

Entertainment

Singer's pop-gospel release cuts 'close to the bone'

By Rob Cullivan
Amy Grant wants her year-old son to know her as more than a "plastic figure with a painted-on halo."

To that end, gospel music's leading contemporary singer chose to include on her latest album, *Lead Me On*, songs that deal with adultery and despair — uncomfortable subjects for any self-controlled Christian.

"I don't want to be a Barbie doll holding a guitar," said Grant, who performed at the Rochester War Memorial on Saturday, Sept. 24, before 6,000 people.

By writing such songs as *Faithless Heart*, which deals with her marital problems, Grant may also do much to dispel the squeaky-clean image many unconverted listeners have of contemporary Christian music — an image that prejudices such listeners against a genre of music that is surprisingly diverse in style and content.

Some Christian bands, Stryper and Chalice for example, borrow their look from secular rock groups like Van Halen and Kiss. Their pants are just as tight, their guitars are just as loud and their stage shows just as flashy as those of their worldly counterparts. Yet, Stryper and Chalice are out to prove you can party with

a sense of piety, writing lyrics that glorify Jesus Christ and urge youth to resist sin. Stryper even throws out copies of the Bible to their holy head-banging fans.

Grant, on the other hand, appeals to a more mainstream listener, the kind of person who might like Joni Mitchell, James Taylor, Bruce Hornsby and Steve Winwood. In doing so, she has built the largest audience of any contemporary Christian musician, even crossing into the secular pop music charts last year when she sang with Peter Cetera on the number one hit *Next Time I Fall*. Despite her pop appeal, Grant's message is unabashedly Christian in content.

With the exception of the Irish rock group U2 and such one-hit wonders as Mister Mister, both of whom have mentioned Christ and the Bible in their music, most bands have built their audience appeal by mouthing words that might not exactly please committed Christians.

Fewer still would go out of their way to boldly proclaim Christ as their savior. Yet Grant is able to sing about Christ with ease. The fact that she does it with zest and showmanship equal to the best of her secular rivals has gained her acceptance from many people, most notably the young fans who find her music a

positive alternative to mainstream pop and rock.

Grant's appeal to her listeners is partly due to her willingness to admit she is tempted by the same doubts that might be experienced by anybody who is sincerely looking for spiritual answers. "I think it's in my nature to be a questioner," Grant said. "There are things all of us struggle with all of our lives."

One thing Grant has struggled with is maintaining her marriage to Gary Chapman, who co-writes some of her music and is playing bass in her backup band on this tour. *Faithless Heart* is her musical expression of the strains that eventually convinced the couple to seek marital counseling.

"*Faithless Heart* is about as close to the bone as I've ever written," Grant says in her A&M Records' press release. "I am who I am. If my business was trying to be a PR person for Amy Grant, then you'd really get some boring albums. So what the heck, you might as well put who you really are on the record!"

Grant says that putting faith in God and her belief in marriage to the test is a natural part of her life. "For me, doubting is a springboard for honestly seeking the truth," Grant said.

Beyond doubt, however, is the singer's extraordinary commercial and critical success. This year marks Grant's 10th in the music industry. The past decade has seen her release a dozen albums, half of which have gone gold, and one of which has gone platinum — 1982's *Age to Age*. *Lead Me On* is currently number one on the contemporary Christian music charts.

Although *Lead Me On* is marked by country influences and ballad-style writing, Grant doesn't plan to stay with that type of writing for the future. She recently dropped in on a recording session for pop musician John Hiatt. The upbeat music being played there convinced her that her next release will "be more funky and danceable," she said.

Her peers in the gospel music industry have recognized her success. Grant won a Grammy for Best Contemporary Gospel Album (*Age to Age*) in 1983, and a Grammy for Best Gospel



Performance, Female, in 1984 (*Ageless Medley*), 1985 (the song *Angels*) and 1986 (*Un-guarded*). She has also received awards from music magazines and organizations.

Ironically it is now, at the peak of her success, that Grant is considering giving up touring. The current tour will cover 65 cities in the United States and Canada, and will last a year and a half. Grant has brought along her son and a friend to help take care of him, although the experience is something she doesn't want to repeat again soon.

"Mixing family with touring is a tricky combination," Grant said. "It is a situation of logistics. (But) I wouldn't have it any other way."

Given that this might be her last tour for some years, Grant is using it to promote a pet cause — Habitat for Humanity, an organization that helps low-income families purchase affordable homes that are built by the families themselves and volunteers. Grant and her family have been contributors to the organization for years and approached its national directors in August of this year with an offer

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Film offers restrained look at pain of family's dissolution

By Judith Trojan
New York (NC) — Rarely have the traumas of marital discord and separation been as eloquently handled as they are in "The Wash" (Skouras), a film set in the Japanese community of San Jose, Calif. Most remarkably, the marriage under scrutiny is a long one, the partners are well past retirement age, and the wife — not the husband — is the partner who chooses to walk away from the unhappy union.

The "walk" Masi (Nobu McCarthy) takes isn't very far, however. She still returns once a week to do her husband's laundry and tidy up. But after eight months of separation, she is comfortably settled in her own apartment,

with an answering machine and a potential suitor.

In contrast, her husband, Nobu (Mako), suffers a miserable existence, refusing to believe that his wife won't return to him. He is as pigheaded and insensitive to a middle-aged waitress who would love to love him as he is to his long-suffering wife and two grown daughters.

First-time director Michael Toshiyuki Uno has done a wonderfully restrained job of exploring the fears that plague each member of the family as they come to terms with its dissolution. Quietly determined to forge a new,

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