

AGGIELIFE

THE BATTALION

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Christian music meets rock 'n' roll

Christian rock band Third Day will perform tonight at Reed Arena

By Thomas Phillips
THE BATTALION

David Carr was very young when he decided being a Christian and playing the drums should become his way of life.

"I felt, well, somehow I want to do something musically for the Lord," he said. "It just kind of fell in my lap, this Third Day thing. It kind of fell in all our laps, and it's just been growing and growing ever since."

Carr, the drummer for Third Day, and his bandmates will take the stage at Reed Arena tonight for a show featuring songs from their decade-old career and some of their latest releases. Third Day, a rock band out of Georgia, is one example of the rising popularity of Christian and spiritually-focused musical acts across the country.

"It's kind of a funny term (Christian band), because Christian music is the only genre of music that's classified by the lyric style, so that's really the only difference, or so it should be," Carr said. "It's hard when people say, 'Oh, what kind of band are you in?' Do I say, 'I'm in a rock band or a Christian rock band?'"

The group writes and sings songs about its faith, as Carr said, "the center of our lives," but takes its musical cues from non-Christian bands and rock 'n' roll idols.

Its sound echoes of southern giants such as the Black Crowes and Lynyrd Skynyrd, but Third Day adds its beliefs into its music.

"We love all kinds of band—rock bands, pop rock bands, Christian and secular, and I would say most of what we listen to is secular stuff," Carr said. "We try to just do the stuff we love, but weave our faith into it."

And as for rock 'n' roll being the devil's music? The band disagrees with the age-old stereotype.

"I just don't see how you could say it's right or wrong. It just is what it is," Carr said. "There's a few diehards who want to believe anything with a beat is satanic or something, and they come up with some pretty weak evidence to

back that up, but we just don't buy it."

The group has seen the fruits of its labor come through in its live shows where, according to Carr, it watches its fans being "brought to a better place." In November, the quintet will add Christian music icon Michael W. Smith to its show for the Come Together and Worship Tour and another month of performances.

With a Grammy nomination, rising record sales and a handful of Dove awards, Third Day has established itself as a band with staying power. It has watched other Christian bands such as P.O.D. and Lifehouse rise to the tops of charts and have nothing but kind words to say about them.

"We just really are very happy for those guys and congratulate them on what they're doing," Carr said. "Sometimes hindsight's 20-20, and a lot of times we tell people in interviews if we could go back and do it all over again, we may have wanted to take that route."

Carr said the group still entertains the idea of opening up to a more mainstream audience. He said it would only take one hit for Third Day to break through to a wider group of listeners.

"We want to be genuine, and we feel like we've got a good thing to say and good music to back it up, so it's just going to take that song or those songs and the right strategy to market it," Carr said. "I don't know when it's going to happen, but I feel like it's something we're going to pursue."

Darren Taylor, program director for the Mix 104.7 radio station in Bryan-College Station, has witnessed the recent changes in musical direction first hand. He said the rising popularity of spiritually-focused bands and artists is driven by the music, not necessarily what it's teaching or preaching.

"If it's a good song, it's a good song," Taylor said. "We don't shy away from any type of music."

Taylor attributes the popularity of such bands to the success of rockers Creed, who he said paved the way for Christian bands.



Christian rock band Third Day (from left: David Carr, Mac Powell, Tai Anderson, Brad Avery and Mark Lee) will perform at Reed Arena tonight at 7 p.m. Student tickets are \$10 at the door.

"You've got these bands playing in front of everybody, secular, Christian, whatever, but they're having bona fide hits, and several of them," he said. "So it's obviously becoming more widely accepted, although these bands, unlike Michael W. Smith, aren't quite as recognizable as pure Christian artists."

Mainstream interests, Taylor said, are moving away from the highly successful pop sounds of the late 1990s and are moving toward a harder, rock sound, like the sound Third Day makes.

"They've (P.O.D. and Lifehouse) come up with this sound that has largely taken away from the Backstreet Boys, 'NSYNC types or the boy band sound that was in a couple of years ago," Taylor said. "Now, the rock sound is back and the Christian bands (are) kind of leading the front of this thing."

Lauren Ricca, a junior education major, has seen Third Day in concert, which she said was unlike others she has attended. Aside from the material the group usually performs, Third Day played during a worship service and a minister from the church lead them in prayer.

For Ricca, connecting with the band and its music was one of the best parts of the night.

"I like the band because, even without

knowing them, I can know their hearts, just because they're Christians," she said. "I can know what they believe and what they stand for just by the things that they sing about."

Ricca said she went to the show with a group of friends and enjoyed singing and being around other people with whom she shares a fundamental interest. She said there is a sharp contrast between secular and Christian bands, no matter what its popularity.

"I guess every band has a message they are trying to get out, or I would think so, and Christian bands' message has eternal value," she said. "Secular bands' message is usually about right now and being happy or things that can make you happy. Secular music is hard to apply in my life, because I don't know about that, or I don't know where they've been."

Third Day, which spends some of its time on the road working for Habitat for Humanity and "getting paint on our Diesel jeans," does not underestimate the success it has had, no matter who its audience is.

"It's just a fun, passionate thing for us, to see it provide for our families and bless so many people," Carr said. "It's an incredible, incredible thing."

The show is scheduled to start at 7 p.m.

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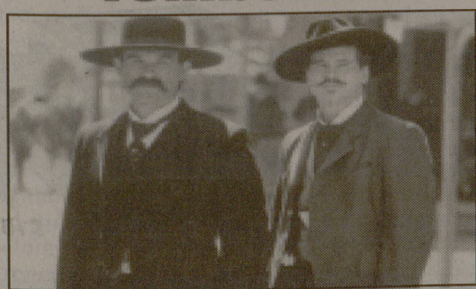
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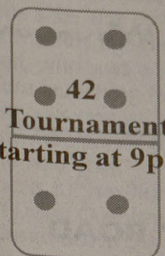
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