

KATY PEOPLE

Jimmy Needham and his wife, Kelly have enjoyed living in Katy for three years



20 Questions

with **JIMMY NEEDHAM**

Katy Christian Musician and Recording Artist

By Ashley Withers

Jimmy Needham is quickly becoming one of the biggest names in contemporary Christian music, with his last record reaching number one on the iTunes Top 200 Christian Albums chart and number 25 on the iTunes Top 200 Albums chart, which spans all genres. The Katy musician shares about his rising fame, life in Katy, and the real reason he sings.



Jimmy Needham Fast Facts

Hometown

Grew up in the Houston and has lived in Katy for the past three years with his wife, Kelly

College

Attended Texas A&M in College Station

Church

Attends Grace Fellowship United Methodist Church in Katy

Albums

Speak, Not Without Love, and his newest release, *Night Lights*

How He Got His Big Break

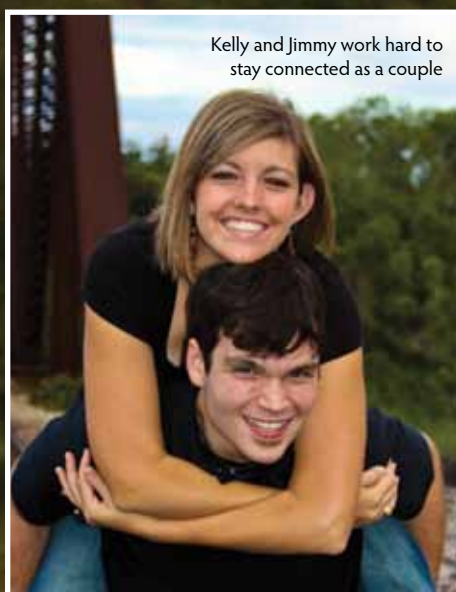
After performing in coffee shops around College Station, he posted his music online and was later discovered by his current record label on MySpace

Musical Influences

Stevie Wonder, Lauryn Hill, Ross King, Lecrae, Shane and Shane, James Taylor, John Mayer, Derek Webb, Sam Cooke, and Michael Jackson



Needham hopes his music inspires a closer connection to God



Kelly and Jimmy work hard to stay connected as a couple



Needham's last album reached number 25 on the iTunes Top 200 Albums Chart

1 How long have you lived in Katy?
My wife, Kelly and I moved down from College Station to Katy three years ago.

2 What brought you to the area?
We heard about a great church in the area called Grace Fellowship United Methodist Church. We started attending three years ago and I can honestly say it feels like home to be there.

3 What do you like most about the area?
I appreciate the calm of this town. I'm on the road many days out of the year, so coming home to a relaxing environment with great people surrounding me is refreshing.

4 How did you get your start in music?
Believe it or not, I was originally discovered on MySpace. When I was at Texas A&M, I would often play at local coffee houses and bars in the area, performing the handful of songs I had written to a handful of people. It was great! I could dedicate a song to every person in the room and still not run out of material! Eventually, my dad offered to fund an independent record for me that I could sell at my shows. I made the CD in August of 2005. We put the music on places like iTunes, MySpace, and other websites. Three months later out of the blue, we got a phone call from the president of Inpop Records in Nashville, TN saying he had heard my music online and wanted to fly down to Houston to talk about signing me to his label. It was an unbelievable moment for me.

5 How would you describe your sound?
Soul pop.

6 What inspires your music?
Anything and everything can become a song. Most often, though, I draw inspiration from my personal struggles, problems I see in the world around me that need to be addressed, and God's word, the Bible.

7 Do you have any hobbies outside of music?
I love to cook! I didn't say I'm good at it, I just said I enjoy it. Kelly and I watch the Food Network like it's going out of style.

8 What is something that would surprise people to know about you?
I used to be 260 pounds. About four years ago, I lost 70 pounds, but for most of my life I was very overweight.

9 What three words would you use to describe yourself?
Since I couldn't find a way to answer this without sounding arrogant or self-abasing, I just asked my wife. Her answer: creative, kind, and funny. I couldn't tell if she said "kind and funny" or "kinda funny," so I went with the first one.



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10 How do you balance your marriage and your music?

Don't let anyone tell you the life of a musician is easy. It is a daily challenge for both me and my wife to figure out how to [stay] deeply connected as a couple, while still allowing me to be on the road doing what God has called me to do. We've had to say no to some great opportunities in the past for the sake of our marriage, but at the end of the day, I would rather have a healthy home than an amazing career.

