

Sight and Sound

MUSIC

City on a Hill: The Gathering
By various artists, Essential.

City on a Hill: The Gathering is the final chapter of Steve Hindalong's award-winning City on a Hill series, and he ends it on a resoundingly worshipful note with its 14-tracks aiming to remind the church to love others as an extension of our faith.

The Gathering combines original worship music with remakes of traditional hymns and features the impressive musical collaborations fans have come to expect from the City projects.

Unique vocal pairings include Ginny Owens with GlassByrd ("We Will Trust You"), FFH with Paul Colman ("Instrument of Peace"), and Caedmon's Call with new Essential act Silers Bald ("Hallelujah Never Ending").

Bebo Norman and Sixpence None the Richer's Leigh Nash blend their distinctive vocals on album highlight "Beautiful, Scandalous Night," a stirring portrait of Christ's death and resurrection, written by Hindalong and Derri Daugherty. The Gathering also features Jars of Clay, Sixpence None the Richer, Sara Groves and Andrew Peterson.

Rich lyrics, solid vocal performances and masterful production

make The Gathering a beautiful finale to this series and should leave listeners yelling, “Encore! Encore!”

Angela Folds Fox

Simple Things

By Amy Grant, Word.

Amy Grant’s new album finds the singer getting back to the basics because when the world becomes almost unbearably complicated—with its international conflicts and general unease—it’s comforting to seek out simplicity.

This may be why Grant sings, “I believe in simple things” on the album’s title track. Simple Things is not as spiritually centered as her recent album of hymns, nor is it as lovey-dovey as the music she made during her “Baby, Baby” pop hit phase. Instead, it’s a little of each.

“Out In the Open,” for example, is a Point Of Grace-ish song about God’s desire for fellowship with humanity; and the album-closing “After the Fire” is a simple, acoustic guitar-accompanied gem that expresses God’s steadfastness during trials.

“Looking for You” details a romance almost too good to be true, whereas “Eye to Eye” concerns itself with ironing out the rough spots in a relationship.

“Innocence Lost,” which features a Celtic hymnlike feel, is probably this album’s best song. It’s a meditation about the price paid for maturity. On it Grant sings: “I miss my innocence/Oh, to be innocent.” Such innocence is one of life’s better simple things.

Dan MacIntosh

Jekyll & Hyde

By Petra, Inpop.

Jekyll & Hyde is an appropriate title for this long-lived Christian rock band, in that the band's lineup is always doing an about-face. Petra recently lost three members—drummer Louie Weaver, guitarist Quinton Gibson and keyboardist Bryce Bell—leaving only vocalist John Schlitt, founding member Bob Hartman and bassist Greg Bailey.

Hartman wrote or co-wrote all 10 songs on this heavily-reminiscent-of-1980s-metal album. Petra's new songs sound like a combination of early Alice Cooper, Poison, Styx and AC/DC, with aggressive, crunchy electric guitars laying the foundation for each tune.

Schlitt provides the vocals and continues to be the consummate rock 'n' roll screamer, making Jekyll & Hyde no doubt a great album to hear live. However, on disc it alternates sonically between fresh and dated.

Overall, Jekyll & Hyde lives up to its promise of being the most aggressive album Petra has ever made, but that doesn't mean it is the band's best. Petra seems so determinedly out to prove it can still rock that the songs sound much the same, the relentless metal beat driving the point home every time.

Yes, Petra can rock out, but it should take a lesson from the band's 1982 album, *More Power to Ya*, which rocked hard with single "Judas' Kiss" but also softened the mood with the title track and "Rose-Colored Stained Glass Window," and lighten up

a little.

Natalie Nichols Gillespie

BOOKS

Spiritually Parenting Your Preschooler

By C. Hope Flinchbaugh,

Charisma House, softcover, 167 pages, \$.

Hope Flinchbaugh firmly believes in making the home a positive spiritual environment for the nurture of children, and for readers of *Spiritually Parenting Your Preschooler*, it is a joy to listen in as she instructs her own children in the ways of the Lord. Many parents will identify with the exasperation Flinchbaugh felt when she asked God, “Is it really possible to actually walk in the Spirit with three wild preschoolers in the house?” This book is her answer.

Not a book about “historical parenting,” *Spiritually Parenting* shows parents how to teach their children to come to Jesus and to follow the Spirit. Among other important topics, Flinchbaugh offers advice on choosing a school, spanking (she believes in it, in moderation) and winning the war of wills.

The author also encourages new mothers to pray the Scriptures with faith for their babies and urges other mothers not to place burdens on the new moms by sharing birthing stories that are not edifying.

