

Episode Title: Scott Avett's Favorite Carolina Barbecue

Episode Summary: In this week's episode, Sid Evans, Editor-in-Chief of Southern Living Magazine, talks to Scott Avett of The Avett Brothers about his passion for painting, how fatherhood has inspired him, and his favorite barbecue joints.

Episode Transcript:

(Biscuits & Jam Theme begins - Fiddler's Barn on Epidemic Sound)

Voice Over from SID EVANS: Welcome to another episode of Biscuits & Jam, from Southern Living. I'm Sid Evans, editor-in-chief of Southern Living Magazine. We've recorded these episodes as we've all sheltered-at-home, and between passionate conversations about Southern food, you'll also hear honest takes about how these musicians have been dealing with the pandemic. Today's guest belongs to one of the most popular bands of the last ten years, and his inspiration comes from his North Carolina roots.

SCOTT AVETT: To me, this is sacred. This is sacred land. I, uh, I'm very connected to it. Uh, shamefully so, I mean, it's ridiculous how connected I am to it.

SID EVANS NARRATION: Scott Avett, along with his younger brother Seth, formed The Avett Brothers two decades ago and broke through to mainstream success with their 2009 album *I And Love And You*. Since then, the Avetts along with bandmates Joe Kwon and Bob Crawford, have sold out venues across the world, won multiple Group of the Year honors from the Americana Music Awards, and been nominated for three Grammys. Their tenth and most recent album *Closer Than Together* landed at Number 4 on Billboard's Rock Album chart last October, and the lead single "High Steppin'" is a great example of the exuberance the band brings to both record and stage. Check it out - This song is just pure fun!

"High Steppin'" by the Avett Brothers fades up during Sid's statement of the title, with the 2nd part of the song's chorus at full volume after Sid saying "this song is just pure fun!" we can hear the following clearly: "I'm a high steppin', high bettin' / Love givin', I'm a love gettin' / I'm a stranger, I love stretchin' out my wheels / Overnightin' on the desert strip / Makin' time and losin' grip / Drivin' circles in the canyons of my mind"

(song fades, Biscuits & Jam theme fades back in and so does Sid's narration)

Outside of the world of music, Scott is an accomplished visual artist, exhibiting his work for the first time earlier this year at the SOCO Gallery in Charlotte. This week, we'll talk about Scott's love for painting as well as proper Carolina barbecue.

SCOTT AVETT: Lexington Barbecue, our father has taken us there growing up. And that was the benchmark for us growing up in, in the Piedmont. Um, so, you know, you don't mess with Lexington Barbecue.

SID EVANS NARRATION: All that and more today on Biscuits & Jam.

Biscuits & Jam theme music ends

SID EVANS: Well, Scott Avett, welcome to Biscuits & Jam.

SCOTT AVETT: Thank you for having me.

SID EVANS: So, tell me a little bit about what it was like growing up in a small town in North Carolina.

SCOTT AVETT: I guess it's heavy on my mind and just really relevant right now with, um, our force into our present surroundings, you know, we really been forced into the now in kind of a scary way to a lot of us and then also to a really good way. And I, when I think back on growing up, in fact, I've just worked on some songs to this point, I get the feeling that like, I have a real draw and a connection to something much quieter than the life that I live. Something much more contemplative. And when I keep going back to these times that I had growing up where we had afternoons that were wide open, we didn't have an agenda, there wasn't a schedule. And I remember just having time to do with it what I would do and I would just *be*, you know. And it seems like in, in adulthood, it's so hard to find it. It's so impossible to find those moments. So I go back to growing up in a small town where there's space that was slow, that priorities, were, um, I guess simple. I'm really grateful for that. I think it paved the way, it carved the path for who I am and everything I do. So overall, the answer to that question, it's just, I'm so grateful to have space, time and literal, you know, geographical space to, uh, to be a kid.

SID EVANS: So Scott, are you on the farm where you grew up?

SCOTT AVETT: I'm adjacent to it. Yeah, yeah. I'm connected to it. In fact, me and my kids roam the woods that I did as a kid.

SID EVANS: So I'm wondering if you could just kind of paint a picture for me of the, of the farm.

