

On a base level, the term ‘blood harmony’ is simple—it describes the specific sound two siblings make when they sing together. Given that Dave Hause has been writing and recording songs with his younger brother Tim for a while now, it made sense to use that phrase as the title for his fifth solo record. But this being a Dave Hause album also means there’s much more to it than that. Beneath the surface of *Blood Harmony*, in fact, are multiple layers of meaning relating to Hause’s role as a musician, a brother, a husband, a son and—having become a father to twins a few months before the release of 2019’s *Kick*—a dad. As such, *Blood Harmony* is also a reassertion of what family means to him. Even more so because it’s coming out on the label owned by he and his brother. “I thought *Blood Harmony* was a great title” says Hause, “and really specific to how Tim and I have decided to work over the years. It also pertains to my children because they’ll have their own *Blood Harmony*. So the germ of the album, the beating heart, is that I’m in a true family. I have a grounded reason to work and a bunch of people that I want to make proud with the work that we do. It’s a family business.”

The importance of that was made all the more apparent after the coronavirus outbreak. Hause, with his brother, used that unexpected downtime to make the Patty/Paddy tribute EPs to Patty Griffin and Dillinger Four’s Patrick ‘Paddy’ Costello. After a while, though, like all touring musicians, he found himself without an income. So when his friend and former manager offered him some work nearby as a Covid safety supervisor for the company she set up after contracting Covid herself, he said yes. It was for one of the biggest celebrities in the world, so to prepare, Hause went to LA and worked on two shoots with two of music’s biggest stars. He was shocked at the scant disregard their teams had for their well-being. “These artists are so successful they never need to work again,” says Hause, “but the label and management were pushing to get away with stuff and it was totally unsafe. I was pretty disgusted seeing the industry at that level, and how much of it was simply greed and not caring about the safety of others. We were just starting to roll out the EPs on our own label, and the whole experience just ironed my resolve—I’m a family artist, and I never want to be in a position where people are urging me to do things that are bad for my or my family’s mental or physical health. That’s not what it’s about for me. It’s about connection. So that experience really reinforced this idea of blood harmony. I’m connected to my people, and this is a small little thing that we’re going to keep pure.”

You can hear Hause’s passion and dedication to his craft—as well as his determined approach to it—flowing through the veins of *Blood Harmony*’s ten stunning, sumptuous songs. Written with his brother over a series of weekly FaceTime sessions, they began crafting songs together in January 2021. They’d been writing remotely together since 2017’s *Bury Me In Philly* so it wasn’t an entirely new process for them, but they modified their approach slightly by giving themselves rigid deadlines. “We decided to get together on Mondays,” explains Hause, “to figure out what we wanted to work on, and by Friday we had to have something you could sing to someone who wasn’t a songwriter. It could be bad, but I didn’t want to just have vague ideas. We called it ‘Pencils-Down Fridays’. Over the course of three-and-a-half months, we ended up with 26 songs.”

They traveled with ten of those to Nashville, where acclaimed songwriter Will Hoge took up the helm of producer. Through Hoge’s connections, what Hause calls “a staggering bunch of musicians” was assembled to flesh out the songs he and Tim had written. He’s not wrong. There was Brandi Carlile’s drummer Chris Powell, Bruce Springsteen And The E Street band bassist Garry Tallent, acclaimed session guitarist Tom Bukovac, Jason Isbell’s guitarist Sadler Vaden, and keyboardist Billy Justineau, Mike Webb, and Jen Gundersen, who have played with the likes of Eric Church, Sheryl Crow, and more. Hause is the first to admit that it was a world away from the punk rock scene he’d made his name with as frontman of The Loved Ones. “They say that when you work in any field, you’re happiest when you initially get the respect of your peers,” he says. “Thankfully, I’ve had that respect for some time now. But in this situation, these people were not our peers. They’ve operated at the highest level of the music business that is even possible, so to get their respect was so gratifying. Their kindness and commitment to making the record great because they liked the songs was tremendous. I keep saying that if anybody else likes the record, that’s icing on the cake, because the way we wrote and made it was so wonderful.”

While nobody would say the quality of Hause’s previous albums was lacking, making *Blood Harmony* with those musicians was nevertheless a concerted effort to ramp it up. And it does. It begins with “Northstar”, a tender paean to the direction, comfort and joy his wife and twins have given him that also drives home the emotional

resonance and sense of family at the center of this album. It's followed immediately by "Sandy Sheets", a nostalgic trip into a past long-gone that references the Gin Blossoms' "Hey Jealousy" in its chorus, and which sounds every bit as iconic as that track. The gorgeous, lilting, paradise of "Hanalai" captures that rare sense of peace when you're with the person you love and nothing else matters, "Surfboard" injects some rare, good-natured humor into the trials and tribulations of being working class—something that remains, as ever, an undercurrent here—while "Carry The Lantern" and its life-affirming, almost Thin Lizzy-esque riffs double down Hause's commitment to his sobriety and his family. "A lot of being an adult for me is recommitting to your better angels instead of chasing your own tail," he says. "That song is about facing temptation but redoubling your efforts to stay committed to the higher things that compel us to be better." It's followed by the gorgeous album closer "Little Wings". Hause calls it a post-script, but it resonates much more deeply and feels more significant than that. In fact, it ends the album the same way it begins—with a tender song for and about his twins that's full of the purest love and hope. It's impossible to not hear and feel just how much they and his whole family—that beating heart at the center of these songs—mean to him. It's a truly beautiful thing.