

Meet the Band: Newsboys 2.0

Christian pop-rock band Newsboys returns with a brand-new album, Born Again, which features the debut of lead singer Michael Tait, formerly of Tait and dcTalk. Tait and longtime Newsboys drummer Duncan Phillips discuss the band's new sound and record, which released July 13.

Michael, how was it for you joining the band?

Michael Tait: Newsboys have always been the top in my industry. So I thought to myself, *Am I ready to do this kind of thing once again without my old partners Toby [McKeehan] and Kevin [Max]?* I prayed about it and thought about it, and I took on the responsibility and learned the songs. That said, I've never looked back, and I tell you, it's the absolute greatest, most awesome opportunity of my blessed life.

What can you tell us about the new record?

Tait: [The title] is kind of a throwback phrase from the '70s when people were believers and followers of Christ, and Christians were still called born-again believers. We're taking that phrase and mixing it with the double meaning of "born again"—of me now being the new singer of a Newsboys band that is in many ways "born again." That said, the record is very traditional in the sense of message because the message never changes, but the method does change. Musically, it's killer; it's pop-rock, it's edgy, it's groovy.

Duncan Phillips: The great thing with Newsboys going forward now is we have the opportunity with Michael to really explore musically and create avenues that we haven't done in the past, so it's really like a software upgrade, like an update to the band. This is a new thing—although having said that, there are

songs that we're writing right now that are very classical Newsboys' songs. We aren't walking totally away from what our fans know, but on the other hand, we want to be new and fresh. And with Michael, he could sing the phone book and people would buy it. He just has that rich, beautiful quality to his voice. Michael says we're chasing the art—we're absolutely doing that and know that we have a paintbrush that can paint those new pictures on that canvas.

What are Newsboys fans now responding to most in concert?

Phillips: I've always been a closet dcTalk fan ... so it's probably "Jesus Freak," which is a dcTalk song from way back when. It's fun for me because it allows me to play this incredibly huge single legitimately within the confines of Newsboys because now we have the guy from that band that sang that song in the first place.

Michael, do you think the transition from Peter Furler to you was easier because of the Christian music community?

Tait: Yes, we're blessed by that. Back in the day they always said that if you were a Newsboys fan, there was a good chance you were a dcTalk fan. I was waiting for the comments, 'Where's Peter? We want the other guy back,' and there were a couple here and there, but it lasted for just a minute.

Phillips: The first guy we thought to ask to be the lead singer was Michael Tait. It's interesting looking back now at the hand of God and how He orchestrated this whole thing. We truly believe it's divine, and because we believe that, we think that the best is yet to come.