



The Freemans Keeping It Young

In This Issue:

Diamond Award Top 10 Nominees Announced!
The Dills | SG Singles | *The Passion*, 6 Years Later

THE PUBLISHER'S PERSPECTIVE: A VIDEO MESSAGE TO READERS FROM ROB PATZ

Rob is still
excited about
the Diamond
Awards. Like,
really excited...

Is he taking this
Mr. Publisher
thing too far?



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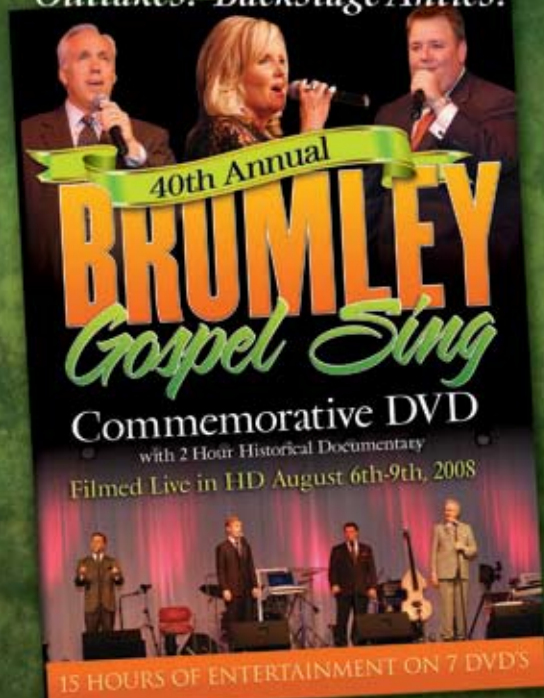
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SGN Scoops exists to showcase what is distinguished, intriguing, and real about southern & country gospel music. We seek with our stories to shed light on people fulfilling a call to minister - to make or support the making of music that excites an audience and glorifies God.
And we seek to do it interactively.

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CROSSING OVER

than usual, but because our readers got more vocal than usual.

Our interview with Matthew Paul Turner ('Jesus-NeedsNewPR') won us kudos and criticism.

Our coverage of non-southern gospel groups, in particular, a Christian Rock band from the West Coast, sparked a colorful debate over on our Facebook page as to what *SGN Scoops* is called and what exactly we are covering.

Admittedly, the current publisher of *SGN Scoops* did not name it (by the way, SGN=Southern Gospel News), nor do we pretend to have a corner on the "news"/news taking place in Southern Gospel.

But, to be clear, we are open and ready to report, feature, and offer our opinions on a variety of Christian music, books, and figures, while keeping a particular focus on Southern and Country gospel music.

This month, we feature the Freemans, who point out how important it has been for them to stay fresh and current in their music ministry, even as they stay true to their own classic gospel roots. I appreciate this outlook as one that is realistic. When our debate ensued on FB about the mission of SGM, the most argued point was whether SGM has a young or growing fan base.

Living with a teenager who lists George Younce and The McKameys "up there" with Ernie Hasse and Signature Sound and David Crowder Band, I can say for sure that it does have one. However, if young people are going to feel welcome in the culture of Southern Gospel, that culture will have to expand. Most new/young SG fans are firmly entrenched in an iPod, satellite radio,

MOST new sg are firmly entrenched in an iPod, satellite radio, indie coffee shop, guitar hero world...their GVB might be crossed with some DMB and definitely a bunch of CCM.

GVB might be crossed with some DMB and definitely a bunch of CCM. Criticizing them for their varied tastes is going to drive them away from concerts and product tables for sure.

OK? Cool. Now, on to something else:

As I sit to write this, we are in the midst of a great season for all Christians: the celebration of Jesus' Resurrection. At Christmas time, we often reflect on the gift of Jesus, and on Easter, the sacrifice He made. It is all equally awe-strik-

The past month was a banner one for *SGN Scoops*... not because we had more readers

ing, isn't it? The God of the world first came to Earth as a helpless child, grew up sinlessly, and shortly thereafter gave that same life in painful death to take punishment for all humankind.

It's really all we need. That sacrifice, that gift, does not require embellishment, graphics, fonts, multimedia supplements, prefaces, or prologues: God as man, God for man.

I like to think that belief is simple enough for all of us, but it gets tested all the time. During this season, we have also seen great tragedy strike close to home. In my town, a young firefighter died while attempting to rescue a man from his burning home just last week. He was 28 with his whole life ahead of him, and now he is someone for whom we will tie a red ribbon around our tree, someone to mourn and remember, but someone whose contributions on earth are over.

Meanwhile, one of our own staff members suffered an unfathomable blow when her new grandson went to Heaven upon his entry into the world.

If you're anything like me, these incidents, these tragedies, do not make you doubt your faith, but perhaps do make you wonder about God's ways. Why do some heroes escape seemingly impossible feats unscathed while some lose their lives? Why are some babies born into the world in perfect condition and some not able to take one breath? What is God trying to teach us?

Neither I nor this magazine has the answer. Today, however, I feel grateful to be working amongst people willing to explore it, willing to listen to God for it, willing to accept it in whatever musical or written form it might come in.

The Bible tells us God is no respecter of persons (Romans 2:11 and a bunch of other places), and I believe that likely means He is also no respecter of opinions and tastes. We all have them, we all like our own better than ones that differ.

At the end of the day, it's our duty to come together under the umbrella of life and grace that was given to us at the cross, to hold each other up in times of testing and sorrow, and to move on in Jesus' name.

Are you ready? Let's go!



KELLY CAPRIOTTI BURTON,
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Songs that comfort us

A DVD recording, a gathering of friends, a comforting memory

By Lou Will Hildreth



Dottie Rambo, Lou, and Mark Lowry in 2007.

A few nights ago, I was unusually restless, praying quietly for "Holy Spirit" wisdom, and I remembered the last song DOTTIE RAMBO sang on a Gaither video—"I Just Came To Talk With You Lord." I put the DVD *Nashville Homecoming* in the player and relived the excitement of the Gaither taping in 2007 at the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville. The gathering of more than 250 Homecoming artists by Bill and Gloria Gaither was the first time in about five years we had all been together and we were feeling the gamut of emotion! Five fabulous DVD titles came from this taping---*Amazing Grace*, *Rock Of Ages*, *How Great Thou Art*, *Nashville Homecoming*, and *Joy In My Heart*. I was seated by two of our greatest songwriters, SQUIRE PARSONS and DOTTIE RAMBO. We had no way of knowing this would be our last time to talk to Dottie and hear her sing one of her songs. She was killed when her tour bus crashed on May 11, 2008. Seeing her on the DVD and hearing the sweet lyrics of her song, a feeling of deep peace and comfort came over me.

Along with the incredible music on the DVD are inter-

views by JIMMY BLACKWOOD, GARY MCSPADDEN, JOEL HEMPHILL, LILLIE FERN WEATHERFORD, BILLY BLACKWOOD, DALLAS HOLM, and MARK LOWRY. BILL GAITHER included my interview, where we talked about our early Stamps-Baxter Music School experiences and his flying to Nashville to preside over my induction into the GMA Hall Of Fame in 2005. A sweet moment on the DVD is JANET PASCHAL'S warm welcome by the Homecoming friends as we rejoiced over her recovery from breast cancer. Later, the camera caught her and KELLY NELON in a hilarious conversation about the early days they sang together. An interview with DUANE ALLEN set the tone for a powerful OAK RIDGE BOYS song. The GATLINS had us all laughing, especially Bill Gaither, as LARRY GATLIN tried to give Bill a lesson in songwriting. Then we all listened as LARRY, STEVE & RUDY harmonized.

Performances by LEGACY FIVE, EASTER, HOPPERS, PERRYS, COLLINGSWORTH FAMILY, ISAACS, JESSY DIXON, ALICIA WILLIAMSON, DALLAS HOLM, MARTINS, JOHNNY MINICK, TIM SURRETT, TALLEYS, LILLIE KNAULS, LEWIS FAMILY, GORDON MOTE, JOSHUA POPE, and MARK LOWRY on this DVD, plus the songs by the Homecoming Choir, are filled with joy and encouragement. A highlight is MOSIE LISTER, age 85, directing the men's choir. Featured on other videos from the taping, and adding their voices and spirit to the choir numbers, are members of the GAITHER VOCAL BAND, ERNIE HAASE & SIGNATURE SOUND, GREATER VISION, DOVE BROTHERS, GOLD CITY, BLACKWOOD BROTHERS, CRABB FAMILY, BOOTH BROTHERS, IMPERIALS, FLORIDA BOYS, BRIAN FREE & ASSURANCE, ANDRE CROUCH, DOYLE LAWSON, BRENDA LEE, RANDY OWEN, FREEMANS, HAYES FAMILY, WHISNANTS, SPENCERS, THREE BRIDGES, GREENES, and REGGIE SADLER FAMILY.

I remember the gratitude I felt at knowing those around me were precious friends---LES BEASLEY, LARI GOSS, LARRY FORD, GUY PENROD, MARSH

continues>

HALL, DAVID PHELPS, WES HAMPTON, SCOTT FOWLER, KAREN PECK, SHERI EASTER, IVAN PARKER, RUSS TAFF, BUDDY GREENE, LYNDA RANDLE, LADYE LOVE & REGGIE SMITH, STEPHEN HILL, CHARLOTTE RITCHIE, TIM DUNCAN, GENE MCDONALD, GERALD WOLFE, DONNIE SUMNER, CYNTHIA CLAWSON, JOY MCGUIRE, MIKE ALLEN, JOSH GARNER, AARON WILBURN, WESLEY PRITCHARD, WOODY WRIGHT, KEVIN WILLIAMS, STAN WHITMIRE, TIM PARTON, ALLEN ASBURY, DARYL WILLIAMS, JIM HILL, JOE MOSCHEO, GORDON STOKER, HENRY & HAZEL SLAUGHTER, ARMOND MORALES, DEBRA & LAUREN TALLEY, CONNIE & KIM HOPPER, TARANDA GREENE, ROBBIE HINER, LABREESKA HEMPHILL, GLEN ALLRED, CALVIN NEWTON, JONI LAMB, JIMMY DEAN, MIKE BOWLING, GERON DAVIS, BOB & JEANNE JOHNSON, ANN DOWNING, SUE DODGE, BEN, ROSA NELL, MARY TOM, FAYE, and ALLISON SPEER, MYLON and EVA MAE LEFEVRE, all featured on one or more of the five DVDs.

