

Avery Sunshine Opens Up The SunRoom (Interview)



Four years ago Avery Sunshine released their debut album of compelling R&B that was quickly embraced by the soul-loving blogosphere, fans and fellow artists. The Atlanta duo of Sunshine and Dana Johnson mastered the intricacies of soul music with a deftness usually reserved for the genre's esteemed sages. Sunshine and Johnson spent years being church musicians and it is the obvious foundation of their music's capacity to fluently move between divine concerns and temporal life. The reception to the first album took them on a world tour that had them opening for B.B. King and performing in front of Ringo Starr. Their extended touring and life in general eventually inspired their sophomore recording, *The SunRoom*. "Call My Name" was leaked a couple of weeks ago and it is a piece of an original song collection by the partners who have grown into a much more sophisticated artistry. Sunshine and Johnson talked to Kickmag about the creative process behind [The SunRoom](#), road life and their ultimate creative aspirations.

What's inside the Sun Room?

Avery: Having a bunch of songs that have nothing to do with each other *laughs* and we said we need a title for this record, what is it going to be? One of our good friends an amazing artist, redecorated our studio it was amazing and we called the room, the Sun Room. And we thought that would be a great title for the album and that was it. And the thing that

made so much sense in your sun room, your personal space, you can do and talk about whatever it is you want to.

Who's producing most of the record?

Avery: We had two different writers/producers â€œSweet Afternoonâ€ that was Clarence T. Hill and â€œTime To Shineâ€ that was Damien Desandy. Both of those guys did those songs completely and utterly by themselves. So Teeny played every instrument on â€œSweet Afternoonâ€ and Damien did everything on â€œTime To Shine.â€ They did the tracks to the songs but we just wrote to them.

What's the story behind â€œCall My Name?â€

Avery: Dana and I would write together in the same musical space. He came up with an idea and called me and he played it over the phone. So with that song he played for me, I put it in GarageBand on my computer and I was able to write to it immediately and the first thing I could think of was the line, â€œWhen was the last time we said I love youâ€ Iâ€™m in a relationship but I donâ€™t feel any love. We talk about falling out of love, but how do we stay in love? We sometimes have to have uncomfortable conversations. So I thought I wanted to bring something up I donâ€™t mean to be confrontational, we havenâ€™t been acting like a couple in love weâ€™re acting like business partners and thatâ€™s not enough for me. I need you still take me out and tell me you love me. Itâ€™s stuff that our parents donâ€™t necessarily tell us, but we find out when we become adults and get married to somebody and before you know it, you guys donâ€™t know how to get back to that place with each other anymore.

It's been a while since your first release, what has changed in your art, if anything?

Avery: I feel like I am more comfortable being me. Iâ€™m more

comfortable expressing me through my music unapologetically me. It took a minute to get to that place. I think you realize that people respond to you, authentically you. And not me trying to be something else. I had to learn that because on the first record it was who Dana and I both were. We were about to make the second record be something totally different because we thought thatâ€™s we were supposed to do thankfully that didnâ€™t happen. I think about an experience we had with Jazzy Jeff he said, â€œYou keep making the music you want to make.â€ Jeff had us at his house and he would fry bacon and we would eat bacon and strawberries and waffles. And we would just spend time with Jeff and his family and he told us to do what makes us happy. We had other voices telling us, â€œNo your record should sound like this you need to do this if you want to be on the radio.â€ Thereâ€™s nothing more damaging you can do to an artist or just a person is to tell them they need to be something else. Rahsaan Patterson, we did a show with him, and he said to me, â€œIf other people tell you how to make your art itâ€™s no longer you art itâ€™s their art.â€ His words, Jazzy Jeffâ€™s words, Will Downingâ€™s words stayed with me during the process. At the end of the day if youâ€™re not doing whatâ€™s true to you, you could do a song you donâ€™t like and itâ€™s a hit and youâ€™ve got to sing this hit you donâ€™t like for the rest of your life. Iâ€™ll let Dana tell the story about Siscoâ€™s â€œThong Song.â€

Dana: I read somewhere that originally he did that song as a joke at first and they were just playing around in the studio and one of the label execs said it was a great song and it became a huge song but it ruined his credibility for him.



