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THE HARD MUSIC MAGAZINE

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Abandon Kansas
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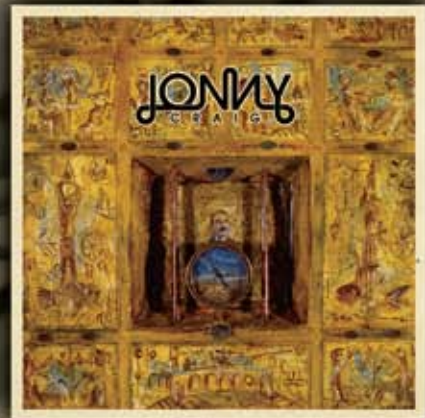
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From the editor

Doug Van Pelt

MORE HARD IMPROVEMENTS

HM Magazine has been bringing the hard news on a weekly basis (and even sending text messages of really hot late-breaking news) for half a decade or more now; and we figured it was time to do something different with the five pages we had been devoting to news in the print edition. We trust that most of you are getting your news on the internet and (thus) the news “bullets” you’ve been reading here lately are already old. Instead of continuing to do what we’ve been doing for the sake of it, we thought we’d use these pages more effectively – for introducing you to the hottest new bands we can find. So, please sign up for the HM e-mailing list if you haven’t done so already, which can simply be done by going to hmmag.com and typing in your email address in the sign-up field and hitting the “submit” button.

And speaking of the HMMag.com website... We’re very happy to introduce a complete new re-design of that thing. Hopefully, you’ll find this new upgrade, faster, friendlier, and just plain more pleasing to the eyes. Kudos to Kevan Lee, the webmaster! Don’t forget to download and use our custom HM browser, too.

If you’re like me, you love to interact with like-minded people. That’s what I love the most about twitter.com/dooglar (follow me as I follow good music) – it allows instant feedback on stuff that’s going on, like live music. If you’re curious about the whole thing, take a tip from me: Don’t just use twitter on your computer, but set up your phone/mobile device with it. The fun quotient goes up exponentially. Trust me! And while we’re on the subject of cell phones, I’ve started sending out some of the cooler, more time-sensitive “hot” news to the 125+ folks that’ve signed up for our free Mobile Alert “Late Breaking News” list. I only send the texts out when it’s worthy and I’ll never give your number to another (cuz we hate spam, too). If you’d like to try that out, send an email with your mobile # and service provider name to news@hmmag.com. We don’t charge anything for it, but if your text plan is limited, watch out (normal text charges apply)!

Special thanks to our interns this summer, Corey and Kelly, who have contributed greatly and put up with a lot (like skunks and slow internet service)!

REGULAR

<i>Letters</i>	56
<i>Hard news</i>	10
<i>Live report</i>	13
<i>Watch to artists</i>	16

FEATURETTE

<i>Superdrag</i>	14
<i>Leeland</i>	47

FEATURE

<i>Showbread</i>	24
<i>Paramore</i>	26
<i>White collar sideshow</i>	28
<i>Thousand foot krutch poster</i>	32
<i>Skillet</i>	37
<i>Pillar</i>	39
<i>Thousand foot krutch</i>	41
<i>Chiodos says</i>	46

INTERMISSION

<i>Columns</i>	20
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REVIEW

<i>DVD, book, & gadgets</i>	23
<i>Indie pick</i>	44
<i>Music</i>	54

SPINNING AT HM NOW

I WAS A KING	S/T	Fun Larry Norman cover: “Hard Luck Bad News”
COLD TRUTH	<i>Do Whatcha Do</i>	Wonderful melodic blues a la Riverdogs.
NATIVE WINDOW	S/T	Current members of Kansas sans Walsh.
STARS GO DIM	<i>Love Gone Mad</i>	Fun hard rock a la Train. Darn good, too!
STAVESACRE	<i>Against The Silence</i>	Five songs that satisfy.
THE AWAKENING	<i>Tales of Absolution...</i>	Dark, gothic and doomy. Just like I like it!
MIKE CRAWFORD...	<i>...Even the Darkness...</i>	Wow. Such a diverse yet smooth ride.

HARDNEWS

Quick & concise

REAL COMMUNITY RESOURCE

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HM Magazine and Love is Concrete will give you access to new music, books and literature and a chance to pick the brains of your favorite (band, author, artist, provocateur). HM Blast Concrete is a weekly email newsletter that comes to you hot off the press and allows you to engage with the community around you in concrete ways. It's also an online community that connects you to the artists, authors and your friends. Talk, discuss and engage with HM and the world around you. Besides music and books, we're talking: funny, interesting, weird and bizarre videos; chances to support and learn a bit more about ways to make a difference. Resources for pastors, churches, leaders, secret agents and laymen. Inspirations, calls to action, challenges and information on how to optimize your mission. See ad this issue for details.

HUNTINGTONS FUND-RAISER

NEW CD RAISES FUNDS FOR MIKEE'S WIFE

Huntingtons put together a new album, *Punk Sounds*, on Knowhere Records to help raise awareness for a reunion / benefit show and to raise money on its own for Mikee Huntington's wife. Mikee Pierce (surprise, his real last name)'s wife, Jennie, has stage 3 brain cancer and all proceeds from the album will go to the family. The reunion show in Philadelphia on June 13th also included a reunited Ghoti Hook. You can purchase the album and/or make donations via PayPal at mikeehuntington@msn.com

News bullets

HM Magazine has been collecting the best "bullets" of news from our weekly newsletters and "News Updates" on our website for the print edition. If you really crave fresh, up-to-date news from HM, then sign up for the HM e-mailing list at hmmag.com.

Hawk Nelson has committed to obtaining 5,000 pairs of shoes for children in need with TOMS Shoes. To help them reach their goal for children in Haiti, Hawk Nelson hosted six in-store "Style Your Sole" events with TOMS Shoes in July while in local areas for concerts.

Philmont joined forces with Steelroots for a new original series of webisodes featuring the Charlotte-based rock band. The webisodes reveal what happens during a day in the life of a touring band. "We only work 20 minutes out of the day, so there is a whole lot of downtime," laughs singer/guitarist **Scott Taube**.

Before There Was Rosalyn recently went into the studio with Brian Hood (MyChildren MyBride) and recorded three songs. Two of the songs feature **Dallas Taylor** on vocals. The band will go into the studio this summer to record a new full-length album.

Heaven's Force, the earliest known Christian thrash metal band, released their two demos as a limited-edition digipak on July 21st via Open Grave Records under the title *Aggressive Angel*. Heaven's Force was based out of Fort Worth, TX. They recorded two demos, the first being titled *Aggressive Angel*, which was self-released in 1983. The second demo would come a year later under the title *Heaven's Force*. Heaven's Force was collaboration between **David Gryder**, **Chris Richie** and **Kelly Berger**. David Gryder would later go on to help form the influential thrash band Rotting Corpse with **John Perez (Solitude Aeternus)**.

Specialty clothing line Malus Clothing has released a collaboration t-shirt with metal all-stars **As I Lay Dying**, themed on the band's last album, *An Ocean Between Us*. The shirt is available currently for a one-time-only run on Malus's website.

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Boarders For Christ head out on massive tour

HM Magazine is also excited to announce that we've partnered together with the multi-ministry organization, Reach Your City (ReachYourCity.com). This fall one of those ministries – Boarders for Christ (boardersforchrist.com) – is launching *The Good Tour*. Featuring professional and amateur riders based out of the West Coast that have been bringing creative demos and outreaches to communities across the United States since 1997. This Fall, BFC will be heading from West Coast to East Coast and back with four boarders and their traveling skate park. The tour culminates with the Skate '09 Conference in Fort Lauderdale, FL on Oct. 22-24 (skateconference.com). So far, dates include stops in: Calif, Nev, Oregon, Wash, Idaho, Neb, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Illinois, Kentucky, Tenn, Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Montana, Wyoming and South Dakota. "When we go to a demo in a community and they hear about *The Good Tour*, we're just preaching that God is good and it's something people need to know and need to hear right now!" –Zach Black, BFC Member



Photo: Cal Knapp

Memphis May Fire

BY COREY ERB

Memphis May Fire has emerged from a lengthy search for a new lead singer with an arsenal of gritty southern rock in the form of *Sleepwalking*. After the band – from Texas, not Tennessee – made their choice in singer Matt Mullins, events unfolded quickly.

“Go back like a year or a little more,” Mullins recounts. “Basically, Memphis May Fire was in the studio with (producer) Casey Bates in Seattle, and there’s a few things that happened that caused Chase (Ryan, ex-vocalist) to leave the band, so they were forced to leave the studio and go home. They did, like, 82 auditions and hadn’t found the right person and they heard through the grapevine about me and they e-mailed me. From there everything went real fast. It just kind of worked out. We clicked real fast.”

