



## Trusting God by Megan Vaughn



"Bikers, bladers, and boarders hit the stage with skateboard airs, freestyle tricks, core dance moves." This may sound like a promotion for ESPN's X Games but these words are describing the new look YWAM Campaigns is giving to mass evangelism in its Impact World Tour.

Since the first U.S. campaign in 1994, cities on five continents have hosted tours with a combined attendance of over 1,100,000 people.

"This is just growing year by year," says Mark Anderson, YWAM Campaigns director, "In the last year and a half around the world, we've seen 140,000 people come to Christ in Impact World Tours."

Campaigns were conducted in 170 cities last year. Set-up work for new campaigns is happening in 17 countries worldwide. Countries which have already hosted campaigns or are in the process of preparing for a campaign include The Netherlands, Australia, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Canada, Brazil, India, Switzerland, Scotland, Finland, Latvia, Thailand, New Zealand, Tahiti, Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, Japan, South Korea, the United States and Mexico.

At the heart of Impact World Tours is an unorthodox combination of entertainment and evangelism. In each city, the tour presents different performers each night targeted to the group they are trying to reach: GXJam's skate boarders, Team Xtreme's feats of strength, Thrive's rock music, or Island Breeze's cultural performance.

This unusual approach was born out of a sense that traditional evangelism methods are becoming outdated. "Young people just aren't responding to them," explains Mark. "We had to take a hard look at felt need because if you don't look at felt need then you can't get to real need. Felt need of most young people has to do with entertainment."

Alv Magnus, YWAM's National Director for Norway, enjoyed watching the crowds in Norway that had come to take in the skateboarding spectacle at Impact World Tour's first visit to his country.

“Lots of them came not even knowing these people are Christian. When they found out, you could see their mouths drop open.” Alv says maybe the most significant contribution of the Impact World Tour had nothing to do with the number of people who came to Christ. He said YWAM Campaigns’ approach helped young people in Norway see a different kind of Christian. It also helped Christian young people see that it can be cool to stand up for Jesus. And it got churches looking outward, and working together.

More and more across the world, a global youth culture responds to this approach. In Andhra Pradesh, India, 56,000 accepted Christ during a November 1998 campaign. Historically, mass evangelism in India has focused heavily on signs and wonders. However, according to YWAM Campaigns, increasing access to television and western influence has lowered the response to this method. The Indian youth culture is influenced by western media such as ESPN, and all-star wrestling. This created a setting in which the performances by Team XTreme and GXJam were effective.

Impact World Tour campaigns operate in three phases: preparation, proclamation, and preservation.

Preparation, the first phase of a tour, lasts six months to a year and consists of cultivating spiritual readiness. Mark describes phase one as, “mobilizing a city to focused prayer and calling the church to holiness.” This call to holiness is accomplished through spiritual seminars open to the entire Christian community in a city.

The preparation stage of a tour also includes building the organizational structure needed for phases two and three. Hundreds (sometimes thousands) of local and international workers are recruited and trained as counselors, artists, technicians, coordinators, and fund raisers. A prominent aspect of the organizational preparations is high-quality advertising for the events, which are marketed as entertainment.

The proclamation phase involves one week of meetings which sound more like music concerts or skateboard competitions than church services. Each evening features one of the different teams of performers, depending on the targeted audience.

The work done in the first two phases must be preserved and built upon. When the teams of performers leave a city, coordinators stay behind for at least a month to help the church community with its responsibility of contacting, discipling, and meeting the needs of the new believers.

YWAM Campaigns’ long-term goal is to have one permanent, locally-owned campaign office for every 7 million people in the world—1,000 operating locations spread across every continent.

*This is an article about YWAM Impact World Tours, reprinted with permission from the International YWAMer, February 2000.*