

Shekinah Glory: 'Surrender'

A dozen years in, the Chicago-based ensemble known as Shekinah Glory Ministry (SGM) continues to be a forerunner for urban praise and worship music. They've made chants such as "Praise Is What I Do" and "Jesus" well-known tunes sung by choirs around the country every Sunday morning.

With five RIAA gold and platinum records and video certifications behind them, this coterie of psalmists, minstrels and banner-wavers is poised to strike gold again with the group's fourth original CD, *Surrender*, which released late last month.

Recorded in April at the ministry's home church, Valley Kingdom Ministry International near Chicago, SGM delivered another set of soul-stirring original songs that kept the capacity audience on its feet most of the night with hands lifted toward heaven. The closing tune, "Surrender," summed up the night's and the album's theme.

SGM's leader, Phil Tarver, with a heartfelt plea, prayed openly for God to break his spirit and give him a contrite heart right before he launched into a majestic declaration. "Lord, break me again until the tears pour out," he crooned softly. Challenging listeners "not to throw in the white towel, but wave the white flag" and to "tell [God] I surrender to your purpose, to your plan, to your way."

All 13 tracks center on conceding to God's will. Whether  it's by turning one's trials and tribulations over to God, a concept exclaimed in the Afro-Cuban up-tempo song "By Faith," or by yielding to a call to worship, emphasized in the dance-flavored track "Come On," SGM encourages believers to trust God in all circumstances.

Aside from Tarver, who leads three songs, there are several new SGM voices such as Brandon Alsberry, Joan Olander and

Danielle Nightingale Cargo, who leads the new radio single "Champion." There is a guest appearance by veteran vocalist Kim Stratton on the riveting "Broken," and the late Pepe Epting's tenor soars on "Peace for My World."

SGM is not only a choir, but rather a dynamic ensemble of psalmists, minstrels and banner-bearers, and this latest album is sure not to disappoint.