SCOTT AVETT: Sure. We started with 65 acres. My dad, my dad's philosophy early on, whether he had a plan or strategy or not, he thought, "well, I'm going to try to acquire some land, uh, that's what I'll do with my money," versus putting it back for a, a more conventional retirement. But, uh, so he purchased land in like 1980, 1981, '82 when it was really inexpensive. So there were motorcycles and go-karts and we did a lot of farming growing up. But it was big hobby farming. That sort of faded late '80s, '90s, and I think that's probably collectively in our county, in Cabarrus County. Uh, it's right beside Mecklenburg County where Charlotte is. I think just the more people, the way it's grown, I think priorities changed, but I think they did overall, even in rural America, I think, uh, people are doing less and less of the self-sustaining living. And, um, so growing up, there was an element of that. As we traveled, as I've grown and traveled so much, I started noticing this value. Then I started seeing this definite monetary value in "why don't I go back, and, you know, settle there? Cause I can do it for cheaper than anywhere I've seen." And I also know the lay of the land. I understand it. And I was able to expand the farm by about, um, 80 acres or so. So we live on that. And my brother and my, my sister and I all have land connected to it.

SID EVANS: You all have pigs, chickens, and goats and that kind of thing?

SCOTT AVETT: We have chickens, and I just got word that pigs are, are on the way because apparently the meat processing stuff, there's really a, uh, a tragic story playing out right now with the meat processing. And some farmers are really getting put in some bad, some bad positions. So, but we always had cows and we did have pigs as kids, and we've always had chickens. We have a big garden. To me, this is sacred. This is sacred land. I, uh, I'm very connected to it. Uh, shamefully so, I mean, just like, it's, it's ridiculous how connected I am to it.

SID EVANS: Well, uh, and your dad, uh, so in addition to having this hobby farm, he was a welder. Is that right?

SCOTT AVETT: Yeah, that took up most of his time. So we would go down and work at his shop and cut metal and pick up metal scraps and paint, uh, equipment that he had built. I don't know if you remember anything like this, but I can't count the times I've cleaned my hands and arms in gasoline. I mean, it was like painting all day, and then dad would say, "here, take this gasoline and clean that off." I was just like, "man, what is this?" Looking back, I'm like, "what? What was I doing? What were we doing?" But yeah, he was a welder. My dad's main gig was traveling. They were bridge builders. So he traveled most of the time in between bridges or jobs that they were doing. Uh, they would build in their shops. So they would build a lot of trailers and they would build what they called wrecking rigs, which, um. Where they would swing out underneath, a, a bridge so you could work and do all the molding or the casting for the concrete or whatever. Um. But dad hired me early at 15 years old. In fact, it's funny. Bojangles' Coliseum in Charlotte. We play there now. We do multiple nights a lot, and I've seen incredible, I saw Soundgarden there. I mean, that's, just goes way back. My first job with dad was working over Independence Boulevard in Charlotte on that bridge that was directly like right under the Bojangles' Coliseum overhangs and he had me working very young, and I think I needed that. I was a little more, um, rebellious with my dad. Or at least outwardly so Seth might've been as well, and I think he needed me to get some, uh, some taste of real life. So from 15 to 22 years old, I worked, I worked with him on, on the bridge, off and on.

SID EVANS: And, and so what about, uh, what about your mom? I mean, who was the, who was the cook in the family?

SCOTT AVETT: So mom was the cook. And, um, she didn't allow anything with wild food coloring in it, you know? There were no Froot Loops in our house, okay? She's a very talented, cook. She cooks very well, was capable of feeding us steadily and, and surely, like throughout our, our childhood, we always had breakfast. The funny thing is she never made more than she had to. We didn't go for seconds and thirds. It wasn't that kind of upbringing. It was, "there's enough, you're going to get, a, one pork chop, mashed potatoes and green beans, and that's it." That's it. It wasn't hard line, but. I remember every time I had neighbors just those good, uh, you know, just wholesome Southern drawl neighbors that would invite me over they, well, the nearest neighbor was a mile away, but I would go to, to his house and they would have me and we'd be having fried chicken, fried chicken and mashed potatoes and corn. And if I didn't get up and get seconds, it was an insult. They would, they would insist, you know, more and more. So anytime their son was over at our house, I'd have to ask

my mom, is it okay if we have somebody eat with us? Cause, and she's like, "god, I don't know if we have enough." It wasn't a stingy thing. It's just that she didn't make more than we had to have, which I don't know what that means, but it means something, I'm sure of it.

(Instrumental music break of Biscuits & Jam theme)

SID EVANS: So what did, uh, what did the holidays look like around the Avett household?

