



Paint the Beauty We Split:

A Conversation With Chad Gardner

On this bonus episode of The Rise and Fall of Mars Hill, we talk to Kings Kaleidoscope's Chad Gardner about faith and music before and after Mars Hill.

SHOW NOTES

Mars Hill's music grew out of the same counter-cultural ethos that defined the rest of its ministry. Most of the church's founding members thought Christian contemporary music was too saccharine and polished for their tastes, and what evolved at Mars Hill reflected the gritty and dark sounds of the city around them. But like many other facets of the Mars Hill story, there was much behind the music. Often selected for their charisma and talent, Mars Hill bands found that few cared about the condition of their souls or the posture of their spirits.

Chad Gardner became a worship leader later in the church's history, having grown up listening to the church's music. His eventual decision to leave would mean sacrificing community and intellectual property rights over his band's contributions to the ministry. Some band members, damaged by various spiritual abuses, would leave the faith altogether.

In this bonus episode of The Rise and Fall of Mars Hill, host Mike Cospers sits down with Chad Gardner, worship leader at Mars Hill, to hear the hard and beautiful stories of the music that defined the community. Peek backstage for a glimpse of what worship leadership meant in this alternative church culture, and hear stories behind some of Kings Kaleidoscope's albums. Finally, find out why Chad told us, "I never wanted to do a duet with Mark."

LINKS

Learn more about [Kings Kaleidoscope](#) here.

Also check out [Citizens](#), [The Sing Team](#), and [Ghost Ship](#).

MASTHEAD

"The Rise and Fall of Mars Hill" is a production of Christianity Today

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Mike Cospers: One of the challenges of producing this podcast was figuring out what you could and couldn't cover in the storytelling. Obviously, a church's 18-year history isn't all going to fit in 12 episodes, no matter how long any episode got. One story we certainly could have gone deeper into is the story of Mars Hill Music, which in many ways from the very beginning was rejection of mainstream Christian music culture, and part of what made Mars Hill unique.

In case you were wondering, that is in fact a didgeridoo, and this is Mars Hill's first record. Don't judge it though. It was the nineties. For context, this record came out around the time that churches across the country were singing Shout to the Lord, and Shine, Jesus, Shine. It was weird and dark. Most of the lyrics were taken straight from scripture or hymns, and there really wasn't anything like it happening at the time.

When musicians at Mars Hill would talk about their music, they'd say, We wouldn't preach anyone else's sermons, why would we sing their songs? And for the most part, they didn't. Not for a really long time anyway. They primarily sang their own songs, plus a few old hymns, and it became a hallmark of the church. They even embraced a punk rock spirit about intellectual property. They had stickers on their CDs that said, Steal this record, and Thank God Jesus didn't copyright the gospel.

This was the era of Napster and this was the hacker ethic. Information wants to be free, so let's just give it away. That would change later, but it was a big part of the culture early on, and it was part of the way Mars Hill Music spread, and spread the influence of the church throughout the early 2000s.

Another thing that made Mars Hill Music unique was that there really wasn't a worship team, in the traditional sense, there were bands. Bands with names, like this one called Team Strikeforce. The idea was that if you wanted to play music at Mars Hill, great, go start a band, write some songs. When you think you're ready, we'll come see if you're any good. The result over the years was that Mars Hill Music never sounded like anyone else, and no two bands really sounded the same. So along with Team Strikeforce, you had a band like Red Letter.

Over the years, the sounds expanded and evolved. Some musicians moved into other roles as pastors, others, like Joe Day, served as church musicians for more than a decade. In the last few years, there was an influx of new musicians and an intentional effort to build a record label and a movement out of Mars Hill Music.

We talked before about Dustin Kensrue of Thrice being part of that story, but a number of other bands emerged around that time as well. And what's remarkable is that some of them stuck around to this day. In fact, you may know some of them like Ghost Ship or Citizens.

If I remember right from our conversation last summer, you talked about you grew up with Mars Hill Music as, like, a teenager. You want to start there?

 @kingskworld

Chad Gardner: Yeah. Yeah. So I grew up in the church...

Mike Cospser: This is Chad Gardner. He served as a worship leader at Mars Hill during the church's last several years.

