

Worship Goes Global

The British worship band Delirious is taking their high-octane praise to the nations.

It's about 45 minutes into the concert at First Church of the Nazarene in Bethany, Oklahoma, and British rock band Delirious have already taken the crowd of a few hundred on a roller-coaster ride—physically, emotionally and, perhaps most importantly, spiritually.

But as the ethereal guitar tone—deliberately paced by a pulsating drum rhythm and understated piano strokes—introduces the intimate worship song “Take Off My Shoes,” lead singer Martin Smith removes his and neatly places them by his side. His powerful tenor voice suddenly becomes reverently tender and emotive as he sings.

“I’ll take off my shoes, I’m coming in / Untie this rope, I’m staying with Him / Love of my life, I’ll live and die / Just for the moments for my King and I.”

Smith’s reference to the Old Testament’s holy of holies lays the foundation for even more personal revelations. The song’s chorus speaks of the sin nature of every person in the building and everyone who has ever heard the song. “Hold me, blow all the pride from my bones / With Your fire / Hold me, breathe on this heart made of stone / Keep it pure.”

Those words look good on paper. They sound even better when heard through the vehicle of song. But Smith himself knows that the battle against pride and the flesh is especially tricky when the world is literally your stage.

“It’s hard because being in a band, you immediately enter a world of self-promotion whether you want to or not,” Smith candidly admits. “You make your records. You make the cover look great. You always put your best foot forward. You want people to think you’re fantastic and the record’s great.

“So we live in this interesting balance of knowing there’s a lot of marketing going on and self-promotion, and yet on the other hand God is the one that’s raising you up. There’s a bit of both really. But ultimately God has to be the one that gets it going.”

Rock ‘n’ Roll Missionaries

Perhaps because of that perspective, the band in recent years has seen doors open to some of its biggest opportunities yet. In fact, no longer does the band Delirious see itself as a traditional touring rock band but instead as rock ‘n’ roll missionaries who are being sent to every corner of the planet.

“Right now as a band we are very much sensing a greater call from God to the nations,” explains keyboard player and band manager Tim Jupp. “Last year alone we visited 25 countries, and there seems to be a continuing increase in opportunity to go to even more places and do what we do.

“We cannot stay in any one place for an extended period of time as perhaps traditionally the missionaries do, but through the music we do have the ability to gather the crowds, preach the gospel, and I believe, see many thousands won for Christ.”

To that end, Delirious members have found themselves traveling the globe playing for people on every continent. Last year,

the band performed at a three-day evangelism event in Hyderabad, India, with Bible teacher Joyce Meyer, where a reported 1.2 million people stood on an old military field.

Earlier this year, Delirious revisited India and were scheduled to perform in Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand, Cambodia, Malaysia, South Korea, the Philippines, China, Ukraine and most of Europe. In October, the band will join Meyer again for two nights in Johannesburg, South Africa, and a women's conference in Toronto.

"From the very beginnings of Delirious we have always felt a sense that the songs we have been carrying would be for the world," Jupp says. "Now we find ourselves in a season when this call is coming to fruition.

"We are very excited to be in this place, and prophetically also believe that we are here to encourage and see a generation of indigenous worship leaders and musicians raised up in their own nations. Also, we want to help create a path and ways for other musicians to travel and minister in places that perhaps right now they find hard to see a way how this could happen."

With last October's CD-DVD release of *Now Is the Time: Live at Willow Creek*, Delirious solidified their commitment to shake things up in the worship music genre. For most of its 15-year career, in fact, the band from Littlehampton, England, has walked a fine line between traditional vertical worship and a horizontal approach that looks at hard issues and how the church should respond.

In one evening, an audience might be engaged in corporate worship with "I Could Sing of Your Love Forever," "Deeper" or "Majesty" and then challenged to action with songs such as

“Here I Am Send Me,” “History Maker” or “Now Is the Time.”

And sometimes things get really uncomfortable with songs such as “Our God Reigns,” a tale of two realities that references abortion, plastic surgery, social injustice and materialism—all the while recognizing that the Creator is in control of the situation.

For Delirious the bigger issue is a concern that the church lacks a holistic view of what worship is truly all about. Over time, the band’s exposure to the world has changed its approach to ministry. Instead of focusing solely on the Christian community, it has shifted to a broader worldview in an effort to reach the unsaved.

That mentality has afforded Delirious some unusual opportunities, including opening spots with popular rock acts such as Bon Jovi and Bryan Adams, as well as invitations to play major mainstream festivals in places such as the Czech Republic and Ukraine. The band even performed for the pope and a million others at the 2005 World Youth Day in Germany and for world leaders at the 2004 Summer Olympics in Athens, Greece.

Living the Life

Amid what he calls an amazing journey, Jupp says figuring out what it means to be both a rock act and a worship band remains an ongoing process. “The biggest challenge is for ourselves, that we actually start to live out some of the things that we sing about,” Jupp says.

“I think that will be the thing that actually speaks to people

more than the songs do. It would be very disappointing if people came to visit us in our town and just [saw] us sitting on our backsides in the fruit of selling records because the songs are good.

“I want them to come and see a life of difference and come and see our work through the local church and all of the things that are going on to help people. I think that would be the most profound demonstration of what it is to lead a life of worship.”

Collectively, the members of Delirious agree that this is just the beginning. In April the band released a book about its ministry journey titled *I Could Sing of Your Love Forever: Stories, Reflections and Devotions*. But the focus on world missions has created a number of challenges that a successful recording artist wouldn't normally have to face.

Although most bands receive payment for playing concerts—not to mention the money earned from product sales—that is simply not the case when Delirious perform in places such as India or Brazil. “As you can imagine this presents an enormous economic challenge to us,” Jupp admits. “We do not have our own reserves of cash to do these things.

“Also, we are at a time that in the music industry, because of the Internet and other factors, that we can no longer rely on record sales to be the bread and butter of our income. We are then left with a situation where as a band we are now earning a living predominantly from playing live, whilst at the same time feeling God's call to go to the nations where we can earn very little, if nothing at all, from playing.”

And despite the fact that traveling to developing countries and performing as rock 'n' roll missionaries doesn't bring in the big pay dates that come with stateside touring, Delirious members are firmly committed to doing their best to follow Christ's example of service.

"The whole essence of the New Testament is about Jesus coming and laying His life down and preferring other people," Jupp says.

"I think the whole essence of worship is about that. It's about laying down our lives, about feeding the poor, about reaching out to others, which is the essence of what happened when Jesus came. He fulfilled everything. It meant God could be real to mankind in a personal way and because of that we can understand what it is to worship Him and have a relationship with Him."

At the end of the day, all the band members agree that it doesn't matter if they play for a few hundred people or a few hundred thousand. But make no mistake: They are deeply entrenched in the belief that God has a big plan in store—as if He hasn't already used the band to accomplish some pretty significant tasks.

"I think we envisioned it reaching bigger levels than this," guitarist Stuart Garrard says. "I don't think we're satisfied. It's brilliant to have traveled the way we do and travel the world, but there's a whole world out there that needs to hear about hope and faith and hear about God's love. Our vision is to do that through our music."

"We feel like things have just started for us," Smith adds.

“We’ve not achieved anything really. I think this is all part of a new beginning.”

Chad Bonham is a journalist based in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, where he produces The ProFILES, a sports TV show. Readers can follow Delirious’ tour schedule by visiting .

To learn more about Delirious log on at