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Derek Trucks & Susan Tedeschi: **A Family Affair**

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Derek Trucks and Susan Tedeschi: A Family Affair

by Terry Adams

Derek Trucks and Susan Tedeschi have much to be excited about. Aside from being two of today's most talented musicians, they are making a living playing the music that they love and revere. They also were married in December of last year and are looking forward to a wonderful life with their soon to be born baby boy. Both have albums that they are recording, and Derek recently finished the first half of the much anticipated new studio album from the Allman Brothers Band, their first in seven years. They are a handsome couple, and they have a firm grasp on what they want to accomplish, both in music and in life. Please enjoy this in-depth perspective that Derek and Susan were kind enough to share with Hittin' the Note.

Hittin' the Note: *Well, first of all, congratulations on marriage, the impending parenthood, and everything. You and Derek must be beside yourselves at the moment. Would you mind telling us about the wedding?*

Susan Tedeschi: We got married at the Ritz-Carlton on Amelia Island. We put it together kind of fast, but everything fell into place, and it was beautiful. We had family and friends there, but not everybody could make it because it was kind of last-minute. There were one hundred people there, so it was still a pretty decent-sized wedding. We were married by Aubrey Ghent, a famous minister who stands up and plays lap steel. After the ceremony, he played with his band.

How did that come about?

Susan: Derek wanted Aubrey to marry us, so he and Blake Budney (Derek's manager) put it together. They handled the music and the preacher—I handled everything else. I told Derek just to handle the music, and he did a great job. He burned some CDs for music during the dinner and everything, so people were listening to everything from John Coltrane to Ali Akbar Khan! We got married at sunset, and right after that, the space shuttle went off, and you could see it lifting off behind us! That was really cool, and it was an extra treat

for us. It was kind of a symbol for new adventures ahead, a journey into the unknown! [Laughs.]

Derek Trucks: I think Allen Woody turned me on to Aubrey. He let me borrow one of Aubrey's CDs about four or five years ago, and it changed my world, as far as slide goes—it was definitely a revelation for me. Then I was talking to Jimmy Herring about the wedding, and he told me that he and Warren Haynes were listening to Aubrey on the Phil Lesh bus, and the idea struck me all of a sudden. We had been thinking of who was going to marry us, and Aubrey made perfect sense. We put the call in, he said he would come down and do it, and it was amazing. He just put the whole day over the top.

Was he familiar with you guys at all?

Derek: Not really. He was familiar with my name a little bit, because I had talked about him in a *Guitar World* interview, and he called me about a show he was doing in Gainesville, so we kind of knew each other on that level, but we had never seen each other play. It was great, and it was nice meeting him.

Has being married altered your lifestyle very much?

Susan: Not really. Actually, at first, it was just great: there seemed to





Kirk West

be a lot less pressure on us, and we both were able to relax a little bit. Other than that, it hasn't really been any different, because we'd lived together, and me being pregnant and everything. I was twenty-six weeks pregnant when we got married, and now I'm thirty-five weeks, so I guess that's been the only real change! [Laughs.]

Derek: So far, everything has been good. It's going to be much more difficult once the baby is born, but right now, we're just taking things as they come. It's going to be different, because you're not going to want to leave home as easily. Right now, it's not that hard to leave home, come back and hang with your family for a few days, then get back on the bus. That's my life right now, but with a baby at home, I'm sure it's going to change. You still have to do what you do, though.

When is your due date?

Susan: The due date is March 5th, but I went to the doctor the other day, and she said starting after Valentine's Day, it could be anytime. We're excited, and a lot of our cousins and friends have been having babies, so it's been a pretty crazy baby time lately.

Has the pregnancy made touring more difficult?

Susan: I've been pregnant since June, and I toured up until September, and then I went into the studio to make a record. That

went pretty good, but I also was trying to get married and trying to put that together, so it was a lot to handle. Being pregnant, making a record, and planning a wedding was not easy to do! [Laughs.] I still have a lot of work to do on the record—I wanted to finish more of it, but I can't breathe as good, being this pregnant, so I figure I'll just wait until after the baby is born to wrap it up. I'm not exactly sure of my touring plans yet, but Derek is pretty much out all the time with his band, and then he starts up with the Allman Brothers at the Beacon on March 14th. He is always out playing, and I was going to start touring in June or July and bring the baby with me, but I think I'm going to focus on finishing the record, and then go out on tour. So I may not tour until September or October. I need the record to come out first, because I toured for a couple of years off of this last record, so I have to have the new record out for this tour.

Has having a child on the way allowed you to reflect on your own upbringing, and how that may influence your thoughts on parenting?

