

CHARMAINE BIO

It's not every day you meet someone so secure in their insecurities, but it's the lovely sense of contrasts that is part of Charmaine. She will tell you how she has learned to be unafraid in her fears. How her life as a modern-day gypsy has kept her anchored to her family and her life's mission. A conversation with Charmaine is a colorful mix of surprises- it's only knowing Jesus that makes all the pieces fit in her life.

Charmaine is an only child of parents who immigrated to Australia from Chile, South America. With music at the core of their family, her parents began by committing their talents to God, then and starting a music ministry within their church based on commitment to Jesus, evangelism, and missions through music. They traveled the world in a Christian vocal group and raised Charmaine out of a suitcase. For Charmaine, traveling to a new place to perform concerts every few days was the norm. School, home life and routine were the exception. Music was the real fabric of her life. She remembers with a slight laugh, "My dad wrote a little chorus for me called 'Jesus Is My Best Friend.' Before every concert my parents would ask if I wanted to sing with them on stage. Being only four years old and not particularly wooed to the stage and lights, sometimes I would say no, or sometimes say yes.'

"I gave my life to Jesus when I was 11, at a youth rally. After, I went to my dad and told him I needed to talk to him seriously about being part of the ministry. My dad said, 'Well, I will treat you like the other singers. I will expect you to be professional and you can expect the same from me.'"

And with that simple conversation, Charmaine adopted for herself the commitment to evangelism and music she had observed all her life. Looking back on it now, she remembers how she took on the role of music evangelist with a sense of soberness unusual in a girl only eleven years old. "I had been watching my parents for a long time, and witnessed the reception and reactions of people from all over. Music truly communicated hope and encouragement, touching the lives of everyone there, and I wanted to be a part of it.

"Because of the world I grew up in, I never saw my life in terms of 'what's the best thing for me to do for a career?' I only thought, 'what is the best that I can give?' And my best talent and ability is music."

"I understood there was a lot of sacrifice in this choice." Because she chose this path, Charmaine says, "I missed out on birthdays, family gatherings, holidays. I was always singing (concerts) at churches, schools, and festivals but never experienced the day-to-day as a normal kid.

"My parents were really good at telling me, despite what I missed out on, all the normalities of being at home, I was seeing the world. The stuff in my books I wasn't just reading, I was actually seeing and experiencing first hand. Those experiences were amazing and I wouldn't trade anything for them "

When she was a teenager, her musical gift was discovered by David Smallbone, fellow Aussie and father-slash-manager of Rebecca St James. Smallbone had started a imprint label, Elevate Records, under InPop and he invited Charmaine to record a project for the label and relocate to the States as an opening act for Rebecca St.James.

At that time, audiences were enormous, and RSJ's heavy touring schedule took them all over the world. Charmaine was on stage in front of millions of people and soon became a staple on tour as Rebecca's back-up singer. After the 2002 release of her worship project "All About Jesus," 17-year old Charmaine had been given an incredible learning experience, but had also submerged her own musical identity during those years with RSJ. "After 7 years, I knew I couldn't be with Rebecca forever. I was going to have to walk on my own, which meant facing my insecurities and overcoming burnout road life, " she says. It was a difficult time of adjustment and insecurity crept in. She often reminded herself about the character of the God she was committed to serve. "He is good. He is love itself and there truly can be hope, in spite of what we feel, in spite of the pain and any unfairness."

Then came a long gap where she found herself stationary in Tennessee, in the unfamiliar position of living at home and not touring. She was encouraged to delve into songwriting, and in Nashville, songwriting usually means writing with other people. Suddenly, the girl who had sung before millions in dozens of countries was terrified of the writer's room.

"My first few years in the States, I hated songwriting with other people. I felt shy and vulnerable. But it forced me to be pushed and challenged; otherwise, I would have stayed in my own little cell. It's easy to live too much in your own ideas and then lose touch with what's true for other people. I actually enjoy the songwriting process and collaborating with other writers now."

Then came an opportunity to work on an album of her own for Indelible Creative Group, and to create the album in partnership with friend-slash- producer Frederick Williams, former Musical Director for the Backstreet Boys. "Fred and I worked tirelessly to write and record something every week," Charmaine says. Finally free to follow her own creative path, her genuine self emerged in the lyrics and production. Charmaine says, "This record reflects all the things I am truly convicted of: love is the real reality; God is good, and because of this, there is hope. "

When in:ciite (formerly Indelible Creative Group) releases this album in Spring, 2010, Charmaine sees the release as step one of yet another exciting journey in her life. She still holds to the resolve of the eleven-year old girl who committed her music and life to His mission. Embracing her fears and moving forward, she says, "I'm reminded daily of God's goodness and that I'd rather be on His mission than my own; It's a road that's going to be fulfilling if it's for Him."