There is no substitute for friends and for songs with lyrics that glorify God when we need encouragement and comfort. I will forever be thankful to our Heavenly Father for the blessing of being part of this momentous Gaither Homecoming Friends taping.

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Post-Passion

What Have We Learned?

their research before coming to see the film, or if they came because someone told them it was the “Christian” thing to do. There are plenty of innocuous kid’s films out there, if that’s all she wanted to see. But “clean” isn’t the first word that comes to my mind when someone describes The Passion.)

That being said, I

With Easter just around the corner as I’m writing this, I thought it might be interesting to look back on what is probably the most famous movie of all time based around the events of Easter. I’m referring, of course, to The Passion of the Christ.

It may surprise some to realize that the movie, and the attendant controversy, is already six years old. I was working at a movie theater at the time, and I was hoping the film’s release would allow the faithful to show theater owners what a great audience they could be. In fact, the people who came to our theater were some of the rudest, most uncivil audience members one could imagine.

One time in particular, the film accidentally broke, and the managers offered refunds or passes to see a different screening. But the patrons, disgusted that they would have to skip half of the crucifixion or watch half of it over again, angrily demanded that the film be fixed instead. Sometimes, though, fixes just aren’t that simple. This print actually had to be sent back to the studio. As much as the owners patiently explained this fact to the customers, the response was still very ungracious.

To be fair, many of the people complaining and causing trouble at the theater may not actually have been believers, but the impression that was left was that audiences who show up for a religious movie were going to be difficult.

(Another patron – a nice one – said before she went in the movie that she was glad that the theater was finally showing a movie that was “clean.” Her comment made me wonder how much believers actually did

acknowledge that the film was hard to watch. I only saw it once, and I may not ever see it again, for the same reason that another viewing of Schindler’s List would be difficult. But those who complained about the heavy violence in The Passion missed the point. Or, rather, they missed two points. One is that the crucifixion itself was not a clean, tidy, inoffensive affair.

Mel Gibson was smart enough to realize that there had to be something shocking about the film to get the audience’s attention.

The second point is that the controversy surrounding the violence in the film actually brought audiences to the theaters in droves. Mel Gibson was smart enough to realize that there had to be something shocking about the film to get the audience’s attention.

I had an atheist friend tell me at the time of the film’s release that Gibson should have made a lighter, more straightforward film. To that I can only say this: another film called The Gospel of John was released into theaters a few weeks after The Passion. Did you see it? Neither did I.

Not every religious film has to use massive violence to get the audience’s attention, of course. But it would be nice if there were other films that had the bravery and creativity of The Passion.

Most gospel films try to cover all the important points of Jesus’ 33 years of life – an understandable choice, but one often lacking in strong narrative drive. Gibson’s



masterstroke was to focus the story intensely on just that last day, giving a harrowing, fast-paced, you-are-there feel to the film.

So, what was the fallout - good or bad - from the film's success? Well, for one thing, Hollywood learned that controversy can actually bring audiences to a film instead of keep them away. However, while the strategy worked in favor of the faithful with *The Passion*, Hollywood was able to use the same idea against us. Two years later, Sony enlisted A-list talent – director Ron Howard and actors such as Tom Hanks – to adapt *The Da Vinci Code* for the big screen, and turned the controversy into big box-office bucks. (Ever wonder why Hollywood never enlists A-list talent to adapt any of the Christian bestsellers for the big screen? Hmmm . . .)

On a brighter note, at least one major studio was willing to take a chance on bankrolling more religious films. Though no studio was willing to put up the money for *The Passion* itself – Gibson privately funded it, then the film was distributed through Lionsgate – 20th Century Fox picked up the video rights, where the film

also did massive business. Buoyed by this success, Fox formed a subdivision of its company called FoxFaith to specifically release religious-oriented films.

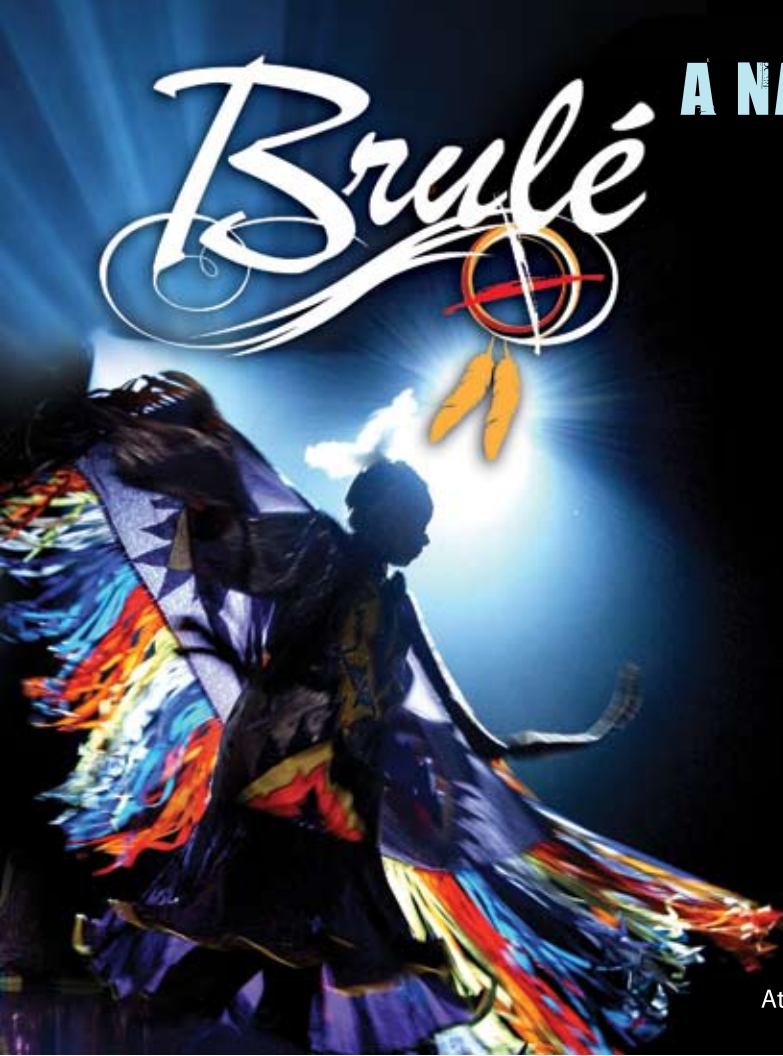
While Fox's new branch was a boon in some sense to the faith-based film-viewing community, in some ways it was simply more of the same. What would have been better is if Fox (and other studios) had allowed for more faith-oriented content inside their regular

Like animated films and foreign films (but even more so), religious films tend to be marginalized, and not considered in the same realm as “real” films.

release movies, rather than separating faith films into their own tiny subcategory. Like animated films and foreign films (but even more so), religious films tend to be marginalized, and not considered in the same realm as “real” films.

To illustrate my point: Can you name three FoxFaith films off the top of your head? Neither can I.

I hope another film comes around again soon that strikes a chord with viewers and allows an opportunity for the faithful to share what they agree with, or what they disagree with, about a movie. Even something like 1988's *The Last Temptation of Christ* could be used as a jumping point for intelligent discussion and a good witness, if we keep – and use – our heads.



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As We Wait

I'll never forget that life-changing Wednesday morning in January 2006. I had been through an intense search for purpose and meaning in my life. I had earnestly been praying for the filling of the Holy Spirit and had made every effort to surrender all areas of my life to God. As I drove to work, the Spirit whispered a call to ministry into my heart. With tears streaming and with a heart much like Mary's, I cherished His promises and believed the impossible would become possible.

When God issues a call to ministry or gives new - ministry direction, often times the assignment isn't clear and we find ourselves in a "limbo - period." Let's be honest. No one likes to wait, however waiting is valuable ministry training. God is more interested in our relationship than our service. He's more interested in our character rather than our gifts. During this waiting period, God will allow our faith to be tested so He can develop love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control. 2 Corinthians 6:6 says: "We PROVE ourselves by our purity, our understanding, our patience, our kindness by the Holy Spirit within us, and by our sincere love." As soon as we learn the lessons to His satisfaction, He will open doors. In the meantime, many of us grow impatient and start doing what makes sense or what everybody else is do-

ing. Before we know it, we behave like Sarah and gain an "Ishmael" to deal with or we behave like frustrated and overworked Martha - in the kitchen frying hamburgers that Jesus didn't order! Waiting on God to develop our character or waiting on Him to open doors can be frustrating, but there are many things we can do.

AS WE WAIT, we should "Set our face like a stone, determined to do HIS will." (Isaiah 50:7b) Our minis-

scripture, He was about his Father's business, and He only said what the Father told Him to say and only did what He was told to do. The Spirit does the same. (John 16:15)

AS WE WAIT, it's also important to remember to keep our eyes on Christ and not compare ourselves to others. When we get our eyes on others, we subject ourselves to passing judgement, jealousy and discontentment. We must remember only God measures success.

Success in God's eyes may not be about how large the attendance is, how many records are sold or how many number one songs we have. It's God's kingdom, His plan. We have to be content and faithful to the assignment specifically given to us. He didn't call every church to be a mega church, nor did He call every artist to the Grammy stage. Colossians 4:17 says "Be sure to carry out the ministry the LORD GAVE YOU." God's idea of

success and the world's idea of success could be totally different and if our focus is on Christ, we'll remain content. Paul is a great example. He was content whether he was hungry or full, rich or poor. 2 Corinthians 6:8-9 says that "he served God whether people honored him or despised him, whether they praised or slandered him. There were times he was ignored even though he was well known." We have to determine to remain true to our calling no matter what that may be.