SCOTT AVETT: The only tradition I really remember of us other than basic ones like Christmas trees and a Turkey for Thanksgiving was just, well, it was just warmth and just love. I mean. It wasn't very formal. It never was. There weren't formal candle lightings or formal days that we did this or that, caroling or, or for this holiday we did A, B, and C. It didn't ever feel that way. It was never that formal, but it was always loving and you know, now you grow old, I guess from an adults, a parent's perspective holidays can get pretty stressful. I just remember them being warm and loving times. That's it. Now, the, the one tradition though that I will say that's, that's gone on ever since I was a kid every year is, our, the Avett family reunion, which we. Would have somewhere in the Piedmont, North Carolina, and that was usually about 60 people. And that was all, um, potluck. And that is a, you know, a family reunion once a year. I don't know if that's that common, like it's every, annual, you know, so that's nice. And that is a pretty big gathering. I remember one time Channel 9 or 36 coming out and doing a, a story on us when I was in middle school or high school because of our family reunion was a tradition that was, I guess, something that wasn't happening as much anymore. So I will say that's a, that's a tradition that I'm at the helm of a, of a, you know, my, my generation of cousins we're all inheriting it now.

SID EVANS: And, and that's still going on.

SCOTT AVETT: it is. Yes. Yeah. And I'm due to skip one. I, I haven't skipped one in a while. Sorry, Avetts!

SID EVANS: Uh, so, um, I want to ask you about your grandfather, um, who was a preacher. Did you know your grandfather?

SCOTT AVETT: He, he baptized me and then he died. What, four or five months after that. He fell off of a ladder while he was cleaning gutters and didn't realize he had injured himself. And, and when he'd gone to the hospital it was too late from what I understand. But he baptized me, so I never, you know, he talked to me, but I don't guess I ever talked to him. Having a dad that was a preacher's son, I think there was a built-in rebellion there. Another tradition that that's, that's held true is that the church that we grew up in was the church that my dad and my grandfather had preached in for a moment. Dad always pushed for us not to take it all too seriously. So we would go to Sunday school and then right before the church service, he'd say, let's go to K&W Cafeteria and get lunch. So, so we would leave, and then when we were in church, he did hundreds and hundreds of character drawings of people sitting in church, and we would get the biggest kick. The Avett family would be over there drawing the congregation. And it was, to me, as I look, looked back on it, it was sacred. It was Holy. It was, God was wrapped all up in it, but it was, it was definitely some delinquency going on there. And when I, when I tried to pull something off like that at my girlfriend's Catholic church, I'll tell you right now, that didn't fly at the Catholic church. No

way. No way. There's no horsing around at the Catholic church, but at the Methodist church, I guess you'd get away with it a little more. There's a little lighter, uh, heart with it, but, um, so growing up in that church, you know, I saw my grandfather's book, on our shelf. He was, he was a tradition at that church. And, uh, this book sat on the shelf for years, which was a collection of his sermons. And, um, when I, in my thirties, when I was really ready to put the throttle down on my spiritual journey, um, that book was just waiting for me. It's, it's incredible. Cause the book was, was waiting when I was ready and when I started reading it and my heart was open to it. Craziest thing, it led me to reading Gandhi. Gandhi led me to reading Leo Tolstoy's A Confession, his-Kingdom of God is Within You. That led me to reading Blaise Pascal. And, uh, all of it's led me to my current just deep love for Thomas Merton and Richard Rohr and, uh, John of the Cross and then the anonymous writer for, um, Cloud of Unknowing. So my grandfather started all that in me. But my relationship with the church was, uh, I was very rebellious in my heart sitting in church. I still get flutters of that to this day, but, um, but I didn't grow up with a oppressive relationship with church.

SID EVANS: So Scott, your dad is a really accomplished musician. You guys have performed together, you've made music together. I'm wondering what kind of influence he had on you as a musician early on.

