


BOYZ II MEN

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Philadelphia's Boyz II Men combined sweet soul harmonies and swaggering new jack swing beats to become one of the biggest R&B groups to come out of the '90s. High school friends Michael McCary, Nathan Morris, Wanya Morris, and Shawn Stockman began singing together in the mid-'80s; their 1991 debut, *Cooleyhighharmony*, was produced by New Edition's Michael Bivins, who hailed the quartet as his musical protégés. Their debut single, "Motownphilly," an origin story with brassy synths and a vocal breakdown, neatly summed up the group's aesthetic; their cappella cover of the '70s soul side "It's So Hard to Say Goodbye to Yesterday" and their breakup ballad "End of the Road" put their raw emotionalism on display. Boyz II Men's harmony-rich update of soul balladry ruled radio in the mid-'90s; they notched back-to-back No. 1s in the U.S. with the lovelorn "I'll Make Love to You" and the apologetic "On Bended Knee" in 1994, and they set a chart record with their vocally spectacular Mariah Carey collaboration "One Sweet Day," which spent 16 weeks in the top spot in 1995-'96. After a few more albums that highlighted Boyz II Men's softer side, McCary left the band in early 2003 and the group took a hiatus, returning with the 2004 covers album *Throwback, Vol. 1*. Boyz II Men's 21st century has included recording other retro-minded albums, having a street in their hometown named after them, and headlining a cruise, as well as receiving a blessing from Beyoncé, who interpolated their 1991 hit "Uhh Ahh" into her jubilant 2011 track "Countdown."