

= Almost There (album) =

Almost There is the first major @-@ label studio album by American Christian rock band MercyMe . Produced by Pete Kipley , the album was released on August 14 , 2001 by INO Records . After releasing six independent records , the band decided to pursue a record contract due to the difficulty of selling , booking , and managing for themselves . The band signed with the newly formed INO Records , and were assigned to work with Kipley , who had not produced a major project before . Four of the songs on the album had previously appeared on the band 's independent records ; the rest were newly recorded songs . The album is a worship and pop rock album , and adopts a more radio @-@ friendly sound than the band 's independent albums .

Almost There received critical acclaim from music critics , who praised the album 's songwriting ; " I Can Only Imagine " received particular complements . Critics were more divided on the album 's sound . Some felt the album was " innovative " or " fresh " , while others felt it was middle ? of ? the ? road or derivative . " Bless Me Indeed (Jabez 's Song) " was released as the album 's lead single ; however , it underperformed on the charts . The album 's second single , " I Can Only Imagine " , proved to be successful , peaking at number one on the Radio & Records Christian AC chart in 2002 . Its success contributed to the album reaching the top of the Billboard Heatseekers Albums chart . After the song crossed over to mainstream radio in 2003 , the album peaked at number 39 on the Billboard 200 and number one on the Billboard Christian Albums chart . Almost There has been certified double platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) and has sold over 2 @.@ 2 million copies in the United States . Billboard ranked it as the fourth best @-@ selling Christian album of the 2000s in the United States , and it was listed by CCM Magazine in its 25th anniversary edition as one of ' 100 Albums You Need to Own ' .

= = Background and recording = =

MercyMe was formed in 1994 by vocalist Bart Millard , guitarist Mike Scheuchzer , and keyboardist Jim Bryson . The band later brought on drummer Robby Shaffer and bassist Nathan Cochran . In October 1999 , the band released their fifth independent album , The Worship Project . The album proved successful , selling over 60 @,@ 000 copies within a year , but the difficulty of selling albums directly , in addition to having to book and manage for themselves , led the band to pursue a contract with a record label . Millard was directed by a friend to contact Jeff Moseley , who had connections in the Christian music industry , for advice . After being contacted by Millard , Moseley expressed interest in the band , and within a week MercyMe was officially signed to INO Records , a new record label Moseley was helming . Moseley introduced the band to Pete Kipley , who would produce the album . Although Kipley had been involved on some minor projects , Almost There was his first major project .

Four of the songs on Almost There (" Call to Worship " , " Cannot Say Enough " , " I Can Only Imagine " , and " In You ") had previously appeared on the band 's independent records . All of the other songs on the album were new songs which had not been recorded before . All of the songs of the album were written by Millard or the band except " I Worship You " , which was written by Kipley and Reggie Hamm . The band included the song after Kipley brought it to them ; although the band wanted to write their own material , they liked the song so much that they put it as the first song on the album . " Bless Me Indeed (Jabez 's Song) " was written at the request of the label , who wanted to capitalize off of the success of the popular Bruce Wilkinson book The Prayer of Jabez . The band did not want to record the song , but eventually acquiesced . MercyMe pushed the label to include " House of God " , an upbeat rock song , since they felt that they had been pushed a little too far towards the adult contemporary genre .

Almost There was recorded at Ivy Park , The Indigo Room , Paradise Sound , and IBC Studios . Kipley produced and programmed the record , while Skye McCaskey and Julian Kindred engineered the album . Salvo mixed all the songs on the album at Cool Springs Studio with the exception of " In You " , which was mixed by Shane Wilson . Strings were recorded by the Paltrow Performance Group .

= = Composition = =

Almost There has been described by critics as being a worship and pop rock album . The album was noted as being stylistically similar to contemporary Christian bands like FFH . In contrast to the band 's independent records , which had an " organic " feel , Almost There adopts a more radio @-@ friendly musical style , although the rock style of the band 's independent albums does occasionally resurface . Similarities were noted between the " guitar nuances " of Scheuchzer and U2 's guitarist The Edge .

