

Episode Title: Derek Trucks's Epic Journey

Episode Description:

In this week's episode, Sid Evans, Editor-in-Chief of Southern Living Magazine, talks to guitar legend Derek Trucks about his experience touring with The Allman Brothers Band at a young age, forming the Tedeschi Trucks Band with his wife, Susan Tedeschi, and the lessons from his parents that helped him survive the music industry. Plus, Derek shares details on the Tedeschi Trucks Band latest audio/visual project, I Am the Moon.

Episode Transcript:

(Biscuits and Jam Theme begins - Fiddler's Barn on Epidemic Sound - plays for 9 seconds before Sid's voice comes in)

Voice over from Sid Evans: Welcome to the Summer Tour edition of Biscuits and Jam, from Southern Living. I'm Sid Evans, editor-in-chief of Southern Living Magazine. My guest today has been called one of the greatest guitarists of all time by Rolling Stone Magazine, and anyone who's heard what he can do on a slide guitar would have to agree. Derek Trucks was a child prodigy who began playing in front of large crowds when he was still in grade school, and by the time he was 19, he was touring with the Allman Brothers. But for the last dozen years he's been producing some of the best music of his career as a member of the Tedeschi Trucks band, which he formed with his wife Susan Tedeschi in 2010. Today on the show, we talk about his childhood in Jacksonville, Florida, his close relationship with Greg Allman, and the lessons from his parents that helped him survive the music industry. He also talks about the Tedeschi Trucks Band's epic new project, I Am Moon, and why it means so much to his band and his family. All that and more on a very special Biscuits & Jam. **[THEME MUSIC ENDS]**

Sid Evans: Derek Trucks, Welcome to Biscuits and Jam.

Derek Trucks: Yeah, man. Good to be here. Good to be here.

Sid Evans: Where am I reaching you right now?

Derek Trucks: I'm actually in our studio in Jacksonville, Florida, behind our house, so we're in the swamp. Right on the edge of alligators and manatees and whatever else is roamin' out there. (Laughs).

Sid Evans: Well, must be nice to be home in Jacksonville.

Derek Trucks: It is, once the world started opening up, we've been runnin' hard, It was a good 20 months without a gig so, when they cracked the window, we (laughs), we hopped on the bus and we've been ploughin'. But it's good to have a little break 'cause the summer tour is gonna be pretty intense, so

Sid Evans: Yeah.

Derek Trucks: This is deep breath time.

Sid Evans: (Laughter). Well, so this is your hometown. I mean, you grew up in Jacksonville, right?

Derek Trucks: Yep, born and raised. Born in St. Augustine but, it's the area, so right up the road.

Sid Evans: Right. Well, so I'm wonderin' if you can take me back to maybe a time before you played the guitar, when you were just a kid, tell me a little bit about the house and the neighborhood where you grew up.

Derek Trucks: Yeah I grew up in a lower middle class house here in, in Jacksonville and my dad he was a roofer at the time and my mom was workin' up at the elementary school and it was very week-to-week, month-to-month (laughter). The lights were cut off once or twice but it, it, we always had a good time. Was always good music around and the energy was good, so.

Sid Evans: Well, so, Derek, who was the cook in your family growin' up?

Derek Trucks: It was my mom., my dad was, usually pretty spent by the time he got home but you know we, we were one of those families that it was, you know, Monday night was, spaghetti night, Tuesday night was some Hamburger Helper (laughs), and there was, there was the steak over rice night. We, we, we weren't so down with that. It was the cream of mushroom part that we didn't like (laughs), but she's still a good cook and there's some food from your childhood that it's still better than anything you've ever had, just, simple food.

Sid Evans: Right. It just, there's something nostalgic about it. Maybe it tastes better than it actually is for some reason.

Derek Trucks: That's probably true. Now, the family reunions were pretty incredible, though, the Trucks family reunions. 'Cause most of the Truckses are from Alabama, but when you get that huge crew together, the southern cooking was pretty incredible (laughs).

Sid Evans: Yeah, tell me about that. What were those family gatherings like? I mean, were these kind of holiday celebrations or more, just family reunions?