Flinchbaugh writes insightfully and with humor, incorporating illustrations of everyday life. She seems to have thought through the child-rearing process with great care, and her readers will appreciate the effort.

Christine D. Johnson

FICTION

Cover Girls

By T.D. Jakes, Warner Faith,
hardcover, 256 pages, \$.

Best-selling author T.D. Jakes has attempted what few writers can do well—cross genres.

In his first novel, *Cover Girls*, Jakes tells the story of four women in four different seasons of life—none of them aware of how intricately their lives are woven together. Nor do they realize that what appears on the outside is a cover-up for harsh, intimate truths.

Michelle is young and pretty, but her marriage is as shattered as her past is violent. Tonya appears to be a spiritual giant, but her outward appearance suggests anything but the joy of the Lord. Their boss, Delores Judson, with all her money and power has a life spinning out of control and a great-grandchild on the way who was conceived in incest. The fourth woman, Miz Ida, knows people think she is “three bricks shy of a load,” but it will be her faith and prayers that see these three women to the throne of God.

Although the beginning of *Cover Girls* displays the typical mistakes of a first-time novelist—point-of-view shifts, weak dialogue—the author’s talent strengthens as the pages turn—and pages will turn. The book will sell well because of the author’s name but will do well because of the author’s talent.

Eva Marie Everson

And the Shofar Blew

By Francine Rivers, Tyndale House
Publishers, hardcover, 464 pages, \$.

In the Old Testament, God used a shofar—a trumpet made from a ram's horn—to call His people to action. And the Shofar Blew by award-winning novelist Francine Rivers is a contemporary story about hearing God's voice and about building—both churches and relationships.

Young Paul Hudson is zealous about serving God and building the church he believes God wants him to pastor. But over time he stops listening to God's voice, and his success becomes his focus. The consequences of his actions affect everyone around him—his faithful wife, his son who is ignored by Paul, and his church members—all of whom also must discern God's will or follow their own paths. Conflict builds slowly as the author carefully develops each character's motives and responses.

The resulting believable spiritual growth of several characters will inspire readers to examine their own hearts. Discussion questions at the end of this novel are designed to help readers take the lessons learned from the story and apply them to their own lives.

With And the Shofar Blew Rivers has succeeded in constructing a timely novel that ministers as much as it entertains.

Leslie Santamaria

Firefly Blue

By Jake Thoene, Tyndale House,
softcover, 361 pages, \$.

Dubbed “the Christian Tom Clancy,” Jake Thoenes writing does have that edge, with quick action, suspense and government conspiracy. Firefly Blue is the sequel to Shaitons Fire, both volumes in a series of post-9/11 novels by Thoenes. However, reading the first novel is not necessary for understanding and enjoying this second offering.

Firefly Blue centers on the FBI’s special counterterrorism unit called Chapter 16, a reference to the book of Revelation. The discovery of a hijacked shipment of sodium cyanide tips off an old enemy who has made new friends. While dealing with a potentially deadly plot, main character, Special Agent Steve Alstead, is caught between family, faith and country. He has to maintain his marriage and faith while fighting terrorism.

Thoenes effectively develops the secondary characters in the novel, adding interest. However, it is at some expense to knowing more about Alstead and his family.

Thoenes does a good job avoiding a preachy style. Some characters quote Scripture, but the Christian aspect of the book does at times seem to be tacked on as an extra thought.

The author excels in exploring with great insight the emotional aspects of law-enforcement work, giving his writing depth and validity. And even though this novel has many side stories, Thoenes masterfully ties all the twists together for a satisfying and intriguing ending. Readers looking for a fun and light read will enjoy Firefly Blue.

Margaret Hull

The Light of Eidon

By Karen Hancock, Bethany House

Publishers, softcover, 400 pages, \$.

In the tradition of J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis, Karen Hancock has created an exciting allegorical fantasy. *The Light of Eidon*, the first novel in the Legends of the Guardian King series, is a classic hero's journey. Fifth in line for Kiriath's throne, Abramm Kalladorne has renounced his title, changed his name to Eldrin and entered a religious order to make himself worthy to tend the Holy Flames of Eidon.

As the story begins, Eldrin's years of study are about to culminate in his initiation, but he has reservations. Evil forces thrust him into slavery in a foreign land where he must fight in gladiator-style games. In captivity, Eldrin faces many false gods with counterfeit powers and must decide what he believes about Eidon and truth.

Hancock's writing, often eerie and suspenseful, is rich in sights, smells and sounds. Tension is sustained as the reader wonders whom Eldrin should trust. The allegories for atonement and salvation are fresh and insightful.

