

- Entertainment
- [Veggie Tales - Jonah](#)
- [People](#)
- [From the Editor ...](#)
- [Books](#)
- [Cartoons \(updated daily!\)](#)
- [Chat Transcripts](#)
- Music
- [Music Reviews](#)
- [Music News](#)
- [Mark Joseph](#)
- [Interviews](#)
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- [Currently In Theatres](#)
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The Ragamuffin Band To Return With New Project

By Matthew Turner  
*Music and Entertainment Editor*



Crosswalk.com Entertainment Channel - With the death of Rich Mullins in 1997, a unique legacy was left on the face of Christian music as the minstrel was taken home to glory. Through his friends and musical compadres, A Ragamuffin Band brought his last original album to life in The Jesus Record, which received three Dove Awards.

After touring the country to celebrate their friend's music and memory, this special group of minstrels have returned to the studio to provide a new December 28th release for Myrrh Records called Prayers of a Ragamuffin.

**THE ALBUM**

Prayers of a Ragamuffin will feature songs written by the members of A Ragamuffin Band, which includes the album's producer and lead singer Rick Elias (The Confessions, That Thing You Do), Aaron Smith (The 77's), The Temptations), Jimmy A), Vector, acclaimed photographer and painter) and Mark Robertson (This Train), Stand).



Focusing on prayer, the album will include raw, soul-searching songs that contemplate Man's need of God's grace, and reveal an intense desire to know and serve Christ more deeply.

"We wanted to make a record that had a unifying theme, like The Jesus Record, so that it would be a collective expression of who we are as a band, and not just four soloists," says Elias. "Prayer is the most unifying aspect of our relationship to each other, and we felt we wanted, even needed, to explore that. Prayer speaks to the listener on the most fundamental level of their relationship with God, because it transcends all denominations and backgrounds - it's what we all do as believers."

"This group has an uncanny ability to get to the very heart of Christianity, and express their longing for God in a way that is inspiring and passionate, while remaining accessible. The listener will be faced with an honesty which speaks to the longings and desires each of us encounter as believers," says Jim Chaffee, vice president and general manager for Myrrh Records. "The Ragamuffins bring a depth of experience and artistic integrity to Christian music which is rooted in their commitment to our marketplace, their years together on the road, and their success as songwriters and musicians both collectively and individually."

A standout cut on the album is the power anthem, "Make Me An Instrument," which will also be the first radio single from the project. The song takes its lyrics from two ancient standards of the Christian faith, the "Prayer of St. Frances of Assisi" and "St. Patrick's Breastplate," and is scheduled to reach radio on October 15th.

"In a year that has been marked by few big songs and even [less] innovation, the Ragamuffins don't just surprise you - they slap you up-side the head," says Bob Thornton, program director for KXOJ radio in Tulsa, OK, after hearing the song "Make Me An Instrument." "This is no longer a legacy band - they are building their own legacy. "Simply put, [Make Me An Instrument] is the best song of 1999."

Other songs on the album include "Brother Sun, Sister Moon," "God Grant Me Tears," "Faith, Hope and Love," and "Help Thou My Unbelief."

"We wanted the songs on this record to express both the ancient, venerable prayers of our faith's history, and the common, impromptu prayers of everyday," says Elias. "There is great power in these prayers that are hundreds of years old, that have been read and prayed by thousands of Christians - but we also wanted to look at what prayer meant in our own lives, both personally and collectively."

**THE BOOK**

CCM Creative Ventures and Harvest House Publishers are releasing a book in conjunction with Prayers of a Ragamuffin, entitled Ragamuffin Prayers, which will hit bookshelves in March 2000. The written project will consist of song lyrics from the album, prayers, and essays from other respected Christian artists. Among those expected to participate are the Ragamuffins, Sixpence None the Richer, Amy Grant, Michael W. Smith, Kevin Max of dc Talk, Phil Keaggy, Charlie Peacock, Chris Rice, Cindy Morgan) and author Brennan Manning, as well as many others.

The book will also feature original artwork by Abegg, known for his work with such artists as Kevin Max of dc Talk, (At the Foot of Heaven); Michael W. Smith, (Live the Life); Ashley Cleveland (You Are There), Phil Keaggy (Phil Keaggy); The Exodus Project and Chris Rice (Past the Edges), as well as the Dove Award winning art direction on The Jesus Record.

A Ragamuffin Band was formed by the late Mullins in 1992-93, and toured with him intermittently until his death in 1997, appearing on Mullins' A Liturgy, A Legacy, and A Ragamuffin Band and then completing the project he was working on just before his death, The Jesus Record. The band takes its name from the book The Ragamuffin Gospel by Brennan Manning. They toured extensively last year in support of The Jesus Record, hitting 80+ cities nationally. The group's version of the Mullins/Mitch McVicker anthem "My Deliverer" from the project brought them a No. 1 radio single and was named "Song of the Year" at the 1999 Dove Awards. In addition, the group took home two other Dove Awards, a second #1 and two Top 10 radio singles on behalf of The Jesus Record.

For more information on A Ragamuffin Band and for a preview of their new single, "Make Me An Instrument," visit <http://www.aragamuffinband.com>.

by Barry Smades for The Music Channel at crosswalk.com

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**Q. Of the new releases mentioned below, I'm most looking forward to:**

- Bebo Norman's *Myself When I Am Real*
- Sara Groves' *All Right Here*
- Plus One's *Christmas CD*
- Sixpence None the Richer's *Divine Discontent*