AS WE WAIT, we can allow God



tries are not ours; they never were and never will be. To have an authentic, fruit producing ministry, we need to be listening for God's direction and be determined to do ONLY what God tells us to do. Moses, Samuel, Jehosophat, David, Paul, Stephen are a few Biblical examples but Jesus himself is the best. John 17:4 states "I brought glory to you here on earth by completing the work YOU gave me to do." It's very easy to get caught up in what others are doing instead of letting God define our ministries and draw its boundaries. Jesus made it clear in

to identify and purify our motives. 1 Corinthians 3:12-15 says "Anyone who builds on that foundation may use a variety of materials, gold, silver, jewels, wood, hay or straw. But on the judgment day, fire will reveal what kind of work each builder has done. The fire will show if a person's work has any value. If the work survives, that builder will receive a reward. But if the work is burned up, the builder will suffer great loss. The builder will be saved, but like some barely escaping through a wall of flames." James 3:14 states "selfish ambition is earthly, unspiritual and demonic." Proverbs 20:27 tells us "The Lord's light penetrates the human spirit exposing every hidden motive." To assure us of God's acceptance of our service on judgment day, we

When God issues a call to ministry or gives new - ministry direction, often times the assignment isn't clear and we find ourselves in a "limbo - period."

need to allow Him to search our hearts and purify our motives. We should continually pray for purity of heart.

AS WE WAIT, we can learn to

truly trust God and follow His leading. Waiting can feel like we're wandering in total darkness. Isaiah 50:10b-11 says "If you are walking in darkness without a ray of light, trust in the Lord and rely on your God. But watch out, you who live

in your own light and warm yourselves by your own fires. This is the reward you will receive from me. You will soon fall down in great torment." This verse describes two kinds of people - both are walking in darkness or "by faith." The first group relies on God; the second group is self sufficient. The self sufficient group ends up in pain. Ouch! I'm sure we've all "been there - done that - got the t-shirt!" Proverbs 3:6 says "In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight." The Hebrew word for "ways" is "Derek" meaning the pathway of life. "Acknowledge" comes from the Hebrew word "yada" it means to know relationally and experientially. In other words, we should relationally know and experience God in our everyday life and He will continually lead us on the right paths.

AS WE WAIT, we can be sure God's plans are worth waiting for! Ephesians 2:10 states "For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago." You are God's masterpiece! He's had plans for you for a long time! These plans are good by God's definition of good - plans to give you a future and a hope. (Jeremiah 29:11) Get in tune with the Holy Spirit to find out exactly what His unique and specific plans are for your life. Get determined to not interfere or get ahead, then follow Him! Enjoy the adventure with great anticipation of hearing "Well done thy good and faithful servant."

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AS WE WAIT, we can believe God to accomplish His purposes. I still cherish the promises God made to me in January, 2006. I've been amazed as I've dated fulfillments in my old journals and Bibles. Although everything has not come to pass, I know my God is faithful and will perfect every good work He begins! He will perfect the good work He started in you as well!

The Classic 4 aka: CF Harmony: Taking the Stage by Storm

By Evie Hawkins

Classic!

What better way to describe a quartet that consists of award-winning vocalists and musicians..respected for decades, individually and now collectively bringing that enormous culmination of experience and inspiration to the stage.

It's definitely a storm..a feeling of revival, because this group has certainly revived some stages recently. This writer was for-

tunate enough to witness the contagious energy of this harmonious group of men in a recent concert at Father's House Church in Nashville.

Roy Bray not only plays piano but provides Baritone vocals as well. For over 40 years, Bray has felt the continued calling and thrill of this tradition that has

been a part of his life since his youth..He was raised and bred on the music of the church, a lifestyle that has become his mainstay, and he continues to have the desire to keep his music heritage alive. Bray certainly keeps the ivories alive in a concert. His enthusiasm is both contagious and uplifting.

Basing the group in Ashland, Tennessee has provided them with a convenient location and



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opened doors in music-loving churches, such as Nashville's Christ Church.

Tenor Tank Tackett, has been a long-standing member of the church, and the group was recently well-received in concert there. Tackett has been a beloved Tenor with the legendary Statemen Quartet, the Envoys, the Rebels, and has sang on many projects, including ones with Michael W. Smith, Carmen, The Judds, Charlie Daniels, and Dolly Parton. One special highlight of the Father's House concert was the moving performance of a Tackett tradition, "I Know a Man Who Can."..

Bass singer, Joe Fowler, owned the Southerners Quartet, traveled with the Gerald Payne Family, and sang with Squire Parsons (Redeemed) for 7 years. He



Publicity photo courtesy of Classic 4. Concert photo by Evie Hawkins

also sang with the Jubilee Quartet at the Smokey Mountain Jubilee in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee for 15 years. Fowler's smooth Bass contribution to the group should be a model for any aspiring quartet.

Lead Singer, Bruce Campbell, traveled with Gladheart and the Sheperdsmen Quartet prior to joining the Classic Four. His love for Gospel music started at a young age, and his passion is still evident after 16 years of extensive travel in the music ministry. Lead vocals such as Campbell's provide a solid foundation for this sought-after sound that is crisp, clean, and refined

As the Classic 4 criss-cross the country performing, they continue to ignite a fire, one of revival, traditions, memories, the spirit of Southern Gospel music, the smooth harmonious sound of 4 men that have honed their skills for decades!

To catch a Classic 4 concert, check out their dates here: <http://www.theclassic4.com> or contact Roy Bray at The Classic 4 office 615-554-5151.

You can also click here to join The Classic 4's fan-page on Facebook.



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Story By Lorraine Walker

Family groups have been part of the Southern Gospel fabric since the music itself was born. Tight harmony, perfect timing and ability to read the mind of the other singers can only come with genetics and countless hours spent making music together. When the Freemans step on stage, the talented family proves to their listeners that this old-time music is as relevant to today's listeners as Vestal's beehive was to her fans. The Freemans are the 2010 Goodmans, with the next generation on the verge of making their mark.

Darrel and Chris Freeman met and married while singing with The Pathways in the early '80's. Chris was already crowned "Queen of Gospel Music" in 1976 and '77, and the couple began their royal reign of power country vocals when they formed The Freemans with Darrel's cousin Joe. The Freemans family began to grow and eventually joined them on the road. In 2002, their daughter Misty had her first top 10 hit. Their son Caylon, joined the group as drummer and now also joins them on vocals.

The Freeman sound has always been a mix of country, southern and spiritual gospel music, with a heavy dose of Vestal-vocals and down-home honesty. The direct lyrics and sincere performances have brought them a huge fan base and many awards through the years. The uniqueness of their sound means the listener always knows when a Freeman song hits the airwaves. Caylon Freeman describes their style.

"We've always enjoyed the Goodmans, and of course the Rambos, and the Hinsons in the early days, so we definitely love that sound," says Caylon. "It's what I was raised on. Mom and Dad sang that style, as well

as my aunt and uncle. There was always that country sound that came out of the hills of West Virginia and Virginia area. I think that's where we developed it from. I always loved the Goodmans and they at times used a modern country band sound that I liked. I always enjoyed that and still enjoy it today."

After three decades of performing, the Freemans manage to keep their sound current. "We keep our sound fresh by listening to a lot of music," says Caylon. "We enjoy a lot of groups. Living in Nashville Tennessee, we are bombarded by a lot of music, which I



What awards mean to us is encouragement to keep going on, to keep doing what we do.

.Darryl Freeman

love because I enjoy playing. I love bluegrass, some country and a lot of gospel. I think we stay fresh by listening to a lot of music and being here and playing music. Being a musician you want to stay current and fresh to keep things going and to keep it young."

The Freemans have a new album coming out shortly which Chris says they are very excited about. "We were hoping it would come out in April and we are still going to shoot in that direction," says Chris. "We've all been kind of under the weather. It's been three years since we've actually had a new release so we are a little bit behind. But due to that fact that we had a lot of personal things happen to our family, by the time we got home from the weekend we just really and truly didn't feel like going into the studio."

Despite the personal trials, the Freemans did manage to finish the recording and Chris talks about some of the songs that fans can look forward to. "We've got a lot of great songs. Our first song to be sent out to radio was written by Diane Wilkerson. We've never recorded any of her songs before and she's a great writer. The title of the song is 'The Father And The Son.'"

The Freemans are
Keeping it Young

Chris continues, "We have a lot of different writers on this project, a lot that we haven't sung from before. We are hoping the street date for this album will be early May. We are in negotiation right now with marketing, trying to get this project out on the web and to the stores and radio."

The group had to listen to hundreds of songs to pick the ones that were just right for the Freemans. Having to pick one of those as a favorite was difficult for Chris. "One of my favorites is 'Just A Little Light,'" says Chris. "It's a song that Darrel sings and it has an awesome message. It talks about how there is no 'big I's' or 'little u's' when it comes to serving the Lord. In His eyes, the one that unlocks the front church door is just as important as anyone else in the church. I think it's going to be a great song."

"Our son Caylon is making his debut by singing his own solo song, 'Sending Me Angels,'" continues Chris. "Darrel and Misty have a song that they will be singing together. We have a lot of different things, such as a couple of old tunes, one of which is 'Is This Beulah Land?' 'We are excited about it. We don't even have a title yet, but it'll be out really soon!'"

The Freemans are thrilled about their new release and about the nominations they have received for several award shows over the last few months. After years of top songs, awards and nominations, it might seem that the group would become immune to the thrill of being named as one of the best. However, Darrell says that is far from being the case for these artists.

"It's always an honor to be recognized in anything you do, whether you play music or sing, or whether it's by your peers or your fans, it's a great feeling,"

says Darrell. "What it means to us is encouragement to keep going on, to keep doing what we do. It's exciting, and gives you a little energy, to know that you are doing something well."

"All the awards shows that have come up over the last few years I think are all good," Darrell continues. "If there gets to be too many it will water it down some. Right now I don't think there are too many. I think it's great to have people honored that may not ever be honored at a single award show. Maybe at another award show they would be honored, when they have been overlooked by traditional award shows for thirty years. There are a lot of people that have been overlooked and perhaps not been given anything. So we appreciate the new award shows that honor these people and give them their roses while they are here."

"Of all the honors that have been given to us as a group, the one that means the most is Chris being inducted to the Hall of Fame," shares Darrell. "It means a lot to us as a family to think of what she's done, and now she's in the Hall of Fame here in Nashville."

