

CEEM

MATTHEW WEST

STICKING TO THE STORIES

AND FINDING A FAITH-FORGING FORMULA



NEEDTOBREATHE
LIVE FROM THE WOODS



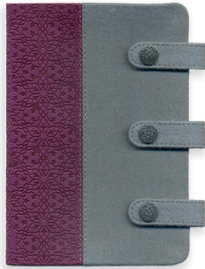
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FEATURES

Matthew West

Now releasing his third consecutive album featuring fan-submitted stories—five years later, this formula has forged a faithful journey

Cover photo & Matthew West images:
Cameron Powell

**NEEDTOBREATHE**

This must-see live band has finally translated their experiential art into portable form—find out why this was the right time and place

**Christy Nockels**

Why she didn't initially feel like a forerunner and how you'll be pleasantly surprised by her stance on women in worship

**Audio Adrenaline**

Hands On / Feet Forward: The faces and the sounds have changed—again—but for Audio Adrenaline the mission will always remain the same



DEPTS

FROM THE EDITOR**PHOTOS****OUT AND ABOUT**

Pics of your favorite Christian artists on the road, off the road and everywhere in between

SONG DEVOTIONAL**DAN BREMNES****REVIEWS**

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1 Peter 5:6-7 (MSG) | *So be content with who you are, and don't put on airs. God's strong hand is on you; he'll promote you at the right time. Live carefree before God; he is most careful with you.*

As we enter graduation season, 1 Pet. 5:6-7 is a most appropriate message. In fact, now that I think about it, I could have certainly benefitted from hearing this at the commencement speeches I was required to attend. Assuming, of course, that I would still remember anything from my high school and college graduation days in 1995 and 2002, respectively. Yes, I managed to cram a four-year undergraduate degree into seven and-a-half years (don't act like you're not impressed)!

Be content with who you are. Personally, it has taken a long time to get there, and God continues to reveal new ways of understanding this across the seasons. For **Christy Nockels**, a spirited perspective from a new friend coupled with a wake up call from God lit the fire for her to begin living into the roles of coach, mentor, leader and forerunner in her ministry profession.

Live carefree before God. **Matthew West** may not come across as the uptight type, but tense moments were created when forced to weigh decisions based on professional life vs. his home life. Apprehensive at first, West tells us in his *CCM Magazine* cover story that touring with his family has been "the most incredible experiences of our lives."

He'll promote you at the right time. On the heels of releasing a debut Number 1 album (a chart position they haven't enjoyed in sixteen years), think about how **Audio Adrenaline** may view the perfection of God's timing now? Additionally, visualize the paths that He has been carefully connecting between all of those involved—past and present—in that ongoing ministry!

Graduates, the themes that run throughout this edition of *CCM* are excellent reminders that God has made you (just the way you are) for a purpose, and that trusting in His perfect timing—even when it may seem like He doesn't know the time—will give us a most fulfilled life. Step out into your upcoming unknowns believing *His strong hand is on you...He is most careful with you.*



Blessings,

Kevin Sparkman
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Andy Argyrakis is a Chicago-based entertainment writer/photographer who appears in the *Chicago Tribune*, *Illinois Entertainer*, *Hear/Say Magazine*, *Concert Livewire* and more.



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Matt Conner is a music writer for the *Indianapolis Star*, *Relevant* and *Metromix* and the founding editor of www.StereoSubversion.com.

#CCM Mag



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Toni Henson Slade



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A little boy has played with all his heart
The living room has turned into
A fort with flashlight stars...

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I'll be thankful for doing those chores
'Cause that's where love has been...

-- "Where Love Has Been"
(Spencer's Song)



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that was Given Away.*

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1



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1 & **2** The **Rock & Roll Hall of Fame** honored the legacy of the recently departed **Andraé Crouch** (pictured on the big screen) with the “Rock My Soul” tribute concert. The sold out show from Cleveland’s State Theatre at Playhouse Square was part of the Hall’s 2015 Rock Week Induction Celebration and featured performances by **Marvin Winans**, **CeCe Winans** (pictured center) and **Donnie McClurkin** (right).

2



3 Modern rockers **for KING & COUNTRY** take a much deserved break during their recent performances of “Fix My Eyes” and “Run Wild” on *Jimmy Kimmel Live!*

4 Dove-Award winning hip-hop artist **KB** gave fans the ride of their life as he hosted exclusive car stereo listening parties in select cities of tunes from his new album, *Tomorrow We Live* (Reach Records).



5



Photo: Andy Argyrakis

6

5 & **6** “The First Lady of Country Music” **Loretta Lynn** remains a touring titan, even at 83-years-old, and she once again delighted a sold out Chicago crowd with both the secular and sacred, the latter of which were just rounded up and reissued on ***Hymns & Gospel Favorites*** (Gaither Music Group).



Photo: Andy Argyrakis

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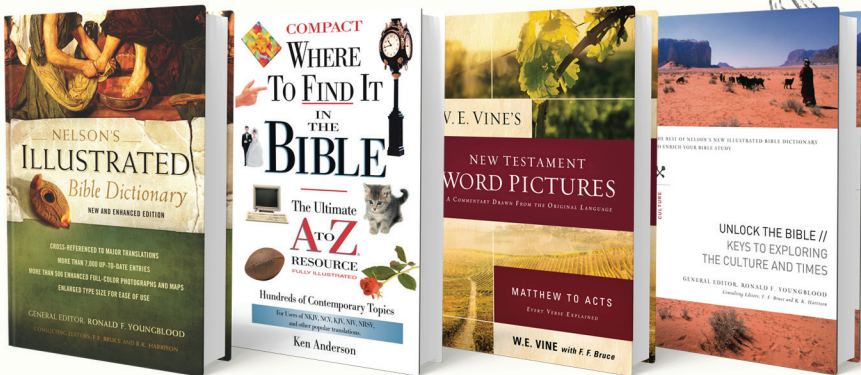
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STICKING TO THE STORIES

BASED ON THE PREMISE OF AN EXPERIMENT, MATTHEW WEST NOW RELEASES HIS THIRD CONSECUTIVE ALBUM FEATURING FAN-SUBMITTED STORIES—FIVE YEARS LATER, A FAITH-FORGING FORMULA HAS EMERGED.

