

Derek Trucks: Guitarist keeps on truckin'

by *George_Varga*

It's possible that Derek Trucks, who turned 28 on June 8, is not the most talented, resourceful and rewarding electric guitarist of his generation. But I'm challenged to name anyone else who can match him in terms of skill, vision, taste and the ability to hold his own in almost any musical setting.

DEREK TRUCKS - Inventive young guitarist Derek Trucks jams with the ensemble that carries his name. CNS Photo courtesy of James Minchin. Trucks is probably best known as one of the two lead guitarists in the Allman Brothers Band, which he joined in 1999. His uncle, Butch Trucks, has been one of that fabled group's two drummers since its inception in 1969.

The young guitarist was only 19 when he joined the Allmans, although his resume at the time already included his first album as the leader of his own band, along with collaborations with Bob Dylan, Buddy Guy, Widespread Panic, Jazz is Dead and Barenaked Ladies.

This year and last year found Trucks touring with Eric Clapton and holding his own as he assumed the heady six-string role of Clapton's onetime foil, Duane Allman. Rather than simply emulate Allman's classic bottleneck guitar parts from the landmark 1970 album by the Clapton-led Derek and The Dominos, "Layla and Other Assorted Love Songs," Trucks added his own stamp.

Particularly impressive were the sitar-like slurs and slides he played, which were inspired by his passion for the music of Indian music legend Ravi Shankar, one of Trucks' idols. Equally notable was the manner in which he was able to sound fresh and vibrant throughout, even when soloing alongside Clapton on such well-known songs as Jimi Hendrix's "Little Wing," Bobby "Blue" Bland's "Further On Up the Road" and Robert Johnson's "Queen of Spades" and "Crossroads."

I first interviewed Trucks in 1999 and was immediately impressed by his uncommon dedication and maturity.

"Most guitarists I know listen only to guitar players, and it sounds like it. Because they're playing an instrument, instead of music," he said at the time.

"For me, the key is looking back to when it was done pure and for the love of music. If you're serious, you have to search back to when it was really honest, whether it's Delta blues or jazz. You have to go the source. Once you get the bug, the music and creativity always come first."

You can expect lots of creativity from the ongoing "Soul Stew Revival Tour." It marks Trucks' first extended concert trek on which he and his ace band are joined by his wife, the accomplished singer and guitarist Susan Tedeschi. For added incentive, the tour also features his younger brother, 18-year-old virtuoso Duane Trucks, who will drum alongside percussive veteran Yonrico Scott.

A word of advice to anyone attending: Wear goggles, as sparks should be flying from the opening notes onward.

IT'S THEIR PARTY AND THEY'LL SASS IF THEY WANT TO

On June 23, The Pipettes will perform on the main stage at England's legendary Glastonbury Festival, for which all 177,500 tickets sold out (as usual) in an instant. Glastonbury's capacity is approximately 177,300 more than most of the small venues that this three-woman vocal group is performing at on its current North American tour with its four-man band, The Cassettes.

To these ears, an intimate setting is far more suitable for The Pipettes. Its buoyant music suggests what might happen if you filled a petri dish with musical DNA samples of The Ronettes, Lily Allen, Lesley Gore, The Go! Team, The Shirelles, Bananarama, Debbie Harry and a very lo-fi Phil Spector.

But The Pipettes' early '60s-inspired sound comes with a welcome twist, in the form of the sly, post-feminist lyrics on such songs as "Your Kisses Are Wasted On Me," "One Night Stand," "Judy" and "Guess Who Ran Off With the Milkman?"

The result is smart, sassy fun that doesn't take itself too seriously. And that's a good thing, since - as superficially enjoyable as their frothy songs are - musical originality is not one of The Pipettes' strong points. But if career longevity seems unlikely, as is often the case for blast-from-the-past, post-modern retro acts like this, there's still good reason to believe that attending a club gig by The Pipettes should be a hoot.

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