

An online literary and arts journal

Over the course of thirteen years and two previous solo albums, Ed Morales has musically charted his own Christian spiritual journey, asked thought-provoking questions along the way, and delivered melodies and sing-able hooks frequently reminiscent of the British Invasion and its resultant 1960's American scions. Morales' latest offering, *Apple & Thorns*, continues this tradition with 12 new tracks of earbud-friendly music.

Morales is at his best on the CD's upbeat songs. That is, when he's strumming his 12-string Rickenbacker over a strong backbeat, channeling vintage McGuinn or McCartney, and crafting jangly, radio-ready pop singles: "The God of Second Chances", "One Love," and "Name" (the bonus remix on the CD) stand out in this regard.

His in-studio work ethic has paid off on some memorable moments from the disc, including an orchestrated arrangement on "Carried Up On A Hill," an intimate rendition of the thirteenth Psalm, and these minimalist lyrics underpinned by a driving 6/8 acoustic:

Seek find knock there
Spirit etches life
For the simple will confound the wise



The CD's other more outspoken lyrics seem intended for Christians already in the flock; the poetry reflects a modernist Weltanschauung, and may come off a bit pedantic in a postmodern listener's ears, but they are borne out of Morales' conviction and are harvested — to borrow from theologian Walter Brueggemann — from fields sown with "acres and acres of certitude." For Morales, this is not a negative: his faith and his evangelicalism are worn on the sleeve, and describe his life's trajectory. For this reason, the release bodes very well for rotation geared at the American CCM radio audience. Note: at the time of this review, the title single had just reached number 2 on the Indieheaven Radio Chart.

Apple & Thorns, clearly a labor of love for Morales, is more apple than thorn, more fruit than thistle, and might just garner a solid national following for the Texas-based singer-songwriter.

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