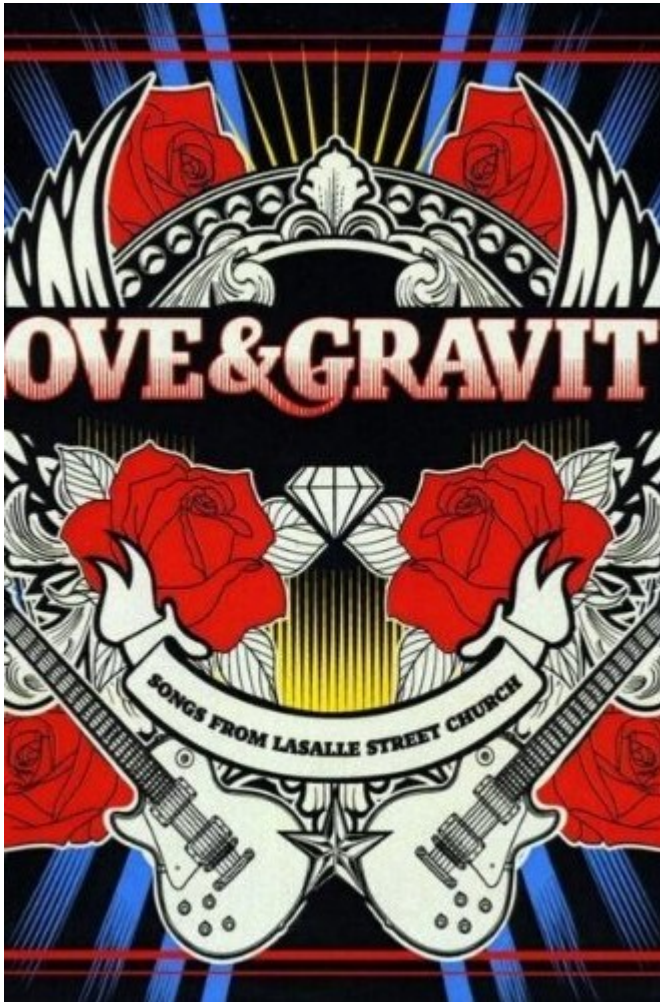


Love & Gravity

reviewed by [Louis R. Carlozo](#) in the [August 9, 2011](#) issue

In Review



Love & Gravity

self-released

Outside of Nashville or Los Angeles, perhaps no house of worship has more recording studio owners per capita than Chicago's LaSalle Street Church. At least three regularly attend there, and the church has become a haven for musicians. This

is largely due to the dynamic ministry of Gary Rand, a former touring singer-songwriter and Christian music pioneer who incorporates world music, African-American gospel, rock and jazz into Sunday services.

Rand's latest project, carried out by Gravity Studios owner Doug McBride and Riverbend Studios owner Chris Stacey, is *Love & Gravity*, a 13-song disc that samples LaSalle's best performers. This album is far from being a novelty CD; McBride's résumé includes Live, Buddy Guy and major acts that would take up most of this space to list. As crisp as any commercial release, *Love & Gravity* represents an amazingly uniform album in theme, purpose and style, considering that the tracking took place in a single day, with a single band of LaSalle players backing the lead performers.

Many of the songs create a bracing country-rock vibe, with challenging lyrics and themes to match. Rand himself opens the disc with a song he co-wrote with his wife, Lenora. Titled "It Hurts Here," it's a haunting exploration of empathy that recalls Christian music pioneer Mark Heard: "Where there are hearts that beat, there are hearts that bleed / Where it stops God only knows, unless it stops with you and me." Matt Black's song "God Is a Woman" isn't for the theologically faint of heart. Building from a stripped, shivering dirge into an anthemlike rocker, the song declares: "She rescues and frees us / She comes to me like Jesus / She moves in between us / She changes my heart."

Tipping the hat to Wilco, the college-age Stacey Brothers sing of redemption in the throes of loss on "Sticks and Stones," backed by dusty harmonica and musicians in waltz-time swing: "You've got to wait 'til the sticks and stones sing." Yet it's younger sister Alaina Stacey who steals the show with the moving "Someplace to Go" (written by her dad, Chris). The 16-year-old sounds like the long-lost little sister of Emmylou Harris. Her high lonesome "woos," backed by a softly scrubbed acoustic guitar and spare percussion, convey a whirlwind full of autumn shivers: "When we cry 'Help me, Jesus,' please God don't leave us, there's always someplace to go."

That's not to take anything from the other performers. Their work here calls for a baker's dozen of solo releases. This album soars far above a host of calculated, slaved-over releases from the Christian music world.

Love & Gravity is available at myspace.com/lasallestreetmusic and at iTunes and CD Baby (www.cdbaby.com/cd/lasallest).