

music review

reviews by Christmas McGaughey

grand prize *identity*

Electric guitars and drums thunder as Luke Caldwell chants at the top of his lungs: "Break down, pull my pride down; break me away from me." The music is intense, the lyrics honest and passionate. Listening to their first nationally released album, *Identity*, it's hard to imagine that Grand Prize's lead singer and guitarist had never picked up a guitar until God put one in his hands at Bible college a few years ago.

"That's where I just fell in love with Jesus," Luke said of Calvary Chapel Bible College in Austria. After he was given a guitar, Luke prayed with his roommates that



if it was God's will, He would gift Luke musically for His glory. Luke returned home and served as youth pastor and youth worship leader at Calvary Chapel Boise, ID. Three others in the fellowship joined him and recorded their independent album, *Reveal Your Love*, released in 2002. Two years later, Grand Prize (named for the "prize of the high calling of God" in Philippians 3:14, KJV) signed with a Christian label and released *Identity* in January of 2005.

the band

The four band members are all from CC Boise, where Luke's father Bob Caldwell pastors. Grand Prize is Luke Caldwell, vocals and acoustic guitar; Nolan Mather, electric guitar; Tony Caruso, bass; and Nick Koebeler, drums. Nolan Mather replaced electric guitarist Steven Harder. While they have a nationally released album with another in the works, the band members stay heavily involved with Calvary Chapel ministry—playing at summer camps, crusades and Calvary worship services around the country.

Some of the sweetest times, Luke said, are during worship. "You can feel His presence working in people's lives. You see men and women being broken down before the Lord and opening their hearts to Him."

They tour constantly, performing nearly 150 times in 36 states in 2005. "Our wives and our parents have been a huge encouragement, supporting us through prayer," Luke said. Each of the band members are married, except for newcomer Nick.



the ministry

"We know that if we can connect with people through music, the Lord can use it to open their hearts spiritually. That's why we share at every concert," said Luke, who was a youth pastor for five years. "I understand what's going on with youth, what they're passionate about, how they're hurting. It's hard to be a Christian in a society that's so messed up and perverse. It's awesome when we can connect with youth and encourage them." At many of their concerts, band members linger to share Scripture with teens one-on-one.

the music

With a fresh sound, Grand Prize has been compared to popular Calvary-born artists Jeremy Camp and Switchfoot. On *Identity*, listeners will find a diverse cache of original songs. Luke's vocal style ranges from intense on "King of Kings," to mellow and worshipful on "You Are Wonderful," with a pop style on "I'm Waiting." Guitar work on "Like I Never Did" echoes The Edge of U2.

After they finish writing and recording for their next album, the band will join Calvary outreaches to Europe and India in August, then begin touring in the fall. Their next album will be released at the beginning of 2007.

www.grandprizemusic.com



scott cunningham *grace amazing*

Scott Cunningham's first solo worship project, *Grace Amazing*, is just that: a worshipful response to God's grace. Scott, known for his original songs like "I Wait for the Lord" recorded by Dove-winner Jeremy Camp, serves as director of Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa's School of Worship.



Scott's most memorable definition of God's grace came nearly a decade ago at CC Bible College: "God's unmerited favor lavished upon the infinitely ill-deserving." Scott added, "Grace isn't something God shows us only at the point of salvation. It's like an ocean of grace that surrounds us; it enables us to walk with Him, to do what He's put in front of us every day." Citing Hebrews 4:16, Scott said, "We need to remember that His is a throne of grace where we find grace and mercy to help in time of need."

Just a few months after the album was released independently, Scott received feedback from as far away as England. A 15-year-old emailed Scott to testify that God used *Grace Amazing* to help him overcome feelings of condemnation and rest on God's grace. "That's really exciting," Scott said, sharing that God had promised years ago to take what little Scott had, bless and break it, and multiply it.



The catchy and contemplative song "Anchored Deep" reminds believers to trust in God despite emotions: "My heart deceives me; my feelings lie ... But I'm anchored deep in Your great love." While all the songs are worshipful, some range in style from the powerfully rocky "Heaven Sings It," based on Revelation chapters 4 & 5, to slower alternative rock "I Wait for the Lord," mellow worship in "Shine on My Life" and ethereal-electric song "Beauty." The album's hidden track and "Only To My King" feature his three oldest daughters singing original songs.

Scott and his wife Megan have four daughters: Madison, Raleigh, Emaline and baby Sabella.

For lyrics, chords and other information:
www.Scottcunninghammusic.com