



## Cody Dickinson – *Homemade*

For decades, Cody Dickinson has flown the flag for homemade American roots music. From his ongoing work with North Mississippi Allstars — the chart-topping blues/rock band he cofounded with brother Luther Dickinson in 1996 — to his Grammy-winning turn as record producer and film documentarian, he's become a serial collaborator, working alongside everyone from Robert Plant to Lucero along the way.

"I've made a career out of collaborating," he says. "If I'm working in film or TV, my job is to support creative people and help them realize their vision. If I'm working as a musician, I'm getting behind the drums and literally backing up somebody else. Most of my life has been spent supporting."

Cody turns the tables with *Homemade*, an expansive and evolutionary album that marks his long-awaited debut as a solo artist. Stacked to the ceiling with southern soul, west coast boogie-woogie, hill country blues, and plenty of ear-candy pop hooks, *Homemade* redefines his reach as a vocalist, songwriter, and multi-instrumentalist. It also finds him in full-on family mode. Looking to spend more time with his young children, Cody recorded the album at home in Mississippi, where he played every instrument himself and balanced the tracking sessions with his responsibilities as a father of two toddlers.

"Getting married and having two babies has been the most wonderful, mind-boggling, life-changing experience," he explains. "I love being with them. I used to leave for a tour and the road would go on forever, but now, I love coming back to my family. Maybe that's why most of these songs have a common theme of home, whether I'm singing about being home or missing home or unconditionally loving the people who are there. There's even a song about moonshine, which is literally a homemade spirit."

On "Goodbye Albuquerque Tuesday Night" — which unfolds like a road warrior's fond farewell to the endless touring cycle — Cody pays tribute to the changing priorities that now bring him back to Mississippi after each batch of shows. Equally influenced by Huey Lewis and the Grateful Dead, the song shines a light on a longtime creator whose musical interests go far beyond Memphis blues. Elsewhere, *Homemade* offers everything from vintage, barn-burning rock & roll ("Walk Right In") to Ray Charles-worthy R&B ("Black Out Curtains") to modern-day gospel ("Can't Feel At Home," featuring vocals from Tikyra Jackson). Arriving on the heels of the standalone single "All Night Long" — a Junior Kimbrough classic that Cody heard often as a child, back when he attended weekly shows

at Kimbrough's juke joint in Tchulahoma, Mississippi — *Homemade* marks a full-circle moment for the songwriter, showcasing not only where Cody is going, but where he's been, too.

For the Dickinsons, family heritage has always been important. Long before he co-founded North Mississippi Allstars, Cody received a firsthand education from his father, Jim Dickinson, a Memphis icon who played piano on the Rolling Stones' "Wild Horses," produced Big Star's cult classic *Third*, and contributed pump organ to Bob Dylan's *Time Out Of Mind*. That family legacy continues to thrive on *Homemade*, which features artwork from Cody's daughter, Mavis. The one year-old also makes her singing debut on "Goodbye Albuquerque Tuesday Night," giggling and gurgling her way through the track.

"I recorded that vocal with Mavis in my lap, and she kept grabbing the mic and singing into it, doing these real sassy ad-libs," he remembers. "Her timing was impeccable. She really meant it! What she was singing perfectly fit the theme, too, because that song is about my children and wanting to come home to them."

Ironically, *Homemade* might not have seen the light of day if Cody hadn't left home to attend the 66th annual Grammy Awards, where "Stompin' Ground" — a collaboration between Aaron Neville and Dirty Dozen Brass Band, released as part of Cody's award-winning *Take Me to the River* documentary franchise — was nominated for Best American Roots Performance. The song won, and during a celebratory dinner following the ceremony, Cody met John Sopkia from Strong Place Music. The two became friends, with Strong Place quickly signing Cody Dickinson to their roster.

"I love how it all came together," Cody says. "This album is very grassroots — it was made at home, around my family, filled with Mississippi blues and southern music — but there's also a very Hollywood-friendly, showbizzy angle to the story, because that's where the deal went down. I made this record for *me*, but I made it for everyone else, too, and I like that it can occupy both of those worlds. It's big enough to do that."

Perhaps the album's biggest moment is "Big City": a rallying cry for action and inclusivity, set to a festival-friendly soundtrack of grooves and guitars. If "Goodbye Albuquerque Tuesday Night" serves as *Homemade*'s cornerstone, then "Big City" is its beating heart. Cody calls it "an open invitation for everyone to come together and take on the world's problems," speaking like the true collaborator he's always been. That team-player mentality is still very much a part of Cody's DNA. With *Homemade*, though, he proves he can stand alone, too, writing his own soundtrack for a world filled with loved ones, change, and killer songs.