



Metro / Religion

The Portland Festival 2000

CONTRIBUTED STORY
FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

This year's Portland Festival held at Waterfront Park on August 18 and 19 by Luis Palau's Ministry is bigger than ever! Bring your friends and family for good food, music and fun. Kids can enjoy the Children's area and skateboard demonstration sponsored by Jammin 95.5.

A highlight of the two-day program is the musical concert where some of the biggest Christian acts will be singing on stage.

Jaci Velasquez will be performing on Friday evening, August 18. Velasquez has brought the message of God to more people than most women her age. Two years ago she won the Gospel Music Association's Dove Award for New Artist of the Year for her debut album, *Heavenly Place*. In 1999, at age 19, she became the youngest artist ever to receive the Dove award for Female Vocalist of the Year. And in January 2000, Velasquez learned she'd landed a Grammy nomination for Best Latin Pop Performance.

With the release of Velasquez's self-titled second album, she continues to bring the message of hope to millions of fans. Her songs tell about God—and His love for us. Commenting on the feeling behind the lyrics of one song, Velasquez says, "What do I have to give the world? I don't have anything. And sometimes what it's down to is, 'Speak for me, Lord. Do all these things and be all these things I can't be for this world in need.'"

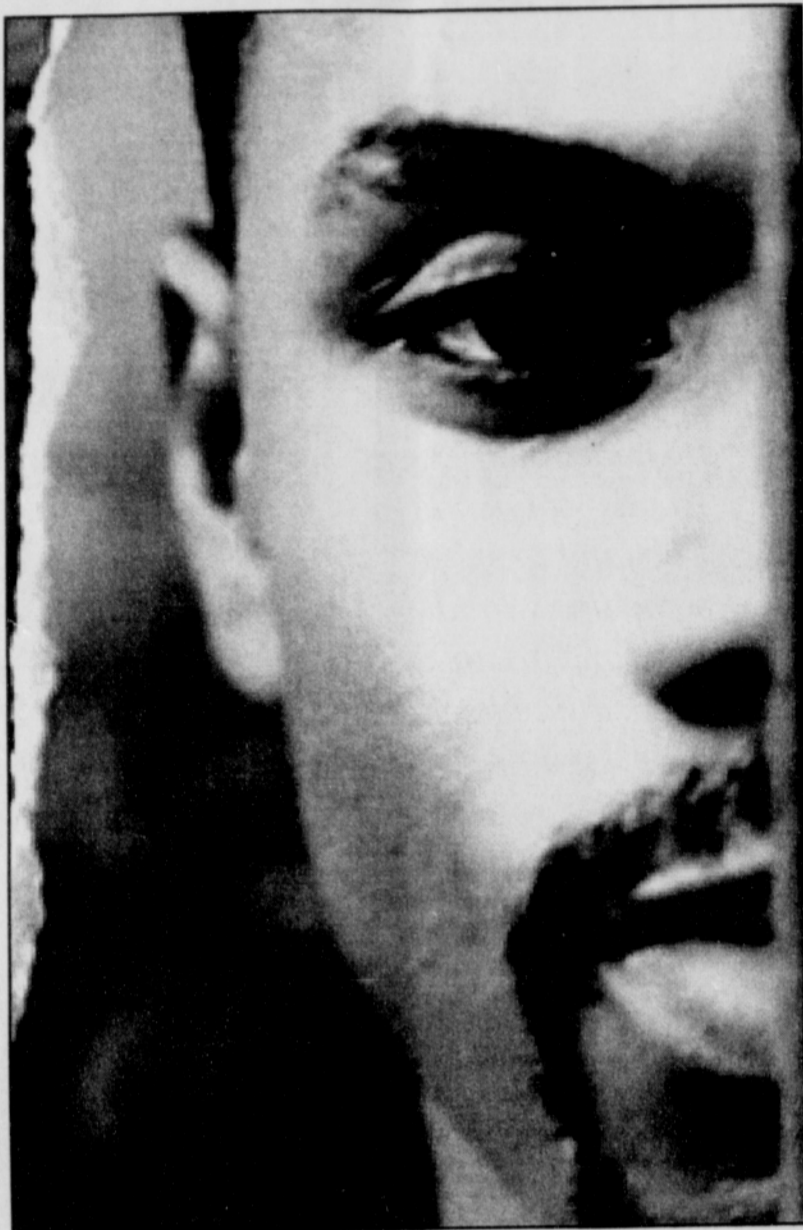
Wintley Phipps will also be performing on Friday night. Born in Trinidad, raised in Canada, and educated in the United States, Wintley Phipps knows about dreams. And he's convinced God works through them. That's why he wrote *Power of a Dream* (1996). That's why he founded the U.S. Dream Academy, an online Christian academic resource.