Derek Trucks: It was usually a reunion based around somebody turning 70, 80, 90 (laughs), even 100. The Trucks side lived a long time. I loved those gatherings 'cause especially as a young kid when you see four or five people sitting in a row that are all 80 or 90 years old plus, there's some Jedi council vibe to it (laughs). Like what do they know (laughs)?

Sid Evans: And I, I've got to imagine there was a good amount of music at these gatherings.

Derek Trucks: You know it's funny, the musical side of the family was maybe a little bit more, the black sheep side of the family. I mean, my uncle being in the Allman Brothers and, there were a few other musicians in the family. As time went on, that became more of the conversation. But in the early years, it was almost like uh, yeah, I don't know what they're up to (laughter).

Sid Evans: Definitely up to no good.

Derek Trucks: Yeah, and they, they weren't wrong (laughs).

Sid Evans: (Laughs). Well, I wanna ask you about your uncle, Butch Trucks, who was, a drummer and he was one of the founding members of the Allman Brothers. Did you have a close relationship with him?

Derek Trucks: Yeah, I mean, we were on the road for 15 years together, um, in the Allman Brothers and then I played in a few bands with him leading into that for longer, so, yeah. we had a, a long, close, sometimes intense relationship. But, I-, learned a lot from Uncle Butch. he was an incredible force. Incredible musician and, uh, in a lotta ways, I think his, his reverence for that music and his intensity and, just the way he felt about Dwayne Allman in those early days. That's, I think that's what carried a lot of the integrity of, of that sound and that band. no one could play like him. I mean, you obviously had to have Greg's voice over there, to make it legit but, Butch's sound was, the piece of that puzzle and equation.

Sid Evans: Did your parents support your interest in guitar kind of from the beginning or did you have to kind of get them on board?

Derek Trucks: I mean, they, they were supportive. It was a little bit reluctant because of what they had seen and been around. I mean, they were... my dad was at the Fillmore. He saw Hendrix. he knew what that lifestyle could and did to people and, so when I was nine years old and wanting to play that music and sitting in with local bands in Jacksonville, my parents knew who these people were (laughs). Like, there was no mystery, from their end. There was from mine. But they supported it. I mean, I think they realized that if you're an athlete and you have talent at a young age, there's an obvious track to do what you wanna do and if you play music, goin' to music school for the things that I was doing wasn't necessarily the call. I mean, it was, the way you learned that music is by bein' around the veterans and the greats and my dad was on the road with me until I was 17, so, he was there to kinda shield... he didn't shield everything. He wanted to make sure I knew where the bodies (laughs) were buried or I knew what was what, but, enough where I was able to get through it relatively unscathed, 'cause it's a wild scene. It's a wild world that, and it's, I think it's quite a bit different now, but these were still the days before one company owned every venue in the (laughs), in the country. And I think it's tougher for musicians now to really glimpse at the source and maybe what it was really about back in the day. I feel lucky that I got to see a lot of these guys and these, play with these grizzled veterans, in my formative years.

Sid Evans: Yeah. Well, you've had a pretty stable career as a musician, which is not exactly common among rock stars and, What are some of the things that your parents taught you that have kinda helped you survive in this crazy business?

Derek Trucks: There was definitely a lot of lessons in humility early on. That was the one thing that my parents would not let slide. I remember times, even bein' 13, 14, 15, somewhere in that age where, where my dad kind of hit me on my shoulder and said, "You're kinda walkin' a little different", (laughter), there was some arrogance in the way I was walkin'. And I, uh, it really hurt my feelin's but then I was like, "You know what? He, maybe he's right." (Laughs) So, they were always there to keep me in check and, you always have to recheck in, you know. you're never fully outta the clear with anything, right? (laughs).

Sid Evans: No, no, definitely not. Well, I mean, you had a pretty extraordinary childhood. I mean, you were playing in front of huge crowds by the time you were 10 or 11 years old, is that right?

Derek Trucks: Yep, I think that's about right. I remember the first real big show. I was playing with this band here in Jacksonville, Ace Moreland and the West Side Story. And Ace was on Ichiban Records, which was like an offshoot of Alligators, a blues label. and I, I remember hoppin' in a Winnebago with them and goin' up to the Toronto Jazz and Blues Festival. I think I was nine years old. and that felt like... goin' to Mars. I don't think I left the city limits at that point.

