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Seventh Day Slumber

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Seventh Day Slumber — Lost & Found

They've been a close-knit family affair from the beginning, but has that always offered a lighter load for front man and husband-father Joseph Rojas?

By Kevin Sparkman

With twenty-one years under their belts, it's more-than safe to say **Seventh Day Slumber** have etched themselves into the fabric of Christian music history. With latest radio hit and title track to their upcoming eleventh album **Found** (Jul. 28, 2017, **VSR Music Group**), they're now firmly planting their act as a mainstay, with a unique foothold as favorites from heavy rock to AC listeners and audiences alike.

Another rare attribute to the success of Seventh Day Slumber is their connection with family. From the get-go, they've always been intimately engaged with their fans, perhaps coming easy for all members as front man **Joseph Rojas** has weaved his role as family man with music from day one. Providing another twist to their story, is the fact that Rojas himself can trace his spiritual conception and development alongside that of the very public road of music ministry—offering keen insight and perspective for even casual fans—and Rojas has never shied away from sharing the most personal of stories, whether through song or sit-down's.

Throwing-on another layer, Rojas' eldest son, sixteen year-old **Blaise** is now the band's full-time drummer, a position that for many may assume was natural, but, as you will read, the gig wasn't easily inherited. With wife and kids so intrinsic to the life of the band, however, no magic "easy button" has been available to Rojas. A quick listen to "Found," and our conversation with he

and band mates Blaise, **Jeremy Holderfield**, and longtime member **Josh Schwartz** (currently filling-in for **Ken Reed** at the time of the interview), will reveal yet another part to this on-going journey. Enjoy this chat as we sit down together over, of course, delicious Mexican food in Hendersonville, TN.

CCM Magazine: *Joseph, growing up, your father chose to not be a part of the family and it's been publicized that you didn't really experience the love of a father until you found yourself in the back of an ambulance due to drug abuse resulting in overdose. As we're coming out of Father's Day season, what does it meant to you to now be a father yourself?*

Joesph Rojas: . I have three sons, and just to be able to look at them... To see the look in their eyes that they know their daddy loves them. For me, it's like I am able to break the mold and not follow in my father's footsteps. Honestly, I questioned whether I was going to be a good dad, or not.

With drugs and different things, I was on a bad road before I came to Christ, so I wasn't ever really sure about being a good dad or husband. So, to look at my kids now and to see how much they love me—knowing that I love them—it's surreal. It's almost hard to explain.

CCM: *How would you encourage others that are currently going through similar situations?*

JR: I think that there are a couple of things that really need to happen first before you can really be free, or to break that chain. One, is you have to be able to forgive. I had to forgive my dad. For me, to try to be a good dad, I had to. I'm not saying that you can't be a good dad if you have bitterness and anger towards your own father, but it makes it really difficult. Even after I got

saved it wasn't easy. My prayers were literally, "God, help me to want to forgive my dad, because I don't know how." Before I knew it, God helped me and I honestly forgave him. That was big, because bitterness and anger is like swallowing the poisonous pill and waiting for the other person to die. But once I forgave my dad, there was this release.

Second, in being a father to my own kids, I had to really look to God as my father. I want to encourage people that are struggling with that—maybe they don't have a good male role model in their life, or maybe they're like, "How can I be a good dad when I've never really had anybody to look up to?" All my uncles are drunks, at the time, all my friends were this or that or on drugs, or whatever... For me, I learned from God, the Father, on how to be a dad. My wife, Laurie, has also been a huge encourager, as well. She's really helped me along with the process of forgiving. Again, I think that's such a huge part in overcoming such tough things.

CCM: If you didn't really have a dad growing up, how difficult was it for you to begin that process of looking to Christ as "father?" How do you now apply those attributes from your Heavenly Father to your relationship with your sons?

JR: Right, when you say, "God the Father," early on I didn't know what that meant. To me, a father was someone who cheated on your mom and beat her in front of you and then leaves you. As I began to get more into the Word and surrounded myself around people that knew the Father—know Him as Abba Father—then I began to learn that He is the only One that doesn't leave. He forgives, and He loves unconditionally.

