

Brian McKnight on performing and travelling



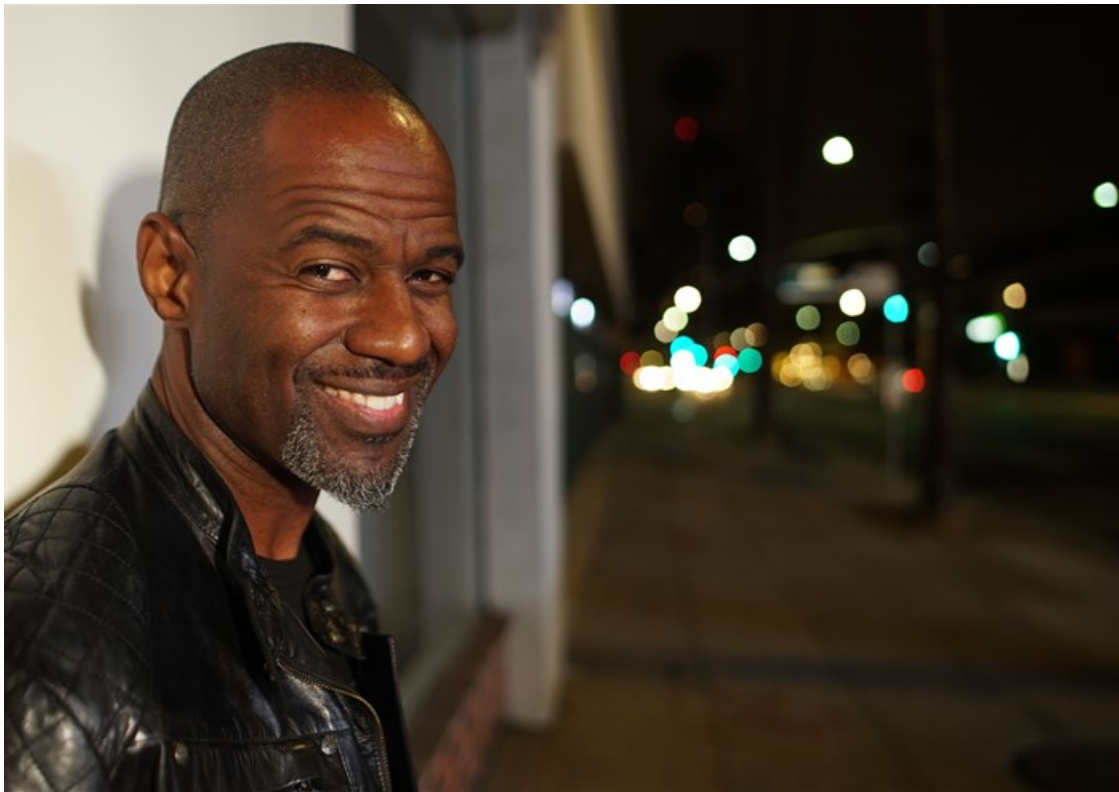
By Eugene Yiga

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After more than a quarter century as a recording artist, Brian McKnight once again reinvigorated his approach to songwriting, recording, and performing. Forever, the lead single from Genesis (his 18th album release), reached Top 25 on Billboard's Adult R&B Chart, along with radio charts all over the United States. He believes "Genesis is a new beginning of sorts with a nod to my past, firmly rooted in the present, and looking towards the future."

■ *How's it been to be on the road again?*

It's great. Obviously, the years that I put out new albums are busier than other years, but people want to hear me and it's awesome that they show up. I'm never going to complain about that.



■ *What's been your favourite place to perform?*

It's hard to pinpoint one place or distinguish one from the other. I love any place where people will show up to see me, so that's every place.

■ *What memorable experiences have you had on the tour so far?*

We were in Toronto and it was raining outside at this festival but people stayed. They got drenched and there was lightning, but people stayed. Most people would have left or been mad. But they just stayed and they sang and we all got wet. It was amazing.

■ *What else has been special?*

I've done some amazing things. I sang on stage in Italy with Andrea Bocelli and it was just one of those surreal moments; after 25 years they don't happen that often but this was one of those moments.

▣ ***What do you love about performing?***

There are moments when I look out at the audience and see those faces singing the songs that I've written. It's that moment that I realise I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing on stage.

▣ ***How do you maintain your energy levels when travelling and performing so much?***

I think I've built up a good resistance because I've been doing it for so long. But when you hear that audience screaming for you, it's difficult to not get charged. People are out there, anticipating and screaming for you. If you can't get up for that, then you're in the wrong business.

▣ ***Why do you think fans have such a connection to your music and performing?***

I think people wait for you to come. They're anticipating you coming and they love what you do. And it's that love that makes that makes them stay; it's that love that makes them come in the first place. There's that bond you have with your favourite music that's nostalgic and brings you back to those memories of the first time you heard it and who you were with. And it's all those things that add up to why they come and why they stay.

▣ ***What's been your strangest or funniest travelling experience?***

I'm not sure if there are 'strange' things that happen. Fans can get a little crazy sometimes – we don't have to go into all those sorts of things – but it's been easy for me.

■ ***Do you ever experience culture shock while you're abroad?***

Earlier in my career, for sure, but now I've pretty much been everywhere. It's also 'isolated'. You get to a place and you're whisked off to a hotel, and then the sound check, and then the show, and then you're off to the next place. It's almost like you don't get the chance to get to that point of culture shock.

■ ***What other challenges from travelling do you have to deal with?***

Security issues in different countries can be trying at times. And getting through airports, from plane to plane, can be a little hectic but it's no different from what anybody else has to deal with.



■ ***What do you love most about being on the road?***

Getting to see people in other parts of the world that love what you do. And that's one of the good things about social media. Someone in Russia can tell you how much they love you and it gets to you right now. So when you get there you can already anticipate what's going to happen and how people feel about you. That's priceless.

■ ***What do you miss most about being away from home?***

The bed we [Leilani Malia Mendoza and I] sleep it at home is amazing. And it's hard to get that same kind of sleep when you're anywhere else. But we're together most of the times so it doesn't matter where we sleep.

■ ***Is there somewhere you've not yet been that you'd love to travel?***

Russia, for sure, because we haven't been there. I've seen pictures and I just can't imagine being in Red Square and experiencing that for the first time and the fact that we'll probably do it together makes it even more amazing. And of course, Croatia because that's where they film *Game of Thrones*!

ABOUT EUGENE YIGA

Eugene graduated from the University of Cape Town with distinctions in financial accounting and classical piano. He then spent over two-and-a-half years working in branding and communications at two of South Africa's top market research companies. Eugene also spent over three-and-a-half years at an eLearning start-up, all while building his business as an award-winning writer. Visit www.eugeneyiga.com, follow @eugeneyiga on Twitter, or email hello@eugeneyiga.com to say, um, hello.

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