

[00:00:07]

PERSON: Hi there, and welcome to the Talks at Google podcast, where great minds meet. I'm [inaudible], and I'll be bringing you this week's episode. For those of you who are new to us, Talks at Google brings the world's most influential thinkers, creators, makers and doers all to one place. Every episode of this podcast is taken from a video that can be seen at youtube.com/talksatgoogle. Boyz II Men remains one of the most truly iconic R&B groups in music history. The trio, which includes Nathan Morris, Wanya Morris, and Shawn Stockman, holds the distinction of being the best R&B group of all time with four Grammy awards, nine American Music Awards, nine Soul Train awards, three Billboard Awards, a 2011 MOBO Award for outstanding

[00:00:56]

Hollywood Walk of Fame, as well as a Casino Entertainment Award for their acclaimed residency at the Mirage Resort and Casino in Vegas, which has been ongoing since 2013. In this talk, Nathan, Wanya and Shawn discuss their rise to fame, how they've persevered through challenges along the way, and the secret to their partnership remaining so strong after an incredible 27 years in the limelight. Moderated by Valeisha Butterfield Jones, here's Boyz II Men. Three decades of R&B hits.

VALEISHA JONES: Hi, Joe. It's going to be a long day.

WANYA MORRIS: Yeah. This guy.

SHAWN STOCKMAN: Hi, everybody.

WANYA MORRIS: Hello. How are you?

NATHAN MORRIS: Hello, hello, hello, hello in the back. How are you?

PERSON: So guys, first, we want to give you a big welcome to Google. I can honestly say that I'm sitting here, and I would imagine that many of us are because of the true

[00:01:51]

impact you've had in our lives, in our careers by just seeing the example that you made across the globe, as far as representation. So first, just want to kick it off to you on who is Boyz II Men? Like, where are you today? What makes you tick?

WANYA MORRIS: Man.

SHAWN STOCKMAN: Yeah, go, go.

WANYA MORRIS: Well, honestly, Boyz II Men-- we represent music. Real music. We try our best to maintain the integrity of music throughout our careers. We went to the high school for creative and performing arts, and that's what we went to school for. I barely got out of it--barely got out of school just because all I wanted to do was sing with these guys, and being choir majors-- vocal choir majors--we actually would be around each other. So we kind of formulated somewhat of a place where we belonged

vocally without knowing that we were going to sing together. And once we decided to get in the room--and Nate will probably tell you the story and how it all came about--

[00:02:56]

but once we got into a room and actually started singing harmonies, it was something that we couldn't let go of. It was almost like a drug. It was like a high. It was like the best sex that you ever had. You know what I'm saying? Honestly, I mean. But that's what harmony does, you know what I mean? When you're creating it, like we often say, music comes out of our throats. You know what I'm saying? And it comes together and it becomes something so magical that you can't forget and you always want it. You're chasing that actual perfect harmony, and Boyz II Men--we are music. That's how we feel about it.

SHAWN STOCKMAN: Basically, we're harmony crackheads. Is that what you said?

WANYA MORRIS: Harmony crackheads.

SHAWN STOCKMAN: All right. Thank you.

VALEISHA JONES: So talk to us a little bit about the journey. We always see-- I always give the example of Instagram. It's like the highlight reel, right? But we all know that to get and reach your level of success, there had to be some hardship. So curious to know if you could share with us some of the struggles that you're comfortable with sharing so we, too, can kind of navigate those moments in our life.

[00:04:04]

NATHAN MORRIS: Well, we actually started as a group that you know now in, I'd say, '90, '91-ish that the world knows. And obviously, coming out of high school, we jumped out pretty fast. Things went very well for us and success was great. The first three or four years went very well, , and then things kind of got a little fishy. Us being young, learning the industry as teenagers, not quite soaking in all the information that we probably needed to soak in. And not knowing enough about the business to know that, unfortunately, the music industry was built on the shoulders of mobsters and people like that who weren't 100% honest. We, coming from Philadelphia, being taught that whatever you work for, you get like that.

VALEISHA JONES: Philly in the house.

NATHAN MORRIS: We, coming from Philly, being taught that when you work hard, you win. And then you get into a business that kind of flips it on you that when you work hard, things don't always pan out.

[00:05:00]

So to make a long story short, things didn't always go well for us, and the middle of our career kind of dipped down. And we kind of only had ourselves as a group to rely on because everyone else around us, we started to realize, were strictly around us to either better themselves or make more money or not give us enough information for us to move forward. So we kind of fell on each other's shoulders. We tried to figure

out how to fight through it. I mean obviously, you guys see there's one member missing from the original group. That was one of the hardships that we kind of went through-- something that we were able to bounce back from. And we all grew up together. We talk about it now-- that 27 years in, we've probably spent more time on the road with each other than we've spent with our own families. So we're kind of closer than we are even to some of our family members. So for our guy to leave in the way that that thing went down for us, it was a little difficult. But we knew, like Wan said, that all we ever wanted to do was sing and make great music. And we weren't going to let one person stop that show. And again, to try to narrow it down, because I know we all want to talk, there's always hardships.

[00:06:03]

And I think the key is figuring out where you want to be and how you dig out the place that you're in. I'm a big believer in trying your best to control what you can control, and don't stress out about the things that you can't control. And we kind of took that moniker as things weren't going well to just do what we could do, and let everything else fall where it went. And 27 years later, we're still able to be successful at what we're doing.

VALEISHA JONES: Amazing. Yes. As we sit here on the Google campus surrounded by a room of innovators, curious to know--we see where you are now and the 27-year, huge career that you've had. But curious to know about the breakthrough. What was the moment that you knew, wow, this thing is big? This thing is really working and it's time for us to scale.

SHAWN STOCKMAN: Wow. It's hard to pinpoint a defining moment because I lie to you not--

[00:07:03]

we got together sometime in 1989, and six months later, we were discovered. And then a year later, we put out our first record. And then it just went shoo. But it was really just one of those things where it had to be kismet because it was just one of those things where everything just kind of happened.

WANYA MORRIS: The stars aligned.

SHAWN STOCKMAN: The stars completely aligned for us. So I would say from--
- OK, I'll say one moment. We call it the magic show.

WANYA MORRIS: Oh yeah.

SHAWN STOCKMAN: It was February of 1989.

WANYA MORRIS: Valentine's Day.

SHAWN STOCKMAN: Valentine's Day, right? I like to tell this story mainly because I think out of everybody in the group, it affected me the most because I was kind of the introvert geek nerd dude. I was probably one of the only black dudes that listened to metal music and--

[00:08:03]

WANYA MORRIS: Read comic books.

SHAWN STOCKMAN: Read comic books.

WANYA MORRIS: And hung out with devil worshippers.

SHAWN STOCKMAN: I did not hang out with devil worshippers.

NATHAN MORRIS: A little bit.

SHAWN STOCKMAN: So I joined this group. We put together this show for a talent show that- like an assembly show that we have every year. And we went to school with guys like The Roots and people like that. So let me tell you something. Our talent shows were worth the price of admission. Like, we had some of the baddest musicians, singers in the country. So anyway, the curtains are drawn open. We're standing there in these sequins.

