

# The Nashville Connection

## III supports three singer-songwriters. But why?

BY AMANDA VAN LAMSWEERDE

### The Question

What do an established Christian singer, an inspired pop rock duo, and a down home country Nashville singer-songwriter have in common? And why are their CDs being given out in claims training classes? That is the question that students in the III claims classes have been trying to answer.

As mentioned in the last issue of *Claims Education Magazine*, course designers at International Insurance Institute are always looking for ways to spice up their training and have a little fun while teaching their courses (see *Claims Training Can Benefit from a Little Spicing Up*, winter 2007 Edition, Vol. 4, No. 1 at [www.ClaimsEducationMagazine.com](http://www.ClaimsEducationMagazine.com)).

That article discussed how dividing students up into teams and giving gift baskets to the winning teams has really impacted the feedback and participation from students in the training classes. Further, that by adding an autographed edition of Emeril Lagasse's newest cookbook to the basket really makes for some lively competition in the training classes these days.

Always looking for something new, the course designers have come up with an additional item that has an III connection—a package of three CDs, all personally autographed by the artists, from three exciting musical talents.

Who are these performers, and what can their connection be to each other? See if you can guess.

### The Artists

Jennie Williamson has been into music for a long time. From a young age, Jennie was surrounded by a musical

family. Her father, a director for the church choir, instilled a sense of awe and wonder in her as she was swept away by the magnificence of his choral arrangements. Her father left out little in his family's musical education while simultaneously introducing his children to symphonies, operas, and bluegrass.

Surrounded by such an environment, it was no surprise when, in early high school, Jennie began playing both the flute and piano. She massaged her craft throughout college, composing bits here and there, citing her fledgling writing at the time as a "constant evolution" of who she was.



But her latest CD, *Alleluia*, has taken her to new heights and attracted widespread attention.

Having already sold over 450,000 CDs in her career and appearing on many Christian radio and TV shows, Jennie seeks to share her faith and the comfort she has found in it with others. "The idea," she explains, "is to teach people."

"Sometimes we go away to college and stray away from our families and our values, and then inevitably we settle down and return to who we were," Jennie

comments. "I want people to know that we don't have to wait too long before we come back to what we believe."

More information about Jennie and her music can be found at [www.JennieCD.com](http://www.JennieCD.com) or [www.AriSonRecords.com](http://www.AriSonRecords.com).



Michael Krejci is one of the most promising country singer-songwriters Nashville has seen in years. His debut CD, *Out of the Blue* is "laden with 11 catchy, tuneful jams, straight-forward lyrics and a pure singer with an earnest, hopeful voice in the vein of early George Jones," says Josh Green of *The Daily Sun* ([www.DailySun.org](http://www.DailySun.org)).

Mark Wehner, host of Nashville's *Americana Tonight*, says "Michael Krejci's CD, *Out of the Blue*, goes down like a smooth Tennessee bourbon, with just as much full flavor. His voice is captivating, his songs compelling, and the solid instrumentation makes this a record that must be noticed."

While his music cannot be easily categorized, it encompasses country, folk, bluegrass and roots styles, complementing his open-minded musical spirit. Michael's introspective songs and raw vocals have been compared to the likes of Bruce Robison, Radney Foster, and

Gordon Lightfoot.

Although based in Nashville, Tennessee, Michael's songs are consistently played on select radio stations across the country from KPBX 91.9FM in Spokane, Washington to WELY 94.5FM in Ely Minnesota, to WKCO 91.9FM in Gambier, OH.

More information about Michael Krejci and his music can be found at [www.mknashville.com](http://www.mknashville.com).

Jarrood Cooper is a principal in the pop rock style band, *Fair June*, with partner Michael Mikosz. Released in 2006, their CD entitled *A Whisper Across A Wire*, which was a top- five-selling CD on [Awarestore.com](http://Awarestore.com), has been drawing comparisons to John Mayer, Maroon 5, and The Goo Goo Dolls.

*Fair June* was one of the artists selected out of thousands of submissions to perform at Boston's 2006 NEMO Music Conference/Festival (known for breaking artists such as The Police, U2, Gavin DeGraw, Ray LaMontagne, among many others).

WOXY Radio in Cincinnati describes *A Whisper Across a Wire* as "an electric blend of melodic, acoustic-rock sets tossed with jazz and funky grooves that emote love, loss, hope, and yearning."



More information about *Fair June* and their music can be found at [www.FairJune.com](http://www.FairJune.com) or [www.Awarestore.com](http://www.Awarestore.com).

### The Connection

So, now that you know the musical acts, have you guessed the connection? If you guessed, "they're all insurance adjusters," you'd be wrong. If you guessed, "they're all the illegitimate children of various insurance commissioners," you'd be wrong. If you guessed, "they're all Loss of Consortium claimants," you'd be wrong once again.

However, if you guessed, "They have all been employees of International Insurance Institute," you'd be right! Not only that, they all worked in the same branch office in Nashville.

As accounting manager, Jennie Williamson organized financial records and handled company accounting issues. She was the first one to spread her musical wings and hit it big with her first album entitled *Songs for the Masses* which was an instant success.

Contacted about this article, Jennie said, "Working at III was a great learning experience. Not only did I learn about business, but I learned a lot about myself. Both of these things helped me advance in my music career. Even though III is not in the music business, I did learn that business can be about caring. Stepping stones are very important in life as long as you use those stones to keep moving toward your goals and help others in the process!"

As an executive assistant, Jarrood Cooper handled all aspects of III trainer bookings and workbook publication. After a couple of years, he joined up with his partner to form *Fair June*, now based in Chicago, IL.

About his tenure at III, Mr. Cooper said, "The years that I worked for International Insurance Institute gave me firsthand exposure to a successful business built on service to others. My degree in Business Management taught me why some companies succeed and others fail in 'real world' business. But the guidance and mentoring I received at III, about how important it is to be of service to other people, gave me the

knowledge to relate to not only our fans, but to the business end of show performances and tour management."

Michael Krejci took Jarrod's place, as executive assistant, handling travel plans and organizing marketing materials. Like Jennie and Jarrod, Michael had a musical talent that could not be denied. Within a couple of years after taking over for Jarrod, he was approached to put his lyrics and music together for his debut CD.

Looking back on his days at III, Mr. Krejci said, "I truly enjoyed my time at International Insurance Institute. To this day, my former co-workers continue to be an integral part of my life, both as friends and mentors. III is a close-knit, compassionate company. My experience there was invaluable."

Dave Vanderpan, Director of Claims Training, said, "The Emeril book was a big hit. Adding these CDs has made those team baskets even more enticing, and that makes the classes more fun. When people are having fun, they learn much better."

Ken Sanders, Sr. International Trainer, mentioned, "Sometimes during breaks we have a chance to pop one of the CDs into a CD player. People are always surprised at the high quality music that these CDs possess.

So if III is based out of New Orleans, how did this connection to these artists come about? "Pretty easy," said Carl Van. "Our home office used to be based in Nashville, TN, and when you're in Nashville, there are a lot of amazing musicians waiting for their break. We just got lucky and hired three of the most talented ones. Personally, I am very proud that these exceptional artists have been part of the III team."