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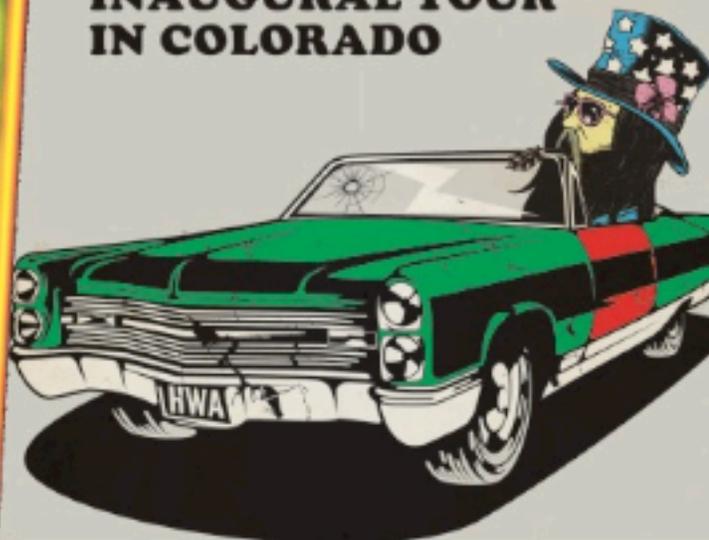
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HARD WORKING AMERICANS

**KICK OFF
INAUGURAL TOUR
IN COLORADO**



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:



WOOD BROTHERS



**CRUCIAL GIFTS
FOR MUSIC FREAKS**



PATTERSON HOOD

• **ARK LIFE**
• **NYE'S TOP SHOWS**

• **THE BEST LOCAL
ALBUMS OF 2013**

COLORADO'S BEST CONCERT CALENDAR



They hadn't even all met before the day that all five members of Hard Working Americans first gathered at a studio to begin recording their debut album. But after a week in the studio the new group had solidified into a full-on band. Their debut album will be released in January, but the band will launch its inaugural tour in Boulder this month. Hard Working Americans will play the Boulder Theater on December 20.

Hard Working Americans launch their first-ever tour in Boulder

By Brian F. Johnson

"You know how people always say, 'You should get out of your comfort zone'? Well I'm doing the exact opposite of that. I'm trying to create a place where I do very, very little," said Todd Snider during a recent phone interview from East Nashville with *The Marquee*. Snider, along with Widespread Panic's Dave Schools, Great American Taxi's Chad Staehly, Chris Robinson Brotherhood and Cardinals guitarist Neal Casal, and drummer Duane Trucks of King Lincoln, have recently formed the new band Hard Working Americans, which will kick off its first tour in Boulder this month.

When Staehly and Schools nominated Snider as the leader of the group, Snider's first order was to tell his band members to do whatever they wanted. Snider might not have a solid future as a dictator, but he explained that his approach was the liberating move that he needed. "I've always made all of the decisions on my records, all of the decisions on my shows, all of the decisions on everything, and it's been fun, and I'll do it again," he said in his syrupy Southern accent. "But I like the idea of taking the pressure off myself and not just giving it to someone else, but to these guys in particular."

According to keyboardist Chad Staehly, the whole idea of Hard Working Americans came about after he encouraged Snider to invite Schools to a gig Snider had scheduled in the Napa Valley area, not far from where Schools was living. “They got together for that show and Dave ended up playing with him and they had a ball and that got things going from there. Then we kicked around some names of some other people we knew and after a month or two of that we had the lineup,” Staehly said in a separate interview with *The Marquee*.

When the whole group got together for the first time in May, at Bob Weir’s TRI Studios, it was for many in the band the first time they were meeting each other, but Staehly said that didn’t stop them from getting right to work. “We got there on a Sunday afternoon and Rick Vargas, the engineer there, was ready for us. We all shook hands and within a really short period of time we were sitting in there with instruments tracking the first songs. By day two it was full steam ahead and nothing was going to stop it at that point,” said Staehly.

The material that Hard Working Americans was laying down, and what will appear on their debut album when it is released in January, is a collection of other people’s songs that Snider had put together over the years. Snider had found songs that he identified with from songwriters that he’s lucky enough to consider friends. “I would never win a singing contest, but I can sing my heart out, and I think that’s what you’re supposed to do. The best way to sing is ‘lost,’ and it’s easier to get lost in somebody else’s song. It’s harder to get lost in a house you built than in a house somebody else built. Gillian Welch, Kevin Gordon, Kieran Kane, Tommy Womack, Will Kimbrough, Kevn Kinney, Brian Henneman, Hayes Carll and other friends of mine build beautiful houses, where I’ve been lost and wandering for many years,” said Snider. “That’s so liberating, you know. Because they’re not my songs, I don’t scrutinize them so much, but I can feel them very, very much.”

Staehly explained further, that the whole idea was to join the singer/songwriter world with the jam rock world and that with he, Snider and Schools putting their heads together they had originally arrived at a playlist of about 25 songs. “We whittled that down to 15 and then cut two more songs out for the recording. That was our road map, those songs, but when we got into the studio, things started to develop. Todd and Dave were designated as the producers of the project, but it was a really open experience and turned into a full band situation to work on the arrangements and the style that we developed as a group. Most of the songs are really turned on their heads and we made them our own, which was the whole point,” Staehly said.

Both Snider and Staehly also pointed out that while some may view Hard Working Americans as some sort of supergroup, or short-lived spinoff group, that they’re approaching the entire project from a different perspective. “Everyone in the group shies away from the term supergroup because, to us, it implies a one-time thing,” said Staehly. “There were no expectations going into this, but once we were in the process and making this music together and recording this music, when we got to the other end of the week we had become a band — in a matter of just seven days. It was amazing the level of the universal mind that we started reaching within a day or two.”

Snider echoed that sentiment by explaining, “We’re not a side project. When we’re together, this is our main thing. We mean to do what we’re doing.”

Like their band name implies, they’re working hard at their chapter of the American dream, getting their messages across. “Dave, Neal, Duane and Chad put in thousands of hours to eliminate any disconnect between emotion and execution. They play what they feel, the same way my singer/songwriter friends say what they feel. I know we don’t look like poster children for anybody’s political campaign, but we’re all about taking patriotism back for the silly and the absurd, the broken and the bleeding, the subversives and the stoned. Patriotism shouldn’t belong

to the rigid structures of the airport security line or the football field. My favorite patriot is Yankee Doodle, and that guy stuck a feather in his cap and called it macaroni,” Snider said.

Originally, it was thought that Snider would sing and play guitar in Hard Working Americans, but early on he put down his guitar and focused only on singing, and so far, he plans on keeping it that way. “My hope with this group is to really be a singer and stay out of the way of the music and let it be about the band — which is my round-about way of saying that I probably won’t be doing a lot of talking at these shows,” said Snider, who is known to tell long tales during his solo shows. “I don’t know how to warn people about that. I’m not going to stop doing that with my shows, but I’m not going to interrupt this band with babble. If you want to hear me babble wait until after the show,” Snider said. “I never shut up.”

He then added, “This project has been really easy, because all I’ve done is about a year ago, I made a sort of commitment to who would do this, and now, I just have to sit around and wait to hear when I’m supposed to be somewhere. I just want to stand there on stage and be like, ‘Wow, I can’t believe I have these seats. I got the best seats in the house and all I gotta do is sing a little bit.’”

Hard Working American’s first show, which is being sponsored by the Boedecker Foundation, will benefit the Foothills Flood Relief Fund to assist victims of the recent floods that ravaged the area.

:: Hard Working Americans::
:: Boulder Theater :: December 20 ::