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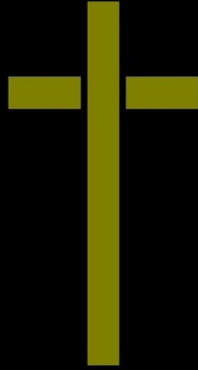
PAUL BALOCHE

HE WRITES THE
SONGS THE WHOLE
CHURCH SINGS

SHAWN MCDONALD

THE SOUND OF
THE BRAVE

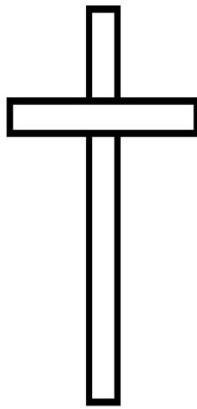
MAY 1, 2014



Doug Sedona
Who Created Love

Nashville, meet Heaven...





Doug Sedona

"Jesus, I Say Thanks"

International Version

Heaven, meet Nashville...

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FEATURES

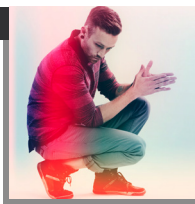
ON THE COVER:

Francesca Battistelli

Honesty Becomes Her

**Shawn McDonald**

Brave new world

**Paul Baloche**

He writes the songs the whole world sings

**Donnie McClurkin**

Better together

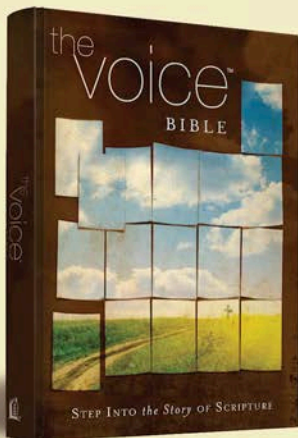


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DEPARTMENTS

FROM THE EDITOR

PHOTOS

TOUR SPOTLIGHT

Casting Crowns



OUT AND ABOUT

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

WHAT'S NEW

ALBUM RELEASES

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IN THE STUDIO

Michael W. Smith



INDUSTRY INSIDER

with Keith Mohr

REVIEWS

ALBUMS, BOOKS AND FILMS

ONE LAST LOOK

GINNY OWENS AND

ANDREW GREER

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Do you remember when you were young and anything was possible? You could be Superman or a gold medalist or fly to the moon. There were no limitations on what your life could be.

Sadly, most of us lose that bright-eyed sense of optimism and self-worth far too early in life. We become mired in our own insecurities, complicated further by relationship and financial woes, addiction or distractions.

Soon, our life looks a certain way; and whether we like it or not, we become complacent and assume and accept that things will never change.

Francesca Battistelli and Shawn McDonald tend to think differently. Now a mother of two, Francesca is seeing life as a blank canvas. Each day, she has determined to engage life with eyes wide open and a heart ready to jump in the direction of her Savior.

Likewise, after traveling through a season of darkness, Shawn McDonald is entering a new phase of joy, hope and, with a fresh understanding of the power of grace, bravery.

Neither of them has allowed complacency to creep in.

Somehow, I think God wants us to approach our lives the same way. Despite our past, our failures, our weaknesses or doubts, God has freely given us breath, choice, joy and opportunity. With mercies new each day, He's also equipped us with everything we'll ever need to start each day with a blank canvas and a divine pen.

So go grab that superhero cape. Go after that medal or the moon. Let God have the pen and write your epic tale anew day after day after day.



Caroline Lusk

Caroline Lusk
Editor, CCM Digital



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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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[YOUTUBE.COM/TCMCCMONLINE](https://www.youtube.com/tcmmccmonline)

DEBUT RELEASE:

Artist: TWICE DAVID

Album title: My Shepherd

Label: Gospel Explosion Records

Release Date: February 2014

Number of songs: 10

Producer: Kady Muteba

Genre: A little bit of pop, funk, R&B, hip-hop, Afro pop...

THE ARTIST: Born in the heart of Africa (DRC), the South African instrumentalist and praise and worship leader has worked as gospel music arranger and producer prior to launching Gospel Explosion Records, a label striving to produce gospel music in various genres.



THE MUSIC: "My Shepherd" is a must listen diverse mix of gospel music. The album's diversity stems from its mix of musical genres and from its blend of different languages ranging from English (70%) to a mix of French, Swahili, Zulu... It is set to get you dancing, praising, worshiping and being great full for the Lord's goodness.

AVAILABILITY: The album is currently available in over 40 major online stores (Itunes, Amazon, 7 Digital...).

[Click here to sample and order "My Shepherd".](#)

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT:

[TWICE DAVID'S REVERBNATION PAGE](#)

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THRIVE TOUR

CASTING CROWNS, LAURA STORY,
FOR KING & COUNTRY
SEARS CENTRE/ HOFFMAN ESTATES, IL
STORY AND PHOTOS BY ANDY ARGYRAKIS

Casting Crowns, one of the best-selling bands in Christian music, is currently hosting one of the most prominent Christian music arena tours this season, splitting their two-set show among past hits and several selections off the new *Thrive* (Beach Street/Reunion), which didn't just top the Christian charts, but also rose to No. 6 on the overall *Billboard* 200.