The album 's first song , " I Worship You " was described as " falling somewhere between adult contemporary and rock " , and utilizes acoustic guitars and synthesizers . " Here Am I " relates the story of people who are not being reached by Christians , and " challenges the listener to go out into the world and stand up for their King " . " On My Way to You " is a worship song , requesting " wisdom , purity , and humility in our pursuit of holiness " . " How Great is Your Love " incorporates both string and electronic instruments ; Millard 's vocals in the song utilize " effect ? laden delays " . " I Can Only Imagine " is a ballad , opening with just piano before building to include drums and guitar . Lyrically , it asks what it will be like in Heaven , standing before God .

" Bless Me Indeed (Jabez 's Song) " is one of the fastest songs on the album . Lyrically , the song parallels the prayer of the Biblical character Jabez in 1 Chronicles 4 : 10 , asking God for blessing and protection from evil . " Cannot Say Enough " was described as " ambient " and compared to Third Day 's " Your Love Oh Lord " . " House of God " was noted as being one of the album 's more rock ? oriented songs . The song utilizes " driving " guitars and a " nasty " guitar riff , and invites the listener to enter the house of god . " Call to Worship " is a mid ? tempo song led by guitar ; the song was compared to the work of The Cure . The final two songs on the album , " All Fall Down " and " In You " , are slower ? paced songs , with the latter being led by piano and strings .

= = Release and promotion = =

Almost There was released in the United States on August 14 , 2001 . " Bless Me Indeed (Jabez 's Song) " was released as the album 's lead single . The label aimed to give the band a wider appeal by capitalizing on the success of the popular book The Prayer of Jabez . The song debuted on the Radio & Records Christian AC chart on August 31 , 2001 at number 29 , and spent four weeks on the chart , peaking at number 27 . The poor chart performance of the song led to album sales that were lower than anticipated . The album debuted at number 12 on the Billboard Christian Albums chart on September 1 , 2001 , and a week later entered the Billboard Heatseekers Albums chart , which ranks the top albums from artists who have not had an album enter the top 100 on the Billboard 200 chart , at number 39 .

" I Can Only Imagine " was released as the album 's second single . The song debuted on the Christian AC chart on November 2 , 2001 ; it reached the number one position on February 22 , 2002 and spent two weeks at the top spot . It also peaked at number 15 on the Radio & Records Christian CHR chart . As a result of the single 's radio airplay , Almost There experienced a " surge " in sales . The album debuted on the Billboard 200 at number 184 on December 22 , 2001 , and entered the top ten on the Christian Albums chart on January 19 , 2002 , charting at number eight . The album reached the peak of the Heatseekers Albums chart on February 2 , 2002 , and the following week entered the top 100 on the Billboard 200 chart , charting at number 98 . " How Great Is Your Love " was announced as the album 's third single in an interview with Billboard magazine on February 12 , 2002 . Millard had heavily pushed INO Records to release it as a single . However , " I Can Only Imagine " stayed on the Christian charts so long that by the time it fell off , the band had to begin work on their next record , and the song ultimately wasn 't released to radio . Almost There was certified Gold by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) on June 13 , 2002 , signifying shipments of over 500 @,@ 000 copies . The band released their second album , Spoken For , on October 1 , 2002 . More than a year after the album 's delivery and after the release of the band 's second studio album , Spoken For (2002) , Almost There remained near the top of the

Christian charts . Almost There ranked as the 6th best ? selling Christian album and the 128th best ? selling album of 2002 in the United States .

