Agape — Gospel Hard Rock (1971)

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01. Blind — 3:34 02. Happy — 2:40 03. Believe — 3:00 04. Man — 3:38 05. Trust — 4:08 06. Freedom — 5:05 07. Choose — 4:05 08. Blood — 2:00 09. Rejoice — 5:28   Fred Caban — guitar, vocals John Peckhart — bass Mike Jungkman — drums, organ

This early attempt to fuse the popular sounds of artists like Cream and the Jimi Hendrix Experience with an evangelistic Christian message comes off as ham-fisted and naïve, but undeniably genuine. Agape doesn't quite live up to the "hard rock" portion of their album's title, filling most of the tracks on this debut with watery blues, lightweight guitar textures, and clumsy, half-spoken vocals. Still, they do find a few excuses to freak out on side two; "Freedom" contains some lengthy, double-tracked fuzz guitar solos and "Choose" features a thick, galloping Grand Funk Railroad-style approach during the instrumental sections. The album's closer, "Rejoice," begins as a disturbing reading from Revelations set to eerie psychedelia -- all discordant strings scrape over a slinky, sinister vamp, eventually bursting into heavy riffing and a rousing chorus of "Read your Bible!" Singer/songwriter/guitarist Fred Caban was definitely preaching to the converted, delivering frankly simplistic testimony and borrowed Biblical passages stitched together with awkward sincerity. In the turbulent era that Gospel Hard Rock was recorded, it might have helped the group's cause to directly address some of the spiritual crises that their youthful audience was facing rather than just parroting doctrine and language that hippies had already decided they couldn't accept. Perhaps because of this veneer of innocence, original copies of Agape's albums are highly sought after by record collectors, sometimes commanding up to 300 dollars apiece from entirely secular fans. --- Fred Beldin, allmusic.com

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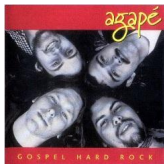**Agape — Gospel Hard Rock (1971)**

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