

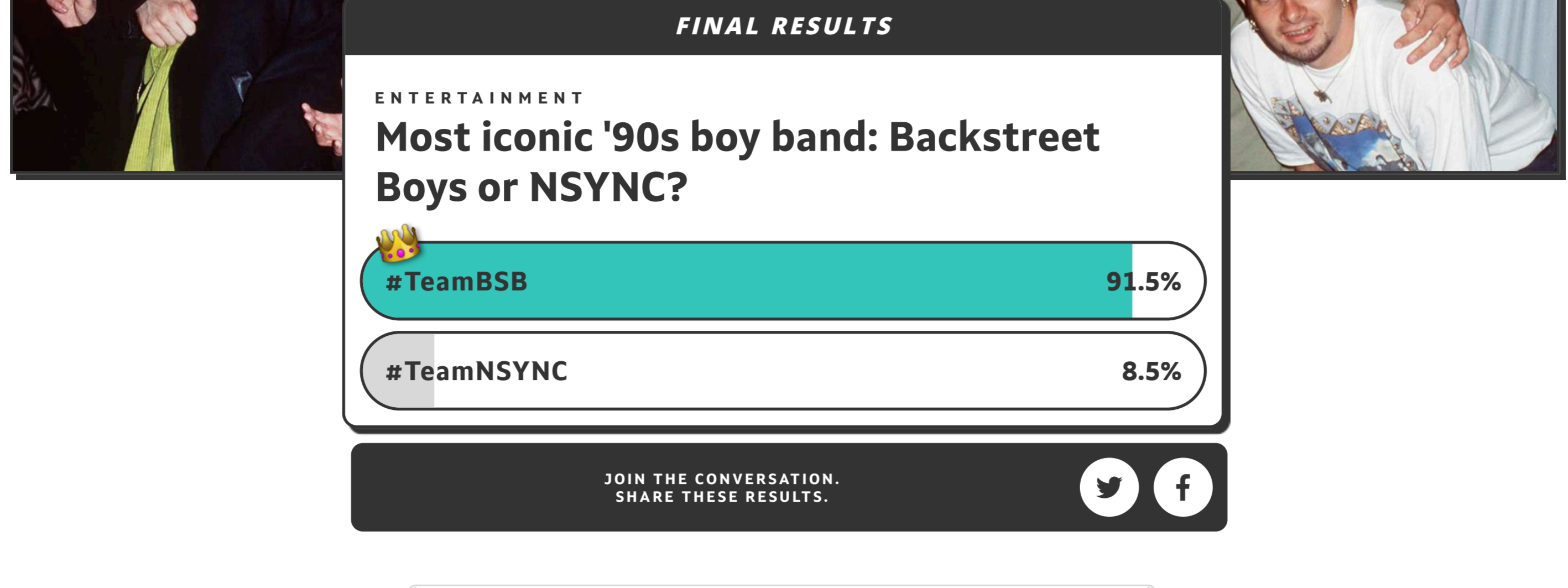
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# Most iconic '90s boy band: Backstreet Boys or NSYNC?

The late '90s saw a resurgence of [boy bands](#), but [NSYNC](#) and [Backstreet Boys](#) stood out above the rest. Both boy bands were signed to Jive Records after being discovered by [sleazy music manager Lou Pearlman](#). BSB would go on to become the [best-selling boy band of all time](#). NSYNC fans argue that does not make BSB the best. NSYNC had the edge when it came to individual talent, including future solo music star and actor Justin Timberlake. So, which '90s boy band is the greatest? 🤔🗳️

