


ACM

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 JOURNAL
 

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 an International Alternative Christian Music Journal


 ASHLEY CLEVELAND

**ACM Journal:** I spoke with Gerald Fast of Spin 180, and he mentioned you'd written a few songs that Steve Camp has used. Russ Taff, Rick Elias... a few others too.

**AC:** I wrote one song for Steve, actually I wrote it for myself but Steve recorded it, called "Threshing Floor." And Etta James just recorded one of my songs, which I'm thoroughly delighted with. I worked on one of her records and think very highly of her. A lot of people over-record for their album, though, so I don't know if it will make the record. All of the publishers that I have worked with since moving to Nashville 6 1/2 years ago held back what would be considered the bulk of my material, and did not pitch it to mainstream artists. The hope was that I would ultimately have a record deal and be able to record them myself. Also, Billy Sprague recorded one of my songs. I did a lot of co-writing also. Russ Taff recorded a song that I co-wrote called, "He Came Through."

**ACM:** Is your background gospel then, with a little blues and rock?

**AC:** My background is not gospel... My musical background is really folk. I always liked soul music too. I guess that would fall under the heading of gospel. In my twenties, I attended an all black church in California, simply for the passion of their worship...and I was tired of the conservative Presbyterian service. Rhythm and Blues - I came to the blues later. Now I naturally feel things on the blues side.

**ACM:** Your release, "Big Town," then, really captures your folk, blues, with a little rock mixed in, and represents where you've been and where you're going?

**AC:** I think I couldn't have put it better myself.

**ACM:** Is there a song that is really close to your heart? Something that really speaks to where you are, where you're going, or something that's really influenced your life?

**AC:** Well...the songs span ten years. The oldest song on the record is "Willie." And the second oldest, which is certainly very dear to me, is "Rebecca" - because I wrote that for my daughter shortly after she was born. She's eight-and-a-half now. The most recent, "Up From the Ether," I wrote during the recording process. They all come from a very specific chapter, and they're all important to me. A comment on where I was in my life and what I was experiencing and, hopefully, that I was growing from.

**ACM:** So, they're snapshots of your life...

**AC:** Very much so. I'm a newlywed, so "I Could Learn to Love You" is foremost in my mind. I've been in the music business for 17 1/2 years working professionally. Some years busier than others, I might add. I had an opportunity over the years to accumulate quite a catalogue of material, so I had a lot of songs to choose from. I chose what I did, because I felt they were a well-rounded view of where I was coming from - both positive and negative. I've had a lot of press that the record is about my bad relationships with men. Well, there are eight other songs on the record that aren't about that. I'm hoping that people will not pull things out of context and will look at it as a whole.

**ACM:** Unfortunately, there's a tendency to group things into women's music when it comes out with that slant.

**AC:** Yeah. And it's not. Certainly that's an element. I have definitely made some poor choices in my life and I'm an experiential writer. I write about what I know.

**ACM:** But you must have found someone great if you've just married.

**AC:** I am married and I did find someone in the end. We were friends for many years and we work together. The romance was a result of the growth of our friendship and a mutual appreciation for each other. But,

we also have a lot of passion. In the end, it's finding someone you can be content to struggle with. I really admire him. I want to be with him in the thick of it. He's a rare and wonderful man and I'm really fortunate.

**ACM:** Having your daughter the age she is...does that influence the direction you take with your music, where you take your music, or influence the music itself?

**AC:** I am very much devoted to my family and that is the priority for me. In the end, I think that God will have very little to say about how I ran my career, but I would assume that he's going to have a few questions about the way I raised the child He gave me. I take that really seriously. The important thing for me is to write music that is provocative - in the sense that it would provoke thought or would challenge people to consider my perspective - whether they agree, disagree or aren't interested. I would like to see a little depth in the industry. It feels like for the men it's just a lot of hair bands and very frivolous. And for females it's something short of a burlesque show. And neither one means a whole lot to me. I would just like to see something a little more intelligent going on. I'm being very general and

certainly there are artists out there that have tremendous substance, but it seems that they tend to be few and far between these days.

**ACM:** Certainly not on the forefront of MTV.

**AC:** You're right about that. My husband is a guitar player, and practices while watching MTV. About 15 minutes of that is more than enough for me!

