

YEAR IN REVIEW, PART 1: OUR FAVORITE STORIES, PICS & ALBUMS OF 2015

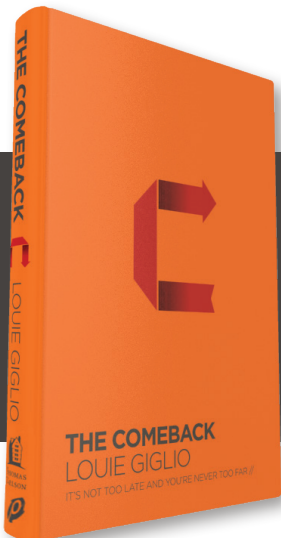
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## From the Editor

### 2015 IN PICTURES

With this January-long dedication, we'll flashback to our most memorable images of 2015. For this edition, check out exclusive pics of Lauren Daigle, for King & Country, Colton Dixon, Skillet, Steven Curtis Chapman, and Michael W. Smith.

<http://www.ccmmagazine.com/media/out-about-january-1-2016>

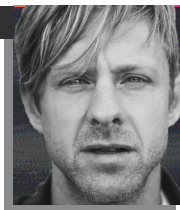
#### TobyMac, Lauren Daigle & Jeremy Camp

In our Jan. 1, 2016 cover story, we take a look back at our favorite stories from 2015—part 1 of 2, be sure to read the Jan. 15 edition for more favorites!



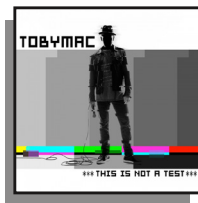
#### Jon Foreman, KB, Darlene Zschech & Red

We asked questions, they gave answers—go back to see what the artists had to say in our favorite Q&A features of 2015!



#### Andy's Top 10

Reviewer  
Andy Argyrakis'  
Top Picks - 2015



#### Matt's Top 10

Reviewer  
Matt Conner's  
Top Picks - 2015



#### Kevin's Top 10

CCM Editor  
Kevin Sparkman's  
Top Picks - 2015



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**Happy New Year!** It's been an amazing year in Christian music. Some brief highlights off the top of my head—A memorable night at the **Dove Awards** in October (how about the red carpet, **Lecrae** and **Lauren Daigle**?!), **CCM United** in January (wow, will an event like this ever happen again?), **Audio Adrenaline's** live webcast, hanging out at **Natalie Grant's** house to listen to her latest album **Be One**, and getting a sneak peek of the **Winter Jam 2016** tour lineup at Nashville's **Adventure Science Center's** planetarium (with **Newsong**, **Matthew West**, **Crowder** and so many more).

I can't believe we've gone through an entire calendar since I wrote my first Editorial Letter for **CCM Magazine**. In early 2015, I used this particular piece of real estate to hint at new things to come for **CCM**. Since then, we have launched an entirely new website at **CCMmagazine.com** — our main objective for this past year— and have only begun to scratch the surface of bringing you the latest in Christian music news, stories, photos and videos in an exciting new way.

None of this would have been possible if it weren't for an awesome group of people working behind the scenes, making this thing "go" every two weeks. A humble thanks to my colleagues at Salem Publishing Nashville — **Mike Miller**, **Smitty Wheeler**, **Ross Cluver**, **DeDe Donatelli-Tarrant**, **Joel Stombres**, **Jon Edlin**, **Tammy Phillips**, **Martina Ahlbrandt**, **Joshua Jamison**, **Shaun Helton**, **Amy Lee**, and **Jason Lloyd**.



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



**Andrew Greer** is a Dove-nominated singer-songwriter and writer. The Texas native and Nashville, TN resident recently released his first book, co-authored with Ginny Owens, titled *Transcending Mysteries* (Thomas Nelson). More info at [Andrew-Greer.com](http://Andrew-Greer.com).



**Matt Conner** is a music writer for the *Indianapolis Star*, *Relevant* and *Metromix* and the founding editor of [StereoSubversion.com](http://StereoSubversion.com).

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To our contributing editors, contributors, and freelance writers around the country — **Andy Argyrakis, Matt Conner, Andrew Greer, Lena Ziegler, Caroline Lusk, Lindsay Williams, Melissa Riddle-Chalos, Grace Aspinwall, Christina Fox, Rebekah Bell, Justin Sarachik, and Jamie Walker.** To our web team, old and new — **Barry and Je French, Tim Trudeau at Syntax Creative, and Nathan Markey at Seablaze Web Studios.** Also, thanks to **Britt Edwards and Chris Cameron at Center Street Recording Studios** for your time, expertise, and laughter (invoices are being fulfilled!).

Of course, many thanks to Brian, Emily, Janet, Stacie, Kirsten, Lori, Brian, Courtney, MacKenzie, Rick, Velvet, Celeste, Maureen, Christina, Jules, Shannon, Lori, Aaron, Susanne, Jackie, Lynn, Tracy, Gina, Paige, Jeff and Steven — you know who you are, thanks!

Here's to an exciting 2016!

Blessings,



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin Sparkman". The signature is stylized and fluid, with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

**Kevin Sparkman**  
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# WHAT LOVE FEELS LIKE

TobyMac shares the challenges and deep rewards of loving-his family, his fans, his art, people in need-and his focused approach to togetherness and human connection

BY LENA ZIEGLER

**Excerpt from the August 15, 2015 edition of CCM Magazine** | There are many barometers of success for a recording artist—albums sold, awards won, headlines made... By these and all other measures, **TobyMac** is the consummate winner, having soared to heights few artists ever reach, cementing his position as one of the most influential figures in Christian music today. Over the course of an unstoppable 25-year career, he has become an industry veteran, an innovator whose faith and artistry have led to 11 million units sold, 6 GRAMMY Awards, numerous Dove Awards, crossover success on the Billboard Charts, and the co-founding creator of **Gotee Records**, where he has been discovering and inspiring up-and-coming Christian artists for more than twenty years. But behind the glitter of fame, industry respect, and chart-topping achievement is a humble man who embodies the kind of resounding success that can only come from pure faith, love of family, and an unshakable belief in the power of everyday, human connection.

With the August 7th release of his sixth studio album, **\*\*\*THIS IS NOT A TEST\*\*\***, TobyMac epitomizes this and, ultimately, what it means to be a collaborative artist. As seven of the album's 13 studio tracks feature outside performers, including **NF, Mr. Talkbox**, and his former band-mates from **dcTalk**, as well as newcomers **Hollyn, Capital Kings**, and **Ryan Stevenson**, Toby recognizes the value of this approach.

