

MATT MAHER ALIVE AGAIN

The meaning of life and the mystery of death are weighty topics that have inspired creative souls for centuries, but rarely has an artist taken a more compelling—or more vulnerable – exploration into those themes than singer/songwriter Matt Maher on his sophomore Essential Records release *Alive Again*.

Over the past few years, Maher has been on quite a journey, making the transition from full-time ministry at his home church in Mesa, Arizona to life as a respected worship leader with an international platform. In that time, he’s developed a reputation for being a versatile songwriter – always eager to build bridges between communities and inspire others to creative excellence—all for the glory of God.

From writing such well known worship anthems such as “Your Grace Is Enough,” or “As It is In Heaven,” to collaborating with other worshippers and artists on their respective projects (Chris Tomlin, Matt Redman, Brenton Brown, Hawk Nelson), the last 18 months of 2008 and 2009 has been an exceptionally creative and productive time for Maher.

As he began writing for *Alive Again*, a definitive concept began taking shape. “The over-arching theme that emerged seemed to be centering on what it means to be alive,” says Maher. “The whole notion that God became a human being should change the way we look at what it means to be human, and ultimately the way it leads us is back to the cross.”

Maher describes the title track as a song about waking up to the Kingdom of God. “I was driving from the Mexico border to San Antonio and the sun was getting ready to break the horizon,” recalls Maher of the inspiration for the song. “When we left it was pitch black and all of a sudden we were two hours into the drive and I realized I could see. I could see the light before the sunrise actually took place. I immediately thought about how Christ is preeminent in the world, before the world even sees Him. John 1 says, ‘In the beginning was the Word and the Word was God and the Word was with God.’ Jesus loves the world, so He’s shining in the world, through the church, before people even know that it’s Him.”

The lyrical depth and passion for community found throughout *Alive Again* reflects Matt’s heart as an artist. The vibrant passion evident in Maher’s live appearances is also captured on the new record. Produced by Paul Moak (Mat Kearney, CompassionArt) and Christopher Stevens (Delirious, tobyMac), *Alive Again* more fully represents his ability to bond with an audience. “Paul Moak was really adamant about capturing a performance and a moment,” Maher explains. “I think this record is a great snapshot of where I am on the journey as an artist and in my faith-walk.”

Alive Again is filled with great moments from the in-your-face title track, which is the album's first single, to the rock-tinged "Shout of the King." "No Greater Love" (co written with Chris Tomlin and newcomer artist Audrey Assad) is a buoyant pop anthem with an infectious chorus. "Flesh and Bone" is a poignant ballad with a particularly vulnerable delivery. "Hold Us Together" is a powerful anthem for these troubled times; a rallying cry to demonstrate that the love of God evidenced by the church can make a difference.

"You Were on the Cross," wrestles with the often asked question, "...where is God in the hurt and heartbreak." Through this song Maher points out God's presence in our suffering. He shares, "Not only is the cross, in and of itself, the atonement for sin, it is the means by which all human suffering becomes a transformational moment. It doesn't matter how dark your situation is, God Himself has been there."

"Remembrance," co-written with friend and prolific songwriter Matt Redman, reflects the heart of relationship and community evident throughout *Alive Again*. "It's such a unique moment we find ourselves in; when people from different denominations can come together and explore the deeper spiritual aspects of faith and communion."

Like all artists, Matt's life experiences have shaped his music. "It has given me a heart for two things: One is to interact with culture more and another is to be a vehicle for unity," say Maher. "I feel like there have to be people who are willing to just stand in the gap between Christian thought, and society. We are supposed to be in the world but not of the world. My mandate as a Christian is not to retreat, but to be a light. In a post Christian society, everybody is called to be a missionary wherever we are. The mission field has changed. The mission field is everywhere."

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