Mullins evidently had a good amount of inspiration bottled up, because he only had two weeks to write the lyrics for the already-completed instrumental tracks, written primarily by guitarist Kellen McGregor, before entering the studio. “I have a lot to say,” Mullins states plainly. Even during a scathing critique of greed in America or a call-out of current musicians being handed opportunities without working for them, there is an underlying hope and spirituality present in the lyrics.

“This record really offers hope and change and it’s a wakeup call if you will,” says Mullins. “We do music with a much greater purpose than just doing shows and going to parties and hanging out. If we could inspire some people and change some lives in the process, then that’s cool.”

Fans from the Chase Ryan era may have to get used to Mullins’ vocal style. But there is something unique about how he varies the pace of his screamed vocals in just the right parts of songs, while mixing in clean vocals to tell each story accessibly. Bottom line: the final product shares the frenetic pace of the events that transpired leading up to its creation.

“We definitely wanted this record to be real driving – that’s what kids fed off of on the (self-titled) EP,” Mullins says. “We wanted to make a record you could listen to when you’re working out or when you’re driving or hanging out with friends and we wanted to keep the energy going with this record, but it’s also a lot more melodic.”

**FREE
DOWNLOAD**

MEMPHIS MAY FIRE

The song “North Atlantic vs. North Carolina” from the upcoming Trustkill album, *Sleepwalking*, is yours free when you sign up for HM’s free mobile “Late Breaking News” text-messaging service or the free email list. Send an email w/ your mobile # and the name of your service provider to news@hmmag.com [YOU CAN CANCEL EITHER AT ANY TIME. YOUR NORMAL TEXT CHARGES APPLY.]

Sancrosanct Records welcomes **Bloodlined Calligraphy** to its family of artists. The band is currently working on the material that will become their 2010 release with the combination of brutally fast-paced riffs and floor-shaking breakdowns that fans have become accustomed to in their previous offerings.

Christian Metal Fellowship is working to release its second compilation album for several underground metal bands. A tentative tracklisting includes songs by **Monotheist, In Grief, Dark Lay Still, Gondolin, Nephesh** and many others.

Mae have announced the release of the second installment their EP trilogy for 2009. Mae has committed to offering 100% of the proceeds from digital sales of the trilogy – (*Morning, Afternoon and Evening*) – to fund humanitarian and charitable projects. Each month Mae is offering a new song as a digital download; all songs can be purchased for a minimum donation of \$1.00 each. “We’re excited to team up with the Donors Choose organization, which helps educators around the country get the materials they need to effectively execute their curriculum,” explains lead singer **Dave Elkins**.

Downhere is scheduled to release their first full-length holiday album, *How Many Kings: Songs For Christmas*, on October 6th. The new self-produced project features the timeless classics of the Yuletide season. “We made a giant list of Christmas songs and narrowed them down to our top choices, realizing that every one of them was at least 100 years old,” says lead singer **Marc Martel**. “We all really resonate with a love for good lyrics, the classic ones that are going to last, so we do a lot of really old Christmas carols. However, we also tried to make the old stuff sound new.”

As Cities Burn has broken up. “We’re happily moving on after six good years. Our lives and our wives have called us in different directions. Thanks to anyone who has come out to a show, had words to say, or bought a CD to help us fill the tank.”

12 HARD NEWS

HARDNEWS

Page twelve



Whenever I witness some real revival-type activity, like God moving His people at a show by bands like For Today or Sleeping Giant, I am always excited and curious. I'm curious what the people do that somehow seems to come up with a welcomed invitation for God show up. I don't believe in formulas, per se, that we can use like witchcraft to conjure the Holy Spirit based upon our whims (the very idea is preposterous), but I'd like to know what these bands do or make sure they don't do in order to keep the invitation for God to come and work open and regular...and not go away.

What are some things that you guys have done... Not to put God in a box or say that He acts by formula, but what are some of the things that you do to prepare for your shows and what are some of the things that you would never want to stop doing for fear of losing God's special touch?

Mattie Montgomery: "Reading the Bible," he says, almost before the question finishes leaving this interviewer's mouth. "That's first and foremost. The Bible is called the Bread of Life and what good would my physical body be if I never ate? And so, the same concept: 'What good is my spiritual body if I never eat my spiritual food?' Just spending time listening. I grew up thinking, 'I'm going to go pray,' and I would sit down for a minute and say, 'Dear Jesus, here's my laundry list of things I want you to do. Amen.' And that's it. I wouldn't spend time just inviting God to come and speak to me. I think that is the whole basis of prayer. First asking, 'God, what are You doing? What are You doing in this world? What do You want to do through me and how are You wanting to do it? And how can I be a part of it?' And then volunteering everything you have. Sacrificing everything you have just to be involved in this incredible scheme of God's to save the world.

What do you think is the balance between being a sinner and being a saint?

I believe that what God says is true. I think that when God says, 'Let there be light,' then there will be light. And when God says to a valley of dry bones to arise, they're gonna get up and do it. When God says that anyone that believes in Jesus, they will have eternal life, that means that it's true. And when God said, that in Him – through faith in Him – we can approach the throne with freedom and confidence, I believe that's true. And so, as much as by the world's standards and even by the standard of my own memory, I'm a sinner, by the standard of God's Word, I'm a saint. And so I can walk as one, because God said it. And what God says is always true.

News bullets

For Today is heading out on tour with Emmure, Stick To Your Guns, Evergreen Terrace and Oceano for the *Hard Knock Life Tour* this fall. The band will also be jumping over to Australia for a week's worth of tour dates there.

Seabird will return to the studio this fall for its sophomore release, in stores December 2009. It'll feature production by Paul Moak (Mat Kearney, Sixpence None The Richer) and Matt Hales from Aqualung. Seabird will debut music from its forthcoming record on a tour with David Crowder Band beginning Oct. 1 in San Antonio. "I've never been as excited to be back in the studio as I am right now, says Seabird frontman **Aaron Morgan**. "To be honest, I was a little worried that we wouldn't find songs that were as exciting as our debut album. I now believe with everything in me that this record is a natural progression to a more moving experience than anything we've recorded to date."

David Crowder Band release its fifth studio album on September 22, the ambient and ethereal *Church Music* on sixstepsrecords/Sparrow Records.

August Burns Red have debuted the video for "Meddler," on the band's MySpace page.

Family Force 5 go out on their own *Dance Rawr Dance 3 Tour*. Starting in mid-September, the band will set out on the road with support acts, Breathe Carolina, Cash Cash, Queens Club and iRival.

Skillet's new *Awake and Alive Tour* will stretch from September to December.

The Glorious Unseen has just completed recording their sophomore album on BEC Recordings, *The Hope that Lies in You*, releasing on August 25th.

Eric Collins (Denison MARR / The Dark Romantics) has been working on a new solo project which he is calling, *Mrenc*. The indie pop sound is akin to Spoon, Peter Bjorn & John, Cold War Kids, etc. [myspace/mrenc]

LIVE REPORT

Cornerstone Festival 2009

June 29 - July 4

BY DOUG VAN PELT

BUSHNELL, IL – Some people have rightly complained about outdoor festivals being like a survival test of the elements. Past fest-goers have battled heat and dust or mud. This year's Cornerstone Festival, though, felt like an indoor event with the air conditioning on the whole time. It was lovely ... that is, until the rain of the final day, but five out of six ain't bad.

Monday afternoon had several generator stages going at full blast, beginning an outdoor entertainment district that's a wonderful, but sometimes lacking quality free-for-all for DIY bands wanting to be heard. Tuesday saw several bands showcasing as part of the "Reignite" all-day showcase of indie bands. **Los Lonely Boys** played a laid-back and seasoned set of blues-soaked tunes that showed off their universal appeal. By the time the festival officially started, over a hundred performances had already taken place.

It was cool to hear **Owl City's** strong pop hooks and see how two guys with Apple notebooks and keyboards can fill a tent so wonderfully. **Relient K** finished off the Mainstage on Wednesday, wrapping up with the epic "Deathbed." **The Showdown**, **Spoken**, **Showbread** and **The Blue Letter** all rocked the HM Magazine Stage with love and volume.

