

# The evolution of Hillsong music

## From Australian pentecostal congregation into global brand

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**ABSTRACT:** *Branding is increasingly acknowledged as a marketing strategy used by transnational religious institutions commonly known as ‘megachurches’. Commentators on this phenomenon often view the branding process as an artificial driver of organisational growth rather than as concomitant with the evolution of a group of people. This article examines the history and development of the music and branding of the Australian megachurch Hillsong. Within the space of 26 years, Hillsong evolved from a ‘local’ Australian congregation into a transnational enterprise. During each phase of its development, its music communicated the vision, values, and focus of its leaders and congregation visually, aurally, and sonorously. Hillsong’s branding has thus proceeded organically, both driving and being driven by the church’s growth.*

### Introduction

The importance of brands and branding to the ways people communicate and make meaning in consumer societies is a topic of cross-disciplinary interest, found within sociology, business, marketing, and design (e.g., Hart & Murphy, 1998; Lury, 2004; Moor 2007; Schroeder & Salzer-Möring, 2006). The field of religious studies has recently extensively examined the megachurch, defined as a church with over 2,000 members (Travis, Thumma, & Warren, 2007; Warf & Winsberg, 2010). It is increasingly acknowledged that branding is the emerging marketing paradigm of the megachurch movement (e.g., Einstein, 2008; Twitchell, 2007). Studies show the effect of globalising market economies on religious

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institutions (Moore, 1995; Twitchell, 2005), and the effects of production and dissemination of 'Christianity' as a symbolic global culture (Coleman, 2007). However, this analysis often presents branding as a form of advertising—a means of 'selling' religion—rather than a mediated communications exercise. This article seeks to redress this notion. While acknowledging that branding drives church growth, we seek to highlight branding and growth as concomitant processes. Branding *evolves* with an organisation, reflecting the goals and values of its socio-cultural milieu. Church growth and branding are the chicken and the egg.

Australia's largest megachurch is Hillsong Church, founded in 1983 with 45 members—now boasting over 25,000 members and operating on five continents. McIntyre (2007) argues that the major driver of Hillsong's growth has been the world-renowned worship music synonymous with its name, promoting religious experience in the marketable form of a CD (p. 176). Two releases, from Hillsong LIVE and the younger Hillsong United, issue annually from the church. McIntyre notes, 'Hillsong music is an accessory that extends the initial God purchase into a complete Hillsong brand of Christian living' (p. 187).

As the church expanded, its musical product reflected changes leading to a branding strategy that can be observed in its lyrics, album cover imagery, and musical style. This article asserts that, as the Australian megachurch Hillsong evolved, it developed a highly sophisticated and responsive method of branding that communicates its theological emphasis, corporate identity, and target audience.

## **Methodology and structure**

Data for this paper was gathered during investigations into Hillsong Music Australia (HMA) music within the bounds of a Master's of Philosophy research project, conducted through content analysis of 21 Hillsong United and Hillsong LIVE CDs and DVDs released in the period 1996–2007 (Riches, 2010a). This was representative of 280 songs, upon which a frequency count was conducted to assess theological themes that generally separate classical Pentecostalism and global evangelicalism (e.g., Testimony, Trinitarian Address, and Expected Transformation). In order to determine stylistic characteristics of Hillsong's music, methodology from Mark Evans's analysis of congregational song (Evans, 2002; Evans, 2006) was adapted to analyse musical aspects such as melody, rhythm, harmony, structure, dynamics, texture, and timbre. This data is supplemented by Wagner's

PhD research at Hillsong London (Wagner, forthcoming). In order to ascertain Hillsong Church's marketing practices, the advertising and marketing communications depicted in annual merchandise released by HMA was observed. Results of the analysis were used to ascertain key themes in communicating the presence and nature of a Hillsong brand, and identify changes to marketing practices during the study period.