Susan: Both Derek and I feel really blessed that we have parents who have been together for a long time, and have stuck it out. His parents have been married for thirty years, and mine have been married thirty-five years, so we know that marriage takes a lot of sacrifice and hard work. My parents raised three children, and Derek's parents have raised four children so I think we're going to have a lot of help from the moms—they have a lot of experience, and they were both great mothers, so we feel blessed. Having a baby is something I've always wanted from life—I didn't expect to have it now, but I'm excited about it, and I feel very fortunate. I know that Derek's going to be a great dad—he's great at everything! We're going to try and take a grass roots approach, be positive, and the two of us need to work together. The whole magic of raising a child is the two of you getting together and being firm about stuff. We need to support each other, stick together, and be happy, healthy, and positive. We want to keep it simple.

Derek: When you know a baby is coming, you definitely look back to your earliest memories, and it made me feel more thankful to my parents, and the way they brought me and my brothers and sister up. I really want to re-create that environment with our child. You get excited about learning everything from the beginning again, whether it's music or life, just seeing that newness in somebody's eyes. I've been watching Todd Smallie with his baby, and seeing the way it has changed him, so obviously there isn't anything that I've done yet that's even close to this experience.

Do you want to introduce your child to music early, or are you going to wait a while?

Derek: I don't want to ever force the issue as far as if he decides to play music or whatever. [Susan and Derek are having a boy, but have not decided on a name. -T.A.] He will be introduced to music from the first second. He has already been to many shows, and you can tell he already recognizes the sound of certain instruments. Whenever Susan comes out to our shows, he gets really active when he hears the sound of the flute or the slide. There are a few records at home that on cue, when the same track comes on, he starts kicking. He's already been introduced to music, and around our house, it's going to be everywhere. As far as playing and leading that life, that's going to be his call.



Derek, you just finished laying down some tracks with the Allman Brothers. What was that experience like?

Derek: It was great, man. I had no idea what to expect, because I've heard so many stories from being on the road with them just how tedious the studio can be, and how crazy it has been in the past. On one level I was kind of dreading the experience, on just the work ethic level, but we got in there, and everybody was focused and clear-headed. It was amazing—there were two or three songs every day that got knocked out. When I left the studio, Gregg hadn't put any vocals down. When I got the tracks with him singing, I was shocked. He sounds better than I've heard him on record since the early days. His voice is strong, so I can't wait to see what happens. I think it's going to be a pretty monumental record. I know with everything going on with Dickey being gone, there are going to be a lot of eyes on this record, but I think it's definitely going to hold up.

When you're in the studio—be it with the Allmans or your band—how do you prepare for a solo?

Derek: With the Allman Brothers record, we had played the tunes during the summer, so I kind of went in there on the fly. The day before, I was putting together a crib! [Laughs.] You don't really think about solos too much—at least I don't. I go in and let it fly like it's a live performance. The added benefit is that you get to listen back to it, and if something really hits you, you can keep it, or if something



ing a solo that you're thinking about John Gilmore or Ali Akbar Khan, so it's going to change from night to night. There are some songs where the melody is so strong that you want to stay true to that, and be an extension of the song, rather than something completely detached from it.

You play lead and slide in open E, and a lot of times you play both in the same song. Why do you do that?

Derek: Sometimes during the day when you're practicing, you hear different things, and that's what you want to focus on that night. I'll start playing slide, and if it's not going where I want it to go, I'll put it away and I'll start with my hands, or vice-versa. It really just depends on the mood. Some tunes just lend themselves more to one or the other; if I want to sing through the instrument, I'll take the slide out, but if I want to take it to a completely different place, I'll take a chord solo.

What's the status on the new album by the Derek Trucks Band?

Derek: Craig Street is going to produce the record—we met with a lot of people, and his vibe seemed right. He's done some really cool Chris Whitley records that I really like, so I think it's going to work well. There has been a lot of preparation put into this one. Everybody has put a lot of thought and energy into it as far as what kind of tunes we want to write and what kind of tunes we have. After

All music, really, is an extension of what you're doing, what you're living, and what you believe in.

is not working, you can change it a little bit. You have more of an opportunity to take chances as well. You can completely lay it out, and if it doesn't happen, you've got another try. All the solos on that record are live—I didn't overdub anything.