A couple of the strongest highlights of the fest had two things in common – vocalist **Mark Salomon** and guitarist and then bassist **Jeff Bellew**. **Stavesacre** played a joyous set on Thursday that covered all the band's hits (like "Minuteman," "Sand Dollar" and "Gold and Silver," and closing with "At the Moment"), as well as a couple new ones from their *Against The Silence* EP. After reading Mark's book, *Simplicity*, and getting insight into all his tormented lyrics, his song introductions this night and his uncharacteristically smiling face and steam rising from his bald head played out like a high definition drama of a great band seemingly playing just for the fun of it. Seeing so many shows of theirs in the past and noting how good they were when Mark was mad about something, it would make sense to worry that this would produce a downturn of performance quality. No worries here. They sounded amazing, tight, and driven. **The Crucified** played an evening encore on the following night, and it was a fantastic display of raw power and energy. Not only was this a band reuniting after over a decade, but they were performing so tight and fast that it was a sight to behold. Drummer **Jim Chaffin**, of course, provided a super solid low end, but **Greg Minier's** guitar playing was both clean, dirty and his wah-wah effects showed great feeling. Of course, songs like "The Crucial Moment," "Your Image," "Mindbender" and "The Power of God" were mesmerizing and a rallying point for gang vocals and really good memories. It's hard to think of such an



intense performance as "nostalgic," and that's probably due to this music being more like a supercaffeinated energy drink than some dull but fine wine.

A jillion other heartfelt performances took place, but a small smattering of highlights would also include: the fun and goofy times on stage with **Austrian Death Machine**; the raw, thunderous metal power of **Oh, Sleeper** and **Becoming The Archetype**; the "Battle of the Alamo" (complete with forts) in the crowd at the **Flatfoot 56** show, which reportedly took out a tent pole; **Living Sacrifice** (who, along with **War of Ages**, **The Devil Wears Prada** and **Underoath** all played under tents rather than the rained-out mud bowl of Mainstage on Saturday); the frenzied preaching at **For Today** and **Sleeping Giant**; and a piano rock band called **Eastern Block**. It was exciting to see **Brian "Head" Welch** play on the main stage, who held his own with his riff-heavy "scary-core." **Shiny Toy Guns** was another anticipated act, which shone brightly in tunes like the self-censored "Le Disko," "You Are the One" and "Don't Cry Out," but didn't seem too comfortable on the big stage. Next year, when you deliberate making the trip: just go.



SUPERDRAG



BY DOUG VAN PELT

Superdrag is loved by its fans.

I took a walk with the band's singer, John Davis, through the streets of Austin during South By Southwest. We needed to find a quiet place to talk and record what he was saying. As a waiter showed us to a seat in the corner of Brick Oven Pizza, he turned to Davis and asked, "Superdrag, right?" and then he shared how much he liked the band. It's incredible how a band that never went Gold or Platinum can command such recognition and appreciation, but these good ole boys from Knoxville, TN do just that. If there could ever be such a thing as "Indie Rock Superstars," it'd be these guys.

It's nothing new for an artist to proclaim that their latest is the one they're most proud of, and Davis can be added to that number. "You know," he demurely states, "I've made five full-length records now with Superdrag, a bunch of EPs and singles, a lot of recordings and these couple of solo records... I think you just become more effective at communicating. In case you hadn't heard, he had a dramatic conversion from full-blown, killing-himself-

with-liquor alcoholic to serious and joyful believer. He quit Superdrag and recorded a solo album for a Word-distributed Christian label, Rambler Records, in 2005. He left behind his so-called "secular" career, did the *700 Club*, shared his testimony and all that. The formula, if there is one, is to forever stay on this track, forsaking the world and its music scene. But that's not how Davis decided to go.

"I spent a lot of time thinking about how to bring it back. I missed it. All the songs I was writing sounded a lot like Superdrag. There was bitter feelings when I just walked in one day and said, 'Dudes, I can't do this any more.' My friend put ten years of his life into this, too. I missed the guys. At the same time, I had all these tunes and I really wanted to hear those guys play 'em.

"It was remarkable how easy it was to get the music together again. We had so much fun playing. The gigs were so well-received. There was such an outpouring of love from people. It was unreal, man. It was more than I had any right to expect. There were way more people than I realized waiting to see it. It's not like a global empire, like Aerosmith. What we do have, we're very grateful for. They're just nuts! Some guy flew from Hong Kong to see one of the reunion shows. I can't explain it.

"There's a couple of old songs that are off the table, still. I don't want to hear them again. There's a song called 'Anne T. Christ.' It's about a girl, but it's not a pun I care to make again. It's reverence. Superdrag fans will live if we don't play that song." Judging by their reaction at shows, he's right. "I was amazed by all the fans that gave me a fair shake, regardless. If they trusted me in 1998 to tell 'em what I really thought, they trust me now."

The level-headed excitement Davis feels nowadays is evident when he talks about how he was able "to make a Superdrag record that honors Him, instead of defying Him and acting like I can live without Him. That's why I'm most proud of it, because it gives honor to Whom it's most due."

After we leave the restaurant, a good half-hour longer than we both planned, we head across town on foot, passing one live music club after another. A guy and a girl are running (sprinting) towards us from three blocks away, shouting: "Superdrag! (huff, puff) Superdrag!" We stop and turn around as two twenty-somethings bound down the sidewalk to talk to Davis about getting into the private party they're playing at later on that night, to which he obliges. If I didn't believe it then, I certainly do now. People love these guys.

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WATCH TO ARTISTS



The Rocketboys

If you were one of the many at Cornerstone Festival two years ago, you might remember seeing or hearing about Homer Hiccolm and the Rocketboys. These are the same rocketboys, but only without the confusing reference to the DIY scientist and his backyard rocket building. The college friends formed in Abilene, TX in 2005, but moved to Austin, changed the moniker and have been consistently playing and recording.

Their brand new album *20000 Ghosts*: (hits September 29) continues the soft-spoken melodies and ambient sound bed. It was engineered and produced by Louie Lino (Nada Surf, Matt Pond PA), mastered by Alan Douches (Sufjan Stevens, Animal Collective) and features artwork from *Dark Was The Night* artist, Ryan Feerer. Describing the new album, guitarist Daniel Wheeler says it "displays a new range of diversity and maturity in our music, while maintaining the pop sensibility that fans have come to love. We try to find the balance between a light, drum-driven brand of indie rock and darker, more atmospheric sounds coupled with lyrics and melodies you can't get out of your head."



Abandon Kansas

The moniker feels appropriate with Abandon Kansas. A new label deal with Gotee Records brings them from the Sunflower State to the national scene, while a new album, *We're All Going Somewhere*, produced by Mark Townsend (Relient K, Deas Vail), affirms the first half. On the new disc, frontman Jeremy Spring explains the quartet's move from younger poppy tendencies to a more mature indie rock style.

"With the music on this new record, we're listening to a lot of new stuff for us – a lot of Kings of Leon, Manchester Orchestra, the new Killers record and a lot of Muse. Before it was lot of *CCM Magazine* stuff and *AP Magazine* stuff – high school teenie rock kind of stuff. We're trying to grow up and I think we are, slowly. Plus we don't have a big enough fanbase where it really matters if we change styles right now, so it's not like we're disappointing millions."

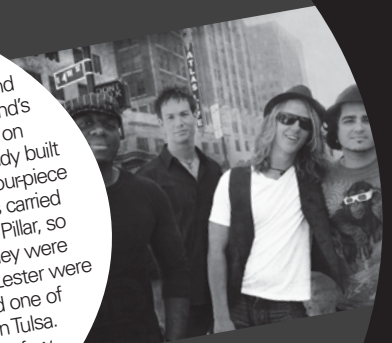
"Mark was amazing at pulling things out of us," Spring continues. "He spent as much time pushing the record button as he did sitting in a band preaching at us about what kind of band we are. He set us free from the whole pop thing and turned us loose as an indie band with some melodic, pop elements."

—Matt Conner

Stars Go Dim

It's questionable territory to call Stars Go Dim a new band. It's not debatable whether they'll blow up or not. The pop-focused quartet is composed of former rock band members, specifically of Pillar and Justifide, but the band's soft spot for major hooks comes through loud and clear on new release, *Love Gone Mad*. With a great fanbase already built and viral melodies set for any market that will listen, the four-piece should have no problem with a new identity. "A lot of fans carried over just because I did a lot of the street team work with Pillar, I had a lot of friends there," says bassist Mike Wittig. "They were interested in what we're doing now, because me and Lester were a part of it. All the guys are Christians in the group and one of the guys is even a worship leader at a church here in Tulsa. But what we write about are a lot of love songs. A few of us are married and have kids, so it's a topic that relates to everybody – Christians and non-Christians."

—Matt Conner





Mike Crawford & His Secret Siblings

When we dreamed up this new section (Watch to Artists), this was the first artist that came to mind. My attention to this outfit was the result of a recommendation email from David Crowder, who never emails this magazine editor and recommends in very strong terms that we should check out this band ... until now.