Musically, Casting Crowns kicked its contemporary stylings up a notch (and added a splash of folk), while unfurling plenty of encouragement with recurring favorites such as "Lifesong," "Who Am I" and "Voice of Truth," alongside the faith-affirming appeal of "Thrive," the family restoration-themed "House of Their Dreams," the marriage-mending "Broken Together" and the ultimate spiritual thirst quencher, "The Well."



Mark Hall of Casting Crowns



Megan Garrett of Casting Crowns



Laura Story

Singer/songwriter Laura Story brought an overt element of worship to the evening, turning in immensely moving tunes off last year's *God of Every Story* (Fair Trade), though "Indescribable" continues to be her career song, of which she delivered a heart-felt rendition.



for King & Country

Opening duo, for King & Country, delivered a lively alternative-rock sound, plenty of percussion and even some singing/playing in the audience, from its debut disc *Crave* (Fervent/Curb), falling right in line with the headliners' message of perseverance and spiritual renewal.

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DAILY CONFESSIONS
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PROVIDENT



HONESTY BECOMES HER

BY CAROLINE LUSK



Throughout history, honesty has been one of the most valued, desired, manipulated, exploited and, at times, diluted elements of human character.

Children learn to tell the truth, often after human instinct has led them to hide that broken vase or the fact they just hit their little sister.

Scripture extols the virtues of honesty, while vividly painting the tragic consequences of its absence.

Modern culture encourages us to let our "true self" shine, while lauding air-brushed images and discarding or concealing

those individuals whose truths make us uncomfortable.

Francesca Battistelli is decidedly counter-cultural. Turning on the lights, pulling back the curtains, she is unabashedly in pursuit of honesty and passionately committed to help a darkened world not only seek truth, but live in it.

"I think the world is hungry for truth, whether they want to believe it or not," she says.

With honesty her clarion call, the 2011 GMA Artist of the Year approached her latest album with steady feet upon the firm

foundation of divine inspiration.

"If *We're Honest* had to be the title," she says. "You write the songs you need to hear. This was about being transparent and going deeper spiritually."

For her journey she brought along a fresh spirit of creativity and a very well-stocked diaper bag. Now a mother of two, Francesca's brave new world revolves not only around her music, but her family, as well—both of which inspire the other. From beginning to end,

the album is a diary of every busy, stressed, delighted, joyful, yet very real mom.

"My son is three, and my daughter is one and a half," she shares. "They play really well together, but the jump from one to two was dramatic! It's amazing but definitely harder."

Francesca playfully and sincerely weaves her tales of parenting adventures and misadventures throughout the record. "Before the Crazy Kicks In" is a charming play-by-play of the chaos that is toddler-



rearing, leaving absolutely no room for doubt that Francesca is a lot like the rest of us.

"I'll walk off the stage and change a diaper," she says with a laugh. "We're just thankful we get to travel together as a family. We don't know how long we'll be able to tour with all of us. We think about homeschooling and making plans for the future, but we're open to what God has for us."

That willingness inspired the hooky chorus of the project's first single, "Write Your Story."

"Jeremiah 29:11 has been my verse for a while now," she says. "The idea is that God is the one who we want holding the pen of our lives. We put a lot of pressure on ourselves to come up with a plan and go make it happen. God wants us involved and to steward, but He really just wants our willingness and availability. That's how I've tried to live my life."

By any standard, Francesca has been diligent in her quest to live life wide open to the direction of her Savior. Likewise, her penchant to be vulnerable and apply just the right amount of restraint through her songs has allowed all of us to see a bit of ourselves inside her honest, charming lyrics and hooky, singable, beautiful melodies and arrangements.

Perhaps it's no surprise, then, that the title track of the album emerged over a conversation with good friends.

"I was going through some stuff with different relationships and was saying how I wish they would just be honest with me," she says.

"There's this lie in the church that's keeping us isolated and telling us we're alone. We hear that if you have a problem, you keep it

to yourself or people will reject you. So we keep our secrets and struggles and sins to ourselves and live in these little islands and not have any real relationships. God wants us to live in community together."

Taking her own words to heart, Francesca and her family are building their own community, and doing so in a way that they can build and maintain real relationships over time. Recently, they relocated to Nashville from Atlanta.

"We left two sets of grandparents in Atlanta; but now that we're in Nashville, the record-making process has become so refreshing," she says. "I could wake up, feed the kids, go

write and come back home. I felt like I had a handle on it for the first time as a mom."

It's a handle she has received from God and wielded with grace.

It's also one she's willing to relinquish if that's the Lord's leading. But for now, she is firmly planted in the garden of creativity, blossoming ever more day-by-day as a mother, a wife and a woman of God.

"Ideally, I'd love to be making music as long as possible," she says. "But for now, knowing that our family can be together literally every moment of every day is such a blessing."