Sid Evans: Well, there musta been a moment where you were on that stage and, you kind of realized the power of that guitar and the effect that it was having on an audience. what was that like for you as a kid

Derek Trucks: I'm not sure how aware of all that I was, in the early, early days. I knew I would affected my parents, because when, when music really hit them, they would get chills, there'd be tears, like that was always a thing you were striving for. It wasn't necessarily crowd response, it was like, gettin' to that point. because when my dad would talk about seein' the Allman brothers in the early days or even B.B. or whatever, those were the things he talked about. Like, just those moments, those little musical epiphanies that you have. So, I remember that being, thinkin' about those things, but it wasn't until I met Colonel Bruce Hampton years later, maybe 13, 14 years old, 12, somewhere in there, just hangin' with him, you realize if you're gonna do this, it's not just a hobby. there's other ways to think about it and there's a depth to it and, and it's a powerful thing and Colonel was definitely a pivot for me in just the way I've looked at everything. And he, I mean, he saved a lotta musicians that way. who knows what would've happened if I hadn't run into somebody like that. Because I, I mean, I was just a kid up until that point and then you start thinking of things, in a totally different light. And I think a lotta people that went through Colonel were able to kind of hold on to the, the thing that makes it great, and not lose it and not... it doesn't just become just a career or a, or a job or, some way to get over on people. You try to stay connected to the source and what it's about and, I feel lucky I ran into the right people at the right time.

Sid Evans: Well, I wanted to ask you about Dwayne Allman, who was someone that you never met. I mean, he died famously in a motorcycle accident, but he was famous for his slide guitar. and I've heard you say that he was a major influence on you. When did you really kind of discover his music or really connect with his music?

Derek Trucks: You know, I'm, I'm not sure if I can remember a time when that music wasn't around. I mean, it was really the soundtrack that I remember growin' up to. I remember crawling on the floor in our living room and that Layla record, just leanin' up against the peach crate so they would keep 'em in. I mean, those were earliest memories. It was those records. My mom had a few Joni Mitchell records and Carol King records and there were a few B.B. and Ellmore records.

Derek Trucks: And when, so when I first got a guitar at maybe nine years old, at that point I was actively listening to Eat a Peach and those were things I would ask my parents to put on and it meant something to me. And when I first started playin', that's the sound I wanted to try to hear and create. When you pick up an acoustic guitar and you're like, "This doesn't sound anything like that", (laughs), it's like if a... and then I remember one of my dad's friends He would come give me lessons and he brought over a

slide once and, and then it's like, "Well this is more like it. This is startin' to make a little more sense." And then when I got my first electric guitar from a pawn shop and then this tiny little amp, the first time I realized you could just store it an amplifier. That's, that was like a, that was a pretty big moment (laughs). Like, "Holy cow, this is... that's the thing." You know, but you felt like you really discovered something that no one else had ever found (laughs). So that, those were, uh, those were fun days.

Sid Evans: So you really started with the slide. I mean that was kind of from your earliest days on the guitar that's how you got goin'?

Derek Trucks: Yeah, I mean, that, that was the sound I always wanted to hear and I was a pretty small nine year old, too. Like, I didn't have large hands yet (laugh), so like I could, I could definitely get across what I was hearing much easier with a slide you know, those pawnshop guitars when the action's an inch-and-a-half high, they're hard to fret (laughs). That thing was...

Sid Evans: (Laughs) Right.

Derek Trucks: It was not a good guitar (laughs). It was not nice.

Sid Evans: So, Derek, I wanna turn to Tedeschi Trucks. You've been part of Tedeschi Trucks since 2010, I believe, tell me a little bit about meeting Susan, and the first few times that y'all played music together.

Derek Trucks: Well, when we met, she was opening for the Allman Brothers, at the Saenger Theater in New Orleans. She was doing a whole tour. I had just joined the band. I had been in the band maybe a month or two I remember showin' up to sound check and seeing and hearing her and just not being able to, like, put the two things together (laughs). and you know, we started, chattin' and hangin' out and, we were on the road for a while. Her band at the time was Double Trouble, Stevie Rays old band I think they knew the Allmans and Greg from back in the day and they were not letting Susan come hang out on our bus. It was just like, "You are not, you cannot go over there", (laughs).

