

BRIAN LITTRELL

Brian Littrell is forging a path into uncharted territory. Sure, other soloists have stepped out of their popular groups to do side projects. Some have soared into the upper stratosphere of pop music success, while others have disappointedly failed to meet expectations. But this confident, young man is doing something that has never been done before. With the Fall 2005 release of his solo CD for Provident Label Group's Reunion Records, Brian is following a call placed in his heart as a young boy and using his gargantuan platform to make a statement that it's okay to stand strong for what you believe in. Even if that thing you believe in is one of the most divisive issues in the world. It's enough to make even the bravest guy think twice. But not Brian.

Perhaps it's because he's able to stand on the astonishing success his group has attained. Nobody would blame him for that. Unbelievably, their tour of fifteen House of Blues dates sold out in twenty minutes. *All of them*. It'd be understandable if someone puffed out his chest a little. After twelve years together and more than 75 million albums sold around the world, the Backstreet Boys are arguably one of the most popular groups of the Billboard generation. On the day of the group's *Millennium* CD release, Times Square had to be shut down because nearly 30,000 people showed up.

Even still, Brian is convinced that all the worldly success he's achieved with the group has been merely a stepping-stone to something bigger, something more significant. The first solo recording heard from Brian was the Spring 2005 release of "In Christ Alone," a song that was singled off of the WOW #1's compilation album. This is a song that has been very close to him for years, and one that he had sung in various churches nearly fifteen years ago. Today, it stands as a purpose statement for his new direction, his driving force, and his cornerstone.

Brian shares, "I've been a born-again Christian since I was eight years old and I've known for a very long time that this has been my calling. If I can do something that opens doors and benefits lives in some way, I hope to be able to do that."

2005 is a busy year for the Backstreet Boys. A new CD release planned for the summer, as well as non-stop touring and promotion of the new project. Throw a solo project from Brian in the mix and you've got a crazy life. How is this the right time? Brian explains, "I've decided to listen more, and when you listen more, you get answers. God has laid this on my heart and it's time to do something about it. It's not my timing but His." With an unusual brand of focus and drive, Brian is choosing to use his days off from the group (even on tour) to promote this new project with television, radio, retail, and concert appearances.

Raised in Lexington, Kentucky, Brian was brought up attending a Baptist church with his family. He was into every sport, and singing in church. Actually most of his family were singers and musicians. He sees Christianity as a way of life, a choice. "To know love and compassion, and what is right and wrong in God's eyes." And through his music, he hopes to bring people closer to God, as well as educating people who do not know God. But all in a way that isn't offensive or condescending to anyone. "I want people

to be drawn to what they hear and that goes for nonbelievers as well as believers," Brian explains. "That's breaking new ground and bringing people together."

Looking out over the audiences of sold-out stadium tours, Brian could see not just young kids and teenagers enjoying the show, but parents as well. That's something he hopes will continue with this new solo project. "Good quality music brings families together," he notes.

Stating that the other guys in the group have been nothing but supportive, he also adds that stylistically, his solo project will not stray too far from the sound that made the group so popular. "My record will sound a bit like the Backstreet Boys because that's a big part of me and that's where I am musically. It will also have a mixture of traditional gospel as well as contemporary Christian music."

Even though he is known worldwide, Brian is surprisingly laid-back, settled, and at ease. Hardly the marks of fawned over, travel-weary, superstars. He points to the relationship he has with his wife Leighanne and son Baylee as being the roots that keep him pulled down to earth, in the midst of all the screaming fans. "I think having a normal life outside of the Backstreet Boys keeps me in check. My wife and my son have everything to do with that. There is nothing more rewarding than having a loving wife and a strong, healthy little boy. That is what God has given me. I am blessed."

With this upcoming solo project, it's impossible to predict what's going to happen. But one thing is for sure, the world will be listening. Well, at least a few dozen million. Through it all, it's easy to believe Brian when he says that it's not about him. That it's not about acquiring any more fame or money or accolades. It's a bit bigger than that. It's a bit more brave than that. When all the applause for Brian fades away, his one hope remains. "The objective is to change the way people feel about God. There will come a day that God will be applauded."