

THE BEST OF SIXPENCE NONE THE RICHER

The story of Sixpence None the Richer is the tale of two remarkable people who both embraced culture and sought to shake it, leaving an indelible mark on the face of pop music. Though many artists had sacrificed either their faith or their art for the sake of commercial success, Sixpence maintained a rare combination of artistic integrity and steadfast conviction in the wake of mass appeal, all the while unashamedly presenting a philosophy of faith that often left the watching world speechless.

The journey first began for vocalist Leigh Nash and songwriter/guitarist Matt Slocum, both of New Braunfels, Texas, with the release of their acclaimed but little-distributed debut, *The Fatherless and the Widow* (REX Records, 1994). This sparsely-produced record startled critics with the way Nash perfectly owned Slocum's songwriting, breathing an effervescent life into each line as though it were her own. Already, Sixpence had found the combination of wrenching lyrical depth and brave vocals that would captivate thousands as the band's career progressed.

The band's 1995 follow-up, *This Beautiful Mess*, met with growing acclaim, but suffered from REX's demise shortly after its release. Sixpence then found a welcome home in newly-formed indie-label Squint Entertainment, the brainchild of legendary producer Steve Taylor. With a resolute commitment to introducing people everywhere to the band's music, Squint prepared to launch the momentous album that would move Sixpence into its spotlight pop center.

First released in 1997, *Sixpence None the Richer* spent more than a year on shelves before its winsome love song, "Kiss Me," landed on the soundtrack to Miramax Film's "She's All That." Seemingly overnight, Sixpence found themselves with the #1 pop song in the U.S., as "Kiss Me" became the most-played song in 11 countries and topped VH1's "Video Countdown." The GRAMMY-nominated sonnet appeared on sitcoms and soaps, and landed the band on Leno, Letterman, and morning talk's crown jewels as well. Even England's royal family couldn't resist the single's charms, playing the song for over 200 million viewers at Prince Edward's 1999 wedding.

In due time, Sixpence followed that success with its cover of the La's hit "There She Goes," adding an eleventh-hour recording of the song to its soon-to-be platinum-selling project. Establishing Sixpence as a legitimate "Breakthrough Artist," according to *R&R Magazine*, the song became a Top 10 pop single and video in its own right. More television and movie appearances followed, including a cover of Sam Phillips' "I Need Love" for the *Here On Earth* soundtrack (Twentieth Century Fox), NBC's *Today Presents: The Best of the Summer Concert Series* ("Us"), and original worship choruses for the compilation albums *Exodus* ("Brighten My Heart") and *Streams* ("Breathe"), along with many others.

Sixpence's final studio album, 2002's *Divine Discontent*, recorded the band's struggle to come to terms with the obligations of its commercial success. *Divine Discontent* delivered another Top 10 single with its cover of Crowded House's "Don't Dream It's Over," and a Top 20 with "Breathe Your Name," while giving the band a chance to take stock of its creative journey and reiterate its deep-seated convictions.

The Best of Sixpence None the Richer finally gathers these many, varied songs into one comprehensive collection. The project covers wide topical ground, from cult pop classics like Abba's "Dancing Queen," that Sixpence covered for the 1999 political satire *Dick* (Sony Pictures), to such philosophically-defining treatises as "The Ground You Shook," a poignantly understated contribution Sixpence made to the tribute album *Roaring Lambs*, titled after Bob Briner's best-selling book by the same name.

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The Best of Sixpence None the Richer gathers Sixpence favorites from across each of the band's studio albums, along with hard-to-find cuts from various soundtracks and compilations and a few new songs. The track list includes the band's version of "I Just Wasn't Made for These Times," contributed to a compilation commemorating Beach Boy Brian Wilson, and a unique Japanese version of "Kiss Me" never before heard outside Japan. Revealing Sixpence's spiritual bent are such fan favorites as the Psalmic "Trust (Reprise)" from *The Fatherless and the Widow*; the atmospheric, quizzical opening to *This Beautiful Mess*, "Angeltread;" and *Divine Discontent's* "Melody of You," which climatically marries the group's streams of artistry, belief and pop appeal. The collection would not be complete without a couple of fresh creative offerings, found in the previously unreleased cuts "Loser Like Me" and "Too Far Gone."

Together, this collection of songs chronicles the dedication Sixpence has shown to Briner's call for believers to "...confidently carry their faith with them into the marketplace so that our very culture feels the difference." Time and again, from Regis to Leno, the members of Sixpence have found opportunity to speak their faith by simply answering questions about the literary reference that birthed their name. With each encounter, they patiently tell once more the story that Nash recounted in her appearance on Letterman in August, 1999. Although Nash has never completely overcome her youthful nervousness on stage, she bravely walked over to a chair on the "Late Show" stage following her band's performance.

After asking where the band's name came from, Letterman teasingly interrupted Nash to ask if he could stop by her hotel room after the show. Nash's blank silence stopped him cold, chastening him into an apology. With that, she proceeded to finish her story.

"It comes from a book by C. S. Lewis...called *Mere Christianity*," she resumed. "A little boy asks his father if he can get a sixpence - a very small amount of English currency - to go and get a gift for his father. The father gladly accepts the gift and he's really happy with it, but he also realizes that he's not any richer for the transaction..."

"He bought his own gift," Letterman responded. "That's right," Nash continued. "C.S. Lewis was comparing that to his belief that God has given him, and us, the gifts that we possess, and to serve Him the way we should, we should do it humbly...realizing how we got the gifts in the first place."

"Well, that's beautiful," Letterman stammered, with uncharacteristic earnestness. "If we could just keep that little sliver of enlightenment with us, things would be so much better..."

World-renowned theologian C. S. Lewis provided a fitting foundation for the impressive platform Sixpence None the Richer built to change the world. Following in Lewis' footsteps, Sixpence understood that to reach people, one must communicate in their language, and do so with honest imagination. And each, in word or song, gained the ear of their generation, conveying orthodox truths to a waiting, watching audience without ever compromising art or thought.

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