

Chris Tomlin's 'And If Our God Is for Us'

Grammy-nominated artist Chris Tomlin has won multiple Dove Awards, and has gold and platinum records to his credit. Time magazine has called him “the most often sung artist anywhere.” He talked about his album, *And If Our God Is for Us*, a sixstepsrecords/Sparrow Records release.

How do you feel about being called “the most often sung artist anywhere”?

I don't know really what I think about that. That's pretty crazy to think how these songs made their way to the church where they have and into people's lives—they have gone way past me. They are way bigger than just a song on the radio or a new album with a song that lasts a year or two. Some of these songs have really found their way into the DNA of the church around the world, and it's amazing that not only it traveled around the United States, but also all over the world. ... I love it because people don't really attach it to me, I don't think. It's just these songs they sing at church, so that's really powerful to me and extremely humbling.

How do you keep your work and your worship fresh?

We are a pretty focused team. ... I live in Atlanta now, and we have a church here that I'm pouring into every week, so you can't help but just keep it kind of fresh when every week you're coming to the same people and same community.

I've been more intentional with songwriting as far as just grabbing our team and meeting together and praying together and writing together and spending hours and hours just really building up each other and worshiping together in our own personal time, and it just keeps it what it's really about. We've never really lost that focus, we are still just a

worship band that started way back in the mid-'90s.

How many of these songs did you write yourself or with others?

I wrote or co-wrote all of them. Most of them were co-writing. We have a pretty vast team of people I write with. Matt Maher, who I have written several songs with, starting with "You're Grace is Enough" to "I Will Rise" to a couple of my favorite songs on this record [that] were written with Matt. Then a guy named Jason Ingram who has been just a songwriting machine as of a late and somebody I connected with this year, and we wrote a couple songs for the album. And then my normal guys I write with, Jesse [Reeves] and Daniel [Carson], who are part of my band, and Nathan and Christy Nockels, who are here in Atlanta. We lead worship together and write together, so it's been a pretty strong team of songwriting.

You recorded in your new cabin studio for the first time. What was that like?

It was so awesome. Every record I've done has been in Nashville, so this has been really nice to be just down the road from my house, and it just created an atmosphere that all of us were like, this is the best experience we have ever had recording. I think just because we were at home and there was no clock that was ticking, it was just like, let's see what happens and record. It's just been so awesome.

And the place was just a wonderful place to record. It's in the middle of nature, surrounded by massive, huge Georgia pine trees. It's just a gorgeous place. It's a little white cabin. ... Other people are recording there now and using it.

My dream is for it to be a house of worship, and people can come and record their music, and it doesn't cost them a lot and it really just refreshes people, a place people can look forward to. So we've been using it for songwriting and for meetings for our church and every kind of thing you could imagine.

“I Will Follow” has seen quick success. Why was that song selected as the first single?

Well, there was a song released earlier this year called “Our God.” It was from the *Passion: Awakening* CD, and it was such a massive, rocket song that I could never believe for it to become that strong of a song. It probably ended up being one of the biggest songs of our music life for me and my band, so we’ve just been blown away by it.

Thinking about what to release after that, we didn’t want to do something kind of down the same path because it would just get compared to that song, so [the first single is] “I Will Follow.” ... I wrote this with Jason Ingram and Reuben Morgan and I was just a little part of writing the song. They had the main idea, and it’s just been really cool.

When I heard it, I thought, man, this was really different for me. I really love the words and what the words are saying ... powerful things. But the beat is different and I loved it, kind of a little more beat driven and a lot of energy in it, and I was like, you know, I really feel strongly about this song because of what it’s saying and it can kind of get hidden, I think, with the message of the song because of how energizing the music is and how strong the beat is. ... I thought it had a really instant likability to it, too, that works well for radio, so that’s why we came up with that one first.

“Our God” has some nice orchestral work on it. What can you tell us about the sound on this album?

“Our God” is the opening track of the album. People will know it from *Awakening*, the *Passion* album, which they’ve heard on the radio, but I think they’ll be surprised by the very first notes of the album. When they hear these strings, they’re really cool. The sound of the album has taken a really great step forward for us. I love the way the record sounds. It’s

big, it's beautiful, it's very high energy.

What we did differently this record is I used two different producers. Ed Cash has produced my last several records, and he is amazing and has become a huge part of the success of my music, and I didn't want to walk away from that, so Ed produced half of this record, and then we wanted to bring in someone new because it's been several years now, five or six years, since I've used anybody new and so I used Dan Muckala, who is amazing. People would know him from Brandon Heath. ... He's got a great ear for songs and how they should be produced, so I think people will hear hopefully something they really enjoy as far as a little bit different sound than what they expect from me, and we were definitely going for that.

Was "The Name of Jesus" inspired by any particular time in your life?

No, there was just a huge collection of writers on that song ... Matt Redman, Kristian Stanfill, Jesse [Reeves] and Daniel [Carson] and myself all kind of chipping in with this song. This was one of the days we were just getting together and writing for the church and just to write songs together. Actually in another room that song started happening. We get together and kind of split off into other rooms in different teams of three or four.

That started with Matt and Christian and Daniel, so I just kind of came in on it at the end of the song. ... We play each other our songs to see which ones rise to the top, and it's really great because when you have that, it's a unique thing of laying down, how much stake do I have in this song? ... It becomes everybody's song. We all want the best for the song. That was one of the ones that rose to the top, and that's why we recorded it.

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