This paper is divided into two parts. Hillsong's branding has consistently reflected its evolving 'corporate culture'. In the first part of the paper, therefore, we present a historical overview of the church, its music leadership, and focus, divided into five distinct phases. The second part of the paper discusses findings regarding three features of Hillsong's musical output—lyrical content, visual semantics from 23 Hillsong LIVE CD covers, and also musical development—in order to track Hillsong's branding evolution.

## **From advertising to branding**

Twitchell (2007, p. 162) believes that many traditional mainline denominations are in decline because they have a 'brand personality problem'. In attempting to sell religion rather than communicate a distinct identity, they have lost their ability to connect with potential churchgoers (Twitchell, 2007, pp. 133-165). By contrast, megachurches are successfully marketing distinct personalities. While the oft-cited exemplars of this, such as Joel Osteen's Lakewood Church, Bill Hybel's Willow Creek Church, and Rick Warren's Saddleback Church are American, in the past 30 years, the appearance of new branded organisations such as London's Holy Trinity Brompton, the Jewish Kabbalah Centre, and the Japan-based Buddhist organisation Soka Gakkai International confirm this as a world trend. They have become their own brands, complete with personalities, logos, and music that differentiate them from their competitors. This is also true of Hillsong Church.

Popular and academic accounts continue to caricature megachurches as 'theology lite', associating their worship with consumerism and entertainment (Dawn, 1995; Evans, 2002; Power, 2004). Although some common characteristics such as conservative theology and contemporary musical expressions have been observed (Coleman, 2007), what typifies megachurches as a group is not their theology (or absence thereof) but mode of communication. Megachurches have moved beyond traditional advertising to integrated marketing

strategies, communicating their messages through diverse media platforms to largely decentralised, transnational audiences. In doing so, each organisation articulates its corporate identity—the image of the community from which it is constituted. These megachurches understand that the medium is still the message, and that the message is most effective when it is a brand.

Advertising the Christian gospel is nothing new (Moore, 1994), and the mediated rise of the megachurch should be considered as a contemporary manifestation of age-old proselytising practices (Coleman, 2007, p. 4). According to Richard Reising, president of the religious consulting firm Artistry Labs :

*[T]en years ago it [branding] was met with extreme scepticism. The whole concept of promoting church was taboo. But there has been a growing acceptance over time. Now people realize what it means and what it doesn't mean. They see it as part of going out into the world to preach, promote and publish the Gospel. (Colyer, 2005 cited in Einstein, 2008, p. 61)*

A brand is the gestalt of condensed meanings, associations, and feelings arising from a stakeholder's interaction with an organisation's offerings. Brands were traditionally conceived as tangible products, but are increasingly recognised as combining both the tangibles and intangibles that communicate the brand (Moor, 2007, p. 36). For example, a Hillsong CD/DVD communicates in several ways, as meaningful associations with its musicians, lyrics, and cover images facilitate a 'conversation' among stakeholders that tells a continually evolving brand story.

An important part of any brand's story is its *identity*. Components include its image (including visual cues e.g., logo and design), but also its stakeholders, including managers, users, and even those who purposefully avoid the brand (Thompson & Arsel, 2004). In other words, brand identity is negotiated through community. A brand represents its community's purpose and values (Muniz, Jr. & O'Guinn, 2001) by using existing cultural codes and adapting to evolving cultural and societal contexts (Holt, 2004). Similarly to (and as) cultures, then, brands and organisations evolve with the community that constitutes them. This is true of Hillsong; over time, its brand has adapted to communicate the changes in the size and demographics of an increasingly transnational congregation.

## From local Australian congregation to global brand: Hillsong history

What is now Hillsong Church began as a local congregation located in Sydney's urbanising Hills District. Over a period of 26 years, it has expanded into a transnational network. In Australia, alone, 25,000 worshippers a week attend services across four campus locations and twelve extension services. As a network, Hillsong churches are found in London, Kiev, Cape Town, Stockholm, Paris, Moscow, New York City, and Konstanz, Germany. Most campuses host services at multiple sites. For example, Hillsong London also meets in Surrey and Kent, broadcasting to affiliated extension churches in Amsterdam, Dublin, and Berlin. Hillsong's annual Sydney conference draws in excess of 28,000 people, while its annual European counterpart draws about 16,000 people to London's O2 Arena.