When I solo, I try to play inside of the tune, to the mood of the tune. Sometimes, if you have something on your mind, if you're upset about something, you can get it out through the music. You can channel a lot of different energies through music, so it really depends on the night and the vibe. There are times when you're tak-

these two shows in Tennessee, we're going into the North Georgia mountains to rehearse for about five days, and then we're heading straight to the studio. Everybody should be pretty focused, so it should be a good thing. We're going to start from scratch on this one, and the record that is already in the can will come out after a few more records. It will be the last record! [Laughs.] There is a lot of great stuff on that record—I love that one, and I'm excited about getting that one out when the time is right. With Javier and Kofi now in the band, I don't want to release a record without them on it.



We did sign with Columbia about a week ago, so it was good to get that done. We took our time so we didn't get stuck in the big record company trap, and I think it's going to be good for us. Columbia will be able to get the record out there, and let people get a handle on what this band is doing.

What have Kofi and Javier brought to the band?

Derek: Adding Kofi has been amazing, because he is such an unsung hero. He is a musical genius—I don't know too many people who think the way he does. I'll think I'm clever sometimes, because I'll write a tune and bring it in, play it once, and he is already on my ass! [Laughs.] It's been amazing having him, and he's really coming into his role as the professor. I think we all can learn a lot from him, because he has so many ideas, both rhythmically and harmonically.

And with Javier, just having that instrument, having that voice, allows us to do so many different things, because we can write in so many different realms now. He brings that Afro-Cuban-Latin thing to the table, and Kofi and Yonrico really excel at that. I think the chemistry is really working.

The song "Shorter" that you wrote—it sounds like it could be on The Sootsayer or Speak No Evil, because it has that kind of vibe.

Derek: Me and Susan and my brother and his girlfriend had been hanging out at the house, and we had just had a great day, and that night, I had this Wayne Shorter solo in my head—I kept hearing this one line over and over. I think the tune is from *Ju Ju*, so I had an acoustic guitar out, and I just based the melody line on this riff he did in the middle of one of his solos. It's definitely coming from that vibe, that direction.

With your band, you guys will play a Sonny Rollins tune, then Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, and then jump into The Meters—you really mix it up. How important is it to you to be diverse in your music?

Derek: I think it really reflects what you're into, and what you're listening to. If the only thing you're into is hardcore blues, then that is

what you should be playing. If your head is in ten different places, than you should try to reflect that in what you do. I think it's important to show where you're coming from. For this band to play one type of music wouldn't work, because it would be kind of false. It's supremely important for us to be diverse, because there are so many avenues that this group can follow, we have so much versatility, and it's good for us to show that. It opens us up, and makes everybody really tune into what's going on. All music, really, is an extension of what you're doing, what you're living, and what you believe in.

Do you ever see yourself possibly growing bored with structure, and perhaps exploring different sounds, like Ornette Coleman or Pharoah Sanders? Do you ever see yourself going in that direction?

Derek: I don't count anything out. Like with the evolution of this band—we were a trio and a quartet for awhile, and I thought that was where it was going to end up! [Laughs.] I certainly don't count anything out, and we're really lucky right now, because when we signed with Columbia, the A&R guy we were dealing with is way into esoteric, far-out stuff, and it's nice to have support like that.

I want you to comment on a statement I read, where you said, "A musician should be child-like, and not childish, in their playing."

Derek: Whether it is a young child or someone who is just starting to understand and see the world, there is a freshness to their attitude. It's not cynical, it's not jaded, and it's coming from a very pure place. That is the child-like approach. The childish can be doing things you shouldn't be doing, and not taking things very seriously. Sometimes it's good to be silly when you're playing music, but sometimes it doesn't have a place. I think the child-like thing is coming from that purer place, that musical innocence. So when you pick up your guitar or when you're playing a solo, it's like the first time you ever played it. It's new, and you're hearing new sounds and tones. I think most of the masters—whether it's Coltrane or Ali Akbar Khan—are definitely coming from that place. Every time they hit a note, it's surprising to them.

Name association time. I'm going to throw some names at you, and tell me what comes to mind. Django Reinhardt.

Derek: Django was one of the first electric guitar masters, and I think he scared and influenced so many people.

Wayne Bennett.

Derek: When I think of Wayne, I think of the Colonel first, because he was such a head! [Laughs.] If you listen to those early Bobby "Blue" Bland records, you just can't imagine them without Wayne on them. The solo he took in "Stormy Monday" may be the greatest electric guitar solo ever recorded. Wayne is simplistic beauty, and I think that is something that more players need to strive for—less is more.

Elvin Jones.

Derek: Elvin Jones is a force of nature, man. I saw him with Cecil Taylor, just the two of them. It was me and Susan, Jaimoe and Butch were there, and it was just unbelievable. At his age, man, he played

like he was twenty-five—just so much energy. We got to go backstage and meet him after the show, and it was amazing to see Jaimoe and Butch acting like children! [Laughs.] Elvin was giving the respect right back, because he loves those guys.