Here's his email:

*I stumbled across this church's CD that is mind-bending. People need to know this thing is out there. Seriously, it is ridiculous. **It's as if the broken social scene were in charge of the music at a church.** The church is Jacob's Well in Kansas City, which you may have heard of. The Waterdeep folks were from there. The pastor's name is Tim Keel. The music guy is Mike Crawford. The title of the CD is: Mike Crawford and his Secret Siblings present Songs from Jacob's Well, Volumes I & II: Even the Darkness Will Not Be Dark To You, which should tell you something about what you're getting into. I just couldn't believe a church was putting out something so artistic and well done. You've got to see the packaging for this thing. Nuts! Anyway, I only have one copy but I'd be happy to send it to you... Well, I'd be sad, but still would (be) joyous to know you would get to see and hear this thing. But seriously, you've got to give this thing some ink. I guarantee your readers would be as thrilled as I am/was to find a church willing to go for something like this. It is epic!*

After reaching out to the church via their MySpace page, a copy was duly sent, which relieved the heck out of me, because I didn't want to see Crowder part with his only copy. Turns out the boasting is well-deserved. The double-disc comes in a quad-fold sleeve with cryptic fantasy art on every surface ... and sometimes that's all it takes to get the fascination wheels turning. Inside this "super prog double disc," as Mike likes to call it, are 17 songs that travel from concept album sound effects to multi-voice singing to chiming, atmospheric guitars to sweeping, orchestral instrumentation. The rest of the subtitle reads: "Subversive Symphonies and Time-Tested Folk Remedies Sure To Aid in the Toppling of Evil Empires." The thoughtful and powerful statement lyrics inside indeed hold the prophetic power of transformation.

Add this album to your collection. You'll be glad you tried something new. And, after all, it comes with a guaranty from David Crowder!

—Doug Van Pelt



We Came As Romans

Sometimes a band on a secular label comes along and straight-up blows you away with its lyrical content. That's the case with Equal Vision's We Came As Romans. The angelic/demonic contrast of the high-register vocals and death growls gives the Detroit, MI sextet's music a beautiful schizophrenic sound, but it's the lyrical content that is most impressive here. Believers will notice Christian threads driving each song, and non-believers will appreciate the positive outlook without being turned away by blatantly biblical language. Guitarist Joshua Moore explains the band's aim to inspire with their forthcoming full-length, due in October.

"Faith is a huge part of We Came As Romans, but not always or exactly in the way that most people would think," says Moore. "When a majority of kids think of faith, the first thought is that it directly ties to religion and stops there; but to us, faith isn't a religious word. Yes, to some of us it definitely is a religious topic, but to all of us it's just about believing in other people and the 'good' in people. Everyone wants to be loved and when kids understand that, that's what we're here to show and try to get people to see."

Musically, the band's perfectionism, along with the production of Joey Sturgis (The Devil Wears Prada, Emarosa), makes for a tight, technical end product.

"After a song would be 'finished,'" continues Moore, "everyone would go through and listen and make sure every single part was something they'd want to listen to. Nothing that was 'filler' or just 'kinda cool.' Each part had to be something that was awesome to listen to."

—Corey Erb



Templar

Album: *Dark Circus* | **Label:** Youngside Records | **Release Date:** August 11 in USA | **RVL:** Killswitch Engage
Members: Dan Yohann – Guitars, Vox | Rafael – Bass, Synthesizers | Toad – Vox, Screaming | SyMon – Drums
Discography: *Witch Hunt EP* (2006) | *Preaching to the Perverted* (2008) | **Home:** Perth, Western Australia

In the Beginning: “Nov ‘06, Ralph and I ran into each other after many years at a Mortification concert and he was starting something new and I also wanted to.”

Show Memories: “I played a show at a club, it was packed, we started playing and because we were a metal band, the sound guy thought we wanted it really, really loud so he turned it up. Three songs in, there wasn’t anyone left, because people needed to get treatment for bleeding ears. Not our best gig.”

One-Song Setlist: “‘Dark Circus.’ It really sums up the sound and attitude of the band and it rocks hard.”

(Answers by Dan Yohann)

ROCK AND ROLL



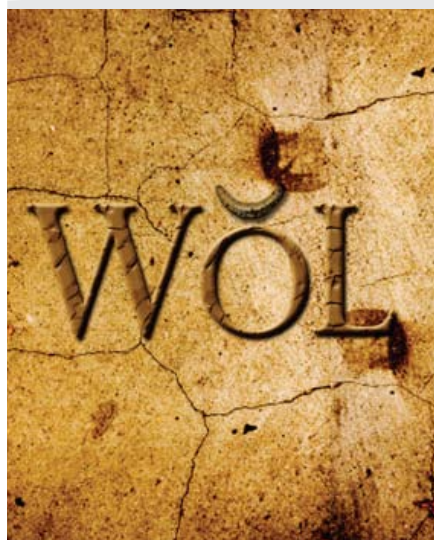
ABIDE

Album: *These Days* | **Release Date:** July 2
Members: Paul M. Toravie – Lead & Rhythm Guitars | Henry Lowa – Rhythm Guitar | Daniel Warbat – Bass | Anton Bobo – Drums | Nathan Lowa – Vocals & Harmonies

In the Beginning: “We initially started out in July 2004, just jamming around with my uncle’s instruments, since he is a rock musician. We basically would play the heavy metal stuff and got opportunities to play in live shows from time to time. About two years after that we got to record our debut album in his studio.”

Possibly Divine Deposit: “The passion or will to play the heavy music to glorify the Lord as well as be an encouragement to those in need of hope.”

Without these Albums, We Wouldn’t Exist as a Band: “Creed – *Human Clay*, Pillar – *Where Do We Go From Here?*, Van Halen – *1984*.”



WoL

Album: *Self-Titled*

Description: “This project is about a war. A spiritual war that involves determination, persistence and sacrifice. WoL is not just a band or a certain type of music, but a Spirit; A Spirit of revolt and anger against all the negative spiritual influences in the world that try so desperately to destroy us. A sample of one of our (very metal) songs: ‘Demons Be Gone,’ demonstrates the reality of the negative forces we are talking about. What you hear is very controversial and should be listened to with a very open mind. When you get to the last part of the song, you’ll understand what we mean. Please know that WoL is in no way interested in any kind of recognition or financial gain. All proceeds will be going back into the project in the hopes that many will be encouraged by its message. If you have any questions or comments or would like to speak to us further about any matter, especially if you or someone you know is struggling with unexplained, impossible problems, please contact us by clicking on our contact us at : info@wolmusik.com (or write PO Box 604, Harbor City, CA 90710-0604). Thanks for reading and many blessings to you.”

–WoL



Steve Scott

Album: *Emotional Tourist* (retrospective) | **Label:** Arena Rock | **Release Date:** Early 2010 | **Home:** Sacramento
Discography: *Moving Pictures* (unfinished/unreleased, Solid Rock, '78) | *Love In The Western World* (Exit, '82) | *Lost Horizon* (Alternative, '89) | *Magnificent Obsession* (Alternative, '91) | *The Butterfly Effect* (Blonde Vinyl, '92) | *Empty Orchestra* (Glow, '93) | *We Dreamed That We Were Strangers* (Glow, '96) | *More Than A Dream* (Glow, '97) | *Crossing the Boundaries* (Glow, '98) | *Love in the Western World* (w/bonus tracks, M8, '00)
Poetry Books: *Ghost Dance* (Monolith, '76) | *AfterImages: Boundaries Vol. 1* ('91) | *The Saint Petersburg Fragments: Boundaries Vol. 2* (Cornerstone Press, '93) | *Out Of Order: Boundaries Vol. 3* (Inertia, '94)
Books on Art: *Crying for a Vision* (Stride, '91) | *Like A House on Fire* (Wipf and Stock, '03) | *Crying for a Vision* (expanded version, Alivingdog, '05)
One Conviction: "The Gospel of John is an important text to consider when thinking about Christian Art and culture(s)"
Without these Artists...: "The Beatles, Leonard Cohen, Gavin Bryars."
Emotions I'd Want Back (if taken away): "I'd like grief and joy back, please ... and maybe anger. Serenity would be good. Feeling the right things at the right time, and doing something (constructive) with or about them."
One Question for God: "How did something so simple end up so complicated?"
Further Info: alivingdog.com/SteveInt.html

TOWN HALL



Benjiman

Album: *S.K.R.I.P.T.* (Spreading Kingdom Realities In Perilous Times) | **Label:** Save The City | **Release Date:** Oct. 6
RIYL: "I will never be able to beat the 'You sound like Toby Mac' comments from music fans, and honestly I love Toby, so that's cool. But I personally think my music is more like Gym Class Heroes or even group one crew."
Discography: *Activate* (BEC, 2005) | **Home:** Lacombe, Oregon
If not for music...: "I think I would be involved in one of two things ... either custom cars/motorcycles or the bicycle industry. I love both! I enjoy welding and modifying stuff, using my creativity to make ideas in my head reality."
In the Beginning: "December 12th, 1993 I decided to start performing. In 2005 I released my first record on BEC Recordings and brought on a back up band."
Without these Albums...: "Well first off, I decided I wanted to be a musician when I saw Petra's *On Fire Tour* in 1989 (shoot, I'm dating myself), then solidified my decision after listening to DC Talk and S.F.C., so I would say my three would be: Petra - *On Fire* | S.F.C. - *Listen Up* | DC Talk - *Free at Last*"
Albums I'd give @Christmas: "Anything from Matisyahu, because the man sings and writes w/such passion it is moving."
Best Video on YouTube: "Grandma and Grandpa Ghost Ride the Whip." Second place would be "Drama Chipmunk."
Show Memories: "For the first two or three years of my ministry satanic cults kept showing up at my concerts! It got so bad that I started knowing their names and faces!"