WANYA MORRIS: Two-for suits.

SHAWN STOCKMAN: Jackets.

WANYA MORRIS: No, no. White jackets.

SHAWN STOCKMAN: Oh, white jackets with these black pleather shoes and the whole nine-- now mind you, we've gone to this school for a few years, some of us.

NATHAN MORRIS: Yeah.

SHAWN STOCKMAN: And kids-- they've seen us around. You know, no big deal.

[00:09:00]

When they open the curtain, the girls screamed like we were New Edition. And so much so-- no, really. They were falling out the chair. But we didn't sing a note.

WANYA MORRIS: Not one note.

SHAWN STOCKMAN: And the principal had to--hey, you guys, stop. And all this other stuff. So we're standing there in our little poses.

WANYA MORRIS: Still standing there.

NATHAN MORRIS: Getting leg cramps.

SHAWN STOCKMAN: Right? While the principal is talking, I'm like, damn. Will she just hurry the hell up? I got sparkles in my hand. We had a whole routine. To make a long story short, we did the show. The next day--again, I was an introvert. Nobody knew me. The next day, I go to my locker. Hey, Shawn. Hey, Shawn. Shawn. Hey, Shawn. Shawn! Hey, Shawn, what up, dog? And it screwed with me a little bit because I was like, wait a minute.

NATHAN MORRIS: Overnight.

SHAWN STOCKMAN: Overnight, literally. So it was one of those things where it was like, wow, this is something special.

[00:10:02]

And this was before we even got discovered. So even then, I felt like this was something of some other plane, spiritually. Like this was just some other entity, and honestly, not trying to make it melodramatic, but that's really what it was. So to define it, I guess that was the defining moment. I knew from that point that I wanted to be a singer in this group.

JOE MULVIHILL: Shawn, real quick, tell them the story about when they dressed up--when you guys dressed up in bow ties and that whole concept, and you thought--

SHAWN STOCKMAN: They could tell that story.

JOE MULVIHILL: And it was a little ridiculous.

SHAWN STOCKMAN: All right, I'll set it up. I'll set it up. All right, so when we got discovered and Michael Bivins of New Edition discovered us and we got the deal, record's done, went to the photo shoot, and--

NATHAN MORRIS: It was horrible.

SHAWN STOCKMAN: Yeah, the first one was bad because we kind of looked like everybody else. We had the baseball caps and the parka jackets and the Timberland boots and things of that nature. And Biv had the vision.

[00:11:00]

He was like, you know, that just ain't them.

NATHAN MORRIS: He had a kind of a vision, but go ahead.

SHAWN STOCKMAN: Yeah, well you know. It was a work in progress, but he was like, see, what I want you all to do, right. Because we were going to do this showcase for Motown Records in Los Angeles. So he had an idea--

WANYA MORRIS: In the office.

SHAWN STOCKMAN: In the offices of Motown.

NATHAN MORRIS: Get them to underlayment, too. The thing in the music industry, period, is that whether you have good music or whatever, you always have to have some kind of gimmick or--I don't like to say gimmick--or some kind of identity or something that separates you from everybody else in order for you to be successful. And after we finished our first album, they really had no identity. They had us singing harmonies in an era that groups weren't really doing that. Doing a capella stuff that groups weren't really doing, so they couldn't figure out an image for the group. So Mike came up with this brilliant plan. Go, Shawn.

SHAWN STOCKMAN: Right. So he took us to the mall.

WANYA MORRIS: Nope, nope, no, no, no, no.

SHAWN STOCKMAN: No, what happened? What happened? What?

NATHAN MORRIS: That was after the fact.

[00:11:59]

WANYA MORRIS: He told us, go to the mall.

SHAWN STOCKMAN: Oh, right, right. Go to the mall, right.

NATHAN MORRIS: He said, buy some sweaters, buy some bow ties.

WANYA MORRIS: It ain't got to match. Nothing ain't got to match.

NATHAN MORRIS: Get some jeans. Well, what color should-- don't worry about it. Nothing has to match. Just go grab some stuff.

WANYA MORRIS: Bow ties, sweaters.

SHAWN STOCKMAN: Colors, pastels. The whole nine. So we bought this stuff. We put it on. We were walking down-- no, no, no, no. I'm trying to give them the short. I'm trying to give them the short, abridged, that-- so we're walking on down Sunset to this place called Pink Dot, where they made like sandwiches and stuff.

NATHAN MORRIS: And Wanya's comment to me was--

SHAWN STOCKMAN: What?

NATHAN MORRIS: Oh, man. People are looking at us, man. These outfits must really work. I said, no, dude. They're looking at us because we look like assholes.

SHAWN STOCKMAN: Oh, it was horrible. It was horrible.

NATHAN MORRIS: Like Life Savers.

SHAWN STOCKMAN: Yeah. For real. For real. It was awful. So all right. So we get our sandwiches. We get laughed at by the passersby on Sunset.

WANYA MORRIS: Beeping their horns.

SHAWN STOCKMAN: Laughing and whatnot. It was hilarious. So we go to the office at Motown. They start laughing, right? Laughing, right?

[00:13:02]

NATHAN MORRIS: First time they ever saw us.

SHAWN STOCKMAN: First time they ever saw us, and they're like, what the hell are-- like, just crazy. So we start dancing. We start singing. Yeah, all that.

NATHAN MORRIS: In the office.

SHAWN STOCKMAN: In the office. In the small little section. We gave it our South Park best. And after that, we left and it was kind of like--

NATHAN MORRIS: The president of Motown called Mike Bivins and told him that you've got to figure this out. This is not working. So then the call was made to go to--

WANYA MORRIS: Yeah, so then Mike took us to the mall.

SHAWN STOCKMAN: Mike called, and yeah, he took us to the mall and he got us these outfits.

NATHAN MORRIS: That matched.

WANYA MORRIS: The sweaters--

SHAWN STOCKMAN: That matched. Right. That matched. The sweaters that you see in "Motown Philly--" that was the shopping mall.

NATHAN MORRIS: The ones that are on the cover. Those white sweaters, those red bow ties, and the hats are the second "Cooleyhighharmony" cover.

WANYA MORRIS: He hooked us up because we had outfits to wear on the shows and everything. So we understood what the Alex Vanderpool-- because that's what it was called at the time-- we understood what the Alex Vanderpool concept was once he took us to the mall and hooked us up.

[00:14:01]

SHAWN STOCKMAN: Yeah, but it went through a really bad stage.

NATHAN MORRIS: Like the ugly teenage stage where you don't know what you're supposed to do.

SHAWN STOCKMAN: Oh man.

NATHAN MORRIS: That was us.

SHAWN STOCKMAN: It was awful. But it was good times.

VALEISHA JONES: So I'm curious to know now, you look back at how you began and the grind--the grit that was required through those stages. And now seeing the huge role that technology is playing in the music industry and you're seeing people get discovered on YouTube and on Instagram. Wondering your thoughts on instant or what appears to be instant success.