Ali Akbar Khan.

Derek: He's at the top of my list. Hearing him was the moment I realized how powerful music can be, and how powerful it is when you take it that seriously. To see someone who is seventy-five years old practice every day is inspiring. There is so much history there, and I think I was at my most peaceful state in life when I was listening to that every day. It set me right, and for me, that's kind of the end of the road.

Paul Chambers.

Derek: Paul has the biggest upright bass sound ever. His playing is so thick and so fat, it's just amazing. He was great enough for 'Trane to name a tune after him, so that says it all! [Laughs.]

Wayne Shorter.

Derek: I listen to Wayne Shorter more than anyone for his compositions, and his soloing is like someone speaking. It's so relaxed, and it takes so many turns. Amongst living musicians, he's tops.

Susan, I read somewhere that your father was your first introduction to music.

Susan: Yeah. Actually, both my parents were an influence on me musically, but I liked the style of music that my dad was into. At the time, it was called folk music, and he'd be going to the Newport Folk Festival. He'd tell me stories about Mississippi John Hurt, and all these other people who were basically blues artists. He said back then, they didn't differentiate between Muddy Waters and Bob Dylan too much. He just knew there were some types of folk music that he liked, and others he didn't. He loved Dylan—actually, both of our fathers love Bob Dylan, so that's something that they have in common. They both like to play golf, too. Our dads get along good—they're both pretty laid back, happy people.

Really, my dad introduced me to the music from the '50s and '60s. He was influenced by Buddy Holly, Dylan, and the Everly Brothers, some of the same artists who influenced Gregg Allman. He was also influenced by people like the Staple Singers, who were basically on the same circuit. Lightnin' Hopkins was also a favorite of his as well. My mom was into musical theater and plays, and she was doing everything from acting, singing, dancing, and directing shows—all kinds of things. Aside from musical theater, she liked James Brown, Sam Cooke, and some of the funky singers of the time. It was nice having my parents' records to listen to growing up, but at the same time, there was never really any jazz in the house. To this day, my mom still doesn't like jazz. She's like, "People can't sing to it!" It's just a matter of taste, you know?

But with Derek, it is fascinating. I love how Derek has expanded my mind musically, from Indian Classical to the sounds of Madagascar! [Laughs.] He is just a wealth of information all

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Aubrey Ghent & Derek

the time, so I really enjoy seeing what he has up his sleeve. Also, politically, I've always been environmentally aware, and trying to read up on anything I can, from Rachel Carson stuff to what is going on locally. Derek takes it one step farther, and is always trying to figure out the real truth, the reality of what is going on in the world. I feel that we're just trying to educate ourselves all the time, and trying to make the world a better place.

Tell us about the blues, and what in particular appealed to you about the blues.

Susan: I think what appealed to me, why I ended up going that route, was because it was the closest thing to gospel—gospel really is my first love. I would love to be a gospel singer, but given the way I look, I don't think it would be very easy! [Laughs.] I do love to sing gospel, and—musically and vocally—it can be very similar to the blues. The other thing that turned me on was people like Freddie King, Otis Rush, Johnny "Guitar" Watson—all these singer/guitar players—and hearing them sing in this bluesy, gospel style really appealed to me. It was like Muddy Waters and Ray Charles mixed together. And playing guitar at the same time, and just wailing on it. Not just wailing on it, though, but also being able to use it as another voice. You know, have it be the same voice, but it comes through an instrument, so it sounds different. I was like, "Wow! I would love to be able to play and sing like that!"

Have you been able to influence Derek at all in that department? Does he have any desire to sing?

Susan: To sing? Derek? No! [Laughs.] He could if he wanted to, but he doesn't look at music like that. Derek tries to look at music in a more pure sense. To me, music is such an emotional in your face thing, but with Derek, music is a more serious thing. He looks for a higher level in the music, and I do know that playing guitar is kind of like singing for him. The guitar is Derek's voice, and he has a few different voices on the guitar, but there is one that is constant, and you always know that it's him. Sometimes when we play and sing together, I connect with him on the gospel level, the place where I feel my music can be the most pure and inspiring. It's where I'm not in control of it at all, and it's just kind of taking over. When I can sing like that, he'll play right along with me, and kind of copy what I'm singing on the guitar. Those are the moments that are the most pure for me.

