

Lincoln Brewster's 'Real Life'

Lincoln Brewster, currently serving as worship arts pastor  at Bayside Church in California, has written such well-known songs as "Everlasting God," "Today Is the Day" and "Salvation Is Here." For his newest album, Real Life, Brewster collaborated with several songwriters including Paul Baloche, Jason Ingram and Mia Fieldes. He recently talked with The Buzz about his role as a worship leader and his new album, which releases today.

First, let's talk about your role as a worship leader. What's most important for you to keep in mind?

Lincoln Brewster: There are a couple of things. I feel like I have a split role. One is to take care of our team. We're a completely volunteer-driven team at Bayside so there's a lot that goes into that with developing people. Our church has been growing really really fast since it started. Fifteen years ago, we started with 26 people and we're bumping up against 12,000 people now, five services a weekend. That volunteer team is essential to what we do. On that front I always want to make sure our volunteers are taken care of. It's increasingly more challenging as we get down the road and as the load gets bigger and bigger; that's one thing I'm always thinking about, how to keep a healthy team. I guess it would be easier in some senses to not be as focused on health and more focused on getting the job done, but I really believe that honoring God with the health of our team is a good thing to do and a biblical thing to do. And we want to make sure we have a team doing it for the right reason and living lives consistent with what it means to be on a worship team.

The other thing is, whether I'm at home or on the road, I always do think about the church and the experience that they

have on the weekends. I always want to make sure they have a good experience in worship and that we're not creating any barriers but that we're really the team that functions to remove barriers and be an inspiration for them and hopefully would cause them to experience the Lord otherwise. I know a lot of that falls in how they're led; having the right worship leaders there is important.

It's a real honor and it's been a neat growth process over the years watching our church grow together in that area. It's been awesome; I really enjoy it and I look forward to continuing down that road in the future.

***Real Life* is your seventh solo album. Is it hard to believe?**

Brewster: It still just sounds completely strange when you say your seventh album. I've started calling myself the Forrest Gump of Christian music—it just seems like it's not something I did; it's something that happened. I'm supergrateful. I love playing and I love worship and I love serving the Lord. I certainly don't feel like I deserve it so it's a great honor.

I'm more somebody who's a maximizer by nature; I tend to try to make the best of any opportunity that God lays in front of me. I just hope that I will be a good steward of this season in my life, and I'm really praying that God will give me the wisdom to find balance in all the things that are going on.

Tell us about your new album.

Brewster: It's sort of a mix of a couple things. We ended up calling it *Real Life* because, honestly, the making of this project, from the writing to the recording, there was a lot of life experience that went into it. My wife—we've been married for 16-½ years now and she's my best friend on the planet. She's interesting because she has one of the best ears for songs and even for audio, mixing, but she's not technical at all, so she can't tell you specifics, but she can tell you if it's not right. And she really poured a lot of herself into

this project as well. So it was really fun to make it from that angle.

With some of the songs, like the title cut, "Real Life," that was a deeply experiential process from the inception of the song. When Mia Fieldes and I were writing it, I had to get up and leave the room a couple times because I kept breaking down. ... In the first verse it talks about growing up in Alaska and then in the chorus there's a line that says, "There was real pain and there were real tears" and what a lot of that is about is growing up in an environment of domestic violence and alcoholism. Having to scroll through that stuff again was intense. ... There was a lot of heavy stuff to process.

As a sum total that's what it feels like the project is about; it's just a very authentic, very real picture. All the way across the board all of the songs have their unique spot even though some of them you might not get that out of it if you listen to it by itself. "Best Days," "Shout for Joy" or "So Good" are more up, high-energy praise songs, but they're just songs that are rockin' songs that come from a really grateful heart, and then some are more introspective.

It was the hardest album I've ever made in a lot of ways and certainly the most gratifying. It's been a neat process and I'm real curious to see the kind of response we get. I really hope that it encourages folks and that it's a great journey from top to bottom.

Did the process bring some healing?

Brewster: Yes, I think so. I've mentioned the type of environment I grew up in before when we've been playing concerts, events. It's been such an encouragement to say, "That was my past, but it doesn't have to be my future." God's been so clear about that. We don't have to be controlled by what happened yesterday. So it's a neat thing to be able to tell other people that there is no such thing as damaged goods

in God's kingdom. You go into the grocery store and see the cart with damaged goods and they're discounted. That's not the way this works. Christ paid in full for everybody, full price. And it was His life that we could be free. So it's a good reminder for me and a good motivator to be the best dad I can, the best husband I can.

What else do you hope people will sense from listening to this album?

Brewster: Being a guitar player at heart I hope that people who are musicians and who get inspired by the musical side of things, that they'll be inspired and challenged. I hope that there are some songs that churches will be able to use, grasp onto.

I think with songs that are more introspective like "Real Life" or "Made for More," I hope that those will cause people to pause and cause a perspective change. I hope if somebody listens to a song like "Made for More" they will understand that we were made for more than this world can offer. There is going to forever be a tension that needs to be managed—we weren't made to be completely satisfied here. If we're completely satisfied here, something's very wrong.

A song like "Real Life" will hopefully help people say, "Yep, I had a past and I've got my todays and I have hope for tomorrow." And they'll realize that our ultimate hope is to be standing before God and for Him to say: "Well done. I'm proud of you. Welcome home. This is real life. Not everything else." Hopefully those will be some perspective shifters for people and just to make them really count their blessings today and have hope for the future.

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