When Chris first won the Queen of Gospel Music





I really don't have a secret to the longevity of my vocal power...The best remedy for anything is Vicks Salve.
- Chris Freeman

Award in 1976, she may not have imagined that she would still be belting out the gospel just as well thirty years later. However, her voice is an integral part of the Freeman legend. The powerful soprano grabs the listener's ear and won't let go until you've heard every word of the wonderful message. After all this time, Chris Freeman still has the voice to command the attention of the largest audience in the biggest auditorium.

"I really don't have a secret to the longevity of my vocal power," Chris says. "I've just been blessed with a good set of lungs I guess! One thing I take seriously: if I feel like my throat is sore, or feel like I'm getting sick, I really try to do the right thing and get into the doctor. The best remedy for anything is Vicks Salve. I rub it on my neck, wrap it up with a wool sock; there is nothing better!"

The secret to a good vocal performance is not only in the mechanics and talent, but also in knowing how to keep a song fresh and new to the audience. "It goes back to when we listen to songs," shares Chris. "We try to find songs that are a personal testimony to us. I think when you feel that; it does keep the song from getting old to you. I try to put myself in the message of the song when I sing it, as if it is the first time. I totally depend upon the Lord and His anointing. I learned that a long time ago. That's what makes a song last and that's what makes it touch the heart. It's not the pretty singing. It's the feeling behind it and that can only come from above."

The Freemans have been singing songs that touch the heart for a long time and will continue to touch many with the new stylings of Caylon and Misty. The talent and genetics have been passed down and so has the desire to touch lives with the anointing of the Lord. As each new album and song is presented by the Freemans, they continue to keep the sound young and the old, old message, new to every listener.

Part 2 with The Freemans coming in the May 2010 issue of SGN Scoops.

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For the Love of Gospel Music

By Evie
Hawkins

Newly Launched Company Aspires to Bring New Hope to Recording Artists

New Hope Music Productions contends not to be just another assembly line machine, stamping out projects in a cookie-cutter fashion. On the contrary, Rod Burton and Darrell Webb have established a company to serve the very unique and individual needs of recording artists within the Gospel music genre.

Burton, is no stranger to creativity, or productions; as he and his wife, Kelly, have proven with the creation of the Branson Gospel Music Convention. The convention has experienced rapid growth in its popularity and established a die-hard fan base across the continent, with social networking fans skyrocketing and more

artists applying for slots on the BGMC stage. With the convention motto centering on the "message," Burton brings that same theme forward, into the forefront of the new record company mission. Webb and Burton

have both given a lifetime of service to the Gospel music industry, from singing, songwriting, recording, and producing; these two men make up a compatible team. Darrell's son, Jason Webb, contributes a wealth of expertise to the company as one of the industry's

busiest session players and leaders.

"The company strives to be artist-centered," Burton says, "We are focusing on individual needs and helping seasoned artists rise and grow in their ministries."

New Hope Music Productions is structured into three tiers, in order to meet individual needs: a national level label, a development label, and a

custom project opportunity for new artists.

For more info on New Hope Music Productions, contact Rod Burton at 708-960-0111 or go to www.newhopemusicproductions.com



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Lord and make music.
- Psalm 92:1

636-937-9704

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"Serving God in Music and Testimony"

2010 - Top 10 Nominees



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ALBUM

Almost Morning, The Perrys
Biblically Correct, Mystery Men
Farther - Paul's Journey
Graveyard Revival, Dr. J.D. Brown
Foot Step Of Life, Firm Foundation
I Can Call Jesus, The Telestials
It's All About Him, Praise Incorporated
Journey Through the Sky, HisSong
Rockin' On The Front Porch, Rene' Jones
Won To The Highest, Ron Brewer

SONG

Amazing Grace is Still at Number 1, Rev JD Brown
He Called Me Out, Paul's Journey
Hold On, Dove Brothers
If You Knew Him, The Perry's
It's All About Him, Praise Inc
Little Boys and Little Toys, Lynda Lynn
Mercy Leads Us Home, Kenna Turner West
Somebody Died For Me, Christy Sutherland
This Storm, McMillan & Life
What Children Believe, Gold City

MIXED GROUP

Eternal Vision
Freemans
Hoppers
Isaacs
Karen Peck & New River
Martins
McKameys
Perrys
Roarks
Telestials

TRIO

2nd Generation
Booth Brothers
Crossway
Greater Vision
HisSong
Karen Peck & New River
McMillan & Life
New Day
Talley Trio
Wilsons

QUARTET

Brian Free & Assurance
Firm Foundation
Gaither Vocal Band
Gold City
Jericho
Mystery Men
N'Harmony
Pauls Journey
Praise Incorporated
Triumphant Quartet

DUET

Aaron and Amanda Crabb
Dale & Cheryl Golden
Dustin & Kaila
Gigi & Randy
Hearts of Faith
Mike & Darla Cornell
Lee & Loyall
Reign Song
Two His Glory
Wendy Word & Forgiveness

MALE SOLOIST

Adam Crabb
Charles Ross
Chris Hester
Ivan Parker
Jason Crabb
Kenny Bishop
Mark Bishop
Rod Burton
Ron Brewer
Shannon Bunch

SONGWRITER

Chris Binion
Dianne Wilkinson
Gerald Crabb
Jim Brady
Jimmy McMillan
Joyce H Summer
Kenna Turner West
Randall Garland
Rodney Griffin
Sandy Bloemer

INSTRUMENTALIST

Adam Harman
Dennis Agajanian
Gordon Mote
Jeff Stice
Johnathan Presnell
Kelly Back
Marcus Neal
Roger Fortner
Roy Webb
Zak Swain

LIVING LEGENDS

Ann Downing
Claude Hopper
Ed O'Neal
Gerald Williams
Karen Peck Gooch
Kelly Nelon
LuLu Roman
Peg McKamey Bean
Rod Theme of Paul's Journey
Tim Reilly

FEMALE SOLOIST

Annette Herndon
Ava Kasich
Bev McCann
Charlotte Richey
Christy Sutherland
Janet Pachael
Mariene Pelt
Misty Freeman
Sharron Kay King
Taranda Green

SUNRISE

2nd Generation
Ava Kasich
Concords
Evidence
Firm Foundation Quartet
Gigi and Grandy Burgess
Mike & Darla Cornell
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Roger Fortner
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Chuck Peters, Southern Gospel Show Prep
Dave Taylor of KWFC-FM, Springfield, MO
Gospel Music Today
Heir Wave Internet Radio
Jonathan Edwards of KWFC-FM, Springfield, MO
Les Butler Solid Gospel 105
Lorene Kirksey of KDKR-FM, Dallas
Mickey Bell, This Week in Gospel Music
Wayne Wallace of WXJC-FM, Birmingham, AL

**CHRISTIAN COUNTRY
MALE ARTIST**

Chris Hester
David L Cook
Dr. J.D. Brown
Jason Crabb
Rene' Jones
Rod Burton
Ron Brewer
Shane Roark
Tommy Brandt
Tracy Lawrence

**CHRISTIAN
COUNTRY
GROUP**

Amundruds
Diamond Rio
Dove Brothers
Eighth Day
Jeff & Sherri
Oak Ridge Boys
Praise Incorporated
Roarks
Wendy Word & Forgiven
Wilsons

VIDEO/DVD

The Crabb Finale, Crabb Family
Going Home With Annette, Annette Johnson
Hinsons Live!, Freemans
How Do I Pray, Randy Norton
Let's Do This Together, David L Cook/Caroline Kelle
Little Boys and Little Toys by Lynda Lynn
Live at the Oak Tree, Crabb Revival
Me Against It, Mercy Mountain Boys
Reunion, Gaither Vocal Band

BLUEGRASS ARTIST

Bound & Determined
Dailey & Vincent
Doyle Lawson & Quicksilver
Issacs
Jeff & Sheri Easter
Joe Cook Family
Primitive Quartet
Randall Franks
Sandi Kay & New Hickory
Watkins Family

**CHRISTIAN COUNTRY
FEMALE ARTIST**

Ava L Kasich
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Presleys' Country Jubilee



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Like most large gospel music events, Branson Gospel Music Convention is served by a small staff and a board. Perhaps somewhat unique is that this group of organizers views themselves as a circle of friends, most who knew each other only casually before the event, but who now have formed a close-knit circle for the purpose of a convention meant to keep spotlight and focus on ministry. Meet the people who work together on this endeavor as they discuss what draws them to its work.

the who of branson gmc

rod burton: My wife and I are the owners and operators of Branson GMC. From updating the Facebook page to taking ticket orders, we have our hands on every part of this event. It is the work of our lives together. Along with the convention, I have a solo music ministry and I sing with Hinson Revival. Recently, I became an ambassador for Compassion International and launched recording company New Hope Music Productions



it takes a fellowship

Meet the Leaders & Advisory Board of Branson Gospel Music Convention

By Evie Hawkins

with a friend of mine. Oh yeah... and I am a husband and dad of four. Life is full!

For me, Branson GMC embodies everything I love about gospel music and ministry. We are putting together concerts of people who have a heart to share the message of Jesus through song...and putting together a venue where they can reach out and build up one another. There is no hierarchy or VIPs at this event, and though we have a program, the whole thing is really meant to foster worship.



kelly burton: I am the wife of a gospel singer... that is what starts it all for me! Rod and I are raising three daughters and live in Homewood, IL, although it looks like we're moving to the Nashville area this year, and of course we spend more and more time in Branson these days. It's hard to pinpoint what 'exactly' my responsibilities are to the convention; Rod and I pretty much just take them all as they come.

