

Sight & Sound

MUSIC

Who We Are Instead

By Jars of Clay, Essential Records.

With *Who We Are Instead*, Jars of Clay has returned to what the band was at its musical beginning, an acoustically inclined pop-rock band, known for its coffeehouse covers of harmonious acts such as Simon & Garfunkel. Instead of playing edgy rock songs as it did on some previous albums, Jars has unplugged for *Who We Are Instead*, trading electric guitars for unencumbered arrangements here.

For example, the band covers the group America's strummy and empathetic "Lonely People," and even when it's not performing 1970s soft-rock hits like that one, it is playing songs such as "Sunny Days" that sound just like aural relics from that kinder, gentler musical era.

The album's lyrics are particularly Christ-centered; even the romantic love songs such as "Only Alive" are couched in spiritual terminology. Because of this album's intentionally plain-spoken musicality, it is hard to imagine any of these new tracks achieving the Floodlike success of past Jars' efforts. But the simple sweetness that is *Who We Are Instead* offers a nice alternative to all the technological bells and whistles now crowding the pop charts.

Dan MacIntosh

Throne Room

By CeCe Winans, Sony.

CeCe Winans is probably one of the most popular gospel artists of our time. Now releasing her sixth solo project, she moves into a posture of worship with her latest, Throne Room.

Winans starts off this very emotive CD with the peaceful orchestral interlude "Hallelujah to the King." Written by gospel great Andraé Crouch, the song is performed wonderfully, as is the marvelous tune "Jesus, You're Beautiful to Me." On the title cut Winans effortlessly breathes life into the relaxing melody. She also covers the popular church anthem "How Great Thou Art." "You're so Holy" will find the listener in the ultimate stance of reverence as will "Oh, Most High" and "Worthy Is the Lamb." Other favorites are "I Thirst for You" and "Come Fill My Heart."

Winans truly moves the listener on the song, "Mercy Said No." Dedicated to her brother Ronald, the track speaks of how mercy steps up to the plate for us, not giving us what we rightfully deserve.

Winans steps into a praise mode with the upbeat tempos of "No One Else" and "Hallelujah Praise."

It's easy to bask in the glory of the Lord with the worshipful sound of Throne Room.

René Williams

Go Tell It on the Mountain

By The Blind Boys of Alabama,
Real World.

When The Blind Boys of Alabama decided to go tell it on the mountain for this album of Christmas cheer, they also invited practically the whole musical community to share in this holiday mountaintop experience. Lead vocalist Clarence Fountain is more than qualified to give any old Christmas carol a large shot of authentic soul power, yet fellow R&B stars, such as Solomon Burke ("I Pray on Christmas"), Mavis Staples ("Born in Bethlehem") and Aaron Neville ("Joy to the World"), also lend their vocal talents to this collection of spirited performances.

Although gospel-soul is the genre of choice here, The Pretenders' Chrissie Hynde turns "In the Bleak Midwinter" into a quietly moving ballad, and Me'Shell N'degorcello adds a spoken word part to the traditional "O Come All Ye Faithful."

But wait, there's more. This album's cast of all-stars doesn't just end with singers. Pedal steel master Robert Randolph is also in the band, and jazzier Les McCann is the guest pianist for "White Christmas." All that talent makes Go Tell It on the Mountain one large and joyful musical family gathering.

Natalie Nichols Gillespie

Christmas

By Rivertribe, Inpop Records.

Australian act Rivertribe once again teams up with Inpop for this unique instrumental Christmas offering. Packed with violin arrangements, didgeridoo, African drums and Native American flutes, plus unusual instrumentation by the tabla and light harp, Christmas is a study in modern instrumental simplicity. Not the typical holiday collection by any stretch of the imagination, Rivertribe generates a sound that is part Mannheim Steamroller (without most of the electronics), part

New Agey mystical atmospheric music (but don't let that description scare you; these are all Christmas carols).

"O Come All Ye Faithful" is ethereal and beautiful, while "We Three Kings" drops in a light piano melody over a backdrop of Eastern-sounding electronica and rapid drumbeats. Packed with fresh interpretations of Christmas classics, Rivetribes has given fans something different and daring to add to their Christmas music collections.

Natalie Nichols Gillespie

BOOKS

The Anointing

By R.T. Kendall, Charisma House,
224 pages, paperback, \$.

Noted theologian R.T. Kendall considers the anointing of yesterday, today and tomorrow in the persons of Saul, Samuel and David in his latest work to reach America's shores. Of Reformed background, Kendall recently retired his post as senior pastor of London's famed Westminster Chapel, which he held for 25 years.