BY MATT CONNER

Every songwriter, in a sense, is a storyteller. Then there's **Matthew West**.

When the GRAMMY-nominated artist first set out to solicit stories from his fans, he hoped at least a few of them would take the time to send him their testimonies of faith, hope, love and courage. The idea was a simple one: write a new set of songs inspired by those who had been listening all along.

Needless to say, West seriously underestimated his audience.

Since that initial request, Matthew West and a host of volunteers, including family members, have sorted through and responded to more than 40,000 stories submitted over the last few years. What began as hopeful inspiration for a few songs has turned into three full-length albums, including his latest, ***Live Forever***. Even more, it's clear that the celebrated vocalist is just

beginning to scratch the surface of this powerful connection.

"This was not my plan," says West with a laugh. "I had no idea that it was going to turn into all of this. I was uncertain I would even make an entire album inspired by people's stories, because it was the unknown. If no one had answered my invitation by sending in their stories, then none of this would have happened."

The type of leap in making these albums with such a fragile request, if left unanswered, has shown West some important lessons for his own faith journey.

"What has become clear is that God doesn't always show us the whole road map, but He'll maybe show us the first mile," he says. "That has been this journey. He shows me just enough to keep me stepping out in faith and going for it. Then the rest starts to reveal itself and the story unfolds, and I realize then what God is doing. God knew there would be 40,000 stories. I was surprised by it, but I don't think He was. I don't think He is surprised by the songs that have been written or that the stories keep coming in."

It's that last line that shows that this long line of story submissions has no end in sight. Every day brings even more, which means West must continue to find new ways to process, organize, respond to and utilize them.

“It’s different every day,” he explains. “There has not been a single day in six years that a story hasn’t come in to my website, ever since I created a place that said, ‘Tell Your Story.’ It’s just unbelievable. On average, I’d say it’s ten stories per day. Other times, I might post a specific question like, ‘Do you have a story about perseverance?’ and then I’ll get five hundred stories!

“The first time I did this, I wasn’t prepared for the amount I was going to get,” he continues. “Over the years, I’ve begun to build a system. In the beginning, it was just folders that I’d put them in and separate them by category. Now I have a database on

my website that allows me to read through the stories and become more efficient with how I handle them.”

POPWE

Handling stories has become the name of the game over the last year for Matthew West. While some of them come nicely wrapped with a lesson learned tied on like a beautiful bow, many are in the midst of despair, confusion, loss and pain. For West, it provides a responsibility and opportunity for ministry in the moment.

“A lot of people will write who really need someone to contact them with prayer,



support, or encouragement,” says West. “Others need to get in touch with a shelter or recovery center. So in addition to creating a system in which to respond to people, we’ve sparked an entire ministry that my father and I started together called POPWE. This gets its name from one of my songs, “My Own Little World,” which talks about ‘population me.’ We began this ministry to directly connect with those penning the hurting stories that are submitted to us. We offer prayer at our concerts, online support and encouragement, as well as facilitating connections for hurting people to contact various resources that will help them find healing.”

In addition to POPWE, West is also launching a brand new blog. The vision behind this is that online conversations will organically bloom and the power of the shared stories will draw and build strength among themselves versus relying on West as the figure-head for initial exposure.

“The goal is to create a conversation. When I first started this, it wasn’t a one-way conversation because I would write a song in response to those stories. But since then, we’ve seen that increasing need to communicate back and forth with people, both for the purposes of those battling depression or addiction but to also let them know that we’re there for them and that their story matters.”

As for those fans that have seen their own stories turned into song, West has a special connection to each and attempts to see each of them at least once per year.

“The people whose stories have inspired specific songs, I keep in touch with them regularly,” he reiterates. “We have events where we gather together with all of the storytellers. We try to do that annually and that’s really special. Then they come out to our shows. When they’re there, I put their song in the set list and introduce them to the audience. This added dimension to the live show has made a very memorable connection with people. They not only hear a story with their ears, but they’re seeing the person who inspired it with their eyes. Hopefully that experience is internalized by the





“WHAT HAS BECOME CLEAR IS THAT GOD DOESN’T ALWAYS SHOW US THE WHOLE ROAD MAP, BUT HE’LL MAYBE SHOW US THE FIRST MILE. THAT HAS BEEN THIS JOURNEY. HE SHOWS ME JUST ENOUGH TO KEEP ME STEPPING OUT IN FAITH AND GOING FOR IT. THEN THE REST STARTS TO REVEAL ITSELF AND THE STORY UNFOLDS, AND I REALIZE THEN WHAT GOD IS DOING.” – **MATTHEW WEST**

realization that God has a plan to use their own story in their lives.”

LIVE FOREVER

West says his goal with each new album is to “move forward,” and that’s especially true of this latest work. His last two acclaimed releases, *The Story Of Your Life* and *Into The Light*, reflected on the testimonies of fans who had endured and overcame a specific event or issue. The new set turns toward the present to ask important questions about the world around us.

