



Sanctus Real

Pieces of a Real Heart

Biography



In the industry of cool known as rock 'n' roll, it's a particularly rare feat when substance actually triumphs over swagger. Even more surprising is when a band blatantly wears its heart on its sleeve, rather than simply championing lyrical ambiguity set to a catchy beat.

But in the musical world of GRAMMY-nominated Sanctus Real, substance and style have peacefully co-existed over the course of five albums that have garnered seven No. 1 radio singles (and six more that landed in the Top 5). Not afraid to experiment with new textures or leave things stripped-down and simple if the song calls for it, the Dove Award-winning act that features Matt Hammitt (lead vocals, guitar), Chris Rohman (lead guitar), Mark Graalman (drums), Dan Gartley (bass) and Pete Prevost (guitar) also hasn't shied away from tackling life's tough questions. Offering glimpses of the guys' own joys and heartbreaking struggles, that refreshing level of candor—and unflinching commitment to honesty—has endeared the band to fans around the globe.

And now with the March 9 release of *Pieces of a Real Heart*, Sanctus Real has continued to push themselves both artistically and thematically. Fueled by the real-life experiences culled from a life often spent traveling from city to city, not to mention the maturing that inevitably results when raising families, the album is confessional, thoughtful and really anything but surface-level.

"There's a real depth here that I'm not sure we've ever had on any other album," Matt shares. "We've always written about things that were important to us. But what really makes these songs stand out is that we're getting older and have experienced so much more life. There's a depth that naturally comes with age, and every couple years between albums there's so much more growth spiritually, emotionally and even musically, and our music is evolving and progressing with life."

When it came time to choose a name that encapsulated the band's latest work, the group was intentional about having the title really fit the pulse of the lyrics.

"At first it seemed a little cliché, but we knew we needed to have the word 'heart' somewhere in the title," Matt says. "It's because all these songs—every last one—are about the deepest parts of our being, our hearts, what we're thinking about and things we're living through. As we started thinking about all the different pieces of our lives, it quickly became apparent that these songs are definitely pieces of our real heart."

One of those "pieces" that's ultimately the record's heartbeat is the band's first single, "Forgiven," which connected immediately—and deeply—with radio listeners. Showcasing Sanctus Real's musically adventurous spirit, the banjo and glockenspiel are used throughout, giving the song an organic, homespun feel that perfectly complements the heartfelt message. Lyrically, the song was inspired by a powerful trifecta of insecurity, failure and fear, and Matt confesses that he had no idea how deeply it would resonate when he wrote it.

"Sometimes at night, you just lie in bed beating yourself up. I'd be fixating on all the stupid things I've said or done. Or how my wife was frustrated with me, and I'm trying to fix that," he shares. "I was really in a place where I needed to say 'Lord, I've got to stop letting my emotions get the best of me.' Yeah, I'm an artist, but my emotions often take me back to where I forget the truth in God's power and forgiveness. I *can* have the confidence to do what He's called me to do, and I don't have to worry."

In conjunction with the song's release to radio, the band encouraged listeners to share a personal story of forgiveness on its website. Then with each story submitted, there was a symbolic gesture when a piece of an original "Forgiveness" painting, commissioned by the guys, was revealed. Thousands of testimonies later, Matt wishes the

process could've lasted longer. Looking back, he says he was amazed by how quickly people were writing in and confessing their deepest, darkest junk.

"It's been incredible to see how God can use something so small to minister to people who are going through really difficult challenges like drug rehab or surviving an affair and working to put their marriages back together," Matt shares. "Whether our failures are big or small, praise God that we're truly forgiven. The truth is, forgiveness is the foundation of everything we are as believers. It's where our faith starts and finishes."

Another opportunity to build on the message of "Forgiven," "Lead Me" has allowed Sanctus Real to share how God is constantly in the business of renewing our strength and strengthening our families.

"I think it's incredibly powerful when an artist takes his/her own struggles and failures and puts them out there to help someone else. We found a unique opportunity to do that with this song," Matt shares. "My wife and I aren't shy about sharing that we've had some pretty major struggles with me being on the road so much. Every marriage has its struggles, and we're committed until death do us part. But we actively have to work through our issues."

And when Matt's wife told him that he needed to be a better spiritual leader, it's a challenge he accepted humbly because he knew it was true.

"I got to place where I was really coasting, not only in my relationship with God, but with my family. I basically had it on cruise control," Matt shares. "Then I found myself really broken before God because I've always desired to lead my family in a way where they feel secure in my love—and that they love the Lord with all their hearts. Bottom line, I want my kids to grow up loving God, and I want to do everything I can to establish that my home is my first priority. I remember being before the Lord and saying, 'God, if I am going to lead my family the way I'm supposed to, then *You* are going to have to lead me because this is the most important task I have besides serving you.'"

As Matt began opening up about his struggles from stage, he says other couples started coming out of the woodwork and sharing their marital struggles after the shows. "I consider it a privilege to share this song because our homes are so broken all across America and all over the world," Matt continues. "It just feels like we've lost a generation that believes that, and whatever we can do to strengthen families and help them to raise kids that have positive role models in their parents, hopefully we can get to this generation before they believe the same lies."

Armed with a passionate message, *Pieces of a Real Heart* also has plenty of hope for the world-weary. In what's been a season of discouragement for many with challenging financial realities, "The Redeemer" is a stalwart reminder that God really has our hopes and dreams in His able, capable hands. With opening track "These Things Take Time," listeners are encouraged that answers to life's most difficult answers *will* be answered—even if it's not here on earth, while "Keep My Heart Alive" is a worshipful, call to action for believers to not allow the busyness of life swallow up your relationship with the Creator. Matt says that song is also a great "note to self."

For anyone who's particularly enjoyed the Sanctus Real concert experience in the past, the band's latest work will be a surefire hit sonically, too. Thanks to a more minimalist approach in the studio, *Pieces of a Real Heart* has all the verve and intensity of the band's electrifying live show.

"I think one of the reasons why the album is so special is because we embraced the idea of 'less is more.'" Matt says. "It was a matter of saying, 'These are the parts that we believe really convey the heart of these songs.' That's what made a significant difference this time around. Hands down, *Pieces of a Real Heart* is not only our favorite album, but I believe it's the best work we've ever done."

For more information on Sanctus Real, check out www.sanctusreal.com.

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