Last year my real labor of love was putting together the program, which is a big part of what brought me to SGN Scoops as editor. I am a blogger and writer as well, a mommy advocate, and it looks like a homeschool parent soon, too. I am also





a big fan of lots of music, but no music is better to me than that made by friends of mine, which is one of the reasons why this convention is so close to my heart. I love that we can offer an event that is as much for artists and their families as it is for the fans.

bobby carter: My family's group, Jay Stone Singers (Ed. note: named for his wife Sharona's father; Jay and Mary Stone recently retired from the road after 33 years) have recently started into fulltime ministry of sharing the good news of Jesus through our music. The group now consists of me, Sharona, and our children, 15-year-old Stone and 13 year old Emma. We live in the Eastern part of North Carolina in the small town of Parkton.... We are honored to once again be a part of the Branson Gospel Music Convention and the vision to minister through song with our dear friends Rod and Kelly [Burton]. I serve on the artist advisory board for the event and last year delivered a devotion to the artists before it began. I will be helping to organize chapel services this year as well.



brenda denney: Along with singing with 2nd Generation, based out of Oak Grove, Arkansas, I am on the advisory board of Branson GMC. I am here to do whatever is needed of me, which includes being a liaison with some of the businesses in Branson, working and praying with artists before and during the convention, and promoting the convention wherever I go!

chris unthank: I live in Murfreesboro, TN (about 20 minutes outside of Nashville). I'm kind of a jack-of-all-trades in the Gospel music community. My main, full-time job is running SSE Group, Inc. with my sister, Amy. We do publicity and internet promotions for both established artists and what we like to call "emerging artists." I have the privilege of working with over 30 artists who are at a variety of levels in their careers. In addition to that, I also do free-lance writing for a host of artists and publications as well as sing with my father and sister in the group Sunday Edition. I also dabble in the art of songwriting, which is a passion of mine. I am fortunate enough to be the publicist for the Branson GMC.

Beginning from top of previous page:
Rod and Kelly Burton; Dusty Wells; Brenda Denney; Kenny Bishop; Johnathan Bond; Lynda Lynn; Chris Unthank; Rob Patz; Bobby Carter



Originally, being a part of Branson GMC was just a great opportunity to establish my business further and help out some friends. After attending the convention last year, it became evident that this was much more than your typical event. The bonds that were forged at this event look to stand a life time, and the event is now as much a passion of mine as it is Rod & Kelly's. There's something really special going on with convention - and it's evident that God has his hand all over it. What He is a part of - I want to be a part of.

dusty wells : I am the Senior Director, National Account Sales with Word Entertain-

ment here in Nashville. I have worked with Word for 16 years and live in the Nashville area.

I love Southern Gospel music and my own past heritage, involvement and experience have consisted of working with many of the top SG artists but mainly working for the Rambos (Dottie, Buck, Reba and Dony) for many many years.

I sincerely believe that Branson GMC is going to be a premier event in the future, and I love the fact that they are not only wanting to work with what we so often label "the major artists", but they have a heart for the many other artists who may or may not be on a label, have achieved radio success, chart positioning, etc...yet they are still out there on a day to day basis working and furthering the message of Jesus Christ in song and testimony. I love it that it has a "family feel" and what I so often refer to as a "genuine heart for the people".

johnathan bond: I live in Chattanooga, TN, sing with Young Harmony, and manage HIS Choice Music Recording. I am a songwriter for HIS Choice Music Publishing. I am on the artist advisory board of Branson GMC, and host the Diamond Awards as well as direct the HCM Talent Search

I love getting to be part of Branson GMC because of the ministry focus that is placed on the industry. I enjoy the heart of each person on the board, believing that working together, following GOD, we can make a difference!

kenny bishop: I live in Lexington, KY, just out of downtown, next to a quiet little lake that calms me every morning. I work at the State Capitol in Kentucky. My office is literally just under the big dome that caps the centerpiece of our state government. I serve as a member of the Branson GMC Advisory Board, and I'm one of the performing artists.

Being able to be a part of something as fresh, focused and authentic as the Branson Gospel Music Convention, for me, is an opportunity to support and promote the ideal and intended focus of the Jesus message, which is the simple truth that everyone at every level and every station is valuable, important, and vital to carriage of the gospel truth. I believe in the concept, the motivation and the purpose.

lynda lynn is a songwriter, singer, reverend, and chapel-builder in Branson. She and her husband Bud have their hands in many projects in the Ozark area of Missouri. They are special advisors to Rod and Kelly Burton in the area of media and promotions and perform at the convention as well, considering it "a wonderful opportunity to share our love for Jesus in fellowship and song."

rob patz: I am the President/Owner of Coastal Media Group. Coastal Media is the parent company of SGM-radio.com and SGNScoops.com. I live in Bellingham, Washington. Coastal Media is proud to be a Corporate Sponsor of the Branson Gospel Music Convention.

From the very beginning, I have been a supporter of the Branson Gospel Music Convention. I personally know Rod and Kelly Burton very well and I can honestly say- I believe in them. I believe in their purpose, their mission and have full confidence this convention is truly a "God-thing."

what is your favorite 2009 memory? **bobby:** The worker from the Convention Center that had been hearing the music and the message through song all week and the was wonderfully SAVED!! That is what its all about! - The emphasis on the message!

chris: I loved performing to a great crowd, but my favorite memory is just getting to spend time back stage with fellow artists and workers of the event. We laughed, cried, prayed, and even got down right mean together. It is a moment in my life I won't soon forget. I also really enjoyed forgetting to turn on the timer and having Rod scold me for it several times during the week! HA!

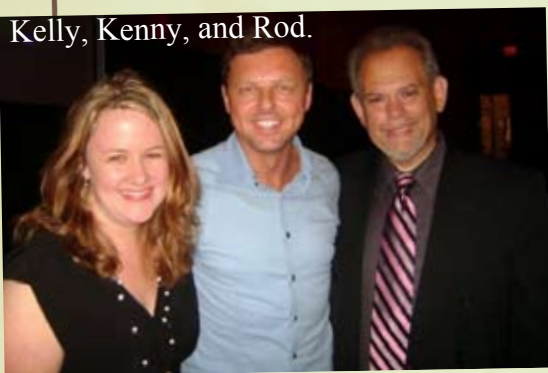
rod: My favorite memory was probably walking out on the catwalk for the 1st time in front of an audience. I had pictured how I wanted it to look, and it was perfect.

kenny: As busy and consuming as the entire event was, being able to spend slow down and spend time with

some of the most beautiful and loving people in all of the world for moments of fellowship and support was a great encouragement to me. I felt loved and blessed to be a part.

lynda: We were all under one roof singing praises and glorifying the Lord.

Kelly, Kenny, and Rod.



kelly: ...the beginning and the end. As soon as we got into the exhibit hall on Monday morning, there was such an air of excitement. People immediately began fellowshiping and working together to help. Then we had a prayer meeting at 9:00 am with about 40 people, joining hands in a circle. I knew then that God was with us and would use and bless us – and He did! By Friday, I could barely say 'Hi' to anyone without crying! God AND His people were amazing throughout the whole week. I have never experienced such unity of purpose.

rob: My favorite memory is "Set Up Day." It was truly amazing to watch the vision/the dream unfold into reality right before my very

eyes. We had worked hard, dreamed big, and anticipated greatly, so the first day of actually seeing our efforts reach fruition was awesome. And- beyond that- the WALKIE TALKIE! (grin)

brenda: The best memory for me was working with the artists and praying for some of them before they went on the platform (not stage) to minister. Some of the artists had never been on a platform at an event like this before and had a few butterflies, some were struggling with their voices, and some just wanted someone to pray. But we would all gather around and pray for them. This is what Branson GMC is all about.

what (else) do you like to do in branson?

kenny: Branson is such a fun place to be. There are not a lot of towns as small as Branson that can keep you entertained, fed and well rested. Besides the great gospel music, there are other great theatres, shows and plays to occupy every minute of the day. And the food...

kelly: I love that though it has literally hundreds of things to do (and EAT!), it is a small town. People call you by name, they welcome your kids at business meetings, and they work together. I am excited this year to be there before and after the convention to enjoy the town with my extended family; we plan to see Noah at the Sight and Sound Theater, head to Dixie Stampede, and eat at Cakes & Creams and Cantina Laredo at least once or twice!

rob: "The Landing" Great shopping, great food- Need I say more?

brenda: Oh I LOVE Branson... I have been coming to Branson since I was a little girl. And my kids grew up coming to Branson. SHOPPING.. SHOPPING.. & I LOVE the Go-Carts.. And I am very dangerous on them.! I have conquered the Rip Cord ... Scared for my life, but I did it... And there are so many GREAT places to eat. Famous Dave's BBQ, Lamberts (they throw rolls at you), and of course good Mexican food..

most looking forward to for 2010:

bobby: I look forward to getting to spend time with the other artists. We are able to share with each other, pray and encourage one another.

dusty: I heard that it was such a close knit convention last year and that there was a sweet camaraderie....I hope that stays and remains pure.

johnathan: I love getting together with our peers and sharing the good news from the road as well as sharing the funny stories with each other.

kelly: I am looking forward to not being so uptight about everything and being able to enjoy more of the week. My nerves are a lot better this year, I know I am surrounded by friends, I know I'm not a bad mom for letting my parents take care of the kids all week, and I am looking forward to hearing the music and partaking in the ministry and fellowship to a great extent.

brenda: Seeing all our friends... Meeting new friends... Praying together.. Encouraging each other.. & shopping with my BFFs..



Johnathan and Bobby.

what skills, personality, etc. do you bring to the team?

dusty: I feel like I can bring a strong knowledge from the major record company, publishing, booking point of views and areas that I have been involved with for nearly 30 years. I think I am very balanced and can show pros and cons in all the different areas from the music business point of view.

johnathan: I feel that I help keep the convention a little more solemn atmosphere.

brenda: I pray that I bring a positive attitude where ever I may be. I want to encourage artist that every time you sing someone is being blessed. It is so important to be REAL. 2nd Generation has attended many conventions/events, etc over the last 5 years and I know what some of artists are feeling. I want to assure them that it is not about what charts you are on, or not on, it's not about nation-wide radio, it is not about who's who in SG music.. It is about the message of Jesus Christ.

lynda: I hope to bring great Jesus joy and bounce!

kelly: I am a detail-oriented yet creative person, which is a little different. But a real bonus, and I say this with respect, is that my knowledge of southern gospel is new and limited. This helps me to refrain from being a respecter of persons. I am there to do what is Godly, what is supportive of the vision of the convention, and what Rod and I feel is right in terms of business. It doesn't matter to me if you had a dozen number one songs or if you just made your first recording (and I probably don't know one way or the other!). I am there to serve everyone who is there to serve our Father.

