



## Derek Sanders revisits and retools songs he holds dear on 'My Rock and Roll Heart'

By **Murjani Rawls** - Feb 12, 2020

Do you remember the elation and joy when you heard a piece of music that you held close throughout your years? Maybe you picked up an instrument and tinkered with it in your bedroom until you got some semblance of a song down. Perhaps you even pretended to be the very musicians you idolized. Who hasn't tried to do ACDC's Angus Young's trademark trot as they listened to 'Back In Black?' There are some songs that ignite a spark inside us. Songs that you don't get tired of no matter how many times you hit the replay button. They can either take you back to simpler times or grow creative vines within ourselves. Some of us grow to play to crowds just like our heroes did. Have fans resonate with the personal stories we call lyrics.

*My Rock and Roll Heart* is a five-song EP of songs that Derek Sanders, most commonly known as the lead singer from [Mayday Parade](#) has comprised as cover songs for release on February 14th. Tracks ranging from artists such as Saves The Day and Jimmy Eat World gives us a glimpse at the type of music that inspired Sanders to begin his own musical journey. I spoke to Sanders

in what it was like to revisit some of the songs that he holds dear, how it feels to release a solo EP, and why *Rock and Roll Heart* feels so much like the Tallahassee, Florida home he came from.

***My Rock and Roll Heart* is a cool, five-song history lesson going through songs that have inspired you. You've mentioned starting to play acoustic guitar at 10 in the past. Do you feel that revisiting these songs and these bands take you back to a time where your love for music was more simplistic?**

Yeah, absolutely. It totally does. It's kind of a crazy thing. Yet, part of it is kind of sad when you think about how much time has passed since then. It's a bittersweet kind of thing, really. Part of what's so nice about this EP to me is going back to how things all began. It's just nice to do something that simple. Something that I can create by myself and however the way I like to do it. Which I don't really get the chance to do very often. It's a neat thing.

**With this EP, people were going to get to see another side of you as opposed to Mayday Parade. Were you nervous at all putting this together?**

Yeah, for sure. To be honest, I still am, but it's kind of like a nervous excitement. It's a little bit of both and it's just now become a real thing. I have the first song out and I'm really excited to see what everybody thinks of the EP once it comes out. Playing these solo shows will be unlike anything I've ever done before. Just as far as having a full set that entirely relies on me up there. I do have a few nervous feelings about that, but it's also just really cool. I love doing what I do and I've loved every second of it, but you get really used to it. It's nice to sort of take yourself out of that comfort zone and do something out of the box a little bit. I'm really looking forward to it.

**This EP born out of a cover of "But Lauren" that you did back in 2017 as a gift to your wife. This was initially just going to be private, but you added it as the first song on the EP. What made you change your mind and share this beautiful and intimate moment that you made for your wife with the world?**

What was interesting was that it was Mike Hanson's idea. He's the guy who wrote the song. He sparked the idea of doing this whole project. It's something I've thought about doing for a long time. As you mentioned, when I personally did that song, I didn't intend for anyone else to hear it, except for my wife. Then weeks after I recorded it, I sent it to Mike just because I thought he'd appreciate hearing this version of a song that he wrote 20 years ago. He was the first one who said, "this is really good. Other people should hear. You should put it out." I thought maybe it

would be cool one day. That was almost three years ago now at this point, which is really crazy to think about. That kind of got the ball rolling and I decided to record a couple of other covers. During that process, I was not entirely sure if I was even going to ever do anything with this. Perhaps it would just be for fun, but became more and more serious the further I got into it. Now, we're here.

**You have some Tallahassee connections on this EP. We spoke about Mike Hanson from Goodbye Love. You also have Daniel Lancaster from Stages and Stereos who joins you on the Jimmy Eat World cover for 'A Praise Chorus'. This is a two-part question; how important was it for you to have like that hometown flavor on your first EP? Also, how did it come about for you to bring Daniel on to cover 'A Praise Chorus' with you?**

I've been super influenced in my life from a lot of different people that have made music in Tallahassee. Some of my favorite bands of all time are bands that came out of Tallahassee. I think a period of time is so special when I looked into all that music, was friends with a lot of bands, and was really inspired by all these people. Mayday Parade being what we are has a lot to do with that. That was definitely really important.

