



In the zone: Ronan Keating is enjoying being back in a boyband

# FROM BOYS TO MEN

They were as screamed-at as the Beatles. Now Boyzone are back together again and Ronan Keating says it even beats flying solo, writes **Sally Browne**

THE night he arrived in Australia, Ronan Keating went out drinking with his Irish mates, including our very own resident former Irish boyband member Brian McFadden.

Keating, 31, who is back in the swing with Boyzone, was here promoting their reunion CD and tour. He and ex-Westlife singer McFadden go back to when both were young heart-throbs topping the charts.

There are heaps of memories to relive, and Keating's excitement at being back with the Boyzone gang

couldn't be more genuine. He may have given countless interviews on his brief Australian sojourn but his enthusiasm is audible in his slightly raspy, ever-so-lovely, Irish lilt.

"I'm not joking, we've had such a brilliant time just being in each other's company," he says. "The first few months we just talked about old times and laughed. Every day we laugh when we're together. I'm loving every minute of it, honestly."

It took nearly two years to get the reunion tour in motion, which in-

cluded winding down the five lads' solo careers, rehearsing dance routines and songs and spending long hours in the gym until they felt ready to take their shirts off.

"We were training for this goal so we could walk out on stage without our tops on," admits Keating.

The band are hoping to make it to Australia as part of a full-scale tour by August next year.

Keating was just 16 when he first auditioned for Boyzone, and although he admits the band name might be a little out of date, he remembers those years well.

"Some of the things we used to get up to," he muses.

He remembers one incident, after a gig in Amsterdam, where a group of girls were screaming and chasing

them down the street as they jumped into their van. One girl's scream seemed to last longer when the others had died away.

"We couldn't understand how this girl was keeping up still running and screaming, and we realised as we went around the corner she was holding on to the back of the car and she went flying off the car and rolled down the street."

Now he, Shane Lynch, Stephen Gately, Mikey Graham and Keith Duffy are more likely to be surrounded by screaming children. Keating jokes that at their recent UK shows, the family room was bigger than their dressing room.

Boyzone have fond memories of Australia, too, including making a video for the song *Isn't It A Wonder*

in the "Outback" of Broken Hill.

Could we possibly have another former Irish boyband member a resident of our shores?

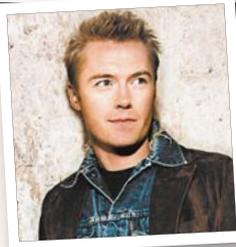
"Absolutely," says Keating. "I'd love to bring my family down here for a couple of years. It's a great country. I really enjoy coming here. It's never bored me. I love the country."

After Boyzone, Keating had a successful solo career but he says nothing compares to being in a band.

"Being in a band is a very different atmosphere," he says.

"There seems to be more people around and a greater buzz when you're in a band. I noticed that straight away as soon as we got together again, it was like someone flicked a switch."

**Boyzone's CD *Back Again... No Matter What* is out now.**



## Keating songfile

RONAN Keating on some of the biggest band and solo songs:

### LOVE ME FOR A REASON

I was a kid. I was 16 years of age. It was my dream to be in a band like Boyzone, not just a boy band but to be in the music industry. To be doing it on a world stage was amazing. I just remember the chaos of it all. I'd never been on an airplane, I'd never left Ireland, really. It was shocking to the system, but what a rush.

### NO MATTER WHAT

For me it was definitely the time that more people seemed to recognise Boyzone as a musical power, I guess. Overnight, people started to respect us differently in the industry.

### ISN'T IT A WONDER?

We shot the video in Broken Hill. It was the first time we made a video away from the UK. It was a big budget. We'd never seen anything like it. We loved it. It was in the desert in the Outback.

### PICTURE OF YOU

It was the first time I was recognised properly as a songwriter. I got an Ivor Novello Award for writing this one. We managed to get the song on the *Mr Bean* movie.

### LIFE IS A ROLLERCOASTER

That was my first big solo record. It launched me as an individual away from Boyzone. It was No. 1 in about 12 countries or something like that. I travelled the world. I'll never forget it.