

Chatting with Michael W. Smith

For 27 years Michael W. Smith has shared his music with the world. Yet the CCM legend calls his 22nd album, Wonder, his most personal to date. He talked to Charisma the project, what he's learned over the years and what life is like as a grandfather.

What was the inspiration for Wonder?

Michael W. Smith: I think all these songs are about what I've been going through just living life. Everything from "Save Me From Myself"—obviously I wake up every day and say: "Gosh, I'm a mess, God. I need You. Save me from myself"—to "Take My Breath Away." There are some tough songs. "I'll Wait for You" is about how life is hard, but those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength and mount up with wings as eagles. That's one of my favorites. "Leave" is another one. No one wants to write about abuse, but it needs to be discussed and talked about. I couldn't be happier with the record. It's been a great journey.

How is this album different?

Smith: Sonically I think it's the best thing I've ever done. We cut everything to tape which gives the big warmth, the fatness, whether it's the bass, vocals or drums. It's really completely different than recording digital. I wrote 75 songs. How do you narrow it down to 12? That's always a difficult endeavor, but I think we picked the best 12.

What do you hope listeners get from this album?

Smith: If people have a chance to hear the record and let it wash over them, I think this record can bring healing. Times are tough, and I personally believe it's a record for our time.

You're a granddad now. A whole new feeling?

Smith: It's awesome. I'm a kid at heart. I'm kind of crazy in a good way and I don't feel old enough to be a grandfather, but I actually am, and we're having a blast. Life is so good.

You've been doing this music thing for a few years. If you could go back in time, what advice would you give a just-starting-out Michael W. Smith?

Smith: I would say just be who you are. Don't buy into what's going on in the world musically. There are a lot of people who want to be Bono. There are a lot of people who want to be Coldplay or TobyMac. We already have a TobyMac. We already have a Bono. The advice I would give is be original, don't try so hard, be yourself.

How has your perspective changed?

Smith: I've learned that it's not about me. You figure out that all this stuff that you think can bring you happiness doesn't last. You can sell 2 million records, and if that's all you care about and you want to be a star, then 2 million's not enough; then you have to sell 5 million and then you have to sell 10 million. You finally realize it's just all sort of pointless. Real peace only comes from the one who made it all.

What is God showing you right now?

Smith: The big thing is just “Be still and know that I am God.” It’s hard because I have so many things in the fire, but there’s a way to do that. All of us have to fight for the time. We have to actually put it on the calendar that we’re going to turn our cell phones off and just be quiet. And I find that every time I do that, I get energized. It’s so valuable.