Derek: That's always a great thing, and it happens almost every time we play together. It's special, so that's one of the reasons why we don't do it every night—we don't want to wear it out. [Laughs.] It's amazing, and playing with her and sometimes Javier or Aubrey—you try to go to church with it. It's call and response, and every night Rico and I connect on that level. I can hit something, and he'll be right there doing it with me. It feels like you're in church, and people are up stomping their feet! [Laughs.]

Susan, tell us a little bit about growing up in Massachusetts and playing music.

Susan: It was tough. I was just trying to get gigs wherever I could—I just wanted to play all the time. At first, I just sang, I didn't play an instrument, so I was just kind of at the whim of whoever had a band I could sing with. I had to sing whatever music they were playing, but I did have a lot of opportunities to perform and be on stage. At age thirteen, I started playing in bands, and then by the time I was about seventeen, I was in a band that was playing more original stuff. It was two brothers—the Thompson brothers. They were always really motivated, and I was inspired by that. Then I went to college at Berkeley, and obviously my favorite thing was gospel choir. I was in a nice diverse mix of people who could really sing, and I was humbled, to say the least. It was a wonderful experience, because I got the nerve to get up and audition for solos or something. Having sixty people sing behind you really allows

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you to test yourself. We would go around to different churches, and some were in nice neighborhoods, and some were in not so good neighborhoods. That gave me the chance to see the reality of what was going on in the world. It was a very emotional time, and I loved it. I grew a lot, both as a person and as a musician, and that opened my eyes to what I really wanted to do, but I still couldn't quite figure it out.

After college, I played with a series of bands, you know, just trying to pay the rent. I waitressed, did all kinds of things just to get by, and it really stunk for a while! [Laughs.] I graduated from college in '91, and by '93 I had a bunch of friends who played the Sunday blues jam at this little club in Somerville, Massachusetts. They asked me to come down, so I started to go down there every Sunday. Then I started learning how to play guitar, and I would get up and play every Sunday with some of the jammers, and not sing. I would force myself just to play rhythm so I could play along with the band and get the feel for it.

So how old were you when you learned how to play guitar?

Susan: I guess I was twenty-three or twenty-four. At twenty-five, I played on my first record—I had a great time doing that. At that time, I was playing with Annie Raines and Adrienne Hayes, and it was neat having two girls who were about the same age and actually liked Muddy Waters and Howlin' Wolf! [Laughs.] That was a lot of fun.

The blues is earth and roots, and so much of where America comes from. What also appealed to me was how humble the true blues artists were. They are such sweet, humble people, and it makes you realize that while there are so many great musicians in the world, these people don't have an attitude. They play music because they



Susan: Yeah, but I guess I'm just too picky about my music! [Laughs.] I don't want to release just anything, solely for the sake of putting out a record. I think I actually could have released them and it would have been fine, but they were a little too commercial for me, and I wanted to slow it down a little. Being nominated for a Grammy was an honor and everything, but then I started hearing, "You need to do a video! You need to do this and that!" I'm like, "Wait, wait, wait! I got here without doing a video!" I was like the only nominee who didn't have a video! I was up against Kid Rock, Macy Gray, Christina Aguilera, Britney Spears—I'm like, "What am I doing here!" [Laughs.]

What was the Grammy experience like?

Susan: It was a trip! Derek went with me, and it was so funny. Derek was miserable! He was so cute, because he kept saying,

The guitar is Derek's voice, and he has a few different voices on the guitar, but there is one that is constant, and you always know that it's him.

