



Out of Sync: A Memoir

By Lance Bass

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At sixteen, Lance Bass received a phone call from Justin Timberlake that would change his life forever. Soon after, he left his small-town home in Clinton, Mississippi, to join an emerging musical group called *NSYNC. Two years later *NSYNC was inspiring Beatles-esque mania around the world, becoming the face of the new MTV generation, and earning the all-time record for most album sales in a single day (more than one million) and in a single week for *No Strings Attached*.

He's remained in the spotlight ever since, and here he talks in depth for the first time about his childhood, his astonishing experiences as a young man and Christian growing up in one of the biggest bands in the world, his shock and frustration at the band's eventual dissolution, and his subsequent career, including his four months in Russia, training to become a cosmonaut.

He also frankly discusses life as a gay man -- his first same-sex relationship at twenty-one, his struggle to keep his sexuality hidden from *NSYNC's fans in case it jeopardized the band's success, and the true circumstances that led to his decision to publicly come out at the age of twenty-seven.

Full of fascinating behind-the-scenes lore and revealing insights from a pop star who, until now, has been notoriously private, *Out of Sync* is the book that millions of fans have been waiting for.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Lance Bass is the ultimate multi-hyphenate: singer-actor-producer-writer-entrepreneur-philanthropist. As a member of *NSYNC, Lance won a number of honors, including a People's Choice Award, an American Music Award, an MTV Video Music Award, a Kids' Choice Award, and a host of Grammy nominations. Lance was inducted into the Mississippi Musicians Hall of Fame, making him the youngest person ever to receive this honor. He is currently Youth Spokesperson for World Space Week and remains active in various charitable organizations, including the Lance Bass Foundation, created to meet the health and educational needs of children. Lance lives in Los Angeles.

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Chapter One

I've known I was different ever since I was five years old. For one thing, I had what I guess you could call innocent crushes on boys.

I knew it was wrong; at least that's what I was taught by my family, my church, my friends, my whole world. That was the overwhelming message I kept on getting. How could I ever admit to what everyone else believed was such a bad, even biblically evil thing, especially to my parents and grandparents, who doted so much on me and made me feel like I was a little prince?

I understood in my heart it wasn't wrong to be gay, but I also knew instinctively that I had to play the game in order to live in the world I was born into.

In all honesty it didn't seem much of a problem to me when I was growing up in Mississippi. There were girls around. I even dated a few, but only because that's what everyone else did. I never thought about it, or felt funny doing it. As for dating guys, it never even entered my thinking that such a thing was possible.

At least not in Mississippi.

That's where I was born, in 1979: the heart of the Deep South. My parents liked the name Lance, so that's what they decided to call me. They'd had it picked out for their firstborn son even before they were married. If they had a boy, they'd agreed, he'd be James Lance Bass, after my dad, James Irvin Bass, Jr. My parents considered making me a III. Thank heavens they settled on Lance!

I was raised in the town of Ellisville, about seven minutes outside of Laurel. Despite my early sexual feelings, I had an extremely happy childhood. I loved my parents, Jim and Diane. I loved my sister, Stacy. And I loved singing in the church choir. My dad was a medical technologist in the Ellisville hospital. I more or less grew up in hospitals, which is why to this day things like having blood work done never freak me out.

We were a completely traditional Southern family. I was brought up a strict Baptist, in the steep shadow of the church where, as it happens, I sang for the very first time. As far back as I can remember, I loved to sing. No one in my family was ever in show business, but my mother's beautiful singing voice put me to sleep each night as a little boy. Even when I'd go off with my dad and grandfather on pheasant hunts in Texas, my mom would tape-record a lullaby so I'd be able to fall asleep in my sleeping bag.

My granddaddy's brother, Uncle Julius, lives near Cape Canaveral. When I was nine years old, my daddy and granddaddy took me to visit him, and that's when I saw my first live space launch. I'll never forget the sight of it! We were there with thousands of people, right near the gigantic countdown clock, the shuttle in the background. Everyone counted down together as the rumble started and the rockets ignited, and the whole thing started rising, shooting straight up into the sky. It was spectacular to think that there were people in there who were actually going into space! That was the day I decided I wanted to be an astronaut when I grew up.

It was something I talked about all the time. Finally, when I turned ten, my parents sent me away for a week one summer to Space Camp at Cape Canaveral. I was certain from then on that my future was to be involved with space. It was the sky, not the stage, that first captured my creative imagination with such an extraordinary display of wonder, probably because singing just came so naturally to me.

My mom taught sixth-grade math at the elementary school I went to, and she remembers that as a toddler I loved singing in our living room for anybody who came to visit. I used to work for hours making up little shows for my parents and their friends, then get all dressed up in costumes that I put together, sometimes performing with my sister.

