

Cross Rhythms tracks down artists who've been quiet of late. This issue Lloyd Wade tells us what's been happening with THE WADES.

Derek, David and Lloyd Wade have long been a gospel music institution in the UK. The group have in many ways proven to be a British version of The Winans and have pioneered gospel's move into R& B. Recording-wise they have hardly been prolific. Despite major critical acclaim 'A Touch Of Heaven' (1995), 'The Feel Good Factor' (1999) and 'A Family Thing' (2001) have been their only albums. Recently even their blistering live appearances (who can forget their stunning performance at Wembley Stadium in 1997?) seem to have ground to a halt. Cross Rhythms tracked down Lloyd Wade to find out what's been happening with the group.

"Following the illness and death of our father (Aubrey Wade) we are currently working on new material for a release in the autumn of 2004. We have resumed taking on bookings for events and are at present in the process of rehearsing a compilation of most requested songs from all previous albums to add to new material for live performances at events. We are now taking bookings and have already begun performing in church and other events. We have performed at The Bright Lights Festival at London Colney early in July where we did main stage and performed to some 500 young people.

"We have a new band of great musicians and are enjoying working on our stuff with a 'live feel'! It gives such a good vibe and it allows scope to capitalise on those special moments in a gig when there's a 'real sense of God's presence' where we just burst into unrehearsed spontaneous singing. It certainly keeps the band on their toes and it generates such an awesome vibe!"

Although they have been focusing on family these past two years and have been absent from the main Christian music scene, [The Wades](#) have noted the emergence of the new wave of R& B/ urban gospel acts in the UK. "More and more groups seem to be able to finance their own projects and are putting out great pieces of work with good production and excellent writing. There does however seem to be a need for more British distribution companies as the ones currently out there can only do so much. Because there is a renaissance happening in terms of the wide appeal Christian music is enjoying, the high standard of music being produced needs to be reflected by the number of British albums actually getting into the shops. Instead we are seeing groups financing their own productions but many are finding themselves at a loose end with distribution. The irony is that the Church on a whole has the finances that can ensure that Christian music is promoted in both Christian and secular arenas. If our ethos is to reach God's thirsty world with the Gospel then there needs to be a shift in emphasis in terms of funding. For example; we have heard how some churches are able to spend millions on cosmetics. If some of that money was used to finance the many Christian groups who are sacrificing their time and money to produce and distribute life changing music, then not only would these artists be able to produce even better quality material but the message of the Gospel will really begin to make inroads in the wider music scene. The increase in appearance of Christian artists and musicians such as Delirious? and Daniel Bedingfield on the mainstream music scene is proof that a concerted effort of investment on the part of the Church would help to place Christian artists and musicians in strategic key areas where good Christian principles are so badly needed.

"As a group we sometimes wonder why there is so much talk about the [The Wades](#) hanging up their mics and calling it a day. All along our career we have had periods where we have not been in the public eye. It was the same before we released our MOBO nominated album 'A Family Thing'. People were writing us off saying that [The Wades](#) were through, because it was a two year gap between 'The Feel Good Factor' and 'A Family Thing', but we were confident in the fact that sometimes good wine takes a bit of time to mature and we knew that 'A Family Thing' would do well so we weren't too rushed to put it out until we were happy with it.

"It's been about the same time now between 'A Family Thing' and [The Wades](#) coming back on the scene and although we will never be over the sad loss of our dad, we feel that there is still anointing upon us to continue bringing God's love and good news to the world with our own unique way of great toe-tapping beats, close harmonies, memorable melodies and lyrics a la '[The Wades](#)'. Besides, dad would have wanted his "boys" to continue doing' what we do best! "SING, GUYS, SING!"

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Keeping it in the family

MARCIA DIXON catches up with The Wades following the release of their new album

TOP male gospel group, The Wades recently staged the biggest ever launch of a UK gospel album when they filled the 4,000 capacity Kingsway International Christian Centre in Hackney, to celebrate the release of their third album A Family Thing.

During their 15-year career, The Wades – comprised of thirty-something brothers David, Lloyd & Derek – have become one of the few gospel groups to attain success in both black and white Christian circles.

They've performed in black gospel events all over the country and wowed culturally mixed audiences at Spring Harvest, appeared at the Cross Rhythms Festival, appeared at Champion of the World at Wembley Stadium, and performed throughout Europe, the US, the Caribbean, and Australia.

A Family Thing gives The Wades a further opportunity to broaden their fan base and brings their musical skills to the fore. DJs and music writers up and down the country are hailing it as their best album ever.

The album's songs reflect the whole gamut of relationships, and conveys the brothers' heartfelt views on the issue of family.

David, the group's spokesman explained: "Our society is trying to negate the importance of family without fully examining or understanding its role. Family provides security, strength and support and thankfully when people can't get this from their natural family they should be able to find it in their spiritual family."

The influences of soul, gospel, r'n'b, hip hop and pop are all evident on A Family Thing, which in many aspects, is their most commercially sounding release - without compromising. David feels the album contains a song for everyone, no matter what their age. He explained: "I just love Shooting the Moon which tells of a father's love for his daughter. Friend is another of my favourites as it highlights the importance of having a relationship with Christ, and of course the title track A Family Thing. This song is encouraging people to stand firm in their family and not allow relationships to decay and die as family is the main pillar of society."

The power of music has allowed The Wades to communicate with all kinds of audiences. David recalled: "I was in South Africa last year, and spent some time with the Asian community. I found it surprising to see them singing praise and worship songs, familiar to congregations throughout the world.

"And, when I sang our own songs, the music was not strange to them. It was then that I truly recognised that music crosses racial and language barriers and touches the heart. It can get across messages of unity and togetherness, breaking through where politics and dogma can't reach."

When the South London-based brothers started their career 15 years ago, they did not think they would be heralded as Britain's leading male gospel group.

However, that is what they have become, and with the launch of their own label, FameCity Entertainment, they aim to start nurturing and showcasing up and coming talent. In the interim, they will focus on what they do best, sharing their faith through music, and showing the masses that it really is A Family Thing.

Marcia Dixon is a freelance writer based in London