

Mp3 Ralph Jeffers - Carried Along



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With introspective lyrics that will resonate with many, the melodic framework of this pop/acoustic offering uses subtly diverse sound and personality to shape the songs and bring the heart driven vocals to the surface. 12 MP3 Songs GOSPEL: Contemporary Gospel, POP: Today's Top 40 Details: Ralph, an East Tennessee native, grew up in Boones Creek and then moved to the Sulphur Springs community where he now lives prior to beginning high school. Experiencing life with friends and having a family that cultivated love and faith has done much to shape him and widen the walls of his heart. Bigger and Better, the second track on the new CD, is a colorful reflection of those early years and how streets and fields may change, but the things that count remain. He was exposed to music early in life with his dad being an accomplished singer and choir director, but only explored music himself on the surface by briefly taking piano lessons. It was later in high school when a love for singing emerged and by the start of college he had picked up his first guitar, primarily to learn a few chords to bang around on while hanging out with friends. He attended East Tennessee State University and graduated with a Bachelors degree in Business. While in college, his career focus began to shift after he began volunteering with youth at his home church of Sulphur Springs United Methodist. It was during this time that he discovered a growing love for being in ministry with youth and the church, and felt the confirmation to pursue a full time ministry vocation. The transition was made in 1999 when he joined the full time staff of Sulphur Springs UMC as a Youth Minister (College-age and music in Contemporary Service). Stretching from college until now, there have been many opportunities to lead worship at local and regional youth functions, church related settings, within the United Emmaus/Chrysalis/Kairos Communities, and in weekly services at Sulphur Springs. But the singer-songwriter side, although writing has been steady throughout, has been something he's not taken far beyond his own walls until now. So with his first independent release

"Carried Along", he has gathered in songs from many different time frames and experiences and intentionally tried to create a project that's diverse in sound and personality while still collectively pointing to God's love and grace. The songs cover a vast amount of experiential ground. The prayer and promise of a church to its' children is heard in Young Heart as the community of faith vows that "as you grow, I pray we'll lead with love and light the road". Amy is a gutsy anthem that asks real questions and cries out with psalm like expression "if I could fly, I'd smash right through the sky / see if I could find out where You hide / it's not a cynic's satire / just an honest cry / this is Amy - I'm down here / can you help me know if You're out there. And on several tracks, the call to live out compassion and service to the world around us raises its' voice. Perhaps no other song on the CD asks harder questions of the singer and anyone listening than What About Me. It holds up a mirror of Jesus in the gospels and asks "what about the hungry mouth / the heart that starves for words and time / what about a man who had no home to call His own / what about spaces filled in jail / faces we pretend aren't there / 'as you've done to the least of these, it's me' / what about me?" About his thoughts on this first release, Ralph says, "You know, even though these songs originate from many different places, I hope that when people listen they'll find the commonality that resonates at the core of us all. Our experiences of joy, raw emotions, humility, wrestling with how to love God and people, and on and on." He knows it's hard, yet so important to let Jesus be clearly seen through us in the midst of all of life. "I'm guessing that there's a lot of us who really want to be faithful and passionately follow Jesus, but we just keep getting weighed down because we know that we're still messed up and clumsy in trying to do so. But deep in the gut, I think we're wanting to be real and authentic; to experience the overwhelming grace that allows us to toss out the pretense, realize that God's got kingdom stuff to do through us, and be transparent to the world around us." And getting out among the people is a part of the new territory that he's looking forward to. "I'm stoked about it! I've been playing in live environments for years, having the great privilege of leading worship, but playing my own stuff will be new. It's gonna be really cool getting the chance to play these songs live and share the conversation with folks."

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