Soul Scholar

Album: *Power To The People* | **Release Date:** June 1
RIYL: old Black Sabbath; Mountain; Led Zeppelin; The Kinks; King's X; Jimi Hendrix
Members: Mark (Egon) Hubbard - Lead Vocals, Lead Guitar, Rhythm Guitar | Donnie Hopper - Drums, Rhythm Guitar, Backing Vocals | Mark Whitbeck - Bass, Backing Vocals | **Home:** Detroit, MI
If there wasn't music, what skills would your members use and what would they do?
 Donnie: "I might be a teacher or a truck driver, which is what I was anyway, Egon would probably be a child psychologist. Whitbeck puts his skills to use."
 Mark: "I would be an filmmaker, electrician, robot programmer, or a web developer, probably. Or maybe I would work with acrylic paints or photography or something."
 Egon: "Yeah, I would probably be a counselor or a photographer."
If you could ask God one question, what would you ask Him?
 Donnie: "Where on Your green earth is the remote for the downstairs TV?"
 Mark: "Teletubbies? For real?"
 Egon: "That's two questions, Mark. Mine would be, why mosquitos?"

The Christian & Art

WITH KEMPER CRABB

The Disconnect: Why Evangelicals Make Bad Art (Part the Eighteenth)

We've previously explored the question of why millions of American Evangelicals have failed to produce much quality art of any sort, and have seen that this is largely due to limited or distorted views of the Bible's teachings (or a failure to act on or consider the implications of what they do know from it), despite the fact that Scripture instructs believers in "every good work" (2 Tim. 3: 16-17), which includes the making of art.

We've seen some of the destructive implications of shallow or distorted views of the Doctrines of Creation and Eschatology. To misunderstand the implications of God's Creation of the world is to ultimately devalue the material world as the arena and plastic materiel of spirituality in history. To misunderstand biblical Eschatology (the doctrine of what God is shaping history toward, and of what His Purposes are to accomplish within and at the end of time) leads inevitably to a pessimism concerning history and its value, and seeing time as the domain of Satan, and therefore as only something to be escaped from, rather than something to be fulfilled and redeemed.

Then we turned to a consideration of the artistic deformation wrought by a sub-biblical perspective on the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, seeing that a rejection or misunderstanding of the Three Persons of the One God destroys the possibility of any theological justification in seeing symbols as both carrying meanings simultaneously as well as unifying those multiple meanings.

We've also seen that the denigration of the Mystery of the Trinity is to minimize the reflected mystery in man who is made in the Image of God, reducing men to simplistic machines subject to quick-fix techniques.

We also saw that the Balance of Unity and Diversity, the One-and-Many Aspect of the Triune God, is the answer to the question every artist faces: which is more important, the artist's interior vision or the perception of the audience? The answer is the balance of the unity of the artist's vision with the diversity of the sundry perceptions of the audience, just as God's Unity and Diversity in Balance is intended to be reflected in Creation. A failure to see the Diversity which defines the Triune God as much as does His Unity leads to a view of man and the world which flattens both, reducing humanity to a uni-dimensional construct made for one mode of being, rather than inhabiting the nuanced, complex, multi-orbed Reality God

prepared for mankind to reflect God in.

In the last issue, we saw illustrated the practical results of this theological defect by the story of a Christian record label's rejection of a song (which both a popular CCM artist and the artist's producer were pressing the label to allow them to include on a new project) not because the song was considered lacking lyrically or musically (in fact, the label thought the song was very good), but because the song lacked what they called "a happy ending," by which they meant a conclusion in which the song's narrator gets what he wants, rather than the thing God deems best for him.

This rejection betrays a belief that humans exist for only one mode of being: happiness (which is not the same thing as joy). This belief is shored up by a uni-dimensional view of mankind as the Image-bearer of the Complex Triune God.

This forces art by Christians into a singular promotion of a view of experiencing God as only wanting humans to be happy, rather than for humans to be holy, and of humans as those who should only experience happiness, instead of those who, in a fallen world, should also experience sorrow, repentance, and lamentation at their own sin and the sin around them, as well as sharing in the Suffering of Christ (1 Peter 4: 12-19; 2 Cor. 7: 8-11).

Scripture, which overwhelmingly concerns itself with the relationship and experience of God with His Covenant People, reflects not only the experience of happiness and joy, but of sorrow, suffering, repentance, duty, malediction, and holy terror, as normative in the fallen world.

If Christian art does not accurately reflect the experience of Reality, which both believers and non-believers share, the Faith appears as an unrealistic, irrelevant belief fit only to be laughed at or angrily rejected by non-believers, and a source of disappointment and confusion to Christians who have not been taught a fully-orbed biblical view of the world. A return to what Scripture teaches concerning the Triune God and all that teaching implies is necessary to restore to the Church to a sound view of God, man, and the world, and to equip the Church to begin once again to produce meaningful art.

[kempercraab.net]

The way I see it Chris Wighaman

“When we honestly ask ourselves which person in our lives mean the most to us, we often find that it is those who, instead of giving advice, solutions, or cures, have chosen rather to share our pain and touch our wounds with a warm and tender hand. The friend who can be silent with us in a moment of despair or confusion, who can stay with us in an hour of grief and bereavement, who can tolerate not knowing, not curing, not healing and face with us the reality of our powerlessness, that is a friend who cares.”

— Henri J.M. Nouwen (*The Road to Daybreak*)

Right now my best friend and wife Megan is sitting in the hospital with her mother. Her mom, seemingly out of nowhere, has lost all feeling and movement in her legs. There is a real fear that they will not work again. Her mom is active, young and a very kind person. She does not deserve this. Slowly, we are realizing just how little there is we can do. Megan has spent every day, all day, with her since we arrived a week ago. She feels helpless. Powerless. All she can do is pray and offer her love and presence to her mother.

The word compassion comes from two Latin roots: com (together) and pati (suffer, endure). Compassion is the willingness to suffer with someone as they endure circumstances that are too great for one person to bear. It is one of the least desirable ways we tend to deal with hard times in other people's lives. It's messy, depressing and asks so much – usually too much – of us. Far too often we are selfish and only worry about how this will all affect our lives. Honestly, I'd rather send flowers and say I prayed for them. Compassion is the example our God sets out for us. Look at the life of Christ. He entered into human existence to join us in our suffering. Psalm 145 says, “The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. The LORD is good to all; He has compassion on all He has made.” The LORD joins in the suffering of all. He desires to be with us as we travel through hard times. This is our example.

Are you compassionate? Do you see suffering and run the other way. Or are you willing to, like Christ did, enter into the difficult times with someone and just be there for him or her?

Devotions with Greg Tucker

*My eyes have seen all this, my ears have heard and understood it.
Job 13:1*

A human ear consists of three basic parts – the outer, middle, and inner sections – and each plays a unique role in bringing sound to life. But the noise was not pleasant in 1995 when a young physician at Boston's Massachusetts General Hospital successfully grew a human ear on a mouse. Referred to as the Vacanti Mouse (after Dr. Joseph Vacanti), once images were released on the Internet, animal-rights activists shouted their objection.

The structure on the creature's back was actually a piece of crafted cartilage, so even though it appeared real – and pictures prove it did – there was never hope of sound getting through. This ear, by design, was deaf.

When God “knit man together,” as it says in Psalm 139, His creation included two complex and delicately made ears so sound could make its way to the brain. But catching vibrations doesn't always mean getting the message. Recently that fact came to life when I recommended a particular song for a friend's football video. “Are you serious?” was the shocked response from everyone in the room. “Do you have any idea what that song is about?” Evidently I didn't.

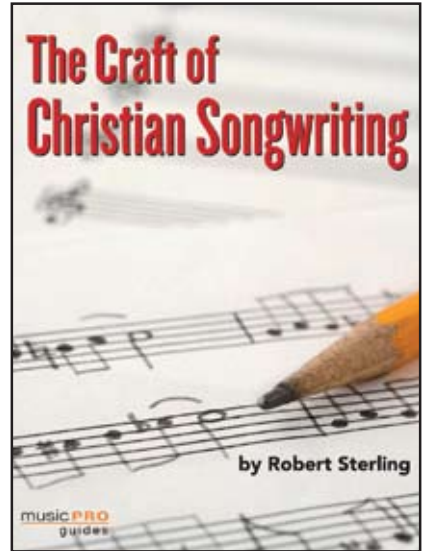
The tune in question was a classic, delivered by one of the greatest bands in rock history, and I suspect it's been played on the radio hundreds of thousands of times. I've always liked it, always hummed the tune, and usually mumbled some of the words when they rolled around. But I had never actually listened.

