

Chris Tomlin Opens Up About the 'Lifeblood' of Revival

On Friday night, Sept. 8, when most people living in the eastern time zone will be finished with their day, worship leader Chris Tomlin will begin his set, culminating a full day of music at Universal Orlando's Rock the Universe. The two-day music event, which also features Lauren Daigle, Lecrae, Casting Crowns, Kari Jobe, Brandon Heath, and others, draws thousands of listeners to one of the country's largest theme parks.

In this interview, Tomlin speaks about his latest appearance at the event, the longevity and legacy of worship music, and the unity in Texas being demonstrated through relief efforts to Hurricane Harvey's devastation.

You do worship events all over the country. How is the environment different at Rock the Universe?

There are some same things for our normal shows that are definitely in common, but also some that are different, especially in Orlando. It's just such a different environment and feeling. People are in such a great place, for the most part having a fun time with their families. We've played it a few times now, and I really love it. I play so late. I play around 11 this year. I always wonder, *Is anyone going to stick around?* But they do. It's incredible.

Do you think the theme-park atmosphere brings in more people not familiar with your music?

I definitely see the audience expanding. The theme park brings so many people. There are a lot of people hearing these songs for the first time.

What is it about your songs in particular that unites

generations in your concerts? You're likely to see a wide range of ages that are familiar with the music.

I remember going to a concert years ago, to Garth Brooks when he was rolling in the '90s. I saw all these different ages of people. I thought, 'That's amazing. Different age groups love his music! I'd love for my music to do that one day.' So to see that happens has been one of the biggest thrills for me, to look out and see grandparents and grandkids, that they all come and share together. It's really special. That doesn't happen a lot. Usually one artist has one target. For me, it's been pretty widespread. I think that speaks so much to music in the church. I try to give people a voice to sing to God. I think in that way it really crosses a lot of lines for ages.

Are you a theme-park lover? Or is it all about your daughters?

It's all about them. They're so fired up to be with me. It's doing all their rides. So that's more fun for me, seeing them get so excited and spending the day with them. They've been talking about it for a month.

Do you have any observations on the state of worship music? Critics said it was a fad and would not last but here we are, 20 years later, going strong.

I think it's continuing to the next generation, and that's a big thing. The next generation coming up, there are incredible worship artists that they are speaking right into their language. That seems to be the lifeblood of the church, connecting to the next gen, and music is a big part of that. It's going to continue to be the force. I think that's what younger people are looking for, what's real. There's something different that happens when I'm a part of this music singing these songs. It will continue. Styles come and go will change. The Spirit is eternal. The music is eternal, and the act of worship is eternal. Worshipping God is never going away, unless the Scripture is wrong. People are connecting into that

and wanting to be a part of something way bigger than themselves. Pop music and country music are wonderful, but they're not bigger than yourself. In this kind of music, you're tapping into something much bigger than yourself, including generations before you. It's big, it's broad, and it's not going anyway.

What's coming up next?

We're hitting the tours again, in the fall is the Good Good Father tour. Then we'll go right into our Christmas tour. Christmas is something I always look forward to; we'll do nine to 10 cities every year.

As a Texan, what are you feeling when you see what's happening in the aftermath of the hurricane?

We are definitely heartbroken. I used to live in Houston, involved in a church there. My family is in northeast Texas, so they're just getting rain, not the flooding. It's a devastating storm. In Texas, the people who are helping and the communities coming together, that's always been amazing about Texas. Texans are so proud, we get a bad rap for that, but we've seen so many out helping and we're going to see more of that in the weeks and months ahead.

For more information or to purchase tickets to Rock the Universe, visit

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