**ACM:** What sort of venues are you playing currently? Primarily bars and clubs in town?

**AC:** That's what I've always played. The way I got involved in gospel music was that I attend a church in Nashville, and the pastor asked me to lead music at one point. Now I just play periodically. A lot of Christian artists also attend my church and ask for songs or ask me to sing background on their records. I never consciously thought to pursue the Christian music industry. Frankly, it was too narrow for me...content-wise. I felt like the restrictions were too limiting.

**ACM:** And, Atlantic is really giving you a chance to be up front about where you're coming from, and things that are important to you then?

... Continued on Page 3



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# KOKF ALTERNATIVE CHR RADIO

Greg Griffin: At GMA in Nashville there were probably a handful of radio stations that consider themselves Christian Hit Radio. But I discovered after talking to them that KOKF could hardly be considered CHR since KOKF's main thrust is in the mainstream market not to the Christian Market. I believe Christian Hit Radio, by its very nature, is not going to do a whole lot to reach that mainstream secular listener.



We report to CCM Update, of course, but if 3 or 4 songs that make their CHR chart are on our playlist, it's almost a miracle. Because they have "their CHR" for "their Christian music world" that doesn't relate to what's going on musically

in mainstream. That's where we want to be. The best term that comes to mind is missionary hit radio. It's something like entertaining evangelism. When we talk about people who have been reached, we're not talking evangelistically speaking, we're talking about people who have signed their name on the line. We have proof that we've reached them - we have documented 17,000 so far - Oklahoman's who've been willing to put their name on the line that their life has been changed specifically because of KOKF's top/40, rock, heavy metal and dance programming. 12,000 of those are decisions for Christ - first time relationships with Christ. There are a lot of other people who don't want to come out and publicly say those things have happened because of KOKF. I started in radio in the late 60' and early 70's... and over the decade of the eighties I've watched Arbitron and Birch in their format

## JEFF JOHNSON

In his fascinating book, *Art and the Bible*, the late Francis Schaeffer offered a bit of advice: "If you are a Christian artist...you must not freeze up just because you can't do everything at once." He also suggests that an artist's performance and world view must be judged on the basis of as much of the artist's work as possible, that every artist has the problem not only of making an individual work, but of building up a body of work as well.

Jeff Johnson did not freeze up, and over the last ten years has released over a dozen albums. He's one of the few Christian artists who have built up a body of work by which his performance and world view may, in Schaeffer's terms, be judged. "Judged," as Schaeffer uses the term in his charitable and liberating little volume means "evaluate" or "critique," and the range, history and glorious diversity of Johnson's music make him the least heard and most critiqued artist in recent memory.

Johnson's music is a bit like a ball of string. You can start anywhere to unravel it, listen to it, to talk about it. It's an instant hit with listeners who have no pretensions to "high art," and absolutely bombs with some of those who do. Johnson is one of the few "popular artists" for whom the phrase is not an oxymoron. "Unique artist," a phrase which should be redundant, actually applies to Johnson, whose dozen-plus albums wind and meander over musical byways, while retaining his musical thumbprint.

He's a critical favorite, for several reasons. One being his prodigious output. In the last decade he's released a series of five vocal albums of rich, deep music that is unparalleled in beauty, widely celebrated and absolutely unique. "Hineni," as Jews say, "it would have been enough." Then he also released five instrumental albums combining chamber instruments with restful acoustic and electronic sounds (termed

"contemplative" to avoid "new age" connotations). Hineni. But there were also two fantasy-science fiction collaborations. And two kids' story tapes with music. His most recent album, *Great Romantics*, combines all these elements in a work of power and beauty rivaling 1989's *Pilgrimage* as his best work. As a producer, his credits include David Friesen's top ten jazz album, *Other Times, Other Places* (1989) for Global Pacific.

Critics love Johnson because he gives them so much to write about, listeners because he gives them so much to love. Glimpses and snatches of things from Music Appreciation class run in and out, pieces from all those books you read (or were supposed to have) drift by, riffs and runs, trills and arpeggios glissando up and down the scales, and shivers up and down the spine. Clean, uncluttered arrangements feature every note and chord hanging in space against silence, in a producer's dream. This is music compact discs were invented for, that puts the *Advents* and *Infinities* through their paces, and makes your pioneer rejoice like angels of God.

