

Making News!

One Of Christian Music's Top Acts Comes To MMC March 28

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Jeff Frankenstein has a message for Yankton: God's Not Dead. Frankenstein and his Newsboys band are bringing that message March 28 to Cimpl Arena on the Mount Marty College campus. The concert forms part of the school's year-long 75th anniversary celebration.

The Grammy-nominated Christian pop rock band bills the "God's Not Dead" tour as its biggest yet. The group has been selling out the nationwide tour covering more than 60 cities.

And still, Frankenstein jokes that the Newsboys band remains unknown to many people.

"We are the biggest band that no one has ever heard of," he told the *Press & Dakotan* in a phone interview. "It's funny that we have been around this long and sold that many records, but we're not that recognized by the public, especially outside Christian circles."

When the Newsboys and their opening acts take the stage, don't expect a quiet, old-time gospel show, Frankenstein said. The evening promises plenty of high energy and audience involvement.

"The show starts at 7 p.m. and lasts three hours," he said. "You are exhausted by the time you leave."

The band is riding a wave of success. Its song "God's Not Dead (Like A Lion)" has held the top spot on *Billboard's* Christian charts since early February. The song is heard on hundreds of stations across the country and received 3 million impressions in its first month at radio.

"Like A Lion" contains a Biblical reference," Frankenstein said. "The lion is used a lot in the Bible to signify something intense and ferocious."

Newsboys' music videos have caught national attention as well. On the heels of winning mtvU's contest for "Miracles," their latest video for "God's Not Dead (Like A Lion)" is also out now.

"Miracles" contains the message of God's presence and the joy of everyday life, Frankenstein said. "There are skeptics all around. But the fact that we are alive and breathing is a miracle in and of itself," he said.

Formed in Australia in 1985, the Newsboys continue going strong after nearly three decades. The band was originally known as The News but changed its name upon arriving in the United States to avoid confusion with the band Huey Lewis and the News.

Current Newsboys members include Duncan Phillips on drums, percussion and formerly keyboards; Jody Davis on lead guitar and backing vocals; Frankenstein on keyboards, synth bass and backing vocals; and Michael Tait on lead vocals.

Phillips, Davis and Frankenstein have been with the band for about 18 years, while Tait joined the group about three years ago.

The Newsboys are familiar with the region, as they have performed at the Lifelight music festival near Sioux Falls and also at Sioux City, Frankenstein said.

The current tour is presented by Compassion International, continuing its partnership with Newsboys to raise awareness for child sponsorships. A special VIP Pre-Show Meet & Greet Experience will be held with each show, with a portion of its proceeds going to support Compassion International's child trafficking initiatives. Other major sponsors supporting the tour are I Am Second and Interstate Batteries.

"At the VIP meetings, the question we get every time is, 'How do you stay humbled while you're in this humungous band?'" Frankenstein said. "When you're in a band, you have your own accountability system. When you're on a bus with 14 other guys ... and no privacy, you are humbled!"

Compassion International appeals at the concerts for people to serve as sponsors for children around the world, Frankenstein said. He has sponsored a number of children as part of the project. "Compassion has been around



The Grammy-nominated Christian pop rock band Newsboys will perform March 28 at Mount Marty College as part of the nationwide "God's Not Dead" tour. The concert begins at 7 p.m. in Cimpl Arena, preceded by a separate "VIP Meet and Greet" with the band.

for decades, and almost 200 kids a night around the world get sponsors," he said. "Thirty dollars a month seems like nothing to us, but for \$30 a month, you are helping a child living in poverty turn his life upside down and feed his family. We encourage our fans to select a child. We get an astounding response."

Joining Newsboys on the current tour are special guests The City Harmonic (winners of GMA Canada's New Artist of the Year award), the high-energy pop foursome Anthem Lights and the rock-driven group Abandon.

A special emphasis has been placed on outreach and evangelism, with youth evangelist Bob Lenz joining the tour to share a message of hope. Lenz's non-profit organization, Life Promotions, will be building a network of supporting churches throughout the tour to facilitate post-concert evangelistic efforts, with additional support from I Am Second.

I Am Second, a movement meant to inspire all people to live for God and for others, is designed to help people discover their purpose in life.

The tour also promotes Shirt4Life, a partnership to help save lives in the fight against AIDS in Africa.

Frankenstein said the band has been heartened to hear the Midwest winter has been extremely mild. Newsboys experienced some anxious moments when the band lost a wheel on its trailer and got stuck on a snowy Colorado mountain pass, but the group eventually reached Farmington, N.M.

The current tour has seen special moments, such as spending time and playing for the Marines and sailors of MAG-39 at

Camp Pendleton.

"Meeting with the soldiers was impromptu. We just got off the plane and they asked if we could say 'hi' to the troops as part of the Wounded Warrior project," Frankenstein said. "We met with 150 Marines who had been injured in Iraq and Afghanistan. It blessed us more than what we brought to them. What an impressive group of people!"

In contrast to some shows, the God's Not Dead tour is more worship based, Frankenstein said. "It lends itself to getting people more in-

involved, like singing along," he said. "Many people are searching for something, and they have never experienced something like this with 110 decibels behind it. At a lot of these shows, we just provide the ingredients and the rest just happens."

The tour provides a unifying force for audiences, Frankenstein said. "The power is that people of all different denominations and walks of life are under one roof. We have singing and things that are inspiring," he said. "It's a very powerful evening for us as a band, playing songs for the crowd and seeing families together. In 2012, you're seeing rock and roll unite families rather than destroy them."

People are finding that strength in Christian contemporary music, Frankenstein said. "I think the message is resonating with people. There is a boldness and a focus that people find fresh," he said. "I think a lot of (that yearning) deals with our culture, where we just keep feeding ourselves with garbage to make ourselves happy or feeling better. I'm worried especially with my 2-

year-old daughter and the way that life will be like in 20 years."

The Christian message provides strength and an anchor in an uncertain world, Frankenstein said.

"We try to be our own god. At the same time, we have a God that loves us and wants to have a relationship with us, but we often try to throw Him under the bus," he said. "We are living on a fractured plant. Everybody is so selfish and wants to make our own plan. But there is God, Who has a plan for you."

As a Christian band, members of the Newsboys feel called to use their talents and gifts to serve something outside of themselves, Frankenstein said.

"I have been doing it for about 20 years," he said. "It's different compared to popular music, where the emphasis is often on me and what I can gain. That can be superficial and temporary, whereas with gospel music you share yourselves most of the time."

The tour, VIP meetings and Facebook allow fans to know Newsboys better, Frankenstein said.

"People have a skewed view of celebrities, even in Christian work. We're pretty quick to admit that we're just four normal guys," he said. "There is power in music. We're a band that presents what is in our hearts for people to react and respond. You're tired and worn on the road, but you take the extra time to talk to somebody. We've made their day, and it lifts me up. The support from the fans has been very humbling."

Newsboys wants its audiences to feel empowered long after the band leaves the stage and the community, Frankenstein said.

"When people walk out the door (after a concert), we hope that we have encouraged them in their faith and talents," he said. "If we can be a small part of people's lives, that's what we want to do."

Tickets are on sale at www.itickets.com or by calling 1-800-965-9324. Group rates are also offered. Reserved seating costs \$22, while general admission is \$12.

For more information about the Mount Marty College concert, contact Andy Henrickson at (605) 668-1533 or visit online at <http://www.mtmc.edu>.

COURTESY PHOTO



The Newsboys' single "God's Not Dead (Like A Lion)" has topped Billboard's Christian music charts for more than a month.

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