Turns out the whole song is about “gallivanting,” shall we say, with the girl next door, and the description is amazingly – almost impressively – graphic. The writer should consider a career in medicine. I was amazed that even the words I did know were dirty, once you put them in context. I felt like such a boob. (Pun intended.)

Satan knows that his seeds, once planted, will yield a garden of bad actions and wrong attitudes, eventually costing a man his very soul. Many Christians are too far along to give-in to major temptation, so the enemy is content whispering things – delightful tales of sin found in songs and jokes and everyday conversation – and he does it so quietly that a lazy listener never realizes he's being painted from the inside out.

Solomon laid out the best plan in Proverbs 4:1, when he directed us to not only listen, but pay attention as well. Shake your head and open your ears, for both sides of the spiritual battle are sending messages through the very sounds you hear.

[Greg Tucker is president of Tucker Signature Films. You can meet him at the HM Magazine booth at Revelation Generation Festival on September 4th and 5th]



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LIFEstyle



LORD, SAVE US FROM YOUR FOLLOWERS

This film should be required viewing for everyone. Nary a DVD was created that was so good at breaking my heart. At times funny, at times cringe-inducing, it's seemingly created by a heart that grieves over all this. It's well-crafted and not only good at pointing out the faults of the USA's evangeli-culture (the most notable of which is how blind we seem to be towards how we come off to others), but

also offers practical solutions. [Zachaeus Film Group] *Doug Van Pelt*
 [Cuss: 0 | Gore: 0 | Sex: 0 | Spiritual Conversations: 100]

THE LOST & FOUND FAMILY

If you like sub-par acting with a redemptive God-centered plot, because it makes you cry (remembering that God loves people just like you), then this movie will do. [Sony Pictures] *DV*

[Cuss: 0 | Gore: 0 | Sex: 0 | Spiritual Conversations: 100]



THE TERRY SCHIAVO STORY

A beautiful, revealing, amazing and poignant documentary that goes deeper than any of the coverage seen on the news. As a documentary, it's put together so well that its 50 minutes flies by without notice. [Franklin Springs] *DV*

[Cuss: 0 | Gore: 0 | Sex: 0 | Spiritual Conversations: 100]

24 SEASON 7

Amidst a writer's strike, one of TV's most popular shows found a way to keep from becoming a parody of itself. They put Jack Bauer on trial for torturing suspects and then leaned on him to save the world one more time. Set in Africa and then Washington D.C., it wasn't the series' best moment, but it was darn good. [Fox Video] *DV*

[Cuss: 10 | Gore: 30 | Sex: 0 | Spiritual Conversations: 30]



FALLEN ANGEL: THE OUTLAW LARRY NORMAN

This documentary has been a long time in the making. The difficult task of telling the story about Christian rock pioneer Larry Norman was compounded during the singer's lifetime by his opposition to the film and its director (and only further complicated by Larry's death last year). While seeing our hero (a certifiable legend in Christian rock) in a less-than-positive light (especially after his death) is sure to freak-out a lot of fans. Thanks to plenty of grace and restraint by the director and one

of the chief story-tellers (Randy Stonehill), it comes off much more balanced than, say, a hatchet job would. Larry is both honored and intensely examined by his peers and also an illegitimate child. Yeah, it's likely to be a controversial and divisive movie. [Jester Media] *DV*

[Cuss: 0 | Gore: 0 | Sex: 0 | Spiritual Conversations: 100]



T.55 USB

Buying records used to be considered an aging art form, but with the recent resurgence of all things retro, buying vinyl is considered a fine commodity once again. But what is the point of buying records when you can't put those songs on your computer or your iPod? Thus, the brilliant invention of the USB turntable. This record player has an outlet for a USB cable (which is included) to connect from the player to your computer. If you have Windows you then install software from an included CD, or with a Mac you download the audio editing and recording program Audacity, and you are all set. As you play the record, the program records it, and you then break it up into tracks. The quality may be ever-so-slightly lower than a CD, but not by much. If you have the funds to buy this record player, it would certainly be a good investment. [stantondj.com] *Kelly Kettering*

[Setup Ease: B | Performance: A | Price: \$199]



MIKEY

The Mikey iPod microphone recorder performs decently in lecture, interview and even certain live music settings, though it takes practice and patience to avoid clipping and achieve that clean, clear stereo sound you want.

[bluemic.com] *Corey Erb*

[Setup Ease: A- | Performance: C+ | Price: \$79]



NAVIGATE

The premise is promising. Controlling your iPhone or iPod while working out or travelling, with the mp3 player tucked away in a pocket. The two-foot cord allows about the right amount of freedom and Navigate also adds FM radio with presets. Useful? Yes ... until someone comes out with a wireless wristband controller.

Practical? Not so much. [griffintechology.com] *DV*

[Setup Ease: A | Performance: B+ | Price: \$59]



WITNESSING SUBURBIA | EILEEN LUHR

Assuming she doesn't already, Eileen Luhr should teach a history course called "The Political and Cultural Hypocrisies of Suburban White Conservative Evangelicals in the 20th Century." She's already written the textbook. *Witnessing Suburbia* recounts the suburban retreat of evangelicals, their varying opinions on popular culture and music as tools, and their integration with consumerism and politics. The book is exhaustive, complete with 758 endnotes taken

from various sources ranging from music magazines (including this one) to historians. Chapter 3 is worth a read for its retelling of the early days of Christian heavy metal. Taken as a reminder of areas to improve, this book could serve to benefit those it criticizes, though it beleaguers the point a bit. [Univ. of Calif. Press] *CE*

24 FEATURE

throughout showbread's decade-plus career, change has been the constant. whether it's been in the band's sound from record to record or in the band's many lineup changes – more than 20 individuals have been involved with showbread either in concert or on recordings – showbread has always found a way to keep listeners from getting too comfortable. it's the same story with *the fear of god*. it all began during the long gap between recording *anorexia/nervosa* in august 2007 and its release in may 2008.

by corey erb

"As soon as we scratch the itch of the album that we just finished, the thing that we've been working on forever, and you finally get it out and hear it, we jump in another direction, like, 'Okay, what's next?' since we satisfied that urge," frontman Josh Dies explains. "We had a lot of time to be like, 'Oh well, what will we do?' and after that we had a couple of long-term members leave and it kind of left us in a good position in a sense that we had three core guys left over – three members who had been there for over a decade – and we had a drummer that we had been playing with for a while. We had wanted to do a record that was more stripped down and aggressive ever since *No Sir, Nihilism is Not Practical* and that was kind of the thing the four of us wanted to do with *Age of Reptiles*, but the other members that we had at the time really wanted to do something else, so we ended up compromising and settling somewhere in the middle. So when it was just the four of us, we were like, 'We have the opportunity to do this now, why don't we just try?'"

But before they could record, their drummer departed. Dies, his brother/bassist Patrick Porter and guitarist Mike Jensen were left searching for a replacement behind the kit.

"Having lineup changes sucks," Dies says. "Being a band that is faith-based and ministry-based, all our decisions are filtered through, 'Let's pray about this and see what we're supposed to do.' When we have lineup changes, we've had it happen for every reason from someone would be like, 'I really feel like God wants me to do something else and I don't want to leave the band, but I don't want to

be disobedient to my calling,' and everyone being like, 'We completely understand. We hate to see you go, but you gotta do what God wants you to do.' And then we've had things where guys would just be like, 'I just don't like this anymore. I don't want to do it.' And everyone within the leftover people, saying, 'I understand that it was this guy's time to go, because I don't think that his heart was in the same place that ours was, as a ministry-based band,' and stuff like that.

"Ever since the beginning, we've had the same songwriters and we've had the same core members that have been the lead directors in what directions the songs will go. I hope that in the future, God will see fit to bless us with a really solid, permanent lineup and we won't have to worry about it, but I don't know if it'll happen."

Showbread eventually brought in their friend Jordan Johnson of the band Tyler Read to record drums, as well as live member Landon Ginnings to record additional guitars. They've since brought in an 18-year-old drummer named Christian on a trial basis for Cornerstone and filming the video for "Lost Connection with the Head." Once the turmoil of finding personnel to play on the record had settled, the recording process went smoothly, according to Dies. One thing that hasn't changed is Showbread's desire to base each album on a central theme.


