

Vibes

New books by Chuck Ripka, Ed Young and Pete Greig

Plus Music by Michelle Tumes, Liz McComb and Michael Olson

Reconciliation Blues

By Edward Gilbreath, InterVarsity Press, hardcover, 207 pages, \$20.

This could be one of the most powerful books you will read this year, one that explores a delicate topic without being so offensive or unreasonable that few will listen. Nor should the subtitle, *A Black Evangelical's Inside View of White Christianity*, steer white readers away in the belief that it's intended for African-Americans. In fact, whites compose the leading audience for *Reconciliation Blues*. As author Edward Gilbreath adeptly points out, believers like himself are often shunted aside or ignored in the white-dominated evangelical subculture. That such slights stem from innate blind spots or insensitivity rather than overt racism doesn't make them any easier to accept. A former editor at *New Man* magazine and now editor of *Today's Christian*, Gilbreath issues a plaintive and yet hopeful reminder that although progress toward a reconciled multiracial society has occurred, many steps remain to be taken. There are several chapters worth noting: his sympathetic portrayal of a flawed and yet inspiring Jesse Jackson, an exploration of the mistaken habit of equating one's political views with authentic faith, and the need to include Native Americans and Asians in the reconciliation conversation. The book includes a study guide that will make for fruitful—and hopefully challenging—discussions.

Ken Walker

BOOKS

God Out of the Box

By Chuck Ripka, Charisma House, hardcover, 224 pages, \$.

Making his living as a businessman, Chuck Ripka learned that obeying the voice of God afforded him the opportunity to make

a difference in his customers' lives. While working in furniture sales, he was able to put away his fear of mixing ministry and business, realizing it was still possible to get his commission and evangelize. Today, his commitment to exercising his faith in the workplace has paid great dividends, to which he testifies in *God Out of the Box*. Having emerged from a poor family and an addictive lifestyle, Ripka learned to obey God in little things. Through the years he watched God provide, and eventually he became senior vice president of Riverview Community Bank, a Minnesota institution with assets worth \$140 million known as "the Christian bank" because of its commitment to biblical values. In *God Out of the Box*, Ripka offers personal anecdotes that show how God can powerfully influence the marketplace for His kingdom. To inspire others who need to know God can use them, he ends each simply written, faith-building chapter with one of the biblically based principles he has adopted along his spiritual journey.

Christine D. Johnson

God on Mute

By Pete Greig, Regal Books, hardcover, 304 pages, \$.

Pete Greig, founder of the international 24-7 Prayer movement, reflects on one of the most soul-wrenching experiences of the Christian faith—unanswered prayer. Prompted to write after his wife, Samie, was diagnosed with a brain tumor from which she nearly died, Greig admits in the book's introduction that prayer "doesn't always seem to work, and it's not easy to be honest about this." During dry seasons, God seems absent, silent, even nonexistent. Greig points the reader to biblical books such as Lamentations and Job, and to Christ's agony, abandonment, death and resurrection for hope. Drawing on real-life examples and wisdom from a wide assortment of people, including rabbi Harold Kushner, Martin Luther King Jr. and rock group . 's Michael Stipe, *God on Mute* offers an intensely

personal and passionate treatment of unanswered questions and prayers. It is a thoughtful and deeply moving book by a church leader who still believes in prayer, even in the wake of one of his most difficult trials of faith. A discussion guide is included.

C. Brian Smith

Outrageous, Contagious Joy

By Ed Young, Berkley Praise, hardcover, 256 pages, \$.

In *Outrageous, Contagious Joy: Five Big Questions to Help You Discover One Great Life*, Ed Young, TV and radio personality and pastor of a Dallas megachurch, appeals to readers who think they are missing something in life. With enthusiasm, the author guides his readers to consider five foundational questions, starting with “Does God want you to be happy?” and ending with “What are you working for?” He asserts that happiness is a myth and a poor substitute for what God really intended—joy. Sidebars offer examples, mainly of contemporary men and women who tell of how they began to experience joy. Stop and Think sections encourage readers to apply each chapter’s major truths. Young brings not only energy to his topic but also meaningful, biblically based content. Honest about the process of finding joy, he writes that it does not come automatically with salvation but must be cultivated. The book concludes with a prayer leading readers into relationship with Jesus as their source of true joy.

Christine D. Johnson

MUSIC

Michelle Tumes

By Michelle Tumes, Levantar Music.

Michelle Tumes has returned after a four-year hiatus. Although her debut release was packed with a classical-New Age pop flavor, the artist’s sound evolved to a more determined pop

sound in later years. However, her latest release is a return to her roots, with classically minded, ethereal worship and her own distinctive vocals. Highlights include the orchestral "Break Through," the solemn "Gypsy Heart" and "Introit," which paints a portrait of divine dependence. The grand "Domine" is a creative mixture of an orchestral atmosphere with pop sensibilities. The piano ballad "Hold on to Jesus" delivers a message of encouragement through tough times. Fans will be thrilled to see this talented artist return with a collection of elegant tunes.

Dewayne Hamby

Soul, Peace & Love Volume 1

By Liz McComb, Sunnyside Records.