Chad Gardner: Obviously all churches are dysfunctional, but compared to all my friends, a pretty healthy way, I had a pretty deep emotional relationship with Jesus before I ever heard about Mars Hill, okay. And so in high school at some point, Mars Hill was making so much noise - and I grew up outside Seattle - my friends and I would pile in my two-door Honda Civic, five of us, and drive into Seattle and just go check it out. Obviously, Mark was... he's just... he was a powerful figure and his confidence was really appealing to me, especially as somebody who had struggled with anxiety. But to be honest, the thing that as a kid growing up also with a lot of music and playing in bands and DJing and doing music at my own church, the music was what was really, like, blowing me away.

Mike Cospser: Chad's band is another one that emerged at Mars Hill and continued after the church closed, continues to this day even. I first heard him about a decade ago when someone sent me this live version of Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing on YouTube.

Of course, listeners to this podcast are already familiar with Chad's band. It's Kings Kaleidoscope. You've been listening to it since we launched the podcast with this song, a reflection on his Mars Hill experience. And that's the story you're going to hear today.

From Christianity Today, this is Mike Cospser and you're listening to a bonus episode of the Rise and Fall of Mars Hill. Today, a conversation with Chad Gardner, from Kings Kaleidoscope. We talk about becoming a worship leader at the church, leaving once he understood it from the inside, and continuing to follow Jesus and make music today. We also talk about a mistake I made and the decision to fix it. And why if you go back to listen to earlier episodes, you're going to hear something different now. So stay with us.

Chad was 20 when he was invited to join the staff as an intern, serving on a team that was launching a college-focused campus near the University of Washington. Within just a few months, Mars Hill acquired a multimillion dollar facility for them.

Chad Gardner: I really wanted to be a part of this counter CCM culture, alternative stream of Christian music that was very Christian. It was worshipful, it was feeding people's faith, and it had nothing to do with Nashville. That was like... that rebellious part of this really helped me lock in with the Mars Hill culture and DNA. Like, I fit very at home there, and there was a lot of pride there for sure at the time, but it also was an opportunity for a lot of genuine worship and just incredible times with that ministry. And it was literally like a bunch of college kids or college-aged kids or early twenties kids, a pastor that's barely 25, and no supervision, and the only thing we had to do was put Mark on the screen on a video every week and kind of run the show.

I actually lived in the church. There was an apartment on top of, like above the sanctuary. So I was like Quasimodo, like 20 years old, living in the church. I'd get an idea for rearranging a hymn or something, I'd just go down three flights of stairs into the sanctuary at midnight and just be playing piano. I was living in this huge space, but there was a couple other guys up there. It was pretty wild.

So I was 20 years old, and I met my wife - she was one of the other, it was probably like four or five of us that planted that campus - she was one of the other people, she kind of ran the business side. We got married when I was 21, and right after we got married, they moved me from the college campus to the main campus, which was pretty weird because I literally was like, I had gotten... I had been married for, like, two weeks and then it was like, I'm working with my wife, the pastor that married us, we're doing this whole thing. And then it was like, Actually, you guys are gonna work different places and you're gonna go to different churches. Because she can't not be at the college campus on Sundays, and we don't have a job for you over here, but you're just gonna work at different churches and good luck to ya. And that did not go well. It was really rough. Eventually, she was able to transfer over to work at Central, but it was weird. It was really weird.

Mike Cospser: So you're part of that, if the first wave is all those guys that were late nineties up until about the 2000s of worship leaders, second wave, that's like Tim, Joel, those guys.

Chad Gardner: Brian, yeah.

Mike Cospser: You're... Then like you, Kensrue...

Chad Gardner: They booted Joel for me. How weird is that? No, I'm serious. Like straight up. I cannot imagine the conversations Joel had. Joel was probably 32 and I was 21, he's 10 years older than me, and they made him the production manager when I moved there to be the worship director, and he, like, mentored me for six months and then he left and I was the worship director and I had just turned 22. How weird is that?

Mike Cospser: But thinking about that now, right? So much of this story is about celebrity and media and Mark being 26 and saying, I've never been a part of a church, I've never been a volunteer in a church, I'm gonna go be a pastor. And then this sort of rocket to stardom, or celebrity. Looking back on that, like 21-year-old, 22-year-old guys making it in the music business isn't that abnormal, necessarily, and you live in that side of it now. How do you look back on your experience inside of the church and think about... Essentially, your charisma put you in a place where they wanted to put you in front of one of their more - important is the wrong word.