Sid Evans: It's dangerous over there.

Derek Trucks: Yeah, and so, so it was just, it was a no-go, and so they finally allowed me to come hang out and ride with them occasionally so I could court her a little bit (laughs). But they were good big brothers, I gotta say. I, lookin' back,

Sid Evans: Well, it seems to have worked out fine in the end. so the first song that I ever heard, y'all play was, a song called Midnight in Harlem, and, it's a beautiful song and it's become, one of the ones you're known for and I think people love to hear it every time they see y'all play and, but I'm wonderin' if you wrote that song with Susan in mind because i- it kinda sounds like it's made for her voice.

Derek Trucks: It's funny because Mike wrote the bulk of that tune maybe a few years before we put this band together. we even attempted it with my solo band and it just, it wasn't the right time and it just didn't quite feel right yet and, when he brought it back up early days of this band bein' together, I was just messing with this looping guitar pattern in open E and it fit perfectly over his tune and then all of a

sudden the thing just made perfect sense. And then, when Susan started singin' it, it was over. I remember the first time we played that in the studio that I'm sittin' in when Kofi hopped into that B3 riff in the intro, and I have chills thinking about it because it was just one of those moments where you're like, "Well, that's not goin' anywhere. (Laughter) Whatever you just played, that's gonna be there forever." Know some moments happen in the studio where you just realize that a, a thing occurred (laughs), something just went down. But, uh, yeah, that that was a song that when we first played it with this group it was pretty instant. We knew. There wasn't a lotta, pushin' and pullin'.

Sid Evans: It's a special song. it's kind of a magical song and I've seen y'all play it a, a bunch of times and it never gets old.

Derek Trucks: Yeah, that, that one never gets old to play. I mean, we intentionally don't play it every night 'cause I don't want it to get to that point ever. We save it, you know? One of the things I've learned from bein' on the road with bands like the Allman Brothers or groups that have been around a while is, if you wear a song out, it's hard to un-wear it out (laughs). like it didn't make sense to me, there were songs Greg just didn't wanna play. You were like, "Come on, it's incredible. Like, we wanna play it." And you could just tell. He was just like at some point he had played it too much (laughs). so, we're, we're really conscious of tryin' to, you gotta let the fields rest sometimes. You can't over plant these thing (laughs). So... Midnight In Harlem's one that I, I hope we never get to that point 'cause it's always when it starts and when everything kicks in, it always feels really good.

Tedeschi Trucks Band's song "Midnight in Harlem" fades in and we hear the following at full volume:

Well, I came to the city

I was running from the past

My heart was bleeding

And it hurt my bones to laugh

Sid Evans: So, you were talkin' about the Allmans and, you know, you played with them for 15 years. And I've heard you say that you had a particularly close relationship with Greg, who died of cancer back in 2017. I can't believe it's been that long.

Derek Trucks: Yep.

Sid Evans: What was it like playin' with him, especially when you were just gettin' started? I mean, you know, he, he had been with the Allmans for, I don't know, 30 years by the time you, started playin'. was he encouraging when you came along or, or was he kind of tough to get to know?

Derek Trucks: I mean, he was certainly tough to get to know but he was encouraging too. I mean, I played in his solo band for a little bit when I was early teens, 14 or 15. so he was always really sweet. I remember the first time... think the first time I met him was down in South Florida. they had just gotten back together, the band reunited in 1989 and they were making, I think it was Seven Turns. was the record they made down in South Florida with Tom Dowd and all those guys and, uh, the band I was playing with, it was Ace Moreland again, a great blues singer, guitar player. But we were playin' this club on South Beach in Miami called Tropics International and the, the stage was up and behind the bar. Like the bar surrounded the stage. It was just a total... children probably should not have been there either. There was a pool in the back. It was just mayhem. But they took a break from their session or had the