So, with my kids, especially as they're getting older—Blaise is now about to be sixteen—communication has to always open.



God never cuts us off, in fact He wants us to talk to Him. In our house, I let them know daddy is always here. I'm not going to judge them. I want to hear what they have to say and be available to them.

Also, it's crazy, but I have to say this. Staying. I'm a dad who stays. There's dads that leave all the time. It was so important for me to let my kids know that their daddy will never leave them. Never. Just as God will never leave us, and I want my kids to know that as well, no matter what they might do. No matter the mistakes, I see and I know who they really are—just like how God sees us. No matter what mistakes we've made, no matter what we do, God knows who we really are and who He's created. So, I want my kids to know that, and I believe they do.

CCM: Again, with Father's Day not too far off in our rear view mirror, does anyone else have something they'd like to share?

Jeremy Holderfield: For me, I remember Father's Days growing up, but it didn't mean as much to me as it does now having kids. I'm excited for Father's Day, but it seems like the last few Father's Days I've come home off the road or from something that we were out doing and I didn't... I don't know, I guess I'm just not expecting something to be big for me, or whatever, but my wife and kids will have made me stuff and created picture collages, etc. Those kinds of things really hit home for me. It's like, "Wow, man. This means so much, even something as simple as my daughter drawing me a picture." It's like I know my kids love me and they know I love them—no matter what else happens in this world as long as there's that love.

If I lose a job and lose money, lose our house, if we've got nothing but ourselves and they know that I love them, then that's all that really matters. So, anticipating that my kids and my wife are going to do something simple and special for daddy and knowing it's going to make me feel like a million bucks...I love that.

Josh Schwartz: For me, I have a lot of great memories with my dad. My dad was one of my heroes. We were really close and enjoyed a lot of good memories with him. He had a stroke and a lot of things have changed since then. It's sad, but still happy, because I remember those good times. For me with my kids... Like Jeremy, I really didn't understand what being a father was until I became one. You love your kids no matter what, and that helped me understand more about God and how He loves us and that whole dynamic of faith.

JR: That reminds me of something that I wanted to say... Now on days like Father's Day, where I used to be really bummed out, now, I feel like God has done something really good. It's a reminder that, "Dude, I am not like my dad was, I'm different and it was through Christ that those changes happened."

This has also helped me to really understand how much God loves me. I'm worse than anyone I know about beating myself up. There's nothing you could say to me that's going to make me feel worse, or going to be worse than what I say to myself sometimes. We have a song called "One Mistake Away" that talks about the burden of guilt, etc. But when I think about the way that I love my kids, I have to ask myself this question: "Am I a better father than God?" If the answer is, "No," then I have to believe that if I could love and forgive my own children as a mere mortal, how much more would the Father of fathers—the Creator of fathers—how much more would He be able to do that with all of us? My kids are teaching me every day about God...

CCM: *Blaise, what's it like working with your dad? Be honest (remember, he's already said he forgives you!).*

Blaise Rojas: It's surreal. I've been playing with the band for almost three years, now. Of course, I've been on the road with them my whole life, and our old drummer Jamie taught me how to play. I had been bugging my dad about playing in the band, and when Jamie went to be a pastor in California, my dad said, "Well, I can't let you in the band just because you're my son. You need to earn it." He made me audition with two other guys, two other drummers, and I got the job.

It's crazy to be able to just look and see my dad right in front of me and to be able to worship with him. To be a part of experiencing all of the lives changed at concerts, and knowing that God's using us to be able to do that, that He put us both in this position together, it's so cool.

CCM: *We all have our own pressures at work, but most of us don't have our own dad as our boss...any unique pressures there?*

BR: I think it's just more of wanting to impress him, than anything else. Sometimes I try to do different stuff to get his attention, to get a reaction.

