

**Tenth Avenue North**  
(From Front Cover)

back realize it is just beyond us.

**Q:** Billboard Magazine said recently that "Tenth Avenue North is the next big thing in Christian music." Those are

some major expectations.

**Mike:** We will all be eating fried chicken every night. We are all going to try to be really large.

**Q:** In all seriousness, that is a pretty big tag to hang on an artist.

**Jason:** I hope that if things get bigger that we will just continue to point people to Christ. That is my hope. I hope that we are not the next big thing but just continuing to point people to the biggest thing – Jesus. I understand where (the Billboard reporter) is coming from with that statement as far as how the industry side of things go. But our desire is not that. Our desire is even if our music is for only a few people, that they will come to understand the breadth of God's love for them, His grace, His forgiveness, or He is a father to them. That is the intellectual side of it. If they can grasp a little bit more of the truth of who they are and who God is then I think we are happy with that. We have succeeded. Everyone talks about us having such great success for the last year but I wonder how they are gauging success? For us, it is trying not to concentrate on the big numbers but more on the one person coming to an understanding of who Jesus Christ really is.

**Smokie Robinson**  
(From Page 3)



**Smokie Robinson with The Miracles 1965**

At the same time, Kennedy, an actor, was in the Philippines making a movie. When he returned, Robinson recalls, "He said, 'I'm going to tell you something I wouldn't tell anybody else. About two weeks ago, I was in my hotel bed trying to sleep. And I heard this voice saying, Leon, I want you to know my son and I want you to tell your friends.' That was when we both got saved and started our relationship with Jesus."

So when Kennedy arrived at his friend's apartment that night in May of 1986, a heartsick and physically frail Robinson opened the door. Kennedy prayed for him through the night, and in the morning he took him to a service.

It was at a storefront church in L.A. called Ablaze Ministries where the preacher, Pastor Jean Perez, called Robinson up to the front.

She hugged him. She told him that she knew he was

coming. She prayed over him. Robinson started to cry, and then he felt a release, and "It was over," he says. He never did drugs again. "It was instantaneous; I gave it up."

Since then, Robinson has traveled to rehabs, schools and churches, speaking about his experience. "I tell everybody I was not cured or medically helped," says Robinson. "I was actually healed. I was healed by God. I tell them, 'Rehab can help a lot of people. But you have to get in contact with your spiritual self or you're never going to beat this [addiction].'"

Robinson knows how blessed he is; not just because he was healed, but also because he's able to share his musical gifts with the world.

"Almost every day of my life, I write a part of a song," he says. "I know it's a gift from God. That's what He would have me do, I guess, because I've been writing songs since I was 5 years old."

That gift is evident on *Time Flies When You're Having Fun*, which features 10 tracks of original material, as well as a cover of the **Norah Jones**-popularized "Don't Know Why".

**Joss Stone**, **Carlos Santana** and **India.Arie** lend their vocal support on three of the songs. Unlike many other contemporary albums, *Time Flies* was recorded "the old-fashioned way," says Robinson, "by having all the musicians playing while I was singing."

"There's another kind of feeling when you have that, you know? It's almost like you're doing a concert in a studio. Everybody feeds off of each other; it's a fun way to record."

The album's title is a pretty fair description of how Smokey feels about music—and life—these days. He's been remarried for seven years; he's recording great new music; and he's sharing his inspiring story.

"I know that's one of the reasons probably I'm still living," he says. "Because I get the chance to go and spread that message."

"My life is wonderful. I'm very happy."

(from *Guideposts* magazine)

**Q:** Your debut album is called *Over and Underneath*. How would you describe it to someone who just picked it up and had never heard anything about your music?

**Jason:** Intellectual melodic pop rock.

**Mike:** A unique brand ... of intellectual melodic pop rock.

**Q:** What was your inspiration for the album? Was there a central theme?

**Mike:** We believe the Gospel is this: that no matter who you are, you are in need of Jesus Christ. If you are doing really well and you feel like your life is awesome, Christ lived better than you. He is perfect. That should humble you out of your pride. His love is over you and at the very lowest depths of human failure Christ went lower. He went into hell itself and buried our sins on the Cross. So, that should give great hope to those who feel defeated. It comes from a song in times where I'm praying to God and He responds. So, "*Over and Underneath*" is a call to just believe the Gospel. It is to be humbled from your pride and to be given confidence out of your fears.

**Q:** If you had to pick a track on *Over and Underneath* that you feel defines what the album's message is all about what would it be and why?

**Jason:** For me, it would be "*Times*". Part of this song is written from God's perspective. At your lowest point, God just says, 'I'm there. I'm here.' Just being able to run to Him at any given moment. I think it is a favorite for all of us, or at least one of our favorites. It just speaks pretty sharply to your heart and the human condition. Often times we run away instead of running to God.

**Mike:** It is interesting that Jesus says, 'What is the work of God?' in John 6. He says it is to believe. And you couple that with the idea that the most repeated command in the Bible is to not be afraid. It is interesting how so often we seem to put the cart before the horse and we haven't ever addressed the fear that we are loved by God. How can we be loved by God? I love the **Dostoevsky** quote from "*The Brothers Karamazov*". He says, "Avoid fear, though fear is the consequence of every lie." So, that song is me saying I'm afraid. God, am I enough? And then it is Him responding to those lies that I have believed and the fears that is has created. He then responds with the truth of the Gospel. We have tried very hard to make sure the Gospel is expressed throughout the entire album.

**Q:** After people hear your music or they go to one of your shows, what do you want them to take away with them?

**Jason:** I don't say this lightly. I'm not trying to say we have some magic button and if you push it people will come and meet Jesus. Seriously, I hope people are encouraged and are given hope. I hope some people are convicted and broken. At the same time I hope people are healed and mended. We can't do it. We will be the first people to tell you we can't do it. We beg God that He would do some cool stuff through our music. We just want God would use us by using these songs to touch people's hearts. That is my desire – that they would leave with Christ.

(See *Tenth Avenue North* in concert on September 16. Details on the concertline page 4. Daily updates of area concerts at [www.atlantachristianweb.com](http://www.atlantachristianweb.com))