

Interview: Drive by Truckers' Patterson Hood

By Zack Harding
Arts and Life Editor

Clarion: What was the recording process like for Brighter Than Creation's *Dark*? How was the atmosphere similar or different compared to previous albums?

Patterson Hood: Quite different than the last one. Very laid back on a personal level, although we worked extremely fast, it always seemed relaxed. [We had] no disagreements or even compromises. The album kinda put itself together and every decision just seemed like the obvious way to go to all of us. [It was] really hard work, but extremely fun album to make.

Clarion: This time you went in with many songs that were road-tested on tour. How does this compare with the in-studio writing that went along with the previous album, *A Blessing and a Curse*?

PH: *Blessing* was a weird time. We were having some deep personal problems within the band. We were trying to keep it together and find a common ground that was becoming less common. There was a lot of compromise and sometimes it [the album] felt compromised. In the end I still like that album, especially the back side, I think "Space City", "Gravity's Gone" and "A World of Hurt" stand out as really good DBT songs, but it's probably one of my least favorite of our albums.

Clarion: It has been revealed that Shonna has three songs on the upcoming album. Has this been a goal for a while now, and how do you feel this addition will change the band's sound live and/or in studio?

PH: Shonna has been writing songs since before I met her. She's very private and mostly has kept them to herself, but I always knew they were there. We would hear her in the next room working on something, but if you went in there she would stop. This time she showed up the first day with two brand new songs and then wrote a third one at the studio. She's a great singer and writer and I think it will greatly



benefit the band. Having her singing so many harmonies has itself been a big plus this time. I always want to move forward and this is new ground for us. Everyone in the band is very happy with this development. Clarion: As a whole, do you feel that the new album comes closer to approaching the story-telling aspect of *The Dirty South*, the contemplative approach of *A Blessing and a Curse*, or does

it take a different direction altogether?

PH: A little of all three. There is certainly more story telling than last time, but some if it is non-linear, more a description of a scene than a whole movie. [There is] more subtlety. *Blessing* was a response to the three albums before it and the way they were perceived. It started with a list of what all we didn't want to do or didn't want it to be, then trying to see

if we could make an album that stands on its own without any of our so-called trademarks. In retrospect, some of that seems a little foolhardy, but that's where we were at that moment in time. In retrospect, I can see how that album is a little polarizing for some folks, but I still think it has its charms. This time, there was no agenda, except to capture what we were doing at that moment and record these songs and let it become what it becomes. It took on a life of its own and we just tried to be true to

that. It's the best thing we've ever done.

Clarion: Many interviews around the release of *A Blessing and a Curse* had references to the idea that the music was approaching a new sound and diverging from the "southern rock" status that the group had often been categorized in. Does the new album continue that divergence?

PH: We really enjoyed

experimenting with the whole southern rock and arena rock thing on *Southern Rock Opera* and retained certain elements of that on *Decoration Day* and *The Dirty South*. We were bored with that and tired of hearing us labeled that way and rebelled against it on *Blessing*. This time, there was no agenda about that type of thing at all. We just wanted to record our new songs as true to how they came as possible with no agenda stylistically. Its a little all over the map, from primal stomp rock and roll to old-timey country to R&B soul to some things that can't really be categorized.

Clarion: Is there anything further you would like to say about *Brighter Than Creation's Dark*?

PH: It's weird because it's stylistically by far our most eclectic album, yet it's also our most cohesive one. I think it really reflects our personalities and where we're all at artistically at this point in our lives.

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