Chad Gardner: Yeah, it was the biggest campus at the time, and then it switched to Bellevue within probably a year. One of the things for - I worked at Mars Hill for about five years - and one of the things is I always had interns. Every year I'd get one or two new interns, and they were always these young kids who really wanted to be worship leaders so they were going to the big megachurch where they had this, like, counter cultural thing. They were trying to get in the same stream as us. And the thing that I would always tell them, because I was experiencing it in real time, was like, your charisma and your talent is dangerous. Like, you can survive and thrive off that and your soul will just be coasting the whole time.

Monday mornings after Sundays, we'd always have these meetings where we did grades for every part of the service. The greeting team would get an A through an F, the worship would get an A through an F, the children's ministry, everything. And one of the scariest moments was when I was, like, 22 years old, and I'm sitting there every Monday

morning, and I'm just getting A's, easy A's, and it's all just because of a talent and some charisma, and it does not matter, like, the condition of my soul or the posture of my spirit or anything else. And you really realize at that moment, This is not... This is bad, this is dangerous.

Mike Cospers: The flip side of it is you are 22, so you're also looking at these people going, Yeah, this is crazy, but also, I guess this is the way to do it. Because you're being told that by the people that are supposed to be your mentors and leaders and all that.

Chad Gardner: And I should double back here. So the thing that got me to the main campus at that time from the college one was the worship director at the main campus, he had to do Easter. And you know how this is with worship directors, they're like, Man, I can't do Good Friday and Easter. And at Good Friday, because Mars Hill's so emo, of course, Good Friday's the big deal. So they said, Well, Chad's doing some crazy cool stuff at the college location, let's see if he can arrange stuff and do the Good Friday service. They usually live stream it to who knows how many tens of thousands of people. We're not gonna live stream it this year, let's just bring the college kid over here and he can cover so I can do Easter. So of course I go like full... It's like challenge accepted. This is the way I think, I'm out here to dismantle CCM, I'm doing a Good Friday service, it must be intense [CENSORED] anybody's ever heard possible.

15 MIN

I assemble best guys I know, and we just do this, like, just craziest live service ever for Good Friday. Two hours before we're gonna start the first service, the media team is in the room and they're like, Oh my God, we have to stream this. So they were, like, hustling, setting up the cameras. They live streamed it, they got a ton of downloads. It was like one of the - how lame is this, but Mars Hill would do these highlights by the numbers year end things - and it was one of the things.

The weekend after I did that service, it was like, you know, you get the email, it's like, Hey, can you come meet Mark in his office, this time, da da da. And I'd never even talked to him. I've been working at his church for two years, I've never even talked to him ever. Maybe in passing like once or twice, but never sit down, have a conversation. And so just based on that Good Friday service alone and how many tens of thousands of people streamed it and watched it, and it was the first moment... Kings Kaleidoscope didn't even have a name yet, it was, like, Chad Gardner. But that was when I got Mark's attention, and then he had to call me up to his big boy office and try to tell me I was gonna be a campus pastor someday. And I'm looking at him like, No way, dude, I don't wanna do that. No way, man, I'm trying to make records someday, when are we getting Mars Hill Music off the ground?

Mike Cospers: So that would've been, what, '11 or so that you came to Ballard?

Chad Gardner: Yeah. Yep.

Mike Cospers: Okay. And so it's really, we're talking a couple of years before things...

Chad Gardner: Yeah, totally fall apart.

Yeah. I got out of there the fall of '13, and my wife shortly after. And in that process, so I turn in my resignation, within an hour my email is shut off and I have a message that's like, Basically, you'll never be on stage again. And my resignation is like, Whatever it takes, I'm here to help train the next person, whatever you want from me, I'm all here to be helpful. And they're like, Nope, you're not getting on that stage again. It was like I was a liability immediately to them. Which is funny, because they let my wife keep working for two months across the street.

Mike Cospers: Isn't that wild?