“My first two records that were inspired by people’s stories were dominated by songs that had to do with someone’s past—the broken home they grew up in, the cancer they battled, the loss of a loved one,” says West. “Much of those records were written looking back at how past chapters in our stories have defined us in different ways.

“On this record, I found myself having this question, ‘Now what?’ I think we’ve established that we’ve all got some messy parts of our story. We’ve all got some chapters that we’d love to do over, but we can’t. So what about the chapters being written in our lives right now? What about the chapters that still have yet to be written before Jesus comes back?

“This record has really set out on a search to answer that question,” he continues. “How do we make the most of our lives right now? How do we do that with our focus on eternity, knowing our stories never end? For those who are Christians and

follow Jesus in this life, it means our stories will carry on to the next life.”

NEXT-GEN STORYTELLERS

In the midst of this unofficial trilogy of story-focused albums, Matthew West faced a personal dilemma. Night after night, for weeks on end, the 38-year-old was bringing hope to the masses and spreading the gospel coast-to-coast. He was following God’s lead with his musical talents. He was also away from his family more than he wanted. He and his wife, Emily, had a major decision to make.

“My wife and I felt the urgent need to pray about how our family was supposed to look and how we were to mix that with the career on the road and ministry,” explains West. “She came to me with the idea of homeschooling, so we could travel more as a family while our children are still young. So

we stepped out into the great unknown, the world of homeschooling, and the road together as a family about two years ago.”

While West was uncertain how the family would adjust away from the normal routines of home life, it didn’t take long for the excitement of the new environments to kick in. The thrill of being a part of the live show appeals to at least one of his daughters, while the ability of the family to be together has been a win for everyone.

“My oldest loves coming on stage with me,” he says. “My youngest is still a bit shy. Just last night, my daughter was on stage singing with me and **Colton Dixon** from *American Idol*,

who’s on tour with us right now. She’s a showstopper. The crowds love her.

“They love being on the road,” adds West with a laugh. “They love going on a tour bus and having their little bunk beds there. Every day is a new adventure with different field trips, and they love meeting new people and making new friends. My oldest was on the bus the other day and said, ‘We make new friends in every city!’ Then my youngest added, ‘And then we never see them again!’”

More than anything, West says he’s able to be fully represent as a father while still going all-in on writing, recording, and performing the songs that his fans have inspired.

“We’ve never looked back,” says West about the change to tour with his family. “It’s been the most incredible experience of our lives. I used to be so conflicted while I was on tour. I’d think, ‘Man, I’m doing what I feel like God has called me to do. I’m telling the world about Jesus.

My shows are going everywhere around the country, but I’m not at home for my kids.’ But now I don’t have to wrestle with that. It’s a wonderful thing. The family doesn’t feel like this is just dad’s job anymore, but it’s our entire mission as a family.”

As inspirational as his music and ministry has been to this point, it’s likely that West’s most important work might just be his commitment to making sure the next generation has its own set of storytellers. It’s your stories—and he’s sticking to them. **CCM**



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INTO THE WOODS

NEEDTOBREATHE TAKES FANS INTO THE BACKWOODS OF TENNESSEE ON THEIR FIRST-EVER LIVE ALBUM.

BY LINDSAY WILLIAMS

Ask any true **NEEDTOBREATHE** fan about the band, and they'll tell you two things:

1. *The Outsiders* is their "career" album.
2. You have to see them live.

NEEDTOBREATHE has had fans and critics alike talking since their debut in 2006, the same year they appeared on the cover of *CCM Magazine* for the first time, an unprecedented feat for a then unknown band from South Carolina. Ever since, the group has managed to be a much buzzed-about topic in music circles—often evoking praise for their superior musicianship and sometimes igniting controversy with their mainstream appeal. But even the naysayers seem to agree on one thing: the band's live show is simply unmatched.

Fans have been clamoring for a live record for years, and last month, one year following the release of the band's highly-acclaimed *Rivers In The Wasteland* (Atlantic/Word), **NEEDTOBREATHE** released ***Live From The Woods***, a recording that chronicles not only a one-of-a-kind concert from last fall but also showcases their undeniable musical talent.

In truth, **NEEDTOBREATHE**—comprised of **Bear Rinehart** (lead vocals, guitar), **Bo Rinehart** (guitar, background vocals), **Seth Bolt** (bass, background vocals) and **Josh Lovelace** (keys, background vocals)—has wanted to make a live album for some time. In fact, they've been recording every show for roughly the last five years. Much like a winning team scrutinizes their moves after every game, front man Bear Rinehart—who served as a wide receiver for the Furman University football squad during college—says the band diligently studies their "plays" after every performance.



When their most recent tour in support of *Rivers In The Wasteland* ended, it was time to comb through the playbook. “We circled a bunch of dates on the tour and said, ‘OK, what were the best nights that we enjoyed the most? Where did the crowds seem like they were the craziest?’ That kind of thing,” explains Bear. “We’ve tried to make live records before, but we never felt like everything lined up. We just didn’t play well enough; the set list wasn’t right, or something would be off about it. We really wanted to make this first one a good representation of the band, and Nashville just lined up perfectly.”

GIRL NAMED TENNESSEE

Last September, nearly 5,000 people showed up at **The Woods at Fontanel**, an outdoor amphitheater located just outside of Music City on the former property of country legend **Barbara Mandrell**. The stage is literally nestled deep in the woods with concert attendees cocooned inside the intimate space by a forest of trees.

“I think the outdoor setting really suits us well. We love playing an amphitheater setting or a festival,” remarks Bear. “It was one of the most,” he pauses, “magical nights that we’ve ever been a part of as a band.”

