



First time: Irish pop group Westlife (from left) Kian Egan, Mark Feehily, Shane Filan and Nicky Byrne, are heading to New Zealand for four shows.

Belinda McCammon talks to Kian Egan from Irish boy band Westlife a month out from the start of their first New Zealand tour.

IT'S not easy being in a boy band, especially, it seems, when that band is Westlife. Despite having 14 United Kingdom No 1 singles and more than 36 million records sold, finding someone who admits to being a Westlife fan can be tougher than catching Osama bin Laden.

But someone must be going to those shows and someone must be buying those records. Look at the person next to you — despite their howls of derision or protests, it's probably them. In 2006, *The Rose* became Westlife's 14th UK No 1 single, giving them the third-most in history (with Cliff

Richard), behind only Elvis Presley, 21, and The Beatles, 17. Westlife are rich, successful and have secured their musical legacy. As you can imagine then, Westlife aren't too phased by what the critics might say; they're doing alright thank you very much. Next month, Nicky Byrne, Kian Egan, Mark Feehily and Shane Filan will perform for the first time in New Zealand. After 10 years the members still enjoy performing, Egan says from England.

"We love it and it's a passion of ours. That's the real reason behind why we do it. Every time we make an album we try to make the best album we can make." For all their success, Westlife have yet to crack the United States market, a fate similar to many successful UK acts but Egan remains philosophical about it. "We've never had a proper shot at America and I think that's mainly because of how the American market is and the band we are."

Home gym graveyard

MATE
MARK WILSON



PUT your hand up if you have succumbed to the lure of a highly comical, slightly annoying infomercial with a limited time upsze offer if you call within the next five minutes, not to mention they throw in Chuck Norris for the first week with all credit card orders. I'm thinking most hands will be up by now. Who could resist a simple kitchen knife slicing through a steel pipe like it was a Warriors backline and still being tough enough to dice tomatoes faster than a prime ministerial motorcade late for the rugby. Or, for the ladies, a bronzed descendant of Swedish god Fabio sculpting his guns on a rubberband-driven wonder machine that folds up and fits in your back pocket. Knives, makeup, wonder cookers, CDs packed with Kenny Rogers and Barbra Streisand are all on offer, but perhaps the most prolific on all these infomercial gems is home gym equipment. Tone and sculpt your buns and thighs in as little as three minutes a day or your money back, less shipping of course. Securely anchored to the couch looking at your gym card from 1984, fresh from bulking up on a steady diet of Jimmy's pies and Speight's to keep you warm over winter, you flick to the infomercial channel by accident while searching for Sky Sport or the Spice channel then, bang, it hits you harder than a Richard Loe forearm to the noggin! A six-pack from home in only three minutes a day — I'm in! Seven days later there it is, direct from Asia, built with the latest wonder materials as used on the space shuttle. Hang about . . . some assembly required, you have hit the first hitch. Undeterred, four weeks later, just after the money-back-guarantee has evaporated, you're finally up and running/stepping towards those washboard abs just like TV. The cruel reality is that real life and TV go together like chihuahuas and cattle yards. If you happen to read the fine print it notes that results will vary and are best achieved with a balanced diet and healthy lifestyle. Fancy that, you can't actually look like those toned celebs in the infomercials simply by investing three easy payments followed by three minutes a day, three times a week. I can tell you not one of those bodies on TV has come from a fitness gimmick, they are from a stack of gym hours, as well as a healthy dose of fake tan. My advice, have a garage sale, buy a gym membership or a pair of running shoes because, unlike Hugh Hefner and the girls of the Playboy mansion, if it sounds too good to be true, it is.

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