JR: Sometimes I'll be in mid-song or mid-singing, and I'll look at Jeremy or someone on stage and think, "That was good." Sometimes he does get a reaction out of me. I know how talented he is. The coolest thing about him being in the group is that he earned it. We looked at the other two drummers very closely, but Blaise worked hard for it. He wants to be in music, so I don't think I add any more pressures on him, just because he's my son. His brother, my middle son, wants to be a veterinarian. The youngest son wants to be a cage fighter [laughs]. I love the



fact that Blaise drives himself musically, but ministry is his true focus. It's really cool.

CCM: *Most people your age don't have full-time jobs, especially ones that are in the public eye. Are there things that you feel like you miss out on?*

BR: The only thing I think I'm really missing out on would probably just be sports, but I'm not really huge into sports, so I guess it's a trade off. I think that what we're doing is such a unique thing, to be able to travel around and get to meet so many people, I wouldn't stay home if I could. I'd rather be out on the road.

CCM: *What does school look like for you?*

BR: Homeschool—my mom is actually my teacher. Me and my brothers are all homeschooled, [*laughs*], “bus” schooled.

JR: My wife is our tour manager too. I've traveled with my wife and three kids since we got married. So, all three of our kids have been on the road since they were six-weeks old. Jeremy's wife and kids also travel. Josh's wife and kids have traveled, and so on.

CCM: *How much of your new single “Found” was written about your experiences growing up?*

JR: Jeremy and I wrote that along with **Daniel Doss**, but for me, it's two-fold. I was a drug addict, it's been highly publicized, and everyone knows that part of my story. But the part they don't know is that even after getting saved and God walked me out of that world, the battles ensued.

For the past four years I felt like I was never getting fed. I didn't even want to talk to my pastor about how I was feeling. It was just this weird thing, because I couldn't even pinpoint what I was sad or feeling empty about. I just couldn't put my finger on it. I woke up one day, looked around at my wife, our kids, our home, and thought, "Man, I'm so blessed, why do I still feel this empty? How am I still here?" It's hard for me to share this, but I have to admit that during this time, I have been running to food. I've put on over one-hundred pounds in the past four years.

Then, something I seemingly overlooked for years—a quote that I used to always put at the bottom of my email signature—stopped me in my tracks and became very real to me again: "We will always be restless until we find out rest in Him." It hit me that I've distanced myself from God. It doesn't matter what you have, how beautiful and amazing your wife and kids may be, or your home—if you distance yourself from God, you won't be able to enjoy it anyway.

I finally came to this place where I just said, "God, I need that closeness with You again." God spoke to my heart and said, "I never left. You thought you were lost, but you never were. I had my eye on you the whole time." That's what "Found" means to me. It's not just about my drug addiction and being delivered from that, but also about the tough times as a Christian where I took my eyes off of God.

CCM: We recently talked with Mandisa about the season she is coming through, one in which she admitted similar struggles with food and losing sight of the Father, etc., but then leaning on the support system of her friends that truly love her through Christ to help her out of it. How has the support system of your family spoken to you as you've been emerging from this recent season?

JR: What really hit me was when my middle son said, "Daddy, I miss you." What's crazy about that is that he's with us all of the time. I didn't even know it, but all of this looking away from God and running made me different to my family, too. I think about that moment, and it helps me to continue on and be strong.

As far as support, these guys have been awesome, everyone from Josh to Jeremy (who's also my brother-in-law), on down to our road crew. Laurie has never made me feel fat. She never stops grabbing my arm when she walks with me. She still kisses me before she leaves, or when she returns. She's just been a huge support. My kids have always been an encouragement to me.

[Looking at the taco salad on his plate] You know, I want to eat this whole thing [*laughs*]. I won't, but if I did, for right now, that's okay. Jeremy and I were talking about this the other day... This is what I look like right now. I can't change it today, but every day I can get a little thinner, a little healthier. This is where I'm at right now. I'm in love with Jesus. I'm working on this, and He's working on me. Accept me or don't, but I know that God has His hand on my healing, this new chapter in our lives. **CCM**

A full-page photograph of a man standing in a vast desert landscape with sand dunes and mountains in the background. The man is wearing a patterned short-sleeved shirt, dark pants, and boots. He has a tattoo on his left arm and is wearing a watch and a ring. The sky is clear and blue.