On the other hand, Johnson's music is an acquired taste. Just how many have acquired it is a little hard to say, since he's never had a radio "hit". The fact that he hasn't has led some of the more revolutionary critics to indict the whole pop music system. Margaret Becker, Deri Daugherty of the Choir, and a surprising number of bands cite him as inspiration, and some play his CD's before shows. He perennially makes those lists of "Desert Island Discs" and favorites polls, and I imagine some producers and label heads go home after a hard day at the headphones and relax with *Pilgrimage* or *Icons*, while bemoaning the sad state of the industry.

Still, the great unheard may not be the great unknown much longer. This renown is getting him a hearing. His label, Ark, has issued all the aforementioned albums on CD, distributed by Sparrow in the U.S. and increasingly available in the United Kingdom. Most can be ordered through Spring Arbor distribution, and pop up in those obscure ads in underground papers. Instrumental cuts from *Similarities* or *This Mystery I Pose* spice up the occasional "new age" or jazz station, while "Looking for God," "Hadrian's Wall," or "Great Romantics" pepper adventurous college and gospel radio. Appearances at Cornerstone and Greenbelt have increased demand and swelled Ark's mailing list.

Critics, as I have said, love to find the literary influences, savor the spiritual metaphors and revel in the musical inspirations in Johnson's music. It gives English majors something to do, but obscures the fact that Johnson is just a regular guy, with a wife and daughter, who goes to church in a suburb of Portland, Oregon, and is (in his own way) doing what we are all called to do.

The real appeal of his critically-lauded music may be that it mirrors the world. That the world is like a ball of string you can start anywhere to unravel. That Johnson, in the last decade, has started to unravel it. He has traced the particular lives of artists in songs about Monet, Rodin, and most recently, in a spirited remake of Don McLean's "Vincent," a moving elegy for Vincent Van Gogh. But if these characters struggle with the Muse, others wrestle with the angels, resisting too-easy answers and instant theologies, delighting in the wonder and diversity of the world, rejoicing in common human life.

This unravelling of the string Johnson calls "flow," and he revels in it in one of his best songs: I move in this flow...I move in this flow a glacier made from layers of history's snow I am what I know, I am what I know and what I know is what I see in dreaming and reality on and on this cycle goes of wretchedness and beauty juxtaposed.

Johnson's Christian worldview is integral to everything he writes, so much so that some distributors have declined to carry him, but references to it are rare enough to be beautiful...stretched...like the music, in dazzling passages throughout his catalog. For all their questioning, his songs echo the Westminster Catechism on the purpose of life: "To glorify God and enjoy Him forever."

The rich musical passages in Johnson's best work breathe elation and enjoyment. They speak of truth and beauty, help us in unravelling the string, and call us forward in our own Christian lives, which Francis Schaeffer calls the greatest works of art. And who knows what might happen if we don't freeze up?



breakouts. And for ten years nothing's changed. When they break out national formats on who's listening, invariably only 8 or 9 percent of all teens listen to any religious radio, and adults 18-34 have been around the 1 percent mark.

ACM: Part of that is their target audience is thirty-five and older.

GG: Well yeah, that's true. They basically gave up the future of our nation as far as Christian radio is concerned. I think that's a total disaster, but then they've never been evangelistic. They've always been taking care of the church. There's nothing wrong with that, but we really feel there's an awful lot of people that are going to miss the Lord entirely if we don't reach them. If you are over 25, you have less than a 5% chance of ever receiving Christ as your saviour, statistically, apart from any miracle. All the research that has been done, from Barnett to the Billy Graham Association and Youth for Christ - even Gallup and the Hart Research Foundation - shows that those who say they are Christians will tell you that first happened in their heart between the age of four and roughly eighteen. So by the time you get past twenty-five, the chance of ever making that commitment in your heart is pretty much gone. One of the most important things in life for those who are 25 and younger - one of the things that dominates their life - is music. So that is the perfect tool to go after them with, but basically nobody is doing it. We had a lot of national advertising agencies calling us wanting to buy teens and young adults, and of course we're non-commercial so they can't buy anything! We also had several local ad agencies that have gotten to know us very well simply because we keep coming up on some of their targets for products and services they want to advertise. So they provided us with some of this research information. One of the things that they know, and we found out because they sent us all this stuff, was that KOKF is #1 in total daily time spent listening by teens in the market. And we have 26 primary radio stations here and a total of 62 radio signals in the total survey area.

ACM: And that was as just a 3000 watt station?

GG: Yes, that's with just the 3000 watts, so we're not even reaching the total survey area with the power we've got right now.