Whether it's her own headlining tour, part of an all-star ensemble, as on the *Son of God* tour, or as a mom making breakfast, Francesca is honestly living a life of beautiful imperfection, dangerous-but-precious vulnerability and arms-wide-open transparency. CCM



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Brave New World

SHAWN MCDONALD

BY CAROLINE LUSK

SHAWN MCDONALD has created pensive, moving, raw music since he first came on the scene in 2004 with *Simply Nothing*. The ten years since have been full of highs and lows. While his music worked its way into the hearts and playlists of people everywhere, the personal struggles of marriage, divorce and an overall sense of darkness loomed large in his life. Despite the challenges, Shawn continued to use his circumstances as a muse to create music the world needed to hear. Today, however, that shadow is lifted. Refreshed and in a new state of grace, Shawn's personal joy has come to life on his latest record, *Brave*. With a more electronic, up-beat sound than on any of his previous work, the title is not only apt; it could serve as a moniker for Shawn himself. *CCM* talked with Shawn about the new music and about this new phase of life. Read on to see how God has led him out of the darkness and be inspired to break free from your own.

CCM: *The entire record is sonically very different from your past work. What was different about this creative process?*

SHAWN: I never like to recreate the past. I want to always be growing and changing. I want my life to reflect that, and I try to be that way in music. When I approach any record, I want to be a better writer. This album is that—progressively different, even down to the melody and style of music. I spent two to three years writing it and pulled it together very differently than any other record. I tried to be culturally relevant. When it comes down to it, I'm a journey writer. I write about my life experiences and try to stay true to my everyday life. I don't want to be a hit writer because it's cool. I have to sing these songs, so I have to have something that would naturally come out of myself.





CCM: *You've worked with producer Christopher Stevens in the past, but there were some new faces in the production booth on this record. Obviously, that had to contribute to the new sounds and overall vibe. How did you end up with the production line-up?*

SHAWN: I worked with three producers on this one, which was a new experience as well. I've done every project with Christopher Stevens, who also works with tobyMac, Mandisa, Britt Nicole and other pretty big artists. He's really like family to me.

With this one, though, we both wanted to go some places we hadn't gone before. I had never worked with David Garcia before. He's a little more pop than I was used to; but it was a fresh, good match, so we gave him three songs. Then, I stumbled upon Jamie Kenny. I'm the first CCM artist he's ever recorded. I felt honored that he gave me a chance and some time.

All three producers are different, but musically we tied the whole project together in a way that feels like one piece.

CCM: *You've always been driven by your live shows, which probably look pretty different with this batch of songs. What changes have you made to your shows?*

SHAWN: It is different. I'm using a full band and integrating a lot of things I've never used before, like tracks. I really even hesitate to say it because musicianship is so important to me. But some of these songs are so big, it's hard to pull off that kind of instrumentation with a couple of guys. Finances aren't always there, so you have to get creative. This music has more electronic components. My drummer fires tracks in real time. It's a really engaging show. I'm a guitar player by nature, but this round we wrote a lot on piano. Now, I'm trying to learn to get out from behind the guitar and move a lot and interact with the audience. It just lets people in. The sweet songs are even more tender; and overall, it's just a more exciting show.

CCM: *Excitement doesn't come from nowhere. Is it fair to say that your personal happiness in phase of life has played out on these tracks?*

SHAWN: I've been in a very joyous season. There's been a lot of time for healing, and I really don't think there's one specific thing you can put a finger on. I don't even know when the shift happened. After a lot of processing and really figuring myself out, I found my passion again. I appreciate the darker season. It makes you stronger, but I was ready for some light.

I called the album *Brave* not just because of a song; the entire album was a departure of what I've done in the past, and that's scary. Music always comes with a bit of judgment. I've lived a lot of my life in fear of what others would think of me, and I made a lot of mistakes along the way. Part of bravery, for me, is simply laying down my fears, inadequacies and thoughts, believing that God will use a broken human heart even if I don't have it all together.

I'm always trying to discover what God is to me; what He wants me to share and what that looks like. As an artist, we're put on a stage, and it's easy to get lost in all the expectations of what we're supposed to be and lose who we really are. We overcomplicate our lives with whatever until we realize that God accepts us. He loves our hearts. All of us are broken. All of us need to discover our need for God. I want to be someone who can communicate messages that will help people heal.

One of the stories I continually think about it in pursuing music is the story of the master and the talents. One of those guys actually invests the talents and brings back more. I think God gives us all gifts and talents, but a

lot of us don't pursue them and tend to bury rather than invest them. I take the content of my songs very seriously and try not to exclude people but invite them in so they, too, can realize what God is all about.

CCM: *Who has represented bravery in your life?*

SHAWN: Jason Holtridge is a pastor of a small church in Michigan. He's very open-minded, and he brings in a lot of messy people. He has a gift for loving broken people. When I was going through a rough time, he let me live in his basement, be involved in his community and let me have a normal life. He really impacted my heart and my mind and was one of the key people who helped me come out of the season of fog.

CCM: *Now that the fog is lifting, what does your world as a father and friend look like?*

SHAWN: Home is awesome. I have a beautiful little boy who is a big part of my life. We're involved in a really awesome community. They've accepted me and brought me in to exist with them. They've not been fans; they've been friends. It's a good season of life.