night off and my uncle came down to sit in, Warren Haynes and Alan Woody and Greg, I think were the four that showed up to play. And, I mean for me it was like meeting almost mythical characters. I mean, I, I knew my uncle a little bit but I didn't see him a ton at that point. He would come into town for Christmas occasionally or something. but even then it was like, "Oh, this is the guy from that band." (Laughs). You know. But meetin' Greg that first time was really incredible and, uh, Red Dog, one of, the legendary roadies of rock and roll lore, he was there, and he gave me one of Dwayne Allman's coricidin bottles. And, -, like that night is pretty heavily seared into my head. Greg and Red Dog gave it to me, by that weird pool behind the club (laughs). It's one of those wild moments in your life. And then I remember being at my grandparent's house and they had a picture of that moment, that sit in with me and Butch and Greg and Alan and Warren and they had a piece of paper covering up the liquor bottles (laughs) under my feet, like that was, their, their friends didn't wanna see that. That was not okay. But I always remember lovin' seein' that, the blue strip of paper taped onto the picture frame (laughter). but Greg was incredible, you know. And, I actually remember the moment. I remember when we found out he passed away. We were... we're starting our tour this year at Daily's Place here in Jacksonville and we, we played the first ever show there. And as we were pulling the bus into the parking lot, I got a call from Burt Holman and the Allman Brother's manager and I knew immediately what it was because it was... you could feel it comin'. And, you know, we heard that Greg passed away as we were walkin' into that venue and, you know, in Jacksonville, their hometown and, it was a big deal that venue opening up. And I remember walkin' in and, and I was like I, I'm gonna need a few minutes (laughs). Like, I can't do this right this second. Just need five. I had to go sit in the dressing room and I, I remember listening to.. "Ain't Wastin' Time No More" 'cause his vocal track is just incredible (laughs). I just had a moment, just kinda got it out for a second. I was like, "All right, now we can, we can face the day." (Laughs). Bu-, yeah he wa-, he was something, man. He was, he was really something. The other thing I really remember, this is more about what he meant to people than it is about him, or knowing him. This was, when we were at his funeral in Macon, we were sitting in the room and I was there with my parents and Otis Redding's widow and daughter are there and Jimmy Carter is there and Cher is there and you just feel this, this convergence of old Georgia and old, you know, the music's, all of the stuff. and I'm sittin' with my parents and they're like, "Yeah, this is where... We were here for Dwayne's funeral. This is the same spot." And we hopped in the car in the funeral procession heading to Rose Hill Cemetery where Dwayne and Barry are buried and there were people lining the road for that whole mile and half. There must of been 10, 15,000 people. People with tents, music playin'. it was a really incredible moment. It felt, it just felt like this moment being from the South that there was, it was like, "You know what? This is something we're proud of and this is the end of an era." You know, even though a few of the members are still left, when Greg went, it really felt like it was, I don't know, It felt like I was readin' a Faulkner book or something. Like, it felt important and it felt, it felt tragic and, but beautiful and it was really a wild time. but yeah that was a wild day and it, it hit me, 'cause I knew what that music meant to me and I saw what it meant to people but, uh, the way people came out to, to watch the car drive by was, you know, you see that was like Muhammad Ali or presidents or... you don't, you don't see that from musicians a lot. It's, it's more than just, "I like this song" at that point. there's something more goin' on.

Sid Evans: Mm. It was a celebration of...

Derek Trucks: It was.

Sid Evans: ... his life.

Derek Trucks: It really was, yeah, and an appreciation of, of what those guys did. And, I mean, they came from nothin', man. You read the story of their beginning and how strong their mom was, Mama A. We knew her really well and she was incredible right to the end. I mean, she was drivin' around in her red Cadillac when she was 94 years old. she was a tough one. Livin' in that same house that those two hell on wheels children grew up in. she was somethin' else.

Sid Evans: A true Southern lady.

Derek Trucks: That's for sure.

(Instrumental music break of Biscuits and Jam theme)

Voice over from Sid Evans: I'll be back with more from guitar legend Derek Trucks after the break.

(AD BREAK)

(Instrumental music break of Biscuits and Jam theme)

Voice over from Sid Evans: Welcome back to Biscuits & Jam, from Southern Living. I'm Sid Evans, and today I'm talking with Derek Trucks.

Sid Evans: Well, Derek, I want to ask you about this project, called I Am The Moon, and it's crazy ambitious. correct me if I'm wrong but it's actually four albums, and every one has a corresponding film that goes with it. and the first album has just come out and it's called Crescent and it's magnificent.