ACM: And some of these stations are 50,000 and 100,000 watts?

GG: Yeah. What we consider our direct competition are all 100,000 watt Stations.

ACM: But you're about to join them.

GG: We're going to slug it out on an equal basis now. Apparently several stations are getting very nervous about KOKF going to 100,000 watts. The sales manager at Oklahoma City's album rock station, which has from time-to-time been #1 for 12 and older overall, said everybody in the media knows about KOKF - who we are and what we're doing - but nobody can figure out how to combat it. And they are predicting that there are at least two stations, maybe three, that might be taken out of the market when KOKF goes up in power.

ACM: Most Christian stations say they can't afford to reach a younger audience because they'll lose their big advertising accounts.

GG: We are 100% listener supported and that means God was free to, I think, do something special. We started this venture in June of 1986, and since we've gone past that first year, we've been totally debt-free. Listeners brought in the money to make sure the station was totally paid off. The Holy Spirit used us so fast, and it penetrated so deeply in the culture here, that we saw kids who are children of very wealthy and politically powerful people in Oklahoma City have their lives changed. Some of them were saved. Some of them were brought back to the Lord. We saw Pastors who were going to preach - who had preached from the pulpit - that what we were doing was devil music and you shouldn't listen to it, whose sons or daughters had started to get messed up in drugs or several other things, and their lives were falling apart. Their dad couldn't do anything about it, and he was a pastor! They were listening to KOKF and they gave testimony that their lives had been changed and they had been brought back to their faith in Christ. That happened across such a broad base that a lot of people that might have organized to protest or object to KOKF were kind've shut up because of the fruit that was around them.

We play a top/40, urban hit kind've sound during the day, and at night, coming out of afternoon drive, it's top/40 rock hits. Then every night at eleven o'clock, seven nights a week, it's heavy metal - heavy metal, punk and thrash - up 'til about four. Then we ease back into the rock and we start the morning drive. We try to look at the whole picture, because we have an incredible crossover listenership between us and several of the top stations in town. There's a real liquid flow back and forth. So we look at those things that are going to attract them that are also going to be Godly or biblical in message or content. But one of the things we had to decide a long time ago is that personal opinion and personal emotion in what is programmed can't really enter into it. There are no national charts really doing the music mixes that we're doing, so you can't really follow after them either. Which means you better find out who your targets are, find out what they're listening to, what sounds are turning them on, what song's are really getting under their skin. And then go after that. Go after that sound and go after them. Like you're fishing for fish...fishing for souls.

ACM: How do you go about getting directly to the listeners?

GG: Teens, for example. We are the exclusive High School Happenings outlet in the metro area. That means we're on thirty secular high school campuses, and were also on junior high school campuses as well. What that means is



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Written by Gord Wilson, a freelance writer from Bellingham, WA.



every day we air between fifteen and twenty second spots of representatives who are saying what is happening at school that particular day. It also gives us access to all the school assemblies and all the school activities. We're at school lunches, some principals even put KOKF on the P.A. during lunch. We've done a lot of music testing, even school bus music research. One of the things we've done is we've taken some of the top secular hits and we've put them together with some of our top hits and theoretically if the kids were only listening to the secular top/40, then all the stuff they'd hear of our hits would be brand new music. Of course now that's not true because there's so much cross listenership, we don't find that many kids who aren't familiar with us now. But in the beginning it was that way, and we soon learned and discovered what songs that we had that kids instantly turned onto to. And the kids today are really programmed and primed for brand new stuff. Being the first to know what's going on musically. They want to hear that fresh stuff and for most of those kids fresh is much more important than familiar. Traditional radio programming says that you must always program what is familiar, particularly in drive times, however, with the advent of MTV and the video format and everything that's happening. Most of our kids, even in their 20's, are programmed to want and desire that fresh new sound and to really be hip to what's going on. We've come to the point now where we really aren't that interested in cassette tapes anymore. We really need compact disc's and/or DAT.

ACM: Bands with cassette-only releases often have DAT masters of their eight-track or better

recordings and could dub a copy off and send it your way.

GG: Yeah, we're interested in that...definitely! Especially with the higher power. We're coming to a point where we're getting ready to make a hard and fast rule it's got to be CD or DAT or forget it. We're really sorry about that, but we're in a real competition here, and we've got to have the highest quality possible. The thing we're looking for are tools to reach those listeners, and if it's really going to hit hard, then we want to use it. Obviously we make a lot of mainstream labels mad at us from time-to-time. Actually more often than that.