When I was ten, Dad was transferred to the town of Clinton, in central Mississippi, so the entire family just picked up and moved everything we had from one house to another. Dad happened to know this family in Clinton that was moving to Ellisville, so we simply traded houses. I have to say, the move was both exciting and traumatic for me; I was happy moving to a new place but sad that I had to say good-bye to all of my friends. I knew I was going to especially miss my best friend and next-door neighbor, Brett. He and I had become close playing in the woods that surrounded Ellisville. To me Clinton was, by comparison, a major metropolis. I was a little scared, and I felt a touch of loneliness, a feeling I wouldn't fully understand, or accept, for years to come. Even back then I didn't know how to reach out with my real inner self. I was much better at holding myself back and pretending that things didn't bother me when they did. That was the way of life I had learned, to hold feelings in for the sake of...well, for the sake of what, I'm really not sure.

I started fifth grade in Clinton and made the adjustment to my new school fairly easily. Soon enough I had new pals and was enjoying my new life. In seventh grade, when I was twelve, I met a boy named Darren Dale. He quickly became one of my best friends. We did a lot of things together, like fishing and going to the movies, but one thing we really shared was a love of music. That was crucial to me, because music was the only way I had to truly express my feelings while still being able to keep them contained. Other people's songs became vehicles, free rides, in a way. I was only the messenger, or so I wanted people to believe, dressing up the words and music of someone else to make them sound all pretty and sweet. By making the music acceptable I was able to make myself acceptable as well, and for me that was extremely important. I could expose myself and keep myself hidden at the same time.

Both Darren and I sang in the local church choir, but I think Darren, in his way, took it much more seriously than I did. I used it as something of a disguise; he used it to bare his soul. Because of that, I guess, even though we both had pretty good voices, he was often the one chosen between the two of us to take on solos.

This one time there was a school music program that called for a quartet. Darren already belonged to it, and because I had a naturally deep singing voice, he urged me to try out. I made it and became its official bass singer, the first time I ever formally sang in a group. Our debut song was "Sixteen Candles," a pop tune that had been a big hit for a group called the Crests.

I discovered much to my surprise and delight that I had a really good time doing this kind of loose, undisciplined singing, as opposed to choir music, which I'd always found much more restrictive, if also

protective. Now I felt free, wanting and able to move around like I was in one of those old fifties bands. I loved the feel of letting go, even this little bit, of letting the inside me out through the ringing harmonies of the quartet. *This is really cool, I thought to myself, the way our voices are able to blend without instruments playing behind them.*

My bass voice surprised a lot of people that night. I remember that after the show my mom and dad asked me where on earth that sound had come from. I didn't know then and I don't know now. For the moment singing would be my only liberation, that voice the only part of me no one had seen before allowed to take shape.

So I smiled and shrugged my shoulders. For the moment I was thrilled that I could please people in this new way. Now I wanted to sing every opportunity I got, in every school and church program that was open to me.

For the next several years music remained my only source of any kind of real freedom, mostly because it relieved me from the dull reality of ordinary everyday schoolwork. So much so that one day when I was thirteen, in the eighth grade, I remember coming home and saying to my dad, "I hope you won't be mad at me if I don't play baseball this year, but I want to try out for the Showstopper group."

He didn't seem to mind at all.

I was relieved at what I took to be his tacit understanding of my situation, at least as much as he could. I'd never been that interested in sports, I guess because I was always the smallest guy on any team I tried out for. Throughout middle school I was always the second shortest kid in my class. The other kids used to call me Half-Pint. It was only when I sang that I felt ten feet tall and was able to convince all the others of my stature. I could hit a note as well as the star quarterback could throw a football.

I naturally gravitated toward the singing crowd, and by this time all my close friends in Clinton were really good singers. The day my friend Darren suggested I try out for the Mississippi Showstoppers, a group he'd been part of already for a couple of years, was the day I decided I would never play team sports again.

The Showstoppers were privately sponsored by the Mississippi Agriculture and Forestry Museum and each member was paid, get this, a hundred dollars a year! We did tons of shows for that hundred dollars, the first money I ever made in show business. I sang a country song for my audition: "I Want to Be Loved Like That." I was so nervous that I was shaking in my fake country cowboy boots. I guess I was all right, because when I finished, right then and there Boyce Vandevere, the Showstoppers director, offered me a place in the show.

Showstoppers was a trip, literally and figuratively. What was so important was learning how to perform like a professional. Every season we came up with a completely new show, and during summer vacations we'd do it somewhere every other weekend. State fairs, political fund-raisers -- it didn't matter to me as long as I got to sing.

Those summer dates marked my first exposure to real celebrity. In Mississippi there weren't any local singers I looked up to, but there were always some older Showstopper alumni who'd come back to visit. A lot of them went off and won state-fair singing competitions, and that made them celebrities to me. I remember thinking back then, *Wow, ho...*

Users Review

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