

# BIO

Over the past decade, Aaron Shust has earned a reputation as one of Christian music's most compelling songwriters and a vocalist of considerable depth and passion. He was named both New Artist and Songwriter of the Year at the 2007 Gospel Music Association Dove Awards and the impact of his song, "My Savior My God" was recognized with the Song of the Year honor. He has continued to build on that early promise to become one of the community's most creative and trusted voices.

Shust is well known for such hits as "My Hope is in You," which spent 14 weeks at No. 1, "No One Higher," which hit the summit on the Inspirational chart and "Ever Be," which made its way to No. 3 on the NCA chart. "O Come O Come Emmanuel" has become a perennial holiday favorite, earning acclaim as the most played song each December for 10 years in a row.

As potent as Shust's voice is alone, there's a special anointing that happens when he engages other believers in worship, and that anointing is readily evident on his new live album *Love Made a Way*, a collection of familiar worship anthems mingled with powerful new songs. "I'd been encouraged by friends and family for years to do a live record," says Shust, admitting he was initially hesitant. As he completed his first decade as a recording artist though, it just seemed like the right time. "Hitting the 10-year mark, it felt like a new season, like a little celebration, a tip of the hat to the first 10 years. We had a guest speaker recently at our church talk about how God is a God of celebration. God wanted to make sure His people were able to remember and celebrate their past. So I felt that after 10 years, it was time to celebrate."

That spirit of celebration infuses every moment on *Love Made a Way* with a sense of purpose and exuberance. "To hear voices in a crowd singing along changes the game for me," says Shust, a

Pennsylvania native who led worship in church for years before gaining a national platform as a recording artist.

“I’ve always said that in a concert setting I want people to worship. I am always encouraging people to sing along. The biggest compliment I can receive after a concert is when someone says, ‘that was less of a concert and more of a church service, more of a worship experience.’ I’m like, ‘Mission accomplished! That’s exactly what I wanted.’ So, to have people singing along on this album is pretty magnificent.

“When I invited people to be a part of this recording, I wanted to make sure they wanted to worship. I didn’t want them to be just spectators. I wanted them to be worshippers. I wanted them to be desirous of entering into the presence of God, raising their hands and closing their eyes if they wanted to, and that’s how the night was. It was a genuine experience of worship.”

Shust was very intentional in choosing songs for *Love Made a Way*. “Five are songs that I’ve recorded over the past twelve years, standards that I’m going to play every night in concert,” he says. “And some of those songs we play very differently from the original recordings. For example, “My Savior My God,” we never play it live the way people are used to hearing it. This was a chance to take some of the songs we play live every night and freshen up the recordings, but I also wanted to write new songs and offer new thoughts, new praises and new worship.”

The album’s first single, “You Redeem”, is a perfect representation of the passion that reverberates throughout the project. “Matt Hammitt began writing that song, brought it to the table and it struck a chord with me,” says Shust. “As we continued writing, I had that sense that this was an important song. There’s been some stuff that has happened in our family over the past couple years that brought about some of these lyrics that were just really important to us, Lies that were meant to defame will be crushed by the truth that You speak. The whole song addresses God being

God. We are all fallen creatures and we try to elevate ourselves by lowering others. We've all had lies spoken to us, spoken about us, spoken over us, but God redeems those moments. He says, 'No, no, no! That curse that was spoken over you, I'm going to turn it into a blessing!'"

"Lead On (King Eternal)" was inspired by the classic hymn "Lead on, O King Eternal." "I love the language in that hymn," says Shust. "One night I was with a group of people and someone asked me to close in prayer. Somewhere in the prayer, near the end, with that hymn in my mind, I closed by praying, 'Lead on, O King eternal. We will follow.' A friend came up to me afterwards and said, 'You need to write that in a song.' I said, 'I'll take that as a challenge.' I was really excited about the idea of singing, There is no place that You haven't been / the mountains, the valley, the places within my soul / You know. In other words, painting the picture of God and saying, 'You go before us. You go beside us. You've walked where we are walking. You are familiar with everything we've ever faced, so lead on. We'll follow.'"

In writing and selecting songs for this collection, Shust wanted the songs to be worshipful, yet direct and unyielding. "I went into every writing session saying, 'I want to write praise and worship, but I want the worship to be bold, confident,'" says Shust. "I don't want it to be depressing. The most subdued song is "You Redeem," but there's such a strength to it. There's such a confidence in our God as we worship Him saying, 'You do this. You do that. These are the things You do. This is the way You are. We are declaring Your character and declaring Your attributes. We are declaring You as worthy. We are declaring You as higher than us and that's why You are worthy of our praise and worship.'"

"My favorite line from this whole record is from the song "Belong". It's actually a prayer inspired by Ezekiel 36 & 37: Take this flesh and bone / Breathe Your life within / Take this heart of stone / Make it beat again. It attributes the characteristics of Life-Giver to God. Why would we ask someone to breathe life or make our hearts beat again, if we didn't believe they could do it?"

Produced by Nathan Nockels, well known for helming the Passion projects, *Love Made a Way* also features beloved worship anthems as “Ever Be”, an oft recorded song that Shust put his own signature stamp on, as well as “My Hope is in You”, from Shust’s 2011 album *This is What We Believe*. “Cornerstone” and “God of Brilliant Lights”, both from Shust’s acclaimed 2013 album *Morning Rises*, are among the songs that take on new poignancy in the live setting.

“Cornerstone,” in particular, took on a new flavor on this latest project. “We realized as we planned to do all these songs that they were all big and energetic,” Shust says. “We said, ‘Let’s do one really simple,’ and we played that without even rehearsing it. It was a beautiful worship moment. It was spontaneous with the band saying, ‘We don’t know exactly what we’re going to do in this song, but let’s play through it.’ It started really sweet and then grew and built with energy.”

In an already distinguished career, *Love Made a Way* is a landmark project that serves as a reminder that Aaron Shust is quite simply one of the most gifted songwriters and singers of his generation. Most of all it reveals the heart of a worshipper who revels in praising God and carrying others into the Throne Room with him. For Shust, that’s his favorite place to be.

“I feel really privileged to continue to make music. I could summarize everything with one Scripture verse, it’s a new favorite of mine and I’m going to keep this for the rest of my life—Psalm 45:1. The second line says, I address my verses to the King. I don’t have any tattoos at all. I have nothing against them, but if I got a tattoo, my first one might say, ‘I address my verses to the King.’ It’s my favorite thing, not just to sing about God, but to sing to Him. He hears our praises. The Bible says He inhabits the praises of His people. He lives within the praises of His people! I consider it a super high privilege to be able to address my verses to the King. I love it!”