

# AWARE

salvador

Hard work.

Two words fans don't usually associate with contemporary Christian music. After all, artists are supposed to step on the stage and deliver a performance that is effortless, seamless, spontaneous - not to mention spiritually significant. But the truth is nothing good happens by accident. *Good* happens when talented musicians work hard. *Great* happens when that hard work is combined with dedication, determination, focused attention to detail, and a conscious decision to deflect the credit from themselves to their Creator.

For Nashville-based jam band, **Salvador**, great music was incubated in the blistering Texas sun, birthed on the road for umpteen days a year, and nurtured by an unwavering commitment to the collective creative process. The eleven songs on their sixth studio album, **Aware**, amply demonstrate the virtue of the American work ethic in producing fresh expressions of worship that are at once culturally relevant, original, and actually sound effortless, seamless, spontaneous. Yet, this time around Nic Gonzales, the band's frontman and primary songwriter, discovered *Great* required more than ever before.

"I have always depended on working hard and being diligent when it was time to get to work," Nic explains. "My Dad was a 'roll up your sleeves' kind of guy. That is the heritage I come from. That was the approach I took for our first five records. But for **Aware**, I think God really stepped into my life in a different way. This time I leaned so much more on Christ. I had a new wife and we were getting ready to have a new baby. I didn't have 20 hours a day to just be alone and write."

"My writing time had been split; not in half, not in a quarter; but down to an eighth of the time I usually have to write. I didn't know what to do. My Mom used to tell me, 'If you give God His time, He will give you extra time.' I know that is Biblical, but I had never seen it in action like this before," Nic continues.

Rather than shifting into writer mode, Nic sat quietly in his studio staring at a blank sheet of paper, listening to the hiss of the speakers in the background. "I remember thinking, 'If I approach this the same way I'm going to get the same results, and I don't want that.' It was in the silence that I realized what was missing in my results-oriented drivenness. I was missing being quiet. I missed allowing God to be who He is in me."

For the next hour Nic wrote; not songs, but thoughts, ideas, concepts. When it came time for the nuts and bolts of hammering out a song with his co-writers, Nic discovered his mother's admonition held true. "Every morning I wrote with a different writer, and it was like lightning. It was like time stopped. We would start at 10 AM and be done by 1 PM. Then I'd go home. That had never happened before."

He points to the album's title cut, "Aware," as an example of the band's new mindset. "Our fast-paced lifestyle often causes us to blow past the basics," Nic muses. "I think most Christian songs express thanksgiving for the things God gives us. But we wanted to take a different approach to thankfulness. Our heart's cry is that we would be aware of what is going on around us, that God would create a fundamental change in me so that I would realize that everything that I am is not just about me."

The theme of seeing age-old truths from a fresh perspective is continued in "What Would It Be Like," the first song on the last three records that Nic didn't have a hand in writing. "What would it be like if we all learned to love each other?" Nic ponders. "That is the fundamental message of this song. But what really captured me and compelled me to record it was the bridge. 'What would it be like if we turned our eyes on Jesus/ That's the only way we'll see the world change.' This is one of the fundamentals that rings true. It is one of the building blocks of humanity that you can always count on."

While the band's approach to crafting songs continues to evolve, one that thing has remained steadfast is the marriage of their personal devotion to God with their dedication to the craft of live performance. Their inspired improvisational skills have translated into an enthusiastic word-of-mouth reputation for emotionally-charged live shows, but it is their heart for worship, their insistence on promoting God rather than themselves, that infuses **Salvador** and continues to electrify crowds whenever they perform.

"**Salvador** is an ever evolving jam band," Nic explains. "Every show is different. There is no set list. The guys don't even know what is coming next. They just hear the chord that sets up the next song, and then off we go. When you can do that it's magic."

**Salvador** is an amalgam of talent from across the Western Hemisphere. Drummer Ben Cordonero hails from Nicaragua by way of Miami. Keyboardist Chris Bevins, who also handles some of the co-writing chores calls Nashville home. Josh Gonzales on the Bass still resides in Austin, and Nic relocated to Music City after his marriage to superstar, Jaci Velasquez last year.

Whether rattling the rafters with thundering, anthemic rock 'n' roll or soothing the soul with a gently meandering ballad, **Salvador** creates music that scratches an indelible groove in your grey matter. **Aware** nails that rare synthesis of spontaneity and expertise with an inspired collection of uptempo, pop-rock worship songs. Many in the industry have declared **Aware** to be the best that Salvador has ever recorded. Nic says simply, "This is what I have to offer. It is the accumulation of the best that I am right now."