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'Song of the South' Celebrates Duane Allman's Genius

By **Jedd Beaudoin** 4 September 2013

Some will argue that the soul of the Allman Brothers Band died on 29 October 1971, when guitarist and founding member Duane "Skydog" Allman was killed in a motorcycle accident. The band tours to this day, with three original members in the ranks, continuing to attract new fans and set audiences aflame at live shows, but the band's last great studio album came 40 years ago and most will tell you that the brotherhood that bonded the group early on vanished once and for all in November 1972, when bassist Berry Oakley followed Duane Allman to the grave.

As grim as all that sounds, this two-hour documentary celebrates the vibrancy and genius of Duane Allman, following him from his youth in Tennessee to his formative years in Florida where he and brother Gregg played in the Allman Joys and, shortly thereafter, The Hour Glass. It was with the latter band that the Allmans and their friends (including Paul Hornsby, who appears in this video) experienced their first taste of success, gaining nods from fellow musicians on the Sunset Strip in Los Angeles and recording two interesting but largely unsuccessful albums for the Liberty imprint.

One of the joys this video provides is how the audio allows you to trace Allman's aural lineage from apprentice to master as the soul-by-numbers sound of The Hour Glass gives way to the rowdier, dirtier, bluesier sound that the Allman Brothers would become known for. After The Hour Glass' sand ran out, Allman found work at FAME Studios in Muscle Shoals where he persuaded Wilson Pickett to record "Hey Jude" and quickly found himself a well-respected and in-demand player.

But the life of a studio rat was not meant for him, and before long he recruited some old friends,

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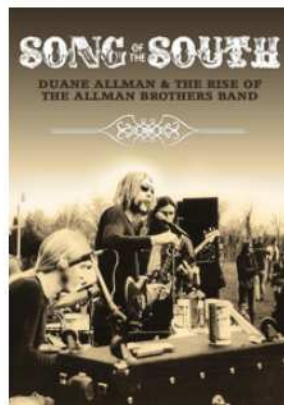
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Song of the South: Duane Allman and the Rise of the Allman Brothers Band

(Sexy Intellectual; US DVD: 3 Sep 2013; UK DVD: 9 Sep 2013)

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including members of the Florida band Second Coming (Reese Wynans, later of Captain Beyond and Stevie Ray Vaughan and Double Trouble was in the ranks), brought everyone to Macon, Georgia, convinced his brother to join, and the rest, of course, is legend. Guests here dissect Allman's impressive but small recorded output with the Brothers, including his work on "Dreams" (from the band's 1969 self-titled debut), the explosive 1971 live album *At Fillmore East LP*, on the Derek and the Dominoes classic *Layla and Other Assorted Love Songs*, and *Eat a Peach*, which features his final recorded work and one of the few pieces he wrote in his short lifetime, "Little Martha".

His legacy is not in need of reassessment but that is not what this video is about. This is the story of a man who traveled a great distance in a short amount of time (he was 24 in 1971 and his recording career was less than a decade old at that time) and whose particular genius not only launched a new genre (Southern rock) but has continued to inspire listeners and players well over 40 years after his death.

With two Allman Brothers related books due for release in early 2014, one by drummers Jaimoe and Butch Trucks and the other from Duane's daughter Galadrielle, this serves as a good introduction of what's likely to come and provides as good an excuse (not that you need one) as any to throw *Eat A Peach* or some other Duane-related recording on the turntable and drift back to a time when a bright and untold future still lay ahead for the man and his brothers.

This DVD is not authorized by the Allman Brothers or any of its affiliates and thus no interviews with the members are featured (except archival tapes with Duane speaking). Extras include an extended interview with Willie Perkins, road manager for the Allman Brothers, as well as one with the Albert Brothers (Ron and Howard) who engineered albums for the Allmans and Derek and the Dominoes. There are also biographies for those who contributed to the DVD, including musicians David Hood and Pete Carr, writers Bud Scoppa, Mark Kemp, and Robert Christgau, and Randy Poe.

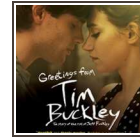
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