"I've always been about bringing people together," he says. "I think we're more beautiful together, I think life gets richer when we're together. That



theme plays into my record, my writing process, and my recording process.”

But Toby’s focus on togetherness extends far beyond the music he himself produces and well into the Christian music industry as a whole. “I love, love to introduce the people that listen to my music to new faces, new voices, new names—people that I really respect in what they’re doing and what they offer to our industry. I want to promote those things because I care about our industry and I care about believers making great music.”

As with many of his canny career moves, he is reluctant to take credit for the collaborative nature of his latest project, and instead credits God for leading him in the right direction.

“A long, but fairly interesting story—well, hopefully interesting to you,” he adds with a laugh. “I was praying about what percentage of my professional time goes where. And it’s been on my heart lately to put a little more effort and time into walking closely with artists and developing artists, and sort of shepherding artists—younger artists—and caring about our industry at large. And when I say our industry, I just mean artists that are Christians. I kind of felt like, man, I need to give a greater amount of time to that. It was just in the last couple of months. And strangely enough, I didn’t realize what I was doing, honestly—I was just working away at my record over the last year and a half — and when I got the first track listing of all the songs when we finally put them all together—and they [had all been] just a bunch of loose ends—and I looked at it and I saw the guests...I just looked at that list and it was kind of like this backdoor answer to a prayer—like God snuck it in on me. [*laughs*] I was like ‘Oh I see, You already answered this, You already had me doing that.’ And I thought it was just so interesting that I was praying about giving more of my time there, and I already was giving more of my time there. I didn’t realize it wasn’t a bunch of A-list artists—it was a bunch of young, up-and-coming artists that I collaborated with. It wasn’t intentional on my behalf; it was just God doing what He does.

But when it comes to fostering new talent, Toby’s efforts are nothing short of intentional. With a gift for finding and developing the kind of distinctive artistry necessary to stand out and make a real impression in the music industry (a gift he humbly dismisses as simply a matter of ‘batting

averages,' or rather a forgiving percentage of hits versus misses), his focus on growing the pool of impactful artists in Christian music through Gotee Records stems from his unique view of the true purpose of art and music.

"When I'm looking for artists, I'm looking for artists that are making art to serve people. That's what moves me about art. Ultimately, I look at it as loving people when you make great art. I'm looking for artists and art that serve people well and love humanity."

Toby adds that he holds himself to the same high standards, never viewing his work as an act of self-indulgent personal expression, but much more than that. "I look at my art as serving people. Causing people to think. Causing people to smile. Causing people to laugh. Causing people to dance. Causing people to have conversations. That's how I view art. A service to the people. I know it might not be the coolest thing to say in the art world, because I know it's supposed to be all about what you're feeling, but I look at it as loving people well when you make great art."

When discussing the songs and lyrics featured on *\*\*\*THIS IS NOT A TEST\*\*\**, it is clear that TobyMac infuses his whole self, his passion, pain, and innate humanity into the art he creates, serving not only the people who consume it, but his own need for creative catharsis.

After the difficulty of losing his father in early 2015, he took time to reflect and draw inspiration from the kind of man his father was. "My dad's life and his death deeply affected me. The way he lived, his commitment to God's Word...his love for the Word and God, the Body and church. He really didn't go anywhere without his Bible." He continues that his father served as partial inspiration for the raw and emotional track, "Love Feels Like," recorded with **Kevin Max** and **Michael Tait** of dcTalk.

The song chronicles the challenges, rewards, and exhausting nature of love when you truly give your all in direct service to others. Toby, himself, has long been dedicated to service, including through his Franklin, Tennessee-based projects Camp Electric, a Christian music camp, and **Run for Hope**, a fundraising organization for **New Hope Academy**, a Gospel-centered school seeking to educate children from all racial, social, and economic backgrounds.



“It’s easy to give to organizations, easy to represent organizations,” he says. “But to serve through them and be the hands and feet of Jesus to someone you love — that’s a depth and dimension I’ve never really experienced other than with my own children. Changing their diapers, walking with them in a deep way, loving on them, and being completely hands on...you relish that. But serving and loving when it’s hard and it taxes your body and your mind is a level I never experienced until the last few years,” he says.

As a father of five, Toby says the lyrics of “Love Feels Like” serve the dual purpose of commemorating his own father and describing the incomparable fulfillment and calling of fatherhood itself. “I wrote this song a lot about my dad and my son Moses. A lot of it was thoughts of him swelling in my mind. How much I love him and want to serve him, and always be the dad that he needs me to be.”

With reverberating honesty, the lyrics of “Love Feels Like” surge with earnestness pressing on the reality that love can be both draining and deeply fulfilling all at once. *Harder than I thought/Takin’ every part of me/ Harder than I thought/So much harder than I thought it’d be/But emptiness never felt so full/This is what love feels like/Poured out/used up/still giving/ stretching me out to the end of my limits/this is what love feels like.* Despite the wearying depiction of love Toby describes in “Love Feels Like,” the song ultimately embraces the fight. *And now these three remain/Faith, hope and love/ But the greatest of these is love/It’s worth everything you put in.*

“It’s strange,” Toby continues, “that you can feel so drained when you’re loving on that level, yet so full because you know you’ve given everything on behalf of someone else.”

There is an element of raw, unbridled sincerity when Toby discusses his family—the sort of presumed comfort in exposing the intimacy of his home you might not expect from a man of his celebrity... **JUMP TO FULL ARTICLE** from the August 15, 2015 edition of **CCM Magazine**

# LAUREN DAIGLE—SO BE IT

An Introduction To Christian Music's New 'It Girl' Proves She's Got Talent, Depth, and Humility Well Beyond Her Years

BY MATT CONNER

**Excerpt from the April 15, 2015 edition of CCM Magazine | Lauren Daigle** grew up imitating some of the greatest voices the music industry has ever heard. With her new album, she's making her case to be included among them.

Daigle makes her full-length debut this month with the inspirational **How Can It Be** after releasing an EP that showed hints of her tremendous vocal power, a talent that's earned numerous comparisons to Adele. If that sounds like a stretch, take one listen to songs like "I Am Yours" or the title track to hear the similarity between the two performers.

Daigle grew up in Lafayette, Louisiana, singing along to the memorable choruses and unrivaled voices of **Whitney Houston** and **Celine Dion**. Her mom called her house

"The Music Box" because Lauren was always singing.

"I would walk around at 5 years old singing Whitney and Celine," says Daigle. "[My parents] would always know I was awake — not from seeing me but hearing me in the mornings."