Derek Trucks: Beautiful.

Sid Evans: Tell me what set this project in motion.

Derek Trucks: I mean the last few years that we went through. I mean, we had 20 months of there was no gigs, you know, nothin' goin' on and, you know, the whole world's just kind of just trapped in this weird moment where there's not much end in sight because it's hard to plan anything. You just don't know what's gonna happen. And early in that, Mike Mattison who wrote Midnight Harlem, is an incredible writer, but incredible thinker and he had this idea of a way to keep the band kind of at least thinkin' about the same thing or just stayin' on track without being able to gig or do what we do. And we did this live show with Trey Anastasio from Phish. We did the Layla record and then it became a live record. so we just dug into that lyrically and musically and, and Mike had read all the lyrics and dug into that album as a writer and he was thinkin' about it. And he, he was like you know, it's one of the all time records. if there's anything that hit me a little off about it was it's just, it's one perspective from top to bottom. Like it's just, "I want something I can't have." And he was like what if we thought about this, from her perspective. What did Layla think about all of this? and then he had the notion of he went and re-read the Layla-Majnun, the Nazini poem, and then he proposed that everybody in the core of the band would read that poem while we were apart and just think about that story from different

perspectives So when we were finally able to get, people tested early on and down here livin' in the studio with us for a few weeks, all these songs started pouring out. So the first five or six songs were written and then the thing kinda takes on a gravity of its own. You start writing to the project and everyone's getting excited about it. And then, when we finally looked back, we had 24 songs and then we were really tryin' to figure out like, "What do you do with this?" And we we'd go upstairs and listen in the studio. There's a nice listening room and we realized like this is too much for one sitting. Like, we gotta think about-do we save one for next year? Like, how do we do this? At that point we had been doin' this weekly thing where we were putting up a live concert on our website and people would tune in together, at 8 o'clock. People would get together from their homes and watch and it became this communal thing and so that kind of sparked the idea of, "You know why don't we do that? Why don't we try to put visuals to this?" And this was all when we had nothing going on. We thought these would be easy things to do (laughs). So, like we didn't realize what we were takin' on. And then our good friend Judd Strickland, he took on the project of sequencing this thing 'cause it was a really important part of it. Judd, and his son, Riley, they took all these tunes and each song he had a card for with a time signature and the key signature and the emotional content of it and where it fits in the story and went full murder board on it, conspiracy theory yarn (laughs). When these sequences came back, we were listening. We were like, "that is, it's a real important part of the project, especially if you're gonna put a film to it. there needs to be an emotional narrative and a musical narrative." So, that was a big part of the equation as well.

Sid Evans: Well, I wanna ask you about Layla, because that's a song that you've been playin' since you were really young. It's by a band, Derek and the Dominoes. Were you kind of named after that band?

Derek Trucks: Yeah, that was definitely a factor. The spelling certainly came from that band. I mean, that, that record was in heavy rotation in my house growing up. I mean, that album cover's one of the first images I can remember. Like, it's just such a striking image. and I remember strangely, playing that song early on, 14 or 15 years old and then, when I got the call and joined Clapton's band and gettin' to play that music with him felt completely surreal. But my parents came over to London when I was doin' the Albert Hall shows with Clapton's band and he invited out to his place in the country that he lived with Patti at the time, or way before. But this was like Layla land. And or, seeing that painting, and just, just being kind of overwhelmed by it. It just felt a weird, a weird (laughter) surreal moment in your life (laughs). Your dad the roofer is sipping tea with Eric is not something you expect when you're growing up on Mentay Street in Jacksonville (laughs).

Sid Evans: I mean this whole project just had so many layers for you. I wanna ask you about the title track, I Am the Moon, which is beautiful. It starts off with this kind of melancholy sort of acoustic guitar and then it kind of builds and builds into something that sounds almost triumphant. How did that sound come together and how did that sort of become the title track?