Renowned gospel vocalist Liz McComb's latest project mixes urban gospel with jazz, Caribbean, funk and hip-hop to deliver strong messages about peace, social troubles, inspiration and relationships. Highlights include the opener "Oh, When the Saints," which blends rap breaks into the familiar gospel tune; the funky "You Ain't Christian Enough"; a contemporary version of the spiritual "Can't Nobody Know My Trouble" and the a cappella soul of "By the Rivers of Babylon." "God Made a Miracle" features familiar, foot-stompin' traditional gospel, and the tender gospel ballad "Peacemakers" features a female choir. This is an excellent release, showcasing McComb's captivating gospel vocals and timely inspirational messages on an eclectic musical backdrop.

Dewayne Hamby

Where Fear and Faith Collide

By Michael Olson, Rocketown Records.

Michael Olson's second Rocketown Records release, Where Fear and Faith Collide, offers a lavish musical backdrop with messages of praise and encouragement where the singer's impressive vocal skills effortlessly soar. Even as it delivers

a modern sound, the disc prompts a recollection both vocally and lyrically of the days when big-voiced male vocalists such as Michael English and Greg Long dominated the Christian music scene. The subdued "On the Third Day" is a song of resurrection, and "Our First Love" delivers a challenge about losing faith. "Fear and Faith" is a rousing power ballad, and "Tell Me Again," with guest vocalist Sara Groves, is an acoustic reminder of God's faithfulness. Unquestionably on par with the aforementioned big-voiced male vocalists, Olson is an impressive talent. This album, with its messages of encouragement and praise, will inspire and impress listeners.

Dewayne Hamby

Adam Cunningham

By Adam Cunningham,
Trackstar Recordworks.

Worship leader Adam Cunningham releases his self-titled debut on Trackstar Recordworks. With deep, country-tinged vocals and melodies that are sure to evoke comparisons to Mark Hall (Casting Crowns), Steven Curtis Chapman and even mainstream country artists such as Toby Keith, the singer delivers 13 new songs focusing on praise, evangelism and Christian living. "Don't Let Go" sends a strong message of encouragement for holding to faith. "One Angel" is a country-tinged tribute to Cunningham's daughter. The tempo-varying warning "Motion Sickness" focuses on hypocrisy, and the ballad "Like I'm the Only One" offers earnest praise for a personal God. Though the project steers a little too close to Casting Crowns, the introduction of 13 fresh new songs and two country detours will help distinguish Cunningham's debut for listeners.

Dewayne Hamby

7 days

By Deitrick Haddon, Verity Records.

Deitrick Haddon is regarded as one of gospel's most intriguing

artists, producing soulful, uplifting sounds for more than 10 years. This latest release is the most defining project of his career. Along with famed R&B producers Tim Kelley and Bob Robinson (Destiny's Child, Boyz II Men), Haddon is presented at his best with music that is mainstream but a message that is spiritual. The 15 tracks range from such danceable grooves as "Don't Go," "So Good to Be in Love" and "Clap Your Hands" to the heartfelt "Through It All" and likely crossover hit "I'm the One." Haddon also voices his concern for the nation on the thought-provoking "Heaven Knows." With its innovative urban sound, 7 Days will likely appeal to mainstream and Christian audiences.

Twanna Powell

FICTION

CONTEMPORARY

Quaker Summer

By Lisa Samson, WestBow Press, softcover, 320 pages, \$.

Heather Curridge has a good life—a family, a nice home, even an SUV. But she's starting to feel that there has to be more to life—and not just more stuff. A car accident brings her in contact with a nun and a Quaker spinster. These ladies' simple lives help Heather realize that the key to a more fulfilling life is giving more of herself.

HISTORICAL

The Miracle

By Gilbert Morris, Zondervan, softcover, 352 pages, \$.

In book three of the Singing River series Lanie Freeman, 17, is now raising her four younger siblings without her parents.

A business venture could be what keeps the family together, or it might break them apart. Unexpected crises arise that rock the family's faith and could destroy Lanie's dream of finding love.

SUSPENSE

The Watchers

By Mark Andrew Olsen, Bethany House Publishers, hardcover, 419 pages, \$.

Abby Sherman has a terminal illness. After posting descriptions of her heavenly visions online, she garners lots of attention—good and bad. Dylan Hatfield has been hired to kill Abby. After he meets his target, he begins to rethink his mission. This supernatural thriller takes readers on a globe-trotting adventure.

NEW ON DVD

The Passion of the Christ

FoxFaith

\$

The Passion of the Christ depicts the last 12 hours of Christ's life from the Garden of Gethsemane to Calvary. This two-disc Definitive Edition includes the theatrical release; Passion Re-Cut, a less violent version of the original film; commentaries with Mel Gibson, John Debney (composer) and others; a segment on the making of the film; deleted scenes; galleries; and more. This film is rated R for violence.

The Waltons

Warner Home Video Inc.

\$

The Waltons: The Complete Fourth Season, which aired from September 11, 1975 to March 4, 1976, is now available on DVD. Ellen Corby (Esther) and Michael Learned (Olivia) won Emmy Awards for their roles during this season. This five-disc set includes episodes about John-Boy being hired as a scriptwriter, Mary Ellen starting nursing school, a house fire and more. Continue to be inspired as this large, close-knit family faces the challenges of the late 1930s with grace and perseverance.

Bibleman

Thomas Nelson Inc.

\$

The Bibleman Powersource series offers another film just for kids ages 6-10. In Tuning Out the Unholy Hero, the WBIG TV network bigwig is out to make kids think "What's Bad Is Good." This villain is trying to block the spreading of the gospel. Of course Bibleman won't stand for it, and he sets out to defeat this unholy hero.