Chad Gardner: It was so wild. Yeah, it was very, very wild. So Kings Kaleidoscope is like - Mars Hill Music is just off the ground, we've released an EP with some hymn arrangements on it that, it's fine, but it's really for the church, and we've released our gnarly Good Friday live recording, and a Christmas thing. But really what we're working on is our main record. So when I put in my resignation, I'm out the door, my wife's out the door a couple weeks later, we're totally out. And I'm going back to Mars Hill going, Hey, you've got a hard drive with a couple months of work on it that I've been working on this record, with tracks, nothing's finished. Like, I haven't sung, but it's a lot, it's a bulk of the record, I would say 70% of the record - of our first record, can I buy it back from you. And I don't have any money, me and my wife both just quit our jobs and left our church community, and we don't know what's going on. But I'm, like, desperate to get back my record so that I can release it. And they're coming at me with, Well, you don't own the name Kings Kaleidoscope, that's not your copyright because you were working for us, and anything creative you do is owned by us. So I'm having to push on them and go, Actually, I started it, you know, I started the Facebook before I was hired, I was only an intern, I own the name, and what are you gonna do with the record otherwise, why not sell it to me, it's just gonna sit on a shelf. They just refused. It was, like, felt so spiteful to not let me continue to do that as a ministry. So the crazy fact is our first record, I rerecorded it. I had to rerecord the whole thing.

Mike Cospers: Really? Wow.

Chad Gardner: Yes. Yeah. Tooth and Nail ended up absorbing Mars Hill Music, and so they released it. Which was okay, but I still was trying to buy it from them and they wouldn't sell it to me either. So I really felt like, Okay...

Mike Cospers: So they were claiming IP even just on the songs you'd written while you were at Mars Hill?

Chad Gardner: Oh yeah, they still do. Like Come Thou Fount, that church pre/post playlist, like, smash hit arrangement that I did, I get pennies on that sucker, because Mars Hill refused to sell me any of the IP. They just sold it in one chunk to Tooth and Nail said, Too bad.

Literally the week my wife and I left Mars Hill, we were fully out and I basically was like, Alright, I'm gonna rerecord my whole album to do it justice and be faithful with that. So here you have me and my wife, we've left both of our jobs, we only have a couple months' money, we have no more church community or, like, oversight. I'm trying to

make a record for the very first time in my whole life, and we have all this death around us. And so in a way, we never got to over intellectualize the problems with the church as an organization and structure. There wasn't a lot of space to just go harbor bitterness for Mark kind of hijacking our organic, genuine community of faith. Because in my view, that's really what happened. All of my best friends are still from Mars Hill. My wife, I met at Mars Hill. I cut my teeth on learning how to lead worship and make music, and a lot of my music friends that maybe aren't even in my band anymore, but some of them are, are from Mars Hill. So net positive, Mars Hill is a very positive experience in my life, like very, but what I'm saying is coming out of Mars Hill and having all that hardship immediately afterwards, I was right back at Jesus' feet. Like, I needed His comfort, I needed His presence every day, and there wasn't another option. I didn't have the space to go sort of like simmer and become jaded and bitter. I fell in love with Jesus immediately, and even in probably a deeper way because of all that hardship. And in hindsight, that probably really saved me from fully falling into a deconstruction spiral and never being able to reconstruct. You know what I mean? Like it just hit the NAS button on reconstructing immediately because I had a real need.

Mike Cospser: One of the things I've thought a lot about, Mark had this confidence and this certainty about if you do things this way, God will bless your life, your life will flourish. And it wasn't prosperity in the gospel in the sense that, like, give us money, you're gonna get healthy and wealthy and everything else. But it was a kind of virtue prosperity, like, Be a man, be a woman, pull it together and there's all this. And so I do think a lot about to what degree that idealistic promise, which is false, because Jesus meets us in our grief and our sorrows as much as He meets us in our successes.

Chad Gardner: Yeah.

Mike Cospser: To what degree the crushing of that idealism isn't every bit as much at root of the deconstruction and loss as it is Mark's actual failure.

Chad Gardner: I think it's probably more, to be honest. Yeah. I think that blueprint that Mark laid down was so appealing and felt like such a better version of every other blueprint of Christianity to a lot of the people there, and then when it didn't work, especially if it was people's first introduction to faith. Like those are the friends of mine that have had the hardest time. If you were saved at Mars Hill and that blueprint is what you had, and then the blueprint shows that it's got cracks in it, and Mark has a lot of cracks in it and he's not repenting, it's a really hard thing to recover from.

Mike Cospser: Did you go on to work at another church, or did you just continue making music the whole time?