But Wintley brings the message through music, too. He didn't discover Black American Gospel until his college days in Huntsville, Alabama, but began writing Gospel music then—and his since sung for U.S. Presidents, the Vatican, and appeared as a special guest on the *Oprah Winfrey Show* and CBS *Nightwatch*. In 1988 and 1989, he was nominated for a Grammy. Wintley is married to Linda Diane Galloway Phipps and has three sons.

Kirk Franklin will take center stage on Saturday evening, August 19. His history includes being offered a recording deal at age 7 (his aunt, who raised him, turned it down). By age 11, he was directing the church choir. And now, Kirk Franklin's albums are rearranging the charts, landing Gospel music on MTV and at #3 on the Billboard pop album chart. "I'm a Gospel artist who has to deal with a secular business," Kirk Franklin says. "I walk a very tight rope. I stay focused through prayer."

His focus kept him on track to a Grammy, and he's the first Gospel or Christian artist ever to reach platinum sales with a debut recording. "I want to educate and enlighten," Franklin says. "Some people are afraid of organized religion. I'm giving a fresh new way to look at religion so it can be embraced."

A presentation by *Sixpence None The Richer* will be another highlight on Saturday evening. "It's all about timing," says Leigh Nash, *Sixpence's* vocalist. "I think it was the right song, with the right band, and the right record label—at the right time." The timing, the song, and the people have added up to a Grammy 2000 nomination for Best Pop Performance by Duo or Group for "Kiss Me," 1999's Breakthrough Artist of the Year by R&R, their self-titled album selling more than 1 million and certified Platinum (February 2000), and



Kirk Franklin

the "Kiss Me" video on VH1 and MTV—among other recognitions and awards. It began with 16-year-old Matt Slocum hearing 13-year-old Nash sing in 1989. Three years later they signed with a small independent label. Add band members Dale Baker, Justin Cary, and Sean Kelly, countless miles on the road—including across the United Kingdom—and plenty of hard work. "After seven years of lessons learned," Nash says, "I'm still just very thankful for the opportunity to make music, and I'm trying to take it in stride." "When we recorded our album, I think we were all at a point in our lives where we were ready to give up our dreams," Slocum says, looking at the past two years. "I know I was. So, hope was the message—don't ever give up hope for yourself."

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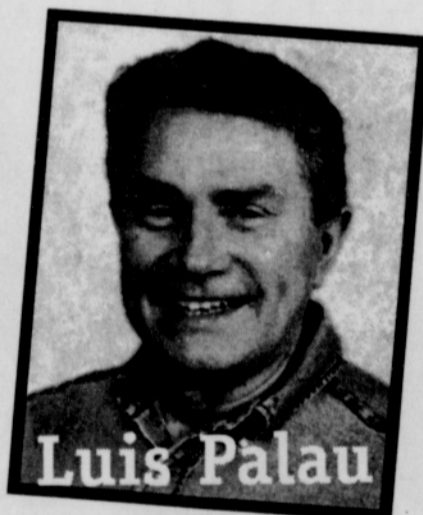
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Portland Festival 2000

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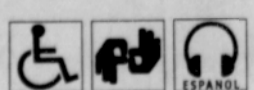
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