

# THE SPIRIT OF COLLABORATION

The identical twin singers explore a lifetime of blood harmonies.

By

CHANDRA AND LEIGH WATSON

blasting Prince, The B52s and Squeeze, and we were listening to The Go-Go's, Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, The Bangles and Simon & Garfunkel. In our hometown of Louisville, Ky., the music scene was filled with punk, hardcore and math-rock bands. Seeing our friends make records and play shows pushed us to start writing our own music. Throughout high school and college, we started to share our songs, playing open mics, coffee houses and dive bars. Eventually, Los Angeles called, we answered and, with that singular decision, our musical journey officially began.

For several years, we were backup singers in a band called Slydell, playing hundreds of shows—or at least what seemed like hundreds—in Los Angeles and broadening our musical community. It was an exciting time in Silverlake. We all hustled, working day jobs to pay for rehearsal spaces and recording time. We were in the same boat with Silversun Pickups, Rilo Kiley, Earlimart, Dengue Fever, Irving—we were all playing shows around town and hoping for a “break.” Eventually, we did get a “break,” just not the one we were hoping for—in 2004, the band we were

**WE ARE IDENTICAL** twins and, as one can imagine, the spirit of collaboration is woven deep within our fabric as sisters and singers. You could say that, since the moment of conception, we have worked together in ways that are unique to our familial bond and parallel upbringings. Being a twin is a strange and beautiful life experience. Born four minutes apart, we learned from an early age how to live in harmony—from sharing bedrooms to best friends, Barbies, cars and cookies. (There is an art to breaking a cookie exactly in half, which is important because your twin gets to pick the piece she wants first). All of it was something that came naturally to us, and the older we get, the more we appreciate that bond.

As kids we were able to share experiences: learning to drive, playing guitar, getting our first jobs and starting to write and sing songs together. Our mom says we sang before we could talk, so it wasn't surprising when we gravitated toward music around the age of 8. We learned to sing harmony with each other in the church choir, and from that moment on, we had “found” our love of music. There was no turning back—so much so that we would get in trouble for singing at the dinner table. Sibling or “blood harmonies,” as they are often referred to, are the centerpiece of our sound. When we sing together, it's a feeling like no other. The sound resonates in your core, creating a vibration, an energy that moves from the inside out. And, when you add genetics, it's no wonder folks are drawn to sibling harmonies.

Our musical influences took a left turn in our teenage years. Growing up, our mom always had music playing in the house. Her vinyl collection ranged from Willie Nelson to The Rolling Stones, Pink Floyd, The Eagles, Cat Stevens and Emmylou Harris. At the same time, our older sister was in the bedroom next door

in broke up. It was at that time that our neighbor Jenny Lewis asked if she could come by to play some of her new songs. She was looking for backup vocalists and, as luck would have it, we were available. The timing couldn't have been more perfect—the stars aligned. She walked over with her guitar and the first song she played us was “Big Guns.” Singing with Lewis came naturally—her mix of folk, gospel and indie-rock sensibilities was right up our alley. This would be the beginning of a collaboration that would alter the trajectory of our musical path.

In its purest form, collaboration can be effortless, magical, fun and fulfilling. Over the years, we've come to understand the importance of acknowledging this “feeling” when we get the honor and privilege of creating with people. Lending our voices in support of other artists or on our new album, *Holler* has allowed us to create this magic—the delight when voices come together to harmonize. We were able to feel this effortless collaboration with our longtime friend and producer, Butch Walker, on our new release. The three of us recorded the vocals in the round, tracking all together and creating a sound we hope translates to the listener that *feeling*. *Holler* is a culmination of our experiences on the road, singing for other artists, making our own records and growing up in music. We wrote this album together and pushed each other to create a collection of songs that we feel is our strongest to date.

Most people have a deep desire to collaborate on some level. In a primal way, there is comfort that comes when working with others to create something extraordinary. Our story is one we are grateful for—the gift of harmony and collaboration. **🎵**

*Chandra and Leigh Watson perform together as The Watson Twins. They released their latest LP, Holler, in June via Bloodshot Records.*

