

Phillips, Craig & Dean: Fearless



L to r: Randy
Phillips, Dan
Dean, Shawn
Craig.

A crumbling economy, wars without end, new health risks, security threats and more. The media give us a constant stream of reasons to be afraid. But what if God's people shined a light of eternal hope right into the face of this world's temporary circumstances?

That's the compelling idea behind *Fearless*, the 10th studio album from one of today's most respected Christian vocal groups, Phillips, Craig & Dean. Uniquely gifted and positioned in their dual roles as musicians and full-time senior pastors in three separate U.S. cities, Randy Phillips, Shawn Craig and Dan Dean know well the current struggles people face and with their new CD are boldly taking the opportunity to respond to them in life and song.

"We were talking about how afraid our church members are today," Phillips says. "A look at your finances right now might mean kids who wanted to go to college can't, and so on. The fear that brings can be so paralyzing; it puts you in a cage. But then we asked ourselves, 'Shouldn't believers who have the heart of eternity in them be different?' That's when we found our theme: Fear less, hope more. We've written or chosen songs that say, 'Break out. Live large.' This is an opportunity to show our power is in God alone."

Craig agrees on a couple levels. "*Fearless* is a statement against the current tide of anxiety that's being sold by the loudest voices in our culture," he says. "But I've also been

inspired by the stories of Christians in parts of India. A missionary our church supports tells us about many who are baptized there in spite of being shunned by family or even endangering their lives. That's being fearless. We all need that kind of courage."

To exemplify its concept, *Fearless* highlights a pair of decidedly upbeat and worry-free tunes about divine goodness.

Asked separately about their favorite worship cover on *Fearless*, each artist immediately mentions the band's first single, "Revelation Song," a tune born out of Gateway Church near Dallas. "Revelation Song" is a rising anthem in churches across the country that the trio has wanted to record for some time. Here, the cut gets a slow-burning arrangement that moves from flickering U2-like guitars into a Passion-reminiscent eruption of praise.

"This song captures the moment of looking up into heaven, peeling back the curtain of eternity so we can peek in," Phillips says. "If you keep your eyes on the Dow Jones or nuclear weapons in North Korea, you'll always be nervous. Look to the awesomeness of God instead."

Dean wrote "Let God Be God" in response to increasing global instability, reminding us that the one who holds the sea in place is watching out for every step we take.

"This is the perfect time for us to say: 'Don't panic. God is in control,'" he insists. "Jesus asks in Luke 12:25: 'Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?'"

Similarly, "Counting on God" (by Jared Anderson) opens the album with a joyful and confident message about never having to worry what tomorrow may bring that Phillips paraphrases as: "Get out of the funk. Embrace life! Run headlong into it. Start counting on God."

There's no shortage of artistic fearlessness on those tracks

either. Although known at first for their softer inspirational hits, Phillips, Craig & Dean have authentically moved into edgier praise and worship territory in recent years. Just as a pastor hears the voice of his younger congregants, so these vocalists respect the ideas of emerging producers such as Bernie Herms (Casting Crowns, Natalie Grant), who guides the sonic direction of *Fearless*.

"I can't even believe what Bernie did," Phillips says with a laugh. "For 'Counting on God' he said, 'Get in the microphone and growl!' and had me singing through a magazine to get a weird vocal effect. I played it for my 20-year-old who—as if she were surprised—said, 'Dad, ya'll sound good!'"

Dean followed suit on "Let God Be God," letting out a convincing James Brown scream atop the funky rock arrangement. "I was just doing it to be funny, but it stuck," he says. "We always want to try new things, and this was our first time to work with Bernie. We were very lucky to get him, because he has really become an in-demand producer."

There's no doubt Herms felt just as fortunate to work with Phillips, Craig & Dean. A distinct winning element of *Fearless* is the trio's time-tested ability to write great songs and still be willing to interpret popular songs from other writers as well, bringing a consistent level of emotion and excellence to the project.

Among the originals, Craig is especially excited about "The Distance," a soaring anthem of grace with heart-gripping words that read like a story-poem.

"The idea is that God couldn't stand the distance between us, so He came near," he explains. "There's a bit of hyperbole in that, but the principle is true. God shows His love in spanning the canyon between mankind and Himself with the humble cross. I feel as strongly about that lyric as any I've written."

Dean wrote “Nothing to Prove”—an adult-contemporary, spot-on relatable account of what life really means—after a close friend and church member lost his father to cancer.

“I’ll never forget the morning he called and said, ‘My dad is gone,’” Dean recalls. “It was brilliant and sad, and I went into the chapel with a heavy heart asking God what I could do, and out came this song with words that I hope can be said about me someday.”

“Live with no excuses / Love with no regrets / Laugh a lot / Leave this life with nothing left unsaid / Make this world a better place / Don’t be afraid to cry / And when it’s finally time to say goodbye / There’s nothing to prove / Nothing to lose / Nothing to hide.”

Moving toward the worshipful core of *Fearless*, Phillips co-wrote “The Spirit of God Is Here” with Paul Balloche (“Open the Eyes of My Heart”) about the privilege of prayer.

“If you love golf, talking to Tiger Woods would be an honor. If it were politics, maybe you’d enjoy speaking with President Obama. But to talk to God! That’s amazing,” Phillips says. “And musically, Bernie gives the song some Coldplay cool.”

Always unassuming, the men are still surprised that what they began in 1991 continues to this day—some 2 million-plus sold records and 18 No. 1 singles later.

“If you’d told me we’d still have an audience after all these years, I’d be stunned,” Phillips says. “That’s just God. We are so grateful.”

“It’s pretty amazing,” Craig admits. “I count these guys as true friends and love this journey.”

“We were just working in our churches, doing what we do, not even really looking for this,” says Dean. “Then God said: ‘Buckle your seatbelt. Have I got plans for you.’”

And so Phillips, Craig & Dean continue to follow God's plans as we all should—fearlessly.

Click [here](#) to purchase *Fearless*. To learn more about this trio, visit [.](#)