

# Christian Rock

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## Christian Rock:

The photo below shows an FCA Elementary band. It's probably grades 4 to 6. There was also a middle-school band, grades 7 to 9. The bands operated like music classes, but they gave performances as well.

This photo is from about 2000. The boy on the left in the top row is Ben Culton, age about 10 here.

Elementary Band circa 2000



The Culton siblings included Mark (in Ray's grade, Class of 1996, 4 up from me), Adam (the next grade up from me), Josh (in my grade), David, and Ben.

My mother Marie and the Cultons' mother Barb commiserated when I was very young as both women had alcoholic husbands at the time. So, Ray and I were around the Cultons more, and earlier, than any other family.

Josh was the Culton boy that I was friends with, but Adam would hang out with us or come to sleepovers.

My best friend in Elementary was Steven Dowling, who didn't attend FCA. In High School, it was Dustin Bergey.

Josh and I were too dissimilar in views and interests to be very close and yet he was a familiar and welcome figure in Elementary. I spent more time with him than I did with any other FCA classmate at that age.

In Jr. High and High School, I'd sometimes try to make Josh laugh with jokes that were often nihilistic or at least iconoclastic.

I once quoted "The Simpsons" out of context, for example, to make fun of Christian music as being "crap rock". Josh would laugh and frown at that sort of thing at the same time.

Josh was one of the few people who I believed would understand my dark humor, but he shied away from it. He tried to tell me that what I was saying was negative, but he was sometimes left speechless.

The time that I turned a Sunday School song into a hardcore song sung by a demon praising Satan comes to mind.

Josh got in trouble for singing that song. I had to explain to a Christian teacher that it was a parody of the style in the form of roleplay and that I didn't actually want to praise Satan.

Josh and I played guitar together, sometimes with other friends and often for youth group on occasions when this was permitted. I had different views on music, though, than he and most of my

friends did.

I was a Christian, but I didn't like the lighthearted Sunday school songs or the Southern Pop that Christian radio stations presented as Christian Rock. I didn't relate to the songs and felt they were insincere. I think this was related to my view that happiness in general wasn't real.

I related to harder Christian rock bands, though, such as early Newsboys, Audio Adrenaline, and, later, bands such as Holy Soldier and Impending Doom.

Note: The album "Jesus Freak" (1995) was the first Christian album that became a secular hit. Both my friends and I loved that one.

The photo below shows my 2000 band, Darkstone Lightstone. I can only say that the name seemed like a good idea at the time.

From left to right: Stephen Kiser, Jake Gustafson, Josh Culton (wearing the "FAN" shirt), Brian Kiser, and Clint Miller.

Note: Josh wasn't a band member, but he jammed at times with the group and/or with individual members.

Darkstone Lightstone band in 2000



Darkstone Lightstone played Christian Rock with unintentional 1970s elements. The 1970s part is interesting. It came from two of our fathers.

My father John was a blues enthusiast. When I was very young, he'd get drunk and slam chords and play and sing the blues on his classical guitar until late into the night. I couldn't sleep and begged my dad to stop, to no avail.

When I was older and John was off alcohol, though, I jammed with him a few times. Ray joined us at least once or twice.

Later on, Stephen's and Brian's father, Mike Kiser, taught most of Darkstone Lightstone's members to play guitar. Clint was the exception as he was on drums.

Mr. Kiser was a skilled bluegrass musician, formerly in a performing bluegrass band. He was also the music leader at the Faith BC youth group for much of the 1990s to 2000 or later.

Blues played by my father and his 1970s music played on the stereo combined with a bluegrass education from Mike Kiser contributed to 1970s elements in Darkstone Lightstone's music. People commented that it sounded like 70s rock.

In High School, Josh and I drifted apart as our interests did.

I was a geek who moved into reading S.F. and fantasy and participated in LARP (Live-Action Role Playing).

Josh and I remained on a nodding acquaintance basis. However, he and his oldest brother Mark started to focus on wild stunts in the hopes of attracting attention from girls. They were successful at this, even to the point of having fan clubs of girls, so they kept it up to Senior Year.

The fan clubs existed because the boys' stunts were entertaining. They weren't of a romantic nature but Josh's fan club did include his High School girlfriend Alicia. After FCA, Josh went to Bob Jones University (BJU) to be with Alicia there. However, she ended the relationship. He stayed at BJU for about a year, but ultimately dropped out.

I only talked to Josh a few times later on.

Josh told me about an incident that happened while he was working with Ray on a job site. This would have been circa 2003.

Josh and Ray were talking about Christianity and surrounding spiritual and philosophical issues. It started to get late. They were on a roof or uppermost floor that was exposed.

Josh was well on his way to being disinterested in Christianity, I think, and I can't necessarily blame Ray for the choices of others. Regardless, when it got dark, Ray stopped philosophizing and said, "Let's just take this pill and lay here looking at the stars."

Ray gave Josh a pill that Josh believed was Ecstasy. That's as much as Josh told me.



Clint and Josh circa 1993



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