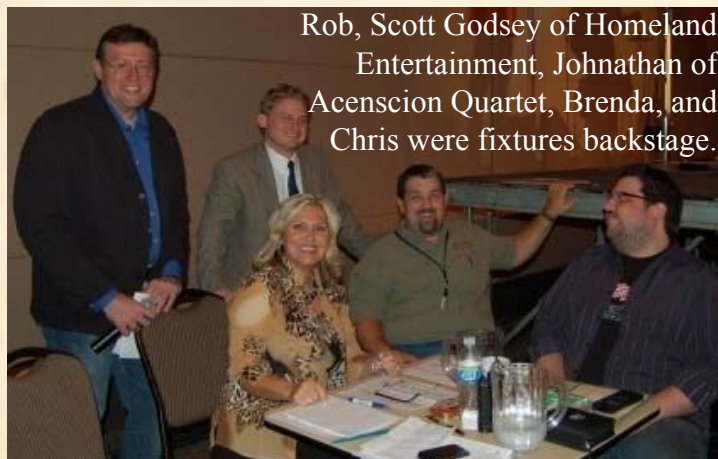
why do you think gospel music has so many conventions?

chris: It's a part of the history of this genre. People love to spend their time being fed spiritual truths through the avenue of Gospel music. Artists, promoters, and fans all know the value that these conventions are. They feed the people, and the artists get a chance to spend time with folks they only seen sporadically over the year.

johnathan: We have GOOD NEWS to share and many people that still need to hear it. Conventions are a good way for us to get the WORD out to more people at the same time, while enjoying working with our peers.

rod: I think it's intended to be a way that people share their ministry and music. That was the original intent... but it became more about a show than about the go. It needs to stay about ministry first, then everything else.

kenny: Can there be too many gospel music festivals and events? As long as there is an audience, people who want to hear and experience the melodies, the lyrics, the presentations and the myriad of styles that gospel music offers, there should be a place for them to find it.



Rob, Scott Godsey of Homeland Entertainment, Johnathan of Acenscion Quartet, Brenda, and Chris were fixtures backstage.

what do you hope always stays the same about the convention?

bobby: I hope that we never lose the focus of why we do what we do... Thank God for the vision that Rod and Kelly Burton have to share the story of God's love through song to those who are hurting.

rod: the focus of ministry...no matter who is there, or who isn't.

chris: The down home, everybody-loves-everybody atmosphere. I never want the convention to get to the point that it's about showing up the group who went on before you or simply playing political games to get your favorite spot. The fact that the convention is made up of people who genuinely support each other's ministries and aren't in it just for the political gain that it may bring them in an "industry" is what sets this convention apart from the others. I hope we never lose that.

lynda: The excitement, the energy, the talent and the love.

rob: Most importantly, I really hope the Christ centered message always remains the same. In addition to that, there was a sweet spirit and a feeling of community among the groups, artists and participants last year. I certainly would like to see the spirit of fellowship, love and unity preserved and maintained for many years to come.

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GMN CELEBRATION CONCERT • Kingsmen, Hemphills, Crystal River, Aqua, Orvil Shindoll, Andrea Thomas

MONDAY, APRIL 19, 2010 • 1 PM

SHOWCASE • Hemphills, Sunday Edition, Andrew Heller, Carla Anderson, 1AChord, Al Mac Will, Wess Morgan, Pam Wiebie, Tim Thomas Trio, Gold Harbor

MONDAY, APRIL 19 • 7 PM

SGMG HARMONY HONORS

Oak Ridge Boys, Jason Crabb, Jeff & Sheri Easter, Guy Penrod, Bowling Family, Crabb Family, Gold City, Perrys, Karen Peck & New River, Blackwood Brothers, Triumphant Quartet, Tribute Quartet

TUESDAY, APRIL 20 • 10 AM

SHOWCASE • Aqua, Karen Harding, Johnna Green, Rev. James Larson (San Diego, CA - Guest Speaker)

TUESDAY, APRIL 20 • 1:30 PM

PICKIN' & GRINNIN' • Larry Crain, Mountain Joy, Sharon Walker, Crawford Crossing, Shara McKee, Southern Brothers, Fresh Anointing, Higher Ground

TUESDAY, APRIL 20 • 7 PM

GMN CELEBRATION CONCERT • Isaacs, Bowling Family, Jeff & Sheri Easter, Palmetto State Quartet, John's Call, Lefevre Quartet, Boxcars, Aqua, 1AChord, Pastor Dan Scott and Christ Church Choir, Andrea Thomas
Guest Speaker: Dr. Jay Sekulow (Chief Counsel for American Center for Law and Justice)

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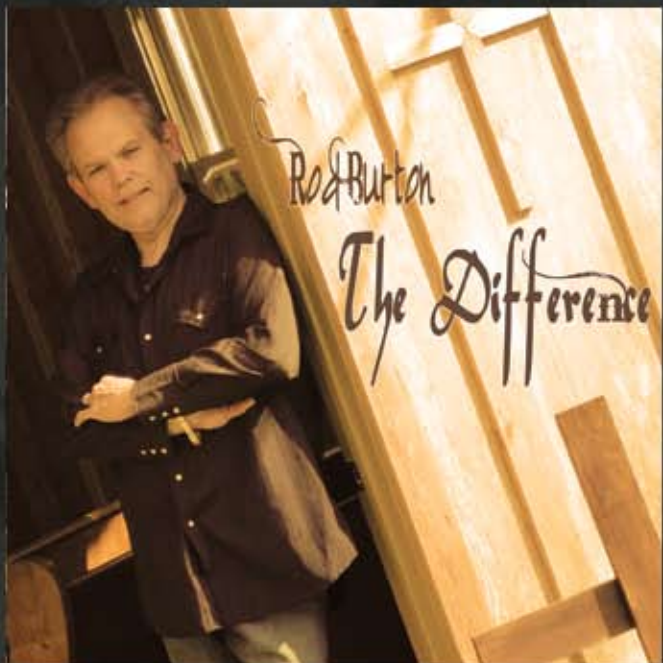
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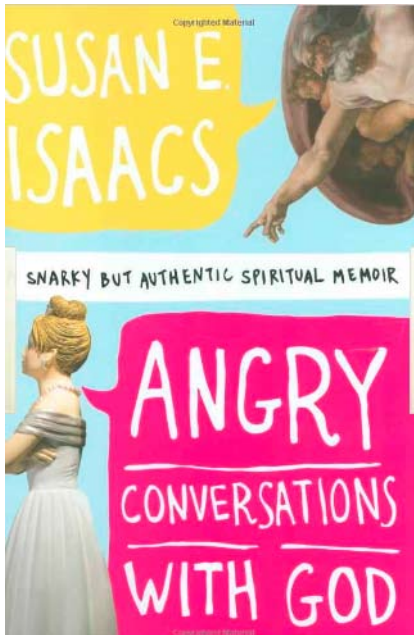
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Angry Conversations, Compelling Read

Book review by Tom Holste



The Christian book market is flooded with short volumes telling you that if you turn your life to God, everything will become automatically easy. If your life isn't super-easy, these books

say, then just positively confess until it does, or follow whatever other 5-step program they have in mind so that your life is never filled with trouble again.

Mercifully, *Angry Conversations with God* is not such a book.

Written by Susan Isaacs, a Christian comedian and writer, this tome begins with the moment in Susan's life when she had finally had enough. Not only was her life not going in the right direction, but she just crossed paths with her former lover – someone who wasn't trying to follow the Lord at all – and his life, with a new girlfriend, was clearly going amazingly well.

A well-meaning, relentlessly perky friend of hers told her that God was in control, and that Susan needed to remember that she is the "bride of Christ."

So Susan did what any sensible bride would do in her situation. She took God to couples counseling.

What follows is an amazingly hilarious, and often deeply touching, story that switches back and forth from a prose re-telling of her life, to a dialogue written in the form of a

play between herself, her counselor, and both Jesus and God the Father, or at least what Susan imagined they would say if they were physically present in the room with her.

The importance of this conceit cannot be underestimated. Because the conceit is established right up front that God and Jesus are being projected from her imagination, it sidesteps any potential heresy that might come from daring to put actual words in their mouth (unlike, say, *The Shack*, a relatively decent book that may mislead many to think that the protagonist's audible conversation with God is a true story). Besides, if we're honest with ourselves, don't we often feel like God is saying to us, "This isn't Darfur. Get over yourself," whether or not He actually is?

Isaacs' story reminds me a lot of my own. Though I haven't had the sexual experiences – or the resulting pain – that she has had, I can relate to her as someone who loves Jesus and wants to use the creative gifts that He's given me, and not being fully accepted by either the religious community ("Why would you ever want to work in Hollywood?") or the creative community either ("Why would you want to be a Christian?"). I expect that Isaacs' story will touch other areas of people's lives as well.

If we're honest with ourselves, don't we often feel like God is saying to us, "This isn't Darfur. Get over yourself," whether or not He actually is?

The easily offended should be aware that there is some mild PG-rated language in this book. Still, I think many of us would admit we've said worse things to God in our moments of anger. I, for one, appreciated reading a book where the author refers to God as someone "whom I loved, whom I could not escape, and with whom I was very, very p---ed off."

The book ends with Susan having an epiphany - the book would be unsatisfying if she didn't - but Susan doesn't leave one with the impression that everything was perfect and hunky-dorky after that. If she did, the book would be as bad as the others I described in the first paragraph. But it's clear by the book's end that, even though some things have turned around for the better in her life, she's still learning and growing, just like the rest of us.

I admit that with most religious books – even the tiny pamphlets - I find them interminable to get through, and will set them down for months at a time before I can come back and finish them. I read *Angry Conversations with God* in less than a week. Check it out yourself and see if she isn't describing your own life on every page too.

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It's a beautiful day in the small town of Munford, TN in September 1999. The main drag through town is blocked off, and the town's fair is in full swing. An older model bus approaches the fair area, and turns in and parks in a vacant lot behind a simple wooden stage where a steady stream of local gospel artists has been performing. The name in the marquee area of the front of the bus simply says "Dills", and off the bus comes a father and mother, their two sons, and the sons' wives. One of the wives is a native of the small town, having graduated from the local high school, and until her marriage had sung with her own family, who would also grace the same stage during the fair. A small crowd of maybe 15-20 people sit on metal bleachers listening to the singing, while hundreds more are wandering through the booths and exhibits. The quality of music from the gospel stage hits every part of the spectrum, but when this group sings, there's something different about them, especially when just the sons and their wives sing. There's a specialness to their blend that shows a lot of potential.