NATHAN MORRIS: At first, we used to frown down upon it, but we realize that you can't really change the times. One thing I will say is that, no offense to the millennials, but our parents always tell us this, too, but we know that if we were able to have that type of technology when we started, because we were taught to use our imagination early, where a lot of kids today don't-

[00:15:01]

if they don't push the button, it doesn't come up. We were trapped in our room by ourselves with a stick and a horse head on it, and we thought we were a knight. So if we had the technology that we had back then with the imagination that we had, this music industry would be off the charts right now.

WANYA MORRIS: Well, the one thing, as well, when it comes to the technology aspect of it, if it's utilized right, it can actually create a growth pattern. People will see you grow, but everybody's a star right away, you know what I mean? Because it's so put out there to be this type of way-- got this gold chain and his hat to the back and Kiki, do you love me? You know what I'm saying? You know what I mean? So now, everybody's trying to create what's already been created, you know what I mean? And it doesn't help the imagination to become something more-- something better.

[00:16:00]

And longevity doesn't thrive through certain circumstances like that. You have to become something in the beginning for people to see you grow to something, which will create longevity. And that's kind of like--I look at it as the Boyz II Men effect. I remember coming to places like--let's just say Google, for instance. It wasn't Google back then, of course. There was no internet, you know what I mean? There was no emails. There was no Wi-Fi.

SHAWN STOCKMAN: Okay, stop dating us, dude.

WANYA MORRIS: So we actually had to go to these radio stations. We actually had to shake hands. We had to go to the distribution companies. We had to actually show that we were able to do what they saw and heard that we were doing on these records. And we went everywhere. We cultivated enough for the world that after 27 years later, people can still say today that Boyz II Men are real, you know what I mean? So there's no technology.

[00:16:58]

It was just basically organic--the purity of music--of our vocals. And nowadays, if people don't utilize it in a manner to build themselves, they're going to be here today and gone today. And that's normally what happens with technology. And I feel bad because there are some very talented individuals out there. They just are jaded by the concept of where to start.

NATHAN MORRIS: And I think the information age helps. I think when you do the comparison, it's easier to attain the avenue to become successful, but it's a lot harder to become successful because of the information age

and it being saturated with just everything. What I mean by that is years ago, when we came out, you only heard about the artists that you heard. You didn't have access to every single person on the planet.

[00:18:00]

In other words, you only knew 50 talented singers in your life. Now, you go on the internet--there's millions of them. So it's kind of watered down to the point where it's not even so much about the talent. It's just way too many people to let them all be successful. We were at a time where--and I hate to date us, but we had three major channels, you know what I'm saying? So if you watched those three channels, whatever you got, you got from there.

SHAWN STOCKMAN: We had to get up and turn on the TV.

NATHAN MORRIS: Now that there's 10 billion channels, it's kind of watered down where everyone's attention--

JOE MULVIHILL: Does anybody know what he's talking about? AUDIENCE: Yes.

NATHAN MORRIS: Okay. As long as we're not the only ones.

SHAWN STOCKMAN: Right.

NATHAN MORRIS: But we just had to use pliers. But anyway, it's so watered down to where--and then Wan and I was talking about this the other day, that you'll hear someone who's absolutely incredible, but now that you have access to 10,000 people who are incredible, how special are they, really?

[00:18:59]

Years ago, we didn't have access. There was always somebody over here that was better than Boyz II Men. Always somebody that was better than Mariah Carey, but you didn't know about them. But now that you have connections to see and be entertained by all these people, it makes it tougher for people who are really, really talented to be successful because there's so many that you can get to.

VALEISHA JONES: So since we're dating ourselves, I might as well just go for it.

NATHAN MORRIS: All right.

PERSON: I turned 40 this year.

NATHAN MORRIS: Nice.

SHAWN STOCKMAN: Welcome.

VALEISHA JONES: Thank you.

NATHAN MORRIS: Yeah. Welcome to the hill.

VALEISHA JONES: 40's really sexy, by the way.

SHAWN STOCKMAN: Welcome to the 40 club.

PERSON: It feels good.

NATHAN MORRIS: We call it the hill. It's the bottom of the hill before you get over--

VALEISHA JONES: Okay, okay. I embrace the hill, then. And I started my career in the music industry for 10 years, and saw music companies shutting down. We know many of them. Tower Records shutting down and the industry kind of crumbling around us. And I got out. I was afraid, and I said, you know, my livelihood is attached to this business, and if I don't pivot now, I'm going to sink with it. That's how I felt at the time.

[00:20:01]

Looking back, my question to you is how have you been able to have longevity and rebrand and even reposition yourself in such a changing, evolving climate?

WANYA MORRIS: Well, honestly, it was hard. It was very hard, simply because we started off--our career was here, and we were doing so well. And we felt like at that time, when the music industry was changing, that we could actually take a couple of years off. Just relax a little bit. Enjoy the success, and when we did that, the music industry changed dramatically. And we came back, and it was like, where the hell is the music? And we actually went through a phase where we actually went searching for where the love was, I guess we used to call it. And we would go and do shows and then things like that, and it just wasn't as great as it--we would go overseas, and of course, it would be huge. It would be amazing, but we live in America, so we wanted love where we were. And we actually took a bit of a nosedive, you know what I mean? And during that time, it was very humbling. It was very humbling because we didn't know exactly what to do. We would actually sit home and wait for the big dates, which would come, but they were far and few between. And we had to, like you said, rebrand ourselves. We had to re-face ourselves, and honestly, that's around the time when we met our manager now, Mr. Joe Mulvihill, and he put together a bit of a team. And that team basically sat down with us and said, how hard are you willing to work to get to a certain place? This is going to be very humbling. This is going to be humiliating, to a certain extent, because you went out from making

[00:22:01]

\$500,000 a night at Madison Square Garden on New Year's to now performing in places that you're not going to feel too good about. But it's going to be a whole lot of shows, you know what I mean? It was like dog and pony shows. And they put this schedule together, and it was a schedule for--how long was that schedule?

JOE MULVIHILL: For the first one?

WANYA MORRIS: Yeah, talk in the mic.

JOE MULVIHILL: The first one?

WANYA MORRIS: Yeah.

JOE MULVIHILL: Probably six weeks maybe. The first-- the one you wanted to kill me?

WANYA MORRIS: Yeah.

JOE MULVIHILL: Yeah, the first one. That was six weeks.

WANYA MORRIS: Yeah, and we did these shows. And I'm telling you, you go from performing at theaters and arenas to performing at a place called Pufferbellies, you know what I mean?

JOE MULVIHILL: Does anybody know Pufferbellies? It's in Cape Cod.

WANYA MORRIS: No.

NATHAN MORRIS: No.

JOE MULVIHILL: Well, they're all going to tell you about The Firehouse--

NATHAN MORRIS: The Firehouse--

JOE MULVIHILL: --and how much of an asshole I am.

NATHAN MORRIS: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

JOE MULVIHILL: They're going to tell you that in a second.

WANYA MORRIS: These places were, you could say, maybe 500 capacity. And there was like 50 people there. And you know, we actually looked at each other literally and was like, holy shit.

[00:23:05]

What is happening to us? What are we doing? And honestly, I say it all the time. We, throughout this time, this humbling period, we broke up like five times, but it was five minutes each time. You know, honestly, and I guess Nate can continue on.