Stephen Christian

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Stephen Christian — Keeper Of The Flame

The former Anberlin front man's fire for creating personal worship has been burning for quite some time, but will 'fans' fuel a flameout?

By Matt Conner

For some longtime fans, the new **Stephen Christian** album is a musical curveball. They're also not afraid to tell him so.

Christian's sole musical association for the last decade-plus has been as front man and principal songwriter for alt-rock faves **Anberlin**, a regular staple atop numerous *Billboard* charts with each new studio release. When Anberlin called it quits after 2014's **Lowborn**, Christian wasn't sure what was next, only that he would continue to exercise his creativity so as not to lose it.

Now, it's clear what God had in mind all along, a new career as a worship leader. Not only is Christian serving a local church in Albuquerque, New Mexico, but he's also confusing fans with a beautiful new worship release, **Wildfires (BEC Recordings)**. Here's the story of Christian's musical transition, and why he says worship is the punk rock of the Christian music world.

CCM Magazine: *How long have you known you were going to make a solo album? Had it been in your head for some time, or did it only surface after Anberlin called it quits?*

Stephen Christian: In 2014, I knew my time with the band was coming to a close, so I approached some friends in Nashville. I was songwriting around town already and had begun to look for

a publishing deal. Creativity is a muscle, so if you stop using it, I feel like you'll lose it. I knew no matter what job I got coming out of Anberlin, I'd need to keep the songwriting going.

I started to write for **Word Publishing** and struck up a deal with them. They'd put me on many different co-writes, including pop, country and even jingles for commercials. [Laughs] Every time I worked on a worship song, I was just drawn to it. I remember calling my friend **Joel Timen**, who works there and sets me up with song co-writes, and said, "If somebody wants to write worship, just stick my name in there. Don't even ask. Just set up the meeting."

So I began to write for other people and others showed interest. They'd say, "Oh, I like that song. Do you mind if I record it?" Slowly, Joel would say, "Dude, why don't you put this out?" My wife started asking the same. Then I realized—as these songs began being put out—that they were all songs born out of my own life, my own passions, and my own relationship with Jesus. It became clear very quickly that I needed to [do *Wildfires*].

Well, I got a job here at Calvary in Albuquerque, New Mexico and everything was put on hold. It didn't feel like the right time for anything else. I wanted to understand the church. I wanted to understand the culture and really work with developing the worship team. When we got it to a point where everything was in a state of homeostasis, I finally thought, "Okay, now is the time where I can pursue the worship project." I didn't think I'd be lacking in my job or abandoning anybody. I felt like this was the perfect time.

CCM: *Were you at all concerned or interested if people would come over to your solo stuff after being with Anberlin for so long?*

SC: I think it's all of the above. I never sat down to question whether someone would be heartbroken if I'm coming out with a Christian record. To me, even though Anberlin wasn't a Christian band in the sense that all of our members were Christian, I always assumed people knew that I was, based on things I'd say from stage or from things I'd post or interviews that I did. I felt like people knew that. I don't think it's a shock that I'm coming out with this record, but I've definitely gotten some backlash on social media. You can literally go to my Facebook account right now and anything I post, people will ask, "Hey, are you going to keep preaching at us?"

There are paragraph sentences saying they can't follow my career anymore, that they respect what I did, but no longer. For me, I'm not going to reply or retort. I understand that this is the overflow of my own heart and I have to believe the Word won't return void. I choose to believe that somebody out there will buy it because they are fans of the band, and slowly this is going to seep into their system. Whether they become a Christian or not through my music—which would be amazing—they have to confront themselves about how they feel about Jesus. The whole record would be worth it if just one person had to confront Jesus Christ and really soul search into what they believe.

So, it definitely caught people off guard. I know people weren't expecting this based on the social media comments.



CCM: Did that surprise you, or did you know to expect it?

SC: I was surprised by it because I assumed people knew I was a Christian. Definitely over the last year or two, I've made blatant statements that I'm coming out with a worship project. I've given song updates. But it's just social media. People don't always pay attention. The world doesn't revolve around me that much that everyone reads every statement I make. *[Laughs]* So it's not like I was hiding this thing and then yelled, "Surprise! I'm a Christian! Who knew?" A simple Wikipedia search will tell people that I'm a pastor.