Derek Trucks: That was a song that Gabe Dickson wrote, when we first jumped into this project. And he... I think this even before we were all together. but he sent down this demo of him singing and playing this tune and everyone immediately knew how incredible of a song it was. And, I mean Susan walked around almost that whole lockdown with an acoustic guitar playing and singing that thing. She was in love with it. so that one was almost intimidating to record 'cause the demo was so good and the idea was so good and you just wanted to make sure you didn't miss the mark. and that was the song for me where I realized that idea and concept that Mike had was now a living, breathing thing. I remember hearing that song and his lyrics and just the feeling of it and it put me in that place that I was when I was

reading the poem. it really felt of a place his voice and her voice together, are pretty amazing. It's a pretty amazing thing we've stumbled across. And, when you're talkin' about like the Layla Majnun story, it's, it's really nice having the two, the male and female voice telling the story, the whole perspective shifts when you're hearing it from two different places. There's characters everywhere, which I really, really love because one of the things that I know from bein' around this 12-piece band is they are full on characters (laughter), so I love when I hear the record. Like, I r-, I see and feel these people. And, I thought Alex who did the movie, did an incredible job at bringing that in where you, you feel like you know these people a little bit. And it's, and what you see is pretty much what you get (laughs).

Tedeschi Trucks Band's song "I Am The Moon" fades in and we hear the following at full volume:

I am the moon, you are the sun

And look at you, flaming out in front of everyone

You are my star, I am a stone

Up here spinning alone

Sid Evans: I wanna ask you about one more, that's called Fall In and it's totally different and it's kind of a feel good song and it sounds like y'all are havin' a really good time when you recorded it. but it's also a very different sound for Tedeschi-Trucks. did this one feel like a shift in direction for you guys?

Derek Trucks: Maybe so. I, I think this whole project felt like a bit of a shift because we weren't gigging and you didn't know if there was gonna be a gig in a year or two years or never (laughs). Like, it was a different mentality, so, we didn't feel like when we were writing songs and recording songs that we had to think about how is this gonna sound live? Like we, there was no sense of that really. We're all livin' together in the studio and you know the sounds get a little bit experimental and you start leanin' into that. and then you start thinkin' about the lyric of the tune and it's an uplifting feeling song but the lyrics maybe a little bit dark (laughs), you know?

Sid Evans: Right.

Derek Trucks: It's like it's willing to follow somebody anywhere even if it's straight to hell (laughter). And it's, and you, you could feel the horn section just like, "All right, let's fall in (laughs)", and you just, you see this scene. And I think the sounds make you play that way, the feeling makes you play that way. It's funny, when we recorded that tune specifically, we would start the tune and it took a while to get into that groove. Like it... we did about two or three takes and by the end of the take, once we got into that vamp at the end, it was just simmerin'. It just, you're like, "All right, that's it. We got it." And then we'd start the song and it would take a minute to get back into it. So I had this idea. I was like, "All right, we're gonna play the song. When we get to the end and it's simmerin', we're just gonna... we're not stoppin'. We're just gonna start again (laughs)". So we recorded the song three times in a row where we never stopped. 'cause the song ends where it begins. It's the same groove and so there's one take that we have that is three versions pinned together and they felt really good. But the one in the middle was the one. It was just... it, it never left that feeling. It's fun when you're in the studio experimenting with things like that, if it finally feels good, maybe that's where we should start (laughs). We don't like, we don't have to build into this thing.

Sid Evans: You know, you've talked a good bit about Mike Mattison, who's a long-time partner of yours and he's got this very soulful, blues-ey voice. And it seems like your guitar is emulating that sometimes

and, and you also do it with Susan. Do you see your guitar as a way of kind of communicating with them and you're responding to them?

Derek Trucks: Completely. I mean, and, and some of that goes back to... you know some of the earliest Delta Blues recordings where you hear Booker White sing and then play a line back to himself like the slack guitar was emulating the human voice, almost a female voice. You know, you hear it with Blind Willie and a lot of the delta guys. it's kind of call and response with, with yourself, and since I don't sing, it's me calling response with Mike or Susan. And some of the stuff they sing is just, it makes you wanna play it. It makes you, uh, maybe they're like, "Stop doin' that. Quit, why are you copying me (laughs)?"

Sid Evans: So Derek, you and Susan have two kids, and there's an awful lot of music in those genes. Are either of them getting into the family business?

