

# musicreview

Reviews by Christmas McCaughey

## m.o.d. ministri of defence

Efrem Buckle first met Robert Prendergast at a Bible study in Robert's home in south London. "The Lord knit our hearts together like David and Jonathan in the Bible," Efrem recalls. "Our desire was to serve Him in any way we could, and we desired to reach out to families and the community in south London. Music wasn't in our minds; we were just looking for any avenue to share the Gospel." They first tried doing a video and tape ministry with Christian teachings. One day, they were invited to participate in a Christian event at a notorious pub in south London. While Robert shared a message, Efrem and other believers passed out tracts and talked to bar patrons. At the end of the message, Robert performed a Christian rap song. "It was the first time Robert had rapped; the impact was amazing—the way people opened up and responded to the Gospel ... because they could relate to the way it was being shared," Efrem recalled. "We realized how effective it was as a tool." The two men felt God was giving them direction for how to share the Gospel. They began writing rap songs about the Lord. "Our goal was not to be known in Christian circles or to make an album. We had one purpose in mind: to get people's attention long enough to share the Gospel with them."

"Ministry of Defence" is associated with the UK's armed forces. Efrem and Robert called themselves M.O.D.—Ministri of Defence—based on 1 Peter 3:15: "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear." Efrem recalled: "From the outset, we sought to be faithful advocates of the faith." They are also called Robert, "Rob Rhyme, Da Pilgrim," and Efrem, "E.Miner aka Stranjah."

In 1994, they began rapping around the community—often with other believers. "We were invited to school assemblies, local youth clubs, street ministries, and prisons," Efrem recalled. "We relished the open doors that music afforded us to share the Gospel." At an after-school in west London, nearly half the student body showed up.



Pastors Efrem Buckle, left, and Robert Prendergast

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Efrem and Robert sensed they had made "a real connection" with the young audience. "We challenged them to make a decision for Christ," he recalled. "Three-fourths of them put their hands up." Efrem twice asked them to put their hands down and explained more fully what following Christ meant: turning away from sin, accepting Christ, and making a life commitment to follow God. The third invitation, even more raised their hands. Christian volunteers scrambled to find enough response sheets for the 300-plus teens who responded. A few years later, he learned many were still walking with Christ. "It was so brilliant to see the work of the Lord," said Efrem, "to see the fruit that remains."

One of their popular songs, "Revolver," says, "As I lay prostrate on my face, I couldn't move, thinking I was dead—lying in pools of liquid red. From head to toe I was soaked in a crimson cloak; my life

flashed before me. But wait a minute, it wasn't me bleeding, I just couldn't understand: It was the blood of another Man, the blood of the Lamb." In south London, gun crime has escalated dramatically, Efrem said. "A revolver usually takes life, but the Gospel gives life."

Along with Pastor Patrick Pierre-Powell, both Efrem and Robert have been co-pastors at Calvary Chapel South London for three years. "Being pastors helps keep us grounded," Efrem added. "One verse that helps me stay centered is 2 Corinthians 5:14–15, which says, 'the love of Christ compels us ... and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.'"

For those eager to be in music ministry, Efrem said: "It's a treacherous place to be, so dangerous. You become a huge target—vulnerable to temptation and trials from the enemy." He added that the Bible warns in 1 Timothy that "a novice" should first be proven before being put in a place of prominence—and pressure. "For me, those ministry standards are also for those in music ministry." He and Robert have several strong Christian brothers who keep them accountable.

Now with families of their own, M.O.D. travels less frequently. Recently, Efrem performed at Creation Fest in the UK and the CC Africa Missions Conference. The duo are raising up other Christian musicians through Urban Mission, which recently ministered at the crowd-drawing Notting Hill Carnival.

Previously independent, M.O.D. will release their self-titled album in early 2007 through Cross Movement Records.

