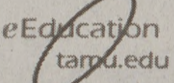


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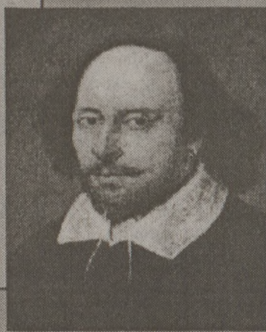
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Ben Harper and the Innocent Criminals
"Diamonds on the Inside"

Burn your bras, dance in the flowers and worship the stars because Ben Harper is back. A name recognized around the world, Harper has put out his fourth album, "Diamonds on the Inside." Who has diamonds on the inside, one might ask. The answer — all the girls who are melting at Harper's feet.

To be honest, this album is amazing. The fact that Harper's slow songs are almost more overpowering than his heavier guitar-laden tracks distinguishes him from other artists. Harper preaches freedom over oppression, being good to one another and most of all, love.

The opening track, which received some radio play this summer, "With My Own Two Hands," is a wonderfully inspiring track with a soulful-reggae feel. "When it's Good," the most creative song on the album, features Harper's beautiful slide guitar and an African tribal beat.

The title track, "Diamonds on the Inside," has amazing lyrics and might have the best pick-up lines ever. One good pick up line is from the song "Brown-eyed Blues:"

"If I knew being here with you today/ Would mean being alone tomorrow

I would gladly trade all of my tomorrows away for a moment with you."

Two other exemplary tracks are "Amen One" and "Picture of Jesus." The only loser on this CD might be "Bring the Funk." It is a miss musically in that the instrumentation is lacking in style and sound. The song sounds thrown together and the lyrics are pretty weak.

Harper's music is significant — musically and lyrically. Idealistic and revolutionary, his music crosses all borders and tackles issues important to all people.

Those who have never listened to Harper will find the first couple of spins to be less than satisfactory, but after his soulful voice has washed over, there will be no other choice but to sit back and name your children Rainbow and Sunshine.



—Dante Chapman

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PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

Evanescence surviving without "impulsive" guitarist and songwriter Ben Moody

NEW YORK (AP) — Amy Lee and her band, Evanescence, are surviving without guitarist and songwriter Ben Moody.

Moody left the group in October, packing his bags the morning before a concert in Berlin and catching a plane out of the country.

"I don't understand Ben," Lee told Newsday in Sunday's editions. "He makes a lot of very impulsive decisions, and he does whatever he wants for the moment."

Evanescence won the Grammy Award for best new artist this year, having conquered radio with the single "Bring Me to Life" and selling about 3.5 million copies of their debut album, "Fallen."

Lee prefers to look forward, praising the talents of replacement guitarist Terry Balsamo, formerly of the metal-rock band Cold.

"He has a lot of creativity on the guitar end that we might have been lacking," she said. But mostly, Lee can't wait to stop touring and start writing songs for the next album.

Some issues more important than TV decency says Chaz

NEW YORK (AP) — For N'Sync's Chaz, there are more important things going on in the world than worrying about decency standards on TV.

"I think it's hilarious that things are the way they are," Chaz told Newsweek for the issue out on newsstands Monday. "We're about to elect the leader of our country. We don't have enough money for schools, we're at war and we're worried about this?"

Chaz was responding to the outcry following pop star Janet Jackson's infamous breastfeeding performance at the Super Bowl halftime show, a performance that also included the N'Sync bandmate Justin Timberlake.

Chaz said we shouldn't be surprised that people sing about sex and want to listen to songs about it. He included such songs on his solo album "Schizophrenia."

"We all think about sex and love, and I've got songs about both on my record," he said. "People gravitate to the sex songs more. Surprise, surprise."

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