



Learning to let go

Going solo after the success of being in a band has challenged Paul Colman to let go and let God.

BY NATHAN BROWN

that I wanted to keep doing it, it was definitely a really strong focus."

But for Paul the choice was never really whether to stop doing music. "Music was what I wanted to do for my job, as well as what I was meant to be doing," he explains. "In the end it's all about people, and music is how you connect with them."

"I thought it all through and decided that's what I wanted to do and then kind of got a new team around me and hit it hard about March."

But the questioning continued as Paul moved into this next stage of his career. "It's very intense," says Paul, speaking of the US Christian music industry. "There's a lot of competition. The financial pressure was the final demise of the Paul Colman Trio — we just

Photos by Jeremy Cowart

Just a year ago, the Paul Colman Trio (PC3) was in the midst of its "farewell" tour of Australia. The group had enjoyed five years as the most successful combination in Australian Christian music and incredible success in its attempts to break into the US scene.

Their success included a couple of number one hits, Best New Artist at the Dove Awards, a Grammy nomination, and support slots on Three Day's massive "Come Together" tour. PC3 brought the curtain down on this stage of its music with a packed final show in home-town Melbourne last February.

As the lights faded and the crowds headed home, the obvious question for now former PC3 frontman, Paul Colman, was "What next?"

"When you don't assume you're going to be doing the same thing," Paul says, "you actually ask, 'Am I going to keep doing this?' And you've got the option to not do it. So when I decided

couldn't keep it together as a band on the road full-time financially. We were all absolutely broke.

"But I've really tried not to think about the commercial side of music this year. I've just tried to get back to what it's all about — the heart."

Ironically, the critical moment came amid the Christian music industry's version of the Grammy Awards. "I remember in April at the Dove Awards, I found myself really wanting to validate myself in my head, saying to myself, 'I'm still here, everything's still fine,'" Paul recalls. "I even hired a publicist to catch the moment, and while it was all good for business, inside I felt, 'Why am I doing this?' I felt like there was an energy inside of me that really wasn't coming from the right place. And I literally heard God say to me, 'Go home and take your wife out for dinner.'



"I felt like having an argument with him [God] backstage. This is the biggest night of the year for my industry, shaking hands and meeting people. Why should I go home. I've got a \$200 ticket, I'm down on the fourth row next to Third Day, what's going on? But I really felt strongly that I needed to just give my ticket away and go home and take my wife out for dinner. It was so strong that I ended up doing it!

"The next day," Paul continues, "I got up and wrote one of my favourite songs on my new album in about 10 minutes and it was just a magical song called *I'm Coming Home*. And I felt like God said to me, 'See, I'm where the songs are. Obeying my voice is where the goodness is.'

"So that's why it's been an exciting year. The songs have been more heartfelt than a

lot of my previous songs. Coming back now to tour Australia [and New Zealand from 2-26 February], I'm in a real moment of excitement and joy in my life. The old songs feel new and the new songs feel amazing. There's so many to choose from. I don't exactly know how I'm going to do it every night, but I'm just so excited because I feel like I'm hanging onto it less tightly than I ever have and it means more. It's kind of a weird combination. So it's been a wonderful year of rebirth, rediscovery and just enjoying being out there, connecting with people."

This journey is reflected in the title of the new Paul Colman album, *Let It Go*. "It's almost like therapy every time I read it," he explains. "And it's this strange kind of paradox in Jesus' teaching, that if you really want to live your life, you've got to let it go. And if you really don't want to live your life, then grab hold of it, which is almost the opposite to what goes through your mind. Everything your mind says is 'I've got to grab hold of my life,' but Jesus says, 'Let it go, trust me for it.'"

As well as the full-production *Let It Go*, this month's Australian tour will also see the independent release of a more intimate recording, *One Voice, One Guitar Volume 2*.

"I had a whole lot of songs left over that I wanted people to connect with but they just didn't find a home on that record," says Paul. "So I spent two-and-a-half days in a recording studio, just me singing, recording the guitar and the voice at the same time, live-to-tape. I did just three or four takes of each song, then picked the best one."

And it's this format that the current tour adopts. "This tour is just me, an acoustic guitar and the audience, which is really the way it started for me in Australia 10 years ago," Paul reflects. "It's a dynamic I really, really enjoy. I like the kind of desperateness of that. I like the fact that there's nothing to fall on. I'm a bit of a thrill seeker when it comes to that."

So after a year of transition, challenge and growth after the last chapter came to an end, this February's national tour sees the beginning of the new chapter of the Paul Colman story. This time the answer to "What next?" is a little more open ended.

"I'll wait and see what this year brings," says Paul. "I'll see what happens with this record and then decide at the end of the year what I'm doing. If I keep on going the way I am or change it again, I don't really know — I've not planned that far, which is unusual for me."

It seems it's one of those "letting it go" things. 📌

See www.paulcolman.com/austour.htm for tour dates and ticket info.