Chad Gardner: No, man. So I left Mars Hill and it was like, I gotta get through this, all this stuff that's happening in my family, and I'm just gonna do this record, nothing else but this record. Got the record out and it was seriously like, Well, we got enough money to live this month and pay rent, let's just see what happens, and if I have to go get a job at a coffee shop I will for a while, or let's see how it goes. A month turns into six months, turns into a year, and then you're like, Alright, I guess I'm gonna make records now, I should probably start making another one. And I kind of fell into - not making records,

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cuz I've always wanted to do that - but I fell into I'm an artist full time now, I'm not like a worship leader. And every time I would get an opportunity to go work at another church or something, it just never felt like that's where God was telling me to go, and so I just kept writing songs. That was never my plan. When I was 18, my plan was, I'm gonna change worship music and do that somewhere, and it ended up being at Mars Hill, and then by the time I was 25, I was just like, I guess I'm just making records now.

Mike Cosper: Yeah. So you wrote a song that is part of this podcast. If I remember correctly, a lot of that album is processing a bit of kind of the experience?

Chad Gardner: A little bit. So we get our first record out and it's like a mix tape of everything that has been sitting in me that was left over from Mars Hill and everything else that I wanted to add to it. Okay. It's out of the way, it's done, Oh my gosh, I got a record done. We go into our second record, a very personal record, and it's sort of more about the emotional toll of those three years of leaving Mars Hill and trying to figure out my life. Get to our third record and at that time, really the people in the band had started to sift out. They were either like, Man, I just can't do it, I'm really struggling with pulling all of the Mars Hill stuff apart, and I just don't know if I believe anymore. And then there's some of them that are like, No, I'm back in a church now, it's been a few years and I'm doing really good.

One of my band members, I had the beat for Sticks and Stones. I send it to him, and the first thing they write - this is the person that's really struggling with their faith, seriously - the first thing they write, they just send it back to me, and the quick thing is, They don't get it, I don't get it, we're committed to sticks and stones. Basically, they triggered this feeling of, Oh, they are processing so much pulling apart Mars Hill, this is the first thing that comes to their head, this. And I thought to myself, Alright, this is a cool opportunity, cuz I really love this person, they're probably not gonna be in my band very much longer, but I can actually be completely 100% unified with them and feel with them in starting to write a song about Mars Hill. Even though I'm choosing the path of, I'm gonna stay enchanted and I'm gonna really hope in the gospel, and they're not choosing that path, we can write a song with a hundred percent equal footing about the pitfalls of Mars Hill. So we wrote a little bit more on it, and then the co-writer that I write with the most is Zach Bolen, and so he actually finished writing the song with me. And it was just this poetic sort of landscape of that story.

Most people, I don't think ever really realized exactly what it was about. When we do a tour, we do a Q & A before the show for some VIP folks. That one gets a lot of questions like, What do you mean, paint the beauty we split. Like it's poetic enough and there's enough imagery in it that people weren't certain what I was talking about, but I know it was meaningful to, like, the band member to be able to, like, write that from that perspective. And so that was really the initial inspiration.

Mike Cosper: Yeah, I was gonna ask about that lyric in particular, cuz I have a sense of what I think that means, but obviously... What do you mean?

Chad Gardner: Well, it's actually surprisingly linear in my head. I think of the beauty as Christ's bride, the church. I think of paint as Christ's redeeming blood, and I think that

we split as the church that we've pulled apart, that we broke. Yeah. So it's honestly like a cry, kind of a plea prayer. Yeah.

Mike Cospser: Yeah. It's an incredible song. Not just because it's a great song, it's an ear worm in the best sense, that you hear it and you want to hear it, you want to go back to it.

Chad Gardner: Sure.

Mike Cospser: But yeah, those lyrics do. I think they have a resonance. As we were putting the podcast together, I was really combing through Mars Hill Music stuff because I wanted to have something that was connected to the church as a theme song, if we could make it work.

Chad Gardner: Sure.

Mike Cospser: And so I come across that song and it just fit so perfectly, what we're trying to do. But one of the things that's been surprising to me over the course of the release is of course, like, a lot of the audience didn't know that you all had a connection to Mars Hill, and it was funny to see the comments where people go, Wow, you guys picked a perfect song to sync up with this, it's like he's singing about the church's story.

Chad Gardner: Yeah. It's like, I am.

Mike Cospser: So one of the reasons I wanted to have this conversation is because there's another layer of backstory here that is funny and it's gonna... It affects the podcast from here moving forward and some changes we're making to the other episodes. I reached out to you. I don't think we'd ever connected before, but

Chad Gardner: No, I don't think so.