In 2003 , the album again received increased sales as " I Can Only Imagine " received airplay on mainstream radio formats . The song peaked at number five on the Billboard Adult Contemporary chart and number 71 on the Hot 100 , also crossing over to top 40 and country radio . The album was certified Platinum on July 14 , 2003 by the RIAA ; a month later , Almost There reached the top spot of the Christian Albums chart after 107 weeks on the chart . It reached its peak of number 37 on the Billboard 200 on September 20 , 2003 . It ranked as the 2nd ? best selling Christian album and 128th best ? selling album of 2004 . By May 2004 , Almost There had sold over 1 @.@ 5 million copies , and of April 2006 it has sold over 2 @.@ 2 million copies . Almost There was certified double platinum on January 20 , 2005 by the RIAA ; as of 2012 , it is one of only eight Christian albums to have reached that milestone ; others include P.O.D. ' s Satellite , Switchfoot ' s The Beautiful Letdown , and Casting Crowns ' self ? titled debut album . In its 2000s decade ? end charts , Billboard ranked Almost There as the fourth best ? selling Christian album of the 2000s in the United States , behind only Satellite , The Beautiful Letdown , and Alan Jackson ' s Precious Memories .

= = Critical reception and accolades = =

Almost There received critical acclaim from music critics . Critics praised the album 's lyrical content , with particular complaint being given to " I Can Only Imagine " . Steve Losey of Allmusic gave the album 4 out of 5 stars , praising it as " a disc that holds power " and being an " exception " rather than a " norm " in comparison to most other praise and worship releases . Losey also noted the " guitar nuances " of Scheuchzer as being similar to U2 ' s The Edge , and praised Bryson as " [placing] intense but subtle keyboard traces within the context of each tune " . Adam Woodroof of CCM Magazine gave it 3 @.@ 5 out of 5 stars . While Woodroof felt the album did not deliver an innovative sound , he complemented it as offering " a breath of fresh air ? and a sincerity sure to hold other artists wishing to dive into the genre accountable In a review for Charisma , Margaret Feinburg praised the album for incorporating songs from their previous independent records . Feinburg said that " MercyMe was stripped of much of its wonderful , organic , out ? of ? the box sound but given new life for radio airplay " , and that " Overall , MercyMe is a band that deserves to be heard " . Kevin McNeese of New Release Today gave the album five out of five stars , calling it " another defining album " in praise and worship music . McNeese particularly praised " I Can Only Imagine " , calling it the album 's highlight , but noted the other songs on the album were " penned with the same passion " .

The J Man of Crosswalk.com gave Almost There a B , and said that " In the ever ? growing genre of modern worship , MercyMe steps up to the plate and drives a home run over the fence " . He praised the album as having a " fresh sound " , but described much of the album was " somewhat low ? key " . Kevin Chamberlain of Jesus Freak Hideout gave the album 4 out of 5 stars . Chamberlain praised the album as being " lyrically one of the best albums out there " and said that " Every song is based on some sort of Scripture or Spiritual truth seldom found in some Christian music " . However , Chamberlain felt the album 's sound was average , saying it sounds like " FFH or any typical Contemporary Christian artist " .

Other critics gave the album a more mixed response . Megumi Nakamura of Cross Rhythms gave the album 7 out of 10 stars . Nakamura praised " I Can Only Imagine " , but said that " little else on the album that matches the huge impact of that one song " . In a later review for the album 's " Platinum Edition " re ? release , Allan Clare gave it an 8 out of 10 , saying the rest of the album aside from " I Can Only Imagine " was " bland " . Russ Breimeier of Christianity Today felt the album was " something of a mixed bag " and described the band 's sound was " a little too mellow to be rock , and a little too heavy to be pop ... their particular style doesn 't stray from a middle of the road sound " . Breimier described the album was not particularly good or bad , and offered a weak recommendation to fans of worship bands like By the Tree and Delirious ? .

In its 25th anniversary edition , CCM Magazine listed Almost There as one of ' 100 Albums You

Need to Own ' . In the following year , the previous magazine , ranked " I Can Only Imagine " as the fourth @-@ greatest song in Christian music . At the 33rd GMA Dove Awards , " I Can Only Imagine " won the awards for Song of the Year and Pop / Contemporary Recorded Song of the Year .

= = Track listing = =

(Credits and tracklist from the album liner notes)

= = Personnel = =

(Credits from the album liner notes)

= = Charts = =

= = Certifications and sales = =