

# **Bethlehem Skyline Bio**

## **Centricity Records**

### **Release Date: September 25, 2007**

***Bethlehem Skyline***. . .just the words evoke images both ancient and contemporary, and it's the perfect title for Centricity Record's new Christmas collection. The songs celebrate the timeless message of our Savior's birth and the joy of the holiday season with cutting edge musicality from some of Christian music's most exciting young talents.

***Bethlehem Skyline*** features Centricity Records artists **Jamie Jamgochian, Jason Gray, downhere, Circleslide** and **Daniel Kirkley**. The songs are a mixture of well-loved holiday favorites alongside new tunes sure to take their place among the season's treasures.

"One of the neat things about ***Bethlehem Skyline*** is that it is essentially a family project," says downhere's Jeremy Thiessen. "There are only a few artists on Centricity Records and we have all become like family, so to record an album together and to all be working toward the same goal is pretty special. There are a number of original Christmas songs on it too which I think will speak to people. We all love the classics, but there's room for new Christmas songs too and I think there are a number of soon-to-be classics on this CD."

Among the new songs is downhere's, *Glory To God In The Highest*. "The point of inspiration for the song was when we played in northern Africa in Marrakesh, Morocco," relates downhere's Jason Germain. "We were out on a sort of tourist activity riding camels, and I caught a glimpse of a shepherd watching sheep. Immediately my mind went back to the stories of the Bible--Moses on the backside of the desert in preparation for the exodus; David watching sheep in preparation for Kingship; the shepherds of the Christmas story. I bought an ancient style ceramic lantern, which to this day lives on my piano to remind me of those shepherds. Who were they? They were, by all by the world's standards, nobody. I identify with the nobodies and I think everyone does. My hope is that this song conveys the gratefulness to God that He sees our hearts and that His story and His love are available to everyone, everywhere, anytime."

***Bethlehem Skyline*** also offers up fresh, engaging new versions of Christmas favorites. Acclaimed newcomer, Daniel Kirkley, lends his impressive pipes to the classic, *Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas* and turns in a hauntingly beautiful version of, *What Child Is This?* "Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas is by far my favorite Christmas song," says Kirkley. "There is something about it that just puts me in the Christmas spirit and I start playing Christmas music the day after Thanksgiving. In fact, I have compiled a collection of favorite tunes that I call the 'Kirkley Christmas Collection' and it has become a favorite with family and friends."

"The second song, *What Child Is This*, was always one of my favorite Christmas carols growing up," Kirkley says of his other contribution to ***Bethlehem Skyline***. "So it just made sense that this would be one of the songs I would record, although we did set out

to **(update the version)** change to something like, ... **(alter the arrangement)** a bit. We changed the time signature up and substituted a few chords. I think this version is pretty cool!"

**Jamie** Jamgochian's pure, sweet voice delivers a stirring rendition of, *Oh Come Oh Come Emmanuele*. "I love the lyric to this song, as it's a prophecy being told of our coming King," says Jamgochian. "We tried to make it my own and put lots of acoustic guitar on it which was a nice switch from the piano."

"The other song I recorded is, *Come Thou Long Expected Jesus*. I had never heard this before my A&R guy played it for me and once again I fell in love with the lyric. It is a cry and prayer that our King would come to earth. This song had so much to say that we made it real simple and highlighted the piano on this one."

Singer/songwriter Jason Gray contributes two tunes about the mother of Jesus. "I think Mary is the perfect character to help us understand what Christmas means," says Gray. "Like Mary, we are all asked to receive the life of Christ inside of us, and furthermore to bear Him to the world -- to say as Mary did, 'Yes, I am the Lord's servant, may it be to me as you have said.'

"I've since come to love that little girl, to admire her great bravery, purity of heart, and willingness to obey though she had to know it would turn her world upside down," Gray continues. "To be the mother of God's son? I would be terrified! It cost her so much, right up to the very end. To think that the redemption of the world hung on the answer of a little 16-year-old girl; to me, her 'yes' is an inspiration, a challenge, and is reminder of what Christmas should mean for all of us -- a 'yes' to receive the Christ child, a 'yes' to bear him to the world."

Penned by Mark Lowry and Buddy Greene, *Mary Did You Know*, has become one of the most oft recorded Christmas songs, but Gray serves up a fresh take on the tune. He also recorded the Pierce Pettis song, *Miriam*. "I've always loved this song and couldn't listen without being moved to tears by it," Gray says. "For me, it gets to the heart of who Mary really is and strips away all that we've added or taken away from her over the centuries. When we were recording, we were out of time and the musicians were packing up when I sheepishly asked if we could try one more song. They agreed and we got it in one take!"

The album takes its title from the Circleslide song, *Jesus is Born*. The lyric speaks of the star that led to the Bethlehem Skyline where the Savior had been born to bring hope and redemption to the world. The song's simple, direct lyric encapsulates the spirit of the Christmas season. Additionally, Circleslide also contributes a potent version of the holiday classic, *Joy to the World*.

**Bethlehem Skyline** concludes with the entire Centricity family of artists joining together on a spirited version of, *Oh Come All Ye Faithful*. It's a moment that celebrates the diversity of talent that makes up the Centricity roster and also the spirit of unity that drives the company's efforts to spread the gospel. It's an exuberant conclusion to a collection that celebrates the joy of the season.

For so many people, music conveys the essence of the Christmas celebration and the songs on ***Bethlehem Skyline*** are sure to become a treasured part of everyone's holiday traditions. "Christmas music is really a soundtrack to life," says downhere's Glenn Lavender. "Hearing some songs will bring back certain memories from years past, meals spent together, games played together, and so on. Then there are other songs, songs about the son of God coming to Earth, which take me to a totally different place."

"It is these songs being played over and over in my car, in the malls, and in friends homes that really help set up the importance of that day so long ago we are celebrating," continues Lavender. "So when the day finally comes, the weight of everything I've been listening to reminds me of how wonderful and loving a God I serve that he would be willing to transform himself into a lowly man and not only live among us but serve us."

###

Media Contact:  
Janet Bozeman/Bozeman Media  
615-376-2246/janet@bozemanmedia.com