Hancock's book will appeal to Christian fantasy readers and to fans of Francine Rivers' *Mark of the Lion* trilogy, but *The Light of Eidon* is so well-done it also should attract new readers to the genre.

Leslie Santamaria

Challenging Entertainment

Retired syndicated cartoonist, speaker and author Tim Downs delivers his first novel, *Shoofly Pie*, a book you can't put down once you get involved with its roller-coaster plot. The title alone is intriguing.

"*Shoofly Pie*," Downs explains, "is made from a concoction of molasses and brown sugar. It's so sweet that it's impossible for flies to resist, and that's why I used the term as a euphemism for a decomposing body."

Set in rural North Carolina, *Shoofly Pie* finds Kathryn Guilford questioning a friend's death. She enlists the help of Nick Polchak, the "Bug Man." He studies bugs on corpses, offering clues to the when, where and how of death.

Intensely curious and even-keeled, Kathryn has to work with sarcastic wiseguy Nick, best described as an endearing eccentric. Their relationship is the basis for much of the novel's witty dialogue.

According to Downs, Nick is "a scientist who takes a completely material view of life and death." As Nick gets closer to the truth, a personal tragedy forces him to reconsider the inadequacy of his worldview. Says Downs: "That's what I want my readers to ask themselves: Where is my own worldview inadequate? How am I like Nick?"

Shoofly Pie will not disappoint fans of the popular CBS-TV series *CSI*. "It's a love story, a mystery and an adventure all

rolled into one,” Downs says.

The author hopes to do a series, with sequel Chop Shop on the way. With his detailed style of writing that makes you feel as if you’re right alongside the characters, here’s hoping Bug Man novels become movies.

Mark Weber

CHARISMATIC

TOP SELLERS

1. Matters of the Heart

Juanita Bynum (Charisma House)

2. Pigs in the Parlor

Frank and Ida Mae Hammond
(Impact Christian Books)

3. Total Forgiveness

R.T. Kendall (Charisma House)

4. A Divine Revelation of Hell

Mary K. Baxter (Whitaker House)

5. The Three Battlegrounds

Francis Frangipane (Arrow Publications)

6. The Tongue: A Creative Force

Charles Capps (Harrison House)

7. A Divine Revelation of Heaven

Mary K. Baxter (Whitaker House)

8. Holiness, Truth and the

Presence of God

Francis Frangipane (Arrow Publications)

9. No More Sheets

Juanita Bynum (Pneuma Life Publishing)

10. Prison to Praise

Merlin R. Carothers (Merlin R. Carothers)

CHARISMA RECOMMENDS

Upside Down

By Benny Perez, Charisma House,

224 pages, softcover, \$.

Author and speaker Benny Perez has a heart to encourage youth to become consumed with God's purposes. Perez offers a comprehensive training manual for today's youth, addressing topics such as bucking the trend, setting the pace, influencing culture, and advancing the atmosphere of faith and revival. He wants young people to have a blazing passion for radical evangelism and discipleship.

Divine Desperation

By John Hurston,
Creation House Press,
224 pages, softcover, \$.

John and Maxine Hurston gave their lives to God in the 1950s. They served first as missionaries in the United States and then in Liberia, witnessing a national revival. Later, they moved to Seoul, South Korea. There John Hurston became mentor to a young Bible student, David Yonggi Cho, who today pastors the world's largest church. This account is proof of what dedication to God's will can do.

Heaven Is So Real!

By Choo Thomas,
Creation House Press,
224 pages, softcover, \$.

Raised in Korea, Choo Thomas was the only child of nonreligious parents. She embraced the Lord in 1992 and wanted to spend every moment in His presence. Her desire led to a deep prayer life, moments of seeing Jesus and a series of heavenly journeys, which changed her life forever. As Thomas recounts her heavenly visits, she often says she wants everyone to realize that heaven is very real—and that heaven and hell are closer than we think.

Favor Makes No Sense

By Jerry Grillo, Creation House Press,

128 pages, softcover, \$.

Jerry Grillo has been in ministry for more than 20 years. He issues a challenge to Christians to move from poverty to

prosperity, from fear to faith and from failure to favor. Grillo reminds us God is not hiding from us and that He wants us to know Him and the power of His resurrection.

Adoracion sin reservas

(Extravagant Worship)

By Darlene Zschech, Casa Creación,
204 pages, softcover, \$.

Well-known worship leader Darlene Zschech shares that we can enter the presence of the Lord when we understand what it means to be an extravagant worshiper. Worship is not about performing—it's a way of life. Zschech teaches how we can become people of excellent and extravagant worship in every area of our lives.

To order these books call (800) 599-5750 or go to .