ACM: Do you consider KOKF a blueprint for other stations, or just a regional success story?

GG: We've had a lot of people call us and fly in to listen to us. I've shepherded a few starting out that want to go the same direction we're going - I guess the answer to that is yes and no. One of the most important things for radio to do is tune into their market. Although I believe a lot of songs, if they're a hit, they'll be a hit everywhere, I believe there's a percentage that won't. One of those reasons is the profile of the marketplace.

One of the categories that a lot of traditional religious radio stations would go for in their market, is middle-age, above-average income, white-collar workers. In Oklahoma City, we have exactly half of a percent of the population in that category. You'd be a fool to try to program specifically to go after that lifestyle. That'd be ridiculous. And yet I know there are religious radio people who really want to do something, but they're out there in those markets and they have no idea what their profile is like. So they're programming to people who don't exist.

... to be continued in Issue 7

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### FINDING IT

On page 4 you'll find an abbreviated list of alternative product available from around their world. We suggest you contact the following for a catalog of their product, much of which may be unavailable in your area.

#### Cheep Records

68 Sunnyside  
Devonshire Road  
Toxteth, Liverpool L83TD  
England

#### Embryo Arts

Noronentaplaan 52  
B-3800 Sint-Truiden  
Belgium

#### Key Records

PO Box 427  
Lloyd, FL 32337

#### Kosher Records

900 North 'L' Street  
Lompoc, CA 93436

#### Metal Cross Productions

Hallmansv. 26  
S-552 59 Jönköping  
Sweden

#### Plankton Records

236 Sebert Road  
Forest Gate  
London E7 0NP  
England

#### True Tunes

210 W. Front Street  
Wheaton, IL 60187

#### Vertical Take Off Music

PO Box 540975  
Orlando, FL 32854

Independent artists should consider sending a copy of all music releases to each of the following radio stations. And, if you are not currently doing so, please be certain to send your releases and other information to ACM Journal!

#### VOICE OF AMERICA

c/o Bruce Brown  
6829 Cottingham Lane  
Centreville, VA 22020

#### RADIO ALTA MIRA

PO Box 737  
Norwood, SA 5067  
Australia

## WHERE ANGELS FEAR TO TREAD

A Brief Primer in Licensing, Publishing, & other High Explosives

This time out we're going to tip-toe together through the highly complex and lethal minefield called Licensing. We'll encounter extreme perils with names like copyright, publishing, and P&D (very unpredictable!). Stay close while we take a brief stroll.

**Copyright.** Before you do anything with your music, you must ensure that no one can dispute your rightful ownership. There are several ways to defuse this bomb, but the two simplest follow. Complete form PA for any single song and send in a cassette and a ten dollar fee for registration to the Library of Congress. If you have several, or an album or CD, you can copyright the embodiment of the work. Use the album title or call it Collected Works of John Doe. The latter registration is like copyrighting your body because it contains your soul. If you change bodies (or release the material in a different form), you will have to register again. Now that you can call your soul your own, beware of those

that offer to buy it. Watch it on the right! That was close.

**Publishing.** This is a multi-faceted weapon and requires more research and caution than we have room for here. Briefly, before you lose your head, it involves the exploitation of your music and/or lyrics by another party (Warner-Chappell, Virgin Music, etc.) in commercials, movies, copies by other artists, sheet music, songbooks, and so forth. A reasonable fee for overseeing and negotiating this mess is usually fifty percent of the gross publishing income. An advance should be offered for tying up your copyright. You can act as your own publisher, but it would be wise to retain the services of a publisher to administer your copyrights. They won't actively seek income for your work, but their expertise and muscle can help in a pinch. The customary fee in this instance is thirty percent of gross to the publisher.

Every time you receive airplay, or your song is performed (even by

you), a royalty must be collected -- at least in theory. This is usually overseen by a performing rights organization like BMI, ASCAP, or SESAC. They function as a form of collection agency. They gather fees from nightclubs, radio stations, and performance halls, dividing the income among members that show up on the playlists according to a sampling percentage. In the case of ASCAP, Michael Jackson and Madonna are usually happiest with this arrangement. For the small fry such as myself, I suggest BMI -- they offer many services to the fledgling and moderately successful songwriter. It should be noted that the cost of doing business with any of these agencies is borne by the subscribers and not the members. Mechanical royalties are generated by embodying your work in CD's and so on for release. The rate is 5.7 cents per song, or 1.1 cents per minute whichever is greater. The record label or distributor must pay you an advance for the units they

manufacture. You keep the money for those sold and not returned. Airplay royalties are 4 1/4 cents per play as of this writing.

