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HAPPY BIRTHDAY TRAA

TRAA this week highlights the survey's most significant achievements as it celebrates its first ten years tracking Australian airplay of Christian music.

This week marks the tenth anniversary of *The Rock Across Australia's* (TRAA) inaugural Christian music chart. [15 February 1999]

The survey, published weekly at www.therockacrossaustralia.com, tracks the 30 most played songs on Australian Christian radio.

TRAA's head researcher Wes Jay says that playlists from more than 20 of Australia's leading Christian stations form the basis for each week's chart.

He says that reviewing the charts from the past 10 years indicate significant development in the way Christian radio views Christian music.

"Ten years ago dc Talk's *Supernatural* was TRAA's first number one song," he says.

"Today, few stations would air it as a gold or classic track because they are more focused on playing music compatible with their target audiences and formats, rather than just reflecting what is selling.

"In general, most Christian stations today - particularly those in metro areas - play fewer Christian songs, less often, yet for more weeks than they did ten years ago.

"In 1999, just two songs stayed in the survey for more than half the year, six in 2004, and ten last year," Wes adds.

The most successful song on TRAA in terms of weeks on the chart is MercyMe's *I Can Only Imagine*. Initially released in 2001 then re-released in 2003, the song has spent a massive 62 weeks in the survey. It is the only song to register in the Top 100 reports of four consecutive years. (2001-2004)

"Surprisingly, it never made it to the top, peaking at #4," Jay reports.

Three songs, however, have spent more time atop TRAA than any others. They are newsboys' *Something Beautiful* (2007), Stacie Orrico's *(There's Gotta Be) More To Life* (2003), and the Paul Colman Trio's *Turn* (2001). Each held #1 for a total of 13 weeks.

"Most songs that go to number one stay there for a week or two, maybe a month.

"It's comparatively rare that a song stays at number one for such a long time. It attests to the quality of the songs and their ability to engage listeners across the country.

"These songs will be played for many years to come," Jay predicts.

The success of newsboys, Stacie Orrico, Paul Colman/Paul Colman Trio, and MercyMe is not just limited to individual songs. Each is among the most played artists on Australian Christian radio.

Over the years, newsboys has secured the most number of songs in TRAA's End Of Year charts with a total of 23 songs, Rebecca St James 22, Third Day 21, Paul Colman Trio/Paul Colman 20, MercyMe 13 and Stacie Orrico 8.

"One can only imagine what the next 10 years holds for Christian music in Australia. Regardless of the global economic situation, it is bright," Wes suggests.

GMA DOVE AWARDS NOMINATIONS ANNOUNCED OVERNIGHT

The Gospel Music Association (GMA) membership has nominated New Zealand's Brooke Fraser for Female Vocalist Of The Year, Hillsong's *Mighty To Save* for Song Of The Year and Worship Song Of The Year, plus Hillsong Kids' *Tell The World* for Children's Music honors at the 40th annual GMA Dove Awards on 23 April in Nashville.

These were among the Dove Award nominees announced at a press conference overnight at the Nashville Convention & Visitors Bureau Visitor Information Centre.

The GMA Dove Awards, gospel music's biggest night of the year, features artists from every style of gospel/Christian music who come together for a night of music and celebration.

"Christian and gospel music expresses itself in many different ways and we applaud all nominated artists for their unique contributions to the music landscape," says John W. Styll, GMA president.

"The powerful messages of redemption, hope and joy found in the music of our Dove nominees come during a season in history when our country and the world need inspiration and encouragement."

The top artist nominee for Dove Awards is current three-time Male Vocalist of the Year Chris Tomlin, whose seven nominations include Artist of the Year, Male Vocalist of the Year and Song of the Year for *Amazing Grace (My Chains are Gone)*. His latest CD *Hello Love* was nominated for Praise & Worship Album, while *Jesus Messiah* from that project earned a nomination for Worship Song of the Year. Tomlin was also included in the Special Event Album category for his participation on the *Passion: God of This City* compilation album and in the Contemporary Gospel Recorded Song category for gospel artist LaRue Howard's recording of Tomlin's *How Great Is Our God*, which was the 2006 Song of the Year recipient.