SCOTT AVETT: You know, early on, we didn't grow up seeing our dad as a musician. I mean I, he was just, our dad. Um, and he had put away the, the dream of being a musician to raise us, cause he, I don't think that he could afford to do that and raise the three kids. So that's where welding came in. And that was, that's what he did. He was, he was very busy. Whatever he did, he was committed to be the best at it. So he was very good at that and put a lot of time into it, though he never identified himself as Jim Avett, the welder. I don't think, you know, only when that needed to be said. He would say a lot. "My life is not at work." you know. "That's not my life. My life is, is elsewhere. And it's, it's home really. But it, it's not at work. I don't live to work." Um, but he kept the door open. He played guitar around us. I remember music was just a, just a, kind of like that book, kind of like my grandfather's book. It was just there for us. It was just there for us. There was a record player. There were a ton of records. Um, mostly old, like country, like, uh, like Merle Haggard and Kenny Rogers and, uh, John Conlee and Willie Nelson. But then it also went into Bob Dylan and, and, uh Neil Young. It's interesting cause very early we had this 8-track tape player and, uh, uh, a carton of 8-tracks. And one of my dad's 8-track recordings was in there and we listened to that. But there was only like a handful of 8-tracks, and it was John Denver, my dad's 8-track. There was a Three Dog Night, 8-track. Uh, and I mean, it was enough to digest, just to sort of romanticize. Here these things are romanticized. Like, he listened to Jeremiah Was A Bullfrog, you know, as a kid, you're like, "whoa, okay, what is this?" Like, and then John Denver, I mean, all I needed was that, that record, Grandma's Feather Bed. And then the sentimental vibe of home and I'd find myself tearing up, listening to it. So I think my dad just made music available and we identified him as someone who was capable of delivering a song like a songster. So I think that just was in a way, a vehicle for us to look up to something. In the non-musical way, watching our dad's, uh, discipline and dedication to travel and being able to do it and maintain a home was really incredible. And that's something we work very hard to do. But going further back, my grandmother was a pianist in the church and music, she was going to be a piano, a piano or a, a concert pianist. And, uh. She really prioritized music. I'll never forget, I had a girlfriend that I dated for a long time and, and uh, was very fond of,

and I remember introducing her. My grandmother was in, uh, in the bed because she was older and she might've even been in like a hospital situation, but we were just visiting her. And, uh I remember her pulling me down to her, her ear and saying, ah, "now, does she love music?" And I didn't really... 'cause she was just kind of like, "if she doesn't love music, she's not the one." And I mean, it's such a broad question, such a such a like, "well, who doesn't love music?" And I know this, I know this girl loves music, but, uh, ah, yeah, I guess? I don't know. Are you, are you really testing her right now?

SID EVANS: That was a deal breaker, a deal breaker for her.

SCOTT AVETT: I know it was a deal breaker. For her, it was a huge priority and she recognized me as the delinquent between the brothers cause I was not one that was, you know, Seth's very disciplined in practicing music. "Musician" is not a title that I throw around. Not, like...music is a, is a, is a means to an end for me, it's one of the vehicles I use to express myself. It's, it's all about creating, and music is universal and its power is, is beyond description. However, uh, I have no clue. I have no clue how to decipher it. Uh, all I know is how to, how to chase down an expression.

SID EVANS NARRATION: *We'll chat more with Scott Avett, after the break.*

(EDITING: Instrumental music break of Biscuits & Jam theme)

(AD BREAK)

(EDITING: Instrumental music break of Biscuits & Jam theme)

SID EVANS NARRATION: *Welcome back to Biscuits & Jam, from Southern Living. I'm Sid Evans, and we're talking with Scott Avett of the Avett Brothers.*

SID EVANS: I want to fast forward a little bit and talk about your music family, and your road family. Tell me a little bit about this group of people that you travel with now and, what that's like, at least travel with when, you know, we're not in a pandemic.

SCOTT AVETT: So, the beautiful and unique thing about our, uh, just about our just-about 20-year journey has been that we were never successful enough to, to grow too fast. And we grew much like a, the, the children that we, that we are, um, we grew slow and people came along in, into our family. Family members joined along the way in real time. Uh, naturally, slowly, never in more than like singular additions. It was always plus one, plus one, plus one. Um, because we saw the need, and we could identify the person whether they were the greatest, we didn't always hire the best. Like, obviously I'm not the best banjo player in the world, but I'm the banjo player for the Avett Brothers. Uh, it was more about the person. It's always been more about the person, and then the person would grow into the role. I don't know if it's getting better. It's just us being on the journey. Now it goes well beyond the band. Uh, we have a whole crew of people that we know and that we love. And they've, they've come along the same way slowly and, uh, it's been so personal and it's so, it's so intimate and, uh, I can't, I can't imagine it being another way. I can't imagine putting out a record where we didn't somehow make the album cover, even if someone else makes it. We're making it. Um, for us, we've crafted this, this family. In a lot of ways this family has crafted

itself. It's been a harbor of love, really. It is a family. And really just saying that it's a family and that we love each other is all that needs to be said.