Daigle credits her parents for two particular facets of her musical make-up that made a strong impression at an early age. One being a game her father developed simply by guessing songs and artists that would play on the radio, resulting in a strong musical vocabulary for young Daigle.

"My dad used to play this game with us called 'The Dollar Game,'" she says. "When we were in the car, he'd turn the dial to a classic rock station—he loved **Led Zeppelin**—and would say things like, 'If you can guess who

sings this song, I'll give you a dollar. If it's really hard, I'll give you five dollars.' It taught us as at a very young age to listen for different sounds, tones and styles of music, which proved valuable in a lot of ways."

When it comes to her earliest musical memories, Daigle remembers another particular moment where her mother helped instill in her the value of documenting a particular moment and metaphor.

"This story involves a planter, one that we used for a tree, that was placed at the front of our house. One particular day when it rained, it filled up with mud and looked just like chocolate milk," she recollects. "After telling my mom about it, she suggested that we make a book about 'my day with the chocolate-milk-rain.'

"So I remember putting together this book complete with pictures I painted. My mom stapled it all together, which then gave me a tangible memory of my day. I think that creativity eventually trickled into my songwriting. It was taking a moment to look at a story or a picture that God had shown me and then incorporating that into a song."

With such a strong musical background, Daigle eventually developed hopes for a professional career, which resulted in auditioning for **American Idol** three times. She experienced relative success, making it all the way to the cut line below the twenty-four finalists. After she recorded vocals for a worship demo track back at home, **Centricity Records** invited Daigle on an artists' retreat; and the rest is history... **JUMP TO FULL ARTICLE** from the April 15, 2015 edition of **CCM Magazine**

# IN EVERY SEASON

Would You Believe That Lauren Daigle's Journey Toward 2015 GMA Dove Awards New Artist Of The Year Began As A Prayer For Pop Success

BY LENA ZIEGLER

**Excerpt from the November 1, 2015 edition of CCM Magazine** | Along with powerhouse vocals and unforgettable songwriting, it is Daigle's unwavering faith that moves so poignantly through her music and into the hearts of her fans that has made her a sensation. But even with that, Daigle says she struggles at times to fight the anxiety that comes with recording, performing, and trusting in God first before all things.

"That's exactly why 'First' was written. There was that pressure, like, 'Hey, with these next four songs you write, can you please give us another hit? Thanks,'" she says, divulging the fears and doubts that plagued her when writing the songs that would transform the *How Can It Be* EP into a full-length album. "I woke up super-anxious one day, and the Lord showed me this passage; *Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you (Matthew 6:28)*. So I knew, right there in that moment, God was doing something incredible. I just needed to sit, and rest in His presence.

"The next day, I walked into a scheduled co-write, and the girl looked at me and said, 'They've come up with a song title, but they want to know what God was putting on your heart.' So I gave her that passage, and she said, 'Well, that's amazing, because the title we just came up with is called First. I knew, right then, that God was about to do something massive in this song.'

"First," currently #1 on **Billboard** Christian Radio charts is massive in its sound, its scope, and its reach to fans, reminding them to have trust in God always, and to always put Him first.

"He's just going to do more, He's just going to do greater things, and remind us not to get anxious and fearful of the pressures, but to stay

focused on His Kingdom. I have to battle that one, and still he'll say, 'Don't worry about those kinds of things, just focus on being a clean vessel for Me to pour through.'"

And it is God pouring through Daigle's voice and the words she sings, that she says forms the spiritual connection between herself and her fans, who through social media and meet-and-greets after her concerts, never forget to remind her of how deeply her music has affected them.

"Night after night, sometimes with tears streaming down their faces, people say, 'I can't tell you what God has done through your music'—it's the total pay off," she says.

"Because then, it's less about me and all about the power of God, as He works through the song. He's the one that's going in and transforming people's lives, and the fact that He would choose my songs completely blows me away.

"Just the other day a woman told me that she had been dating a married man for thirteen years, and then she heard "How Can It Be," and instantly knew she had to end the relationship. She said, 'I knew in that moment God had the capacity to continue to love me through this. Through my sin, through my shame, and to fix all the pieces afterwards, as well.' That, right there, is what it's all about!"

And when it comes down to it, that's what Daigle is now all about—sharing her faith through music, reaching people, and serving God as a medium for His message. Through an initial struggle to find her way, Daigle has found more than her musical path, but also a profound sense of peace and love, coupled with a worldview that could only be credited to her ever-evolving relationship with God.

"He's really crafted my eyes to see beyond what I would normally see," she says. "Like the capacity we have to love—it's just unbelievable. The ability to love beyond human, beyond flesh, and do crazy things, like loving the people that hurt you. That's the exact opposite way in which the world functions, but through Christ, we gain those abilities."

And in the case of Lauren Daigle, He's given her even more... **JUMP TO FULL ARTICLE** from the November 1, 2015 edition of **CCM Magazine**

# THE ART OF FOLLOWING

After a watershed spiritual experience, Jeremy Camp, an industry mainstay at the top of his game, considered calling it quits. But one night in Kyrgyzstan provided the much needed jolt of energy and refreshment in Jeremy's calling.

BY ANDREW GREER

## **Excerpt from the February 1, 2015 edition of *CCM Magazine* A PHONE CALL, A PETITION**

It was a couple of years ago when Jeremy, out of a record deal and running low on creative stamina, received a phone call from a missionary friend inviting he and his band to perform a concert in Kyrgyzstan. "KEER-GASTAN" is a predominantly Muslim nation in Central Asia known for volatile civil strife and strict religious censorship. Speaking Louder Ministries, Jeremy's non-profit organization providing crusade-style events, is designed to "declare the hope of Jesus throughout the world with music, testimony and service."

As a gospel-centric artist known for penning faith-empowering songs like "Walk by Faith" and "Reckless," and considering Speaking Louder's mission, Jeremy began making efforts to pull off the endeavor. "My friend in Kyrgyzstan expressed that people were fearful," Jeremy remembers, citing the intensity of his friend's request. "Churches were going underground. People were being persecuted and killed for their faith. Tension was building and he said they needed something desperately."

"So here I am proclaiming this song 'Reckless' [the title track from his 2012 record], and now a friend is suggesting I be part of something potentially 'dangerous,'" Jeremy explains the responsibility he felt to translate his written words into action.