NEEDTOBREATHE took the stage just as the sun was setting and played long into the moonlight with a set that showcased reimagined versions of fan favorites and new selections. The album’s cover art encapsulates the rustic, southern charm of the evening with a drawing of an owl, illustrated by Bo, who often designs album covers, T-shirts and posters for the band.

During the comprehensive 17-song set, which featured an acoustic version of the band’s current single “Brother,” the group covered “Float On” from **Modest Mouse** and **ZZ Top**’s “Waitin’ On The Bus (Have Mercy),” among others, displaying their diverse musical tastes. In addition, there were plenty of full-on jam sessions, culminating in a confetti-filled moment on “The Outsiders.” Bear credits the crowd’s electric energy and the unique venue as the primary keys to making the evening truly spectacular.

“It was pretty inspiring to watch, and I think that inspired some big moments in the show,” he says. “I just think that atmosphere took everybody out of their element. We joked with the crowd that we had brought them out there to steal their cars. It felt like we were off from the rest of the world, and were having an experience that was completely separate from the rest of our lives.”

“WE ARE CONSTANTLY TRYING TO REMIND OURSELVES OF THE STORIES OF WHY WE WROTE THE SONGS AND WHAT WE’RE DOING UP THERE... THAT SEEMS OBVIOUS, BUT I THINK OVER TIME, ARTISTS FORGET THAT FROM NIGHT TO NIGHT AND IT FEELS LIKE A PERFORMANCE RATHER THAN A CONVERSATION, WHICH IS WHAT WE’RE TRYING TO HAVE WITH THE AUDIENCE.”

– BEAR RINEHART



The band always lets the atmosphere and the reaction from those in attendance set the compass for their live performances, making each concert a one-of-a-kind experience. The set list is intentionally kept loose, leaving room to improvise and ride on the highs and lows of the night.

"I think fans can really tell when you're pressing them a little too hard or you're selling them too early. Our theory is that we always try to play to the audience that we're in front of and let them dictate how the show goes," Bear reveals. "Over time you learn to let the show come to you and not force the issue. Where the show takes off might be a different song each night. It might be the second song or the tenth song, even.

"A lot of times, we work on leaving room in the songs themselves to go different directions," he continues. "Sometimes that gap might be a minute of music, and it might be ten minutes of the night depending on how the crowd's reacting to it and what we're feeling. That really keeps things fresh for us. I think that was kind of a brave thing to do early on, but we've gotten to where we really enjoy that part of the show the most."

MORE HEART, LESS ATTACK

It's evident the band members are having a good time onstage, emitting a contagious energy from start to finish. *The Rivers In The Wasteland* tour was especially pivotal for the band, considering the album's recording process was wrought with tension and uncertainty. After months of fighting and mounting competition, the Rinehart brothers took a six-month hiatus at home in Charleston, during which they didn't speak. As Bear recalls on *Live From The Woods*, when the siblings came back together, they agreed that they had to be brothers first before they could be band mates; otherwise, the band couldn't continue. The ensuing songs that formed their new studio record became some of the most vulnerable of their career to date, and that transparency translated to the stage the night *Live From The Woods* was recorded.

"We constantly are trying to remind ourselves of the stories of why we wrote the songs and what we're doing up there," Bear maintains, adding that he and his cohorts desire each concert to be a personal dialogue with fans. "We get to meet people before the shows, and [we] try to integrate that into





what [we're] doing onstage," he says. "That seems obvious, but I think over time, artists forget that from night to night, and it feels like a performance and not like a conversation, which is really what we're trying to have with the audience."

They're planning to keep the exchange going throughout the spring and summer on the "**Tour de Compadres**," a multi-artist event hitting mostly outdoor venues, including the infamous Red Rocks Amphitheater in Colorado, through August. **Ben Rector** (first leg only), **Switchfoot** (second leg only), **Drew Holcomb & The Neighbors** and **Colony House** will join NEEDTOBREATHE on the tour.

"We honestly just wanted to give our fans what we thought they would want the most, and selfishly, we loved the idea of being on tour with some of our best friends," shares Bear. "All the bands' music has influenced us, but also the people in those bands we really love to be around."

Four bands on the stage every night should make for a logistical and financial nightmare. However, Bear says these challenges were overcome thanks to the tight bond and genuine camaraderie shared between the groups. The artists will share gear and stage time, and each artist has agreed to take a lesser cut in order to keep the cost of ticket prices down.

"That's a credit to all the bands that are on the bill taking less money in order to do it—to play for the team they like," says Bear. "That's something I'm really proud of with this tour that we were able to accomplish. It's only going to work if we're friends and we work together to make it happen."

The tour lends itself to natural collaboration, which will inevitably result in some surprises and YouTube-worthy moments. Meanwhile, it seems the team of compadres they've assembled is quite the mutual admiration society. "I respect the true north of [NEEDTOBREATHE's] artistic work," comments fellow compadre **Drew Holcomb**. "They don't compromise and seek out things only for fame. They really are in it for the music and for the fans, and that is a rare trait."

SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL

NEEDTOBREATHE's live shows do nothing if not whet fans' appetites for new music, and those hungry for more will be happy to know the band is already writing for their next studio record. While Bear can't find the words to fully articulate the eclectic, left-of-center mix of sounds emanating from current writing sessions, he does confirm the members have been writing together as a band, something that hasn't happened since the landmark album that landed them a tour spot opening for **Taylor Swift** in 2011.

"I think I would probably liken it the most to the process of writing before we were working on *The Outsiders*. We were really tight-knit in that period of our lives and spent a lot of time on the bus together working on songs. That's kind of how we feel now," reveals Bear.