To accomplish this, Hillsong embraces the economic and communicative machinery of consumer culture. It is known for its innovative use of media technology (Stackpool, 2008), particularly in the production and dissemination of music. The ubiquity of its music in evangelical (and, increasingly, non-evangelical) churches is largely due to annual music releases marketed as specialised Christian resources. On any given Sunday, worship songs penned by Hillsong songwriters can be heard in churches worldwide. Hillsong has sold over 11 million albums and garnered over 50 gold and platinum awards.

The church has operated continuously for 26 years; however, it was not until 2001 (Phase three) that it officially changed its name from Hills Christian Life Centre to Hillsong Church. This name was previously reserved for its musical product, distributed and marketed as 'Hillsongs' by HMA. Early on, the decision was made to emphasise the church as artist—fusing the identity of the organisation with its music (Riches, 2010a). Senior Pastor Brian Houston explained this decision in an episode of *Australian Story*:

*Hillsong was originally the name of our music and the church was called Hills Christian Life Centre, but people used to talk about 'that Hillsong Church' and the name Hillsong actually became famous, if you like, around the world. So in the end, we thought, that's what we're known as, so we became Hillsong Church. (Jones, 2007)*

Musical success precipitated the church's identification with its Australian music label. As Michael Hawn states, 'the music of Hillsong

is undoubtedly the best-known church music export from Australia to the world' (Hawn, 2006, p.1), and thus the brand name *Hillsong* is used to draw the focus away from music as entertainment towards one in which worship is an expression of its global 'tribal community of discourse' (Schultze & Woods, 2008 p.23). As the Hillsong LIVE website states: 'Hillsong LIVE is the congregational expression of worship from Hillsong Church—a local church with global influence' (<http://live.hillsong.com/>).

## Part 1. The evolution of the Hillsong brand

### *Phase 1: Geoff Bullock's songs and leadership (1985—1995)*

In 1983, Hillsong first met in the hired Baulkham Hills High School Hall. Music pastor Geoff Bullock was employed in 1985, and received support and training from staff at Brian Houston's father's church, Sydney Christian Life Centre. The church's theological emphasis was initially explicitly charismatic, rejecting secular culture and rock music in particular (Interview with Geoff Bullock, in Riches, 2010a), but in this phase Hillsong outgrew the school hall and began to host rock musicals in the Hills Entertainment Centre. Sourcing Australian Christian music from Melbourne band Rosanna and the Raiders, Bullock recognised that heavy rock did not completely fit the congregation's needs and began to write his own choruses for Hillsong's use. In 1988, the church's first tape, *Spirit and Truth*, was released. A large number of annually recorded albums followed. The reputation of the church grew through Bullock's songs, which seeped into Sydney's traditional denominations. Bullock toured his music across Australia, and his lyrics became anthems for Australian Christians:

*This is the Great Southland of the Holy Spirit*

*A land of red dust plains and summer rains*

*To this sunburnt land we will see a flood*

*And to this Great Southland His Spirit comes (Bullock, 1992).*

At the end of 1994, Bullock left the church, citing differences with leadership (Adams & Harkness, 2004).