As Kyrgyzstan's Ministry of Religion and the KGB scoured Jeremy's online



platforms for possible offenses to hosting a local concert — the highly applauded artist’s list of accolades coupled with his “cool, American vibe” ultimately sold them on hosting the show. Of course, it would only be allowable under the strict guidelines that Jeremy would simply play music and not share his beliefs.

But as plans progressed and warnings increased, the husband and father of three (Jeremy is married to Adrienne, former front-woman for Christian rock band The Benjamin Gate) began assessing the realities of sharing the gospel in a country intolerant of — and even violent towards — the Christian message. And Camp, the family man, pushed pause.

“There were too many red flags. It had to be the Lord calling me to do this. I’m not going to flippantly go somewhere that could wind up being crazy,” he says, feeling the cost of this decision to his family with something that could possibly go awry. “We ended up telling them we didn’t think it was going to be the right timing.”

Upon hearing the news, his friend abroad replied with one last appeal. “He said, ‘This is probably going to be the last year you would be able to come to Kyrgyzstan. It’s getting more and more unsafe. The persecutions are starting to rise. The people are fearful. We need help.’”

Rather than a manipulative guilt trip, Jeremy admits his friend’s persistence was an honest plea for spiritual aid. A petition Jeremy and his cohorts were willing to reconsider. So they prayed hard.

“The next Sunday, we were praying at church and God gave us verses and songs that simply said, ‘Go.’ We fell on our faces, crying out to God to prepare the land and the venue in Kyrgyzstan, praying, ‘God I know you are preparing the way. We just want to be a part of it.’”

In the face of the nation’s tense reality, Jeremy and his musical entourage packed their instruments and carried the gospel to Kyrgyzstan.

### **ONE NIGHT IN KYRGYZSTAN**

Once on foreign soil, Camp hit the ground running and fulfilled a full day of press requests and media interviews. But as a mostly Muslim nation with profound religious restrictions, Jeremy was forewarned to choose his

words wisely in order to ensure the concert's confirmation as well as their safety while inside the country. "I would share the details of my testimony in generalities, but then say things like, 'God brings hope — and I want to share that hope with this generation.' But I had to be careful when talking about Jesus," he explains.

As he continued to carefully share his heart's hope, the spiritually sensitive musician began feeling a heaviness, "an unexplainable tension," as he describes, in the room. "People began asking, 'What is the real reason you are here?' All of the sudden, I'm feeling oppression and fear, a warfare, like I've never felt before in my life."

"I remember the night before the main event very well. As we were preparing to go on stage for a youth event I overheard our host, in a worry-some tone, say to the local pastor 'We'll have to deal with that when we get to it'" — not something that Camp or his team wanted to hear in those moments!

"When I asked what was going on, he said 'Because of the interviews, the government has realized that this event may be more in-your-face than they were expecting. In turn, the media is expressing to the people of Kyrgyzstan that tomorrow's concert is provocative in nature, and that it's going to agitate our people. They're telling everyone not to come.'"

The weight of the situation was coming into focus. With Jeremy's likeness appearing on every billboard and open space across the nation's largest city centers, any even unintentional over communication could bear consequences. "If I said the wrong thing from the stage, they would send the local church's pastor to prison for a year," Jeremy soberly relates. "Reality was hitting us."

"After the youth event concluded I asked 'Should I be watching my back?' He said, 'Yes.' So at that point my bodyguard began to follow me everywhere. I then eventually fell on my knees and cried out, 'God, I can't do this. It's too much pressure!' It was in that moment God responded, 'Perfect. Now you can do it. You are letting go of what you can accomplish, because you can't accomplish anything without me.' That blew my mind."

Amid the bomb threats and warnings of sniper attacks, the main event remained on-schedule. Due to the negative press and local grumblings, Camp's ministry team began preparing themselves for a meager attendance. However, by the time Jeremy took the stage that night over 8,000 people flooded the stadium. "At the time I finally walked onto the stage, the peace of God began to guard my heart. I had no fear. I shared about Jesus. Altar calls are against the law in Kyrgyzstan, but I took full advantage of the liberty to talk about my faith — people all around the stadium came forward for prayer."

As a result of Jeremy's surrender, his crew, and the team's concerted exercise of faith in the face of fear, thousands were able to hear about Jesus — some even for the very first time.

Jeremy recalls one tangible sign of God's protection from that evening that was literally marked across the sky. "As we were praying before the concert, clouds were darkening all around the city. Above the stadium, however, the sky was completely clear and blue and there was — no joke — one particular cloud in the shape of a dove! I honestly tried to not over-spiritualize it, but in that moment and after all that happened leading up to it, you just have to let go and say, 'Alright, Holy Spirit. You do your work!'"

Not long after Jeremy and his Speaking Louder team left Kyrgyzstan for home, his missionary friends were kicked out of the country as a direct result of the concert's impact. Thankfully, they were also able to report that the Kyrgyzstan Christian Church has been emboldened like never before.

Simply stated, Jeremy says, "This experience has changed my everything..." **JUMP TO FULL ARTICLE** from the February 1, 2015 edition of **CCM Magazine**

# MIKE FARRIS—FOR ALL THE PEOPLE

Returning to the land of the living, legend in the making Mike Farris is just thankful to be playing music. Period.

BY MELISSA RIDDLE-CHALOS

**Excerpt from the July 15, 2015 edition of CCM Magazine** | January 11th, 2015. The **Ryman Auditorium** was packed to the rafters and rightfully so. The **Sam's Place** concert series — a Sunday night showcase for “music of the spirit” hosted by CCM mainstay **Steven Curtis Chapman** — had re-launched in the fall of 2014 to great excitement, especially among Christian music fans. And this particular show, the first of the New Year, held great promise.

On the bill, in addition to Chapman, were country music artists **Craig Morgan** and **Deana Carter**, Christian pop icon **Michael W. Smith**, CCM rockers **Third Day** and another guy only a smattering of people at the ‘Mother Church of Country Music’ knew anything about. A slight, shaggy-haired man in a pirate-pride coat and a feather-pricked fedora took the stage, with a guitar and a lone keyboard sideman. He'd stood on the Ryman stage many times, but this was totally different.

He knew he was standing in a room full of the faithful, but he wasn't standing before his own.

Flashback to April 2007, when **Mike Farris** debuted his critically acclaimed **Salvation In Lights** before music business insiders and music buyers at Gospel Music Week. There, at **B.B. King's Blues Bar** in Nashville, people who thought they'd heard and seen it all stood with mouths agape, eyes like saucers, aghast at how that sound, that soul, could come from such an unlikely source. Artists, set to perform after the “new kid” Farris, stood off stage, in the wings, shaking their heads in disbelief. “You want me to go on after that?” That Mike Farris had recorded a gospel album was a wonder. The fact that he was alive to record anything was a miracle.

