

HANSON

Shout It Out

Native sons of Tulsa, Oklahoma, HANSON has been making music together for nearly two decades. Thirteen years ago, their out-of-the-blue, soul-inspired brand of American pop-rock'n'roll was introduced to the world. Unaffected by charts or fads, they've spent more than a decade building a community of fans connected to one another and fueled by the energy and craftsmanship of three brothers and their music. Their fifth studio album, *Shout It Out*, is set to be released on June 8th 2010 on their label 3CG Records. They deliver a powerful group of soulful, melodic tunes that will leave you with a contagious sense of optimism for the future and welcomed reminiscence for American rock 'n' roll.

Shout It Out is a collection of finely crafted, R&B-flavored pop-rock, a homage to the music that inspired HANSON when they started out. The album produced and written exclusively by the band is augmented with special guests: Funk Brothers bassist Bob Babbitt, who played on some of Motown's greatest hits, and horn arranger Jerry Hey, who worked with Michael Jackson, Quincy Jones, Earth, Wind and Fire and many more.

"The anatomy of our band is similar to a '70s rock band – white guys from the Midwest who grew up listening to '50s and '60s soul, who are mixing guitars, with vintage keys and melodic songs," Taylor Hanson says. Adds Isaac, "We'll always be a bit rootsy 'cause it's in the Oklahoma soil (the state is also home to artists like Bob Wills, Woody Guthrie and the versatile Leon Russell), but what we've never stopped aspiring to is the great songwriters and performers who struck a chord with us first, that early rock 'n' roll and soul music from Chuck Berry to Otis Redding. We've rediscovered that aspiration on this record. There's a little more swing and a little more air."

While *Shout It Out* looks back in time musically, it also represents forward movement for HANSON. "We love playing classic songs," says Zac Hanson. "But we never sat down and wrote our version of what that sounds like until now."

HANSON emotes such fresh energy on the new album that it's easy to forget that this band has been around the block a few times. Multiple Grammy nominations (drummer Zac is the youngest nominated songwriter in history), years of headline shows everywhere from Carnegie Hall to the Hollywood Bowl and world-records for the loudest concert audience in history.

They've sold millions of records and reached a level of adoration that few bands experience, and have also faced career obstacles that would have broken many artist's resolve. They waded through four years of struggle with a new corporate label made up of inherited executives in discord with the band, which eventually lead the band to leave the label (chronicled in the documentary film *Strong Enough To Break*) and launch their own independent record company, 3CG Records, in 2003. Amidst a crumbling industry, they built their own infrastructure around a DIY attitude and their commitment to their music and their fans. Their independent moves paid off, building a brand that has grown with successful independent albums, singles and tours, during a decade when music sales plummeted. In addition, launching alongside their 2007 album *The Walk*, they championed calls for action on humanitarian efforts, galvanizing tens of thousands of people around the world to participate in barefoot one-mile walks to fight HIV/AIDS and extreme poverty in sub-Saharan Africa.

Talking to the band about their forthcoming offering sheds light on how they find balance between these different elements and how they have emerged with this current direction. "The feeling I had when we were writing was that – as a band – you should be able to talk about serious subjects and share your passions [like fighting AIDS in Africa], but especially on this album, it was important to be able to share joy," Taylor says. While *The Walk* carried a weighty message, in contrast the songs on *Shout It Out*, written mostly in hotel rooms and during soundchecks while touring *The Walk* were, according to Taylor, "A breath of fresh air during our hectic schedule".

Once they had the songs together, they found a studio on a 2,000-acre pecan farm in El Paso, Texas, and locked themselves in. Recording with Zac on drums, Taylor on piano and Isaac mostly on bass resulted in dynamic, piano-driven songs. “The energy of the recording is really not like anything we have captured before,” Isaac says. “It connects with the freedom and spontaneity that came from us being in a giant room together, tracking as a three-piece.”