"It's important for us to kind of have a specific theme throughout the record," he continues, "even if it's not a concept record or even if it's not as thematic as *Age of Reptiles* is, which wasn't a

concept record either, but had a really heavy theme – to be like, 'Well here's the basic idea of what this record is saying and here's where it comes out.' And with *The Fear of God*, I think it's the idea of letting go of everything – about losing everything and embracing that in a way that the world would view that as insanity yet being happy with that – and how that fits into our faith in Jesus."

The record also continues a theme of combining various musical influences. Dies explains that the band took punk energy from influences like *The Shape of Punk to Come* by Refused (the main influence on *No Sir, Nihilism is Not Practical*), Nirvana, Misfits and Squad Five-O, and balanced it with the "garage-y type of pop rock" of Weezer and The Flaming Lips.

"I would like to say that any originality that Showbread has is completely our doing, but if there's any kind of unique element to it that people notice it's probably just because we mash up a lot of really weird influences, but the influences are really strong," Dies says. "The biggest reference we had was the Weezer album, *Pinkerton*. Anytime we were writing and recording we kept going back to *Pinkerton* and, especially sonically as the studio approach – we kept making our engineer listen to *Pinkerton* and he hates it – (we said) 'This is how we need this to sound' and stuff like that, and Nirvana's *In Utero*, like that really jaggedy, abrasive production with really edgy punk songs and then going back to Weezer to make things have melody and make things have structure."





“Ever since the beginning, we’ve had the same songwriters... I hope that in the future, God will see fit to bless us with a really solid, permanent lineup and we won’t have to worry about it, but I don’t know if it’ll happen.”

Photo: Bob Butler

In the past, Showbread has taken some heat for their secular musical influences from parents and fans, but Dies backs up his listening choices as edifying to him as an artist.

“It comes to a point where if you’ve got something that people have an issue with, and it’s beneficial to you in some way ... being like, ‘Well I can’t just change it, because you say so and because you think it’s right. If I felt like God was telling me to, then I would,’” he says.

In the end, Dies hopes the band and the record will inspire listeners to think for themselves.

“One of the things that Showbread advocates is, when we talk to kids and when we talk on the

stage about what we believe, is not just believing something because a band told you that it’s a good thing or a pastor told you it’s a good thing,” he explains. “If you want to have belief, whether it’s belief in something or belief in nothing at all, you have to find out for yourself. I encourage people to find out, because I think it’s worth finding out. I mean, you’re here and alive, and (if you) really think that there is no God at all, then just affirm that for yourself. Search it out and make sure you have every reason to believe that.

“I think that’s where the truth comes from, and when people dig that deep and they look for the truth, they will find the truth. I personally believe that the truth always is Jesus Christ and that that search will yield to that absolute truth. That’s why

I encourage people (to do) that. So I wanted to somehow summarize that kind of philosophy, starting the title track by being like, ‘Okay, well, where is God because the world sucks. It is a terrible place. People are unhappy. All this bad stuff happens every day,’ because I think that’s one of the largest arguments the world has against Christianity: 1) that Christians are fake, and 2) that the world sucks, so where is God? And me as a Christian being like, ‘Yes, this stuff does suck, so where is God?’ And then the turning point of (the final track, ‘The Fear of God’), is being like ‘Here He is, and here’s why.’”

✕

Paramore

HONESTLY BRAND NEW

THEIR LAST ALBUM, *RIOT!*, WENT PLATINUM HERE IN THE STATES AND GOLD IN THREE OTHER COUNTRIES. THEY SCORED A GRAMMY NOM FOR BEST NEW ARTIST. THEY'VE TOURED WITH NO DOUBT, NEW FOUND GLORY AND JIMMY EAT WORLD AS WELL AS HEADLINING THEIR OWN THEATRE CIRCUIT. OH, AND IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT ALL FIVE MEMBERS OF PARAMORE ORBIT THE AGE OF 20.

BY MATT CONNER



With so many accomplishments in a short career span, it's no wonder the pressure is mounting for the Tennessee band's third album. Yet vocalist Hayley Williams, guitarist Josh Farro, bassist Jeremy Davis, guitarist Taylor York and drummer Zac Farro all seem prepared for the release. Most likely, it's a combination of the band's faith in God, the organic approach to the new recording and the confidence of a young band finding their niche.

For *Brand New Eyes*, slated for release September 29, it was the band's live show that served as the biggest inspiration for the new album, with a longing to match that level of energy and raw emotion. Not only is that where the band feels most excited about their sound, but it's also a way to combat the current obsession with overproduction in the genre.

"We're really big on our live show and we feel that it's really powerful, so we want to catch the raw feeling on the album," says Josh Farro. "It's not about messing up on the album, but at the same time, sometimes some things might be a bit out of tune, but it still sounds cool so we kept a lot of that. Everyone now wants to make things perfect. They drench the vocals in Auto-Tune and all that stuff. It's all so cookie-cutter, but I think people want something real. I think someone that's not very musically inclined can tell if a record is real,

even if they can't pinpoint the difference between an organic album versus a Disney band or something where it's perfect."

That longing to create an organic album affects everything – from the production to the songwriting. For Paramore, it's about allowing the songs to say what they need to say and sound how they need to sound, regardless of the pressures to continue the sales from before.

"It's definitely hard to keep things organic," says Farro. "You have a label that's basically breathing down your neck saying that they need songs that are going to sell. We can't just sit back and say we want to write songs on this record without caring if they're hits or not. We never approach writing with the mindset of making sure a song is a hit. We honestly write what we love. Of course, it's always in the back of our head that we need to make it sound good, but we don't want to fit some formula.

"We never approach a song saying that it needs to be a hit. We just write what we love and if it becomes a hit somehow, that's great. If not, that's fine, too. I think on *Riot!*, we were definitely trying to

make songs a little more commercial, because we knew that was a big record for us and it ended up gaining a lot of success. But for this record, we had kind of established ourselves and obviously a third record is very important, so we didn't want to do the same thing twice. We're very proud of it, so if it doesn't do well, then that's just what happens. It's just God's will either way, so I just hope the fans like it."

When it comes to their faith, Paramore has been upfront from the beginning about their Christian beliefs and roots. And that only continues as the band becomes more popular, even as it becomes increasingly difficult.



"It's inevitable for our faith to show through our lyrics and music just because that's what we believe with our lives," explains Farro. "It's bound to come out that way. It's not an easy thing to balance your faith in music. That's about as vulnerable as it gets, because it's a very personal thing and so many people hate the thought of a Christian. We deal with that all the time, so it's not easy to admit that we are. There's persecution at times, so it makes it hard."

Farro says the song "Let The Flames Begin" has opened the doors to spiritual moments at their live shows. "It has an intro to it and then Hayley starts singing, 'Father, Father, I'm ready.' It gets really heavy. I remember this drunk girl came up to me and she was backstage somehow and she just said, 'Oh, you guys are so gooooood.' I was like, 'Um, thanks.' Then she said she got chills on that song and I was like, 'That's cool. I mean, you're drunk, but there's something still at work during that song.' I know what she felt was from that point and that song."

"Most of our songs are just happy and fun and have-a-good-time," he continues, "which no doubt fans like, but once we hit ['Let The Flames Begin'], it's

heavy
and
spiritual.
You can just
see it on their faces.

Sometimes I'll look out and see a couple fans with their arms raised and eyes closed, so that's really cool to see. It gives them a chance to worship and that's beautiful."

Farro believes Hayley's lyrics allow the band's fans to resonate with the subjects she's singing about – whether the subject is a broken relationship or a spiritual longing. And for the rest of the band, the music itself provides a way to spiritually connect with their audience.

"It seems that Hayley is allowing herself to become more and more vulnerable with each record," says Farro. "She's very honest and forthright about her life and some of the songs are really bold for her to write, because it's about her personal life. One song is about us arguing within the band and we're having this fight. That's pretty raw. But the thing is that people are going through the same thing we're going through, because we're all the same age, or else they will go through it as they get older. So we want to write about that. Rather than just writing a song that's all fun and happy, which is okay, I think

people are searching for something they can relate to. It gives people hope."

On this new collection, Farro notes a new track in particular dealing with a faith crisis and hopes that provides another outlet for a spiritual connection.

"On this record, Hayley sings about her faith on one song and it's about how she struggles with doubt sometimes. I think that's cool that she can expose that, because who doesn't honestly doubt in their life? It gives us a chance to talk to fans or someone interviewing us about the Lord and that's my goal personally. I don't write the lyrics, but hopefully you can hear something through the music."

"The only reason that I came up with the music that I did is because of the Lord," he continues. "Obviously it's the same with every record, but especially on this record, I was just praying for God to provide the music for me, because I didn't have it myself. The Lord was faithful and He gave it to me. It sounds crazy to someone who's not a believer, but hopefully they can understand. We hear it all the time from people who say there's something different about our sound. And that's why we're here."



WHITE COLLAR

BRING ON THE FREAKS...