Having endured their own personal wasteland, these "outsiders" have come out on the other side humble, joyful and thankful for the current season. "I think we are more confident and happy with who we are as people and more grateful [for] the situation we're in than ever, and so things are coming much more easily these days. Even hard work is coming much more easily," Bear contends. "We get along so much better now than we ever have. That just translates to us being confident onstage and really enjoying what we do now... I think fans can tell how much we love what we do." **CCM**

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CCM'S REVIEW OF LIVE
FROM THE WOODS**

MEET THE COMPADRES

The Tour de Compadres runs April-August 2015 and features some of NEEDTOBREATHE's closest friends on and off the stage for an impressive starting line-up:



Switchfoot (www.switchfoot.com)

Hailing from San Diego, this west coast band of avid surfers has amassed loyal fans for nearly two decades, and like NEEDTOBREATHE, Switchfoot includes a set of brothers, Jon and Tim Foreman.



Ben Rector (www.benrectormusic.com)

Indie singer/songwriter Ben Rector began writing songs in high school and started touring during college at the University of Arkansas. Rector's music has seen placement on high-profile TV shows, including "One Tree Hill," "Pretty Little Liars" and "Castle," among others.



Drew Holcomb & The Neighbors (www.drewholcomb.com)

Drew Holcomb and his backing band "The Neighbors" were most recently seen making their late night television debut on "Jimmy Kimmel Live." The Americana/folk troubadour is married to singer/songwriter Ellie Holcomb.



Colony House (www.colonyhousemusic.com)

Pop/rock outfit Colony House is made up of brothers Caleb and Will Chapman (sons of Steven Curtis Chapman) and longtime friend Scott Mills. The rising trio has already performed on VH1 and "Late Night with Seth Myers" and recently turned heads at a series of showcases at SXSW.

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A photograph of Christy Nockels performing on stage. She is wearing a light-colored, textured sweater and has her right hand raised in the air. She is holding a microphone in her left hand and looking upwards with a joyful expression. The background is dimly lit with warm, glowing string lights.

CHRISTY NOCKELS ON WHY SHE DIDN'T INITIALLY FEEL LIKE A FORERUNNER AND HOW YOU'LL BE PLEASANTLY SURPRISED BY HER STANCE ON WOMEN IN WORSHIP

TRAVEL BLAZ



BY GRACE ASPINWALL

Soft spoken with a light southern drawl, **Christy Nockels** is as lovely as her voice is inviting. The gracious, diminutive-sounding songstress sat down with us recently in Atlanta to discuss her just-released album ***Let It Be Jesus*** and how she considers this project a reflection of finally coming into her own.

“Why now?” she reciprocated when we posed the question about recording a live album. “I have always wanted to do what ever felt authentic for me in a given season,” she answered. “When I think back on *Life Light Up and Into the Glorious*, and on the latter in particular, the sound was so stripped down. It was very ‘singer-songwriter,’ and at that time I wanted to make something I could play in my car and use as a means for reflection.”

Fast forward to the current season where the last six-months have seen Nockels involved with a group of women worship leaders in which she has grown to serve as a coach, resource, and mentor. “For this latest project, *Let It Be Jesus*, I was desiring for songs that I could use specifically during corporate ministry moments because this was most applicable to my life right now,” she added.

The role of leader didn’t come naturally, but Nockels humbly admitted that she is gradually and graciously observing how she is now able to help fill the gap for others—a rift that remained open for her personally, dating to over twenty years ago when her career began as a fledgling artist.

“God made this calling very clear through my friend, author **Jenni Allen**. I didn’t know her at the time she called and invited me to lead worship at an event called the *IF Gathering*. During that initial conversation she asked me who my mentor was—the person pouring into my life as I allowed God to pour through me in ministry—and all I could say was ‘Nobody? Maybe **Darlene Zschech** from a continent away?!”

L
ER

“Jenni responded, ‘Who is Darlene Zschech?’ [laughs]. Then she said, ‘Do you realize this makes you the forerunner?’ After she said that the tears ran down my face as I explained, ‘Jenni, I get up, make my kids lunch, and then drive them to school. I don’t get out of bed to proclaim that I am a forerunner.’”

Not lost in the ice-breaking humor of her newfound friend’s unawareness of the author of “Shout To The Lord,” was this watershed moment for the now older and wiser Nockels, whom suddenly obtained a grasp of her platform-to-be and foreseeable role.

An emotional Nockels paused, then stated “I still get choked up about this, because I consider that as my wake up call. It was a moment when I arose and became intentional about leading the next generation. I have been [leading worship] for twenty years, all predominantly with men, and in the realization of all of that I suddenly knew that I had the experience—and then some—to

lead [worship] with all-men, to be on the bus with a bunch of guys, and to lead a song from the softness that God gifts to women.”

Nockels has been urging those in the group to play their mutual role as they each partner in leadership in their own settings, which is explained by her controversial views on the subject. Having met resistance for these notions over the years, she likens worship to a marriage and feels it is most complete when both genders are represented in leadership positions.

“I’ve always taken the stance that worship is strongest when both male and female are leading—with the female fulfilling the complementary role, together completing the picture of being made in the image of God,” said Nockles. “True, in Christ we both have acceptance, but there’s something beautiful about that picture of a woman serving freely inside of that covering—like





“THERE’S A CERTAIN STRENGTH AND POWER THAT A MAN BRINGS—THERE IS A VERY SPECIFIC BEAUTY, GENTLENESS, AND HUMILITY THAT GOD HAS DESIGNED FOR US AS WOMEN TO OFFER. IT CAN BE REALLY SWEET WHEN IT COMES TOGETHER.”

— **CHRISTY NOCKELS**

when a marriage portrays that picture of designed headship.

