

Copyright (c) 2020 Baptist Press. Reprinted from Baptist Press ([www.baptistpress.com](http://www.baptistpress.com)), news service of the Southern Baptist Convention. The original story can be found at <http://www.bpnews.net/54581/musical-artists-explore-new-forms-of-creativity-during-covid19-pandemic>

## Musical artists explore new forms of creativity during COVID-19 pandemic

by Tess Schoonhoven, posted Thursday, April 02, 2020 (25 days ago)

NASHVILLE (BP) -- Stay-at-home orders related to COVID-19 have taken on a different meaning to many touring musical artists. Instead of the typical routine of touring and playing music for large events and gatherings, artists are literally staying at home.

And it has come with a hefty price tag for many.

Sarah Davison, leader of country gospel group High Road, said their team's financial losses from cancellations just in March and April totaled more than \$25,000.

"Our group members work part time as music teachers, photographers and downtown musicians in Nashville," Davison said. "And every one of those jobs has also been directly cut off because of the outbreak of COVID-19."

Many Christian music artists were in the midst of preparing for tours and upcoming events, with merchandise orders ready and travel accommodations already booked when cancellations began.

"Every date for March was canceled just within a couple days during the middle week of March," Davison said. "We now have a trailer loaded with recently ordered [merchandise] for the tours and no tour dates."

Erskin Anavitarte, independent gospel music artist and speaker, said he is typically on the road 24 days a month, which has now come to a complete stop.



"I just want to tell people about Jesus," said touring artist Erskin Anavitarte, "and it doesn't matter whether I do that from here, or I'm traveling around the world."

However, Anavitarte noted that as an independent artist he has the freedom to pursue various avenues as he feels God calling him, and therefore is accustomed to his income changing throughout the year.

"People from the outside sometimes don't realize what our lives look like," Anavitarte said. "There have been multiple months in which the expenses exceed the income that comes in."

Because of the uncertainty that can come with life as an independent artist, Anavitarte emphasized the importance of saving during the months that income is consistent.

Without the usual travel, Anavitarte said he has prioritized his online presence, which he does not have as much time to do while on the road.

He is still ramping up to deliver content -- just in different ways. Some ideas include a morning show covering cultural topics and the Gospel, online live music shows and new music releases.

Davison also said she is grateful for the technology to continue sharing the Gospel through music with online platforms, but it is not without its challenges.

"Right now, it's impossible except through social media, to really have a personal connection with folks, and that's definitely a challenge in our field," Davison said. "Our live concerts are centered around personal experience, like any other artist that is in Christian music, and so that is directly affecting how we function."



High Road band member Sarah Davison (second from left) said the group lost all of their bookings for March and April, a financial loss of \$25,000.

John Martin Keith, recording artist and guest worship leader, said he has found some new opportunities due to the change of pace brought on by COVID-19.

Keith earns income from composing music for commercials, TV and movies, in addition to touring as an artist and leading worship for events.

The need for those pieces has actually increased in the recent weeks, giving opportunities for income even in the midst of event cancellations, Keith said.

"That's where God has allowed me to be at the moment, and so I'm very grateful for that," Keith said. "This is a great time to be writing music, and coming up with new ideas. It's a good time, if you've got the time, to be learning something new."

Like Anavitarte, Keith's reach as an artist extends beyond recordings to other avenues like live videos and podcasts.

His podcast "YOU CAN Make a Living in The Music Industry," has been a major focus for him in recent weeks, Keith said.

"Even though we're in this odd place where sort of everything's shut down, that podcast is out there and is encouraging people," he said.

But, Davison noted, as the pandemic continues, it can be difficult for artists to trust God on the timing of when they will return to normal touring and performing schedules.

"There are so many unknowns right now," Davison said. "When will I get to do music again? When is the next date going to be?"

"When it comes to times like these, we really have to live out the words we have been singing about for so long, and it hits home," Davison continued. "The next time I get on a platform to share music and Jesus I will probably cry thankful tears of joy, because of how wonderful it will feel to finally get to do it again."

Anavitarte said he is motivated to continue focusing on getting the Gospel to those who desperately need to hear it.

"I just follow Jesus, and I just serve Him," he said. "I just want to tell people about Jesus, and it doesn't matter whether I do that from here, or I'm traveling around the world. That's gonna happen.

"I'm concerned about business," Anavitarte said, "but I'm more concerned about the ministry."

Anavitarte said he believes the interruption to normal life brought by the COVID-19 pandemic could be God's way of bringing individuals closer to Himself.

"There's a comfort zone that we all like to live in," he said. "When that gets interrupted it is jarring for us, but we learn to find God in the midst of all of those transitions."

And for artists, it could mean new sources of creativity.

Disruptions can bring about "some of the greatest things that God has in store for us," he said. "I'm praying that for myself and for others."



Worship artist John Martin Keith said, "This is a great time to be writing music, and coming up with new ideas. It's a good time, if you've got the time, to be learning something new."