By [Deron Dalton](#)  
Published 4/3/20

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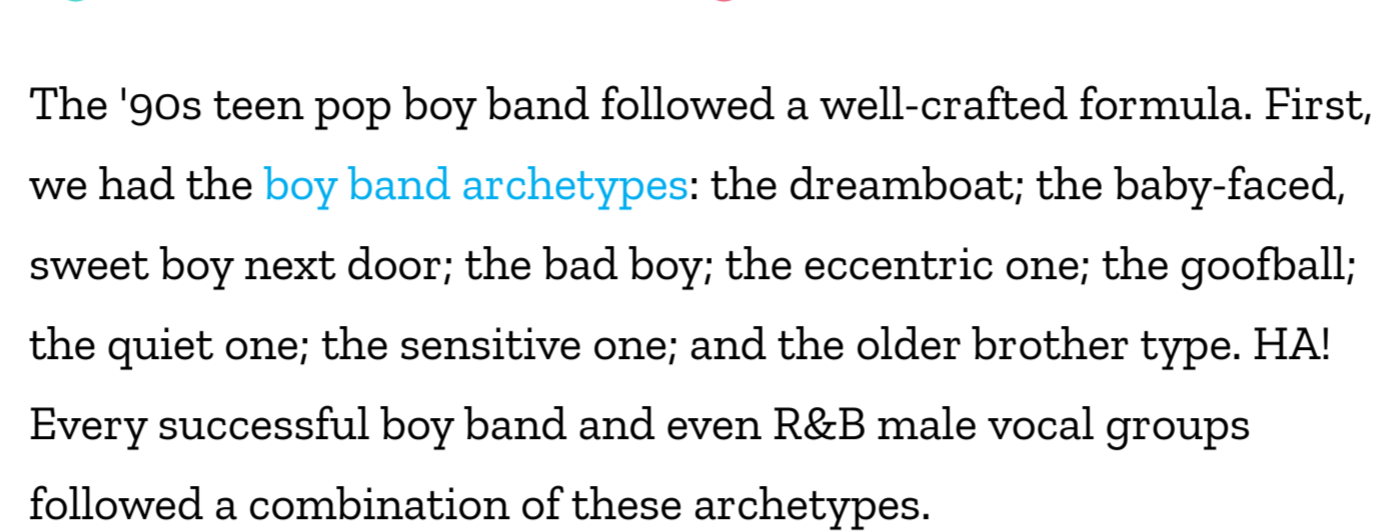
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The '90s teen pop boy band followed a well-crafted formula. First, we had the [boy band archetypes](#): the dreamboat; the baby-faced, sweet boy next door; the bad boy; the eccentric one; the goofball; the quiet one; the sensitive one; and the older brother type. HA! Every successful boy band and even R&B male vocal groups followed a combination of these archetypes.

Each boy band also had to have the right sound, look, and moves. We're talking bubblegum pop tunes marketed to teen demographics and smooth ballads that made your heart melt. Dance moves inspired by the King of Pop. Outrageous threads that were in unison, but showed off each individual members' physique (heck, sometimes open shirts or no shirts at all). And don't forget about the hair.

All of these elements led to screaming and adoring female fans. It was magic—but no other groups captured that magic the way NSYNC and Backstreet Boys did.

<https://web.archive.org/web/2021030161108/http://www.billboard.com/articles/columns/pop-shop/6627385/n-sync-backstreet-boys-boy-band-debate>

Backstreet Boys opened up about the "rivalry" with NSYNC. [US Weekly](#) reported:

*It turns out the question that plagued a generation never actually required an answer! The guys insist the rivalry between them and 'Nsync wasn't real. "If anything, it might've been a healthy rivalry, but there was never any competition. There was never any you know, 'You guys suck!'" McLean recalls.*

BSB even invited NSYNC's Lance Bass up on stage in Las Vegas to help them perform their hit "Shape of My Heart" to prove there's no "serious" rivalry. Here's what Bass said when [People](#) interviewed him:

*Very ironic that I would be onstage with the Backstreet Boys. If you told me that 15 years ago I would have been like, 'What?!' and the fans would have gone nuts.*

*I went to [A.J. McLean] before the show. I was like, 'Please don't pull me onstage.' I had no idea they were gonna do that.*

Friendly pop rivalry aside—still—fans have been comparing BSB and NSYNC for two decades now, and we really need to settle this debate now. Both groups sold millions of albums, packed arenas with their tours, and had a deep pop cultural impact on the world. Who deserves the coveted title of the best late '90s pop boy band?

<https://web.archive.org/web/20221030161108/https://www.usmagazine.com/entertainment/news/backstreet-boys-open-up-about-nsync-rivalry-w44036/>

## #TeamBSB

BSB's had quite a few signature hits.