CCM: Given your depth of experience with Anberlin, how did you find that affecting your songwriting or musical approach with writing worship music?

SC: For me, worship music is a genre all to itself—I think it's the Christian equivalent to punk rock. There are no rules. There's no one sitting there asking you why you didn't repeat the chorus twice after the bridge to close out the song. It's very off-limits. You can listen to **Passion** or **Hillsong** or **Bethel** and see the rule is only to let it be about Jesus Christ and everything else is fair game. I appreciate that about worship music.

I think it's definitely the next evolutionary step in Christian music. People want an experience. That's why people take drugs and go to EDM shows, because they want that experience. There's no greater experience than the Holy Spirit. If your passion, your heart, your conscience is all set on giving glory to the Holy Spirit, everything will fall into place. The Spirit will do His work. I think that's why people are so drawn now to worship music as opposed to music that replaces the word "Jesus" with "baby," which I think a lot of artists do.

Worship music for me isn't difficult because, first off, I didn't set out to sell a single record when I wrote these. I never had myself in mind. I never thought about how I could market this. It was out of the overflow of the heart that the mouth speaks. There are literally songs about stories in my own life from struggles with God or from my quiet times about how I perceive God. "One More Moment" is about having an experience with the Holy Spirit. That's what I can take from Anberlin. I understand the old adage that if you write for one person you reach a thousand, if you write for a thousand, you'll reach no one. It's all about the personal songwriting and that's what I developed with Anberlin. I learned to write from my first-person experience. It was never about the catchy hook then, and it's what I'm doing here now.

CCM: Were any of these songs ever tried out in your local congregation?

SC: Just two or three. The reason is simply that I'm not here to market myself. I don't think all worship leaders understand the gravity of what they're actually doing. The Bible says, "To whom much is given, much is required." You are a conduit to the throne room of God. You will be judged in heaven accordingly. So when you sit there and say, "God, did you see how many records I sold? My Twitter account had so many followers." God will say, "You completely missed me. You missed the mark. You have taken what was supposed to be pure and holy and desecrated it with your image, your god, your idol."

It's such a false throne. With worship music, it's such a delicate balance. It took me a year and a half to be able to worship God as a worship director, because I was so fearful of entertaining. Entertaining is, for me, just second nature. I can get the crowd hyped. I can say, "Put your hands together." I can do a karate kick on stage. [Laughs] You can make it happen if you want, but

I never want to force the hand of the Holy Spirit. I don't want to give someone a false impression of a move of the Holy Spirit because I fall to my knees. That to me is fake and false and you're playing with fire.

That's a heavy weight of responsibility, so I'm very delicate about bringing up a song that's off of a Stephen Christian record. It's not about me. I have to look at the greater good at what the congregation needs and where they are in life. What are my motives for playing the song? Do I really feel like it will minister or am I hoping to sell an extra six copies tonight at the bookstore? [CCM](#)

A full-body portrait of Tauren Wells, a man with short dark hair, wearing a light brown suit, a light blue striped shirt, and a patterned tie. He is standing against a light blue background. A green horizontal band is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing his name.

Tauren Wells

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Tauren Wells — Fully Exposed

Now on his own and elevated to some of the biggest possible stages, is Tauren Wells still comfortable with the up's and down's of life on full display?

By David Daniels

The Recording Academy nominated **Tauren Wells** and his band mates from **Royal Tailor** for “Best Contemporary Christian Music Album” twice, with 2011’s **Black & White** and 2014’s **Royal Tailor**. On June 21, 2017, with much anticipation, Wells stepped out to release his debut solo album, **Hills And Valleys (Reunion/Sony)**.