Let's fast forward 10 years. It's September 2009, and The Dills are in the middle of a week at the National Quartet Convention. Their last two major projects have been picked up by Crossroads Records, one of Southern Gospel's biggest labels for distribution and radio promotion.

Mickey Gamble, executive at Crossroads explains how they came to the company's attention: "I first met them through Kevin Ward, who has recorded several projects with them. Then they were participants in our EmPower Your Ministry course last year."

They've had several songs go to the top 40 of the Singing News charts, performed on the Singing At Sea cruise for several years, and been featured in showcases at the NQC. It's a long way removed from the tiny stage at Celebrate Munford. Don't let the success fool you, though, as these Dills haven't forgotten where they came from. Shawn, Tim, LeeAnn, and Bridget Dill are truly grateful for the journey they've been on, and are humbled by the way God has blessed their music and their ministry.

Bridget Dill shares the story of how

the four present day members of the group began singing together:

"Shawn began playing piano for his parents at the age of 7. A few years later at the age of 7, Tim began playing drums and both of the boys started singing with the family group." Bridget continues, "LeeAnn began traveling and singing with her family at a very young age. Over the years, the paths of the two families (the Johnsons and the Dills) crossed often and

continued>

The Dills: Telling the Story of a Lifetime

By Wes Burke





Photo opposite page courtesy of the Dills. Concert photo taken by Wes Burke.

deep friendships developed. LeeAnn and Shawn later married."

The marriage of LeeAnn and Shawn played an important part in Bridget joining the group. Bridget shares, "I was asked to attend a New Years Eve service in 1993 with some friends who were singing for a Watch Night service with the Dills and the Johnsons. Though married, Shawn and LeeAnn had been traveling with their respective families and this was to be the last night LeeAnn would sing with her family. The plan was for her to begin traveling and singing with the Dills beginning in January 1994. She was due to deliver Logan at any time, so my friends decided I should come along to assist in the concert in case both families had to leave in the event of his delivery. Before the concert our mutual friends introduced me to Tim, Shawn, LeeAnn, and the rest of the families."

Bridget continues, "A few days later I received a call from Tim informing me that LeeAnn had indeed delivered the baby and everyone was well. He also took the opportunity to ask me out on a date. Two weeks later, after an inspirational first date, I began traveling with the Dills. Tim and I were engaged later that year in November 1994, and 3 years later, we married."

Shawn and Tim's parents retired from traveling with the group in January of 2004. It wasn't long after that the group took their first major road trip, leaving West Tennessee for a series of concerts in Virginia. Prior to that trip, the group had stayed within a 4-5 hour radius of their home. Shawn talks about the expansion of their ministry and states, "We never really tried to get our name out there nationally, I guess you would say, we just started praying that if God would open the doors, we would walk through them. We feel that we have been blessed to have ministered to so many people and we love the friendships we've made through the past 6 years and look forward to making many more."

These days, the Dills are keeping themselves on the forefront of the merger of technology and Southern Gospel music. They use multimedia presentations in their concerts where they can, with a very moving and effective video to go along with their great song, "Uncommon." They are also all very active on social media sites like Facebook and Twitter to keep up with their fans. Their web-

site meshes the traditional web-

site with blog posts and microblogging (Twitter).

Their vision to use any and all methods to further the good news they share doesn't go unnoticed. Crossroads' Gamble calls the group "a very smart group with new marketing and new media." He also states that they are "a very good example of some of the younger groups in the industry that are thriving but 'under the radar' as far as the mainstream SG media is concerned. They are being very successful because they have learned how to become 'famous with their

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own people.”

In their willingness to use current technology, the group actually solicited input from their fans on their blog while trying to select just the right mix of hymns for a new recording. Tim says the process “went extremely well. We received nearly 100 suggestions for what people considered to be their favorite hymn! Naturally we could not use all of them and some of the suggestions were not even ‘hymns.’ We did manage to choose the songs based on those suggestions with the exception of 2 or 3 that we chose to put on the album.” The end result is a very strong and enjoyable CD of classic hymns from the group done in their own unique style.

The future is looking bright for this talented group of individuals. The Dills latest mainline recording, *Story Of A Lifetime*, was released to much critical acclaim. Their current single, a cover of the CCM group Truth’s hit song “Holy Of Holies”, is a very powerful ballad that speaks of the awe inspiring access that we have to God’s throne. In addition to *Story Of A Lifetime*, the group has also just recently released a new table

project entitled simply *Hymns*.

Looking to the future, Tim states, “We naturally would like to see that our hard work is paying off ‘visibly’ by seeing the ministry opportunities grow. Although, the world and music industry is changing so dramatically that I think it would be very difficult to know what to expect in the future. I think that’s why we’d just love to be where God wants us to be at that time! Since He’s the only one that knows what the future holds... I figure that’s where we should strive to be!”

Bridget sums things up nicely when she says, “God took four semi-bashful teenagers with a love for His music and brought us together through the help of some circumstances and dear friends. Though alone we’re not extremely outgoing, there’s a power amongst us when we are standing on stage together that we can only describe as God’s anointing. We love each other, we love the Lord, and we are extremely humbled that He has brought us together and allowed us to serve Him doing what we love to do.”

They’ve come a long way since that Saturday in September 1999.

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Don't Be "Sumo Girl!"

"Christian Fitness" by Laurette Willis

Japanese Sumo wrestlers may be the world's top experts in how to gain weight. They are devoted to gaining as much weight as possible because the heavier the wrestler, the more likely he is to beat his opponent.



If you want to lose weight, you'd be wise to learn from the Sumo wrestler what not to do. Here is how an average 165 lb. man becomes a formidable 400 lb. contender. His day looks something like this:

He lives in a dormitory-style Sumo training center with other athletes like himself and awakens around 6:00 a.m. For the next four or five hours he trains and exercises without eating.

Clue: Skipping breakfast will not make you slender.

Most overweight people do not eat breakfast. I was one of them—until I realized I was becoming "Sumo Girl." Skipping breakfast makes one more likely to overeat later in the day. It also causes a 5% drop in metabolism. No wonder I was so sleepy!

Considering Sumo wrestlers exercise so much you'd think he'd be thin, but his eating habits ensure he keeps piling weight on no matter how heavily he trains for competition.

Clue: Exercise alone will not cause you to lose weight. You must change your eating habits.

The Sumo wrestler's first meal of the day is around noon, after which he takes a nap for three or four hours. His trainers want him to conserve as much energy as possible so that most of the calories he eats will be stored as fat.

Clue: Going to sleep after eating puts on weight. In order to lose weight, do not eat within three hours of bedtime.

To gain the large belly for which Sumos are famous, he eats only two meals a day.

Clue: Infrequent meals equal weight gain. Eat smaller amounts every three to four hours instead.

Some women have told me, "I shouldn't be so heavy. I only eat twice a day." So do Sumo wrestlers. You'd think they were non-stop eating machines to become so huge. But no, they eat just two meals a day—two huge meals a day. The average Sumo meal would feed five or more average people!

Clue: Portion sizes do count.

In order to train his stomach to eat those huge portions, he eats past the point where he is no longer hungry. He continually ignores his "full signal."

Clue: If you want to lose weight, stop eating when you are no longer hungry—NOT when you feel "full."

The Sumo wrestler's diet is surprisingly healthy and low in fat. He eats the same dish at every meal: chanko-nabe, a meat stew with rice and vegetables. This traditional Sumo dish is eaten with very little variation every day, twice a day.

Clue: Don't be a "boring eater."

I used to call myself a "boring eater" until I decided to stop calling myself names. We get into a rut with our eating sometimes, don't we?

Fitness experts agree it's important to vary our work-

"Christian Fitness" cont'd

outs because the muscles adapt quickly. If we continue to exercise the same exact way all the time, the body becomes accustomed to it and we won't experience the progress we'd like. Similarly, it's important to add variety to our food plans. This isn't just to fend off boredom at the dinner table. When you eat a variety of different foods you are more likely to get the broad range of nutrients your body needs. You also won't get that horribly deprived feeling of being on a diet and become tempted to go running into the arms of the nearest Keebler cookies elf.

To avoid becoming "Sumo Girl" remember:

- Skipping breakfast will not make you slender. You

must eat breakfast.

- Exercise alone will not cause you to lose weight. Eating habits must change.
- Going to sleep after eating puts on weight. Do not eat within three hours of bedtime.
- Infrequent meals equals weight gain. Eat smaller amounts every three to four hours.
- Portion sizes do count. Use a measuring cup until you can "eye it."
- Stop eating when you are no longer hungry, not when you're "full."
- Don't be a "boring eater." Variety is the spice of life!



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Our SGN Scoops Staff is are comprised of professional writers, singers, speakers, publicists, and ministers. Please visit their websites for more from them. **| CONTRIBUTORS**



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Evie Hawkins's love for writing spun many articles that were read by music industry professionals and lead to the development of the Evie Hawkins Agency, in Nashville. Evie keeps residence in Alabama and Tennessee, and enjoys as much time as possible with her husband, their family, and the musicians whom she loves very much. eviehawkinsagency.net.



Chad Hayes is a pastor, husband, and father to an adorable one year old. He is also the resident CD reviewer for SGMRadio.com

It is the Lord's desire- and ours here at *SGN Scoops Digital*- that you become one of His followers. God has promised eternity in Heaven with Him for all those who accept Him as their Personal Savior. It's as easy as "ABC":

A: Admit that you are a sinner.

Romans 3:23- For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.

B: Believe that, because of your sin, you deserve to spend eternity in Hell. However, Jesus shed His blood and died on the cross of Calvary to pay the debt for our sin. He then rose from the dead three days later, proving His victory over death, Hell, and the grave. He offers this as a free gift to anyone who will accept it in faith.

Romans 5:8- But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 6:23- For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C: Call upon Jesus and ask Him to come into your heart, forgive your sins, and make you one of His children.

Romans 10:9- That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

Romans 10:13- For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

If you would like to accept God's free gift of salvation, then all you have to do is pray and ask Him. Your prayer might sound something like this:
Dear Jesus, I know that I am a sinner, and I know that I deserve Hell because of it. However, I believe that you died on the cross and rose again in three days to pay for my sin. I ask you to come into my heart, cleanse my sin, and make me one of your children. Thank you, Jesus. Amen.