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**FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT
SHAWNMCDONALDMUSIC.COM.**

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GYPSY CARNS - gypsyncarns.com

Gypsy Carns The Blues Preacher lives by Matthew 24:14, witnessing in 11 countries including China. This newspaper quote from Shanghai says it all: "Indeed, his style of Delta Blues, with Jesus lyrics, backed by relentless energy made for an altogether cataclysmic experience. If this is Christian Rock then Hallelujah brother!"



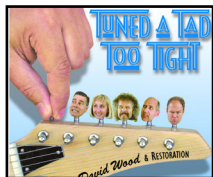
DOUG SHEA - dougshea.com

Doug Shea expresses the peaks and valleys of our common human experience: the heartache, struggle, longing, hope, joy, desire, and awe inspiring experience of God. Christian rock songs (Jeremy Camp style) born from his life journey, struggles, humility, joy, and the movement to a transforming encounter with the living God through His Son Jesus Christ.



GENE EZELL - geneezell.com

Gene Ezell, from Signal Mountain and Nashville TN, has been writing creatively for over 30 years. Gene has won 3 national songwriting contests –GMA's Immerse 2013 (1 of 3); IndieHeaven's 2013 Grand Prize winner; and Songwriter's Café.com's 2012 competition. He has been a finalist in three other nationwide songwriting contests.



DAVID WOOD - davidwoodsongs.com

Singer/Songwriter/Musician/Author/Husband/Daddy/God Seeker. Mission: Make a difference, make it count, make the most of this gift of life and leave a Godly legacy. I believe that God, the creator of the universe, is speaking to us, all the time, all around us, everywhere and in all things. This belief is deeply expressed in all of David's writing, whether it be in song or just a sweet story about life.



YVONNE HARTMAN - yvonnehartman.com

Yvonne is a folk rock singer/songwriter whose critically acclaimed new album was just released. Her songs are described as "inspirational/situational," pulling from life experiences, everyday struggles, and providing encouragement for believers. If you've had "one of those days," curling up with a hot cup of tea and Yvonne's music is the perfect remedy.



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A portrait of Donnie McClurkin, a bald Black man, smiling warmly. He is leaning his head against a light-colored wooden wall. He is wearing a blue and white checkered button-down shirt under a dark blue vest. His hands are clasped near his chin. The background is softly blurred, showing vertical lines of light and shadow.

BETTER WITH TWO

*DONNIE MCCLURKIN DISCOVERS
THE JOY OF DUETS*

BY ANDREW GREER



Donnie McClurkin is a living legend in gospel music. For decades now, the Grammy, Dove and Stellar award-winning artist has defied racial and genre boundaries, while remaining true to his mostly traditional gospel roots. On his latest project, *Duets* (RCA Inspiration), Donnie celebrates his gospel home base by tracking high-powered pairings with diverse musical legends such as Tye Tribbett, John P. Kee, Tramaine Hawkins and Israel Houghton. In this *CCM* exclusive, the dynamic songster narrates for readers the fun and importance of singing together.

CCM: For years you have been known for big-named collaborations. What inspired the release of a project like Duets now?

DONNIE: Two years ago, I was on a gospel cruise where all the artists on board met to talk about the state of gospel music—without managers or record executives. Fred Hammond commented that to generate more heat we would have to start collaborating like the hip-hop and pop artists. That statement stuck in my spirit, and that's where the concept of *Duets* came from.

CCM: You have had a substantial solo career. Why share the platform?

DONNIE: God has always wanted us to be one. Jesus said in John 17, "Father, may they be one as we are one." When we try to do things solo it makes it so Herculean! [Laughs] We all work best together. Some have made

ministry private territory. We can't allow that to happen. It's time to bring the genuine image of what it means to minister back to the forefront and show the world that we are united.

CCM: How did each veteran contribute to the recording?

DONNIE: Being professionals, every artist brought such expertise, their signature, to the song I wrote. The energy of Tye Tribbett is phenomenal. The wisdom and songwriting ability of Israel Houghton is inspiring. Tramaine Hawkins, who has been my idol for decades, was legendary. Dorinda Clark-Cole requires you to stretch. She never stops singing; the rifts go on and on. Preashea Hilliard has such a genuine heart for ministry, and it comes through when she sings. Every artist made the CD a classic work of art.

CCM: Yes, this record is a celebration of great partnerships. But is there a deeper purpose and meaning to these songs and these pairings?

DONNIE: I hope this project inspires others to work together in delivering the message of God's love. I would like to do this again with CCM artists such as Mac Powell, Chris Tomlin, Natalie Grant, Jeremy Camp, Michael W. Smith, Brandon Heath and Nichole Nordeman to prove that there really is no divide between gospel and CCM but that there is one Lord over all! **CCM**



**FOR MORE INFORMATION,
VISIT DONNIEMCCLURKIN.COM**

PAUL BALOCHE

WRITING THE SONGS THE WHOLE CHURCH SINGS

BY MELISSA RIDDLE CHALOS



There is a certain blanket of wisdom that, if you seek it, comes over time. It wraps around a true and honest place where you are surrounded by good friends and family and have nothing left to prove. A place where you know who you are, you know your purpose and you're content to leave the details up to God.

