



shaking  
the  
planet  
with praise

A Q&A WITH PLANETSHAKERS



*From Melbourne to Maryland to Malaysia, Planetshakers takes their name literally, leading worship in sold-out stadiums all over the globe. Since their founding in 1997, they have produced 20 albums, most of which were recorded live at their annual conferences. The Australian worship band sat down with MORF while touring the US to share how they engage teens in praise.*

## HOW DID THE PLANETSHAKERS MOVEMENT GET STARTED?

SAM EVANS: It started off as a youth group. It was in Adelaide, south Australia, and my husband felt God speak to him about starting a youth conference and calling it Planetshakers. At our very first youth conference there was about 350 young people that got together. God just turned up in great power and ignited a fire within these teenagers that then went back to their youth groups. Word started to spread all around our state and around Aus-

tralia about what was happening in little old Adelaide. It's all about teenagers that were getting set on fire for God and then going back to their high schools and seeing their youth groups growing and their churches impacted. What started off as 350 people soon started to multiply until we were traveling around Australia, five cities, with our conference with close to 30,000 young people coming along.

## YOU TALK ABOUT "EMPOWERING GENERATIONS TO REACH GENERATIONS." WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

SAM EVANS: We provide an environment for them to encounter Jesus, and out of that environment, being so impacted by their encounter that they go back into their own world and start sharing the Gospel and reaching out. They start sharing what they have experienced at Planetshakers with everyone else. It's not just about their own encounter. It's an encounter for them to then do something. Part of our mandate is to stir up the dreams and the vision that God has for each individual life.

## THE "JESUS HIGH" CAN OFTEN FADE AFTER STUDENTS LEAVE ONE OF YOUR EVENTS. HOW DO YOU ENCOURAGE STUDENTS' COMMITMENTS TO LAST?

SAM EVANS: This is where our mandate developed over the years. We had a youth conference, and then God spoke to us about planting a church because we really needed an environment where these young people could come and encounter God, but also be discipled and grow in their faith. So that's where the church started, 11 years ago in Melbourne, Australia. Then there are different people that we've partnered with, different churches that we've come alongside. Again, trying to fos-





BACK (left to right)  
Natalie Ruiz  
Scott Lim  
Andy Harrison  
Chelsi Nikkerud  
Josh Ham  
Joe Vatricila

FRONT (left to right)  
Rudy Nikkerud  
Joth Hunt  
Sam Evans  
BJ Pridham

ter a continual environment that will help people mature, grow and develop in their faith. It's not just a one-off experience.

## TEENAGERS ARE PRETTY FAMOUS FOR THEIR APATHY. HOW DO YOU STIR UP A PASSION IN STUDENTS ABOUT SOMETHING AS "OLD FASHIONED" AS JESUS AND RELIGION?

**JOSH HAM:** The music is relevant. It's Top 40, that dancey vibe stuff. They just latch onto it.

**BJ PRIDHAM:** There is a term that gets thrown around with Pastor Russell and Pastor Sam, that's "old school new school." It's that everything is Bible. It's a Bible-based church. It's a Bible-based

ministry. Everything we believe is Bible-based. But we've put it in a vehicle that our generation can access. It's not just for the young. It's for the young at heart as well. We've made it a point to keep developing in that area, to make sure we stay current so that we can keep speaking to the generation that's here now and the generation that's coming up.

**SAM EVANS:** That's what Jesus did. He spoke the language of the day. When He was with fishermen, He talked about fish. When He was with tax collectors, He talked about money. He was very relevant to the environment that He was in. So that's where we really believe that we need to speak the language of the day and not distance ourselves in those traditional ways. It's so easy to do that.

We as human beings get comfortable in what we know, so we always continue to push the envelope of creativity in sounds, words, really just trying to speak the language of the day so the Gospel isn't shut down to anybody. It's accessible to anyone because, of course, we believe it's life-changing. That's part of our mandate – to keep progressing in our sound.

## YOU'VE SEEN HUGE NUMBERS OF STUDENTS COME TO CHRIST IN LARGELY SECULAR COUNTRIES AROUND THE WORLD. HOW DO YOU REACH THOSE



## STUDENTS WHO HAVEN'T GROWN UP IN CHURCH?

JOSH HAM: We go into quite a few schools every week, up to 20 schools now. We run a program called No Bull, which is an anti-bullying program. In the last 12 months, they have passed a law in high schools which means we can't actually talk about the Gospel, but that doesn't mean we can't go in and be Jesus to these people, to spread that light. So we go in and talk about positive living, no bullying, that kind of stuff. Through that, if those guys want to get involved even more, if they want to get connected, the leaders get them connected to our youth group as well.

BJ PRIDHAM: What we find with that, this awesome God-inspired idea to go in and discuss bullying has provided a vehicle for kids to have a moment with Jesus in the classroom because the idea has come from God. So there would be times where we would ask kids to respond, kids that are bawling their eyes out, responding to this message of anti-bullying, which is pretty cool.

SAM EVANS: Also, with our youth group in our church, when you walk into our church, it doesn't really look like a church, so I think that's important. These people who don't know anything about Jesus or the church come in and feel very comfortable because for them, this is like going to a concert or a nightclub. So they are like, "I feel good in this environment." It's not like going into a church that's quiet and smells weird. But then, of course, we present our praise and worship and a great, inspiring message. We find even in our secular society, that is so appealing to them be-

cause we have really worked on what we would call our "shop-front window." I think that's key to getting people who don't know Jesus into the church: not to really look like the church on the outside, but we are the church 100 percent.

## HOW DO YOU KEEP THAT CONCERT ATMOSPHERE FROM AFFECTING YOU ONSTAGE, FROM BECOMING A "ROCK STAR" MENTALITY?

SAM EVANS: We really believe in a great discipleship program within our church, the discipleship of our musicians and our singers, to keep them grounded in their faith and grounded in what the Word of God says, keeping them focused, that this is all about Jesus. We don't pay our musicians. So many churches will pay their musicians as session musicians. We don't do that. It's purely a volunteer basis. That keeps someone grounded, doesn't it? We keep encouraging each other that our motivation needs to stay true. If anyone gets out of line, we're good enough to go, "Excuse me..." Or we bring them on a tour and get really, really tired!

## ANYTHING ELSE YOU'D LIKE TO SAY TO ENCOURAGE AMERICAN YOUTH MINISTERS, MENTORS AND PARENTS?

SAM EVANS: I would tell them to believe the power that they are connected to – Jesus Christ – that that power can work within their lives and within their teenagers' lives. If we only believe what God says in His Word, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and he will not depart." Believing that they have the words, the advice, the comfort, the encouragement – everything that they are sowing into these young people – it will produce a harvest. Parents or leaders can be confident. They "hope" this works or that they are doing the right thing. I would say, "No, believe!" As they are stepping out in ministry in this way, they will see God move in the hardest heart or the most difficult situation because God is powerful, He is able and He will do it.

JOSH HAM: For those parents, don't ever underestimate the power of prayer. Keep cover over your kids, keep praying over the church, that God would bring good relationships into their lives. Just every day, pray and pray and don't ever underestimate that.

*Originally formed in 1997 to lead worship for the Planetshakers Awakening conference in Australia, Planetshakers Band is passionate about uniting generations worldwide through worship and is known for favorites like "Get Up," "Healer," "Beautiful Saviour," "Nothing Is Impossible" and "The Anthem." While they tour internationally, the team remains based out of Planetshakers Church, a multi-campus, 12,000-plus member congregation based in Melbourne, Australia that is pastored by husband and wife, Russell and Sam Evans.*