

# Reaching through Reggae: Dominic Balli

Story by Laura Kebede  
Photo by Tom Price

*I was just a boy when they told me  
What you gonna be and they sold me  
The American Dream for a small fee  
The price of my life and my own  
dreams*

*What about a dream where the  
Kingdom comes?  
Peace on the earth and His will be  
done.*

*What about a dream where the  
people fight  
not for fortune and fame but for  
saving lives?"*

"American Dream" lyrics by Dominic Balli

Just days after beginning to understand God's love and committing to follow Christ at the age of 16, Dominic Balli's youth pastor asked him to lead the church in worship songs. Dominic had been playing guitar since he was 13 but had never sung in tune.

"I was that person in church ... words weren't rhythmically right. I was singing in a totally different key and I couldn't tell that it didn't sound good," Dominic said. But he accepted the offer anyway and went home to practice. This time, he could distinguish when he was off-key. "The Lord healed my ears. I could hear that my guitar was out of tune and how to sing," Dominic said.

A former youth pastor at CC Ramona, CA, Dominic is now 31 years old and still playing music. In July, he released his second album, *American Dream*, which landed at No. 2 on the Billboard Reggae Albums chart and No. 3 on the Billboard Current Contemporary Christian Albums chart. The lyrics from this second album challenge what has become known as the "American dream," which is often fueled by a desire for fame and fortune. In contrast, Dominic's goal is to use his music to promote the spreading of the Gospel of forgiveness through Christ.

Dominic noticed subtle changes in himself after his first album, *Public Announcement*, began bringing in substantial financial resources that he had never experienced. He and his wife, Emily, had moved into a bigger house with a manicured lawn in a

nice neighborhood. "We were living the American Dream. But the comfort of that lifestyle started to eat away at my spiritual life ... my purpose ... and who I was as a person," Dominic said. "Soon I realized that this American Dream isn't all it was cracked up to be and that God doesn't bless us just so we can be blessed, but so we can be a blessing to others." One of the ways that Dominic has chosen to be a blessing to others is by donating all the profits from the second album to ministries and people in need around the world.

Even though Dominic grew up surrounded by music, the idea of writing songs that other people would listen to was the furthest thing from his mind. But that all changed during his first semester at CC Bible College in Murrieta, CA. Dominic had originally wanted to go to Hollywood and study at a music production school but didn't have the grades or the money. Then he sensed God speaking to him directly, saying that He would bless Dominic's music to the point that the unbelieving world would want to hear it, opening a door for the Gospel to enter their lives. Dominic wasn't interested in targeting Christian radio in his music writing. He wanted to present the Gospel and biblical themes in a style unbelievers would understand and enjoy. "Musically, stylistically, I hope it sounds like something you would hear on mainstream Top 40 radio," he said.

Dominic would soon discover that this calling to the unchurched would also be carried out through the church. He began to hear stories about believers sharing his music with their friends and family—that it contributed to helping backslidden Christians come back to Christ, drug addicts turn to Jesus, and unbelievers open up to a relationship with the Lord. So for the last three years he has performed predominantly at Christian venues while continuing to play for mainstream audiences. Over the years he has shared the stage with headliners such as Toby Mac, Jeremy Camp, LeCrae, Hillsong United, and Barlow Girl.

In the meantime, Dominic and his band just came off a two-month tour in California,



Dominic Balli performs.

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Florida, Ghana, and Brazil. During the tour, they had the opportunity to preach the Gospel and minister to more than 20,000 people. They saw thousands give their lives to Christ during the concerts.

Dominic grew up in the church. His father, Tom Balli, pastors CC Lake Arrowhead, CA, and his grandfather, Chuck Wooley, is another long-time Calvary pastor. "Parents aren't really quick to say how their kids minister to them, but he ministers to me," said Pastor Tom. He describes his son as extremely generous in offering his home and giving to those in need. Tom said, "Dominic thinks about what is beneficial for God's kingdom rather than what is beneficial for his life." 🙌