

A Little Closer—By Anadara

I remember a time when I didn't know songs fit into categories. I didn't know about genres or what it took to create a hit song. All I knew at eight years old was that I loved making up melodies on the piano and finding words to fit the music. The songs were inspired deep within me and flew out without a filter. Once I entered high school, I was taken with the love of musical theater and didn't write as much. However, when I picked up a guitar my first year studying music at Syracuse University I was found again by this natural desire to write songs. It helped me nurse my homesick heart to write songs about missing my home in Carlsbad, California. Having been born and raised in Carlsbad, everything and everyone I knew and loved were there. Syracuse, NY was a long way from home, and on the countless snowy nights that I never saw coming, I poured myself into playing the guitar and writing songs free from the knowledge of how a song should be written. As with any craft, not knowing the guidelines has its pros and cons. Creatively I was extremely fulfilled as I wrote freely about what I was experiencing, yet I needed some direction as to how to make my message clearer.

Eventually I started playing the local music scene in Syracuse and then New York City, where I lived for three years after graduating college. My time spent in New York City was one of the most exhilarating and educational experiences in life so far. The electricity of the city and the raw depth of humanity around every corner inspired my writing. It was during these three years that I witnessed first-hand the tragedy of the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center. During this season I started to pick up some of the "how to's" of songwriting, and my songs soon became cohesive and the structure started to resemble songs I loved. As time passed I became faced with the inevitability of comparing myself to others and started to lose a bit of the raw honesty and freedom I used to enjoy in my writing. However, it was also a time of falling in love and marrying my husband, Rocky. We couldn't wait to move to Nashville to start our new lives together and see if making music full-time could be in my future.

After a few years in Nashville, I signed a record deal with Spring Hill Worship and my record, *Into the Unknown*, was released. *Into the Unknown* captured a season of my life where I was fortunate to start collaborating with established songwriters in Nashville. Some of the songs I wrote during that time are now being used as choral anthems and were included on various worship compilations. *Worship Leader Magazine* nominated "The Name," written with Joe Beck and Billy Sprague, for "Best Scripture Song" in 2005. Spring Hill Worship provided many opportunities for me to travel and share my music with a larger audience, but they closed their doors in 2007. Soon after this, I reconnected with Scott Faircliff, a writer I had met while writing for *Into the Unknown*. Sharing a deep affection for the great songwriters of the '70s and '80s, Scott and I wrote a number of songs together, like "Love is the Exception" and "NYC," which would eventually inspire the direction for my new album. In the process I was also extremely grateful to work with Tom Michael, Brett Vargason and Todd Shay, who together make up the ZOD Lounge. Not only did they play on the majority of the tracks but they also produced a number of songs on the record. Their motto "Love people, Make Music" played out in our collaboration as they brought the songs to life and their camaraderie helped make this record a reality.

In writing and recording this new record, *A Little Closer*, I welcomed the tension of writing as freely as an eight year old, while continuing to develop my craft and build clear and powerful songs. During my times of writing I have constant conversations with God, much like praying. A song usually takes over a whole season of my life and stays with me even through the night. In this way, this record is written out of worship. Even as the songs don't necessarily lend themselves to corporate worship, I pray that people will find this record to be healing and inspiring in this journey we are on. A life of faith requires our hearts to be engaged in all that is going on around us and inside of us. Hopefully these songs will point toward tender places in your heart where God is asking you too to move a little closer.

So, it is safe to say that I have not just been taking a journey back to the freedom of an eight year old in my creativity but also in my personal relationships and in my relationship with God. There was innocence in those formative years of loving people and having no fear. As children we aren't afraid to ask and I'm finding that a lot of life requires asking. Whether we are asking for help, asking why or asking for what we need, this kind of reaching out and being okay with the small and big mysteries of life keeps our curiosity alive and leaves room for God to move us to a new place. Standing in the middle of my life, my marriage, my church, my friends, my art, my memories of NYC, Syracuse and Carlsbad, I've tried to allow the songs to be born out of day to day life and my deepest need for the love of God in the midst of it all. God has always reached me through music and I've seen that music is the most effective way for me to communicate my heart back to the world.

Much like sitting on the beach looking out at the horizon, or sitting at a café on the streets of NYC witnessing the rhythm of life, I hope this record will inspire that kind of watching and waiting in your own experience of faith, friendship, creativity and community. To me, these things are impossible to separate and have everything to do with each other. St. Francis of Sales said, "You learn to speak by speaking, to study by studying, to run by running, to work by working; and just so you learn to love God and man by loving. Begin as a mere apprentice, and the very power of love will lead you on to become a master of the art". Here's to the beauty of beginning and God's grace to always invite us a little closer. Thank you for reading and for listening!