Dependent on drugs and alcohol since the age of fifteen, Farris' addictions had long held him hostage. At age nineteen, answering a newspaper ad for a soul singer, he became the front man for **Screamin' Cheetah Wheelies**, signed a deal with **Atlantic Records**, recorded three albums and toured around the world. Primed for A-list success, the southern rock outfit gained a rabid, faithful following, but Farris' demons denied him the focus success required. His gift was undeniably rare and new opportunities continued to knock — including a stint in **Stevie Ray Vaughn's Double Trouble** — but a fog wrapped him like a gauzy winter coat, taking a seemingly irreversible toll. Homeless, living in his car in Knoxville, TN, his reality had all the trimmings of a made-for-television movie.

But God had a better plan for his broken boy.

In 2005, Farris got his first taste of sobriety. He stood at the grave site of his nephew, as his own estranged father drove away, and he knew it was past time to get his life in order. Not the best approach by any means...

**JUMP TO FULL ARTICLE** from the July 15, 2015 edition of **CCM Magazine** CCM

# JON FOREMAN

Around The World In 24-Songs

Can Jon Foreman's latest musical journey accurately provide the soundtrack to the sunlights, shadows, darkneses and dawns of our lives

BY ANDREW GREER

**Excerpt from the October 15, 2015 edition of CCM Magazine** | As one of the founding fathers of the multi-platinum alt-rock band **Switchfoot**, **Jon Foreman** is one of music's most recognizable young veterans. But even longtime Switchfoot listeners admire the beloved front man for more than just music. His holistic platform encompasses a passion for philanthropy, his west coast homeland and surfing, and a reflective solo discography, wrestling down the mysteries of his faith alongside fans, not simply in front of them.

Having already released a seasonal EP series—*Fall, Winter, Spring* and *Summer* — plus a pair of acoustic-alt-folk records as one-half of **Fiction Family**, a side collaboration with **Nickel Creek's Sean Watkins**, Foreman's thoughtful singer-songwriter prose has enlisted a throng of discerning listeners all his own.

Following his serial trend, 2015 introduces a new collection of EPs entitled *The Wonderlands*. Featuring 24 songs, produced by 24 creatives, divvied up between four EPs — the already-released *Sunlight, Shadows* and *Darkness*, with *Dawn*, releasing later this month — Foreman takes the time to pause and reflect on the unique language of music, and how this melodic speech can help us express our hearts for each other, and for God.



**CCM: Twenty-four songs. Twenty-four producers. Help me wrap my head around the motivation behind utilizing so many different people to capture this massive set list of songs?**

**Jon Foreman:** The question was, “How do you make a record while touring?” I wanted *The Wonderlands* to be acoustic guitar with lush instrumentation. I can fake playing enough instruments on the road, but I don’t play cello or bass clarinet [Laugh]. I really can’t get that orchestral feel. So, my friend, Chris York, and I came up with the idea of hiring these incredibly talented friends of ours, sending them the songs and they would send us back all the tracks. Cello, piano, choir, whatever.

All these different producers — **Andrew [Wessen]** from **Grouplove**, **Darren [King]** from **Mutemath**, **Taylor [York]** from **Paramore**, **Jeff Coffin** from **Dave Matthews Band** — I would send them various stages of a song, and they would send their version of it back.

After the first record I realized I really like a sparring partner. I like someone to hit back with their own musical muscle. I need that. I need somebody else in the ring with me.

**CCM: What was the significance behind the number ‘24?’**

**JF:** I wanted to create a world with *Wonderland*, where all these songs would map out this place that wasn’t quite earth. Where you could look back at our planet from this objective position that gives you a little distance. Then the concept of 24-hours of this musical planet came as we were grouping the songs.

**CCM: Music is therapeutic. It is an outlet for our feelings—to give feelings to our penmanship, of sorts. These EPs explore the gamut of emotions. How do they help you express what is on your mind and heart?**

**JF:** I feel like melody and music, in general, expresses things I can’t express any other way. Music often tells the truth quicker than words, couple that with social acceptability. It is socially acceptable for me to sing a song about God, girls, sex, doubt, fear, anything, in front of thousands of people, but

I would have trouble talking about these issues with my closest friends. It gets to the heart of the matter.

Referring to the idea of writing fantasy, **C.S. Lewis** said it could, steal past those watchful dragons, of religion. I feel like music does the same thing as a kind of melodic allegory of life.

In music, there's this idea of tension and release. Periods of doubt, and then resolve. We get to the other side. Sometimes music says those things more clearly than words.

### **CCM: Music seems to have a universal relatability.**

**JF:** I've played shows in Japan, India, South Africa, all over the Philippines, and Malaysia, where people don't necessarily speak English. And that's what I sing in, right? [Laughs] Somehow the content of the lyric gets across. It's crazy to see a bunch of people who don't speak English singing along perfectly to your song with their hands up in the air, eyes closed. Then you talk to them after the show and they don't speak English. You realize what a powerful connection music has with the heart.

**CCM: Where you live in California, you are founding a music school where** underprivileged teens can receive music lessons. What inspired this?

**JF:** A desire to see the world change was the initial impetus for all of my crazy projects. You are first aware of a problem. The problem, at least in California, is all the music programs are being cut—art and theatre programs as well. So I thought, "Maybe music is being cut because music it's no longer needed for a child's education." Then I did the research, and music is crucial for better test scores in art, math and literature. And it's also crucial for self-esteem, holding a job and higher education. So then the question becomes, "What are we going to do about it?"

As musicians, we care more about music than anyone. So if we're not going to do something, then no one's going to do anything. That's where the initial thrust came from. We're hoping to open it this fall... **JUMP TO FULL ARTICLE** from the October 15, 2015 edition of **CCM Magazine**

# KB—For His Glory Alone

The newest Reach Records standout, KB, chats with CCM about music, ministry, golf, and community

BY KEVIN SPARKMAN

**Excerpt from the June 1, 2015 edition of *CCM Magazine*** | You see a story about a rapper entitled “For His Glory Alone,” and immediately you think that you’ve read it before. Second verse definitely not the same as the first verse.

It’s true, in his short, now two-and-a-half album career with Atlanta’s **Reach Records Kevin Burgess**, whom we all know by now as **KB**, has already attained what most in the genre have not in the lifespan of their artistry. Modest record sales, growing clout in the artist community in and out of hip hop (Christian or mainstream), awards, and documented crossover chart success—all items that seem to pass by the tiny sliver of music industry pie we know as Christian hip hop.