How do you choose your daily inspirational quotes on your Facebook page?

Avery: Whatever speaks to me at that time. I go a lot of times with where I am and how Iâ€™m feeling that way itâ€™s not

contrived. Nine times out of 10 itâ€™s Avery has a show or something thatâ€™s not me thatâ€™s someone from our team. But all the other stuff thatâ€™s me.

You keep consistent interaction with your fans through social media, why is that so important to you?

Avery: Thatâ€™s how we started. For me being an artist thatâ€™s what being an artist is and thatâ€™s what musicians do. As a church musician you talk to the church people you talk to the people who are listening to your music. You wait a few minutes after church so they can come by and tell you about a particular song they feel. You extend that courtesy to these people that you are having these conversations with and it would be abnormal for me not to talk to I hate calling people who listen to my music fans but I havenâ€™t found another related term and for that reason I donâ€™t want to call them fans. Theyâ€™re people just like me and they shine in a different way than I shine.

I noticed some â€˜60s soul influences on â€œTime To Shineâ€ and â€œI Do Love Youâ€

Avery: â€œTime To Shineâ€ dictated that sound I feel like it wrote itself. â€œI Do Love Youâ€ we wrote that in the car. We were about to do a show with Anthony David. We were in Charlotte, N.C. sitting in the car and Dana was in the driverâ€™s seat with his guitar. We were parked! Not driving!
laughs

Dana: Believe it or not the song is about my son, who at that particular time he is an amazing, outstanding young gentleman, but at this time in his elementary school career we were getting calls pretty much everyday. And as a parent it makes you so crazy because you donâ€™t want to get those phone calls. When I picked him up from school and I said Mrs. Collins called me and she had a different spin on the thing and thatâ€™s exactly what that song is about. I think thatâ€™s

the irony of it because I think most people would think it's about a man talking to a woman or vice-versa but it's really more about the idea of that sometimes the relationship you can have with your child can take up so much energy.

Avery: You know, like parents, have a special relationship like my father is retired and he can kind of be a pain to my mother and she'll say, "I love but I don't like you."



You've been touring a lot is there anywhere you haven't played yet but want to?

Avery: Australia

Dana: Japan

What was it like meeting a Beatle, Ringo Starr?

Avery: It was like, is this really happening? And then you meet him and he and Jools Holland are having a conversation off to the side. The only other thing to possibly trump that maybe was opening for B.B. King three days we had in the U.K. with him. And us meeting Slash all at the same time. Slash, Ronnie Wood from The Rolling Stones and just kind of hanging out with B.B.King.

Dana: Out of all the artists that were there that day when he was asked which artist he would want to work with he said Avery Sunshine and it was amazing.

What was it like hanging out with B.B.King?

Dana: Ok, maybe I had a couple of drinks and I'm standing there having a conversation with Ronnie Wood and I was like "you're a Rolling Stone and he was like "I know isn't that crazy." It was like one of those moments, it was amazing. It was like talking to this guy that I literally grew-up listening to his music and we're having that conversation over Jack Daniels.

Avery: But all because we decided to do some music in my living room or in the closet we were at that point because we made the decision let's just make some music and see what happens. We ended up opening just Dana and I on stage 3 shows with B.B. King.

Going forward, what is your vision for Avery Sunshine?

Avery: I want to be a mash-up of Oprah, Bette Midler and Kevin Hart. I want to be some sort of mash-up of that, I don't know what that is but whatever it is I'd like to be something like that.

Dana: I just want to have the ability to have people hear our music and feel something ideally or at least get the intent we put forth in our music. I'd love to do a big tour with pyrotechnics with lights, explosions all that stuff that would be awesome. But what we're doing now is pretty awesome too.

Any closing words?

Avery: If there's anything keeping you from shining let it go!

***Keep up with Avery Sunshine on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#)
The SunRoom is available through [iTunes](#) and [Walmart](#)***