Mike Cospser: Yeah, but through Joel we connected and we talked. Told you a little bit about the podcast, and the thought that we'd like to use the song as a theme song. And it was this funny moment, because it was probably May that we talked, and it was like, Yeah, we're doing this thing, it's Christianity Today. And neither one of us had a sense that it was gonna be that big a deal.

Chad Gardner: Right.

Mike Cospser: And so we worked out the details and we just went forward with it. Tell me, I would just love to hear - and genuinely share as openly as you're willing - what has the experience been like for you as the podcast became this weird phenomenon, and as your song and your band and your work became so connected to it?

Chad Gardner: So yeah, I remember you calling me and talking to me about the podcast and saying, Yeah, your song would work perfect for it. And I'm just thinking, Oh yeah, you know, that song's about Mars Hill and it's got enough poetic imagery that I'm sure that would be perfect. Sounds good. Whatever my agency says, just pay for it, do it, let's go, no problem. That was my initial feeling. And then when it took off and the scale of

the podcast got so big, and this is at a time where I am..I don't really... I don't have social media on my phone, I was working on a record, I'm hyper focused. I'm not really paying attention, to be honest, at all. I'm kind of out of it. When I first saw the texts that were like, Now I can't listen to Sticks and Stones anymore without hearing Mark scream, How dare you, after Chad sings, then I was like, Oh no, what have I done?

Then when I saw the scale of it get big, then I really thought, Oh man. And then when I heard it - because I didn't even listen to it for a while - and then when I heard it, I was like, Oh man, look, if this was a thing like I thought initially it was gonna be, which is ex-Mars Hill people, gonna help them process, seminary students gonna be like a cautionary tale, might have a few, like, hardcore deconstructionists where this is just, like, TMZ sugar for their appetite, that's fine, I don't care. When it got to the scale of that, I was like, Oh my gosh, my song... It's like my biggest thing that I'm doing now is like a duet with Mark Driscoll? Oh my gosh. I don't want his thumbprints all over my song that's already been out for two years, my song that's already been my most successful song and been in the Super Bowl commercials, and all this stuff, like, I don't want people associating Mark with that. I don't want to go open for a bigger artist where I'm playing for a couple thousand brand new people that have never heard Kings Kaleidoscope ever. And when we play that song, part of that audience has listened to a random, big podcast in the top five on iTunes, and they're like, Wait a second, this is a theme song for a gnarly church story. It was like, Man.

It's not that I didn't want my song connected to Mars Hill, because it's part of my story, it was like the feeling of Mark putting his fingerprints on my expression and my piece of work felt... it just started to really feel icky. And I couldn't shake it. And I was feeling... I didn't know what to do because I was like, Man, this thing's getting millions of downloads, they're however many episodes in, I'm not gonna tell them to pull it out. But I just couldn't get that pit out of my stomach of this type of association is not what I want here for Kings Kaleidoscope, Kings Kaleidoscope is one of the few public facing things left over from Mars Hill that is still believing and is still hoping, and it's still full of faith and chasing that enchantment with the gospel. And I just, I hated the feeling that one of our songs was gonna just have Mark's fingerprints on it forever.

Mike Cospser: Yeah. And so a little more of the backstory. We hadn't talked about that at all. You were thinking that I... We were approaching the final episode, and a few weeks out before that final episode, it clicked for me that it didn't make sense to have that song for the finale. I wanted something that entered into a deeper sense of lament, a deeper sense of brokenness. And so I reached out to you to connect to you and talk to you about that. And I've just got to say, when we came up in the conversation, here I am as an editor and a producer, proud of this thing that we've made, and particularly proud of like how we set up the credits and they tell a story and all of this kind of stuff.

Chad Gardner: Yeah.

Mike Cospser: But the thing that struck me, I remember we were on a Zoom call and there were a couple other folks on it, and you shared what you just shared, and I realized, Oh man, I contributed to the pain of Mars Hill in a way that I didn't mean to, that no one on our team meant to. And not so much in necessarily, like, I think about it and I think

probably you would agree with this, like not so much even in necessarily the connection of the song to the story, but putting Mark's voice in the story, making him a part of this work that you did, that was part of your redemption story or this hope you're trying to tell. And so that broke...Just honestly, that broke my heart. I just felt like, Oh dude, if someone had done that to me, it would've crushed me too.