SIDESHOW

LET ME INTRODUCE YOU TO A BAND I LOVE. THEY'RE CALLED **WHITE COLLAR SIDESHOW** AND THE TAG "BAND" HARDLY FITS THEM. THIS VAUDEVILLIAN OUTFIT IS CLOSER TO A DYNAMIC ART EXHIBIT IN THE NEW OLD WEST THAN A ROCK BAND. THINK DRUM STREET CORPS ACCOMPANYING ANDY WARHOL ON THE PLAINS OF KANSAS OR OUTSIDE AN OLD WESTERN SALOON CIRCA 1800s. OR IMAGINE THE JIM ROSE CIRCUS AND TRAVELING ODDITY SHOW ROLLING INTO A PIONEER TOWN TO ENTERTAIN AND ENLIGHTEN THE SETTLERS FOR AN EVENING OF INDUSTRIAL NOISE.

OH, THEY HAVE SOME OF THE STANDARD ACCOUTREMENTS OF A TYPICAL ROCK BAND – THERE'S CDs, DVDs AND T-SHIRTS FOR SALE IN THE BACK. THERE'S TWO DRUMSETS, A BASS AMP AND A MICROPHONE AT CENTER STAGE. BUT THERE'S ALSO A 50-GALLON BARREL, BEER KEGS, SAW BLADES, AIRPLANE ENGINE PARTS, A TIRE RIM AND A UNICYCLE ... BUT THAT MICROPHONE NEVER QUITE GETS THE SONG/SINGING OR HARMONY TREATMENT.

T.D. Benton (affectionately known as "T") will grasp it to introduce a song or two, but its primary use is to deliver an honest, heartfelt confession of the pain and destruction of pornography, self and drug abuse, and like the unveiling of the *Wizard of Oz* at the end of the movie, the audience is given glimpses of real beauty and told flat-out that, "When there's nothing left but God, that's when you realize Christ is all you need."

The White Collar Sideshow is weird. It's bizarre. It's unusual. But get this: after spending a short time with these people you will undoubtedly realize that God is alive in their hearts and they are into this following Jesus stuff ... full tilt.

The first thing anyone will see is the visual. The unusual garb. It's refreshing to not only meet a group of people that quickly learn your first name and treat you with respect and genuine interest, but they're also fairly in-depth artists that are not too aloof to explain the main symbolism behind what they're doing.

"I kind of see the performance as kind of a Blue Man Group meets Rob Zombie thing," spells out T. "Not that I saw Blue Man Group when I was putting the group together, but then I watched it and was like, those cheaters!" he laughs.

"I've always been a horror movie fan," he admits without the apprehension that some curious but doubting church-goers might throw his way. "And I still am, but I've always gotten a different message out of it – like there was a reason somebody was making this and whether it was their hatred, anger, or just trying to prove a point in some strange way."

In other words, he was able to get past the surface level of the art of horror films and see something deeper. This is the same skill he hopes to instruct and empower others in, so that they can see the world around them and creative expression, perhaps, with new eyes. He sometimes makes it a point to bring up that he wishes he didn't have to explain his show. "I shouldn't have to," he'll quip, but he gently does anyway.

"The pig mask is very symbolic with what we are doing in addiction, not (that) men are pigs, but how our heart becomes swine, or dirtiness, like how pigs eat slop. And when we hide those things, that is what we become and even that portrays to the outside. I always tell kids, 'When you know someone in grade school or high school and then you saw them get involved with a girlfriend or boyfriend or even with drugs and how they change and you don't know the same person you used to know,' sometimes that's how our hidden addictions evolve to and we become that creepy figure or that future version of what we used to be and we have to get back to what we were, so that's what the pig mask kind of represents. (His wife) Veronica's character, 'The Faceless Woman,' is really based on my life as a male, looking at women – no face, always at their asset. Or, never looking in their eyes or at their heart, but always (thinking) 'What is in it for me?' Lust, I guess would be a great way to portray that. It's everywhere. Sex sells everything."

He catches his breath and just continues: "And how to re-learn respect – especially with my wife – with other women and having eye contact as opposed to looking everywhere else. The gas mask. Usually my son performs with us."

That's Tristen, T.D.'s 11-year-old son (the guy holding the balloon). "He does local shows and he toured the first three weeks of the summer with us," explains Veronica. "His character is 'The Leech.' He lives with his mom (from a previous marriage) in Russellville, AR." If you YouTube White Collar Sideshow, he's dancing on an orange-ish looking video for "Birdfed Thru IV's."

"The gasmask is a creepy character," continues T.D., "but very symbolic to when you're at home alone. The battle that you have: 'Am I going to click on this? Am I gonna do this? Nobody's looking. Nobody would ever know.' And if that battle that is in your mind or in your heart, versus whatever that is. For me, a lot of that was pornography or myspace advertising or the pictures that you can click on. Very innocent, (but) something that could become very much a part of your life, and how do you get away from that? And it's a battle – the warfare that you have within your own mind and heart about the things that you're dealing with."



VERONICA, THE FACELESS WOMAN - LEFT BEHIND CUSHY JOB FOR BASS GUITAR, TRAVELLING IN BAND EV WITH TERRORIZING DOGS.



PHILIP - RANDOMLY PICKS PEOPLE OUT OF AUDIENCE TO PLAY 50-GAL. BARREL, WHO USUALLY RECEIVE MINISTRY AFTER THE SHOW. "HOW DID YOU KNOW?" (A GOD-THING)



T.D. BENTON - PERCUSSIONIST CREATING HORROR FILM, CALLED "WITCHUNT."



THE LEECH - "HE'S A CREEPY KID," BEAMS HIS PROUD DAD (?) IN AN ADDAMS FAMILY SORTA WAY.

He finally reaches the end of the characters, describing his own ring-leader role: "My character is kind of the ... I would say, just myself – the insanity that you go through just being a real human being and trying to stay focused on things – learning from your mistakes and teaching others through your mistakes and trying to inspire and be passionate about that message and showing other people that, no matter what you're going through, you yourself can take whatever actions that you're having from your hidden addiction and flip it around and use it for someone else to realize they're not alone. I think that's what the insanity is. The videos explain exactly what's going on in the songs – exactly what was going on in my mind in the moment and some real-life situations from part of my life.

"I love taking the old horror movies, the *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, who we are in public and who we become when nobody's looking. And *Frankenstein* – man, what a great movie! Don't treat somebody the way you don't want to be treated. Or they will become a monster. Love people. Encourage people. Challenge people. Done in a horror movie way. Strange, but that's how God works, I think. Out of the box.

"Look at Jesus. Died on the cross, rose from the dead. How much out of the box can it get? Yeah, we can't put that in a little bitty church and expect people to shape us as Christians. We've got to let God shape us for who we are and how He can use us for who we are and not for what other people want us to be. I think that's what our whole performance – hopefully, people go home with and see a new life in their life. Even though it's a creepy way, I hope that we are able to shed light at the end. 'Hey, you know what? This isn't how it has to be! It can be like this.'

"The drums and all the junk – the flea market stuff – are basically just stuff that we found laying around and thought it'd be cool to use and didn't realize how the whole image came together that way. That was a total God thing, as far as a circus-y sideshow and the top hat and the creepy mustache was just part of a 150% effort of, 'If I'm going to do a sideshow, I've gotta be the same person all the time. I can't be two different people in order to get the message across.' I think it adds to the spectacle of what the performance is. And unusual. I think and hope a lot of people walk away going, 'I've never seen anything like that, and I'd love to see it again and maybe get something else out of it – either through the videos or the message or even just the music. Maybe just to inspire somebody to do something different musically. Also, I didn't just want to use a bunch of keyboard effects on a computer. I wanted people to see what we really used on our CD," he laughs.

Right there you have it. A grocery list of oddball things that are held up in a simple, what-you-see-is-what-you-get type of honesty, in order to reinforce the idea that we're all valuable and we all have faults, and so it's just a foolish and futile effort to hide behind our masks when healing can begin with confession.

The guys are working on a horror movie, which they hope to be a teaser for their shows in 2011 or 2012. "Hopefully we'll get to tour with this performance for another year and a half or so and then the next time we'll come out after that will be a whole different show." Take our word for it, find out if you're anywhere near a White Collar Sideshow and go see it ... they won't be bringing this thing out forever. Plus, like a disturbing or mysterious movie, you'll want to see this spectacle again and again to figure out more of the plot.

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THE TRAILER THAT GETS YOUTH PASTORS SCRATCHING THEIR HEADS. "WHAT 'VE I GOTTEN MYSELF INTO?" | HM'S EDITOR DONS THE PIG MASK. | THE UNRULY HANDLEBAR MUSTACHE THAT'LL SOON AIR ON THE TV SHOW, *THE DOG WHISPERER*

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