

CHRISTIAN CITY YOUTH

Church has changed. Just listen to music from Sydney's Christian City Youth worship team.

Dan Korocz and Nikki Fletcher are key members of the group from Christian City Church Oxford Falls whose latest album "No Longer I" is generating a good deal of interest across the country. The group has released a radio single More Than which is gaining strong airplay across the country.

Vic Campbell talks with them.

- Vic *What are you trying to achieve and communicate with your latest CD No Longer I?*
- Nikki Fletcher We represent the youth ministry of our church, Christian City Church Oxford Falls in Sydney. We're a praise and worship band. We play at youth every Friday night and the CD *No Longer I* is a collection of the most sung songs in youth and at church. And we've put them together on an album.
- Vic *It sounds terrific. It can sit with a whole lot of other modern day culturally appropriate stuff. Who is it aimed at?*
- Nikki It's definitely praise and worship. Our primary audience is Christians from 10 to 30. But there are also a lot of slower, mellower songs that 30 - 60 year olds would really love too.
- Vic *Do you write most of the material, the lyrics?*
- Nikki I write some of it, but not all of it. We share it around the praise and worship team.
- Vic *When you write a praise and worship song, what are you trying to achieve? Are you trying to excite people or give them some sort of pipeline through to God?*
- Dan Korocz When I write I'm thinking how kids will react. I'm trying to write for our services to help kids want to praise and worship God, whether that means jumping up and down, or dancing around, or lifting their hands. So when I write, I write songs that's will work in a service.
- Nikki Our job as the praise and worship team is to create a certain atmosphere and a dynamic so that when whoever is running the service gets up to speak it's already happening. The kids are already into it and responding ... so the songs we write create that atmosphere musically. Lyrically, the songs say certain things like - I reach out my hands and worship you. This is what we want happening in our services and what we do is to serve that.
- Dan *We want to lead people to a place where it's just them and God, and they're just going for it.*
- Vic So how do you guys as artists and performers distinguish between "entertainment" and "ministry"?

Nikki I think it's got to do with where your heart is at. If you're going up on stage and you're just there for yourself, that's fine if you're not a praise and worship act. But worship is all about God. Being a worship leader is all about leading people to God, pointing people to God and that's what you've got to be doing.

Vic *Imagine I'm a total pagan. Can you explain to me what 'the heart of worship' is?*

Nikki I think it's about being real.

It's more than singing a song or lifting my hands. It's about how you live your life. Do I love my 'brother' more than myself? For example, if I'm not putting Dan first, then I'm not worshipping God. That's what he's asking me to do.

It's also about serving. when I get up to sing, I'm not thinking about what song I can sing that makes me look the best, or the song that makes my voice sound the best. It's about focusing on God.

I never had any desire to sing punk or anything like that but that's what the kids are responding to. When we get up and play Dan's songs they respond to that. They're not responding to me when I get up and sing my jazz songs. (I used to be a jazz singer.) So for me it's about serving them. I've adapted and changed so that now when I get up it doesn't matter if my voice doesn't sound so great on that song - I don't care. If the kids love the song, it's about them and not me. That's why it's worship and not entertainment.

Vic *So what is No Longer I?*

Nikki This is music you can put in your CD player and it's a representation of what we do in a service.

It is a revelation that comes from people laying down their lives to build the church.

Vic *What your hopes are for this album? What do you really want the album to achieve?*

Nikki I love all the songs and I do care about them, but if a kid can get a revelation of *No Longer I* and realise that life is not about them - they can start living for God and living for others. They're God's two greatest commands, love him and love others, if people get that revelation I'll seriously be happy.

Vic *You used to sing jazz.*

Nikki Yes, but the thing is now I don't classify myself as a singer - that's not what I do. I describe myself as a worship leader.

Vic *Explain.*

Nikki If someone rang me up and said I'll pay you \$100 to come and sing at this event, sing a Celine Dion song, that's what a singer does. That's what I used to do. I wouldn't do it now unless it was as a favour. What I do now is a ministry position at church where I lead a

team of young people to do stuff like run the music in services, to write songs and lead people in worship.

Vic *And is it primarily for youth and young adults that you would be leading worship?*

Nikki I do youth and young adults and church. I do all types of services, across all generations – old and young and everything in between.
But for this album, this is primarily youth.

Vic *Finally, what is your dream for the album?*

Nikki My whole dream for this album was to capture what's going on in our hearts and what's going on in the young people in our church. Obviously I have a vision for it and I have stuff in my heart, but I believe this is carrying something that is on the cutting edge and is completely relevant to this generation.

All we wanted to do with the album was to capture a piece of that so kids could put it on in their car.

The other day a Mum said to me that her 14 year old daughter had just got the album and she's had it on in the car. She's a normal teenager and putting it on in the car and singing along with it about Christ living in me.

That's what we want kids singing not other destructive stuff. If that's what's in their spirit, even if it starts as a pop song, those words have power and eventually their spirit and their hearts will change.

And this started in our hearts when we said it's *No Longer I*.