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**Music Review: 'Amazing Grace' by Rick Wakeman**Written by **Mike Parker**

"Amazing Grace"  
By Rick Wakeman  
MVD Visual

I know I'm dating myself, but I confess to having been a Rick Wakeman fan for more than 30 years. I was first introduced to his amazing keyboard wizardry during my high school years when he was creating moody, atmospheric flights of fancy with the avant garde, prog-rock band Yes. I was in college when I got my hands on his solo projects, most notably the hugely popular LP (in quadraphonic, I might add), "Journey to the Center of the Earth." I was married with five kids when I discovered Wakeman was actually a believer and was putting out some specifically Christian projects.

After all these years, Rick Wakeman continues to surprise and delight fans with his extraordinary talent, his showmanship and panache, and with the depth of his knowledge of musical forms and history. Thus, it is with great joy that I can recommend Wakeman's new combo CD/DVD, "Amazing Grace."

The CD contains two versions of the world's most popular hymn along with 17 of the church's most treasured songs of faith – though I'll wager there are a handful of songs here you have never heard of. It is simple and complex, familiar yet elusive. With the exception of the title track, the project is completely instrumental, and many of the songs are comprised solely of Wakeman on the piano or organ. Yet it never drags, nor gets boring. "Morning Has Broken" maintains all of its wonder and majesty, but Wakeman injects just enough playfulness into it that you can sense yourself skipping along the dewy corridors of creation. "Glad That I Live Am I," a tune with that I have absolutely no history, has quickly become one of my favorites. It is compelling, urgent, intense, yet beautifully unhurried. Wakeman even makes such classical masterpieces as Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" his own.

The DVD has the added benefit of allowing Wakeman to introduce a brief history of each song. Gorgeous nature scenes are interspersed with shots of Wakeman's artistic mastery of the keys, creating an atmosphere that is wonderfully conducive for worship or meditation.

**Mike and Paula Parker** cover entertainment for LifeWay.com from their home in Middle Tennessee. Visit them online at [www.wordcrafts.net](http://www.wordcrafts.net).

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