SID EVANS: So, when you guys are traveling, uh, do y'all sit down and have meals together when you're on the road?

SCOTT AVETT: We really do. Yeah. We eat, we eat. There's two or three tables full of people and yeah, I mean it's, it's pretty much the same time every night. And even when we're on these off days. And I, I curse myself sometimes because sometimes I'm not in the best, state of mind or best frame of mind to be socializing with my compadres. Um, but -even on a day off, we might have like three shows on one, one day off, two shows on, two days off, and then four, four shows or whatever. And then you'll find yourself on the day off, still eating with your family. Every night. It's just like, man, what's going on? But it's, uh, it's nice. It's nice that you, to say that. It's, it's nice to, to think about that to, to reminisce on that.

SID EVANS: So are you a barbecue guy? You're in the heart of barbecue country there.

SCOTT AVETT: Yeah. And when I went to East Carolina University, and, and got schooled in Eastern North Carolina barbecue versus, uh, Lexington style and the Western, I was like, okay, it's, it is on, I guess. But, uh, yeah, my girlfriend, or my, she was my girlfriend. She's my wife now, Sarah. She used to live right across from B's Barbecue in Greenville. And we used to go to B's and get, get barbecue there, and there's obviously Parker's there and, um, then Lexington's, a, a huge, a huge, uh, draw for us. That was what we had growing up the most. But, uh, I love a lot of barbecue and I never, I couldn't say I liked either one better or worse, I, you know, I, I love them all.

SID EVANS: Well, so if, if somebody's visiting North Carolina for the first time and you got to pick one place, what, what, what do you think it would be?

SCOTT AVETT: In Charlotte, there used to be a place called the Hickory, Hickory Smokehouse, which was, uh, incredible. It wasn't North Carolina-style though. Um, Lexington Barbecue, uh, our, our father has taken us there growing up. And that was what we were, that was the benchmark for us growing up in, in the Piedmont. Um, so, you know, you don't mess with Lexington Barbecue, but, uh, but I've never met anybody that puts the care and the thought into, uh, barbecue that Sam Jones at, at the Skylight, um, in Ayden, North Carolina, I think. I think they may have a couple of them, maybe one in Winterville as well. But, uh, uh, Sam has been, has been real good to us. But, uh, I've had his barbecue on, on a number of occasions. And, um, I mean, it's just, it's, it's incredible. So you'd have to drive four hours East of, of, where I live to go to go eat that. But, uh, if you're in my area, go to Lexington.

SID EVANS: That's high praise.

(Instrumental music break of Biscuits & Jam them)

SID EVANS: So Scott, I want to just shift gears for a second and ask you a little bit about your art. In addition to being a very accomplished musician, you are an incredibly talented artist. It's something that you've pursued for a long time, um, that you're very active in, but not everybody knows about. Tell me a little bit about, uh, about what that means to you.

SCOTT AVETT: Art was something I just was naturally always doing and always drawn to. And what I mean by art is, is, is making things and creating, creating things. Um, a lot of my life has just been doodling, but, organized and disciplined, doodling will get anybody in trouble. And, will start showing up in dreams and, and lives in this, in this case. And, uh, the discipline that I did study, you know, uh, figurative painting in school. The professor Leland Wallin was, um, was dead set on instilling in me some sort of a, a commitment to painting. And then, uh, Michael Ehlbeck, who was a printmaking professor there was the same with printmaking. They had different, different approaches completely. But, it had a, a big impact on me. After being told that most art students go on, to either work in restaurants for a living or go on to, uh, I don't know, mow yards, which I, to me, you can certainly be an artist in both of those fields, so it doesn't even really matter. But something about that, I guess lit a fire to maintain painting, like maintain the studio, keep painting no matter what, always paint. And so even when I started touring early and was really doing the hard work and touring as a musician, I was really dedicated and committed into the discipline of keeping a studio and making, painting a part of my life, painting, drawing, printmaking when I could. And it remained that way always. And I always had a goal of painting large scale, uh, compositions with, primarily figurative painting, but, um, that's not happening, right this second I'm actually painting something very different, but, Man, it's hard to articulate. It's, it's, I was born to do, I was born to make things.