All of this money represents a considerable peril if left unprotected -- lost wages! Never give away your publishing (but by all means sell it to a publisher at the previously described rates). You might trade a small piece of your 50% to a label for a larger advance or royalty rate, but remember that this may be your only hit! That's why everyone wants a piece. Songs have languished for years only to resurface and make millions for the label or publisher. This is not the exception. Bottom Line -- this is your music, not theirs. I can't stress enough that most people in this industry do not have your health and future financial well-being as their primary concern. Watch out! Incoming! That was a near miss with a P&D round.

**Production and Distribution.** P&D involves the licensing of your product (music or finished album

with artwork) to a distributor or record label for a given period of time (I suggest a year to see how the marriage works out). All manufacturing and production costs should be paid by those licensing your work. In return, you should receive an advance against a royalty of approximately 50% of all monies received after reasonable expenses. Be sure to define reasonable in the contract. This agreement should in no way require the surrender of any future publishing rights -- PERIOD.

There, we've made it to the other side. Phew! Remember that the licensing of your music means more potential income to you over your lifetime than any record contract or tour. This income can only be protected by you through the application of secured copyright and publishing rights. I feel a whole lot safer now, don't you!

Written by Daniel Koenig, a musician, audio engineer, and independent producer.

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## ASHLEY CLEVELAND

AC: Yeah! I was concerned the other extreme would be true in a secular environment. I'm sure many record labels would be gun-shy about any attachment to the Christian philosophy. Lately they're a little more skittish because one of their bands, King's X, did an extensive article in Rolling Stone magazine and talked extensively about their faith and apparently sales dropped. But our appeal is different. Their audience and my audience are, for the most part, probably different. Not only has Atlantic not limited me in any way, they chose "Walk to the Well" and "Big Town" for the record. They loved those songs.

ACM: Are you getting airplay at the national level?

AC: "Willie" did well in the Northeast and the Southeast. It did well in Canada and pockets in the western U.S. too. The second single, "I Could Learn to Love You", just came out Friday,

so they're just gearing up for the push on it. The record is moving along very steadily.

ACM: As far as Christian radio stations go, the jury is still out?

AC: With Christian radio you need distribution by a Christian record label, and my record label doesn't want to do that right now. They just want to get me established through the regular system.

ACM: Stand on its own two feet in the real world...

AC: Yeah. I've heard from alternative Christian radio stations. Or Christian radio stations with alternative hours. That's where the record is getting played.

ACM: Any plans for you to pursue music festivals like Greenbelt, Flevo, or Cornerstone?

AC: I would certainly love to participate in that if I were asked. I don't know if there are any plans to pursue that. I played the Newport Folk Festival (which is a blast) a couple of years. And the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival a few times. My record isn't being carried in Christian bookstores, it's only in regular record stores.

ACM: The important thing is just being honest about your faith. To earn respect based on your ability and the honesty and applicability of what you have to say.

AC: I've never pursued anything else. The things that I've been through in my life have equipped me to really understand other people's struggles. I hear from a lot of people who are not believers, but are really touched by the spiritual material. I feel this is where I've been placed...this is where I belong. I'm a professional musician, and I'm not entirely comfortable with using the stage as a podium for evangelism. But at the same time, I'm going to sing my material. Hopefully that will

speak for itself. What I'm saying is...I think I'm where I'm supposed to be. And I think I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing. I really hope my life reflects it.

ACM: Even though you're a Christian, and you live a life consistent with that, life is still a rollercoaster.

AC: Things are working out. I think life is very difficult, and the biggest struggle I have is that I was raised to believe that life was going to be fair. It was a big stumbling block to discover that wasn't true...that whole myth of trust Jesus and everything will be fine. That's not entirely true. Or, trust Jesus and everything work out the way you want it to, which is usually how people interpret it. People get the notion that it's their ticket away from pain. If I have anything good to bring to the table...to really offer people in my life...it is directly born of the most painful times in my life. The stuff that came easy amounts to very little over time. If I have any substance, or any depth, that is what that's made of.