“I’ve experienced that very thing in the last twenty years of leading along side men,” she continued. “I’ve expressed to the ladies in our group how I intentionally approach [leading worship beside men] with the attitude of ‘I am looking to you as the headship,’ and when your heart has humbly and truly accepted that role, it can only foster more trust which in turn creates more opportunities to serve and lead.

“There’s a beauty and a freedom in that, and you come to realize that you

really do have your own voice from within this intended design—that your place is extremely important and needed. There’s a certain strength and power that a man brings—there is a very specific beauty, gentleness, and humility that God has designed for us as women to offer. It can be really sweet when it comes together.”

Let It Be Jesus was recorded at her church in front of an audience of just around three hundred and fifty in attendance. Among the songs debuted was “My Anchor,” co-written with Jason Ingram. “I think this song is one



that our generation really needs to hear,” she added. “Just the thought of that prayer—a prayer for Jesus to be our anchor, no matter what we’re going through or how derailed things might seem. The truth that Jesus really is our anchor reminds me of the hymn ‘The Solid Rock’ [sings]

*On Christ the Solid Rock I stand
All other ground is sinking sand
All other ground is sinking sand*

“‘My Anchor’ is like a new hymn that reassures us that His every word is the rock and that we can count on it. There’s so much stuff out there today, but JESUS, His every word is so true! He is what I can count on, and what I can completely stand firm upon.”

In addition to her relatively new role as mentor and the release of a new album, Nockels is first a devoted wife and mother. When asked how she balances everything,



she laughed and emphatically said “I don’t! I have to have help. I reflect on the woman in **Proverbs 31** and how she gave a portion [of her money] to her servants...*she had*

help. That always makes me feel better!”

Even if she thinks she’s not, the affable singer, leader, wife, and mother is somehow managing to do it all. And with this, her latest project packed with anthems primed to creep into Sunday morning set lists, only confirms her continuous charge ahead—as a forerunner—while after all, constantly running after Jesus. **CCM**

+ [CLICK HERE FOR CCM'S REVIEW OF LET IT BE JESUS](#)

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AUDIO ADRENALINE: HANDS ON / FEET FORWARD

*THE FACES AND THE SOUNDS
HAVE CHANGED—AGAIN—
BUT ADAM, BRANDON, DAVE
AND JACK ARE ALL-IN ON
CONTINUING AUDIO A'S
MINISTRY MINDED LEGACY*

BY KEVIN SPARKMAN



Cool J once opened a title track on an album with “*Don’t call it a comeback / I’ve been here for years...*”

It’s hard to label **Audio Adrenaline** as a *comeback* due to the fact that there are four completely new bodies assembled to carry the Audio A banner—a flagship brand in contemporary Christian music if there ever was one—in a move that was, frankly, quite bold.

We’ll continue that sentiment with regards to the release of their tenth studio album **Sound Of The Saints**. Okay, if we must acknowledge the giant elephant sitting in the room (we must—*it’s right over there!*), those who consider themselves devoted fans of CCM will have to admit to executing a double-take at the announcement of former **DC Talk** member **Kevin Max** fronting the band. Then, after just one album and a quick exit to stage left, it’s as if the collective sighs rippled in unison when it was announced that Audio A will be releasing a new album in 2015—



without any of the former band members.

Whew, now that we've acknowledged the elephant, let's move forward.

Funny thing about all of that head-shaking and hands-on-faces—while we were busy introducing appendages to noggins Audio Adrenaline has been reuniting brand name to audiences, and album sales to charts. At the time this article will publish, press releases will have reported *Sound Of The Saints* debuting on Billboard's Christian charts at Number 1—a peak position held by only one other Audio A album, *Underdog* in 1999.

Having also been here for years, founders **Mark Stuart** and **Will McGinniss** know what they are doing. Of course, time will always tell, but it seems that they've found a successful combination in **Adam Agee** (lead vocals, formerly **Stellar Kart**), **Brandon Bagby** (guitars), **Dave Stovall** (bass, formerly **Wavorly**), and **Jack Campbell** (drums). If chart positions don't do it for you, we suggest letting the music speak for itself—and once again trusting in Stuart and McGinniss. They are still very hands on with the band as writers (Stuart co-wrote the current title track with Agee), artist development, leading the beloved **Hands And Feet Project**, and providing overall official Audio A stamps of approval.

We asked the current torch bearers their thoughts upon accepting such an audacious responsibility. “Unbelievable—an honor—a privilege,” the guys each stated without hesitation. After weighing the options of joining Audio Adrenaline versus accepting offers to tour with other high profile acts, Bagby recalled, “I decided that if I am going to play music it needed to be for a higher purpose. For me, God's timing was perfect in the way He orchestrated this opportunity coupled with the proven ministry focus of Audio A.”

After a dozen-or-so years fronting Stellar Kart, Agee was unsure of where his path would meet opportunity. A music industry veteran, it took a complete surrender before God prepared his heart for this current

journey. “I finally got to the point of saying to God ‘I'm open to what ever it is You have me to do, even if it's not music.’ My wife and I prayed about it, and her main thing was that she didn't want me to be away from the family just to play gigs—there had to be a huge ministry component if we were going to continue in this business. Audio Adrenaline was definitely something that we saw ourselves getting on board with,” a thankful Agee stated.

“Being a part of this band is inspiring. It's just another crazy opportunity that I've experienced where God has proven Himself to be so real. Every night when we are on stage I find myself praying, ‘Alright God, thank you for showing up and for reminding me that You've got this.’ When we let go of what we think we can do on our own, He inevitably shows us something greater,” added Agee.