NATHAN MORRIS: Well, no, no. I mean, he's 100% correct. It took a lot for us to really wrap our head around changing gears, as you said. And what we were able to do was-- a lot of people don't know all the history of our group. They know that we sing. We've got some so-called pretty good records. Well, I just-- I ain't going to say they're all good. But you know, we make records. But a lot of people don't know that a lot of our career was spent grinding, learning how to be performers. A lot of people don't understand that. They've seen the videos of "Motown Philly," and then they see "End of the Road," and we kind of walk around and don't do much.

[00:24:03]

So-- being honest. So hypothetically, if you were ever to hear about a Boyz II Men concert, you have no idea what to expect, because all you see us do is walk around in videos. [LAUGHTER] So my point being is that-- exactly.

WANYA MORRIS: That's it. That was it.

NATHAN MORRIS: So my point being that, because people didn't know that about us, we were able to use it to our advantage. Like when you said, figure out, the music industry changing, what are we going to do? Are we going to jump ship or do whatever? So what we were able to do is, I guess you say, lean more towards being a performing group versus a recording group, because there was not a lot of money in it for us anymore. Because people were stealing records. They weren't paying publishing correctly, even to today. So we were able to transcend and start that circuit that Wan was talking about, getting back on the road, performing,

[00:25:00]

and becoming a performing group to where it's one of the only forms of music that people still can't take from you now. They can't copy it. They can't steal it. They can't do anything about it. They have to come to the concert to see a live performance. We get some-- I don't want to name any networks or whatever. It's oh, well, let's come to Vegas, and we want to tape your show. And we're like, no. We're not letting anybody tape anything live that we have, because it's all we got left. You know, when you make a record and you put it out, instantly the whole world gets it. And after that it's pretty much stolen, gone, or whatever. So we don't control it. It's the only thing that we can control. So again, like I said, we were able to switch gears and realize that in this day and age for us, performing is the key. Because it's the only thing that we have sacred that we can offer to our fan base that you just can't go on the internet and get.

WANYA MORRIS: But to get to that point, we went through a lot. We went through a lot. I mean, like I was saying, we performed in this place called-- what, was it The Firehouse?

NATHAN MORRIS: The Firehouse.

WANYA MORRIS: The Firehouse. And like I said, it was like 500 capacity.

[00:26:01]

And we walked into this place, and--

NATHAN MORRIS: It was 500 capacity. That didn't mean that that's how many was there.

WANYA MORRIS: I'm telling you, there wasn't 500 people there, you know. We walked in the place, and there's a mechanical bull in the middle of the floor. And I didn't know we was about to recreate the pony video-- you know what I'm saying-- or not. But we walked in this place, and there's a mechanical bull. The stage got a pole in front of it. And I'm like, is this a strip club?

JOE MULVIHILL: There's a Coors Light over a billiard as your lights.

WANYA MORRIS: Like, seriously. And we get there, it's like, you know, it was-- literally 50 people showed up.

NATHAN MORRIS: And Joe wasn't there.

WANYA MORRIS: And Joe-- no, he was at--

JOE MULVIHILL: No, I was there.

NATHAN MORRIS: Oh no, you was there for that one.

WANYA MORRIS: No he was there. He was our manager.

NATHAN MORRIS: He was there for that one. I forgot.

JOE MULVIHILL: Hold on. I thought I was going to be fired, because when they--

NATHAN MORRIS: Close.

JOE MULVIHILL: Yeah, thanks. When they were singing "End of the Road," there was a woman on the bull.

WANYA MORRIS: Yeah, yeah.

JOE MULVIHILL: And they looked at me like, really, dude?

WANYA MORRIS: And it was crazy, because, you know--

[00:27:02]

and this is why I love my fellas. You know what I mean? Because we share the same veracity when it comes to what we do. You know what I'm saying? It was 50 people there, and you would have thought that it was 5,000, because we sang each song the way that we've always learned how to sing everything.

SHAWN STOCKMAN: The only way we know how.

WANYA MORRIS: The only way we know how is to go 120%. And as time progressed throughout those months and months and years of performing at these crazy, crazy places, you know, the numbers started building again. You know what I mean? 50 to 100 to maybe like 500, and then 5,000, and then we did the U.S. Open. We sang the national anthem at the U.S. Open.

JOE MULVIHILL: "God Bless America."

WANYA MORRIS: "God Bless America." Yeah. No, we switched it. Didn't we flip it? We did--

JOE MULVIHILL: Maybe did both.

WANYA MORRIS: Yeah, we did both. We did both. And from that point, I guess, you know, like Joe said, the key is to get corporate America to believe in the brand again.

[00:28:01]

And once we did that, it started building and building. But it took a very long time. And honestly, I remember being on a boat, a cruise, looking at each other like, man, this is it. After this, we out. I remember in the van, in the van, Shawn was like, if this I don't want to do this no more. I said, I don't want to do this no more, either. You know what I'm saying? We done. Let's just quit it. And then we got to the room, and you know, Nate came to the room, and he was like, look, man, this is us. This is all we got. And Shawn, we all just, it was like, yeah, you right, bro. You know what I mean? This-- this is all we got, for real. You know?

SHAWN STOCKMAN: Where the hell am I going?

WANYA MORRIS: CMB. You know what I'm saying? We are our brother's keeper. You know what I'm saying? So it was one of those things that, it brought us closer. You know? One member was gone, but it brought us closer. It showed us that we were the last of the Mohicans. And we had to maintain that integrity.

[00:29:01]

JOE MULVIHILL: You know, everybody sees, like in sports, LeBron James. You see him when he performs on the court. You don't see the other 22 hours, what he puts in to get what you see on TV. And what I learned when I met them was the personalities and the dynamics. Some of you probably are surprised how funny they are and how goofy they are, and how they-- and when I saw that, I was like, I said, we need the world to see that. We all know "End of the Road." We all know "Motown Philly." We all know that. And those are going to be hits for the rest of your life. But how do you get people to get to know you? Not just, oh yeah, I know that guy. They didn't know Wan's name. They didn't know Shawn's name. I mean, they did, but nobody knew their personalities behind it. So the theory was, if we just get them out. Now, I wasn't anticipating a bull. I wasn't anticipating Pufferbellies, all those other things.

NATHAN MORRIS: You booked it. What do you mean, you wasn't--

JOE MULVIHILL: Well, I didn't really-- I didn't realize. I didn't realize that those were-- you know what, dude? I didn't realize, okay? So what we learned from a business standpoint,

[00:30:00]

and because you guys are innovators and thinkers, the thought process behind it was, if we grind it out long enough, eventually, because I know what I like, and I think other people like what I like, for the most part. You got good attitudes. You guys are good people. You have unbelievable songs. Let's just see where this can kind of take us. And slowly, but-- and Wan's right. It was a very slow process. I was questioning myself 100 times. Like, why are you putting them through

this? I was fans. That's why I even decided to do it. I was a fan way bef-- Janet Jackson, the Super Bowl. I was working for the Super Bowl at the time Janet Jackson's thing came out. And right after that, I got a phone call to go to Japan and meet Boyz II Men, because they were about to fire your existing manager, I believe. And when I went out there, I saw one show, and I was like, okay, there's a real business here. I mean a real business. And I sat down and said, guys, there's something real here. This is what I think.

