

Orrin Hatches a CD

By Benjamin Ryan



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You might think of him as the fire-breather who called Clinton "a jerk" and openly mocked Anita Hill. But there's a gentler side to Orrin Hatch. Pop the new CD release *Put Your Arms Around the World* into your Discman, and groove to a collection of relentlessly optimistic Christian music with lyrics by none other than the quixotic back-burner candidate himself. It marks Hatch's fifth release since being "discovered" in 1996 by his collaborator: singer, songwriter Janice Kapp Perry.

It seems Hatch learned more than just a solid work ethic during his ascent from Pittsburgh blue collar-dom to his current career as Mormon morals spokesman. First his cash-strapped parents scrimped and saved to give him piano, organ, and violin lessons. Then his days at Brigham Young fostered an affinity towards (maudlin) poetry, which has fueled over 300 songs to date.

There's no explicit political context, but some of the *Put Your Arms*' lyrics convey the implicit wag of a finger. Take this one: "Heal our land, please grant us peace today, and strengthen all who lack the faith, to call on thee each day." It's not hard to reconcile the sentiment with the man who described the Democrats as "the party of homosexuals." In fact, Hatch's prolific output seems devised to make the purveyors of today's violent, debauched musical entertainment hang their collective heads in shame.

But *Put Your Arms Around the World* is unlikely to knock Limp Bizkit off the charts. Saccharine and devoid of originality, his lyrics champion Christian utopianism through mawkish clichés. ("Give the gift of love, lend a hand to those in need!") Sung with bipartisan gusto by Santita Jackson (daughter of Jesse) and Chris Willis, the music is relentlessly uplifting, with ear-splitting harmonies and a syrupy mess of exploding background choruses.

Hatch says, "My hope is that perhaps just one person will hear my music and be inspired to right a wrong. I believe that music and popular culture can be a tremendous force for good." And maybe vote Republican.