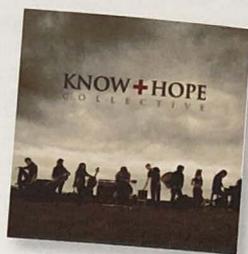


FIRE, TRUTH AND GOD AT WORK: MEET KNOW+HOPE COLLECTIVE

After a three-year silence and some 'refiner's fire' experiences, Audio Adrenaline's Mark Stuart and Will McGinniss are back with a new message and a different sound. Sarah Giles tells us more.



'It all started with a bunch of guys getting together around a fire ... it's a collection of stories about vulnerability, tragedy and redemption ... it's about all of us living out God's story.' This is the Know Hope Collective, a bunch of musicians and storytellers on a redemptive journey, with Audio Adrenaline's lead singer Mark Stuart and bassist Will McGinniss at the helm, joined by Julia Ross, David Leonard, and 2010 BMI Christian Music Award-winning Songwriter of the Year Jason Walker.

Each of the group has a personal story of hope, shared in videos on the enhanced CD format of the self-titled album. Stuart's is of professional and personal difficulties: losing both the distinctive voice for which he is known and his ten-year marriage. Having come through those experiences is reflected in the album: the tone is not just of hope, but of a hope that has triumphed, that has come through heartbreak and been renewed.

The album came about because of a shared experience with group of people in a small group at Mark and Will's church. They sat around a bonfire and told each other about their experiences, their struggles, and about what God was doing with them. Hearing this collection of stories was an inspiration to the band members. They contacted a handful of musicians and asked them to join them, and the Know Hope Collective was born.

Uphill, together

From the first chords of 'Attention' the mood of this album has a more knowing feel to it than Audio Adrenaline's peppy, upbeat atmosphere. It's not that any of that group's enthusiasm for God has been lost, but that the music conveys something of what it means to have clung on to the threads of faith while everything else fell apart. It's as though the energy of AA classic songs such as 'Mighty Good Leader' has been spent; they have refuelled, and are now climbing a new hill, pushing on to the next summit, and taking us with them to see what's up there.

And if encouragement for uphill struggles is what you need right now, this hits the spot. It's not an album of jumping up and down, but of reflection, recommitment, and readiness for what God is going to do next. Even the sing-along anthem 'Hands and Feet' has been recast – it's a little more mellow and aware of the consequences of the commitment it makes with the words 'I'll go where you send me'. It's certainly not a blind faith that's expressed; it's a raw, sensitive one. A less youthful one, perhaps. One that knows what it is to sin and to be restored. To be let down and to keep on believing.

Similarly, 'Good Life' is imbued with new emotion: a slower, emptier rendering makes it more poignant and powerful than its previous incarnation. You know that Stuart means every word. It comes from the heart, and when he sings 'I've lost everything I could ever want and ever dream of, it comes from a different place than it did before. But so, then, does the response. When the next line comes, and he tells God 'I've found everything, I could ever need here in your arms', it's clear this is just as heartfelt. This is the perspective from which a strong faith can only grow and move forward. It's inspiring stuff.

And this is very much the theme of the album. Three of the ten tracks may be former Audio Adrenaline classics, but this is in keeping with the message. God reworks things and builds them together with the new, 'repurposing' them, making them stronger and more meaningful than they were before. 'Build us Back' (which was written by Mark Stuart and Jason Walker but previously released by Newsboys) expresses it well:

*'We are scared, we are poor
All our safety nets are torn
We've been humbled to our knees
From these ruins, we believe.'*

The sense of renewal is palpable in lyrics such as these:

*'Though the mountains be shaken, the hills be removed
Your unfailing love remains
After all that's been taken, Your promise, still sacred
You build us back with precious stones.'*

What about the negatives? To be honest, I'd like to hear another couple of tracks, especially as three are reworked versions of previous releases. But that's a minor point and it's outweighed by the emotion and drive of the content that is included.

Still helping in Haiti

Meanwhile, one long-running project from the old line-up continues to grow and bear fruit. The Hands and Feet Project dates back to 2004 – the Audio Adrenaline days – when the band discovered a need for an orphanage in the town of Jacmel, on the south coast of Haiti. The first Hands and Feet Children's village was created to help orphaned and abandoned children. Now, the Hands and Feet Project has grown to care for over 85 children and has had a deep impact on the band members, who refer to it as 'one of the most significant ventures of our lives'.

Now, with the Know Hope Collective, they are once again using music to help children in need of love and shelter; and this group use their platform to present evenings of worship, entertainment, and story telling, sharing the redemptive and miraculous stories of the orphans of Haiti. This is perhaps even more in keeping with the themes that come out of this album. It's about a gritty, real faith, that knows about getting hands (and feet) dirty for the sake of the gospel.

Details

- Hear all the tracks and read about the project at <http://knowhopecollective.org>.
- Released on 1 March 2011, the album is on the Integrity Music label and is available from iTunes and Amazon.
- For more information about the Hands and Feet Project, visit <http://www.handsandfeetproject.org>.