

The Exchange - Group Bio

2014 was a good year for The Exchange: the release of our debut original EP; a 3-month Europe tour opening for The Backstreet Boys; and finishing with our appearance as competitors on NBC's "The Sing-Off."

The Exchange uses music to make friends. Every show is half concert, half house party. It's a chance to interact, whether with people from our culture who speak our language, or with those living across globe, with whom music may be our only way to start a conversation. It's not to say that the five guys in our group are homogeneous; quite the opposite! We are as different in our backgrounds as we are in appearance. Each of us has a distinct voice and style, which might seem, at first glance, incompatible. But it's the fusion of our contrasting roots—r&b, rock, gospel, opera, and hip-hop—that ignites our energy and defines our sound. What unifies the musical melting pot? The vocals. The Exchange's music is built around the raw, soulful power of the human voice.

We met on the TV set of a singing competition, seeming to have little in common. But once we relaxed enough to see one another as people, not just adversaries, we started to share riffs, beats, jokes and life stories; we found ourselves becoming friends. We began to think that our enormous differences—in ethnic backgrounds, musical training, voice qualities, etc.—might combine into something really special. Once we tried singing together, we experienced the truth of that idea, and we quickly understood that we belonged together. Because our own process was based on transcending our differences through musical communication, we recognized that that could be a big part of our contribution to the musical scene, of our group identity. Our goal, we agreed, would be to use music to reach across various divides, to make contact, and make friends. We see this as a cultural, musical, and spiritual exchange; hence, The Exchange.

In our very first year, we "exchanged" around the globe, from London to Hong Kong, Alaska to Dubai, Vegas to Sri Lanka, and The Virgin Islands to Australia. We performed in schools, concert halls, stadiums, hotel lobbies, bars, and subway cars. We flew budget airlines, sometimes slept on floors, and often literally sang for our suppers. We rubbed shoulders with musical celebrities, like Wynton Marsalis, Sara Bareilles, Renee Fleming, Boyz II Men, Olly Murs, and Flo Rida, and we held the hands of impoverished children who didn't speak our language, but sure could sing our songs.

To the surprise of many, The Exchange's entire journey has occurred under our own steam; no label, no agency, no management company. (Even for The Backstreet Boys' tour, we booked all of our own travel. Needless to say, we are no strangers to the glitches of international travel and we are pros at "going with the flow"). The freedom to chart our own course has been crucial, allowing us to make community outreach a centerpiece of what we do. We are convinced that a key to global progress is education, and that music can be a spark that gets kids ready to learn, and helps them to stay with it through the adversity that might otherwise derail their purpose.

2015 promises to be groundbreaking: a 55-city US headline tour, another album, and... we hope, a tour as part of American Music Abroad. We would cherish the opportunity to contribute our music-based exchanges in this new way on the international stage.