[www.calvarychapelsofthelondon.org](http://www.calvarychapelsofthelondon.org)  
[www.myspace.com/modefence](http://www.myspace.com/modefence)  
[www.urbanmission.co.uk](http://www.urbanmission.co.uk)  
[www.crossmovementrecords.com](http://www.crossmovementrecords.com)

## brett williams hideaway



Brett Williams' latest album, *Hideaway*, reveals a well-honed knack for songwriting and multi-talented musicianship that come from having two decades of music ministry under one's belt. Serving as worship pastor at Calvary Fellowship Seattle, WA, for more than a decade, Brett also has produced eight albums since 1984. Some may recognize him from his early Christian band, Brett Williams and In Reach; others may know his original worship songs—including "I'm Amazed," "Empty the Ocean," "When the King Comes Down," and "When I Walk with You."

"About ten years ago, I moved more toward worship," Brett recalled, "trying to write songs with congregational worship in mind." Some songs explore the relationship of Christ and the believer. Others are

"Davidic songs—about who God is, His character, His faithfulness." Old hymns are transformed, as in the song "Only" (on the *Hideaway* album)—a jazz/pop composition featuring smooth arrangements with trumpet, bass, and electric guitar. Musical style ranges from bluegrass on the song "Quantity"—where Brett sounds a bit like secular artist Tom Petty—to mainstream pop-worship in "Hideaway." On the island-style "Prayer," Brett plays the ukulele, and the song is reminiscent of "Over the Rainbow" by Hawaiian artist Iz. Adding to the variety and beauty of the album is "Educate My Soul," featuring beautiful cello work with rich violin, then moving into a gentle pop style with prayerful lyrics: "Hungry is my heart to know the truth: Teach me to love You."

Brett cited King David as one who worshiped God with all of his might and brought treasured offerings to the Lord. "I want to be the best I can be for the Lord and use the skills He's given me to the best of my ability," Brett said. "The position of worship leader is a strange dichotomy:

One must lead strongly and decisively and also be invisible at the same time. We have to lead with humility and with a servant's heart, but we also have to let people know where we're going." Just as any pastor or teacher would, Brett feels a worship leader should be diligent in prayer and preparation in order to bless God's people.

Brett and his wife Kathleen have four children: Jesse, Cameron, Joseph, and Rosa.

[www.brettwilliamsmusic.com](http://www.brettwilliamsmusic.com)



Brett Williams

## rodrigo rodriguez the prayer



Born in Quito, Ecuador, Rodrigo Rodriguez began playing guitar at age 7 and recorded his first album at age 10. Well-known for his skillful classical guitar playing, Rodrigo traveled the world performing in various venues. He came to the U.S. in 1986 to teach classical guitar at a university in Dallas, TX.

While he was a successful musician, Rodrigo relates that he felt sadness and isolation despite his immense musical ability. A friend invited him to Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa in 1993, where Rodrigo felt the Lord touch his heart; there he gave his life to Christ. "I was raised in a very religious family, but I didn't know about a relationship with Jesus Christ," he said. "I went to church that day because my life was empty; it had no purpose at all."

"When I became a Christian, everything changed," Rodrigo said. "God gave me

music for His pleasure, His own purposes." Rodrigo cited the biblical story in 1 Samuel 16:14–23 in which David played his harp for Saul. "God used David's music to heal the spirit of Saul, to soothe his troubles. I believe that was the intention of God when He created music: to encourage others and to bring glory to God ... He didn't create it for man's glory," he said. "As believers, we are no longer artists; we are worshipers."

Since accepting Christ, Rodrigo has played solely for the Lord—including Gospel crusades abroad and at churches in the U.S. While he has recorded many albums, his 2-CD album, *The Prayer*, features him playing 23 solo arrangements of contemporary worship songs and traditional hymns, including "Be Thou My Vision," "Come Thou Fount," "Lord I Believe in You," and original pieces. "These are very non-sophisticated, simple arrangements so that people can just listen and worship the Lord any time," he said. The soothing, beautiful melodies range from classical pieces to expressive Latin guitar stylings.

Among his other albums are *Christmas Feelings*, with Christian songs for the holi-

day; *I Am Not My Own*, a Spanish album and the only one in which Rodrigo also sings; and *My Father's World*, in which Rodrigo is featured with the City of Prague Philharmonic Orchestra. He and his wife, Mary, live in Boca Raton, FL.

[www.rodrigorodriguez.net](http://www.rodrigorodriguez.net)

***Sing aloud to God our strength; make a joyful shout to the God of Jacob.***

Psalm 81:1



Rodrigo Rodriguez