

Former city resident releases first album

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Former Stratford resident Monica Joy hopes her new album, *If Everything is Lost*, will bring hope to others and help them find their way.

The album, released last month, is a first for Joy. Though she had been writing songs for years, it was only recently she took the step of sharing them with others.

"I've been writing since I was in my teens but didn't feel compelled to share a lot of the music until the last year or two," explained Joy, in a telephone interview from her home in Zurich Monday.

"I really started feeling like I wanted to share the music that meant something to me in hopes it would be meaningful to others."

She began sharing her music in her church and the response helped her solidify her decision to record an album.

"The music had served the purpose of journaling for me but then I saw it was valuable to others as well."

Describing her music as mellow, healing folk-pop, the CD features 13 songs from a Christian perspective. While others compare her sound to Canadian artists Sarah McLachlan and Chantal Kreviazuk, Joy remains modest about her work.

"It's an album that's easy to pop in the stereo and listen to around the house or driving in the car," she said. "It's very reflective because of the purpose it's served in my life."

Joy, whose husband Tim is a former associate pastor at Faith Bible Church in Stratford, left the city for Zurich last summer. She works as an elementary school music teacher, while Tim pastors at Zurich Mennonite Church. They are expecting their first child in August.

The album was recorded over a few days last summer at The Music Room in Kerwood and produced by Michael and Scott Bannerman. Joy said working with artists such as David Champion, Ben Bolt-Martin, Penny Brown and Glen Teeple was a rewarding experience.

"I don't have a band, so we called in musicians from southern Ontario," she said. "I felt really honoured to work with the musicians on the album...it was a real treat."

So far, Joy has played a few shows, one at Faith Bible Church at the end of April. She said she was blown away by the response and the support she's received so far.

"The Stratford response was really, really encouraging," she said. "To have so many people come out to listen to me play, it's all pretty new to me. I've never felt that before."

She is looking into a national distribution deal for the album, but nothing is finalized. Currently, the CD is available at her website, www.monicajoy.com, and she expects it to be available in local Christian music and book stores.

"I'm OK with whatever happens...I didn't make the album to make money," she said, with a laugh.

But she does hope her music can touch others.

"I think the album will often speak to people in a hurting place in their lives and it can help them get through it," she said.

"I really couldn't hope for more than that."