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City street newsboy yells out the bad news,  
CNN broadcasts grief, gloom, and despair,  
People hunker down behind their closed doors,  
Been so long since they have lifted a prayer,  
God's still great and he is still on his throne,  
Evil can never gain the upper hand,  
If we call out we'll get a clear dial tone,  
God's line is faster than the hottest broadband.

—Paige Clawson and Shane Clawson



FROM "COME ON (IT'S TIME TO TAKE YOUR STAND)"  
YB2 MUSIC, INC.

November 15

## **YB2 DEBUTS IN HARTFORD**

*By Brooklyn Smith, the Hartford Register*

"Welcome, Hartford, to the YB2 Never Stop Believin' Tour," Shane Clawson announced after taking the stage Saturday night. "Are you ready to go higher?"

And with that the band launched into "Go Vertical," a song currently riding the top of the pop charts. Whether you're into the teen scene or not, sales figures, polls, and the covers of teen magazines indicate that YB2 has already conquered a higher plane. The other young pop bands are struggling to keep up. Saturday night's appearance—the first for YB2 in Hartford—was even better than the concert I caught last year in Washington, DC. The band has matured, not only chronologically, but stylistically. The vocalizations are more polished; the lyrics deeper than the bubble-gum pop the group promoted last year. The group's moves are still tight, the camaraderie still evident. The teenage concertgoers got into the music and sang along with all the songs . . . when they weren't shrieking out the names of the group's resident heartthrobs.

YB2 leapt into the limelight two years ago when Ron Clawson formed the vocal group with his teenage offspring, Paige and Shane, then added newcomers Noah Dudash and Liane Nelson. This year he replaced singer Vance Gerkin with Josiah Johnson, a thirteen-year-old who packs a lot of punch in his pint-size frame.

The high-energy program kept the teens around me jumping up and down and singing along for nearly two and a half hours. During the break between the first and second sets, program director Ron Clawson made a striking choice—Paige Clawson and Noah Dudash performed a duet accompanied by keyboard and guitar—a quiet, moving tune that seemed to draw back the curtain on a teen's troubled soul. After all the celebration and joyous abandon of the first set, I was glad to see the singers acknowledge that pain exists in the world . . . and I was grateful they're willing to sing about it.

Songs like "Your Word" and "Just the Way That I Am" reveal the group's Christian background,

but tonight's show wasn't centered on religion—it was centered on music. Lively, hoppin' music.

The concert offered the ultimate in pop stargazing for fans who paid more than \$60 for the majority of the convention center's 15,000 seats.

As the program wound down, some fans started moving toward the exits, but when the strains of YB2's monster hit "Y B Alone?" began to play, the teens halted in the aisles and the screaming began again.

I don't know if YB2 has what it

takes to last ten years in this business—after all, these young singers have lives to begin, educations to pursue, careers to evaluate. Standing in the packed aisle, I wondered if they missed their families and friends back home.

But when I looked up at their images on the Jumbotron and saw the smiles on their faces, I thought, *Who wouldn't want to do that?*

If I were fourteen again, I'd sell my sister for the opportunity to be on that stage.

YB2. Long may they rock.



# 1

*Sunday, December 12*

***Shane stepped up*** to the hanging microphone, adjusted the headphones on his ears, and nodded to the producer through the glass window of the sound booth. An instant later the musical track poured through the speakers. Shane waited for his cue, then sang his line: “Come on in for a smoooooooooth ride.”

He held the note until his father’s hand fell, then lifted a brow and looked at Ray, the sound engineer. Ray said something to the man behind him, then leaned into his own mike and nodded. “That’s a keeper, Shane. We’ll punch it in.”

Shane pulled off his headphones and turned. Liane sat on the carpeted floor behind him, steadily chewing her bubble gum while she scanned the latest copy of *Scientific American*.

“Hey.” Shane held out the headphones. “Your turn.”

She made a face as she looked up. “Already?”  
“What can I say?” Shane grinned as he held out his hands. “I’m a one-take wonder.”

They’d been at the Tallahassee, Florida, studio since before dawn, having arrived after an all-night bus trip from some coliseum in Georgia. This would be a quick stop, RC had promised. They were recording a commercial jingle for a friend of his, so they would be in and out in a matter of hours.

Then they’d go *home*.

Shane had never been so ready to see the sprawling house that was YB2’s home base.

After Liane stood and took the headphones from him, Shane turned and took her spot on the floor. He hated to admit it, but he was more than ready for a break. They’d been moving at warp speed since Thanksgiving, and that day had been anything but a holiday for YB2. So after this recording gig, they were driving back to the Orlando house for a few hours of downtime, then Liane, Noah, and Josiah would fly home for Christmas. Taz would go to his home in Orlando, leaving Shane, Paige, and Aunt Rhonda home alone.

RC, Shane’s dad, was taking off too, though he’d promised to be home for Christmas. Lew Hargrave, vice president of Melisma Records and the man in charge of YB2’s business, had asked RC to go to London and oversee the recording of a musical track by the London Philharmonic. YB2 had been asked to perform “God Bless America” at the White House on the Fourth of July, and

Lew figured that only the London Philharmonic could provide a worthy accompaniment.

“When the White House calls, I think we should answer,” RC had told the group. “So I’ll be taking some of my vacation time to go to London, and we’ll be moving around a few dates so we can be in Washington next July fourth.” He looked at Paige and Shane. “I know this means leaving you alone during the holidays, but I’ll be home by Christmas Eve. And I think Aunt Rhonda is looking forward to having you all to herself.”

