

ROCWeekend



Still truckin'

We catch up with Derek Trucks of the Tedeschi Trucks Band. Page 4

The Naples Grape Festival is among the top things to do. Page 3

Pasquale's Italian Eatery in Batavia offers Italian fare with a family vibe. Page 5

Allmans' Trucks is ready to shift gears

Jeff Spevak

MUSIC CRITIC

JSPEVAK@DemocratandChronicle.com



Perhaps the sense of anachronism will be lifted from Derek Trucks once he walks away from the entrenched legacy of The Allman Brothers Band. A group that represents all that is excessive and excellent and self-destructive in rock and roll.

The Allmans are easing into retirement at the end of this year. Trucks and Warren Haynes, the guitarists who have held the iconic band together for two decades, announced earlier this year that they were leaving, moving other projects to the forefront. For Trucks, that's The Tedeschi Trucks Band, the 11-piece rock monster that he heads with his wife, the singer-guitarist Susan Tedeschi, playing Thursday at the Auditorium Theatre.

"I would have left three or four years ago," Trucks says of the Allmans, "if it wasn't feeling like so many people were involved in this thing, and I didn't want to leave them hanging."

That's something that always emerges during interviews with Trucks, and I've done three or four. Just phone conversations between strangers, but the guy comes off as decent and thoughtful and comfortably normal. How can you be normal if you were playing guitar alongside Buddy Guy when you were 13, and became a full-time member of The Allman Brothers at 20? Yet Trucks seems to have been less worried about his own career than what would happen to the roadies if he and Haynes left the band.

"It's been an amazing run, an amazing thing to be part of," Trucks admits. "But it was a drain to keep it at a certain level. Sadly, at times there seemed to be a cloud over the camp."

Clouds? Thunderstorms followed the Allmans. Drugs. Death, not only of band members like Duane Allman, who created the signature twin-guitar sound. But Trucks talks of the loss of roadies who'd been with the group since before he was born.

"The road takes its toll on people," he says. "Even though I'm a generation or so removed, I had to take a step back. The Allman Brothers and bands from that era were an experiment. Sex,



VIVIEN KILLILEA/GETTY IMAGES FOR JOHN VARVATOS

Recording artist Derek Trucks of the Tedeschi Trucks Band will perform at the Auditorium Theatre Thursday with Playonbrother.

drugs and rock and roll, pedal to the metal. I don't know if there was any concept what the consequences were."

Trucks is eager to explore the excesses of The Tedeschi Trucks Band. They are not pharmaceutical, but musical. It's a young band, just three albums into its career. And one of those is a live recording. Like the Allmans, whose *Fillmore East* is on many lists of all-time albums, The Tedeschi Trucks Band is a live experience. One whose multi-genre, multi-culture potential is something that the latest album, *Made up Mind*, "just scratches the surface on," Trucks says.

"It's a great headphones record that way. The more you dig into it, the more is revealed. I was just listening to *Talking Book*, by Stevie Wonder. On 'Maybe Your Baby,' there's a tambourine

stashed in the right side in a really weird place. I've probably heard that track 150 times, and I never realized how important that tambourine was."

Oh, yeah. Trucks listens to his music on vinyl. With headphones. He speaks the language of audiophile, learned at an early age with The Allman Brothers Band on the turntable. "Some of the passages Duane played on 'Mountain Jam,' those are beautiful passages that enlighten you, just lift you up," Trucks says. "An Aretha-in-the-church moment."

"'Blue Sky' has that feeling too. I was listening to *Eat a Peach* not long ago. It's been years since I had listened to that music, that I had put my head in that space. 'Blue Sky' came on. I must have heard that 500 times since I was a kid, sitting in my room, listening to the

IF YOU GO

What: The Tedeschi Trucks Band with Playonbrother, the electric soul-rock project headed by Soulive's Alan Evans.

When: 7:30 p.m. Thursday.

Where: Auditorium Theatre, 885 E. Main St.

Tickets: \$39, \$49, \$59 and \$79, available at ticketmaster.com, (800) 745-3000 and the Auditorium box office.

vinyl. I felt like that again."

Trucks is 35 years old, qualified enough to lament on how the good-old days weren't all that great. "I grew up in the deep South, the rap on the deep South has always been, it's racist down there. It obviously is," Trucks says.

But its not just his story of a couple of rednecks in a pickup truck yelling slurs at a group of musicians in a multi-racial band.

"It's the same, if not worse, almost everywhere in the country," Trucks says. "It's pretty stunning, how prevalent it is, and how we sweep it under the rug. I have a 12-year-old son, I make sure he knows how lucky he is. He doesn't have to worry about walking to the bus stop, to the house, and getting harassed by a cop."

"Music is medicine for people, I see it at every show. I go to shows sometimes needing that, it's a slate cleaner. Music is different. It's like church and religion for a lot of other people, without the need of dogma and the need to go to war."

It's a world in need of healing, and we're not getting enough of it. Today's music, Trucks says, "makes me nauseous."

"It really bums me out about the current state of music. Megastars that have this platform that is unlike any platform given to any human ever. It's narcissistic. Ranting and raving about what they have or how they've been slighted. Jay Z, Kanye West, that seems to be the only thing they care about. They need to be thinking: I should be using this platform to lift everything up. Like Curtis Mayfield, Bob Dylan, people who were changing the course of the country."

"I'm glad they weren't trying to do that in this time. I don't think it would work."