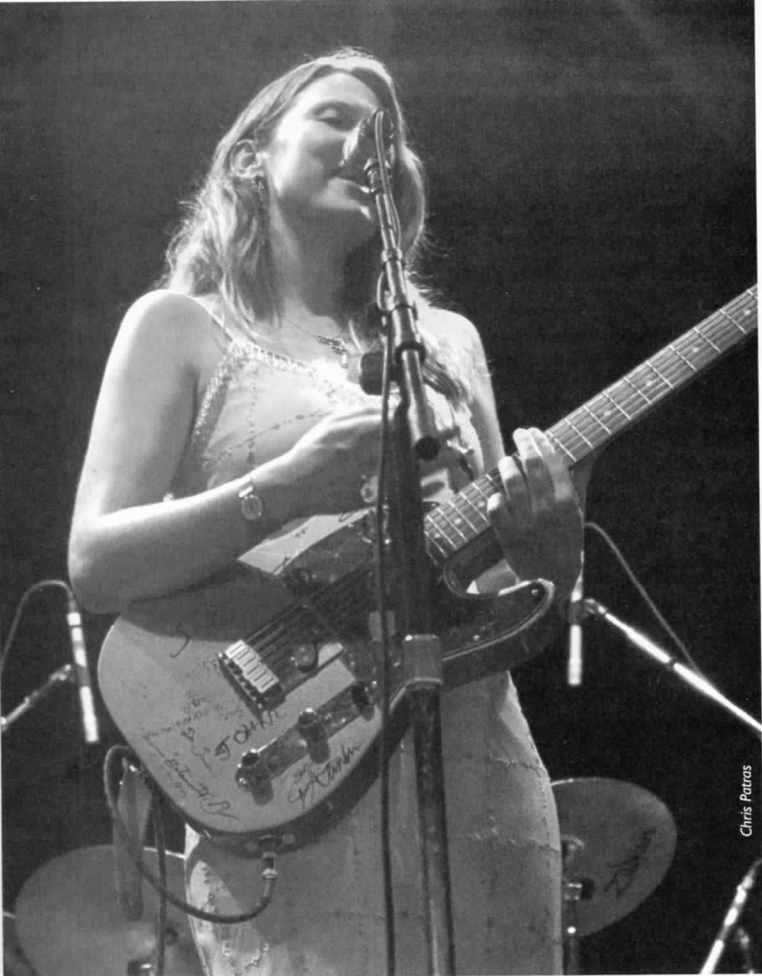
love it, and that's what I was really drawn to. I liked the realness of that, how it was just these people singing about their lives—or making up stuff and being crazy, too! [Laughs.]

After that, things began to develop for me. We began playing outside of New England, touring a little bit. We played New York, went down to Memphis and Jacksonville, where we played a blues festival a bunch of times. This is like '94, '95, and '96. Then I recorded *Just Won't Burn* in 1997, and it was released in '98. I've been touring behind that record ever since, and so I'm overdue for a new album. I've recorded two records since then, but for a number of reasons, I didn't feel that they were really the records that I should be releasing.

I didn't know that you had two records in the can.

"Honey, this sucks! These people suck! This is all crap!" But then there were a couple of good things that happened. I'd gone to the ladies room, he waited outside for me, and Wayne Shorter walked by. He ended up hanging out and talking to Wayne, so it was good that he got to meet people he idolized, and who weren't being recognized in the spotlight, because they don't sell a million records. Seeing people like Wayne Shorter and Elvin Jones certainly made him feel better.

Derek: Meeting Wayne was so random, man, it was great. I completely groupied him! [Laughs.] He was so gracious to me. I told him that we recorded a few of his tunes, and he was saying, "When I was growing up, they said you couldn't be a composer and a soloist, but I think I proved them wrong!" [Laughs.] I would love to get a



Chris Parros

chance to play with him, and really hang with him at some point.

Susan, let's talk about your new record. Where are you recording it?

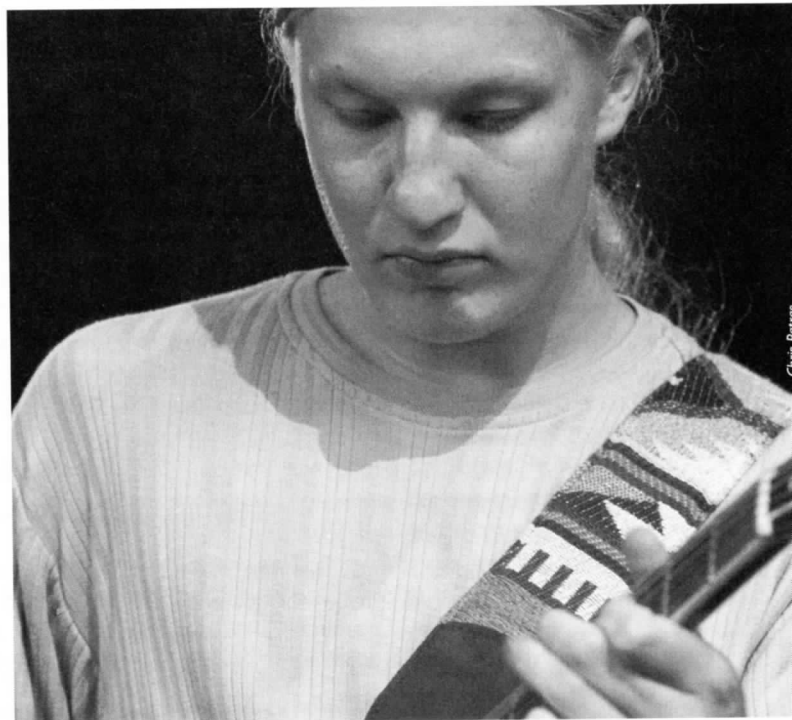
Susan: Right now, I'm just frustrated with it. Tom Dowd is living in Miami, and for health reasons, he can't fly, and he didn't want me to travel because I'm pregnant, so he drove up here. We recorded here at Made in the Shade Studios, which is Lynyrd Skynyrd's little place. It went OK, but it didn't feel right. We recorded for a few days and got twelve tracks down. There are probably four or five tunes that we can use, but I still have to overdub vocals and guitar on them, because I couldn't do both at the same time. I sing too loud, so I couldn't be in the room with the guys at the same time. I have a bunch of new material, but a lot of the songs are ballads, so I've been trying to write and do some other types of songs. I don't know—maybe I've been preoccupied about being pregnant and getting married—having all these life-changing things happen. I want to be focused on my record, but I've wanted to make a gospel record for like three years now, so every time I try to make a record that has pop crap on it, I just can't do it. I get really frustrated by the whole process.