And speaking of stepping out, that move has landed Wells—who also serves as a pastor at Royalwood Church in Houston, Texas—into the company of whom many would consider music royalty, to be witnessed by some incredibly large audiences at some of our biggest palaces. This summer, Tauren Wells has been invited to perform songs from *Hills And Valleys* on **Lionel Richie’s** 22-city **All the Hits Tour**, which also features special guest **Mariah Carey**. The concert schedule includes stops at such vaulted venues like Madison Square Garden, United Center, and the Hollywood Bowl.

Before Wells set out on the tour of a lifetime—we’ll go ahead and call this one a “Hill”—he took a little time out of his busy schedule to discuss his new music, and potential pinch-me moments with us, for our July 15, 2017 magazine edition.

CCM Magazine: Congratulations on dropping your debut solo LP. Has there been any highlight reactions to your new music since its release?

Tauren Wells: Man, every reaction is awesome. I love my son's reaction. After I play a song, he says, "Dad, can we listen to **Andy Mineo**?" [Laughs]

But no, it's really impacting a lot of different people in a lot of different ways, and it's always fun to see which songs are connecting with which people. It's an exciting time right now.

CCM: What were the hills and valleys that inspired the title track/album title?

TW: It's really just the existence we all experience. Life is a rough time of highs and lows—some unbelievable highs; some amazing moments we get to experience. Then at the same time, there are some really devastating lows that we all walk through.

This song is a song that gives us hope and is a reminder that even on the mountaintops of life, we have to remember we didn't get there by ourselves, by our own power, or our own ability. It was God who set us in a high place, so we need to remain humble and bow low.

At the same time, when we're walking through the valleys of life, we need to remember to stand tall because God sees us, and He's growing us. I had heard a lot of songs—a lot of messages about God being the God of the highs and the lows—but I hadn't ever heard anything about our posture, or our response, in those big moments to those low moments in life.

CCM: *At one point in one of your sermons also titled “Hills And Valleys,” you said, “God is the only One capable of handling the weight of glory.” How do you handle all of the “glory” that comes with being an artist and having a platform?*

TW: First of all, platforms don’t make people, they expose them. When somebody gets on a stage, or somebody gets to a certain place of influence, you start to see who they’ve really been all along.

I want the posture of my life to always be a posture of humility, and that’s a daily decision that you make to serve other people; to think about people outside of your own life. For me, I unload the affirmation of people, the praises of people, in worship to God. I think that is one of the things worship was created for. It’s to take glory off of ourselves and lay it before the God who is so worthy and deserving of it.

Worshipping God is the first thing, but then there’s serving other people. You can’t get more like Jesus than when you are serving others. It’s important for me to be connected to my local church. I run sound on the weekends. I change the batteries for other singers. I do things behind the scenes to help elevate other people. That is a great reminder for me that the world doesn’t revolve around me; that it revolves around Jesus, and it revolves around others. Hopefully God will give me the grace to keep that mindset.

CCM: *Are there any other songs on this album you plan on unpacking further in sermons?*

TW: Oh, yeah. I’m going to speak about the song “Known,” for sure. At some point, I’ll also probably speak about “When We Pray” and “Nothing But You.” I’m hoping to put

together a devotional that walks you through the album and gives you the layers beneath the lyrics, because there's a lot there. We try to say it in three minutes, but could spend thirty or forty on each song.

CCM: Of those three songs, is there one that has impacted you the most?

TW: All of those are pretty impactful, honestly. Probably my favorite one is "Known." There's a quote by **Timothy Keller** that says, "To be loved but not known is comforting, but superficial. To be known and not loved is our greatest fear. But to be fully known and truly loved is, well, a lot like being loved by God."

I love that quote because it points to the truth that God sees us as we really are, not our Facebook persona, not our Instagram, not our nicely filtered lives that we send out for public consumption. He sees to the depths of our heart, to the core of our souls, and He calls us loved.

That is a grace that I can't wrap my mind around, because I know me. I know my propensities, my inclinations, and my brokenness. And the fact that a perfect, Holy, all-knowing God would love me is overwhelming to me.

I hope that this song inspires us to actually love people like Jesus loves us; to know people deeply and still love them truly. If we can become a church that loves people, even knowing where they stand politically, where they stand socially, the brokenness in their lives. If we could really love people like Jesus loves people, then we could be the force we were intended to be in the world.