"If you do something long enough, you uncover life lessons along the way," Paul Baloche says. "You aspire to be faithful to God's calling in your life, pressing through even when you fall short. And when you hit a certain age, as you grow in your faith, you recognize the potential and the burden of being a leader, realizing 'I've got to step up and be more intentional toward the people

God has put in my life.' And your prayer becomes, 'Lord, give me grace to finish well.'"

After twenty-seven years of marriage to his wife and songwriting partner, Rita, twenty-four years leading worship at Community Christian Fellowship in Lindale, Texas, twenty-two years of ministry/recording with Integrity Music and hundreds of teaching resources provided free for churches, one might think Paul Baloche had already qualified for a great finish.

But for this faithful modern hymn writer, author (*God Songs: How to Write and Select Songs for Worship*), mentor and teacher who once aspired to be a priest, ministry is not a sprint but a marathon, a long series of obedient steps in the same direction. A path where every aspect of life is forged in fires





of passion for Jesus and His church, and the result is almost always an honest prayer for the church to sing.

And the church has responded. Paul Baloche is one of the most acclaimed songwriters of our time. The winner of multiple Dove Awards, he is also the artist behind radio standards, including "Because of Your Love," "Hosanna (Praise Is Rising)" and "Our God Saves." And he is the writer of top-ranking CCLI songs and modern-day classics such as "Above All," "Open the Eyes of My Heart," "A New Hallelujah" and "Your Name." In short, Paul writes songs that the whole church sings. It's a calling he doesn't take lightly.

"When I'm writing worship songs," Paul explains, "I realize that I'm offering a vocabulary for people to sing back to God.

My hope is that, as they sing those words with melodies, it will act as a catalyst in their hearts, creating transformation deep down in their soul."

Paul's newest release, a CD/DVD simply and appropriately titled *LIVE*, is a recording of great passion made possible by complete transparency before the Lord. "On a Friday night outside of Toronto, a thousand leaders came together to form a congregation of one to worship God," Paul says of the unforgettable night of worship. "A unique sound from singers of varied denominations and generations, raising old hymns and new songs as sung prayers... raw, spontaneous, and unpolished... Our hope was to capture a true and honest expression of worship to our God."

Featuring eleven memorable, worship-engaging songs, *LIVE* resounds with

resurrection and life, essential, classic songs of hope and faith that carry us through Easter and beyond. From the rousing opening anthems, “Our God Saves,” “God My Rock” and the new Matt Maher co-write “You Lift Us Up,” *LIVE* sets a tempo of joyful declaration.

“You lift us up, you lift us up, and what was dead is raised again, in your great love...”

From there, Paul leads this congregation of worship leaders into contemplative worship with “The Same Love” and “Jesus Be My Savior,” an emotive, acoustic ballad sure to

become an Easter/Communion standard.

“It wasn’t nails that kept Him there, that held our Maker’s hands in place

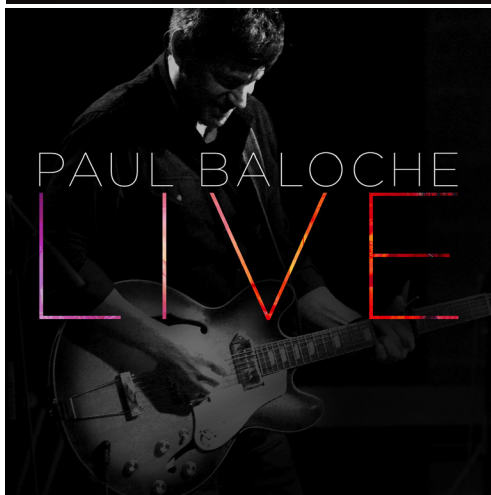
It was a love that overcame our sin and shame”

“Mighty Fortress” and “My Hope” follow, two engaging spin-offs of classic hymns, the first co-written by Paul and Aaron Shust, the latter a revisionist take on the 1834 hymn, “My Hope Is Built On Nothing Less,” co-written with Ed Kerr, Sheila Rabe and Alyssa Mellinger.

“He Is Risen,” a powerful, mid-to-up-tempo chorus of resurrection and celebration, punctuates *LIVE*’s undeniable congregational appeal, exhorting all to “sing with all creation, sing of a world made new / in His life we too may live, bursting from the tomb...” A brand-new song written with worship veteran Graham Kendrick, “He Is Risen” looks beyond Christ’s death and resurrection and toward His glorious return, a perfect lead-in to the Baloché/Brenton Brown-penned “Glorious” and its benediction of “Holy, Holy, Holy.”

All in all, *LIVE* is an inspiring, heartfelt evening of worship intended for an audience of One, a gathering of Spirit-filled believers compelled to sing of their Savior. For more than a quarter century, this has been the heartbeat and calling of Paul Baloché, to write worship songs and invite his brothers and sisters to join in the song. To be real. To be intentional. To live and be present in the worship moment.

