

Mission Matters: Shane and Shane—The duo returns

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THEIR DAY OF RECKONING IS HERE

JAMIE GRACE

The newcomer proves her chops on her full-length debut

HEATHER WILLIAMS

Tragedy turned around by a hallelujah

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Grace & Rhythm

By Emily Hoenschmeyer

Passion. Maturity. Raw talent. Sound unheard. Mix with a little spunk, accent with cowboy boots and shake with the inspired hip-hoppin' beats of her mentor, TobyMac... and viola! You've got a 19-year-old who is not only beyond her years in faith, but a step ahead of the music industry. She's the new singer/songwriter who's hit "Hold Me" is currently topping the charts. She is Jamie Grace.

Any way you cut it, this young lady is on the fast track—academically, musically, spiritually. Not only did she graduate from high school at only 16, but she is just around the corner from finishing up college. Did I mention she just wrapped her first album *One Song at a Time*? How does she do it?

"It's definitely challenging to prioritize and schedule things out so that I have enough time to do all my homework, to do interviews, play shows and practice. I always tell people jokingly, 'I work hard and I pray even harder,'" says Jamie.

Okay, just good scheduling skills? We all know in reality it takes more than organization to balance a degree, let alone a music career. "I have a great support system—my parents and my road manager hold me very accountable. It's work first, then singing songs," Jamie responds. You better believe she's working hard too, especially since she plans to become a neurologist someday. Look out medical school!

More than her studies though, Jamie is a true musician to her core. In fact, since her grandfather introduced her to the drums and guitar, she has challenged herself to learn a new instrument every year: "My parents raised us to listen to a broad spectrum of Christian and classical music... This year I wanted to learn to play the banjo because I've always loved country music."

Ultimately, she's got a sound like no one else. In fact, she touches on so many rhythms and flavors, you might consider her a true cross-over artist.

"I think my style now is derived from and been inspired by so many different styles of music. It's given me the complete turn for creating my own style," Jamie says, reflecting on the genre of her album.

Still, beyond Jamie's life as a student and as a fabulously fresh new artist, she's really just a life-loving, joy-filled, Jesus-praising Atlanta girl. Having grown up as the daughter of two church leaders, her father being the foundational pastor of their home church, Jamie fell in love with God at a young age: "I became a Christian when I was seven-years-old and I really knew it for myself—my parents didn't make me. I really felt God tugging at my heart."

Yet, when Jamie was just nine-years-old, a rare and life-altering problem attacked her body: Tourette's Syndrome. "I started to make moves and sounds I couldn't control and that got really frustrating. Tourette's isn't very common and statistically it is definitely not common in females, let alone black females," says Jamie.

"I remember being very lost and thinking that God didn't love me anymore... I never doubted [God] existed because I saw how much my parents trusted Him and my sister loved Him, but they didn't have problems in their lives so I figured God loved them more."

Remaining undiagnosed until she was 11, Jamie fought the frustrations of her disorder, wrestling with God until music helped her shift: "At the same time I was falling in love with music, I was falling in love with Jesus all over again... I was playing a bunch of Jesus songs when I was learning to play instruments and they brought me out of [that] rut."

Then suddenly, one day this young lady realized a truth that will forever impact her relationship, her testimony, and her walk: "God's joy is right here and hasn't gone anywhere... it's not about what we can't control, it's about what we can control and how we react to those things."

And that specific joy has been what motivates and drives her to achieve such fantastic and servant-filled dreams. "I don't care what it takes, I'm going to sing songs about God's joy. I am going to be a motivational speaker and tell other kids about God's joy... We all have crazy stuff that happens in life and maybe God can speak through me to help change lives." ☺

