

Mars Hill Church's The Modern Post: Grace Alone

With the opening burst of synth and reverberating drumbeat, The Modern Post set the tone for its first release, *Grace Alone*. This is not your typical set of worship songs, but in fact much more: different, atmospheric and altogether worthy of praising God.

The band is fronted by Deacon **Dustin Kensrue** of Mars Hill Church Orange County, who just ended his 14-year run in the post-hardcore band **Thrice** in order to focus on his family and leadership at Mars Hill. Phil and Lee Neujahr are on bass and drums, respectively. Rounding out the sound of the Modern Post is Jonny Sandu on keys.

The band's first EP, releasing Tuesday, is also being timed with the launch of Mars Hill Music label. There seems to be a mighty weight in that push, but also a great trust of **Mars Hill Church** pastor Mark Driscoll in Kensrue's ability to create something that is honest, God-honoring and creative that will attach itself to listeners who don't find God in other forms of worship.

The sound of *Grace Alone* may not resonate with past fans of Kensrue's past work, but, in his words, "it happened." With the perspective that much worship music can be overly sentimental, they chose to push against that by creating music that is celebratory and upbeat.

The opener "Just As I Am" is fitting for an album that seeks to approach worship music in a different light, as Kensrue croons, "Lamb of God I come, I come [just as I am]." By the end of the song, the power in Kensrue's voice melds with the atmosphere created behind him.

Next is the title track with its driving bass and guitar

hooks. While “Grace Alone” could have easily become a huge anthemic song, instead the band created the right amount of balance between joyful worship and a grabbing rock groove. Then the pace slows with “Before the Throne” to allow Kensrue’s voice to really soar and carry the message of the song. The close relationship between Kensrue and the Neujahrs is evident here as the bass and drums really support Kensrue and add a victorious feel to the song.

With the Modern Post’s take on “Amazing Grace,” the album  hits its stride and provides listeners with the strongest song on the album. As the frantic fast-paced cymbal attack from Lee Neujahr sets the tempo throughout the song, the power of the band when it comes together for the chorus of “God of grace ...” is hard to deny, and you may forget you are listening to worship music.

The slow building verse in “White As Snow,” the album’s closing song, with a low vocal rumble from Kensrue and a reserved drum and bass line, is a perfect setup for the bombastic chorus that follows. When the full band hits the final chorus I can see worshippers stomping and singing out to the Lord. It is a powerful feeling, and it leaves the listener wanting more.

While *Grace Alone* may not strike a chord in the ears of all the listeners of **worship music**, nor those who have followed Kensrue’s successful career thus far, Kensrue and friends set out to create a new vision for worship music, and they have succeeded in that goal. While it takes a few measures to get going, by the end of *Grace Alone*, you will be toe tapping along to what is a great first entry into the worship music world from Mars Hill Music and the Modern Post, even if it’s not your typical listen.

As the final song fades out into echoes, it is easy to see why these musicians came together as they have created something truly special for worshippers to celebrate Christ.