Kendall's twin emphases on Word and Spirit unite in The Anointing as he explains his view that all branches of the church need balance. Yet he does not shy away from an anointing that moves God's people out of their comfort zones. With respect for history, Kendall demonstrates that it is important not to live in a former anointing, to be "yesterday's man."

Continually renewed intimacy with God, and walking in the

calling and capabilities He has given brings spiritual power for living for today and tomorrow. As a pastor, Kendall has learned from key leaders in the church, such as Martyn Lloyd-Jones and Paul Cain, and he offers valuable insights from these relationships. In *The Anointing*, Kendall is articulate, personal and firmly grounded in both Word and Spirit.

Christine D. Johnson

Always Enough

By Rolland and Heidi Baker,

Chosen Books, 186 pages, paperback, \$.

Do you feel helpless when facing personal problems? Do you feel cynical when confronting the challenges of living in a predominantly non-Christian world? Have you stopped believing in even small miracles?

Allow the glory of God to fall heavy upon you through experiencing revival in Africa's Mozambique, where God led lifelong missionaries Rolland and Heidi Baker in 1995.

Mozambique still waits to recover from the ravages of fighting, famine and flood. Yet, the Mozambicans have trusted in Jesus in spite of continuing pestilence, poverty and pain. Often without the comfort of even a slice of bread, the people still hunger for the Bread of Life. For them, He's always enough.

Jesus has fed the Mozambicans with supernatural life. He has healed the blind, the deaf, the lame, the AIDS victim, the demon-possessed. He's multiplied the loaves of bread and raised the dead. He's filled hundreds of thousands with "passion and compassion," heavenly visions and language.

God has planted more than 5,000 churches in Mozambique (groups of more than 50 each), and now the Bakers minister in 10 countries through Iris Ministries. They work tirelessly for the abandoned of this world, always “ministering to the one.”

The Bakers write: “The poor teach us how to seek after God. ... The poor will never say no to a feast. They’ll come and eat. The Lord is setting out spiritual banquets for his Church, but so many are just full. They have smorgasbords and buffets and restaurants at every corner. They’re just not hungry.”

You’ll want to feed on the Bread of Life again after reading the Bakers’ story. There’s always enough, but never too much.

Pamela Robinson

Street Children

By Andy Butcher, Authentic Media,
224 pages, paperback, \$.

Andy Butcher takes a systematic look in Street Children at a problem that is no respecter of national borders. This small volume, subtitled “The tragedy and challenge of the world’s millions of modern-day Oliver Twists,” surveys the vast scope of a serious problem that leads to crime, drugs, violence, disease and death.

Butcher traces the historical record of the battle against systems that seem to breed street children, but succeeds in bringing the faces of street kids to the fore. He intentionally calls readers to take responsibility to combat the problem.

Offering a ray of hope, he demonstrates how Christians who

have counted the cost of such dangerous work are responding. Interviews with street kids and urban ministry workers afford Butcher an understanding about the way street kids think. An eight-page photographic insert shows in detail the conditions in which these children live.

Although the simplistic title will not draw readers not already curious about street kids, Butcher has done a service for those willing to expand their knowledge of this complex issue.

Christine D. Johnson

MUSIC SPOTLIGHT

Free to Sing His Praises

On “Only God’s in This,” on Virtue’s new disc, Free, sisters Heather Trotter, Ebony Holland and Karima Kibble offer a trendy R&B groove telling listeners they want to give people something to sing and dance about. But it is not about relationships, partying or materialism. It is about God.

Instead of singing about getting rich and partying without purpose, Virtue offers positive, affirming songs to encourage those who are looking for healing, peace and self-acceptance.

“At this point in our lives, we are growing, and we’ve let go of so many things in order to grow,” Trotter says. “We made a decision to give our worries and concerns to God. We just felt He was telling us to free ourselves of everything ... free of negativity, free of self-doubt, free of whatever it is that

holds you back.”

Virtue is very serious about “being real,” and this fourth release seems even more transparent. You can sense a fresh anointing. Virtue is more confident and focused than ever.

“You have to free yourself of insecurities—people or things that prevent you from reaching your purpose,” Kibble says.

“We’ve gone back to our roots, straight up singing His praises,” Holland says. “A lot of the songs [on Free] say you are free to worship, free to praise. Once you can be free of things that weigh you down, you are free to be yourself and worship God for who He is.”

Mark Weber

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. A Divine Revelation of Heaven

Mary K. Baxter (Whitaker House)

7. The Tongue

Charles Capps (Harrison House)

8. The Believer's Authority

Kenneth E. Hagin (Faith Library Publications)

9. Blessing or Curse

Derek Prince (Chosen Books)

10. A Divine Revelation of the Spirit Realm

Mary K. Baxter (Whitaker House)