So all that to say, Man, I am sorry, and I'm glad we were able to talk about it. And so one of the reasons... The reason we're telling the story now is because we've gone back through the previous episodes. If you go back and listen to any previous episodes, you'll notice that Mark's voice is gone from those opening credits. And that's not a copyright decision, that's not anything else, it's we want to honor the song, we want to show our respect and appreciation for you as an artist, and we want to be part of the redemptive story that the song is telling.

Tell me what else is happening with some of those other bands that have continued on since the show.

Chad Gardner: Yeah, first, I'm just so thankful that you guys even... You guys did not have to do anything with that at all. And I was blown away that you guys heard that, just really heard my heart on that and going, Man, you know what, with the scale of this and how Mark is in the song with me, it actually is gonna kind of hurt our band as our entity and just as a band, it's gonna be a tough association to break. And the fact that you guys heard that was incredible. So I'm so thankful for that, for real.

But yeah, there's a few other bands from Mars Hill that we're all still kind of trucking along. When the church collapsed, you had the main sort of worship directors, or a few of them. Me, Zach Bolen with Citizens, Brian with the Sing Team, Cam with Ghost Ship. Those are kind of the main ones. There's a few others, but we just kept kind of making records. To me, that's kind of been a beautiful element of when you think about the Mars Hill story and you think about this organic like-mindedness pursuing faith, and then Mark and this infrastructure crushes it and falls apart, that community in pockets just kept going. And then the music guys are one of the ones that just kept going. Brian and Zach are some of my best friends, I talk to them every single week, we still write music together. Like we're basically doing the exact same thing we would be doing within an infrastructure of Mars Hill, we're just doing it on our own now. So all of those bands are constantly putting out music.

I think it's a little bit of the embodiment of the healthy side of the spirit of Mars Hill still alive. So everybody that's fascinated with Mark and the movement of all that stuff, there's the cautionary tale part of it. There's also the, like, beautiful community side of it that has these pockets that are still going, and I think it's very apparent in the music that's out there.

Mike Cosper: It's like a fragment of the thing that felt like it was such a big deal, right, the way that Mars Hill was able to do something that was very different. And then to look at it now and to see that it survives and thrives, that's a great thing.

Chad Gardner: Yeah.

35 MIN

Mike Cospers: Thanks for sitting down with me for this conversation. Is there anything you wanted to talk about we didn't get to?

Chad Gardner: So, yes, for everybody out there who heard this song at the intro of this podcast has been following this along and thought, wow, what a fitting song for this, this whole deal, just wanna make sure everybody knows, that song has been out for years. We've got a bunch other music that's been out for years, and there's a bunch more bands from Mars Hill that have been making music. So if everybody can check out, Ghost Ship, Citizens, The Sing Team and us, Kings Kaleidoscope, we would all appreciate it because, you know, we're one of the things from Mars Hill that has kept going, that I still think is beautiful and not a lot of people know about it.

We have a new record coming out this summer called Baptized Imagination, and we're doing something we've never done before, which is we're gonna play the record live for all of our fans on a huge national tour that we're about to head out on in May, in June. All through those two months, we're gonna be premiering a record live which we're really excited about. We've never done that before. It's gonna be crazy. And then shortly after this summer, the record will be out. So yeah, follow us in Spotify. So you don't miss it. Follow us on Instagram. Both of those are just Kings Kaleidoscope, and you can get tickets at kingskaleidoscope.com. Good luck, spelling kaleidoscope, but Google will help you out. You'll find it. And yeah. Thanks for having me, Mike. I really appreciate it.

Mike Cospers: And I'll say this. I'm begging you - this is a fear I have. If you go see Kings Kaleidoscope live, do not shout...

Chad Gardner: Yeah, don't sing it.

Mike Cospers: ...Who do you think you are, because I think they would probably and should instruct the bouncers to throw you out if you do.

Mike Cospers: Thanks Chad.

Chad Gardner: Dude, thank you so much.

Mike Cospers: The Rise and Fall of Mars Hill is a production of Christianity Today. It's executive produced by Erik Petrik. It's produced, written and edited by Mike Cospers. Joy Beth Smith and Azurae Phelps are associate producers. Songs on this episode are by Brad Currah and Paul Musberg, Team Strike Force, Red Letter, Citizens, and of course Kings Kaleidoscope.

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