So to make a long story short, it's really difficult to make a record when your heart isn't in it. I think Derek has the right idea; keep it fresh by writing new tunes all the time, staying on the road, staying focused, and not being distracted by everyone telling you what *they* need! [Laughs.] He has been an inspiration to me in that regard. So I'm just going to try to make a record that sounds good to me.

Susan: Jeff Sipe is on drums, Jason Crosby plays keyboards and violin, Ron Perry on bass, and me—just a four-piece. Jason does some cool overdubs, and I'm hoping to add some horn arrangements and some other things later. I want to tighten up a few tunes, and I need to get focused again on it. I think that after the baby comes, I will find a new source of inspiration! [Laughs.]

I don't like being a bandleader, though. It's too stressful; it's always about getting everybody their paycheck, and this and that. There is so much of that going on that it pulls me away from remembering that I'm a musician half the time. I think that's because I haven't had things set up right, business-wise, for a while. I'm going to make some changes, and hopefully, that will lift the burden some. I'm not the best communicator in the world; I just like to go and play! I don't like trying to figure out where everybody's head is at, what everybody needs, and be the mom and babysitter for five grown men! [Laughs.] It just wears on you. Derek is good at it, but he's got such a great network of people working with him. He's got Blake to take a lot of the pressure off, but Derek deals with stuff straight up. I don't always deal with things—I kind of procrastinate. When it comes to being a woman and a mom, I don't procrastinate at all. I like doing that, because it's always been a part of me.

I do love being on the road and making records, but I don't like the pressure of having to make a record just to sell a certain number of units. You know, Derek could care less about that. I love that attitude, because he just does whatever is pure to him musically. I mean, I always wanted to make a gospel record, and now everybody is going, "Oh yeah—you should make a gospel record!" I'm like, "Great—it's three years later!" I've been so stressed about it lately, that I'm just trying to get back to my roots and start over again. The music has to come from within—it has to be inspired. You just can't force it out and do whatever to please everybody else. So I'm just trying to focus and please myself musically. I need a foundation, whether it's raising a family and having a foundation morally, with values and things, or having it in a band, but I've got to start somewhere.



Chris Parros

Who plays on the record?

What was it like working with Tom Dowd?

Susan: It was great. Tom is really an amazing person, just fascinating. He is like a walking encyclopedia of music. It is amazing the number of projects that he has done, and he was really great to me. I learned a lot from him, and he had a lot of positive things to say.

Talk about the influence Derek has had on you as a person and as a musician.

Susan: Derek has made me more aware of myself, how I treat people, and the way that I am perceived, both musically and in general. He has made me more responsible for my actions, and he has helped me see the more positive side of things. Derek has also shown me that there are endless musical possibilities out there, and has really expanded my horizons. He brings me a lot of hope musically; that you can do what you love to do and can adapt it in a way that does hit the masses. I mean, he'll play anything from jazz to Indian classical to gospel to funk to blues or whatever, but it all comes across the same way. His music is universal, so he can do that in a way that has really opened my eyes. He has made me more humble and less selfish—I think those are the two big things. He won't stand for any diva attitude! [Laughs.] He has opened my eyes to what is important, and what isn't. What we have to look forward to, what we have to be thankful for, and what we need to work on. Derek is a very insightful person, and he is very aware—he doesn't miss anything. He makes me realize that it is important to be serious about things, and look at life a little heavier.