Two female artists have the next biggest impact, with Natalie Grant and newcomer Francesca Battistelli each receiving five nominations. Grant, the current three-time Female Vocalist of the Year recipient, receives another nomination in the category, along with a nod for Pop/Contemporary Album of the Year for *Relentless*, while the #1 US radio hit from that record, *I Will Not Be Moved* was nominated for Song of the Year and Pop/Contemporary Recorded Song of the Year. The Grant-penned *Breathe on Me* rounds out her five nominations in the Worship Song of the Year category.

Battistelli, the New York-born singer songwriter and now Dove Award Female Vocalist and New Artist of the Year nominee, burst on the Christian music scene with her 2008 hit *I'm Letting Go*. That song has now received Dove Award nominations for Song of the Year and Pop/Contemporary Song of the Year, and her debut CD *My Paper Heart* was nominated for Pop/Contemporary Album of the Year.

Four-time Group of the Year Dove Award winners Casting Crowns will go for five with another Group of the Year nomination in 2009. The worship band's total of five nominations includes Artist of the Year and Christmas Album of the Year for *Peace on Earth*. Casting Crowns also earned nods for Short Form Video for *Slow Fade* and for Long Form Video for *The Altar and the Door Live*.

Among the other Artist of the Year nominees, is Steven Curtis Chapman who has previously won this award seven times, the last one in 2000. Chapman, who has

been touring with Michael W. Smith on the United Tour, has had renewed spotlight this past year centered on the Song of the Year nominee *Cinderella* which became an anthem for fatherhood not only on Christian radio, but worldwide. *Cinderella* is also nominated for Pop/Contemporary Recorded song and Chapman's co-write of Bart Millard's *You Reign* is another Song of the Year nominee.

Fireflight is recognised as a contender for Artist of the Year in the first year they have received any Dove Award nominations. The female-fronted (Dawn Richardson) rock band received national exposure as a favorite of TV networks like NBC, ABC and ESPN which have licensed their songs. Fireflight was also named one of the winners of Taco Bell's first Best of the Beat fan-voted contest and was named Gospel Music Channel's first Listen Up Artist last year. Now, they have four Dove Award nominations including Rock/Contemporary Album of the Year for *Unbreakable*, Rock/Contemporary Recorded Song for *Unbreakable* and Rock Recorded Song of the Year for *The Hunger*.

Other artists receiving four nominations include Brandon Heath, MaryMary, Laura Story and Michael W. Smith.

Producers and songwriters also enjoyed big nomination success this year with Ian Eskelin (Francesca Battistelli, Remedy Drive) and Wayne Haun (Ernie Haase & Signature Sound, HisSong) each receiving eight nods while Ed Cash (Chris Tomlin, Laura Story) came in with six and Jason Ingram (Brandon Heath, Meredith Andrews) and Warrryn Campbell (MaryMary, Kierra Sheard) each received five nominations.

Dove Awards will be handed out in 43 categories. The Songwriter of the Year nominees were not announced today, but will be revealed prior to the GMA Dove Awards. Dove Awards nominations go to recordings released during the eligibility year November 1, 2007 through October 31, 2008 and voted on by the members of the GMA.

The complete nominations list is at www.doveawards.com

DELIRIOUS TO RELEASE ONE OF ITS LAST NEW PROJECTS

Delirious releases its latest project - *My Soul Sings* - next month.

Recorded in front of 12 000 Colombian Christians last year, Fierce Records says the live CD-DVD is one of the "last ever new projects" that Delirious will release.

The label says the concert spans songs from the early days to the *Kingdom Of Comfort* album. *My Soul Sings* releases on March 16.

JARS OF CLAY SET TO RELEASE 10TH STUDIO PROJECT

Jars of Clay releases its tenth studio album in April.

Lead singer Dan Haseltine says the new project titled - *The Long Fall Back To Earth* - delves into the beauty and tension of relationships, and what makes them worth fighting for.

Haseltine says that one of the songs the group views as a cornerstone of the new project is *Two Hands*. The song is shooting up the US Christian charts and is expected to chart in Australia within the next two weeks.