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Ragamuffins Return With Special Prayers

By Matthew Turner
Music and Entertainment Editor

Crosswalk.com Entertainment Channel - Now beginning a legacy of its own, {{A Ragamuffin Band}} returns with its initial original project -- ==Prayers Of A Ragamuffin==.

The group, originally put together by the late Rich Mullins, saw its work on Rich's last project ==The Jesus Record== be honored with a trio of Dove Awards. Now, with its first project of their own, the group has again created the same eclectic mix of styles and stretched the mix even more.

The album features songs written by the band members - producer and lead singer Rick Elias, Aaron Smith, Jimmy Abegg and Mark Robertson.

"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," said Elias, whose work on The Jesus Record brought new visibility to his career as a producer and artist.

"Prayer is the most unifying aspect of our relationship to each other, and we felt we wanted, even need 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 album includes a raw, soul-searching style that illustrates our need to know and serve Christ more deeply. In addition to the folk and pop sound that people have come to look for in the band, Prayers Of A Ragamuffin has an edgier sound in spots and takes the band more in the rock vein that many of them have worked in.

"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," said Myrrh Records president Jim Chaffee. "The listener will be faced with an honesty which speaks to the longings and desires each of us encounter as believers.

"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 highlight of the album is the first single that hit radio in October. "Make Me An Instrument" takes its lyrics from the famous Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi and St. Patrick's Breastplate."

"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 influence of Mullins is seen both in the theme and look back at the historic church as well as the Ragamuffin music that listeners have come to expect.

In conjunction with the new album, CCM Creative Ventures and Harvest House Publishers are set for a March release of a companion book called "Ragamuffin Prayers." 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 {{Sixpence None The Richer}}, {{Michael W. Smith}}, {{Phil Keaggy}}, {{Charlie Peacock}}, {{Chris Rice}}, {{Cindy Morgan}} and author Brennan Manning.

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