

MUSIC

to behold. Because of its presentation, "Hollow Reed" is a song that could easily be found on a Lois album of indie rock past.

It takes a while to grow into *The Union Themes*, but when you do, you'll find the songs stick in your head like deeply reaching roots.

NO STRINGS ATTACHED

- 'N Sync • Jive
- MILLENNIUM
- Backstreet Boys • Jive
- 98° AND RISING
- 98° • Motown
- WHERE WE BELONG
- Boyzone • Mercury

As Madonna and Cher get older, and as the latest electronic music gets more complicated and less danceable, where is a gay

bands, just put out a dancey new full-length called *No Strings Attached*. This record opens with the hot radio single "Bye Bye Bye," and continues like a hit-making freight train until the softer, more tender "That's When I'll Stop Loving You" cruises like a comfortable caboose. It's important to know these boys are able to reflect.

98° is a bit more R&B than the rest of the bands, and these guys' vocals are smoother and sexier. Unfortunately, the fellows in 98° are dorky too, hence their album's title, *98° and Rising*. Fans of this band are usually those with a hankering for older types, or bear cubs.

Boyzone's album, *Where We Belong*, is the most boring of the boy band releases, but it contains the uplifting, heartfelt ballad "No Matter What," which is easily worth the cost of the entire album. Boyzone is Irish, so if you

The boys of Boyzone, including openly gay Stephen Gately (second from left)

