

October 30, 2017 - Andrew Savage is the frontman for the rock band, Parquet Courts. Their last studio LP, *Human Performance*, came out in 2016. Savage's debut solo album, *Thawing Dawn*, was released in 2017 on Dull Tools. Here he discusses the usefulness of side projects, tricks for remembering lyrics, and how to keep your old songs exciting.



As told to Gary Canino, 1641 words.

Tags: Music, Process, Inspiration, Multi-tasking, Collaboration.

Andrew Savage on keeping things fresh

As both an artist and a musician, you've spoken about the idea of someone getting into your music by seeing your art first. Do you ever think of it working the other way around, where you'll get people's attention with your music first?

I guess that's bound to happen, because I'm more known as a musician than I am a painter or an artist. A lot of people know me as both, but it's safe to say that most people that know me as an artist also know of me as a musician, and they probably wouldn't have sought me out as an artist had they not already liked the music. When I'm doing artwork, I'm not really thinking about painting, for example—Parquet Courts or music isn't really on my mind. Whereas, if I'm doing an album cover, yes, certainly it is. Ideally what draws people into the sound is the record. I would like to make art that has less to do with music, or at least the music that I make, and just stands alone as a visual piece.

This record was described as having been made by a community of musicians. Does the music reflect this sort of local community?

There are people out there that know Parquet Courts, but perhaps don't identify me with being local to any certain scene. Maybe just the perception that Parquet Courts are a popular band that tours the world leads them to think I'm no longer part of a community. But that's not true. I am, and the people that play on Thawing Dawn are people in my community and the New York scene that I've had a history with.

The personnel on the record reflects where I am geographically, and, in this moment, who are my peers. [Showcasing this community] also sheds a light on those projects that might not be as well known as Parquet Courts. That's how I've gotten into a lot of music, just seeing who's working together and who was in each other's little clubs.

What's your relationship with country music, and do you view your record as belonging to that genre?

I'm drawn to country music, but it was one of those things that was so omnipresent for me growing up that it was something I didn't take seriously. I thought it was older generation music, but at a certain point I stopped being snobby about music for the most part, and that helps open doors for you. In my 20s, I was able to assess it differently and realize how it's just as important as the blues as far as its influence on rock 'n' roll goes.

I read reviews about "Winter in the South," one of the songs from the record, and people were describing it as "country-fried" or "galloping," and don't I think that song is that at all. The album at large isn't really either, but one thing I've found that's important to people that write about music is the fact that I'm from Texas. Much more important to them than I think it is to me. There's a muscle memory that's been

made to associate that with me. There's definitely no denying that two of the songs on the record are strongly country-influenced, though. I think for the most part I didn't want to do any genre pastiche or anything. I'm more interested in making an album that's eclectic.

Some of the songs on this record are 10 years old. How do you know when it's time to revisit something or do a different version? Do you ever listen back to your older songs?

The old songs were never abandoned. They were a little too far removed from any of the bands I was doing at the time, but were always just in my brain saying, "Hey, we're still here." That's when I started to revisit them. There was some momentum happening, and I realized that there was a theme, or a style that I was getting into that I knew I wasn't writing for a Parquet Courts record.

I think it helps to have other creative things going on when you're in a time-demanding project. So I've got artwork and the Dull Tools label, and it's ultimately a good thing to have other musical things, too, because that's really helped me to write the next Parquet Courts record.

Writing this record has helped me shape what that is going to be, and also just help me get in a really good practice of writing in this year. I'm grateful for the experience in that I feel like it's just got me kick-started on a good groove, and I'm excited to see what comes. I'm also excited for people to hear these songs because some of them have been around a long time.

How did the writing of *Thawing Dawn* impact the writing of another record? Are they similar in a way?

No, they're not, and that's what was really helpful. I knew at a certain point when I started writing these melodic or stripped-down songs, that I was creating a different type of song, too. I asked myself, "What things am I not expressing here that I do want to express?" That was a good way for me to channel into what the next Parquet Courts record was essentially going to be about, or the vibe it was going to have. They're very different, so there was no confusion as I was writing those songs in tandem.

Thawing Dawn was just such a fun, low-stakes record to make. A lot of times it would just be [producer] Jarvis Taveniere and I goofing around till late at night, and just trying stuff for the hell of it. One thing that's easy about doing a solo record is it's just me. There's no conflicts. The democracy of collaboration is less there. I'm just like, "Yeah, fuck it, I'll try that. Why not? It's my record. If it sounds shitty, it's all on me." Recording that way gave me a little more inspiration, such as chopping up songs to create a suite. [Experimenting] like that gave me a confidence to bring that atmosphere a little bit into Parquet Courts and this next record, letting things fall to chance.

You've been the singer in several bands over the last decade. Do you feel like it's the same voice throughout when listening to your previous work?

To a degree, I do. When I listen back to my older bands, it's a totally different point in time in my life, under totally different circumstances. It seems like a former self almost. Because we still play a lot of old songs in Parquet Courts, and probably will for a long time, I find there to be some challenge in doing that. We started the band when I was 24, and I'm in my 30s now. There's a kind of cognitive dissonance I get between the person who wrote that song, and the person who's performing it now here, six, seven years later.

I have to make it a challenge in order to enjoy it myself, and therefore have other people enjoy it. I would ask myself, "How can I do these songs differently, and what can I add to them, performance-wise?" Some of those songs, I don't even remember writing because it was so long ago. I don't really even remember what the core circumstances of my writing them, just because some of the songs on Light Up Gold are still some of Parquet Courts' oldest songs.

I've got to be able to channel those into who I am now and be able to really feel it. If I'm feeling it then other people are going to feel it. It's just about challenging yourself and making a song new for yourself again.

There are often tons of lyrics in Parquet Courts songs. Do you ever have techniques to remember them?

This last tour we played "Instant Disassembly," and I had to write out all the lyrics and tape them to my monitor for the first two shows in order to get through them. That happens. There's a lot of words. It's amazing how sometimes there's just this automatic response to what's in my head when I'm singing a song, and I have no idea what the next line is. And as I'm thinking that, I just spit out the next line. It's an automatic thing. It's in there, but it's not always the easiest to access. If we're playing a song that I haven't played in awhile, I'll definitely re-scan the lyrics because there's a lot of them and I can't have them all at once.

You don't always think of playing music as athletic, but drummers and certain vocalists are definitely an exception there.

There is an athletic element to that, for sure. There are definitely times where I find myself doing it on a song where I'm really barking stuff out, like "Sunbathing Animal" for example and I'm like, "Wow I'm getting really winded. I'm getting tired." Or I can feel the nine drinks that I had the night before in moments like that. It's a workout, for sure.

"Great 00's hardcore records that made me who I am" by Andrew Savage:

Lion of Judah - Universal Peace LP

Lifes Halt / What Happens Next? - Start Something split 12"

Limp Wrist - Discography

Mind Eraser - Cave LP

Gordon Solie Motherfuckers - Powerbomb Anthems Vol. I

Name

Andrew Savage

Vocation

Musician

Fact

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Photo by Vince McLelland