

Music Reviews

The Power of One

By Israel Houghton, Integrity Music.

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height="200"}iSGpfyKbW9M{/youtubejw}

Kudos to Israel Houghton for not staying in his comfort zone and giving listeners another standard, albeit solid, praise and worship album with those funky guitars that he and his band mates play so well. On his latest album, *The Power of One*, Houghton finds inspiration from pop stars past and present, including Gnarl's Barkley ("Just Want to Say" is similar to Barkley's mega-hit "Crazy"). He also incorporates some

New Orleans jazz music ("UR Loved"), a ballad with restrained keyboards that sounds like Phil Collins ("I Receive"), a reggae tune on which he shouts "Jamaica" ("Surely Goodness") and finally, "You Found Me," a song that Houghton does, somewhat curiously, as an alternative-rock number. In between all that, there's a fairly straightforward gospel song ("Every Prayer") and an innocuous title track that sounds like the distant cousin of Eric Clapton's "Change the World." It all makes for an interesting album that will probably be well-received by Houghton's fans. But from a critical perspective, this album is something akin to a five-course dessert after Thanksgiving dinner. Now that Houghton knows he can pull off just about anything, perhaps next time listeners will be treated to lighter fare with fewer trimmings.

—CAMERON CONANT

The Now and Not Yet

By Jeremy Riddle, Varietal Records.

Jeremy Riddle's latest CD opens with "Christ Is Risen," a song celebrating the resurrection and challenging believers to go tell the world. "Bless His Name," an album standout, is a clarion call to believers: "Come, let us sing for joy / And let us shout aloud to our King / Come, let us worship God / Lifting holy hands / Bless His name." The heartfelt ballad "As Above, So Below" examines what we struggle with on earth and then pleads with the Father in heaven to let His kingdom come. "Among the Poor" was inspired by the revelation that worship is more about ministering to others than about singing songs. "To Be Like You" carries a lighthearted melody but is a cry to be changed to "reflect the God I know." "Prayer for the Church" is a most timely and much-needed song for the church today: "We're praying no more compromises / No more moral crisis / Tonight may she move and act as You / No more small divisions / No more lack of wisdom / Tonight may she move and act as You." Believers individually and collectively with their churches should sing this prayer. Riddle's melodies and thoughtful lyrics will usher listeners into the presence of God, and they will gain fresh understanding and insight as they worship. **—LEIGH DEVORE**

The God of This City

By Bluetree, Lucid Artist.

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Many people have heard and even sung the anthem "The God of This City," which has been recorded by Chris Tomlin and was the theme for the Passion World Tour. But now we can hear it from Bluetree, the band that wrote it. Hailing from Belfast, Ireland, the members of Bluetree—Aaron Boyd (lead vocalist and guitarist), Andy McCann (bassist), Johnny Hobson (drummer) and Pete Kernoghan (deejay)—want to write worship songs that

inspire change in everyday life. They desire to encourage people with hope but also remind them to live with others in mind. They practice what they believe. They were on a missions trip to Pattya, Thailand, a city known for sex tourism, when God gave them “The God of This City.” Bluetree realized that this was a “prophetic shout” not only for Pattya but also for the entire world. The energetic debut opener “Life’s Noise” reminds us that God is in the quiet of life and praising Him clears away distractions. “Burn Me Up” cries for God to refine us so that the world sees more of Him. Boyd wrote “Each Day” after getting the news that his newborn daughter had cystic fibrosis. This upbeat song declares that even in difficult circumstances, we can trust the God who never leaves us alone. This album combines a diverse mix of songs and styles, yet the sense of worship throughout makes it cohesive. If this debut is any indication of what is ahead for Bluetree, believers are going to be encouraged by their ministry for many years to come.

—LEIGH DEVORE