Like his employer Reach Records, however, KB has made enough noise to garner the attention of those outside of the Christian hip hop community. His 2014 EP titled *100* debuted on Billboard’s Christian chart at #1 (#4 on Billboard’s Rap chart and #22 on their vaulted Top 200), all leading up to securing a Dove Award, relationships with the GRAMMY organization, and acclaim that has taken him far beyond the streets of his Tampa, FL dwelling.

As he concluded in the documentary “Before Tomorrow—Part Two,” featured on his website *WhoIsKB.com*, “All in all, my job on this earth—what I’m doing here—is to bring clarity to people’s vision of God.” Like the namesake of a humble Bible study that began in a Tampa apartment that has now turned into a community-wide movement—above all else, Kevin Burgess lives to glorify Christ—for His Glory Alone.

Shortly after the release of his second full-length album *Tomorrow We Live* (already a chart success story), we talked with KB about how he got his start, working with **Lecrae** and **Bubba Watson** (yes, that Bubba), the difficult

subject of suicide, and how his community and family keeps him focused and grounded while his career takes off.

### **CCM: Have you heard testimonies of others coming to Christ through your music specifically?**

**Kevin Burgess:** Many times. I've had people come up to me after shows to tell me that my music has changed their lives. All of the glory goes to God. It also seems like it happens at times when I may be going through a season of discouragement or resistance when it comes to what I'm doing professionally. It's like God orchestrates those moments to reaffirm for me what He's able to do through my music.

There was a guy that I met once that confessed he was about to take his own life before coming to one of my concerts. During the show, God completely transformed his mind.

### **CCM: Speaking of suicide, walk us through the painful real-life moments of "Calling You."**

**KB:** We had a friend in our community ending up being very bitter toward a lot of us upon his return from combat overseas. Although I understand now that he was genuinely hurt, at the time I admit that I felt like he was being somewhat immature about the situation. It was difficult to consistently get him on the line and there were always issues with Skype, etc., but in hindsight we could have definitely tried harder while he was there.

After he returned, he consistently distanced himself from the community, and seemingly, away from Christianity — this should have been a red flag for all of us. Then one night he took his own life. I went to his house within the hour it happened and experienced his family weeping and mourning, I remember being speechless and feeling hopeless. "Calling You" came out of the burden I felt to retell the story in a way to respect the family, but also to bring to light the unfortunate common reality of suicide in America.

Two things that I have taken away from that story and consistently tell are, 1) Being more compassionate to those who are sick and hurting. A lot of factors can feed into someone reaching a mental state of actually

going through with taking their own life, but we have to be better at loving someone through their hurt as if we're responding to someone with a physical illness, and 2) Encouraging anyone with a struggle to please, at the very least, just talk to someone about it. Allow yourself to become a little vulnerable, there's a very good chance many other people you know are going through something similar — you're not alone.

### **CCM: Who were some of the Christian hip-hop artists that influenced you?**

**KB:** What began the shift of thinking from rap as a hobby to more of a career mindset were some of the artists from **Cross Movement Records**. I was introduced to a guy named **FLAME**, his first album is still one of my favorites to this day. I immediately identified with him through his slang and accent, as he is from St. Louis, not far from where I grew up. **The Ambassador** and **Da' T.R.U.T.H.**, also from Cross Movement, and of course Lecrae.

### **CCM: How has Lecrae been involved in your artistry?**

**KB:** I'm a firm believer in the notion of "you know you have a career when it becomes a career." So when people asked me to perform and then began to pay me for it, it's like, "Hey, I have a career!" Before all of this, rapping was definitely just an extension of an overall ministry for me in Tampa. I am part of a community-wide mini-movement called HGA (His Glory Alone). We were everywhere sounding the alarm that Jesus had saved us — and not that it has ever been our aim — however, the reality was it did not support any of us financially. But it eventually became one of the links that led me to meeting Lecrae, and eventually he introduced an opportunity for me to make a career out of music. Taking what I naturally did here — then refining, perfecting, and turning it into something that's a bit more constructed and consumable. Lecrae had a lot to do with me having a career in Christian music — he initially gave me the platform and the means to expand on what I felt God calling me to do.

### **CCM: What have you learned from Lecrae?**

**KB:** A lot, but the main thing I can say is that I've learned from his example of keeping strong accountability — steering away from "yes men" and

surrounding myself with those that are not afraid to challenge me.

### **CCM: You have to tell us about Bubba Watson!**

**KB:** [Laughs] He's an incredible golfer and lover of Christian hip hop. We were doing a song on the album about taking risks and I thought that it would be pretty risky to have a golfer on a hip hop song, so it just kind-of happened...

**JUMP TO FULL ARTICLE** from the June 1, 2015 edition of **CCM Magazine**

# DARLENE ZSCHECH

Leading With Humility And Hope

Q&A with Darlene Zschech: Master songwriter and legendary leader; Humble mother, cancer survivor, child of God

BY KEVIN SPARKMAN

**Excerpt from the February 15, 2015 edition of CCM Magazine** | With the releasing of her latest project ***In Jesus' Name: A Legacy of Faith and Worship***, a celebration of **Darlene Zschech's** favorites, **CCM Magazine** wanted to dig just a little deeper into a few of the project's newest songs, catch up with her family's mission efforts in Africa, and to get her thoughts on subjects like worship and heaven.

The anointing of God on Zschech's work is undeniable. Also apparent, is the glorification of God that is spread the world-over time and again through her music—a contribution that has now spanned three decades. She says of her penned classic "Shout To The Lord," "I still get overwhelmed as I hear people worship Jesus with those lyrics. The message stands true and the declaration within it gives people strength and clarity. I personally stand in awe of God's faithfulness every single time I sing it."

Zschech's humility is intrinsic to her ability in capturing the very nature



of her relationship with her Creator through song. When asked what goes through her mind when she thinks about the millions of people singing the lyrics “My Jesus / My Savior / Lord, there is none like You” around the world each and every Sunday, she simply stated “It’s the people’s song, not mine. Seriously, the feeling of honor to have been part of that has never left me.”

**CCM: Tell us the story behind writing the song “In Jesus’ Name.”**

**DARLENE ZSCHECH:** I was actually walking through the final stage of cancer with a dear lady from our church, and to be honest, I got SO angry that cancer takes the lives of so many. Mark and I both lost our fathers to cancer—the list goes on and on—so my intention was to write a statement of faith straight from the Word of God that would confront the fear head-on.