NATHAN MORRIS: Well, he road managed us for a long time at first. That's when he booked the Pufferbellies and the mechanical bull.

[00:31:00]

And then we, like he said, we were in the process of looking for another manager. And because we've gone through so much-- we've gone through a lot in this business. And again, one thing about this group, when it comes to people that we meet and we grow a liking to, we become very, very attached, and very, very loyal, almost to a fault. And it's kind of put us in spots where our loyalty outweighed what someone else was doing to us, and kind of put us in bad situations. So with Joe coming along, we were already kind of bruised kids from a lot of different things happening. So we really had to play it back a little bit and kind of see what we felt he could give us. And we played it for a while. We made him run around a lot. You know what I'm saying? We did stupid stuff to just see if he'd do it, and he did it. I mean, you know--

JOE MULVIHILL: You made me change my shoes.

NATHAN MORRIS: Yeah, he used to come around-- you know us-- with these beat up Puma white shoes that looked like he was kicking rocks.

[00:32:01]

And we had to tell him that--

WANYA MORRIS: Like, dude, you hanging with black people. You can't have those crusty shoes.

NATHAN MORRIS: Can't have no crusty shoes. So now his shoe game is all switched up now. So he's got that fresh part. He still likes to wear swag a lot. You know what I'm saying? We got to still get him out of free stuff. You know, somebody give him free stuff on the golf course, he'll come to a meeting with that shit. And we had to tell him, you can't wear that. So we still working on him. But the funny thing is, there was a situation where-- this was right before we hired him. I used to play "John Madden NFL Football" a lot. And at the day, it just came out, and I just bought the game. We were on the road doing some shows. And we were going to this hotel that night, and while we were doing press all day, I was all excited to get to my room and play the game. I was talking about it all day. And I got to the room, and they had one of those old TVs that you couldn't really plug the new HDMI into. So I was pissed for like an hour. And then Joe called me. He gave me the schedule for the next day. So he said, you got everything? I said, yeah, dude,

[00:32:59]

but I'm pissed off. I was trying to play my game, da-da-da da-da. He said, whoa, whoa, whoa-- what's wrong? I said, the TV's jacked up. I called downstairs to see if they had a monitor. I know they got one. They're holding it from me. They won't give it to me. So he's like, oh, hold on for one second. Give me like 20 minutes. So I get a knock on the door. Somebody brings a brand new TV, flat screen TV, in my room. And I'm like, I called him, I'm like, dude, somebody-- what am I doing with this? He said, dude, just open the TV, play the game tonight, just don't throw away the box. So I'm like, all right. So I still--

JOE MULVIHILL: They're all thinking, damn, that's smart.

NATHAN MORRIS: And what's funny is that these are the things that always click in my mind, because this is someone who thinks outside the box. And as a manager--

SHAWN STOCKMAN: Figuratively speaking.

WANYA MORRIS: Literally.

NATHAN MORRIS: Yeah. And literally, that's what managers need in this business, to be able to kind of go around and maneuver without making the artist look bad. So I played the game all night, and then I put the TV back in the box.

[00:34:00]

We go downstairs, and we're flying to the next city. Because I'm flying to Miami. And I'm like, okay, well, I said, what do I do with the TV? Just bring it downstairs, we're going to put it in the van and take it to the airport. I said, take it to the airport and do what? So, make a long story short, not only did he take the TV back to the store, he bought it in the city we were in, flew to Miami, and took it back to Walmart in the other city. So, right away for me, I was like, that's the kind of thinker that we need on our team. That--

WANYA MORRIS: Hustler-- you're hustling.

NATHAN MORRIS: --can help us do what we need to do.

WANYA MORRIS: Ain't nothing to see, a hustler is a hustler. But when you got a white boy hustler-- man. You know? It's funny. And not to make this a Joe Mulvihill situation, but, you know, I remember we were on the plane-- no, we were on a train. We were on a train in Japan. And I didn't know him. I didn't give him as much time as everybody else did. You know, I didn't trust people too much. You know what I'm saying? I like people. I love them, but I didn't trust people too much.

[00:35:01]

And I was sitting there next to him, and he was looking at me. This was probably only the second time we might have talked. And he looked at me, and I'm sitting there, you know, eating my peanuts and stuff. And he said, you don't like me, do you? And I was like, I don't know you. You know what I mean? And he was like-- I mean, I said,

[00:35:21]

I know you-- you know, I know what you're about. What am I about? I said, you're an opportunist, right? And he was like--

JOE MULVIHILL: I lost my mind.

WANYA MORRIS: He lost his mind. And I was looking at him like, what's the matter with this white boy? You know what I'm saying? I said, dude, I said, listen, I said, don't-- you're taking it the wrong way, bro. I said, you're an opportunist, which means that you look for opportunities. And these opportunities benefit you. I said, and as these opportunities benefit you, because you're working with us, that opportunity is going to benefit us.

[00:35:56]

I said, so I'm glad you're an opportunist, because we haven't had anybody around who was looking for opportunities for us. I said, you see something in us, and you see there's an opportunity. I said, so use us [...]. Exact words.

JOE MULVIHILL: Exact words.

WANYA MORRIS: Exact words.

VALEISHA JONES: That was a quote.

WANYA MORRIS: Exact words.

VALEISHA JONES: That was a quote.

WANYA MORRIS: End quote, end quote.

VALEISHA JONES: End quote.

WANYA MORRIS: End quote. You know what I'm saying?

NATHAN MORRIS: Close, close.

WANYA MORRIS: No offense. That's what we say--

VALEISHA JONES: I got you. I got you.

WANYA MORRIS: --when that's our homeboy now.

NATHAN MORRIS: Close it. Close it.

WANYA MORRIS: You're our homeboy now.

NATHAN MORRIS: Close that quote down. Go. Yeah.

VALEISHA JONES: All right. So we are going to turn it over for questions.

WANYA MORRIS: Yeah, we talk about it all the time.

VALEISHA JONES: Now that we just said the end quote. If you do have a question, please line up at the mic, and I will ask my last question as you guys think about what you want to ask. So let's get started. I'll close out this portion of the panel by saying that Oprah had a video that went viral a couple of days ago that said young people right now are focused too much on building their brand instead of the quality of their work, the craft, right? So for those of us in the audience who have a side hustle, or who may be interested in starting a business, or whatever it is that you are innovating right now,

[00:37:01]

what advice, and what order would you give with that notion?

NATHAN MORRIS: You go, because [inaudible].

SHAWN STOCKMAN: I'll say this. I'll say a quick story. I got a 15-year-old at home. And he put me on game as far as how kids nowadays, with the opposite sex, or somebody that they like, communicate with each other. And they do almost everything through text, right? That's how they ask for a person's phone number. I don't know how they get the number. I don't know. And that's how they ask for dates, movies, the whole nine yards. And I asked my son, I was like, so, when do you talk to them? You know? And he was like, well, we don't really-- you know, we go to the movies and that's it. I was like, that's it? You know you're skipping a few steps, right? So it kind of correlates to what you're saying as far as like, it's cool to create this facade of who you might be or what you are, and things of that nature.

