

Sight & Sound

MUSIC

Secret Conversation

By Charles Billingsley
Perpetual Entertainment Group.

Charles Billingsley, long known for his silky vocal stylings of other people's songs, now steps behind the scenes to lend songwriting credit to five of the tunes on his newest effort, *Secret Conversation*. Billingsley has lost none of his vocal chops and displays them in new modern worship songs such as "Your Love for Me" and the beautiful ballad "In Your Presence."

The album is less a showcase for the artist's talent, however, and more a foray into worship, with Billingsley's co-written efforts "Whisper to My Heart" and "The Altar" displaying a vulnerability and earnest longing for a touch from the Savior. This is a pleasant collection of new songs aimed at the inspirational listener.

Natalie Nichols Gillespie

Just Come In

By Margaret Becker
Cross-Driven Records.

After 19 No. 1 songs, Margaret Becker left the recording business for a few years to mentor young artists. Yet Becker's fans wouldn't let her go. To oblige, the singer-songwriter went into the studio after three years and re-recorded some of

her best songs and a few new ones.

Becker produced *Just Come In* and gave it a stripped-down, raw production that lends the album a coffeehouse feel—perfect for her smoky vocals and emotive delivery. She soars on praise song “You’re Worthy” and new songs “My Refuge Be” and “Jesus Draw Me Ever Nearer (May This Journey).” She also packs power into previous hits “Say the Name,” “Clay and Water” and “All I Ever Wanted.”

Becker shows once again that she is a talented singer and songwriter who would be sorely missed if she left the landscape of Christian music completely. *Just Come In* is one of the rare “greatest hits” albums definitely worth the wait.

Natalie Nichols Gillespie

BOOKS

How to Hear From God

By Joyce Meyer, Warner Faith,
304 pages, hardcover, \$.

In her latest release, Bible teacher Joyce Meyer reminds us God talks to people—every day. We can hear a supernatural word from God anytime in the Bible. Otherwise, God usually speaks to us through natural ways (for example, creation and people) and the still, small voice within us, which brings conviction, assurance and peace.

The book falls into two sections: learning to listen and learning to obey. In fact, Meyer stresses, “If you want God’s will for your life, I can tell you the recipe in its simplest form: Pray and obey.”

How to Hear From God offers an expanded version of Meyer's tape series by the same name. It is ideal for use in small groups. Discussion questions follow each of its 14 chapters.

"Hearing the audible voice of God is rare for most people and nonexistent for many," Meyer insists. "I have heard the audible voice of God [only] three or four times in my life."

Learning to listen to His still, small voice becomes imperative for the Christian. Meyer teaches us how to recognize it.

Pamela Robinson

The Secret Place of Joy

By Lindell Cooley, Regal Books,
150 pages, softcover, \$.

As music minister at Brownsville Assembly of God church in Pensacola, Florida, Lindell Cooley has ridden the wave of revival for almost a decade.

In his book *The Secret Place of Joy*, Lindell challenges readers to move from simply being a spectator of worship to being a daily worshiper. In a conversational tone, he discusses the importance of forgiveness, the role of the maturation process and the need for intimacy with God.

Cooley explains that worship is about loving God without condition or qualification. When we become the worshiper God longs for, then we will enter the secret place of joy.

The book is extremely easy to read, and Cooley's down-to-earth approach to spiritual topics is refreshing. If you want to have a greater sense of joy, then read this book.

Margaret Feinberg

Think Like Jesus

By George Barna, Integrity Publishers,
224 pages, hardcover, \$.

In George Barna's research work, he has observed that it's often hard to see a difference between Christians and non-Christians. In *Think Like Jesus: A Revolutionary Approach to Making the Right Decision Every Time*, Barna urges believers to be set apart and consciously develop a biblical worldview.

The author identifies seven core questions that Christians must be able to answer biblically in order to live transformed lives, including "What is the character and nature of God?" and "What spiritual authorities exist?" He then answers these questions from Scripture and provides practical applications.

Barna also presents fresh data revealing that less than one out of every born-again adult knows the foundational truths of the faith well enough to "think like Jesus." His research questions, which are representative of traditional evangelical thinking, measure such diverse factors as prayer for the president, boycotting products and belief in the inerrancy of Scripture.

Barna doesn't give a straightforward solution on how to train one's mind to think biblically, but he does provide resources that will help in the formation of such a worldview. Most importantly, Barna acknowledges that committed Christians

sometimes will differ in their opinions as to what a biblical worldview is, and in that light, he encourages a loving response.

Christine D. Johnson

FILMS

The Fighting Temptations

Paramount Pictures, PG-13.

Mix Sister Act and My Big Fat Greek Wedding with a large helping of gospel music and Southern charm and you get The Fighting Temptations. Several Christian musicians make cameo appearances including the Rev. Shirley Caesar, Donnie McClurkin and Yolanda Adams. Also featured are pop singer Beyoncé Knowles, R&B legends The O'Jays, Melba Moore and others. The film opens in theatres across the nation September 19.

Darrin Fox (Cuba Gooding Jr.) is a New York City advertising executive, compulsive liar, big spender and has creditors trying to chase him down. He returns to his small Georgia hometown to claim his inheritance. But there's a catch. His great Aunt Sally stipulated in her will that he gets the money only if he leads the church choir to a national contest.

Challenged by a legalistic church sister, Fox tries to rebuild the choir, making promises he never intends to keep. He finds his new talent in a variety of places, from the barbershop to the county prison. But before long, the foundation on which Fox has built his seemingly successful life crumbles. He finally realizes what his lies have cost him and decides that truth is what really matters.