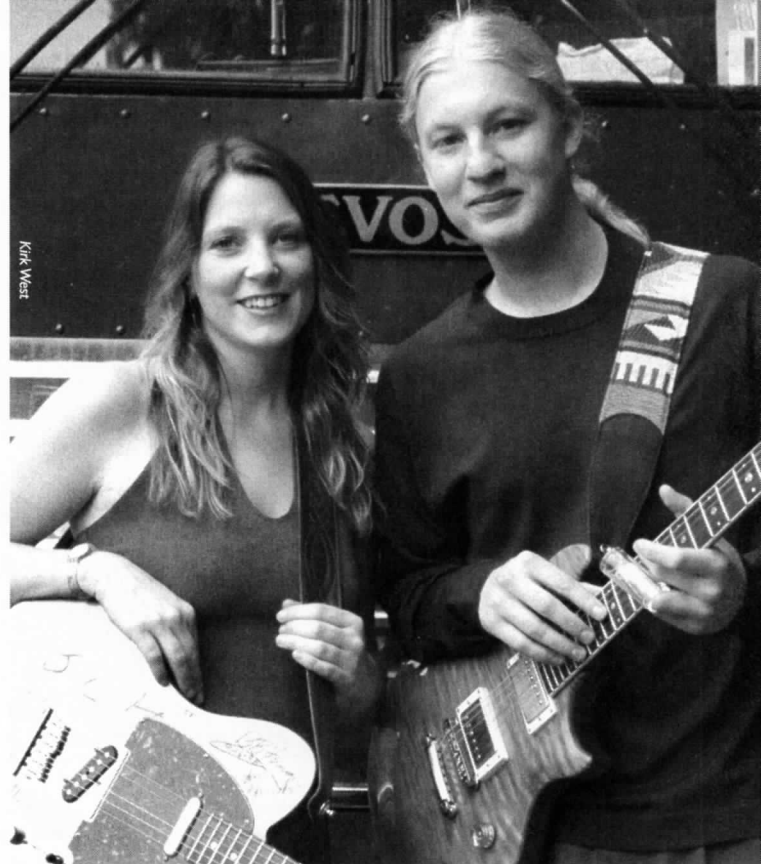
Derek, what influence has Susan had on you as a person and a musician?

Derek: When you decide you're going to be with someone forever and you're going to have a baby, you just check yourself, and you look at things completely different. When you're with someone and you're that close, it brings everything to the surface. The good, the bad, the ugly, and everyone who is in a relationship or married knows how much you have to go through. How much of a learning curve it is, and how much you just have to forge ahead. It's never a walk in the park all the time, but it's great, man. When you find someone you can just open up to, it's an amazing thing.

Musically, I think it's been nice to have someone to share things with. I've been really getting into the gospel thing, and Rico was coming from that bag, and hearing Susan sing really reinforces that in my mind. Susan sings gospel so well, I think down the road—whether it's her next record or whenever—her gospel record is the one I want to be a part of. I told her about a month ago, "You need to scrap all this other stuff and do a gospel record." When she's really singing, she's singing gospel, and that's what I want to hear—that's what really moves me.

How close do you view music and family?

Derek: For me, at this point in my life, music is almost everything. I see so many people who are into so many vastly different things, and so I don't want to say that it's everything, but it's very important. I see families that are able to be into things together, whether it's books or life or music, and it makes them that much closer. I'm so glad that I can listen to music with my father, or he



can come out to a show and be completely moved, and really key into the things that I would hope he would key into.

As for my brothers and my sister, it's been great being able to turn them onto music, and see their eyes open the way your own eyes do when you're turned onto something. I think music serves as a great tool by which you can get closer to people

Susan: I feel very blessed because if I wasn't a musician myself and I was pregnant while he was out on the road, I'd be going crazy. I don't know how other women do it, but being a musician, I understand that he is out there, keeping his band working, and he is keeping the music serious. I know that he has a higher purpose for being out there. At the same time, with family, he has been very good about trying to come home when he can and be responsible. He takes family and music very seriously, and I do, too. I know that they can both work together, and I'm excited about starting a family, but I'm also excited about going on the road with the baby and seeing Derek play. I'm not so caught up anymore about doing my own thing as I used to be. I was always so driven, but it was for reasons of self-sufficiency. Now that I have Derek in my life, I don't mind having somebody there to take care of me. He's made me loosen up a little bit, and go with the flow a little more. It's not that I don't care about my career and I don't care about music anymore—I do. I just don't feel a rush to do everything all at once. My passion is more towards starting a family right now, but I still want to be inspired musically.

I feel that music and family are really tied together. Just look at the Allman Brothers—they have a lot of symbols of family and band tied together, and I like that. I just want to be next to Derek. If I can sing and play my music, I'll be thrilled. I don't need to be the center of attention, I don't need to be the star, and I don't need to be on the road three hundred days a year, so we're working on having both family and music. ☺