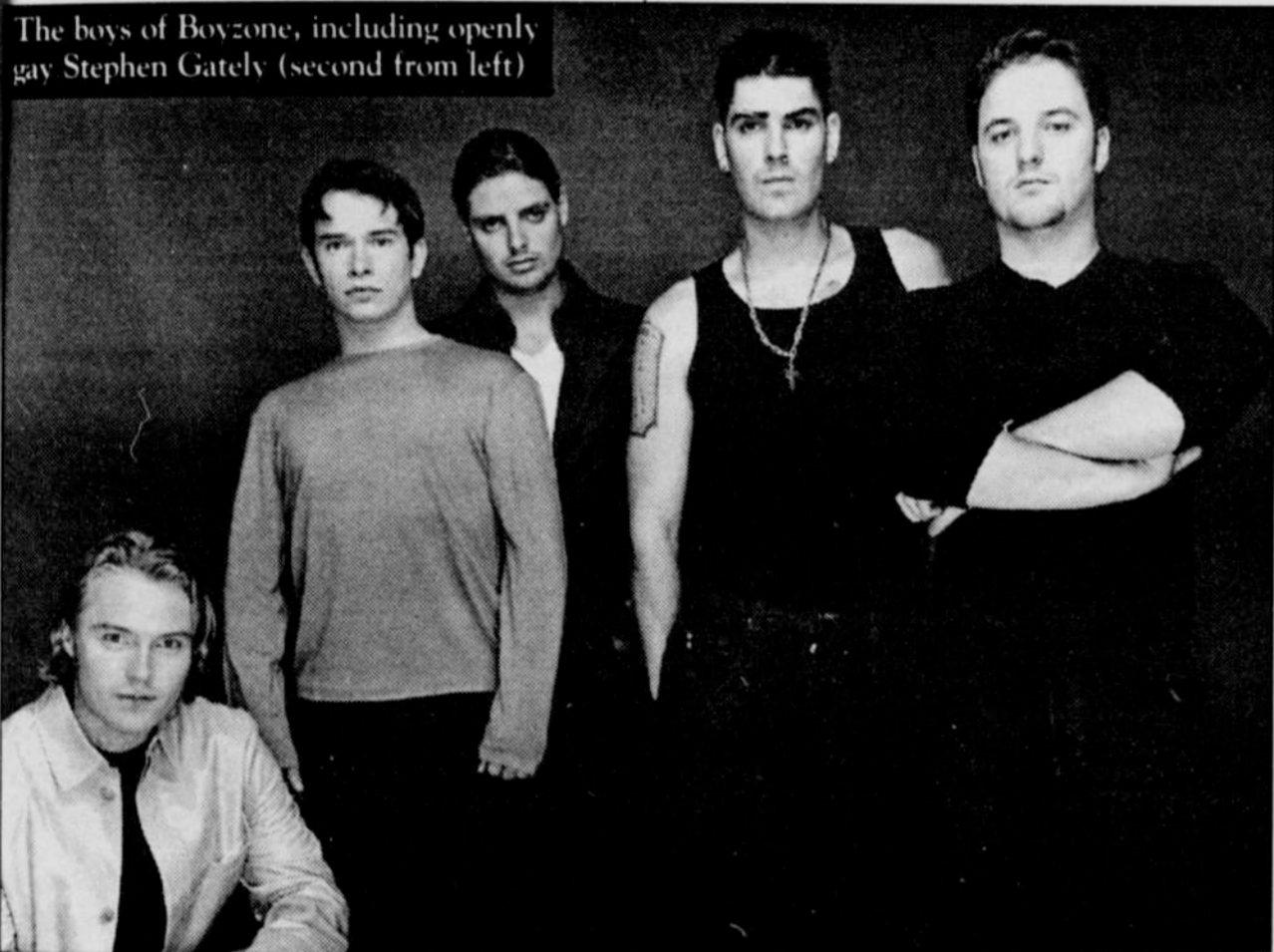


PHOTO BY NORMAN JEAN ROY

boy to turn? The answer, easily enough, is pinned up on the walls of preteen girls across the United States: boy bands.

How could any young girl or any gay boy resist the golden locks and dimples of the Backstreet Boys' Nick? The Doogie Howser-esque countenance of Justin from 'N Sync? The perpetually shirtless members of 98°?

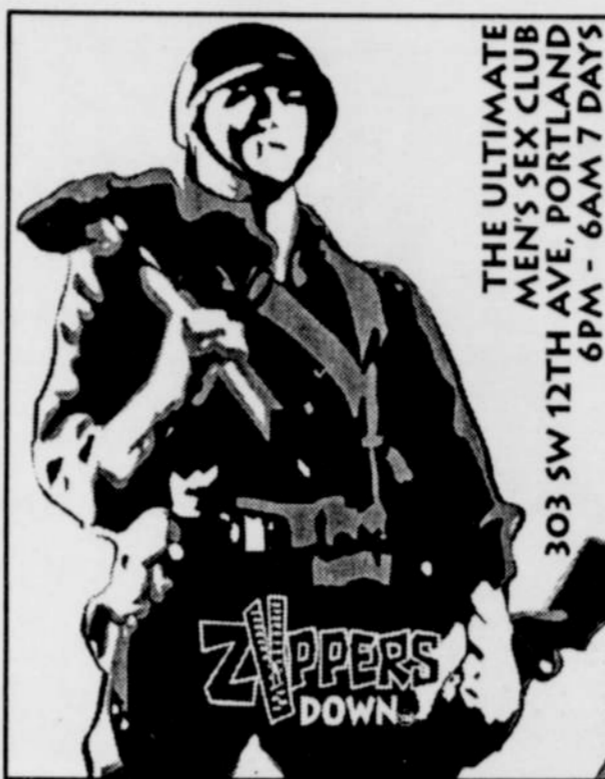
Aside from posing for photo shoots, these steamy performers also manage to release albums on hip major labels. One fine afternoon in Portland, I monopolized the listening stations at Everyday Music to get a taste of these bands' most recent releases.

'N Sync, the weirdest-looking of all the boy

like younger, cuter versions of Bono, you will probably like Boyzone (which is not to say you'll like their music). Oh yeah, Boyzone member Stephen Gately publicly outed himself late last year.

Musically and physically, the Backstreet Boys are where it's at, and they're certainly the best looking. Also, their latest release, *Millennium*, spins the most wonderful Top 40 song to hit the charts in a while: "I Want It That Way." Yummy!

■ KATY DAVIDSON is a *Just Out* staff writer who thinks she knows everything, just like everyone else.



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