### *Phase 2: Darlene Zschech and Hillsong's International Fame (1995—1997)*

After a year of interim leadership under Donna Crouch, Darlene

Zschech was instated as worship pastor. She continued in this position until 2007, through three distinct phases outlined below. During Phase two, Integrity Publishing began to distribute Hillsong albums. Zschech was the first female worship leader distributed by this US label, and her chorus 'Shout to the Lord' (Zschech, 1993) catapulted her and the church to fame in America. Although Teoh (2005) considers Zschech's celebrity dependent on Hillsong's marketing strategies, Brian Houston emphasised her contribution to the church's growth during this phase:

*Darlene Zschech is a great lady. She's an absolute ambassador for the church. She oversees our worship and creative arts department. I think a lot of Australians would get a shock if they realised just how widely sung internationally Darlene's songs and the Hillsong songs have become. The song 'Shout to the Lord' that Darlene wrote is sung by 35 million Christians every week. (Jones, 2007)*

### **Phase 3: The emergence of United (1998 – 2002)**

In 1998, the church's youth band 'United' began to pen original songs. This was to radically change the sound and direction of HMA (Riches, 2010a, p. 123). United became the second annual product of the church (alongside 'Hillsong Church' albums), promoted heavily in adult services as well as at youth events (Riches, 2010a). Reuben Morgan assumed leadership of this group, with Zschech as a mentor. These albums achieved cult status with Christian youth, also receiving industry recognition. Hillsong's logo appeared on HMA products during this time, and 'The Church I See', a vision statement authored by Brian Houston, was introduced. This states the new aim of Hillsong:

*To reach and influence the world by building a large Christ-centred, Bible-based church, changing mindsets and empowering people to lead and impact in every sphere of life.... I see a Church whose heartfelt praise and worship touches Heaven and changes earth; worship which influences the praises of people throughout the earth, exalting Christ with powerful songs of faith and hope. (Houston, 2008; emphasis added)*

This statement was hung on the wall of Hillsong's newly purpose-built venue, 'The Hub' in Castle Hill.

### **Phase 4: Hillsong London and international bands (2003—2007)**

During Phase four, leadership of United was transitioned to Joel Houston (son of the Senior Pastor and significant songwriter). Hillsong

London began to release albums, adding a third major product to the Hillsong brand portfolio. The Sydney church's albums were renamed 'Hillsong LIVE' to distinguish them from the London and United products, and United albums began to move away from Hillsong's characteristic live events towards studio recordings. In 2007, Darlene Zschech stepped down as Hillsong's worship pastor to become senior pastor of her own church, Hope Unlimited Church (Hope U.C.) on the Central Coast, NSW.

### ***Phase 5: Consolidation of the Hillsong brand (2008—2012)***

In 2008, Reuben Morgan assumed the role of worship pastor under Joel Houston as Creative Director. London recordings were discontinued and HMA consolidated its main product into two streams: Hillsong LIVE as the expression of the church's global congregation and United as its touring ambassadors. HMA signed with Sony EMI, increasing distribution networks worldwide. Joel Houston currently is also lead pastor of a new Hillsong church in New York City, but regularly appears at important events in both Sydney and London.

## **Part 2. Lyrical, pictorial, and stylistic change**

### ***Lyrical change and the Hillsong LIVE product: Data and findings***

The lyrics (or text) are an important element of Christian music. Steve Turner (2001) claims, '...[contemporary Christian music] is the only musical category recognized in the record industry that is defined entirely by lyrical content' (p. 47). Others argue that the function of text in worship must be understood within its musical and social context (e.g., Althouse, 2001; Evans, 2002, 2006). As Zschech notes: 'Every time we record a live album, it's a magnificent night. It's a snapshot of twelve months growth in the heart of a local church' (Fergusson, 2006, p. 203 cited in Riches, 2010b). Text articulates the changing beliefs and values sung by Hillsong's entire community over the year preceding the recording.

Hillsong's writers submit hundreds of songs annually; however, few are recorded. The selection process ensures that songs reflect both the congregation and the leadership at the time. When a song is written, Hillsong pastor Robert Ferguson checks it for biblical accuracy. If it passes this test, it is 'field tested' during a service. Joel Houston asserts, '...[u]ltimately, the song is decided on by the crowd. If people sing it, it's good. If it doesn't go over well with them, then it's not. It's the congregation who decides' (cited in Farias, 2005). The lyrical text can



thus be considered reflective of (and generating) generally accepted understandings of Hillsong's theology at the time of composition.

