



JASON BOLAND

Written by [Evan Schlansky](#) - May 19th

Jason Boland & The Stragglers are a Southern country rock institution with a rabid fan base. We quizzed the Oklahoma native about his rugged new, Shooter Jennings-produced album *Dark and Dirty Mile*, his songwriting heroes and more.

Who are your songwriting heroes?

Bob Childers, Mike McClure, Tom Skinner, Randy Crouch, Todd Snider, Billy Joe Shaver, Van Morrison, Townes Van Zandt, Merle Haggard, Omar Rodriguez-Lopez, and Johnny Cash.

Tell us a bit about your new album.

The new album is titled *Dark and Dirty Mile*. It is nine new songs and a couple of covers from our mentors.

We recorded it down at Cedar Creek Studios in Austin with the help of our buddy, Shooter Jennings.

How would you compare it to 2011's *Rancho Alto*?

Every album you hope to inch closer to what you hear in your head. *Dark and Dirty Mile* has a tone less flattered by modern technology, and catches a funny little glimpse of who we are as players.

What's your opinion on the way modern country songs are written, where co-writers crank out a song a day in the hopes of getting a good one?

Every industry has its factory jobs that turn out quantity, but if the consumer left it on the shelf they would cease to exist.

Has modern country music gotten any better in the past five years?

Not at all.

When did you start writing songs? Were they good right away, or did that come later?

I started writing songs in high school, I remember feeling good about the songs at the time, so they must of down their job. If I had to sit through them now, I would probably break out into a sweat.

What was the first song you ever wrote? Tell us about it.

The first song was called "Now." I wrote it my friend Joe Hopper, and it was a grungy, acoustic ballad. Thanks, MTV unplugged.

What's the last song you wrote or started?

"Holy Relic Sale," is the last one I finished and I'm working on one about a gambler. Both are post *Dark and Dirty Mile*.

How do you go about writing songs?

Whenever the mood strikes me, usually on guitar.

What is your approach to writing lyrics?

To find a slightly different way to say anything. The themes are all the same; I just do my best to be original.

What percentage of the songs you write are keepers?

If I finish a song, it's a keeper of some sort.

What percentage of songs that you start do you finish?

I don't even know a percentage, if a song doesn't hook me into it right away, I tend to move on. It's probably pretty high.

Do you have any standards for your songs you try to adhere by when choosing them for an album?

The best eleven or twelve at any given moment.

What sort of things inspire you to write?

Things that evoke emotion, usually feelings over facts.

What's a song on your album you're particularly proud of and why?

"Lucky" I guess, because I wrote it the week my wife, Mandy, and I were getting married. Tender ballads have never been my strong suit, they may be the hardest type of song to write.

What's a lyric or verse from the album you're a fan of?

"She's a blue diamond, she can strike anywhere."

Is it easier, or harder to write songs, the more you write?

I think you get better at the craft but the spirit moves when the spirit moves.

Are there any words you love or hate?

I love the word coffee. It makes me happy.

If you could co-write with anyone living or dead, who would it be?

Todd Snider, since he is living.

Who do you consider an underrated songwriter?

John Fogerty.

What do you consider to be the perfect song?

"Old Five And Dimers."