**CCM: You recently stated “As I put my HOPE in Him, His love will engulf me, and I will be stolen away to a place no one else can go, because it’s a place reserved for Him and me. There is a place in Christ designed just for you too.” As a worship leader who directs thousands into corporate worship regularly, how do your intimate moments with God correlate with your leading?**

**DZ:** I honestly know that you cannot lead people to places you’ve never been. Diving deep into His love and grace this year has not only affected my worship leading, but every area of my life. I will never be the same. I don’t want to be the same. To be a worship leader that truly leads, you must be a prayerful person rather than simply a musical person. Understand the theology behind why you do what you do—then the confidence that shines from that place has nothing to do with you, rather, the Godly fire in your belly to lead people to the courts of the King will easily lead the way.

**CCM: What advice or encouragement could you give to those receiving the call to write songs specifically for worship?**

**DZ:** When writing, you’ve got to have something to say—something that is truly stirring in your spirit. It sounds so simple but it’s true! Dig deep, don’t

rush. Get feedback from those you trust. Hold your songs loosely—worship is not about you and your songs, it's about the glory of God.

**CCM: What are some of the basic principles that you apply to help you in the songwriting process?**

**DZ:** Always get someone to check the theology of your lyrics. And, in the end, when writing songs for congregations, make sure they can sing them!

**CCM: Is there a particular writer or singer today that you can foresee releasing a “worship legacy” project in 15-20 years?**

**DZ:** Oh my, there are so many people I love and admire when it comes to worship music! **The Bethel** [Music] team, **Hillsong** team, **Miriam Webster**, **Israel Houghton**, **Worship Central**, etc. But as we are very close to **Martin** and **Anna Smith**, I would say that Martin's writing has had a profound effect on me, my family, and now our church family. He is one of the very, very best... **JUMP TO FULL ARTICLE** from the February 15, 2015 edition of **CCM Magazine**

## RED—Q&A With Red

Finding the light: Reliving the pain from darkness produces best Red album to date

BY KEVIN SPARKMAN

**Excerpt from the March 15, 2015 edition of CCM Magazine** | When an established outfit veers from a perceived musical pathway, a reaction garnered by many faithful **Red** followers after **Release The Panic** in 2013, it can set the stage for an endless meandering or a triumphant return. When this, the fifth offering **Of Beauty and Rage** was dubbed as a “concept album,” emanating ripples of shock waves seemed to have Red's core audience rocked once again.

Well, the core is definitely rocked — but the February 2015 release, debuting at #14 on the U.S. Billboard 200 chart (#2 U.S. Top Alternative Albums, #1 U.S. Christian Albums), has already proven to be a fan favorite and is bringing the band's faithful followers back to Red's roots heard on debut recordings **End Of Silence** and the sophomore **Innocence and Instinct**. In addition, Red self proclaims "We've created, hands down, our best album yet" as voiced on their **PledgeMusic.com** profile page, where fans came out in droves to support *Of Beauty and Rage*.

We agree with singer **Matt Barnes**, guitarist **Anthony Armstrong**, and bassist **Randy Armstrong**, the collective we know and love as Red — this is, to date, their watershed recording. Aside from any negative connotations the term "concept" may conjure, the formula just seems to work on of *Beauty and Rage*, as the band does a masterful job of utilizing sixty-plus powerful minutes to package the story of hidden beauty we find waiting for us beneath the darkness.

We catch up with twin brothers Anthony and Randy and dive deeper into the concepts from ***Of Beauty and Rage***.

**CCM:** In addition to an intense soundtrack, *Of Beauty and Rage* also incorporates some pretty dark imagery — which is accompanied by a companion graphic novel — how potentially dangerous is it to put so much emphasis on this?

**Randy Armstrong:** It can illicit reactions of "Are you guys really who you say you are," or "Have you changed because you put a scary-looking figure on the cover on the album?" This reminds me of an article I recently read by **Dan Haseltine** of **Jars Of Clay** in which he talks about bands increasingly receiving criticism as their audience and popularity grows, and how the first things people seem to reach for are fear and anxiety. We do those things to provoke thoughts and questions like these and to hopefully have the opportunity to have intentional conversation about Who we believe in.

We've always been a band that has tried to push the limits — to not ignore the dark things. A lot of us have a hard time getting out of the darkness because we suppress it, but through *Red* we choose to confront

those things head on. Plus, we know who we're running to, so this ultimately provides for an opportunity to engage others about our Savior. God has given us a story to tell through the music and art we've created, but He creates the opportunity.

### **CCM: The song "Yours Again" talks about finding a peace in God and returning to Him—how would you encourage someone who might be struggling in their relationship with the Lord?**

**Anthony Armstrong:** Some people will put God to the test and want some sort of physical proof. They might yell to God and say "OK, last resort, if You're real prove it!" But it's amazing all of the signs along the way that go unnoticed or ignored that are intended to help get ourselves out of our own way and back to Him. For some, they have been lingering in the shadows for so long it finally gets too dark to see their hand in front of their face. It's a sad reality that sometimes it takes us getting to the absolute lowest parts of our lives, when there's no other way out, to realize we need our Savior, but He'll take us any way the He can get us!

**Randy Armstrong:** I don't think God ever leaves us, He's always there — it's us that wind up distancing ourselves from Him. As we walk through dark times together, sometimes as Christians we wonder why bad things have to happen to good people. But take courage in knowing that throughout all time God has used broken people. Also be encouraged to keep your foundation in Him because He uses broken people to lead other broken people through the darkest parts of life.

### **CCM: The song "Gravity Lies" is about our identity in Christ — how would you encourage someone who might be struggling with their identity or even self-worth?**

**RA:** I would encourage that they talk to someone that they can really trust.

**AA:** A simple, but good answer is to go to church. Try out a local church youth group. But trust your instincts and also use caution, because sometimes even those places aren't always necessarily filled with light. Find a place where you can connect with other people, and once you're

## **Q&A FEATURE**

comfortable, dive in a little more and begin to truly understand the differences compared to how things were when you started. Ultimately, I think it's about relationships. Jesus Christ is all about them — He wants to be in relationship with all of us. In the right and best of situations, He can use the relationships that we foster in being a part of the body of Christ to draw Himself nearer to us, and to help us with figuring out who we really are. encourage that they talk to someone that they can really trust...

