

NO MATTER WHAT

RYAN STEVENSON

As he set to work on writing new music, Ryan Stevenson had a lot to express in the batch of songs that would culminate into his third studio project, *No Matter What*.

Lots of life lived, including making decisions to be more present to with his family in the midst of a heavy touring schedule and moving to a new city. Vital revelations of self and spirituality unpacked. Persistent fears acknowledged, battled, overcome and battled again. Ryan had songs for all of that, but considering the two years it took to finish the album, he clearly wasn't interested in rushing the process.

"Each collection of songs is a different journey for me—I feel like I'm always experiencing different phases of growth and refining, which is what really helps me with the inspiration in the music," says Ryan. "I definitely feel like I grew spiritually and emotionally during the making of this record, because I was truly leaning into the Lord, and asking the Holy Spirit to breathe into each aspect of it."

Sparked by the tremendous success of his breakthrough radio hit "Eye of the Storm"—a multi-week *Billboard* chart-topper that became one of the most illustrious singles of 2016—Ryan enlisted that song's producer and co-writer Bryan Fowler to help with *No Matter What*. Gotee label head TobyMac was also very much in the mix on various creative levels, including writing and executive production.

The tight-knit trio has already scored one hit from the project, as Ryan's quintessential anthem—and the cornerstone of the entire album—"The Gospel," hit *Billboard* Top 3 status in 2017. The song managed to receive airplay at all 112 chart-reporting Christian Adult Contemporary and Hot AC stations in the country.

"Bryan and I have a unique chemistry and ability to work flawlessly together," Ryan shares. "And of course Toby is a huge part of everything I do—and not just on this project. We're a part of each other's lives personally, which makes the music creativity all the more special."

The collaborations didn't stop there. On top of a slew of other A-list co-writers and creative influencers including Jason Ingram, Chris Stevens, Jonathan Smith and Hank Bentley, two of the most iconic names in CCM also jumped in to lend vocals to songs. MercyMe frontman Bart Millard joined Ryan on the title track "No Matter What" and Amy Grant contributed her unmistakable voice and songwriting to the power ballad "Faithful," an earnest charge to resist the world's distractions and seek the Kingdom first.

For Ryan, "No Matter What"—the album's swing-ballad lead single—envelopes the entire central theme of the project in under four minutes.

"When people finish listening to "No Matter What" and the album as a whole, more than anything, I hope they'll walk away knowing that, no matter what they think about themselves—the shame, regret, guilt of their pasts—Jesus still sees them through the lens of redemption and grace," says Ryan.

While Ryan doesn't skimp on getting the message across throughout *No Matter What's* nine tracks, there's no shortage of stylistic flavor in the mix, either. The power-pop explosion of leadoff track "Lift You Up," sets an inviting tone of what's going on in Ryan's head and heart, while complementing other high-energy tunes found later in the playlist, like the synth-pop jam "Always Been You" and the 90s-inspired ode to his youth "Single-Wide Dreaming."

After two years of prayerful consideration and preparation in crafting the album, if there's one song that came down to being the most meaningful to Ryan, it's "Child In Your Arms."

“This song was such a huge point of inspiration for the project,” recalls Ryan. “We wanted to write each song like a child writing a letter to his or her daddy. The Lord has been teaching me a lot these days about becoming a child - returning to my child-like wonder - and this song was my moment to essentially crawl up in His lap and be His son.

“It was essential over the course of these two years that every song on this record exists for a reason,” he continues. “I was very intentional how lyrics and music were being crafted from the very beginning. What’s resulted is a collection of songs that have seriously stirred me, and will hopefully serve to reassure others that it’s not our own abilities or accomplishments, but the Father’s work in us, that shapes our truest and most beloved identity.”

