

SPOTLIGHT



Nick Walker

PHILLIP PHILLIPS

For his second effort, the former *Idol* puts the spotlight on guitar

ALMOST TWO YEARS TO THE DAY after winning first place on *American Idol*, Phillip Phillips is releasing his second album, *Behind the Light*. And after banging out his debut, *The World From the Side of the Moon*, in just three weeks, the seven spent on *Behind the Light* felt downright luxurious—and allowed him to explore a new dynamic in the songwriting and recording process.

"I brought the band in for two weeks, and we would just jam off the songs that weren't finished," says Phillips, 23. "When we did, that would really build the song out even more. The drummer might get into something different with the bass player, and the guitarist might do something entirely new. That's what I'm really loving about this album: It's not just all about me, it has different personalities in there."

For the new record, Phillips—who wrote or co-wrote every tune—put together a team of songwriters, including Derek Fuhrmann and Gregg Wattenberg, who contributed to his debut effort. "I wanted to write with the same guys because they knew how I write and how picky I am. They understood me in a musical and lyrical aspect. We work so well together, and

it's all very organic. That makes it so much easier and fun, too."

Phillips was the winner of the 11th season of America's biggest singing competition, but the Georgia native considers himself first and foremost a guitarist—and as such found no small measure of satisfaction working in a favorite riff that didn't have a home. "'Thicket' gave me a little trouble," he explains. "I would have to go sit by myself in the hotel room. But I really wanted to finish it because there was such a cool guitar riff that I wanted to get on the album simply because I love playing it. I played it for like a year but never turned it into a song. It was more just a fun exercise on the guitar for my hands."

For Phillips, music is all about the joy of collaboration. "I love to jam—we all like to jam onstage," he says. "It's not all about singing for me. I'll do a guitar solo, but then we all go into this cool jam we worked on that's a little complicated. It keeps us on our toes, but it's fun for all of us. I like to give all the guys a solo during the show—it's fun to hear. The voice is a great instrument, but there are so many other beautiful things besides the voice."

—Amanda Farah

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