CCM: I can't imagine too many pastors have opened up for the likes of Lionel Ritchie and Mariah Carey. Do you approach touring in front of their fan bases differently than majority Christian crowds?

TW: First of all, it's an amazing opportunity, and I'm so grateful to Lionel for picking me. There were other options that he could have chosen, and he chose me, and I'm humbled by that.

I'm going to really treat this audience like I treat every audience. We're going to have a good time. We're going to play some songs that are going to get them moving. We're going to play some songs that will hopefully connect with them on a heart level.

Really, that's what every musician wants, whether you sing from the perspective of your faith in Jesus or otherwise, you want to connect to the heart of people. I want to connect hope to the heart of people. I want to connect truth and love to the heart of people. What better way to do that than 20 minutes of great music and having a good time?

That tour is 22 shows all over the country. I get to play pinch-me-I-can't-believe-I'm-doing-this venues like Madison Square Garden and Hollywood Bowl; just iconic venues that I never even thought to dream about playing because it seemed so far out of reach. Yet, that's just like Jesus to create realities for us that are greater than the ones that we have envisioned for ourselves. I'm pumped, man. It's going to be awesome. [CCM](#)

HOLE NORDEMAN
EVERY MILE MATTERED



REVIEWS

July 15, 2017



CCM
MAGAZINE.COM

Nichole Nordeman

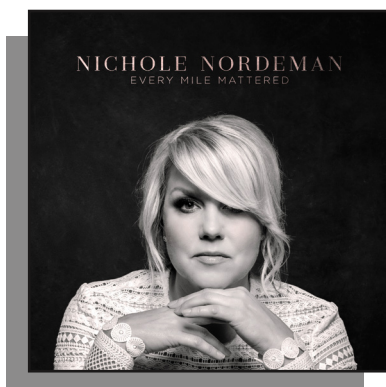
Every Mile Mattered

(Sparrow Records)

FOR FANS OF: Amy Grant,
Sarah McLachlan, Natalie Grant

WE LIKE: “Dear Me”

★★★★★



Longtime listeners already knew **Nichole Nordeman** is perhaps the most thought-provoking, faith-based storytelling treasure since the late **Rich Mullins**, though just a year before his untimely death, a seemingly unsuspecting **Prince** even discovered her gifts first hand when he covered “What If” somewhat out of the blue. Shortly thereafter, the singer-songwriter-pianist returned after a lengthy hiatus with 2015’s moving EP ***The Unmaking***, though after that mere tease, she’s truly back to full-time artistry on ***Every Mile Mattered*** (her first long player in twelve years).

Across a soundtrack of sublime piano pop and angelic vocals, Nordeman makes observations of the ordinary sound extraordinary, while candidly exposing her soul with a depth and vulnerability rarely shown in Christian music these days. In fact, “Dear Me” is destined to be her “Purple Rain,” if not a bedrock of the entire genre, as she chronicles coming of age in her faith in between pleas for spiritual inclusion and heart-wrenching cries for social justice, that if they were actually put into practice by even just those who profess similar beliefs, could literally change the entire world.

—Andy Argyrakis

New Hope Oahu

Live at the Blaisdell Arena

(Dream Worship)

FOR FANS OF:

Anchor Worship, Darlene Zschech

WE LIKE: “You’ve Won My Affection”

★★★★☆☆



The latest release from **New Hope Oahu**, hailed as one of North America’s most innovative churches by *Outreach Magazine*, is a live EP that offers a spirited take on some of the church’s more popular songs.

Performed live at the Blaisdell Arena in Honolulu, favorite songs like the pulsing pop number “I Want You” and the more straightforward “Call On The Name” are fleshed out in this live setting. “You’ve Won My Affection” is a memorable new tune with nice congregational potential and fans of **Darlene Zschech**.