The best thing this movie has to offer is by far the music. Caesar has a cameo role and also gives a roaring vocal performance. Knowles' stellar voice only adds to the quality of the film. Rapper T-bone is simply amazing and adds an entirely new dimension to the music. Many times throughout the film, moviegoers are going to want to tap their toes and clap their hands. The variety of characters from all backgrounds exemplify God's love and desire to use anybody.

Several conversations and situations give this movie its PG-13 rating. However, Hollywood got a lot of things right and made a really fun film!

Leigh DeVore

NEWS

Frank Peretti Thriller Goes to the Movies

A film version of the suspense novelist's Hangman's Curse opens this month

Hangman's Curse, a youth thriller by Frank Peretti, made an unprecedented move when it jumped to the top of the best-selling adult fiction charts shortly after its release. The harrowing tale is now slated to appear on the big screen in a handful of cities September 12.

Produced by Ralph Winter and Namesake Entertainment in association with Total Living Network and North By Northwest, the film marks Peretti's first book to become a movie. For years fans have been asking the author when one of his titles, including This Present Darkness and The Visitation, would become a film. Peretti said Hangman's Curse was chosen because it's a smaller project.

"The Darkness books are further out because they're so expensive to do," he said. During the negotiating process, Namesake Entertainment picked up the film rights to Hangman's Curse, Nightmare Academy (the second title in the The Veritas Project youth series) and The Oath. Twentieth Century Fox still maintains rights to This Present Darkness and, according to Peretti, the script has no immediate production plans.

"[Namesake] wants to establish an ongoing relationship and put their best foot forward," Peretti said. "[Hangman's] is a good film to start with."

The film follows the story of a family of investigators sent to unravel a mysterious curse plaguing a small-town high school. Directed by Rafael Zielinski, the film stars David Keith (Behind Enemy Lines), Mel Harris (Thirtysomething, K-9), Edwin Hodge (Die Hard With a Vengeance, The Long Kiss Goodnight), Jake Richardson (The Dangerous Lives of Altar Boys) and Daniel Farber (Orange County).

Peretti has been heavily involved in the filming, which took place in Spokane, Washington, last summer. He has helped write and rewrite the script, has participated in auditions with actors, and he even played a supporting role as the investigator's eccentric lab expert, Professor Algernon Wheeling.

"We adapted [the book] to the film, and it's a good story," Peretti said. "It moves fast. It's suspenseful, but it's a little different, and I was in the middle of that. That's something about Namesake that's very distinctive; they didn't take my work and run off with it."

He also noted that it is exciting to be part of a film that is not about the end times. "It's like watching Jurassic Park I, II and III," he said. "Why see the same movie again? There are other topics in the world [besides] future eschatology."

The film has recieved a PG-13 rating , Peretti said, "but it's not for any of the usual unsavory reasons. The only pivotal factor is the scariness; there's no swearing or violence or sexual innuendoes or blood. But we didn't want to make it hokey. It's a fine line."

The film opens in six markets September 12, according to Bobby Neutz, co-owner of Namesake Entertainment. The response to the theatrical release will determine the video-release date. If the response is strong, the company plans to roll it out into additional markets.

Margaret Feinberg

MUSIC SPOTLIGHT

Singing for the Lord

Sandtown, the inner-city children's choir of third-through-eighth graders who live in the Sandtown community in Baltimore, Maryland, was birthed out of New Song Urban Ministries, who wanted to give a dying community the chance to revive itself. Now it is giving participants a chance to develop self-esteem, hone their talents and see the world.

"The choir is one compartment of a community-development

program of comprehensive rebuilding of the Sandtown community," says Steve Smallman, the choir's executive director.

"Most kids are in the choir to spread the name of Jesus and to inspire people to go on and push to achieve their goals," says 14-year-old choir member Anthony Gaither. "Most people are not used to hearing kids singing about God and just worshiping the Lord."

Smallman lives in the neighborhood of Sandtown, where drugs are commonplace, and stealing was once such a way of life that you could watch thieves roll refrigerators down the community streets in shopping carts.

The Sandtown choir gives these kids something to strive for, a goal to achieve, and the knowledge that they can do anything they put their minds, spirits and energy to.

"You hear about young people getting killed every day; that's a reality in our neighborhood," Smallman says. "When the kids perform, you are getting a lot of genuine expression of hope and faith that they need."

"They pretty much get on stage and demand that you love what they do," says choir director Alvin Richardson. "'Cute' is the last thing you think once you hear them. They'll just about blow the hair off your face."

"We don't back down from anybody," agrees 12-year-old Sharandall Moses. "We just love to sing for the Lord."

Natalie Nichols Gillespie

CHARISMATIC TOP SELLERS

1. Matters of the Heart

Juanita Bynum (Charisma House)

2. Total Forgiveness

R.T. Kendall (Charisma House)

3. Pigs in the Parlor

**Frank and Ida Mae Hammond
(Impact Christian Books)**

4. A Divine Revelation of Hell

Mary K. Baxter (Whitaker House)

5. The Three Battlegrounds

Francis Frangipane (Arrow Publications)

6. No More Sheets

Juanita Bynum (Pneuma Life Publishing)

7. A Divine Revelation of Heaven

Mary K. Baxter (Whitaker House)

8. Prison to Praise

Merlin R. Carothers (Merlin R. Carothers)

9. The Believer's Authority

Kenneth E. Hagin (Faith Library Publications)

10. Good Morning, Holy Spirit

Benny Hinn (Nelson)