



Song of the South: Duane Allman & the Rise of the Allman Brothers Band

[Duane Allman](#)

Sexy Intellectual - SIDVD576 (DVD)

Available from [MVD Entertainment Group](#).

A review written for the Folk & Acoustic Music Exchange
by **Mark S. Tucker**
(progdawg@hotmail.com)

Duane 'Skydog' Allman, properly: Howard Duane Allman, is inarguably one of the immortals—and I would include brother Gregg along with him as well, particularly for those deeply masculine blues vocals and co-authorship of the Allmans' band—but Duane's life was cut so tragically short that he didn't even make it to The 27 Club, perishing in a motorcycle accident at a mere 24 years of age. God, what might have been had that fateful day never occurred! This two-hour+ DVD, with bonus features added, starts where it should, with the advent of Elvis and white rave-up "blues" as Robert Christgau finally returns to his olden-days, sober, non-lubricious self in kicking off the history, revealing the schisms between Northern liberal toleration of race versus Southern day to day experientiality, the latter quite a different thing that would yield the coming musical hybrids. It's an important point that too often gets lost in hero worship and revisionism.

But Duane Allman was an artist with a different vision who'd gigged for major black blues figures and, along with bro Gregg, wasn't about to shake off the influences. As early buddy Sonny Fussell put it "He just walked to a different beat" and was a strong-willed young man who loved two things most in life: motorcycles and music. His career Army father had been bizarrely killed early in the brothers' life by a fellow vet who was hitch-hiking, and his mother had to go to work to raise the two boys, often keen-eyed as to whom she let into her house to associate with her sons...but also toiling five days a week, and thus the boys hosted an in-house environment for kindred their age, one that cultivated the sort of freedom teenagers seek. Not too hard to see, then, what would eventuate.

Song covers intensely the rise to local fame Duane and Gregg accrued, going through several incarnations as cover bands until catching up with Pete Carr, when things began to roll toward the future on several fronts, eventually meeting the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, who introduced them to Bill McEuen, who immediately wanted to sign the pre-Bros. ensemble Hour Glass. The boys traveled from the homey South to surreal psychedelic California and knocked around for a while before opening a concert headlining the Grateful Dead, so impressive that the audience boo'ed the Dead off the stage. Despite highly manipulative home base Liberty Records' many dilutive dictates, the group managed to impress to a certain degree but were nonetheless muzzled far too much, slated to not long after depart from manager/producer Dallas Smith and associate shitheel businessmen to forge their own direction.

Duane met up with Carr again, Hour Glass played the Whiskey, caught the L.A. sounds, and even hung with Frank Zappa and the Mothers, though Taj Mahal most captured his fancy. The documentary then gets heavily into everything that occurred as the guitarist transitioned from session player to Phil Walden's Capricorn label—originally intended to be a soul imprint until Phil met Duane—and things exploded. At this halfway point, though, I'll leave the reader hanging and consign the rest of the story to a scan

of the DVD. If you're the kind of listener who can't get enough of what actually led up to the sounds we all love, this DVD is particularly toothsome, detailed as a road map, leaving nothing to guesswork. By the time the disc winds down, you'll know everything you need to, and, no matter how much you dig those epochal Allman LPs with Big Duane, a whole new dimension will open up, with tons of photos, cuts from singles, concert clips, Dickey Betts and Jaimoe on the way, everything you could want. Dig in. If you ever doubted the Allmans really started Southern rock, you'll get over that very very quickly.

One last thing, though: this documentary makes it clear that Duane Allman literally lived for music and was quite an intelligent cat, no two ways about it, but, like so many highly impassioned milestone rockers, never escaped his youth to fulfill a destiny that had been beckoning like a succubus, and, as commenters make very clear, the Allmans, despite some mighty talent, descended from the heights after his passing. Duane had been the heart and soul of the band, and, as Dr. Eldon Tyrell told Roy Baty, the candle that burns twice as brightly burns half as long...alas.

Edited by: David N. Pyles
(dnpyles@acousticmusic.com)



[Return to FAME Reviews](#)

[Return to FAME Home Page](#)

Return to acousticmusic.com Home Page

Website design by David N. Pyles
DNPyles@acousticmusic.com
acousticmusic.com