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Kutless
(Photo
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Kutless band members love to see God change lives

By Leann Callaway

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When the Christian rock group Kutless performs, teenagers wearing heavy-metal T-shirts often attend their concerts with the intention of making fun of the band. But when Kutless starts playing, they usually change their tune.

“We've seen those kids come in with their arms folded across their chests and try to look all hard, and be like, 'These guys are a dumb Christian band,'” band member James Mead said. “But when they hear the music, they're like, 'This is cool. This is different than I expected.’”

But Kutless band members want to do more than change minds. They want

to change lives.

“When I'm watching a person who doesn't know the Lord and then see their heart soften through the night, to the point where at the end they come to know Christ, it's really special,” Mead said. “I think the coolest part for me is watching the Lord use our band to really impact someone.”

Along with Mead, who plays guitar, Kutless is made up of vocalist Jon Micah Sumrall, guitarist Ryan Shrout, bass guitarist Kyle Zeigler and drummer Kyle Mitchell.

In 2000, the band began leading worship once a week for their peers while attending college in Portland, Ore. The following year, they signed with a record label and began touring, booking more than 200 events a year, including concert venues, churches, youth rallies and evangelistic crusades.

Because of Mead's life experiences and struggles, he relates to teenagers and helps prevent them from making the same mistakes he did while growing up. Before he became a Christian, he was searching for something to fill the emptiness in his life. This led to a battle with alcohol and drug abuse, which almost took his life.

“I did not grow up in a Christian home,” he said. “My parents got divorced when I was very, very young. There was no spiritual foundation or guidance. I had only heard some stories about God but nothing about a relationship with him.

“My mom got remarried when I was a child. The man that she married was physically abusive, so I grew up with a constant fear. When my mom finally found out about it, we packed up and moved to Oregon when I was 11. When I got to Oregon, I was a really angry kid because I felt like a part of my childhood was stolen from me. I couldn't be a carefree kid. I was really angry from having to live that way.”

By age 12, Mead was “hanging around with other rebellious kids” and using drugs. Eventually, he started dealing drugs to his peers, until he was caught at the end of his eighth grade year and placed in a drug rehab program.

“I started ninth grade clean from drugs, but I still hadn't found what I was searching for and was still angry,” he said. “So I started the same cycle, but this time, I turned to alcohol. By the time I was 17, I was a total alcoholic.”

On his 17th birthday, Mead drank so much while celebrating with friends that he nearly died from alcohol poisoning.

“Looking back, I realize that the Lord spared my life,” he said. “The next week, I found myself in church—listening to the gospel for the first time and hearing about Jesus Christ, spanning that gap. He was what I was searching for, and he reached out to meet me.”

Now, Mead tours with Kutless and tells young people about Christ's love and forgiveness.

Kutless recently performed at First Baptist Church of Carrollton, and this summer, they will perform at Six Flags in Arlington on a Christian youth day.

“I hope people leave our concerts knowing that our sole purpose is to lead people into the presence of Jesus Christ,” Mead said. “We also want teenagers to know that you can be a Christian and have fun. Jesus is the answer to what they are searching for.”

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