"Quit Playing Games (with My Heart)" was the group's first breakthrough hit in the U.S., back in 1997. It was followed by "As Long as You Love Me," which touted a similar vibe as a sappy love song. "Everybody (Backstreet's Back)" brought the dance moves and a funky pop sound (and has lived on in film and TV). The pop-rock hit "Larger Than Life" was definitely... well... larger than life. Their most signature hit might be Burger King's greatest endorsement—the acoustic pop hit "I Want It That Way."

BSB clearly had no shortage of hits on the Billboard Hot 100, with covers from artists across genres. The group was that influential.

Backstreet Boys have the numbers to prove that they owned the late '90s. The group had a lot more longevity than NSYNC. And let's be real here—the Backstreet Boys are the best-selling boy band of all-time. The group has topped [\\$165 million in record sales worldwide](#). NSYNC also made it into the top 10, ranking at #7. But that's quite a distance from #1.

BSB wanted it that way and got it. Watch the signature music video to "I Want It That Way" below.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20221030161108/https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4fnddFfaWCg>

## #TeamNSYNC

But NSYNC came out swinging out of the gates! "I Want You Back" and "Tearin' Up My Heart" brought the moves, and we quickly learned what the group's name truly meant—"in sync." "Bye Bye Bye" and "It's Gonna Be Me" became the group's biggest hits, the latter topping the Billboard Hot 100.

NSYNC recorded music with an urban pop feel that just made you want to dance. The group also has been covered to death by other musicians—NSYNC made the kind of music that makes other artists want to rock out! Talk about being pop icons and being able to influence artists across genres!

NSYNC as a group was a teen pop sensation—just like Backstreet Boys—but their musical influences were much more diverse.

Plus, NSYNC was a bigger pop culture phenomenon. "No Strings Attached" was their declaration of breaking away from their sleazy-ball manager. That album debuted atop the Billboard 200—selling a record-breaking [2.4 million](#) in its first week, and went on to become [one of the top-selling albums of the 2000s](#). The signature dance moves from "Bye Bye Bye" are iconic. "It's Gonna Be Me" memes—a play on their hit single "It's Gonna Be Me"—have also outlived the group.

And let's not forget how the members of NSYNC are style icons—from Justin Timberlake's spaghetti top to Chris Kirkpatrick's [braids with the beads](#). The music video for "Pop" is super colorful and captures the essence of the group's outrageous pop-star personas. Big personalities, big costumes. We mean, their third top-selling album is named "Celebrity!"

NSYNC disbanded in 2002. They called it "a hiatus." JT went on to become one of the biggest pop stars ever. But one thing is for sure—NSYNC was the epitome of late '90s pop culture!

Check out the music video for "It's Gonna Be Me" below.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20221030161108/https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GGMIWwIXg3M>

## #TeamBSB

Listen to BSB's essentials below via Spotify.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20221030161108/https://open.spotify.com/album/oAof3AqFbEyiZQgJwAXFzm>

## #TeamNSYNC

Also—listen to all of NSYNC's greatest hits on Spotify.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20221030161108/https://open.spotify.com/album/3bhFoH4PFnY4ifK4981U8X>

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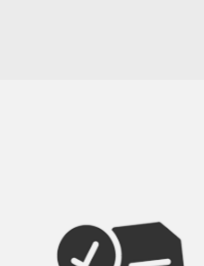
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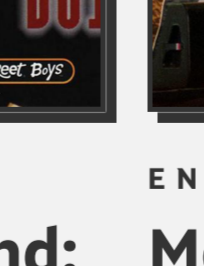
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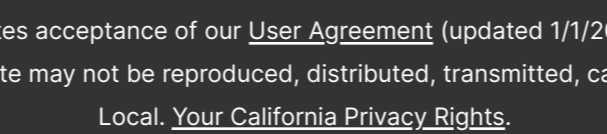
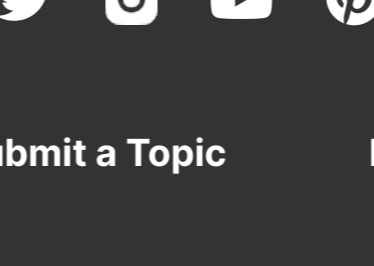
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