### ***Testimony in song***

Rather than thematic exposition, Pentecostalism is known for presenting testimonial narrative in song, encouraging non-Christians to seek experiences of conversion and a distinctive Pentecostal practice of glossolalia (also called tongues) (Clifton, 2005, p.54). Few Hillsong songs teach doctrine; most emphasise this individual conversion experience. Words pertaining to conversion were tracked in the lyrics (Riches, 2010a) and were found to increase significantly across the phases, while references to the distinctive Pentecostal emphasis on Spirit Baptism decreased in the same period. A lyrical emphasis upon conversion narrative confirms McIntyre's (2007) assertion that Hillsong emphasised evangelical doctrine in its music during phase four, with ecumenical intent (p. 181).

### ***Trinitarian address***

The category 'Trinitarian address' was used to assess Hillsong's Pentecostal theological emphasis upon the role of Spirit (Albrecht, 1999). HMA songs were found to rarely address the Spirit directly, with references decreasing across phases 2, 3 and 4. At the same time, references to Jesus and God or Father increased significantly, reflecting a consideration of HMA branding in reaching an increasingly broad audience (see Riches, 2010a).

### ***Expected transformations***

Daniel Albrecht (1999, p. 179) describes 'Transcendental Efficacies' as a characteristic of Pentecostal liturgy that relates worship to personal transformation. Although type, meaning, and use of transformation vary among Pentecostals (Cox, 2001), it is central to Pentecostal belief and practice as a whole. Seven 'Transcendental Efficacies' were identified in Hillsong's text, their frequency and appearance noted across three phases. As Hillsong music developed, personal development, revival, and prosperity decreased in their frequency of reference. References to supernatural empowerment exhibited an inverted U-shaped relationship, with lyrical references moving away from supernatural empowerment of the individual towards the church as Spirit empowered to effect social transformation within the community (Riches, 2010, p. 60). Following media and academic criticism against 'prosperity' theology (Biddle, 2007; Bryson, 2005; Power, 2004), the theme of prosperity all but disappears from Hillsong's text over this period, while evangelism remained relatively constant.

*Table 1. 'Transcendental efficacies' in Hillsong text*

	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4
Personal development	18	16	9
Supernatural empowerment	18	5	12
Revival	6	8	2
Prosperity	6	4	2
Evangelism	5	7	6
God's presence in human suffering	4	6	24
Social transformation	0	0	4

Stark and Finke (2000) note that, as churches grow, they are often forced to accommodate a broader range of views within their congregation. Also, increased ecumenical contact leads to a 'softening' of views on issues deemed controversial. In the case presented above, prosperity was deemphasised. Concurrently, a new emphasis on the presence of God in human suffering (often criticised as lacking in contemporary gospel music e.g., Dawn, 1995) appears in response to voices from outside the denomination.

### ***Album cover art***

The second branding tactic analysed in this study was cover imagery of Hillsong LIVE albums. As noted in the introduction, global popularity and influence of the Hillsong brand can be attributed to the success of its annually released music albums. As it has grown, it has communicated its changing identity through album artwork.

#### *Phase one:*

1992—1995 marked the release of the first albums marked 'Live Worship/Hills Christian Life Centre/Sydney Australia', which were recorded in the Hills Centre venue in Castle Hill. The album covers feature Ken Duncan's landscape photography, with the iconic Sydney Harbour Bridge and characteristic landscapes displaying the 'Australianness' of the product, seen below:

Figure 1. *The Power of Your Love Album (1992)*

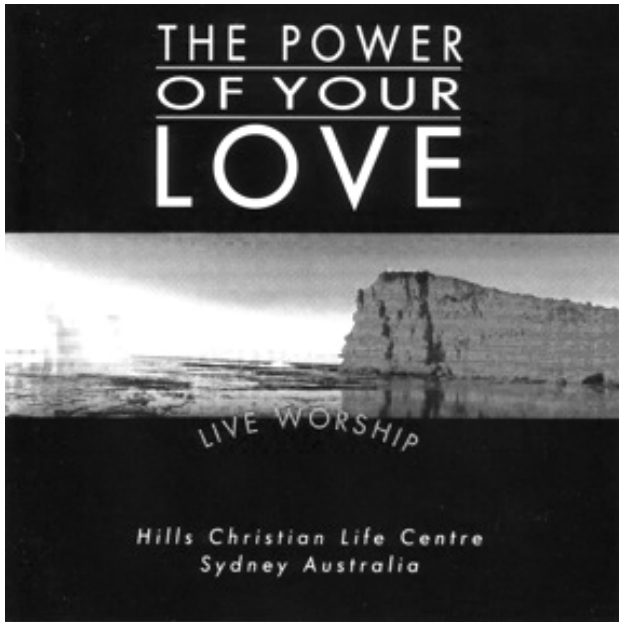
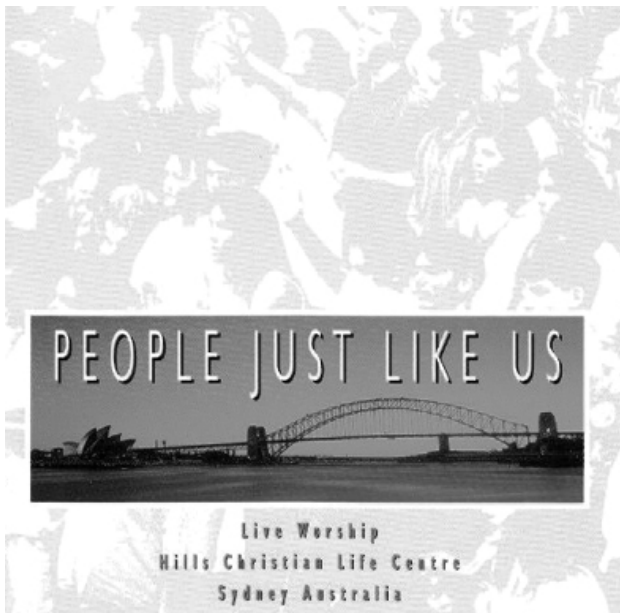


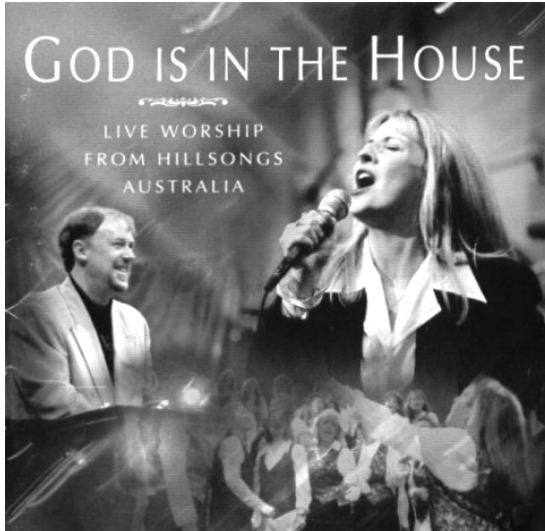
Figure 2. *People Just Like Us (1994)*



*Phases two and three:*

Album covers during Phases two and three emphasise images of key songleaders and musicians of the church, most notably Zschech, superimposed over the image of the Hillsong choir. The cover of *God is in the House* (1996), can be seen below:

*Figure 3. God is In the House (1996)*



*Figure 4. Touching Heaven Changing Earth (1998)*



On the cover of the 1998 album *Touching Heaven Changing Earth*, Zschech and the Hillsong choir appear inside an image of the globe. The increase in size of the choir from 100 to 150 (Riches, 2010, p. 106) signifies church growth, visually represented also on subsequent album covers. The Australian landscape is still visible in the right hand margin, but the global nature of the music (both in intention and reach) is now a dominant theme.