SID EVANS: Well, so Scott, we've been talking a lot about family and, you've focused a lot of your art and your music around the subject of family. Um, you've done some really large scale portraits of your wife and kids, for example. And, and I'm just wondering how does that go over as a dad?

SCOTT AVETT: Yeah, yeah, yeah, I get the, the expected complaints for sure. Yeah. Yeah. There's, "why dad, why didn't you paint me in that one?" I'm like. "Alright, alright." Or "why did you, why am I? What? What?" And I have to tell them all this, "this is not you. This is a painting. This is not you." Uh, but you know that the family life, this season of life that I'm in, family is, is all that you see that, it's just in your face, in your face, in your face, and if your eyes are open to it, if my eyes are open to it, I, I see some incredible things. It's just, it's just very, uh, very beautiful. So it'd, it'd be crazy for me not to be affected by it.

SID EVANS: You know, I think it was, it might've been yesterday or the day before you, you posted a beautiful song on Instagram called A Father's First Spring.

SCOTT AVETT: Yeah.

SID EVANS: And there was a lyric in that song that says, uh, "I was a child before the day that I met Eleanor," which is your daughter's name.

SCOTT AVETT: Yeah.

SID EVANS: I'm just wondering, how has being a father changed you as an artist and a musician?

SCOTT AVETT: Um, well, it's a huge blow to the ego, you know? Having, having a child, witnessing a child, being born, witnessing a partner going through that, witnessing a mother,

um, birth a child. It's such a huge blow to, um, to another's ego. And that's a good thing. I think one of the big early blows that are series of blows that are, are, you know, knocking that, that ego, putting that ego in its place. And, uh, that has been a real benefit to me. Uh, it's really hard not to only think about yourself, but having children does a, a damn good job at interrupting that. And, uh, I'm grateful for that. That's, uh, because I know that that's really the goal. Um, because I'm leaving that, this, this ego, I know that I'm leaving it behind when I, uh, when I pass away. And, uh, the more that I can keep my eyes on it and keep it in check, I think the better, the better I am to other people and being good to other people is what being a dad is about. Uh, being good to my brood over here, you know, like that I got to start there. I always think about wanting to change the world and I'm like, then I'm being grumpy or something with my family and I'm going, "how can you be, you know, how can you change the world, Scott, if you're not gonna, you know, treat your family good." You know? So having kids is a good exercise in, uh, good advocacy and, and, and good example. It's such a good opportunity to do that. I love being a dad and I love watching these kids grow and I think they're going to be great. Great men and women. I think that's exciting.

SID EVANS: How has this time been for you, this sheltering in place? I'm guessing you, you probably haven't had this much time at home for a stretch in, in a while.

SCOTT AVETT: No, I haven't. And, uh, I've needed it. I think me personally was probably headed for something like this. It was either going to need to be self-imposed or it was going to need to happen some other way. And the other way probably would be other than a pandemic, you know, somebody getting sick or something. And, um, there's all these like discomforts about it. And then, you know, I said this the other day, there's real tragedy in this, and that's not, it's not about that. That's, that's just not welcome or, or nobody's happy about that. We, we're losing people from it, and people are losing jobs and people are hurting. And that's not cool. Um, but I think collectively a pause is, is, healthy. And I think that we'll all come out much stronger and, uh, and better for it.

SID EVANS: Well, and it's probably been hard on your work family, um, you know there's a lot of people that depend on you guys.

SCOTT AVETT: Totally. Totally. Well, yeah. Yeah. You know luckily we've been able to keep our guys employed, um, and we hope we can just come up with a way to, to string that out and, and make it happen. Uh... Yeah. It's just such a paradox because it's, it's so bad and it's so good. It really is. And it's so, it's so dark, like, and by dark I mean, it's so, uh, new and unknown. It's, it's, it's like going into the dark and, uh, there's so much good about that. I feel for the people that, the healthcare providers that are, that are taking care of people. I mean, this is real stuff, man. So my heart goes out to all of them. And people that have lost, loved ones and people that are sick, we think about a lot. And we just hope that whenever we get an opportunity to do something for somebody, we identify it and, and seize it. Uh, and then the good that this has to offer, we'll have to seize that too and, uh, not take it for granted. Then when we do get back out there, it's going to be awesome. You know? It's going to be like, we're going to be so grateful to, to be able to work. So grateful to be able to play. It's gonna be cool.

