

IN THE FAST LANE AND ON STAGE

By Allen Kiger



Bellamy Brothers: Great Harmony

As we approached The Bellamy Brothers tour bus parked outside the Red Skelton Performing Arts Center in Vincennes, we were greeted by Tim Thomas as the tour production manager. He opened the doors and introduced us to David and Howard Bellamy. They shook our hands and invited us to sit down and make ourselves at home. The brothers had a nine-hour delay at an airport and didn't get to Nashville until 4 a.m. before making their way to Vincennes. They could have easily said they were tired and passed on the interview but they were very gracious with their time. They said with a laugh they did get a \$200 voucher from the airline for their troubles.



On The Bellamy Brothers bus, left to right: Howard Bellamy, Allen Kiger, David Bellamy.

I had interviewed Howard on February 19th and arranged for a sit-down interview when I found out they would be making a concert stop in Vincennes. Many of the questions I had for this duo came after reading their new book, *Let Your Love Flow; The Life and Times of the Bellamy Brothers*.

I asked about the music jam they use to have in their hometown in Florida called "Snake, Rattle and Roll." It was the country version of Woodstock and over the years, raised a lot of money for local charities. But the jam got so big and out of hand they quit doing it. David said they've had offers from sponsors and promoters to bring the jam back but they would only be interested if they put on the event themselves. Howard said they would be open to doing it again and David added, "We kinda keep all our options open."

I asked them their favorite part of their new hit reality TV show called "Honky Tonk Ranch." David said one of his favorite moments of the show was riding horses in the bay near Tampa, Florida. He said it was just so beautiful and the dolphins were following them. Howard said his favorite moment was meeting an American hero, Master Sgt. George Vera, through Building Homes for Heroes. They've since become friends and discovered Sgt. Vera lives close by. These stories can be seen on the Cowboy Channel or streamed on RFD TV.

In their book, The Bellamy Brothers mentioned playing at The Nugget in Reno on the same stage where Red Skelton had performed years before. I was curious how they felt about now performing on stage at a venue named after the beloved comedian. They said they were probably two of the biggest Red Skelton fans there was. They said some of the best times they had spending time with their father was watching Skelton's show. No matter how hard their dad worked them on the ranch, they would always stop on Tuesday night and watch Red's show on television with the family.

The brothers still live on the same ranch where they grew up in Darby, Florida. They said they raise Brahma cattle, a breed originating from India. The Florida heat and humidity doesn't bother the cattle. Howard said the cattle don't even bother finding shade.

I asked them about being honorary Texas Rangers which they talked about in their book. Both said this was the award they were most proud of and they still display the award along with the prayer of the Texas Ranger.

I asked the Bellamy Brothers about their most popular hit song "Let Your Love Flow," which went to number one in 15 countries. Having such a huge first hit opened many doors. They had so many stories to tell about that song, their career and places they have traveled. They have literally traveled the world and I'm sure there isn't a place in this country they haven't played at or traveled through. The Bellamy Brothers have played over 8,000 shows in their 43-plus year career.

My last question for Howard and David was, with all their success and worldwide fan base, what would be the way they would want to be remembered. David said he would want to be remembered for their good songs and Howard added just putting up with each other all these years, which they attribute to being brought up right.

Concert Review

The band was on stage as Jim Heep on pedal steel guitar introduced The Bellamy Brothers. "Feelin' The Feelin'" was the first song they performed, followed by "Kids of the Baby Boom" which I think struck a chord with the majority of the audience. It was a diverse crowd with ages ranging from 19 to 90.

"Dancing Cowboys" was the next song they played which was the song that was playing on their show while they were riding horses in the bay. It just made me think of how



The Bellamy Brothers on stage at Vincennes.

peaceful that looked on TV and my mind was drifting between the song and the show. I guess that's the power of music. A few songs later was "Lovers Live Longer" followed by "I Could Be Persuaded" and "When I'm Away From You".

Next on the list was one of my favorites, "Rip Off the Knob." I remember loving the video on CMT, back when they played music videos. A few songs later was "Old Hottie" followed by "Crazy From the Heart."

I can't list all of the songs they played in their one hour and forty minute concert. All night, the thing I noticed was how much fun the band had interacting with each other. Rocky Marvel on drums, constantly keeping beat and twirling the drum sticks, at the same time guitarist Randy Hiebert was dancing his way around the stage to perform next to Galen Butler on keyboards and Randy Hall on bass. You could feel the closeness of the band and wanting to perform their very best, and it showed.

As The Bellamy Brothers started playing "Let Your Love Flow" I knew we were nearing the end of the show. This song had the sold-out venue singing every word. The last song of the night was "Redneck Girl." At the end of the song they thanked everyone for coming to the show. They received a standing ovation and cheers. The Bellamy Brothers asked the audience if they wanted to hear one more song. Of course the crowd shouted, "Yes!" and they performed "I'd Lie to You For Your Love."

As the band exited the stage they got a second standing ovation. They had played 22 songs and could have played 22 more and still would have left out someone's favorite. When you have 20 number one songs, almost 40 top ten songs, and were promoting new music they would have had to perform all night to play them all. Since you are reading this and you weren't at the concert just put on one of their records or CD's and close your eyes. They sounded on stage just like on their recordings. And, they still have that great harmony after all these years.

What a great night - an interview with The Bellamy Brothers on their tour bus and then a fantastic show with the best of music, great musicians, and well written songs. This interview was probably one of my favorites, as The Bellamy Brothers music has had such a huge imprint in my life, sharing music with my dad. I wish my friend Don Stanphill could have lived to enjoy the night with me, a night that will never be forgotten.

Don't forget Sunday nights at 8:30 pm to tune into the Cowboy Channel for Honky Tonk Ranch. You can also order merchandise at 1-800-622-1080 or you can order online at honkytonkranch.com