[00:38:03]

But there's still an organics to it that you still have to apply. You still have to talk to the girl. You have to ask her what she likes. You have to be in her face, and have what's called a conversation, and things of that nature.

WANYA MORRIS: See if her breath stinks.

SHAWN STOCKMAN: Right. Whatever. You know, you have to find out all of those things in order for you to really like or dislike this person. I think that with social media, it's a great tool, but again, I think a lot of kids are skipping steps. They are taking it for face value. If I look like this, if I sound like this, if I act like this, then I'm going to be successful. And they never really take the time to put in the organic work to actually be the person that you are perceiving yourself to be. And that takes the work. Like Joe mentioned about LeBron James. He just doesn't get up and play the way that he does.

[00:38:59]

He practices hard every day. With my group, we just don't go out there and sing songs. We practice. We rehearse. We've done this time and time and time again. And that quality comes with that. You have to put in those-- I guess, what's that theory? If you put 10,000 hours into something, then you-- yeah, yeah. That guarantees that you don't become something that fizzles out very soon after. So you have to put in that organic time.

NATHAN MORRIS: And I think as far as the brand building, I believe that the key to it all is service. A lot of people, like you said, they tend to focus today on building the brand. But now I know a brand, but I know a brand for giving me shitty service. One thing that we've known throughout history, we know what type of shoes Nike makes. We know what Google offers. Those brands have cemented, I guess you'd say, a form of quality, that you know, when you add it to that name,

[00:39:59]

you're not really contemplating what you're going to get, because you already know. So to your point, yeah, there are a lot of people out there now who are so-called on their hustle, and want to build their brand. But if your brand doesn't represent any type of quality service, then all you really have is a brand-- a brand with a bad reputation.

SHAWN STOCKMAN: And you get exposed. So don't skip--

WANYA MORRIS: Eventually.

SHAWN STOCKMAN: Yeah. So don't skip the steps. That would be the main point of this whole thing.

JOE MULVIHILL: And real quick, to the point, grinding it out with Pufferbellies and the mechanical bull and all that was their second stage of their career, doing all the groundwork to not only work out jokes, how they communicate. You know, we did an event in Atlanta, the 100 Black Men event. I was the only white guy there. We literally got on the plane, flew to Orlando, Florida, for Arnold Palmer, the golfer. Everybody knows the golfer Arnold Palmer. And they were the only black guys there. And we looked at each other and said, how crazy is this that you guys can resonate amongst anyone all over? Color-- it doesn't matter who they are.

WANYA MORRIS: Doesn't matter.

JOE MULVIHILL: And how did that happen? I really think the grind, the humbleness-- because you got to remember, they were kids making millions of dollars.

[00:41:01]

Everybody loved them. They were the greatest thing in the world to nobody cared. They lived through the Nirvana era. They lived through the hip-hop era. They lived through the boy band era. They live, now, the trap rapping era. I mean, every single thing-- I don't even know what it is, trap rap or whatever it is. But the point is, the music has changed over the last 20 dramatically. '80s music had two forms of music. It was rock bands and it was the '80s fun, kind of goofy, poppy stuff.

NATHAN MORRIS: That's if you were white. But they had other stuff, too.

JOE MULVIHILL: And R&B. The point is--

NATHAN MORRIS: Oh, and just R&B? We didn' 't have hip-hop, huh?

JOE MULVIHILL: Well, yeah, it just started in the '80s.

NATHAN MORRIS: I just thought I'd throw it out there.

JOE MULVIHILL: It just started in the '80s.

NATHAN MORRIS: You notice he only named his two forms of music, right?

JOE MULVIHILL: You know what? My point is, we as a business were able to not only adjust to-- we weren't chasing anything. We were just being real to who they were. That's the problem with the internet. You see something, and you try to change it up to follow that, and you're too late. If you just do what you do, eventually, patience-- and anybody in the room, no matter what you want to do, if you have kids,

[00:42:00]

don't have kids, have a business, side hustle, no matter what is-- patience and showing up are the two things that can take you there.

SHAWN STOCKMAN: And one more thing. Learning how to communicate. A lot of people tend to put-- and I guess it's kind of customary for us to be put into a category. We're an R&B group, mainly because people see black people. But as you look in the room, who do you see? You just don't see black people. You see all types and nationalities and colors and age groups and things of that nature. I think mainly because of the fact that we learned how to communicate. It wasn't just about the music. We knew how to communicate our message through the music. And the music was kind of like the byproduct, in the sense of, yes, I really like those songs. But just like Nate mentioned, a lot of people just saw in our videos just us standing there pointing at a camera, and things of that nature, until they saw us in a show and was like, wow, this was something different. This was something more, more than I expected.

[00:42:58]

So with all of those trials and tribulations, and us not skipping those steps, we learned how to communicate with everybody-- not just black people, not just white people, but everybody. And I think that's what kept us going.

VALEISHA JONES: All right. So we are going to turn it over to our questions, starting with my sis, Michelle. If you guys will first introduce yourselves--

SHAWN STOCKMAN: (singing) Michelle--

VALEISHA JONES: And then keep your questions--

SHAWN STOCKMAN: (singing) My belle--

VALEISHA JONES: --as brief as possible so everyone can get a question in.

NATHAN MORRIS: And when you finish, can you raise the microphone stand up a little bit higher, because the people behind-- no, I'm just joking.

VALEISHA JONES: It's arranged by height.

NATHAN MORRIS: I'm just joking.

VALEISHA JONES: I'll be like, dang!

SHAWN STOCKMAN: That was a low-key burn.

NATHAN MORRIS: I'm just joking with you.

MICHELLE: Hi, so again, my name is Michelle. Thank you all for coming. Huge fan, super excited.

JOE MULVIHILL: Where you from?

MICHELLE: Virginia.

NATHAN MORRIS: VA.

VALEISHA JONES: VA.

MICHELLE: And my question is, could you all tell us your story as to how you all got your name, Boyz II Men?

[00:44:02]

NATHAN MORRIS: Go ahead, Shawn, you got it.

SHAWN STOCKMAN: Nathan and I were on the phone one day. We had a previous name that we will not mention.

NATHAN MORRIS: Sure won't. Google it.

SHAWN STOCKMAN: Yeah, yeah. It's probably on Google. And while we were talking on the phone, there was a New Edition song called "Boys to Men" that came on the radio while we were talking. And I said, that's our name. Like, that should be our name right there.

WANYA MORRIS: And Nate was like, I don't know.

SHAWN STOCKMAN: And he's like, well, I don't like it. I don't like it.

NATHAN MORRIS: Well, the only reason why I said that, because at that time we weren't Boyz II Men, and we weren't successful doing anything. So we just did local stuff. And every time we'd perform, we did "Boys to Men," a New Edition song. So, it would sound, ladies and gentlemen, Boyz II Men singing, "Can You Stand the Rain" by New Edition. It just sounded weird, because that's all we did was New Edition covers. And now our name is a cover, too. So as we moved into our career-- because it's funny, when we talked about it, we said, all right.