SID EVANS: You know, you guys have written a lot of songs about struggle and hardship, and, uh, there's a song I love called True Sadness. Uh, and it has this line. Um, "just know that the

kingdom of God is within you / Even though the battle is bound to continue". I'm just wondering if it's, you know, it's occurred to you that your music has, has really helped people get through this, this time.

SCOTT AVETT: It does occur to me, I'm told as much. And so I, um, I try to ride that obligation. In as sincere a way as I possibly can because, turning off is probably what, what is called for in a lot of ways. Um, shutting it all down is, is wise and will do do for the soul, great things, but at the same time, I mean, you could put out a song or, or, or say a word to someone and it means, it does mean that much. And it's not my, it's not my call, what it means. It means something completely different to me. But, uh, I, it does occur to me that it matters. And so I try to stay obligated to that and also stay sincere that I do, I do things like put a song out there or, or perform a group of songs for whatever, Instagram or anything else that might brighten someone's day. Uh, but I do it in a sincere way 'cause I'm not doing it in a sincere way. I think it's going to start turning in on itself, you know?

SID EVANS: Well, you had a great song the other day where you were in a chicken coop and it sounded like you had some, uh, you had some voices in the background accompanying you.

SCOTT AVETT: Awesome. It's awesome. So yeah, and I was doing all of these, like I was doing a lot of them, and that one was just, after that one, I was like, Oh man, I need to just shut this down. But I actually shifted gears and I've been working on a painting and the painting, I'm so dedicated to it. It's taken all my time and so it's slowed me down a bit. But, you know, I don't get...this morning, Seth and I were able to do a little something together that'll come out somewhere at some point. And, and we know, we know that it matters and we don't, we don't just go, "ah, you know, nevermind. I'm not going to do it." I just, I just sometimes not doing is, is right. You know, sometimes it's better. I'm in no shape to be, you know, talking to anybody or sharing my nonsense with somebody and I got to identify that as well. Like "it's best you just stay, stay put right now, Scott."

SID EVANS: I just want to ask you about one more song. There's a song on your new album Closer Than Together. It's called It's Raining Today. And there's a lyric in there that says, ah, "it's raining today. Let's stay in our room. Be patient babe. The clouds will break soon." I mean, it almost seems like you wrote that song for, for right now.

SCOTT AVETT: I guess so. Yeah. I didn't even. Yeah. Um, well, I didn't, uh, but, uh, you know what, what did, uh, I was listening to Richard Rohr talking, this has been last year at some point, and he said, you know, and this might've been quote, he picked up from somebody else, but he said, you know, things are as perfect as they can be. And they always are, you know? And I just, uh. Sometimes I don't at all understand that or think about that. And It's Raining Today is really about depression, probably. Um, and you didn't need a pandemic to feel that song, to know that song or to, to feel isolated and locked down. I, I can be, I can be on top of the world, theoretically speaking, and just feel locked down and feel like a prisoner. And I can be, uh, at times during this pandemic, I felt, as liberated as I've ever felt. So I don't understand that. Um, I try to honor that and I try to recognize that, uh, in myself and understand what that means.

SID EVANS: Do you mind just singing a little bit of that chorus?

SCOTT AVETT: Oh, how's it go? Let's see. "It's raining today. / Let's stay in our room. / Be patient babe. / The clouds will break soon. / But I must confess. / I'm glad if they stay, I don't want to leave. / It's raining today."

The Avett Brothers song "It's Raining Today" starts fading in during this a capella version, where the second time Scott sings "It's raining today" meets with the recorded version. The song fades completely up and the chorus plays out; "Here and then gone, invisible dawn, all of the edges are frayed. / No warmth on my shoulders, no breeze to carry these old worries away / My hat's on the porch, it's heavy and soaked / I'm on the steps and I don't have a coat / What do I do, what can I say?" The song begins a fade out as the group sings "What can I say?" and Sid's next sentence should come in before the band gets to the next line.

SID EVANS: Well, I think we ought to leave it there. Scott Avett, thank you for being on Biscuits & Jam.

SCOTT AVETT: Thanks for having me, Sid.

SID EVANS NARRATION: *Thanks for listening to my conversation with Scott Avett. Closer Than Together, the latest album from The Avett Brothers, is available wherever you get music and you can visit theavettbrothers.com for news updates and more.*

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Come on by for more Biscuits & Jam next week. We'll see you then!