The Daniel [Lancaster] thing just kind of happened. We've been friends for a really long time. Pretty much most of my life. We played a lot of shows together. I was actually playing an acoustic event around two years ago or so. This was before I had known that I was going to do 'A Praise Chorus' as a cover on this EP. I was playing this event and doing some covers and I decided to do that song. Daniel was also playing the event and we got together and talked about what track we could sing together. We just decided to do that song live together and I love the way it sounded. That influenced me to then do this version of a song for the EP. Having Daniel come and sing it was really cool. He's such a talented dude and I always enjoy the opportunity to work with him on anything.

**Something Corporate's 'Punk Rock Princess' would be considered their most "punk rock" track in their catalog. You took it, flipped it, and made it into a nice little acoustic track. Why did that track stand out to you, either now or when you were younger?**

I've always loved that song. That's always been one of my favorite Something Corporate songs I listened to. I got really into that album (*Leaving Through The Window*) when I was in high

school. It's always been one of my favorite tracks. I originally wanted to do a 'Konstantine' for this covers EP. I really wanted to do a piano ballad and I thought 'Konstantine' would be the one to do. The more I started thinking about it and then trying to put it together, it just seemed super ambitious. That song is eight minutes long. It's an incredible song and it's done so well the way that they do it. It just kind of seemed really daunting of a task to take that on.

I started to kind of shy away from that idea, and then 'Punk Rock Princess' just naturally came about. It's a song that I had played live before as a cover and just works so well. I love the way it sounds just stripped-down acoustic like that. It also has different chord progressions at the end of the song underneath the chorus that I really liked a lot. I think it's really cool with the melody. It all just seemed to mix once I realized that maybe 'Konstantine' is too hard to pull off right now.

**You also covered 'August In Bethany' by The Juliana Theory which you end the EP with. With how emotional that song is, was that intentional to end this project on that note?**

I remember hearing that song for the first time in the 10th grade if I'm not mistaken. A friend of mine burned me a CD with a bunch of different music on it and that song was on there. I just kind of just loved it instantly and I'd never heard anything else like it before. Moving forward, *Emotion Is Dead* ended up being my favorite Juliana Theory record. That's probably pretty common with a lot of people, but there's still something about a couple of tracks on *Understand This Is A Dream*.

'August In Bethany' was this super-strong emotional ballad. Whenever I mentioned the idea of doing 'Konstantine' and once I dropped that I was, "well now I need another I super emotional song on the EP." I think that was the next song that came to mind. Obviously, it's a guitar song the way they do it. I messed around with doing it on piano and it just felt really nice and just came together so naturally. It just and I liked that I capped things off with it.

**I think that with this EP, you've found yourself in a new creative space. I'm thinking is like you're in this new creative space. You mentioned that you're still thinking about new music. When you go back in time to all the songs that inspired you and make recreations of them, has it rejuvenated you creatively?**

Honestly, it has and it's kind of difficult even to describe it. What's weird and I don't want this to sound like super negative, but it's kind of almost given me like writer's block. We're working on new Mayday Parade stuff currently and getting ready to go into the studio here before too long.

With anything that I'm working on, I'm asking, "Is this good enough? Does it have the magic it needs to have?" A lot of times, I think it does. I just can write a bunch of songs and send them to the guys and some of them click and some of them don't. I find myself having a hard time like even finishing a lot of these ideas because I'll sort of stop and look at it. I'll analyze it and think, "Is this good enough?"

It's kind of like got me in almost a weird place and I think there are a lot of factors really to that. Part of it is looking back at the songs that I think are just really so magical. It's weird because, and again, I'm not trying to sound negative, but it's like I don't expect those bands to put out music today that hits me the same way. It's just a really hard thing to do. It works that way with most bands and with most people. That's got me thinking about the stuff that I'm writing now. Is it going to move people the same way that our early stuff did? How do you capture that magic again? or whatever. That's something that I'm definitely like super conscious about and I'm just trying to do my best I can.

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