Please remember that simply saying a prayer doesn't save you. You must believe this in your heart as well.

If you have any questions about salvation, or if you just prayed to receive Christ, please e-mail us at sgnscoops@gmail.com. We'd love to rejoice with you! God bless you!

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AMERICA'S QUARTET

Hopper, Goodman, Talley, Speer, LeFevre, Perry; family names are synonymous with Southern Gospel. The industry and indeed the Church itself, thrives on families committed to serving the Lord together. In a sea of couples, how does the single Christian live a life of significance and victory?

Artists who are single often find themselves the target of over-eager fans, stage jokes, ugly rumours and even stalkers. Living single in the public eye is difficult for those trying to remain true to their calling. Do you date your fans and risk having your activities posted on

from North Carolina, says, "You're always busy, even at home. You have very little free time, distractions left and right, and always someone wanting your attention. If there were two of you, it wouldn't be enough. Then there are things that would tempt you, if you would let them. People are always asking why you aren't married. I get that a lot. And, 'I would like for you to meet my daughter.'"

Sandra Barnes, a single lady who is a fan from Michigan, had this to say about the interaction of audience and performers: "You would think that SG fans would have class

says, "Each side has its own disadvantages and liabilities and its own blessings. Even though known married artists may get some come-ons, they probably get less than known single artists. In that regard it is easier. They have people taking care of business at home which is good, but they also miss being with their families. Single people probably get hit on far more than marrieds. Also, if something goes wrong at home when they are gone, it is harder to have someone else take care of things. They might also feel almost without a home."

We brought this discussion to

Living Single in a Southern Gospel World

First in a series by Lorraine Walker

Facebook? Do you date fellow artists and risk a broken relationship that will make further performances together difficult? How do you remain morally upright with all of the temptations surrounding you?

Some would say it is just as difficult being a single fan as it is being a single artist. Being alone and living a victorious Christian life is difficult no matter what your profession. Most churches don't have viable singles groups for adults over 35 and it is difficult to meet other singles in a church setting no matter what your gender. Finding your significant other is narrowed down to your workplace or special social events such as concerts. This makes the single artist an easy mark for avid fans who misunderstand compassion for personal interest.

In a recent discussion on Facebook, some single friends discussed the pros and cons to being single in Southern Gospel. Stephen Widener, a single artist and pastor

and integrity, but a lot don't. I've seen single and married artists being assaulted by groupies of all ages flirting or trying to match up their children or grandchildren with them. It's really a selfish act and shows a definite lack of respect."

Sandra continues, "I've seen some artists handle it well and others not so well. I still think it is an individual thing. If someone is doing it for the right reasons, they won't let all that mess go to their heads or have to struggle with it. Yes, more people may know their names than yours or mine, but I believe the strength to deal with all that comes from the same place. It doesn't matter if you're in a 9-5 desk job, in front of 1,000 fans, or jobless."

Fan Terry Snyder

several artists in Southern Gospel, and they have an interesting perspective that is well worth sharing with other singles, and the Christian community as a whole. Southern Gospel singles are indeed living joyful, victorious lives, and this article begins a series which spotlights these successful artists.

The first artist in our series is Greg Bentley from North Carolina. Greg has been involved in Southern Gospel for many years and travelled fulltime with groups such as the Hoppers, Down East Boys and the Squire Parsons Trio. He has been on both sides of the industry, and remains the same friendly, affable gentlemen that he always has been. Greg currently works fulltime at Crossroads Music,



I have always kept an open mind as to being married if God put the right person in my life.
~Greg Bentley

and also has a part-time group called Message Trio.

Bentley enjoys the freedom and independence of living single. However, he says, "The down side can sometimes be finding things to do when no one is with you." Greg says he doesn't think that it matters what your profession is when you are single, the challenges are basically the same. However, he does feel that the life of an artist is easier on a single person than on someone who is married.

"It is much easier for sure," says Bentley. "Much of my road life was with married people. I saw how hard it was to be away when the power goes out at home, or a water line breaks, and you cannot be there to help your family. Also [the married person was] missing special events, birthdays, anniversaries; things that single people do not have to face."

Bentley notes that ministry is the same whether the person in the audience is single or married. The artist is ministering to people, not their marital status. However, as a single, he has run into challenges. "It is somewhat hard because you are always on guard trying not to offend anyone. You may be totally in the right, but someone may interpret your actions in the wrong way."

Where does the Southern Gospel bachelor find a special someone to spend time with? "Through the years I have dated ladies that I have either met at concerts or through mutual friends," says Bentley. "I have only dated ladies that work on the inside of the industry, so it has not been an issue of two road people trying to work out schedules."

Bentley has also found that the Church as a whole is more geared to families and couples. "I do believe that this is an overall Christian perspective," he says. "More Christians seem to get married earlier than in the secular world. And as you become an older single, yes, there is a different treatment."

Greg Bentley is on staff part-time at Trinity Baptist, a place that welcomes single adults. "Our church has a pretty active singles ministry that includes all singles from college age with no age limits. There are activities that can be enjoyed together like days at the lake, or movie nights and cookouts."


Many married people cannot understand how someone can remain single into their 40s and not be anxious or upset or desperately searching through dating websites. As a single who is content with his current status, Bentley says, "I have always kept an open mind as to being married if God put the right person in my life. The times I

have felt I had found that special someone, but it has not worked out, I usually get a peace from God that He is not ready for that change in my life."

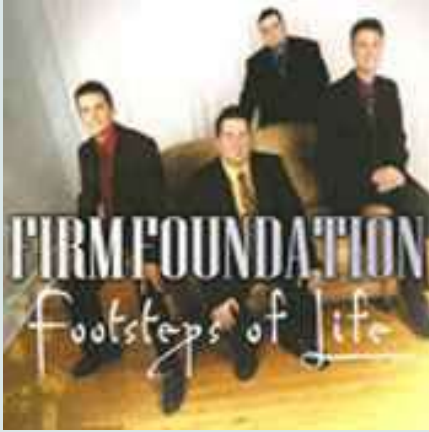
Greg Bentley is a mature Christian who knows that his life is directed by One greater than himself, Someone who has his best interest in mind and has perfect timing. To those singles who have not found peace in their current status, Bentley says, "Keep God first and foremost in your life. He promised to be our mother, our father, our brother or sister; our Companion and Comforter. He promised He would never leave or forsake His children. If you are questioning being single and God's plan, study the life of Paul. He has been a great example of being totally centered on Christ and letting God handle the rest. First learn to be comfortable with who God has made you to be. Then you will find it much easier to be comfortable around other singles as well as married friends."

Our thanks to Greg Bentley and the Facebook friends who contributed their thoughts to Part One of Living Single in a Southern Gospel World. If you would like to contribute to this series, write to me at lorraine@sgnscoops.com

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Who's making new music...

CD Reviews by Chad Hayes

FIRM FOUNDATION

Footsteps of Life

www.firmfoundationqt.com

With 8 years of ministry under its belt, Firm Foundation Quartet is by no means a new group. However, they are an up-and-coming group that many people are just now hearing about for the first time. The group consists of Steve Bridgmon (lead/manager), Josh Brown (tenor), Josh Teasley (baritone), and Anthony Davis (bass).

Footsteps Of Life is the group's latest album. It's a progressively-styled album with 10 songs from such writers as Marty Funderburk, Dianne Wilkinson, and Buddy Mullins. Lead vocalist Bridgmon even wrote one of the songs. Donna Beauvais, formerly of the group Hope's Call, produced the album along with appearing as a guest vocalist on one of the songs.

Now, the moment you've all been waiting for: THE SONGS!

The first song is the driving, up-tempo "Already On My Knees". This song immediately became one of my favorites from the album. This is a country-flavored number with some excellent vocals. This is also the first radio release from this album. The tempo stays the same for the next song, "God's Gonna Do You Good". One of the things that you notice on both the previous song and this one is the depth of bass vocalist Anthony Davis' range. He seems to spend most of each song in the "low basement", and it's not a bad sound. The tempo then slows down for the thought-provoking ballad, "All He Wants". Tenor vocalist Josh Brown gets the feature/lead here, and his vocals are very smooth. He also does a good job matching them to the "mood" of the song.

The fourth song features album producer Donna Beauvais as a guest vocalist. "Nothing Better To Do" is a mid-to-up-tempo song that has a lighter feel than the first two songs. The verses go back and forth between lead vocalist Steve Bridgmon and Beauvais, and the first chorus is done as a duet with the two of them. The rest of the quartet joins in on the second chorus.

Bridgmon has a clear tone to his vocal that sets a solid foundation for the group's sound. This song is slated to be the second radio release from this album. Song #5 is another slower ballad called "Nothing But The Cross". I dearly love the message conveyed in the lyrics here- nothing is more important or worthy of praise other than the cross of Calvary.

Next up is a driving, mid-tempo song called "You Are The Only One". This one has a more contemporary/praise & worship feel to it and features some solid harmonies throughout. The tempo then picks up for a more traditional-sounding song called "No Earthly Reason". Bass vocalist Anthony Davis has the feature/lead here, Anthony has a solid voice, but a couple of his lower solo notes were a bit rough. This roughness fits in with the overall group blend, but it might be better to keep most of his solos in his middle/higher registers.

Song #8, written by Steve Bridgmon, is another power ballad called "Still Standin'". This is a mid-tempo song that gives the group a chance to show off its vocal blend. The ninth song, "Free For All", is another mid-tempo song with a more contemporary sound. The album ends with another up-tempo, country-flavored song called "This Is The Walk". I think that this one will be a fan favorite.

This is a very good album- one that Southern Gospel fans need to look at adding to their collection. This group has a strong lineup of vocalists who know what they can and can't do, and their song selection and order make the album flow smoothly. Donna Beauvais did a wonderful job of producing this album and getting the most out of these guys. If they continue in this direction, they'll be putting out quality albums for years to come. Overall, I give this album a rating of 9 ½ out of 10 microphones!

Favorites: "Already On My Knees", "Nothing Better To Do", and "Nothing But The Cross"



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