**JUMP TO FULL ARTICLE** in the March 15, 2015 edition of **CCM Magazine** CCM

# TOBYMAC, **\*\*\*THIS IS NOT A TEST\*\*\*** ARGYRAKIS' NO. 1 ALBUM OF 2015

BY ANDY ARGYRAKIS

The year may have just come to a close, plus it's still a few weeks before the new music release cycle really starts heating up again, which makes the start of this new year a perfect time to look back on our favorites of 2015. Though I didn't have the chance to listen to every single project that released last year, if only for the sheer quantity spanning so many genres, record labels and independent offerings, there were certainly several standouts across those I specifically reviewed for **CCM**.

If my round-up possesses any theme, it appears to be linked by artists of faith who aren't only making a major impact amongst Christian radio listeners, but quite literally music lovers across any walk of life. But make no mistake, everyone I've selected is never afraid to say exactly what they believe, while making sure to balance both artistically interesting yet accessible musical landscapes.

So whether it be the hip-hop-infused pop sounds of the eternally youthful **TobyMac**, the classic metallic rock of **Stryper** or the R&B-stacked gospel grooves of **Jonathan McReynolds** (to name but a few), hopefully they'll be a little bit of something for everyone. As you can see, diversity continues to be a constant throughout my listening palette and there was definitely no shortage of that on **CCM's** speakers in 2015! **CCM**



# ANDY'S TOP 10 OF 2015

1. **TobyMac**  
*This Is Not A Test*
2. **Stryper**  
*Fallen*
3. **Jonathan McReynolds**  
*Life Music, Stage 2*
4. **Sara Groves**  
*Floodplain*
5. **The McCrary Sisters**  
*Let's Go*
6. **The Gray Havens**  
*Fire and Stone*
7. **Fireflight**  
*Innova*
8. **Mike Lee**  
*All I Need*
9. **Owl City**  
*Mobile Orchestra*
10. **Manafest**  
*Reborn*

# JON FOREMAN

## THE WONDERLANDS EPS

### CONNER'S NO. 1 ALBUM OF 2015

BY MATT CONNER

Another year of music is in the books, and if I've learned anything, it's that I'm thankful for the ability to depend on the finest songwriters in the industry to remain exactly that. While there were a number of newer artists presenting exciting freshman projects in 2015, the year's best releases were, for me, largely comprised of the names I'd expect. If you'd have told me back at the beginning of the year that **Jon Foreman** would release another four-EP series of solo material, his first in eight years, I'd have likely tabbed it as my favorite. And I would have been correct.

The same can be said for the musical dependability of songwriters like **Andrew Peterson** and **Phillip LaRue**, artists like **Kirk Franklin** and **Joy Williams**, and bands like **Red**. All are proven products in their given genres, known for musical excellence and artistic substance. Each of them also delivered, once again, in 2015.

And, as mentioned, there were also plenty of newer voices in the mix, ones we'll likely be referencing among the "dependable vets" in short order. **John Tibbs** wowed us with his rootsy rock a la **Ryan Adams**. **Tasha Cobbs** has gone from gospel's most impressive newcomer to brightest young star. **Dan Bremnes** made good on the promise of his debut with another meaningful set of songs.

Songsmiths, both experienced and unseasoned, provided much needed language for our faith journeys in 2015. Here's hoping for more of where those came from. CCM

# MATT'S TOP 10 OF 2015

- 1. Jon Foreman**  
*The Wonderlands (Sunlight and Dawn)*
- 2. Andrew Peterson**  
*The Burning Edge of Dawn*
- 3. John Tibbs**  
*Dead Man Walking*
- 4. Joy Williams**  
*Venus*
- 5. Red**  
*Of Beauty And Rage*
- 6. Phillip LaRue**  
*You*
- 7. Kirk Franklin**  
*Losing My Religion*
- 8. Rend Collective**  
*As Family We Go*
- 9. Dan Bremnes**  
*Where The Light Is*
- 10. Tasha Cobbs**  
*One Place Live*

# TREE63 LAND

## EDITOR'S NO. 1 ALBUM OF 2015

BY KEVIN SPARKMAN

What a year of music we had in 2015! In addition to receiving the honor and prodigious responsibility of becoming **CCM Magazine's** latest Managing Editor (**Matthew Paul Turner, Jay Swartzendruber, Lindsay Williams, Caroline Lusk** — your legacies are the examples by which I draw inspiration — I hope I'll be able to keep the torch as brightly lit!), I was more than inspired and encouraged by the projects that graced our computers, playlists, and **iPhone's** this year.

For those that know me, they understand that even though I'm a musician, my media — when not working (or thinking about work), of course — is mostly dominated by **ESPN**, the myriad of sports channels in the **U-Verse** lineup, **Palladia** (which showcases close to 0% in Christian programming), and especially sports talk radio. There are, however, occasional exceptions. These exceptions were upgraded from my **iTunes** "Work Only" playlist on the office computer, to front-and-center in my **Nissan Rogue's** CD player or auxiliary input, date night priority playlisting, or home entertainment system — they made my cut, and were a welcomed distraction to **MLB, Glastonbury Festival** re-runs, **NHL**, and **college football**.

There were many releases in 2015 that personally spoke to me, I feel it necessary that I include an "honorable mention" section, if you will. To begin, and because it's still afresh on my spirit, I have to say that I haven't been a fan of **Christmas music** until this year — thanks to **Andrew Greer's O Come Emmanuel** and **Tyrus Morgan/Jamie Jamgochian's Christmastime** albums. With a nod to my favorite **Pandora** playlists — **M83, Mutemath, and The Naked And Famous** — I was opened to trying out **Bethel Music's Synesthesia**, and absolutely love it! Midwest restaurant chain, **Pizza Ranch**, gets my vote for "most creative compilation," and includes one of my favorite **Kevin Max** songs, "Panic Button." An artist we will be talking

about for some time to come, **Hollyn**, sneaked just outside of this list — look for a full-length album and probable Top 10'er next year. **Brandon McSwain**'s indie release from early 2015, **The Breaking**, has continued to be a playlist staple in my daily commutes. CCM

## KEVIN'S TOP 10 OF 2015

1. **Tree63**  
*Land*
2. **Lauren Daigle**  
*How Can It Be*
3. **Jon Foreman**  
*The Wonderlands*  
*(Shadows and Darkness)*
4. **Mutemath** *Vitals*
5. **KB** *Tomorrow We Live*
6. **Gungor** *One Wild Life: Soul*
7. **Matthew West**  
*Live Forever*
8. **Jason Crabb**  
*Whatever The Road*
9. **Jeremy Camp**  
*I Will Follow*
10. **NF** *Mansion*



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