

AIN'T NOTHIN' BUT A "G" THANG

WRITTEN BY TERRA SULLIVAN PHOTOGRAPHED BY AUTUMN DE WILDE

Way back before Garrett Dutton III, founding member of G. Love & Special Sauce, found his voice, he was just a self-described "19-year-old white kid from Philly trying to sing like Howlin' Wolf in his bedroom." But then one night while delivering what he dubbed his street-side blues about street basketball, couriers and general city life, something just clicked.

"One night, it just came out of me. I had finished up one of my blues tunes and I just started rapping and I thought, 'oh shit, that's real!'" Garrett relates over his cell from his Boston home. "I thought, I can do this, that's not weird at all, that's me." A decade and then some later, and ten releases under his backwards baseball hat, the creator of hip-hop blues has gone from trying to explain to blank-eyed strangers what his music sounds like, to touring a solid 200-plus days out of the year,

G. Love & Special Sauce pioneered the hip-hop blues genre of music.

performing heavily in the jam band circuit, collaborating on the *Curious George* soundtrack and establishing a prominent spot on fellow mellow guitar strummer Jack Johnson's label Brushfire Records.

At 8 a.m. in the morning, he's surprisingly spry for a musician known for lyrics about booty calls, barbeques and tasty alcoholic beverages, but he says he has a reason: "I just dropped my kid off at school." Besides his daddy duties with his 6-year-old son, Garrett is in a holding pattern until G. Love and Special Sauce's latest release, *Superhero Brother*, comes out this summer. "Right now, I'm just in that spot where you have to wait to see how people will react to it."

People's reactions won't be a total surprise this time around, though, because unlike previous releases, much of the work on *Superhero Brother* was fan-tested before it went on the record.

"It was a really great recording process this time around. We would schedule studio sessions and then do a mini tour beforehand so we'd have our shit together." So in many ways, G. Love's fans can take a stab at writing credits too. "If something didn't really hit ... Well, songs are funny that way because every song I write sounds great to me and then you see if the band likes it, then that's a good

indication but not always. Sometimes the band doesn't like it," he laughs, "and it's still a great song! But if it's something that's not hitting with people live then maybe it's something that needs to be revisited."

Many of the songs on *Superhero Brother*, including the title track, reflect a world citizen's view as well as a tongue-in-cheek look at the state of the union. Perhaps as a result of the record and having a family, Garrett has become involved with several causes, including a Barefoot Beach cleanup project with the environmental non-profit group Surfrider Foundation, and Malaria No More to help fight the death of one million people in Africa who'll die from the preventable disease. This summer, G. Love & Special Sauce will play Lollapalooza, the legendary concert that has aimed to be a completely green, carbon neutral event for the last two years.

"My catchphrase for this record is it's about life, love, family, weed and politics," he says with a hearty laugh that trails off into what sounds like a slight smoker's cough in the end.

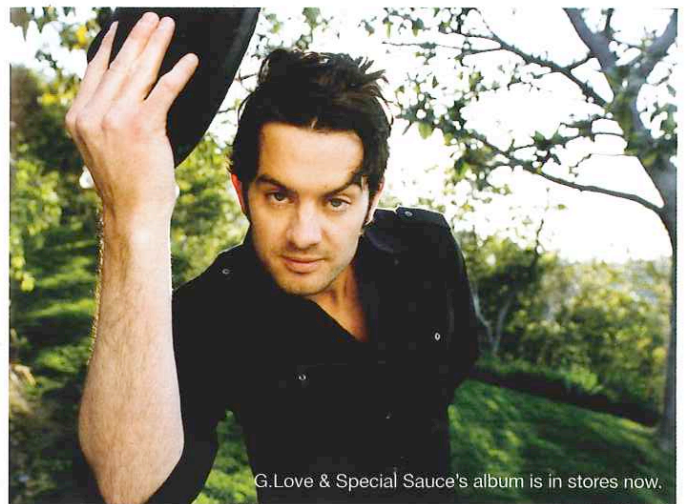
Garrett is also hard at work on a children's book called *Little Daddy*, for kids with traveling daddies, as well as a survival guide for young musicians tentatively called *101 Ways Not to Fuck Up Your Chances of Being a Rock Star: A Pocket Guide for Navigating Your Way Through*

the Treacherous Seas of the Modern Music Industry.

So far, he's at about tip # 29 but he says his main advice to anyone starting out is to just do something completely different than what's already out there. This advice has clearly defined G. Love & Special Sauce's funk-tinged hip-hop blues party with a conscience throughout the years.

"I think you always have to redefine yourself, but the reason we're still around is because of the original concept, which wasn't even a concept at the time. But we came

up with the sound called the hip-hop blues. No one else was doing it," he explains. "When we were starting out, say I was in an elevator and I have my guitar and someone says, 'Oh you're a musician, what do you play?' and I say, 'Oh I play hip-hop blues' and they say, 'Oh really, I love that kind of music!' and I'd say, 'Oh really? Cause I know you ain't never heard that music! 'Cause no one else does that shit.' I'm not trying to brag but there's no one that does what we do. It was just exploration and incorporating all kinds of music." •



G. Love & Special Sauce's album is in stores now.