

Abandon Releases 'Control'

In the two years since Abandon's Forefront Records debut *Searchlights*, the San Antonio-based band scored a Dove nomination, throngs of critical acclaim and tours alongside Fireflight, Building 429, Remedy Drive, Teen Mania's Acquire the Fire, plus a plethora of major faith-based festivals. Amongst all the activity, the modern rockers crafted its sophomore CD, *Control*, which finds the five-some taking the next natural evolutionary musical step, while also turning inward for their greatest lyrical depth to date.

"It's been a lot of hard work, and when you're in the audience looking at a band on stage, it's easy to take for granted how they got there," notes frontman Josh Engler. "There's a lot of leg work that makes it all possible. From the very beginning, we set out to stay real and stay at the audience's level, even if we are literally three feet above them on stage."

The 13 tracks that comprise *Control* are oozing with examples of the group's instant reliability and heart on sleeve vulnerability, despite all the interactions with success and fame since first starting as an indie act in 2005. If anything, the more experiences members have encountered through their vast travels has yielded an even greater realization of their constant dependence on the Lord and need to break beyond comfort zones with a faith that's fully on fire.

"Seeing something like the Northern Lights in person makes us marvel at the natural, God-orchestrated phenomenon happening in such a beautiful state outside of human control," Engler muses. "Growing up, we were sheltered a bit and it's interesting how your perspective of life changes. As we have toured, our core beliefs have remained intact, but it's interesting how our 'Northern Lights' moments have changed our perspective. Who is ultimately in control?"

As the idea of control continued popping up in the songwriting sessions, it was only natural for Abandon to follow suit with the album's moniker. However, it's more than merely a quick catch phrase that summarizes the thematic thread throughout the project, but also a chance for audiences to consider a handful of very pertinent rhetorical questions. "'Are you in control or is God in control?'" the singer encourages fans to ponder. "We basically want people to come away with an answer to 'who's controlling your life?' We're not really looking for a quick answer, but more to challenge your perspective and to provoke thought and motivation. It's brave to question where you're at and search out your heart."

The guys can attest to that type of self-examination, followed by a season of giving the Lord complete control first hand, which in spite of the success from their freshman to sophomore records, was still filled with its fair share of strain. For starters, being on the road meant distance between wives and extended families, along with financial sacrifices, as Abandon continues to invest in building its ministry from the ground up. And while the players will be the first to admit being stretched further than ever before on all of those fronts, an eventual ability to lay those burdens before the Lord and relinquish their control led to the greatest clarity that they were indeed pursuing the proper path.

"When we don't surrender our lives over to God and hold onto it ourselves, we limit ourselves, but when we let God take control, it's way better than we dreamed or hoped," affirms Engler. "We've learned to be good stewards of our time and to hold one another accountable each and every day. And by us being open about what we're going through, we hope to open up topics of conversation with our listeners. A lot of times, we find that if someone digs a song, we have the opportunity to talk about what we went through personally and maximize the ministry potential."

Aside from the topical relevance, *Control* is replete with

musical muscle, thanks in part to split production duties between Paul Moak (Third Day, Mat Kearney, The Blind Boys of Alabama), Chris Stevens (who also helmed the band's *Searchlights*), and Josh Silverberg (a relatively new knob twirler who previously found fame in Edison Glass). Regardless of the collaborators, Abandon builds upon its Coldplay meets The Killers pedigree adding each of the individual guys' personalities in the studio.

Guitarist Stevan Vela brought an ultra-creative, borderline perfectionist attitude to ensuring excellence, while his cousin Dave on drums interjected rhythmic intricacy and conceptual depth. Bassist Bryan Fowler also added a proactive spirit to constant experimentation and suggestion, even going as far to try out parts on piano, guitar and drums. As for Engler, he's a self-described dreamer who approaches songwriting with a mixture of theatrical delivery and personal authenticity, while his guitar grinding brother Justin Engler rounds out the rhythm section as the band's ultimate brainstormer and sounding board.

One example of that overflowing chemistry comes during the incredibly contagious lead single "Feel It in Your Heart," which finds the fellas casting aside life's numerous distractions in favor of plugging into God's plan, in turn, stirring up an undeniable passion to go forth with an eternal mindset. From there, "SOS" is a figurative cry for help from the weary, suggesting full-fledged rescue only comes from complete commitment to Christ, while "Push It Away," serves as a resolute anthem for unabashed believers to never be swayed, even amidst ridicule, challenge or persecution.

"'SOS' and 'Push It Away' were both written with Aaron Gillespie from Underoath and The Almost," explains Josh Engler. "We had met at the Dove Awards, and shortly after he was available to write with us. We wrote both songs in four hours, which was really fast for us, but he's full of energy and that's just how creative he is. He thanked us for the

opportunity to write together, but we were the ones who were honored!”

Adds Gillespie about his immediate impression of Abandon: “Genuine. It’s a word that we misuse a lot. Why? I think because in this industry we all want to be just that. ... Abandon, however, is the real deal. They seek God and write music about it. I was super privileged to have the opportunity to write two songs with them on this new album. These guys are killer. Get their records, and hear their hearts. Genuine.”

Additional examples of Abandon shaking up its formula come during “Your Love Goes On,” the group’s inaugural AC single that’s framed around acoustic guitars and epic ballad elements. On the lyrical front, it speaks about God constantly pursuing His creation, even those who feel unworthy or like they’ve committed too many sins in the past to be wiped clean. “When we fall, we should run back to Him because that shows maturity as a Christian,” considers Engler. “He’s a father figure, and just like when a child scrapes their knee, they run to their parents. Our hope for this song is that people view it in that light, rather than feeling like they should run away from God. Whenever we mess up, His love is constantly chasing us and He’s relentless in pursuing us.”

Between members’ constantly developing faith, the project’s adventurous sonic ambition, and perhaps most importantly, everyone’s individual resignation of control, Abandon is poised for its most active and effective season thus far.

“We’re always re-evaluating success for ourselves,” Engler sums up. “We don’t think there are any limits, not in a prideful sense, but with the intention of serving the Creator and wanting Him to use us to impact the world around us.”

[Click here](#) to purchase Abandon’s new album, *Control*.