“When I meet people who are full of the Spirit—despite their present circumstances, beyond their temperament or attitude—I’m inspired,” Paul says. “I want to be that kind of person, to be in His presence, to read and digest His Word, to make it part of my DNA, to walk it out—to live it out. In the end, I want my life, my music, to facilitate a conversation about God and who He is.” CCM



**FOR MORE INFORMATION,
VISIT PAULBALOCHELIVE.COM**

MICHAEL W. SMITH

BY ANDREW GREER

Album Title: *Hymns*

Label: Cracker Barrel Records/
Provident Label Group

Release Date: March 25, 2014

Recording Studio: The Court, Franklin, TN;
The Whine Cellar, Spring Hill, TN

Producers: Kyle Lee, Jim Daneker and
Michael W. Smith

Number of Songs: 15

HYMNS HERITAGE: I have always loved hymns. I may not remember every sermon I heard Sunday mornings growing up, but I sure do remember the hymns. So much of my faith and understanding of who God is was shaped by those early hymns. We've talked about recording hymns for years. It just finally worked into the calendar at a time that was good for me and for Cracker Barrel. I'm so glad to finally have it out. —*Michael W. Smith*

ORDER OF SERVICE: Picking the songs was the hardest part. The first time I sat down with a pen and paper to select songs for the project, I came up with enough titles to fill Volumes 2, 3, 4 and maybe more! There are people like me who grew up singing the hymns and need to be reminded of the amazing melodies and deep theology of these songs. There is also an entire generation that never sat in a church pew with a hymnal. I love the songs of the modern church and worship music; I even wrote some of those songs, but it is a shame if these hymns don't become familiar to this younger audience, too. —*M.W.S.*



Photo: Cameron Powell

LYRIC PRIORITY: I wanted to “stay out of the way” of the lyrics with the music and production. You don’t need to add a lot to a song like “Old Rugged Cross.” It speaks for itself. This is definitely a case where less is more. —M.W.S.

VINTAGE VIBE: In the studio I surrounded myself with hymnals. I had some, my mom and dad had some and Amy Grant let me borrow a bushel basket of old—some very old—hymnals. To imagine the hands that held those hymnals, the voices that sang from those pages... it is amazing that the songs in these old books are as relevant and true today as they were when they were first published. Just being in the room with some of these hymnals was inspiring to me. —M.W.S. CCM



FOR MORE INFORMATION,
VISIT MICHAELWSMITH.COM.

GETTING STARTED PART 3 OF 3

BY KEITH MOHR

I've worked with thousands of independent Christian artists over the years and frequently run into the same questions over and over again. Some artists are throwing darts at an unknown target in a dark room. Others think they have all the answers and end up making poor decisions based on incomplete information.

My philosophy is: the more you know, the more you'll grow. This is the third in a three-part series of responses to some of the most frequently asked questions. Open your mind, pray over the advice you find here and be blessed on your journey.

Question #3: With social media inundating our lives, what's the best way to tackle my personal marketing and promotion so that I still have time to make music?

The first priority of any artist is to create great content. People are drawn to excellence and are rarely attracted by mediocrity. In everything you do, from your music, to your communication, branding and anything else that can be consumed and judged, pursue excellence.

Once you have content, you must market it. With the nearly limitless options of social media, you must be strategic in your approach. Without a plan, you're likely to drift off into the abyss of your Facebook wall or Instagram account and you waste time—time that cannot be regained.

Develop a strategy. A simple outline could look something like this:

1. Assess your content, determining the most appropriate outlets and platforms for your style and message.

2. Know your audience. You must learn who your followers are before you can be relevant to them.

3. Develop your story. More than ever, there is a premium on personality. Anyone can put out music. It's your story—your struggles, victories, your heart and soul—that will bring you to life and draw people in. For help in developing your story and inner vision, visit www.theinnervizion.com/thediscoveryprocess.pdf.

4. Establish consistently high-quality visual outlets. Put some thought into your Facebook page, website or other online platform. Make sure your pictures and bio are current and look great. Make sure your contact info is visible and that your site is intuitive and easy to navigate.

5. Ask for help! If social or web savvy isn't your thing, find someone who specializes in it to either guide you or literally do it for you. Maximize your strengths and find good people to help you where you are lacking.

Building a brand is hard work and takes a lot of time. Be strategic, build a team and prayerfully follow the Lord's leading in your time management and resource distribution.

CCM

Keith Mohr is founder/president of Indieheaven.com, an organization for independent Christian musicians, songwriters and artists. Follow Keith on twitter.com/indieheaven, [facebook.com/keithmohr](https://www.facebook.com/keithmohr), [facebook.com/indieheaven](https://www.facebook.com/indieheaven).

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AC

WORSHIP

**UNSPOKEN****Unspoken** (Centricity)

FOR FANS OF:

MercyMe, Maroon 5

★★★★☆

Early EPs spoke of the pop promise of *Unspoken*, and the Centricity quartet makes good on that potential on their full-length debut. From the initial spark of "Start A Fire," *Unspoken* is a slick, inspired set of songs that conjure comparisons to the strongest pop outfits in the industry. "Tomorrow" is the highlight here, but radio will find lots to love.

