

Magazine Interview

April 2007 edition
Christian Living TODAY magazine - South Africa
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JEWEL OF AFRICA

Matt McClhery speaks about his musical history in Zimbabwe and his debut worship album, *Fly*. By Kirsty Wilkins

Zimbabwean born musician and singer Matt McClhery clearly has talent: he's been compared to Matt Redman, Chris Tomlin and David Gray. Having recently released his debut worship album, *Fly*, I caught up with him to find out more.

Matt was born in Zimbabwe in 1979 and it was here that his musical career began. At four years old, he sat down at a piano and played the national anthem by ear - "my mother was obviously shocked!" he says.

Although Matt took piano lessons in primary school, it was guitar that appealed to him most. "I was given a guitar for my birthday one year - I thought it was cool, but I had no idea how to play it," he says. He got the opportunity to start while in high school in Zimbabwe - a teacher at the youth group he attended encouraged him to play. Showing Matt three simple chords, the teacher left him to it. "Something stirred within me as I played," he says. "I found that I enjoyed it so much, I practiced every moment I got. Soon, I could change chords with no break in the beat."

Throughout school in Zimbabwe and then into varsity in South Africa, Matt continued to improve his skills, leading worship at various churches and youth groups. "Even now, I make a point to go to various seminars that deal with vocals, guitar playing, worship leading and song writing. There is always something new to learn and I strongly believe that we need to strive for excellence in all that we do, especially when what we do is for Jesus," he comments

His first single, *Jewel of Africa*, was recorded in his last year of varsity and made the Top 10 on the Zimbabwean charts in 2002. For the last four years, he's been living and working in the UK and has recently released his debut album, *Fly*. Most of the songs are based on personal experience, "although I also try to write songs about what God is currently doing or saying in my local church," he says.

Matt's style can mostly be described as contemporary pop/rock worship, "but I try to be as eclectic as possible. I listen to what's currently happening in Christian music as well as secular music, so my songs will be able to serve the church as well as able to reach outside the church walls to touch those far from God."

When asked what he's listening to at the moment, he replied: "U2's new album, *18 Singles*, Lemar's *The Truth About Love*, Matt Redman's *Beautiful News* and the latest Hear the Music worship album called *Change the World*."

Matt concludes that he prays that God will anoint the songs he writes and sings "so that many lives will be touched by His Spirit."