Derek Trucks: I don't think so. I mean they have incredible taste in music and they're, they're music lovers and, they, they took different paths so far. It's funny. I think today is our third day as empty nesters. The very day we got home after movin' our daughter and the, the first Crescent came out, it was a weird mix of emotions that day (laughs).

Sid Evans: Well, that whole project, must feel a little bit like givin' birth in a way. Y'all been workin' on it for so long and it just came out a few days ago. I think I saw you say on Instagram that y'all had a big gathering and you had your parents over, to listen to it and watch it with you.

Derek Trucks: Yeah.

Sid Evans: What was their response?

Derek Trucks: Man, it was really, really fun watching 'em 'cause we, I mean we've obviously seen it every step of the way, but until you sit down and watch it and finish with people that haven't seen it, you're really unsure of how it's gonna land and I remember Susan bein' pretty incredibly nervous right before it started. Like, we were about to go onstage. And you're like, "It's already done (laughs). There's nothin' we can do now."but it felt really good. And then the next morning I got a call from my dad and he was really excited about, "That was great last. I really loved it that instrumental. I've been thinkin' about that all mornin'." And I was like, "Alright. This is good. I feel better about the day already." Because Chris Trucks is, he's amazing. If he doesn't like something, he will not blow smoke (laughs). so, it, it was nice. I appreciated that. I felt better about it.

Sid Evans: You got over that hurdle?

Derek Trucks: Yeah, it's a big one.

Sid Evans: Well, Derek, I just have one more question for you. you grew up in the South, you've played just about everywhere there is to play in the South. What does it mean to you to be a Southerner?

Derek Trucks: Man, I feel lucky. I just feel like there's something in the water. There's something that happens down here that's just different than anywhere else. It sounds and feels different. It smells

different. The food, the culture, just leading with politeness, I appreciate (laughs). Like, I mean, I, I know it's not always 100% pure and true everywhere you go, but it sure is a nice start, you know? I mean we travel all over the world and there are places you go, where you get that familiar sense like, "I like it here. It feels like the South (laughs). I don't know how you put your finger on it, man. I mean, I appreciate the feeling when I'm here. And I, I certainly appreciate the sounds and the things that we were given right outta the gate, you know? I think a lot of what comes in my playing and what I do is just a thing that was here, you know? It just happened and the thing was here and, I remember even bein' on tour with Clapton or a lot of other artists. There's almost this mythical thing that they have about artists from the South because it's, uh, that's what they were all after for a very long time. I mean, that's where the Blues came from. That's where a lotta of the soul came from and, when you hear Otis Redding or Greg Allman sing, you, you know where they were from (laughs). And you know where they weren't from, so, those are the things that I cherish. I mean, I feel like, I remember doing these tours in Europe and this was during... I think it was Bush two and it was, there was a big anti-U.S. sentiment in a lot of the places you're playing these festivals. And I remember doing interviews and being asked about it. I was like, "You know who my ambassador is? It's B.B. King. That's my ambassador." I was like, "This is a blues festival, by the way that we're playing. You know where that came from, right?" Those are the things that I feel like you can always hold onto. There's a beauty to that stuff is just I think pretty bullet proof, man. That's timeless stuff and a real gift to the, to the planet.

Sid Evans: Well, I hope y'all can enjoy a little time at home before you get out on the road but, we're very excited about your new music and hope I get to see you guys soon.

Derek Trucks: Yeah, man. We'll be out there and I appreciate you man. We look forward to connectin' sometime.

Sid Evans: Well, Derek Trucks, thank you so much for being on Biscuits and Jam.

Derek Trucks: All right, man. Be well.

Voice over from Sid Evans: Thanks for listening to my conversation with Derek Trucks. Make sure to check out the Tedeschi Trucks Band latest project, I Am The Moon, and visit TedeschiTrucksBand.com for tour dates, social media, and more. Southern Living is based in Birmingham, AL. Be sure to follow Biscuits & Jam on Apple Podcasts, Spotify or wherever you listen so you don't miss an episode. And we'd love your feedback. If you could rate this podcast and leave us a review we'd really appreciate it. You can also find us online at southernliving.com/biscuitsandjam Make sure to come back here next Monday for my conversation with Alton Brown.