11 What would you say is your greatest accomplishment?

That's a tough question for me. I think the thing I am most grateful for is having been able to do this professionally for five years now and also that God has given me the grace to not compromise the lyrical or musical integrity of what I do. I work hard at making sure that the things I say in these songs are biblical, real, and honest, even if it means less people are accepting of it. It's also my goal to continue to push the envelope musically in my genre. I want to make music that hasn't been done before on Christian radio. By God's grace, we have seen that happen and are continuing to pave the way for new musical styles in the Christian and non-Christian community.

12 Do you write all of your songs?

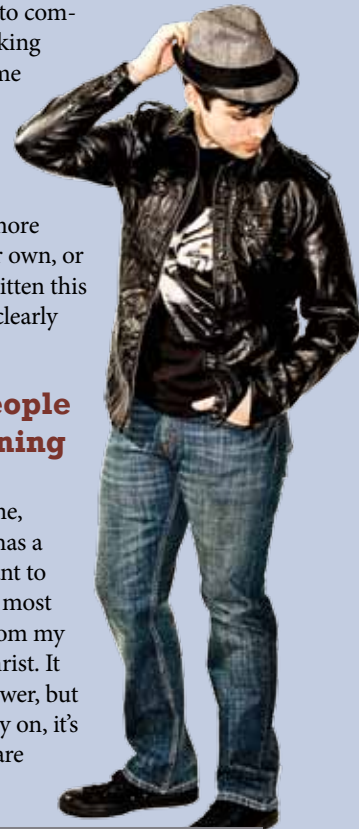
I write or co-write everything on my records, unless it is a cover song. On the *Night Lights* record, I decided to cover Marvin Gaye's "How Sweet It Is".

13 What is your favorite song that you've written?

My favorite song I've written comes off my new record, *Night Lights*. The song is called, "The Reason I Sing". Every so often, I have the ability to communicate exactly what I am thinking and feeling in song. This is a prime example. I wanted to get across my struggle between my fame and God's fame. Which one do I care about more? As Christians, which name are we more concerned with promoting – our own, or Jesus'? I was so happy to have written this song, because that message was clearly articulated in a creative way.

14 What do you hope people take away from listening to your album?

Every record has a different theme, which means every tour season has a different particular message I want to get across. But ultimately, what I most want to see my fans take away from my CD is a deeper [love] of Jesus Christ. It may sound like a predictable answer, but this is not the question to be artsy on, it's the question to be honest on. I care about people seeing us for who





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we are: broken, sinful, and all the time in desperate need of a savior. I care about people seeing God for who He is: bright, blazing, wonderful, powerful, holy, gracious, and ready to forgive those who run to Him.

15 **Have you ever considered branching out into the mainstream?**

I'll say this: I'm not opposed to it. If God orchestrates that for me in the future, I'll happily oblige. I don't know how accepting the mainstream community will be of a guy who talks about Jesus a lot, but if they can handle it, I'm in!

16 **Who are some of your musical influences?**

I listen to a lot of different artists and genres, but my top 10 would have to be Stevie Wonder, Lauryn Hill, Ross King, Lecrae, Shane and Shane, James Taylor, John Mayer, Derek Webb, Sam Cooke, and Michael Jackson.

17 **What is it like performing live?**

It's an absolute blast. Being on stage with my best friends in the world, making music for the most important cause in the world, and doing it all over the world is something I never dreamed I'd be a part of.

18 **Do you have any crazy fan stories?**

I am so appreciative of my fans. I've seen pictures of folks who have gotten my lyrics tattooed on their arm before. Many of them travel all day to come to one of my shows. We were in Australia once playing a 30-minute concert and a family showed up that had driven 11 hours just to see the show!

19 **What is the best part of being a musician?**

I'm blessed to be able to speak the most persuasive language in the world: music. If ever there was a medium that most powerfully communicated ideas in our generation, it is music. And since I am convinced the truth I have to share is the most important truth in the universe, I consider it an honor to use my gifts as a musician and songwriter to share that truth with the world. I am so grateful that God has allowed me to speak the language of my generation.

20 **Do you have any advice for aspiring Katy musicians?**

The best advice I've heard is this: Be excellent at what you do, right where you're at. A lot of times, we musicians get so caught up in what could be that we forget that right where we are is the only place we are. I am much more impressed with the local artist who is incredible at what he does but not many people have heard of him, than the so-so guy who sold a million records because he figured out how to auto-tune his voice. Be excellent at your craft right in the place you are at. **KM**

ASHLEY WITHERS is a graduate of Seven Lakes High School. She is currently a junior at Southern Methodist University.

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