In addition to the budding and critical success of this current reincarnation, God immediately began delivering greater things. A spring tour with **Newsboys** before new music featured on *Sound Of The Saints* was available in take-home form was a great kick-start to Audio Adrenaline's evolving timeline. “It's the biggest show in Christian music,” said Campbell in his outback accent. “They blew us away every night. I grew up listening to them in Australia, so to have toured along side them in America was amazing.”

Stovall chimed, “It's was great watching **Michael Tait** perform every night. Even off stage that guy was always dressed to the nine's! Everything he said from stage was always meaningful—he had the crowd in the palm of his hand every time he spoke. [Laughed] They were never quiet for me when I spoke on stage, so I took notes on the way that their show flowed and how they were able to entertain while also maintaining a worshipful reverence at the same time.”

It seems that it wasn't just Newsboys that caught the attention of the audience at these

slew of recent springtime shows. “It was a really worshipful moment when we played [title track] ‘Sound Of The Saints’ on this tour because every audience inevitably stood up, raised their hands, and sang ‘Hallelujah’ at the end of the song,” said Stovall. “One night in Michigan at the end of ‘Saints,’ the crowd began clapping, but didn’t stop—they just kept on going. At first I thought to myself, ‘Wow, they really like us,’ but after it continued we realized that they were responding to the Holy Spirit, as if it were some sort of praise-applause. I’ll never forget it.”

No longer mind that elephant seemingly lingering in the room.

“‘Sound Of The Saints’ is a song I co-wrote with Audio A founder Mark Stuart,” answered Agee when asked more about the album title. “The song talks about the trees of the

field, the echoes of a cave, and all of those different elements of creation that express their praise, but nothing compares to the sound of God’s children singing their praises back to Him.

Like [Dave Stovall] was saying, hearing the people sing that song each night, whether it was for the first time or perhaps they had heard it before, made for some special moments.”

When considering the musical legacy of Audio Adrenaline, one constant throughout the tenured outfit is the approach to songwriting. “They were a huge influence on me as a songwriter. The unique twist that Audio A adds to their positive and uplifting themes is that they will also challenge you. We want to continue that legacy and encourage people to take the extra step to actively live out their faith,” said Agee. This is supremely evident on the opening track “Move,” which was a fan-favorite on this latest tour.

“‘Move’ is a momentous song, but it’s also another song that represents what Audio Adrenaline has stood for from day one—getting out of your comfort zone, going out into the world, and no matter what it takes telling others about Jesus,” affirmed Agee. In true Audio A fashion, Agee also added “It’s also just great rock ‘n roll—a lot of fun.” The **NFL Network** has picked up the song and **MLB Network** is featuring ‘Move’ as one of their themes for the show **MLB Now**.

So how has Audio Adrenaline passed the eye and ear tests for recent concert-goers with, no doubt, some attendees being fans from the band’s inception as A-180? Agee said “We spent at least an hour with the fans after each show and one of the coolest things from this initial tour was the young audience members expressing to us that they didn’t know of Audio Adrenaline, but were won-over after experiencing the live show,” another staple in the fabric of Audio A’s composition.

Bagby added, “The greatest thing was the lifelong fans approaching us with their encouragement and letting us know that we were doing a great job. Coming from them, for sure, we understood the weight of what that meant and it helped us to stay focused on doing what we feel we’ve been called to do from this established platform.”

It’s not a *comeback*. Audio Adrenaline has been around for years, and they never really left. “Rules” are made to be broken, and the continuing lineage of Audio A is an embodiment of what the guys—all of those guys—have been singing about for years: getting out and moving away from our comfort zones. *His understanding is beyond measure.* **Psalms 147:5.**

What elephant? **CCM**



**READ CCM'S REVIEW OF
SOUND OF THE SAINTS**



“WIDE OPEN”

BY DAN BREMNES

Do we really believe that God has good plans for us? Do we actually believe that He works all things together for our good—even if we’re in a difficult season?

A few years ago life was going really good for me. I had just been married, I had a great job as a self-employed carpenter, and I could see the next five years of my life running pretty smoothly. All of a sudden, almost overnight, I lost every bit of work that I had slated. It was 2009 and the midst of the housing market crash. Every hope of work as a carpenter quickly dissolved. I found myself frustrated and confused.

How could God use this as part of His plan? How could God use something like this for my good?

It forced me to search. I began to rekindle a dream and a passion that I had inadvertently put on the back burner. It was something that always lit my fire, but conveniently could never find the time to focus on. If I’m being honest here, I don’t think that I ever really had the courage and faith to put my all into its pursuits. I had become comfortable working for a paycheck, but it wasn’t what I truly desired.

I believe God was using this situation as a wakeup call, and that I really had no other option. *In their hearts humans plan their*

course, but the LORD establishes their steps.

Proverbs 16:9

I used this time to finish the songs that I was writing and began to plan recording sessions. Then, little by little, I experienced God opening some amazing doors for us in music. Nothing came quick and easy, but I soon found myself on a most exciting journey. For once, I felt alive. I had a purpose for my passions. God was guiding me into the things for which He had made me.

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. **Romans 8:28**

Again, I struggle with the courage for it all. In fact, stepping out on faith did not come without much trembling. Was I to sink, or swim? I believe God intentionally led me to a place of vulnerability where He finally had an opportunity to work through my weaknesses.

“When I’m a little afraid of what I don’t know, I know You’re here and you won’t let go / If I step out will you catch my fall / What ever You want, I’m wide open”

Now, five years later I find myself living in Nashville, working with an incredible team, touring with artists I’ve grown up respecting—



and look around to realize just how good is God. Sometimes God uses seemingly terrible situations to lead us into His divine plan for our lives. What ever nudge you might

be feeling from Him, faithfully take that step and live the life He’s called you to live. ☐☐☐

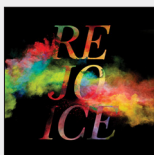
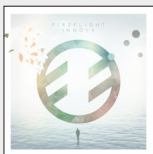
Dan Bremnes debut full-length album Where The Light Is (Capitol CMG) releases June 9, 2015.