[00:44:59]

We'll hang on to it for a little bit. But over the years, we realized that it became a name that was perfect for us, because as Wan always says, you know, no matter how hold you get, there's always going to be a little bit of boy inside you. And for us, our music we feel transcends generations from old to young, boy to man, woman to girl. So it's one of those things where it just kind of stuck after a while.

MICHELLE: Thank you.

NATHAN MORRIS: Thank you, Shawn.

WANYA MORRIS: Thank you.

PERSON: Hi, my name is [inaudible]. Same here, huge fan, thank you for coming.

BOYZ II MEN: Thank you.

PERSON: I'm from the Bronx, New York.

WANYA MORRIS: Boogie down.

PERSON: I kind of wanted to hear from you, you're talking a lot about longevity and communication and brand. And as a boys group, Boyz II Men, you know, there's so many groups that we've heard of that have just, not even here anymore. They're gone. And so I want to hear you talk more about, what are the values that you all share that keep you and this bond so tight despite those five minute break ups and all of that stuff.

[00:46:01]

What has worked for you to keep the partnership strong and alive and empowering?

SHAWN STOCKMAN: We had a better understanding than most of, we're better together than we are apart. Just like Wanya mentioned, when we broke up, we kind of got a sense of clarity. It was like, you know, breaking up is not a good idea. And mainly because, also, our fans and the people who supported us kept us up here. So even when we didn't feel that way, other people felt that way. So again, Nate mentioned something about service. We felt like it was our duty. We were servants to people who appreciated what we did. Despite how we felt about each other and ourselves, our own selves, there were people that wanted to see us, that came out time and time again,

[00:47:01]

that wanted to sing those songs and live those memories again, and things of that nature. So Boyz II Men has become bigger than us. The music and what it's become is so much bigger than who we are. Again, we just consider ourselves servants at the end of the day. These songs have done so much for so many people that it's kind of like, Okay, well, let's just do it for them if not for us.

WANYA MORRIS: And I know that we spoke about the stars aligning for our success. But you know, we believe that there's only one way that stars can align, and that's by the Creator. You know what I mean? We actually, you know the day that we decided to go into and sneak backstage at the-- you know, the "Motown Philly" song, we snuck backstage and met Michael Bivins. You know, we had no money. We had no idea how we were going to get in. And each and every time we wanted something that night,

[00:48:02]

we would stand off to the side and pray. And it was amazing. And I know that these fellas can attest to it, that we didn't have tickets to get in. We prayed, somebody got us inside. We couldn't get backstage. We prayed, and somebody came and helped us to get backstage. And for us to be together right now, it's just a testament to the fact that we're supposed to be together right now. And it's not for us, you know? It's for those people who we have a responsibility for, the child that actually, mother came and said, you know, we played your records for them while they were in a coma, and they came out of the coma, and they wanted to hear Boyz II Men. You know? The little kid that's in the front row that's nine years old, singing "I'll Make Love to You." Like, why? How-- why are you singing that song?

[00:49:01]

You know what I'm saying? But it's because we've created some sort of non-offensive approach to life and to love, you know what I mean? You know, everybody wants their children and their family to be able to be a part of something that's not offensive. And God gave us these songs. We're just vehicles. You know what I mean? Anybody could have sang these songs, and they would have been great songs. But the way that we feel these songs is because we know that they were gifts to us. And we have to share that gift with everybody else. So yeah, the stars aligned, but God made them align, and that's why we're here.

NATHAN MORRIS: And I think the human side of the longevity, which is missing in a lot of things today, which is I believe, again, there's always-- the key is the spiritual aspect of who we are and what has brought us together. But being able to stay together is, one, to be able to, like you said, all the other groups aren't around.

[00:50:00]

And most of the main reasons why they aren't around is because they don't respect the people who they work with. They don't understand them for who they are, and are able to live with their imperfections and their rights and their wrongs. We've learned over the years to understand each personality of each guy in this group, and that's who they are. But we also have the ability, that when one guy steps out of line, the other two guys are able to put him back in line. None of us have become so big to the point where none of the other guys can tell you anything that you need to do. And that's what happens with a lot of these groups. You know, they have those side guys that come along and say, yeah, you're bigger than this guy. Yeah, you don't need to be there. And the egos start getting big to where the guys they created the group with, they're like, I don't really need these dudes. I can do whatever I want. But there's a

humbling within us that coordinates, similar to what Wan is saying, is that, not only do we do it for the audience, but we do it for each other.

[00:50:57]

Neither one of us want to let anyone else down with what we are here to do. So when some guy is not doing something right, and we kind of put him in check, we have to sit back and think about that, because we just don't want to screw this thing up. We know how important we are to each other.

JOE MULVIHILL: And they still have fun, too, by the way. And we constantly do things that are-- Wan wanted to record with Tech N9ne. We got him in with Tech N9ne. He's a junkie for rock music. He recorded with the Foo Fighters. Nate loves Justin Bieber, so we recorded with Justin Bieber. So, no. No, the point is, we're always doing something.

SHAWN STOCKMAN: Huge Bieber.

JOE MULVIHILL: The Geico commercial.

NATHAN MORRIS: I'm not even going to--

JOE MULVIHILL: I'm just kidding. I'm just kidding. We did the--

NATHAN MORRIS: They know.

JOE MULVIHILL: Geico commercial.

NATHAN MORRIS: They know.

JOE MULVIHILL: So anyway, the thing is, we still have fun. Twinkle, we good? Twinkle, we good?

PERSON: We good.

JOE MULVIHILL: Okay.

VALEISHA JONES: Okay. Don't shoot the messenger, but we can take one more question.

NATHAN MORRIS: [inaudible].

AUDIENCE: No pressure.

VALEISHA JONES: I apologize in advance.

NATHAN MORRIS: Well, if you stand next to her at the mic, it will be one big question.

VALEISHA JONES: Okay, all right then. What they say goes. Let's do it.

JESS: So, hi, I'm Jess. I was born here in San Jose, so local. You were my first introduction to cool a capella music. So thank you for that.

[00:52:00]

And to go with that, I'm part of Googapella, which is Google's a capella group. And we've been working on harmonies and blending, and you guys are the icons for that. Your music just transcends the beauty that is blending.

PERSON: Sing something, Jess.

JESS: No. You can come to a concert. So what tricks or tips do you have that works for blending exercises, aside from being so close and having gone through so much. Is there something that works for you as a group, whether it's like breathing, or--

NATHAN MORRIS: Hold on, we'll lock that in. We'll get both questions in, and then we'll answer them. Go.

NATALIA: Okay. So the question-- I'm from Moscow. I'm Natalia. So the question is about-- actually, I'll turn my question to that. "At the end of the road," those lyrics, can you talk a little bit more, like, although we've come to the end of the road, which is the end of the road right now, right? Can we-- is it okay to ask to come to the end of the road and ask you to sing?

[00:52:59]

NATHAN MORRIS: Oh, see, now you-- we should have just let you sit down. See what happens when you let the last person in, boy? [inaudible]

SHAWN STOCKMAN: It took her a minute to bring it out, too. She was like, well--

NATHAN MORRIS: She knew she was wrong.