Shane hated to admit it, but he was looking forward to a nearly empty house. His dad was great—no doubt about it, but they were together nearly 24/7. Everybody needed a break from their parents now and then.

“Come on-a my house?” Liane lifted her gaze from the chart on the music stand, then crinkled her nose and looked at the guys on the other side of the soundproof window. “Are you sure those are the right lyrics?”

Ray nodded, then flipped the button that enabled the singers to hear him. “Yeah, that’s it. It’s an old song, way before your time. An actress and singer named Rosemary Clooney sang it.”

Liane shrugged, then positioned the headphones on her head, covering one ear while she left the other exposed.

Shane remembered that Liane always said she liked hearing the studio speakers in one ear and her voice through the headphones in the other. She’d say that only

the truly self-centered would want to hear her own voice blasting in *both* eardrums.

Shane brought his hand to his chin as Ray rolled the tape. He heard the music, then his own voice singing, "Come on in for a smooooooth ride."

"Come on-a my house," Liane sang, then the tape abruptly stopped.

"Next!" Ray called through the mike.

Liane waved her hand. "Wait a minute, I was just warming up. Don't tell me you're gonna keep that one?"

"Sounded good to me, Lee."

"Aw, come on, Ray, I can do it better. Didn't that last note sound a little sharp?"

Ray shrugged. "Okay, we'll do it again. But we don't have all day. I've still got to get the others in here."

"I want it to be good," Liane insisted. "Really good."

Ray glanced over his shoulder toward the man behind him, who appeared to be deep in conversation with RC.

"Aw, come on, Liane," Ray whispered through the mike. "It's only a commercial for a car dealership!"

"I don't care." She lifted her chin. "I want to do it right no matter what it is."

Ray sighed, then nodded as he fiddled with buttons on his console.

Shane held back a grin. Liane's perfectionism could drive anyone crazy, but in the professional world, it was almost impossible to be too perfect.

While she waited for Ray to cue the tape, Liane put one hand on her hip and turned to grin at Shane. Draw-



ing a deep breath, she began to sing: “I’m . . . dreaming of a white Christmas . . .”

He propped his elbows on his bent knees. “Aw, cut it out. Not all of us will get to see snow for Christmas.”

“I’m pretty sure I will.” She turned back to the mike as the music began to roll through the monitors.

Shane stared at Liane’s long hair and tried not to be jealous of her upcoming trip. When she wasn’t on the road, she lived in Minneapolis, and Josiah lived in Virginia—either one of them could have a beautiful snowy Christmas, but he, Taz, and Paige were used to celebrating Christmas with palm trees and sunshine. Noah came from California, so he wasn’t likely to see a white Christmas, either.

It might be nice to spend Christmas Eve in front of a crackling fire while snow drifted down over the rooftops . . . then again, it might be nice to spend Christmas in a quiet house with no growling diesel engines, no screaming fans, and no concrete-and-steel dressing rooms.

Shane’s recorded line played; Liane narrowed her eyes in concentration. “Come on-a my house,” she sang, and even Shane had to admit that this attempt had more energy than the first.

Apparently Ray noticed the difference too. “Good,” he called, looking at Liane through the glass. “Can we keep that one?”

She shrugged one shoulder, then grinned. “I think so. Thanks for being patient with me.” She tugged off the headphones. “Who’s next?”

“Joe,” Ray answered. “Send him on in.”

Shane stood as Liane set the headphones on the music stand. “Come on,” he told her, “I’ll go with you. I think Josiah and Paige are waiting in the hall.”

They’d taken about two steps when Liane paused, her hand resting lightly on his arm. “You know I was kidding, don’t you?” Her eyes met his. “I think it’s cool that you guys get to spend Christmas in Florida. There’s so much to see and do down here.”

“Yeah.” Shane tried to smile, but his mouth only wobbled. “But honestly, I’m mostly looking forward to having a few days off. While you’re up north shoveling those Minneapolis sidewalks, I’m going to be lying out by the pool, working on my tan.”

He ducked in an attempt to avoid her playful punch.

“You’re such a loser,” she said, batting his shoulder with her fist. “I hope it rains on you the entire holiday break.”

“It wouldn’t dare.” Shane gave her a confident smile. “Nothing’s gonna rain out my vacation. I plan to sit back, prop up my feet, and do nothing the whole two weeks.”



## ***Your Word***

Everybody's got a word they want to sell me  
Yakety-yak on my TV,  
Video, radio, quadraphonic stereo,  
PC, CD, DVD,  
But the word that counts in my soul's survival  
Is the word of truth in your holy Bible—

Your word, your word,  
Your word is a lamp unto my feet,  
Your word, your word,  
Is a shining light that's leading me,  
Your word (whose word?), your word,  
Your word is a lamp unto my feet,  
Your word (whose word?), your word,  
Is the word I really need to read.  
I need to heed your word.

Everybody's got a mouth and gums are flapping,  
Blah-ba-dee-blah into my head,  
Pull me left, pull me right,  
Stand up, sit down, fight, fight, fight,  
I'll trust in your voice instead,  
'Cause the word of guidance I should follow  
Is the word of life in the holy gospel.

Your word, your word,  
Your word is a lamp unto my feet,  
Your word, your word,  
Is a shining light that's leading me,  
Your word (whose word?), your word,  
Your word is a lamp unto my feet,  
Your word (whose word?), your word,  
Is the word I really need to read.  
I need to heed your word.

WORDS AND MUSIC BY STEVE SILER  
AND NICK TREVISICK, 2003.