—Matt Conner

WE LIKE:

"Tomorrow"

**SHAWN MCDONALD****Brave**

(Sparrow Records)

FOR FANS OF:

Imagine Dragons, OneRepublic, Avicii

★★★★☆

He's still one of the most engaging singer/songwriter/guitarists the last decade's ever produced; but with a newly added electronic element, Shawn McDonald is bound to expand his audience even further. *Brave* may possess his greatest pop sensibility thus far, but longtime fans will still find plenty of authentic and emotive lyrics coupled with inviting vocals, ensuring a fresh, engaging listening experience.

—Andy Argyrakis

WE LIKE:

"We Are Brave"

**THE ROYAL ROYAL****The Return of the King**

(Paradigm Collective)

FOR FANS OF:

Newsboys

★★☆☆☆

There are inspired moments on The Royal Royal's full-length debut, *The Return of the King*, that draw the listener in—the spacious approach of "Light A Fire" and pop appeal of "The Lights," to name a few. Unfortunately the earnest sincerity of the Canadian duo is outdone by endless repetition and underwhelming melodies on tracks such as "A Real Strength" or "Every Little Bit of Praise."

—Matt Conner

WE LIKE:

"Light A Fire"

**PLANETSHAKERS****Endless Praise**

(Integrity)

FOR FANS OF:

Hillsong, Jesus Culture

★★★★☆

Even after twenty-five albums, Planetshakers is still going strong as a fresh resource for congregations around the world. *Endless Praise* is the latest release and features fourteen new songs comprised of high-energy anthems ("Dance") and reflective ballads ("Made For Worship"). The final track, "Leave Me Astounded," is the only in-studio track, and it's a meaningful way to end another solid release.

—Matt Conner

WE LIKE:

"Leave Me Astounded"

**DEMON HUNTER*****Extremist* (Solid State)****FOR FANS OF:***Becoming the Archetype,*
Trivium

★★★★☆

From the chugging riffs of “Artificial Light” to the slower melodic yield of “I Will Fail You,” Demon Hunter’s eighth album, *Extremist*, is a driving, diverse set that their passionate fan base will undoubtedly appreciate. “The Last One Alive” is the mid-tempo highlight that shows off the band’s technical expertise and accessible chops. Solid State should have a major hit here.

—Matt Conner

WE LIKE:

“The Last One Alive”

**KUTLESS*****Icon* (BEC Recordings)****FOR FANS OF:***Jeremy Camp,*
The Afters, Building 429

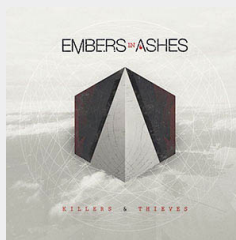
★★★★☆

Last year, Kutless released *The Worship Collection* featuring highlights of its more vertically minded material, while this year’s *Icon* serves as the companion on the more rock and pop-oriented side. Expect eleven highlights of the group’s most familiar material spanning 2002’s self-titled debut through 2012’s *Believer*, all of which serve as a strong summary of the group’s aggressive and contemplative capabilities, while adding further enticement to pick up its brand new studio project, *Glory*.

—Andy Argyrakos

WE LIKE:

“Sea Of Faces”

**EMBERS IN ASHES*****Killers & Thieves*****(Embers in Ashes)****FOR FANS OF:***Red, Anberlin, P.O.D.*

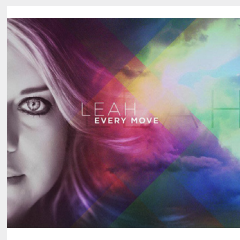
★★★★☆

Christian rockers Embers in Ashes create heavy but family-friendly music on *Killers & Thieves*. Flirting with electronics with a solid metal attack (lots of double-bass), they’re like P.O.D. with a keyboard. The processed vocals frequently lack a visceral kick; but the band sounds earnest, talented and maybe a vocalist away from becoming a major Christian rock contender.

—Bert Saraco

WE LIKE:

“Night From Day”

**LEAH CONDREN*****Every Move* EP****(Independent)****FOR FANS OF:***Laura Story, Kari Jobe*

★★★★☆

Even though Leah Condren is a relatively new artist, her mature approach to worshipful music should satisfy fans of mainstream Christian pop. *Every Move* is a six-song EP that showcases Condren as a songwriter well-versed in what works for radio play. “Awaken Me” and “Who You Are” stand tall next to label fare, which means she’s likely going to find a larger platform in the near future.

—Matt Conner

WE LIKE:

“Who You Are”



BOBBY JONES
Rejoice with Me

(EchoPark JDI)
FOR FANS OF:

Donnie McClurkin,
Donald Lawrence,
Andrae Crouch

★★★★☆

The host of BET's *Bobby Jones Gospel*, the longest-running show in cable television history, studs his twelfth recording with the standout talents of R&B superstar Faith Evans, gospel's Ann Nesby and Shawn McLemore, plus the robust Nashville Super Choir (NSC). Though modern urban sounds sneak in, Jones' consummate traditional gospel background—highlighted by a smattering of throwback hymns—strongly anchors this set.