RELATED SCRIPTURES

Jeremiah 29:11, Isaiah 55:9



IN THIS ISSUE



MATTHEW WEST
Live Forever (Capitol/CMG)
 FOR FANS OF:
 Chris August, Jonny Diaz,
 Brandon Heath
 ★★★★★

Ever the intricate storyteller, Matthew West rarely disappoints. *Live Forever* follows suit and is even more moving and content rich than his most recent offerings, which is saying a lot. Complete with themes of heaven, hope, and of course the compelling fan-submitted stories, West up's the ante and has sonically delivered his best performances to date. On the deeply stirring "Homecoming" (available on the deluxe edition), he tackles the subject of life in the womb versus abortion as he sings "Every life is sacred, every life is a gift, every life deserves the chance to live / When you hear my first cry, when you look in my eyes, you will understand why you brought me to life." "Grace Wins" is a more upbeat, radio-friendly example of the heightened energy and musical prowess now on display, while "Born For This" is the type of encouraging support we've come to love and expect from West's anthems. The overall strength of this album more-than overshadows even the slightest bobble (a bit of a predictable chorus on the title track "Live Forever"), and know that this new batch will easily become staples both on-air an onstage.

—Grace Aspinwall

WE LIKE: "Born For This"

**FIREFLIGHT****INNOVA** (Self-Released)

FOR FANS OF: Ellie Goulding, Imagine Dragons, Katy Perry

★★★★☆

Fifteen years into its celebrated career, modern rockers Fireflight dropped full-length album number five (on 5/5/15 no less) in the wake of many professional and personal changes. For starters, the collection marks the first ever independent effort for the GRAMMY-nominated group, which accounts for a greater risk taking capacity without ever alienating its pre-existing fan base. And behind the scenes, front woman Dawn Michele and her hubby are brand new parents, another likely factor in the band's renewed sense of purpose as musicians and songwriters. Longtime listeners and newcomers alike are sure to latch on to Fireflight's themes of perseverance and rejuvenation, alongside its standard hard rock stylings (now enhanced by electronic and stadium-ready pop elements) to further reinforce this fresh and fruitful new chapter.

-Andy Argyrakis

WE LIKE: "Keep Fighting"

**PLUMB****Exhale** (Curb)

FOR FANS OF: Francesca Battistelli, Britt Nicole

★★★★☆

Plumb's latest album, *Exhale*, continues her impressive string of heartfelt, resonant releases marked by memorable melodies. Her last release, *Need You Now*, brought her fans inside her own relational brokenness and restoration. *Exhale* continues that theme with personal and corporate songs from the vulnerable steps of a sincere spiritual walk.

Whether it's the title track encouraging listeners to "let go and exhale" or a mid-tempo number like "Broken Places" reminding them of the healing and rest available in the arms of God, Plumb offers testimony and perspective from all sides of the Christian life. Even more, relatable anthems like "Lord, I'm Ready Now" will empower fans to move further into their own faith journey. Overall it's a well-rounded set of songs from a respected artist who has been there.

-Matt Conner

WE LIKE: "Lord, I'm Ready Now"

**BLANCA**

Blanca (Word Records)

FOR FANS OF:

Mandisa, Rihanna, Group 1 Crew

★★★★☆

She may have first found fame with the soulful pop collective Group 1 Crew, but Blanca's well on her way to solo success thanks to "Who I Am" being the highest charting debut single from a new artist in 2015. In addition to that electronically-spiked power ballad, this self-titled long player seamlessly switches between pop, hip-hop and the dance floor, all adorned with the latest production trends, plus perhaps most importantly, fear-shattering and faith-fueling lyrics gleaned from autobiographical inspiration.

—Andy Argyrakis

WE LIKE: "Get Up"
(featuring Lecrae)

**SHANE AND SHANE**

The Worship Initiative

(Fair Trade Services)

FOR FANS OF:

Chris Tomlin, Bethel Music,
Brian and Jenn Johnson

★★★★☆

Delivering a set of worship favorites can be tricky, as some will revert to favoring the original writer/performer. Shane and Shane, in their own way, tactfully cover this chosen batch with ease. Their cover of Chris Tomlin's "Jesus Loves Me" tinged in their own signature sound, is a refreshing take. Interpretations on the Johnsons' "You Make Me Brave" is a strong effort, and their subtle reimagining gives the song a unique girding versus the familiar female-led version.

—Grace S. Aspinwall

WE LIKE: "Jesus Loves Me"

**VARIOUS ARTISTS**

Rejoice: Live in Seattle (BEC)

FOR FANS OF:

Jesus Culture,
People Of The Earth

★★★★☆

For those looking for a worship set rooted in the core of the gospel message, the various worship leaders and artists who come together on *Rejoice: Live in Seattle* from BEC Recordings will be just what you're looking for. Featuring Dustin Kensrue (Modern Post), Cam Huxford IV (Ghost Ship), Brian Eichelberger (The Sing Team) and more, the worship collective keep the songs and experience focused on the person of Christ and the greatness of God with songs like "Made Alive," "Mediator," and "Rock of Ages."

—Matt Conner

WE LIKE: "Made Alive"

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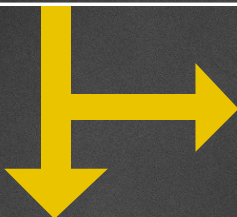
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