

Michael W. Smith's Label Change 'Wasn't a Rash Decision'

Christian music veteran Michael W. Smith has signed with a new label for the first time in his 30-year career. Smith recently inked a deal with Capitol Christian Music Group (CCMG), leaving Provident Music Group.

"When you've been with a family as long as I've been with Provident, it's very difficult to leave, so I don't take it lightly and it wasn't a rash decision," Smith told *Billboard* magazine. "[Provident Music Group President/CEO] Terry Hemmings is still one of my best friends, but I think every once in a while—especially if you've been doing it as long as I have—sometimes it's good to have a different set of ears just to have another shot at it."

Smith started his career writing songs for Amy Grant, Bill Gaither and Sandi Patty before releasing his GRAMMY-nominated debut album, *The Michael W. Smith Project*, in 1983 with Reunion Records, which became part of Provident Music Group, Sony's Christian division.

Smith has placed 29 albums on *Billboard's* Top Christian Albums chart, including 13 No. 1 titles and 25 in the top 10.

Smith's new record deal began with a publishing agreement.

"We began talking to Michael several months ago about working with him as a songwriter," CCMG President/CEO Bill Hearn told *Billboard*. "Since that time, we developed a publishing relationship with Michael where we are administrating his back catalog of songs, and we've done a new co-publishing deal going forward with him for future songs."

Smith has spent the last two years touring extensively abroad, and his first CCMG album is planned to be a live recording of worship songs recorded in Brazil, Malaysia, Singapore, Sri Lanka and other countries.