—Matt Conner

Fernando Ortega
The Crucifixion Of Jesus

(Kachitower Music)

FOR FANS OF:

John Michael Talbot, Michael Card

WE LIKE: "O Great Love
O Love Beyond All Measure"

★★★★★



Fernando Ortega's ***The Crucifixion Of Jesus*** is a countercultural gift, a deeply moving meditation on the events of Holy Week that draws the listener in for a rooted musical experience. Ortega's signature thoughtful melodies are interspersed with spoken narrative tracks that richly tell the story of Jesus' arrest, death and resurrection, meditating on the emotions and experiences throughout.

Few artists choose to mine such important material in such meaningful ways, but Ortega is well-suited for such a task. The end result is a beautiful album and an important devotional for followers of Jesus.

—reviewer

Todd Agnew

From Grace To Glory:

The Music Of Todd Agnew

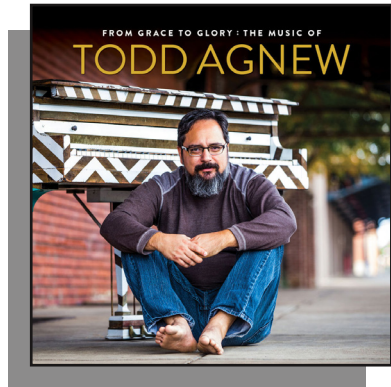
(Ardent Records)

FOR FANS OF:

Mac Powell, Phillips Craig & Dean

WE LIKE: “Nearer Home”

★★★★☆



It's understandable why more than five years have passed since we've heard new music from **Todd Agnew**, after all, in addition to his role as full-time worship leader, Agnew is nearing completion of his Masters degree from Dallas Theological Seminary—which does, in fact, lead him directly into the reason for this masterpiece. ***From Grace To Glory*** is a culmination, of sorts, of Agnew's journey from Christian pop star to more ministry-minded pursuits, but it's not a “Best-Of” compilation, as a quick glance at his bio would relay, “[it's] a collection of the songs Todd wishes you had.” As you would expect, this album runs the gamut sonically with Agnew's signature gristly pop-rock sounds, to intimate-worshipful numbers (“The One You Want,” “Did You Mean Me?”), a reprise of “Our Great God” feat. **Rebecca St. James** (from 2007's ***Better Questions***), U2's bluesy “When Love Come To Town” (as featured on 2004's ***In The Name Of Love: Artists United For Africa***), and the standout “His Eye Is On The Sparrow” featuring tastefully greasy jamming and an ear-pleasing duet introducing **Trulah Maloy**. Now that he's neatly packaged these moments together for us, we're eager to see (and hear) where Agnew's next stop will be along this journey—we're grateful he's taken us along for the ride.

—Kevin Sparkman

Corey Voss

Songs Of Heaven & Earth

(Integrity Music)

FOR FANS OF:

Chris Tomlin

WE LIKE: "The King Is Here"

★★★★☆



The earnest spirit within **Corey Voss's *Songs Of Heaven & Earth*** is what sets it apart from other releases. Aside from Voss's crystal clear vocal work and near-perfect melodic chops, this new five-song EP also captures an undeniable sincerity to connect the listener and Creator.

"Canyons" is a nice single, but "The King Is Here" will undoubtedly be sung in churches nationwide ("As It Is In Heaven" is another good bet). The set's synth-heavy sound easily translates to other instrumentation, which means these songs should nest in any church looking for fresh, inviting songs rooted in creation's imagery.

—Matt Conner

Andy Garcia

Forever We Sing

(Dream Worship)

FOR FANS OF:

Zach Williams, Aaron Shust

WE LIKE: “Forever We Sing

(Magnify)”

★★★★☆



After his father left the family when he was baby, **Andy Garcia** has continually risen above the circumstances and has acknowledged Christ as his source-for-all from the get-go, even leading worship at his youth group from an early age. With one of the smoothest voices singing today, Garcia now bows his **Dream Worship LP *Forever We Sing***. Utilizing his strength—that voice—Garcia shines on favorites like “He Won’t Leave You There” and “Death Was Arrested.”

The album plays like a dream worship set, which makes it a perfect addition to any praise collection or a needed refocus on a long drive. With Garcia’s inviting timbre, count on much more to come from this seasoned and sought-after worship leader.

–Staff