VALEISHA JONES: There's a concert tonight. Concert tonight, Garfield Park.

NATHAN MORRIS: Well, go ahead, Shawn. Answer that question first, and then we'll--

SHAWN STOCKMAN: To answer your question, you know what? We might be the right guys for that question, but actually the wrong guys, because we're kind of unorthodox. Our thing is, we do things a little different. Like the whole triad thing--

NATHAN MORRIS: Out the window with us.

SHAWN STOCKMAN: We never did-- it was always too boring.

NATHAN MORRIS: We never--

SHAWN STOCKMAN: So it was almost like, when we would sing a three-part-- I'm not saying we wouldn't sing those parts--

WANYA MORRIS: Because it would start off like that.

SHAWN STOCKMAN: It would start off like that, but then he would go in, add what we call a crack note, because it's in the cracks, right?

[00:53:57]

It kind of goes with maybe the top, mid, or bottom, but it kind of does a thing like this, that kind of goes in tandem with that particular note. Then Nate will add a bass, then I'll add some weird thing. So it's kind of like, if anything, you do what you feel. It's a feel. And I think that's where our style comes from. It's not necessarily a structure, but more of a feel. If there's a note that we feel like should be in there, we put it in. Even if it's just like one half of a bar, it'll go, and then it will disappear. So that's how we do our thing.

WANYA MORRIS: And also, that's the recording aspect of it, but if you're actually seeing us or hearing us perform a capella, each part that we sing can actually be a lead sung by itself. You know what I mean? So if I start at one note, by the end of the song, I could actually end up at a whole other note and a whole other register.

[00:55:00]

And he'll end up on a whole other note at my register, and Shawn will be in the middle. You know what I mean? So it creates somewhat of a, I guess you could say, somewhat of a wave. And it does something, but the idea and concept is to actually have it move, so that the actual melody of the song can stay, but it can move you. And you don't understand where it's coming from. A lot of people might hear a couple of our arrangements and say, how-- what note is he actually singing? And it's just unorthodox.

NATHAN MORRIS: It's all spontaneous.

WANYA MORRIS: Yeah. And it's fun. It's fun to do it the way we do it, because we know that everybody is scratching their heads. You know what I mean? That's kind of awesome.

JOE MULVIHILL: I'll tell you--

NATHAN MORRIS: Yeah, there you go.

JOE MULVIHILL: No, real quick, when they record, one will jump in the studio and record, and then Shawn will say, hold on, and they'll jump out and jump in and jump out, and they'll say, that wasn't right. No, that was right.

[00:56:00]

No, do this. And it's fascinating. There's no keyboard, there's no pitch pipe, there's nothing. And that fascinated me when I was first-- we recorded with Brian McKnight, and he's the same style as these guys. And they had a keyboard and everything, and Brian's like, plug, take that thing out. We don't need that. And they just find what makes sense as they go. It's just-- it's a fascinating thing to actually see. And if you're musical, you get it.

SHAWN STOCKMAN: Okay, and sweetheart, you've been waiting very--

NATHAN MORRIS: All right. Miss Moscow.

SHAWN STOCKMAN: --patiently.

NATHAN MORRIS: All right.

JOE MULVIHILL: I'll put the mic down now. Go ahead guys, you do your thing.

NATHAN MORRIS: I might need a little bit more volume, though. One, two, hey, hi, hey, yeah.

JOE MULVIHILL: Why don't you do the doo-doo doo da-da? [LAUGHTER]

WANYA MORRIS: She didn't ask for that. You know how women are. You got to give a woman what they want.

[00:56:57]

NATHAN MORRIS: It's early in the day, so we'll switch it up just a little bit so we save these for tonight. One, two, three...

BOYZ II MEN: (singing) Although we've come...

NATHAN MORRIS: Hold on. Are we singing with the mics or not? You got one and he doesn't. I mean, I wouldn't do it. One, two, three... BOYZ II MEN (singing) Although we've come to the end of the road still I can't let go. It's unnatural. You belong to me. I belong to you. [CHEERS AND APPLAUSE]

NATHAN MORRIS: It'll be better tonight.

WANYA MORRIS: We just woke up.

SHAWN STOCKMAN: Oh, one more question.

VALEISHA JONES: Last question.

SHAWN STOCKMAN: Sorry. We got one more question. That's it.

CHARLES: I almost don't want to ask the question now. I can't--

VALEISHA JONES: Make it good.

CHARLES: Okay. So my name is Charles Olivier from Chicago. I recently made the jump over to tech,

[00:58:01]

but I started my career in politics with a couple of really cool opportunities, working for Obama in Chicago, working for him in DC, and Hillary Clinton. And I recently made the jump to come to Google after being the CFO of the Democratic National Committee. So my question is, as black artists, what do you think about-- what are your thoughts on

artists using their platform to be involved in the political process or encouraging other people to be involved in the political process?

SHAWN STOCKMAN: I think it's great, mainly because, I mean, let's face it. That's kind of a historical thing. Artists have always done that, from Bob Dylan all the way back to all of these acts back in the '60s and things of that nature. Artists are the closest thing to people, closer than some politicians. And we get our message across conveniently in a way where people are willing to listen, because it sounds good.

[00:59:03]

It has a melody to it, has a guitar to it, and things of that nature. So we're able to put across our message. And even when we were growing up as high schoolers, you had guys like Public Enemy and people like that, who put their political message in music, too, but the beats was hot. And even now, Chicago native Chance the Rapper and guys like that, who are doing the same thing. And I think it's incredible, because we have the purest, most honest way of conveying the message, because there's no filter. And because we're not politicians, people can be comfortable with our message, because they know that there's no ulterior motive behind it or whatever. We say what's in our heart. We say what we feel, and most of the time it's the same sentiment that most of us share anyway. The same thing comedians do, and things of that nature.

[00:59:59]

We're just modern day Platos and Socrates and people like that who used to say the same thing. So I think it's awesome. And I think there are more people that need to do that, especially now. This is such a volatile time, specifically in this country, that we have to have more artists and more people to express themselves artistically to get the point across. % Where if no one understands the political jargon and vernacular that you might see on CNN or MSNBC--

NATHAN MORRIS: Just sing "End of the Road."

SHAWN STOCKMAN: Yeah, exactly.

CHARLES: Awesome. Thank you. Also, I forgot to tell you, I got a beat down when I was about 10 for pulling the tape out of the "Evolution" album, my mom's "Evolution" album.

SHAWN STOCKMAN: Ooh.

NATHAN MORRIS: Well, we probably would have beat you down, too.

SHAWN STOCKMAN: Yeah.

NATHAN MORRIS: Glad she got to you first. Thank you.

VALEISHA JONES: All right. So I think I speak for all of us when I say that we love you, we support you,

[01:01:00]

we were so fortunate to get to know the men behind the music, and we thank you for that. Let's give it up for Nathan, Shawn, Wanya, and Joe!

PERSON: Thanks for listening. If you have any feedback about this, or any episode, we'd love to hear from you. You can visit g.co/talksatgoogle/podcastfeedback to leave your comments. To discover more amazing content, you can always find us online at youtube.com/talksatgoogle, or via our twitter handle, @googletalks. Talk soon.