



> **BY EILEEN SHAPIRO**
CELEBRITY CORRESPONDENT

THE BOYBAND

Contemporary boy band cover group The Boy Band Project is an effervescent, energy-ridden, talented bunch of sexy boys, all complete with Broadway credits, the members having met in the off-Broadway show *Altar Boyz*.

The group covers boy bands from the '90s such as Backstreet Boys, New Kids on the Block, O-Town, 98 Degrees, Boyz II Men, *NSYNC and beyond, including One Direction, The Four Seasons, The Jackson Five, The Beach Boys and The Bee Gees. The group's shows are interactive and nostalgic as well as funny and entertaining.

Travis Nesbitt, "The Sensitive One" and self-proclaimed leader of the group, has appeared in *Altar Boyz*, *The Producers* and *The Radio City Christmas Spectacular*. He originates from Orange County, California, and takes his inspirations from Lance Bass of *NYSNC and Jonathan Knight of New Kids on the Block.

Jesse Johnson, "The Edgy One," hails from Denver, Colorado, and is inspired by AJ of Backstreet Boys and JC of *NSYNC. He has been cast in *9 to 5*, *Wicked*, *Grease*, *Altar Boyz* and *Xanadu*.

Marshal Carolan, "The Sporty One," has been in *Hair*, *Altar Boyz*, *Mamma Mia* and *The Radio City Spring Spectacular*. His influences are Brian Littrell of Backstreet Boys and Donnie Wahlberg of New Kids on the Block. He is originally from Newport Beach, California.

Neil Starkenberg, "The Boy Next Door" aka "The Baby," is from Long Beach, California, and is inspired by Nick Carter of Backstreet Boys and Joey McIntyre of New Kids on the Block. His credits include *Mamma Mia* and *Altar Boyz*.

I had the unique and joyfully fun opportunity to speak to the band, all except Neil, who stood me up for an audition. They were refreshing and entertaining in a dazzling, flamboyant way. As hard as it may be to imagine, the band sounds better than the original groups that they cover. They will be joining *Get Out! Magazine* on June 25 for *Pridefest* at our booth, and will be singing, signing autographs and just about anything else anyone asks for.



PROJECT

Travis, tell us about the group.

Travis: We are an international, contemporary, boy band cover group, and what we do is, we reimagine the boy band hits from the '90s and beyond. When I say reimagine, I mean we do the moves, the energy, we have a lot of fun. The way we came about, we were all in an off-Broadway show called Altar Boyz, about a Christian boy band. What we did was we saved the souls of New York in 90 minutes through our amazing hip-hop. When

that show finished, I got the idea for developing a '90s boy band cover group. The '90s are kind of like the new wave of retro entertainment, so I made a concept video. It started going, and we're having a lot of fun with it.

Well, it sucks that when you're a cover band--you sound better than the originals.

Travis: It's the best thing ever!

Who is your favorite boy band?

Travis: I'm kind of partial to the Backstreet Boys, because they have been around the longest, and your first is always your favorite.

Jessie: Probably Boyz II Men or New Kids on the Block, because those were my first.

Marshal: I would have to say, hands down, *NSYNC.

OK, Marshal, I agree with you.

Travis: Do you really?

I do. Do you guys do original stuff as well?

Travis: Some of our guys write their own music, but we have just kind of been promoting ourselves as a '90s cover band.

Are you all original members?

Travis: We are all original members. We have subs once in a while, because

we're all super talented, and we are in shows all the time. You were lucky to catch the original four guys.

What is the official name of the group, and how long have you been together?

Travis: We are "The Boy Band Project." We made it in 2014, and we've been going ever since.

How old are all of you?

Travis: Oh, here's where the truth comes out. I'm 33, Marshal is 32 and Jesse is 31. Neil is 28. I think that's probably why we know this music inside and out. When the Backstreet Boys and *NSYNC were on top, we were living our lives. We were like their perfect audience. But we all look like we're 12.

OK, then send a picture, darling.

Travis: Photoshop!

So you boys are going to hang out with us at Pride, correct?

Travis: We are. We will be at the table with you, signing magazines, bringing our T-shirts with our logo.

I want a T-shirt, please.

Travis: You can have anything you want as long as you make us look cool.

I'll make Jesse look cool. He's my favorite.

Travis: He's only said five words. Everybody likes Jesse. It's not fair.



So, where are you going to go with your band?

Travis: Right now what we do is, our show is extremely customized. We can do a show for 90 minutes, and the show is very interactive. We look at all the hilarious things that boy bands did during the '90s. So right now we are doing the casino circuit, we are doing private events, performing arts centers, and eventually I would like to set up a tour and tour the country. I'm also working on going overseas, to London, Europe, and who knows, maybe the Boy Band Project will be on Broadway. You never know, right?

You are all Broadway boys as well?

Travis: Yes, we are all Broadway boys. I've done The Producers, Altar Boyz. I've done a bunch of productions of Hairspray, and I did The Radio City Spectacular.

OK, I'm impressed with you, Travis. Are you the leader, or just the one with the most to say?

Travis: I am the leader. This is my baby.
Marshal: The first show I did out of college was Mamma Mia. That was probably the longest one I did. I did that in

Las Vegas. I was also in the Radio City Spring Spectacular, then I did the revival of Hair.

Jesse: I'm currently doing Wicked. I did Altar Boyz, I did 9 to 5, the Dolly Parton musical, and I did Grease a bunch of times, and Xanadu.

So I heard that you were on my favorite radio show yesterday with Jimmy Star and Ron Russell.

Travis: We were. He mentioned you. They were great. They tried to get personal with us, but we got a little nervous. We sang some stuff, and they invited us to come to Palm Springs with them. They were really cool.

You all sound like you are a lot of fun.

Travis: That's the thing, it's not even work. It's so much fun.

Be sure to meet the boys on June 25 at the Get Out! Magazine table for Pridefest.

The Boy Band Project will be performing at The Monster after the Gay Pride March.

Email - theboybandprojectnyc@gmail.com

Website - www.theboybandproject.com

Twitter - @TBBPNYC

Instagram - @boybandproject

Managed by: 107 Productions - 908.653.0107

PHOTOGRAPHER - ERIC TRONOLONE | LOCATION - DRIFT STUDIO
HAIR AND MAKE-UP - GRACE AND EMILY STOCKDALE



JESSE JOHNSON



TRAVIS NESBITT



MARSHAL CAROLAN



NEIL STARKENBERG