

JOSH WHITE | *ACHOR*

In spring of 2009, Josh White decided to take a huge step of faith. Previously the lead singer of the band Telecast, White quickly became a church planter and worship leader in Portland, Oregon. His church is located in the Hawthorne District of Southeast Portland, a bohemian part of town, known more for its hippies and hipsters than churches. “I met my wife Darcy in this neighborhood 14 years ago,” recounts White. “We know the culture and the people. Which in turn fuels the heart and vision of the church: to preach the gospel to the some of the most unchurched people in the country.”

His church *Door of Hope* offers the inspiration for White’s solo debut *Achor*, a folk/bluegrass project with BEC Recordings. The meaning behind both the church name and the album title come from Hosea 2:15. The valley of Achor is the valley of trouble; so named after Achan’s sin was discovered and judged in the days of Joshua. The prophet Hosea proclaimed that the God’s restoration would transform the valley of trouble into a door of hope. It is this restoration that White and Door of Hope aim to see in their neighborhood.

The songs on *Achor* are the songs of the church, written for Door of Hope and used in its worship services. “Where I did the Brit rock sound with Telecast, these songs reflect the acoustic, folk music of Hawthorne. It’s a mix of folk and bluegrass in worship, almost like a Jesus Movement folk worship revival,” says White.

Produced by Sebastian Rogers, *Achor* took White down a new path of album recording. “This was the first Christian record that Sebastian ever worked on. He was fun and eccentric, stretching me to work from the belief that this should be the most honest music possible.” A belief that shaped the way the album was even recorded. “Typically recording builds from the drums up and everything is corrected to be shiny and pretty. Not this one,” says White. “We recorded my vocals and then gathered all the musicians one at a time in a room to play to that performance. There wasn’t any vocal tuning or loops.

The freshness of recording reflects the content of the songs, which seek an intimate, new relationship with Christ. White is passionate about the experience of living Christ both in the church and through the music. “If you forget the foundation of knowing Christ personally, you can be super involved in a great cause but the gospel becomes lost. Everything comes from the foundation of knowing Christ personally; it’s about that relationship,” he says. “This is about moving beyond just acceptance of Christ. This is about being truly moved by the cost of discipleship and holy living. The record is focused on the possibility of deep intimacy with Christ and the idea that God can still surprise us,” says White.

Songs like “You Amaze Me” illustrate the theme of *Achor*, revealing an intimate love for Christ. “There are two places you can be with Christ: either drawing closer to him or drifting further from him. Everyone experiences the drifting but this song shows God drawn to us by his love.” The darker intensity of “Let Me See Your Hands” show the gritty, honest sense of the album and reflects its “Oh Brother, Where Art Thou?” inspiration; White became a believer around the movie’s release and wrote the song then. “The people around me in Seattle were kind of freaked

out by my new faith,” White says. “This song came out almost like an angry worship song; it had some extra teeth and intensity to it. It’s almost irreverent as I feel myself screaming to Christ saying “let me see your hands.” Still, I love the intensity and honesty found in it.”

Josh White wants to see people come alive in Christ and would believe *Achor* is but one piece contributing to this awakening. “There is a prophetic element to worship; it is necessary and powerful. Hearts open through music, stirring emotions and inserting a message into hearts. These songs come out of what we’re experiencing at Door of Hope; they are part of a movement to turn this city upside down.”

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