

# Boys Brigade makes western debut

by Tom Wilson

He sounds tired. It's ten AM here in the Gateway office, but it's noon in the Montreal hotel room where "he" is. "He" is Malcolm Burn, vocalist-keyboard player for Toronto's Boys Brigade.

Boys Brigade formed in Toronto in 1981 and they released their first album in 1983. Their percussion-heavy songs have assured them of their own niche in the Canadian music market. Boys Brigade consists of three percussionists: Billy Brock, David Porter and Jeff Packer; one bassist, Wayne Lorenz; one guitarist, Tony Lester; and Malcolm. The band has been touring in support of their album *Boys Brigade* (which was produced by Rush's Geddy Lee) for the past five months.

"So, How's the weather in Montreal?"

"It's pretty cool. It's about -9 this morning."

I laugh and tell him it's pretty mild here, only -21.

"We've never been west of Ontario."

Malcolm admits, though they have toured extensively in the United States with the Gang of Four and with the Romantic. Noting that he has seen more of the U.S. than he has of Canada, I ask him about the state of Canadian music: "Canadian music is fine; it's as good as music anywhere. It's funny how many Canadian bands are accepted outside of Canada before they catch on here."

"The most progressive music is being made in Europe and England. It's a melting pot for all kinds of music. Like, there are a lot of African immigrants in England, so the African music is introduced into the popular music."

Over the past year, the Boys Brigade album has been well received by both the public and the critics across Canada on the strength of the two hit singles "Passion of Love" and "Melody." All of the songs on the album are an exceptional combination of danceable music and intelligent lyrics. I asked Malcolm about the songs on the album and about where he draws his inspiration from.

"Basically they're an expression of daily life. They're mainly about human relationships, since everything stems from a person's conception of how things relate to him. A person develops from the relations he has, you know, with a friend, wife, parents or whatever."

With Rush's Geddy Lee as producer on the album, I assumed it was Lee's ex-



perience in the studio and with hit singles that most affected the band.

"Well, obviously he has a lot of experience in the studio and with hit singles, but what we found he did best was to keep it organized, which is not as easy as it may sound with six individuals, all wanting to contribute. He made sure that everyone could participate in the recording. It was very creative."

So what sets Boys Brigade apart from other musical groups?

"Our assets are that we're creative; we like to try different things, take chances. We relate well to the audience which is the aim of entertainment, and we work well together which is rare. A lot of bands are creative and a lot can relate to the audience but it's surprising how few work together."

In popular music today it is virtually impossible to have complete success without having a video to go along with the hit single. The Boys Brigade video for "Passion of Love" is one of the best Canadian videos released this year. Malcolm comments on the video market in Canada and on the concept of videos in general.

"We've just released the second video (off of the album) for the song "Melody." There are not quite the facilities in Canada for videos as there are in the United States. We've got a few shows like *New Music* but we don't have an MTV station so..."

"The important thing to remember (when making a video) is to come up with characters in the video that match the characters in the song. In the song "Melody", the story revolves around a girl (Melody) so the video has to have a character that acts in a way people are expecting."

He adds: "I like videos by ex-10cc members, Godly and Cream. They did the video for the Police's *Synchronicity II* video, which is a great video. I don't like shlocky videos where all they have is a bunch of chicks with big tits running around." Immediately, "Lover Boy" comes to mind followed closely by "Kiss". I asked him if he thought videos could be considered dangerous if left in the wrong hands: "Dangerous? No. It's just called change."

Looking back over the two and a half years of the band's existence, I wondered if the band had changed at all and if they were tired of touring.

"We're more sensible. Now we know the way things work on the outside. You have to understand the way the business end works along with the musical side."


"We enjoy the live shows. That's where you come up with new ideas about how to present a song. We perform a lot of new songs that are not on the album. It's actually gotten better. We're more well known now so the audiences are more familiar with us."

As a final question, I asked what the Boys Brigade had planned for the near future and for the not-so-near future.

"The second album is slowly starting to happen. We'll be finished touring by next month or so, then we're taking a month off to write, then it's back into the studio to record the songs and make the videos."

And ultimately? "To come up with the ultimate album and the videos to go with it. (He laughs). Then financial stability."

On that economic cue, I remember that this is long distance. We say our good-byes and I remind him to bring a warm sweater. Boys Brigade will be appearing in the Great White North at Dinwoodie Lounge on Friday, January 27th and at the Prime Time Lounge on Saturday, January 28th.



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