Images of the congregation first appear on the cover of *Blessed* (2002), as does the Hillsong logo. Both the congregation and logo are incorporated into all subsequent album artworks. Worship leaders Zschech, Reuben Morgan, and Marty Sampson feature prominently in the collage:

*Figure 5. Blessed (2002)*



*Phase four:*

2006's release *Mighty to Save* marks the launch of the LIVE franchise and begins to depict the congregation in 'generic evangelical' imagery (Coleman, 2007).

Figure 6. *Mighty To Save* (2006)



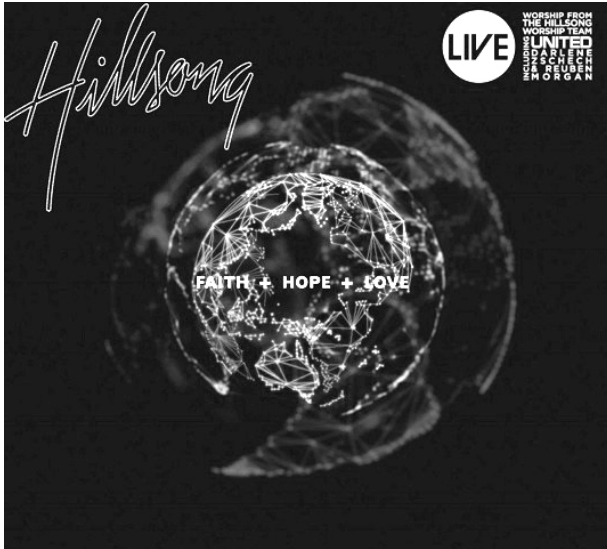
*Phase Five:*

Hillsong has in this phase become a fully branded organisation. The global nature of its congregation is depicted on its covers, where a ‘tribal community of discourse’ (as well as logo and LIVE sub-brand) replaced individual performers. With Zschech’s transition out of official leadership at Hillsong (although she still performs with them), for the first time the celebritised photos are entirely absent, and the church is visually presented as the artist:

Figure 7. *Saviour King* (2007)



Figure 8. *Faith + Hope + Love* (2009)



Hillsong’s global reach is perhaps most clearly visually articulated on 2009’s *Faith + Hope + Love* cover, the only album not to feature the congregation in this phase.

As the above analysis shows, as Hillsong expanded in numbers and reach, these changes were depicted on its album covers. The procession of iconography—from Australian landscapes to worship leaders, the choir, the congregation, and finally to the global community—visually communicated the church’s focus, congregation, and sphere of influence during the developmental phase in which each album was released.

### ***Musical development***

Hillsong’s music is highly important to its adherents. Experiential worship forms emphasise congregational participation through singing, clapping, and dancing and are acknowledged to play a key role in the socialisation and emotional engagement that members seek in a worship experience (Albrecht, 1999; Moore, 2006). Furthermore, ethnomusicologists recognise the role of musical style in constructing and maintaining community and social ideals (e.g., Blacking, 1973; Rommen, 2007). Thus, Hillsong’s musical style is a key signifier of its brand identity. The development of Hillsong’s musical sound as represented in the CDs is noted below.

During Phase one, Evans (2002) notes the appropriation of black gospel genres, particularly in upbeat songs. This continues into Phase two. For example, the title track of *God is In The House* (1996) features call and response, vocal melismas, and clapping—consistent with gospel styles. However, Phase two also marks a move towards funk-inspired high tempo songs such as ‘People Get Free’ (Fragar, 1997) and acoustic folk ballads e.g., ‘In Your Hands’ (Morgan, 1997). While the church promoted African-American artists Ron Kenoly and Alvin Slaughter within the *Shout to the Lord 2* (1998) album, Hillsong also increasingly exhibited white American gospel characteristics in songs such as ‘Touching Heaven Changing Earth’ (Morgan, 1998) and ‘By Your Side’ (Sampson, 1999). This heralded a move towards a more guitar-driven Hillsong sound, popular with U.S. audiences.