—Andrew Greer

WE LIKE: "Rejoice with Me" (ft. Faith Evans)



LATICE CRAWFORD
Latice Crawford

(RCA Inspiration)
FOR FANS OF:

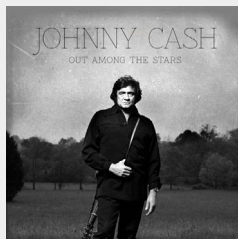
Erica Campbell,
Donnie McClurkin,
Ayiesha Woods

★★★★☆

A decidedly retro vibe permeates the *Sunday Best* finalist's major label debut LP. 'Nawlins-styled horns, trembling B3s and Motown-influenced background vocals accentuate the smoky singer's natural rasp with layered ease, while straight-up spiritually encouraging lyrics give this a distinct, seasoned gospel backbone.

—Andrew Greer

WE LIKE: "You Should Know By Now"



JOHNNY CASH
Out Among The Stars

(Legacy)

FOR FANS OF:

Elvis Presley, Willie
Nelson, George Jones

★★★★☆

It's crazy to think this early '80s album by Johnny Cash was completely shelved because it didn't meet the record company's commercial expectations at the time. In hindsight, these newly unearthed sessions find *The Man in Black* confidently stomping through several earthly tunes of inspiration with his wife, June Carter Cash, longtime friend Waylon Jennings and even future country/gospel star Marty Stuart on guitar and fiddle.

—Andy Argyrakis

WE LIKE: "Out Among The Stars"



**HANS ZIMMER AND
LORNE BALFE**
*Son of God - Original
Motion Picture
Soundtrack*

(Republic Records)

FOR FANS OF: James
Horner, John Williams

★★★★☆

Composers Lorne Balfe (*The Bible*) and Hans Zimmer (who wrote the score of practically every other movie you've ever seen) created the music for the most recent biopic on Jesus, culled from the epic mini-series *The Bible*, which brought in millions of viewers worldwide. The music is big and somber, majestic and mournful. Bits of spoken dialogue might be distracting for some, but not half as distracting as Ceelo Green doing "Mary Did You Know" as one of two contemporary bonus tracks.

—Bert Saraco

WE LIKE:
"Fishers of Men"



CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

SUPERMOM PATRICIA HEATON SHARES WHAT SHE'S LEARNED FROM THE MOMS SHE'S PLAYED AND WHY EVERY MOM NEEDS A MOM'S NIGHT OUT

It's not easy being a mom. Sometimes, we just need to get away for a minute. That's the heart of *Mom's Night Out*. Starring Patricia Heaton (*Everybody Loves Ramon*, *The Middle*), Sean Astin, Sarah Drew and Trace Adkins, the movie is funny, encouraging and quite literally the ultimate experience for a mom's night out!

CCM spoke with Heaton about the film and the many different moms she has portrayed on the big and small screen.

CCM: Out of all the moms you've portrayed over the years, is there one that has been the most representative of "Patricia the mom"?

Patricia: Deborah really represented me at that time in my life. I had young children, and I understood. I know how women can be disappointed with their husbands a lot when it comes to parenting youngsters. It was relatable to a lot of women.

Now I'm playing a mom on *The Middle*. That corresponds to where I am in my life. We're going through things like getting them off to college, not being able to help on homework, dating, using the Internet, that kind of thing.

Frankie happens to work and is trying to juggle being a working mom, trying to stay involved in her kids' lives...I feel like I related to both of those characters...

CCM: In *Mom's Night Out*, you take on a new role—not only a mom but a pastor's wife. Did you identify with her? What do you hope people take away from this film?

PH: I liked the character after we worked on her a bit. It's a tricky position, being a pastor's wife. They have it tough and often feel isolated. Their husband gets all the attention, and she's doing the grunt work and raising a family. This is really the first time a comedy has been done in the family-friendly genre. It's a really fun way to have a good time. I hope it's an encouragement.

CCM: You're probably an authority on parenting at this point. What do you think is essential to being a good mom?

PH: Your brain needs to sleep at night. There's a reason we have to sleep—you have to recharge. That's the same as going out with your friends, taking a breath of fresh air and thinking about something other than the kids. It helps you appreciate, take a step back, and remember why you love them.

CCM: It's a fairly common conclusion that being a Christian in Hollywood is challenging.

How have you continued to grow in your faith?

PH: If you're developing at all, there's always room for improvement. The balance is between having discipline in your own life to keep your self open spiritually. Whether it's reading or meditation or prayer or being part of a church community, you have to know that God can do anything through you anytime He wants regardless of where you're at or how self-disciplined you are. We're responsible, but He is ultimately occupying a central place in our lives.

—Caroline Lusk



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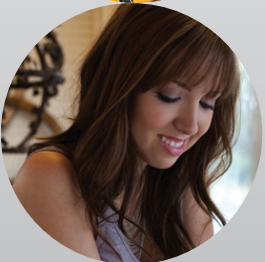
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