Isaac and Zac went back to Tulsa, and Taylor headed out on the road as the front man in power-pop supergroup Tinted Windows, a side project that had been on the back burner for almost three years. The ensemble cast of James Iha (Smashing Pumpkins), Adam Schlesinger (Fountains of Wayne) and Bun E. Carlos (Cheap Trick) made the rounds with critical acclaim. When Taylor returned, HANSON decided their El Paso tracks needed something more. “We wanted the pocket to be a little groovier,” Zac says. A few calls got them in touch with bassist Bob Babbitt, whose credits include more than 200 Top 40 Hits with everyone from Marvin Gaye to Stevie Wonder. Babbitt added bass to half of *Shout It Out*. Taylor says “It’s easy to underestimate the importance of a bass, but musicians know that it can elevate a song from something you like to a head-turner.”

Then they called Jerry Hey, who, like Babbitt, had worked on so much of the music HANSON grew up listening to. “He made his reputation as someone who combines classic style to pop-soul records,” Taylor says. “Jerry has the right taste, style and the skill to pull out whatever is in your head and bring it to life,” Isaac says. “He’s not putting something on there to fill space. He’s asking ‘How do I make these horn parts just as hooky as the chorus?’”

The first single, ‘Thinking ‘Bout Somethin’’, one of the songs that features brass, will keep you humming for days, with lyrics about putting a loose lover in her place underscored by a huge chorus, Wurlitzer, horns and Zac’s drumstick dancing on a cowbell. Even the lyrics are chock-full of R&B references from Sam & Dave, Otis Redding, Aretha Franklin and others. The swinging pocket of ‘Kiss Me When You Come Home’ touches on heartfelt lyrics about the simpler connections that keep a relationship going. ‘Carry You There’ harkens back to *The Walk*, with its message of motivation and connectedness and its gospel choir – “It’s one of our biggest themes, to rise above your troubles,” Isaac says. ‘Make It Out Alive’ is the definition of that pure piano-driven pop style with its unabashed technicolor horn arrangements and singable melodies. ‘And I Waited’ brings in a tougher edge signaling a change in mood from with a four-on-the-floor kick drum and a darker lyrical undertone, helmed by Zac on lead vocals.

The rest of *Shout It Out* is unrelenting in its mission to engage, led by the second single ‘Give A Little’, which stands out as one of the few tracks driven by a distinctive guitar melody, harkening back to pure 60’s pop. ‘Voice In The Chorus’ is the record’s climax, launching with driving piano into a tightly-arranged deceptively complex track about a kiss-off to a fair-weather friend, and backed up by a ruckus ensemble of all the textures heard throughout the album. The final somber tone of ‘Me Myself And I’ brings the album to its conclusion, shining a light on the band’s trademark tight, three-part harmonies and craftsman songwriting, without overproduction or sheen.

HANSON’s new music is accompanied by artwork with vibrant imagery - hand-painted type in primary colors, iconic symbolism that reflects the album’s message of bold expression and the timeless nature of great art. The video for ‘Thinking ‘Bout Somethin’’ embodies those characteristics as well. The band recreates a much-loved scene from the cult classic ‘The Blues Brothers’ where soul music incites a huge impromptu crowd dancing in the streets. In their re-creation, HANSON took to the streets of their hometown of Tulsa with more than 300 extras, including 60 local dancers and hundreds of loyal fans who traveled from far and wide to participate. To top it off ‘Weird Al’ Yankovic, the godfather of pop culture parody, makes an unforgettable guest appearance.

Shout It Out showcases not only the music of HANSON, but the many aspects that have allowed the band to survive and stay relevant. “The album is about being alive, and the contrasts we are faced with,” Taylor says. “We’ve come from a generation leaving the analog world and moving into an interconnected culture at risk of forgetting where it came from. This album tries to put together those pieces, but with a bit of melody to back it up.”

While the new album draws inspiration from the past, HANSON is looking to an exciting new era for the band. Their insatiable desire to innovate with technology - seen in their plans to incorporate mobile live streaming video both onstage and off - is building an even stronger fan connection. They’re committed to their live concert experience, with special events like their sold out five-night stand in NYC featuring each of their albums performed in their entirety, culminating with the debut of *Shout It Out* live. HANSON has established a reputation as successful independent artists who are comfortable at charting their own path, standing at the crossroads of the analog and digital worlds, and offering fans the best of both.