During Phase three, Hillsong’s music exhibited its changing influences, Christian and secular. For example, popular British Christian band *Delirious?* held strong influence upon songwriters Reuben Morgan, Marty Sampson, and Joel Houston and led to the collaboration album *UP: Unified Praise* (2004). Additionally, songs like ‘Everyday’ (Houston, 1999), recorded by both United and LIVE bands, owe a debt to secular bands like *Jamiroquai* in style and melody (For further discussion, see Riches, 2010, p. 115). It is during this phase that the London church’s songwriters emerged.

Overall, Phase four marks an audible move towards a ‘rockier’ sound, with electric guitars and keyboards replacing the acoustic guitar and piano driven sound of the previous phases. Musicians from the Hills City campus and London were integrated into the album-making process, with songs such as ‘Shout of the King’ (Davies, 2002) and ‘All I Do’ (Galanti and Bedingfield, 2002) representative of the new talents. New Zealander indie pop/rock star Brooke Fraser appeared with United during this time, her songs further solidifying the global pop sound of HMA music (Fraser, 2007). Zschech’s vocals still dominate LIVE albums until the end of this phase.

Hillsong albums in Phase five include current releases *God is Able* (2011b), and *Aftermath* (2011a). They show little of the stylistic variation that characterised HMA’s early releases. This can be attributed to the fact that, as the church expands geographically and the capability and diversity of the musicians increases, a need to present a consistent product across the network gained importance. Hillsong is now a branded product musically.



## Discussion

Five phases of HMA were presented, outlining the development of a Hillsong brand. The importance of the phases is now discussed. During Phase one, Hills Christian Life Centre sought to establish itself as a 'local' church, seeking to resource churches throughout Australia with congregational songs. Australian imagery is found in the lyrics and visuals during this period. Hillsong adapted American musical styles (e.g., gospel) to fit its local context, notably in heavily advertised local rock musicals. It was during this time that Geoff Bullock laid the communications infrastructure for what would become HMA.

During Phase two, Darlene Zschech's persona became iconic of the church's identity. This period was marked by developments in music marketing as the church began to seek global audiences. This is seen in the visual merchandising, as well as a musical shift towards diverse styles within the Christian music category. As a growing, influential organisation, the church had to negotiate its perception within and outside Christian circles. Thus, certain changes in the theological emphasis (not necessarily beliefs) of its lyrics can be observed. Changes within the corporatised structure included HMA's global distribution. Furthermore, marketing concepts became better integrated, and a brand image developed.

During Phase three, the emergence of United moved HMA's sound towards a 'younger' pop/rock aesthetic. Prior to Phase two, album covers featured Ken Duncan's landscape photography rather than images of performers. In contrast, Phase three album covers featured Hillsong's lead performers. In Phase four, the international thrust of the brand identity becomes clear. The music product diversified, with the addition of Hillsong London's musicians and recordings. As the international reach of Hillsong increased, the lyrical and graphic imagery of Australia disappeared. The music moved towards both Christian and secular British sounds. At present (Phase five), Hillsong continues to grow and consolidate its cross-media communications. There is a growing emphasis upon branding. However, branding has moved away from key music personnel and towards the organisation itself.

Hillsong is now a fully branded organisation. Its focus is firmly outward, as evidenced by lyrical emphasis, album cover art subject, and musical style. While still relying on the star power of music leaders Darlene Zschech, Reuben Morgan, and Joel Houston, it has moved towards emphasising its global influence. Success breeds more success,

especially for megachurches. Hillsong's communication package is now fully integrated with its original vision statement, and continues to evolve with the organisation, its leaders, and congregation.

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