

BRANDON HEATH

Life has changed a great deal for **Brandon Heath** since the release of his 2008 sophomore album *What If We*. The success of that project, fueled by the massive No. 1 single “**Give Me Your Eyes**,” catapulted Heath into the consciousness of Christian music fans.

With a true songwriter’s gift of making the personal universal, Heath became a voice you wanted to listen to, both in terms of tone and content of his words. And he’s been rewarded for that work with numerous trips to the Dove Awards stage to claim trophies, including two consecutive years (2009 and 2010) as the Gospel Music Association’s **Male Vocalist of the Year**.

When it came time for the GRAMMY-nominated artist to begin crafting the songs that make up this newest effort, titled *Leaving Eden*, one would assume his most comfortable part of the job – songwriting – would fall right into place. Fueled by collaboration, Brandon turned to his friends and fellow co-writers to help shape the new material. His first co-writing session was with award-winning songwriter/producer Jason Ingram, who previously teamed with Heath on their GMA 2009 Song of the Year hit, “Give Me Your Eyes.” The result is *Leaving Eden*’s first radio single, “**Your Love**.”

“Because of the success of the last song we had written together, on my way over there, I was feeling a little bit of pressure, and I think Jason was, too,” Brandon says. “But we prayed and asked God to give us His direction. We felt He wanted us to keep it simple and talk about His love. It was the first song written for the album and exactly the push I needed.”

However, following the inspired birth of “Your Love,” Brandon notes a steeper hill climbed in the creation of the rest of the project. “A lot of these songs came about with a little bit of struggle, with moments when I had no idea what God wanted me to say, but that said, my favorite songs on the album are now the ones I wrote at the last minute, and with the most effort.” Brandon says.

Along with taking great effort in the lyrical development, Heath also desired to present a slightly different sonic side to the music on *Leaving Eden*. The opener and title track kicks in with big tom beats introducing the lyrical keystone “...one more step away...”, nodding at the more muscular sound of the rest of the album.

“I wanted to bring more beats,” he continues. “This is the most pop I’ve ever gone, with post-hooks after the chorus, a very modern pop thing to do. But it was really cool to kinda be in the moment of what music is doing, but also make my own contribution and attempt to push the envelope in Christian music.”

Heath and Muckala and their cast of session players succeed, wrapping Brandon’s voice in a variety of settings from the epic moments of the title track to the acoustic quiet of “**Only Water**,” co-written with Country music’s CMA and ACM Award-winning Song of the Year writer **Lee Thomas Miller**. It’s evident in the gritty, New York City-inspired big chords on “**Stolen**,” the horn-driven strumminess of “**It’s No Good To Be Alone**,” and the beat-laden challenge of “**The One**,” which asks the listener to consider what if they’re the one that can help change the world.

Thematically, when Heath approached titling his new 11-song collection, he leaned into the project’s opener. The concept of “**Leaving Eden**” speaks to a new awareness in Heath’s life, as well as a continuation of his career-long focus on reconciliation.

“The album opens with the title track stating the obvious pain in the world, by just reading the headlines. With the state of things around us, it’s clear we’ve left Eden,” he says. “And what did Adam and Eve want? What was the temptation in eating that apple?”

“They already knew good, but now they had knowledge of both good and evil.”

“I must first mourn the loss of Eden’s innocence in my own life, acknowledge sin and move forward in repentance,” he continues. “I think rediscovering and preserving innocence is part of the umbilical cord that attaches me to God. The life support is still there.”

At the same time, even amidst innocence being slowly chipped away, Brandon Heath knows the world can be changed, even if it’s just one decision at a time.

“I feel like I have a choice not to eat the apple anymore, and to protect what little innocence is still left in my life. Once reconciled with the fall of Eden, I’d love to celebrate the goodness in the world, and that’s what the rest of the songs on the album talk about,” Brandon says.

Leaving Eden represents that important step forward for Heath, as artist, as singer, as chronicler of the world around him. Through this remarkable collection of songs, he reminds us -- moment by moment, decision by decision – of the hope given to us. Although we often may feel the weight of the world pushing in, by looking back and leaning on the One who created us, can we truly experience that burden lifted.

###