

DTB's Yonrico Scott finds his vibe in Greenville

Grammy-winning artist records new album here

By Lillia Callum-Penso • Staff writer • February 18, 2010

Yonrico Scott can talk. Rather, the longtime drummer for the Derek Trucks Band can philosophize. He covers men and aging, the nuances of metrosexuality and the evolution of music throughout his life, seemingly all in one breath. In the rush of words, you could almost miss the comments about living with Stevie Wonder, playing with Santana and, of course, the band's win for Best Contemporary Blues Album at this year's Grammy Awards.

But be assured, a Grammy is a big deal.

"I mean that is the Nobel Peace Prize of musicians," Scott says, surveying the lobby of Sit-N-Spin Studios in Greenville. "It's big to be Grammy-nominated but Grammy-winning? So I feel totally anointed. I feel God put his hands on my shoulders and said, OK, son, now what are you going to do with it?"

Turns out, the answer to that question lies in Greenville.

Just two weeks from his stint in L.A. – where he brushed shoulders with Mick Fleetwood, Ringo Starr and Beyonce – the musician who has toured the world and played with musicians from Widespread Panic to Bob Dylan, has chosen Greenville as his next stop. More specifically, Scott has chosen Greenville's Sit-n-Spin Studios as the spot to record his next album.

"I like Greenville," he says, smiling smugly, as if that is all the explanation needed.

This trip is not his first; Scott, who has lived in Atlanta for the past 30 years, visited a lot when his son, now 24, was a student and football player at Furman. That's also how he got to know the area and local musicians. He recorded on local artist Charles Hedgepath's *holiday* album, which was

produced at Sit-N-Spin in the fall.

"One time me and Charles Hedgepath played a duet at the Bohemian," Scott says, recalling a particularly memorable trip. "Drums and guitar for four hours. ... It was awesome. Where can you do that?"

The recording process will last a mere five days, but Scott's presence here will be felt long after, says John Jeter, who, as owner of The Handlebar, has had a front-row view of the Upstate's music scene. Scott's decision to record at Sit-N-Spin gives Greenville the reputation necessary to grow. And that's the kind of street cred you can't buy.

"One thing feeds off another thing," Jeter says. "The music industry is a really tight-knit industry, everybody knows everything going on. So for someone like Yonrico Scott to come along and put a stamp on Greenville gives us third-party credibility we can't always get by ourselves."

Jeter has seen the "off the rails" effects in the 15-year-old Handlebar's evolving list of musicians.

"Everybody from G. Love & Special Sauce to Amos Lee," he says. "These are names that beforehand haven't ever really considered this market."

And with any luck, that paradigm will hold true for Greenville's musical future, says Matt Morgan, partner and creative director of Sit-N-Spin Studios. The recording industry has changed a lot, he says, even in the eight years Sit-N-Spin has been open.

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Scott is quick to point out some of the best albums of all time – Bob Dylan’s Basement Tapes, for example – were produced in atypical recording spaces.

“Werecorded a record in L.A., we did one in Nashville, we did one in suburban New York,” Scott says of the DTB’s 16 years. “The record that just won a Grammy was in his (Trucks’) back yard in the swamp. I’m serious. The vibe was chill.”

Scott is a presence. From the moment he blows into the room at Sit-N-Spin, Ed Hardy sweater and hat, broad shoulders and truck full of percussion equipment, he exudes [confidence](#). Not the cocky, rock-star kind, but the cool self-assurance of a musician who proves his mettle not by words but by experience.

Jeter observes: “It’s kind of cool to see a kid from Detroit 1. go all over the world and win this major award and then 2. come here. It’s awesome.”

The new album comes at time when DTB is taking a hiatus, its first in 16 years, meaning Scott has now time for a side project with the group he formed in 2004, Yonrico Scott Band. Fellow band members Kofi Burbridge (flute and keyboard) and Todd Smallie (guitar) will join him in the Greenville studio, as will local musicians Hedgepath and Shannon Hoover.

Scott avoids strict musical classification and similarly, he evades defining questions regarding his album. His plan (he does have one) includes a week’s work at Sit-N-Spin and some follow-up with a few “Grammy-winning” guests (he winks) in a studio in Atlanta.

The typical Sit-N-Spin session runs about \$40 an hour versus \$150 an hour at larger studios.

“It’s going to allow him to be more creative,” Morgan says.

“I’m not gonna run at it,” Scott says of the album. “I’m just gonna kind of move at it.”

In all, Scott’s plans for this record are “less jazzy, more funk, blues, gut, a little of this and that. Sixty-five percent vocal, 35 percent instrumental.”

After half an hour, the Sit-N-Spin staff is still unloading equipment from Scott’s van – drum-kit pieces, percussion pieces, snares, tom toms and cymbals.

“I’m not playin’, honey, we gonna record us a record up in here!” he says, snapping his fingers playfully for emphasis. “I am not messin’ around.”

Scott’s voice is almost like a drumbeat, equal parts soothing, energetic and poignant. It’s as if the musician has become the instrument.

“A lot of my cats think people owe it to them to listen to them,” he says, leaning in a little bit. “But I actually think we’re blessed to be able to do this, to get a chance to [go out](#) and play.”

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