

Todd Snider records an installment of "What It Is," a weekly concert series filmed at The Purple Building in Nashville, Tenn., and livestreamed during the coronavirus pandemic.
PHOTO: FACEBOOK.COM/TODDSNIDER



That's kind of like my old Fred Sanford-years plan.

You wrote at least a couple songs on the new album about friends who died over the past year, right?

There was so much of that. It was a really dark year because we lost John Prine to the pandemic; that was the hardest thing. And then Jerry Jeff [Walker] and Billie Joe [Shaver]; they were older, and they all three had a good long run for troubadours.

We were all so down. Almost everyone of the people working on [the record] knew those guys. And then there were two suicides by guys my own age, and then also my dog [died]. All my friends knew my dog. He went everywhere. He sat on the stage; he never left me. So, I had all of that, and then my first manager, she died. She was my first manager, but she stayed in my life until the day she died.

So, all the songs on the new album were written during the pandemic?

Yeah. Usually, I'd [take] like three years or so to get 10 songs, and this time I just knocked them out—for better or worse.

All my singing career, I've tried to avoid telling people [things like], "Never let a day go by." I thought, *I've never really approached this as a preacher before*. You know that song, "You've got to know when to hold them?" I'm like, *No I don't. I don't have to know that*. And anytime a singer tells me I just have to breathe, or anything like that—I

can't tell you how many times when I'm listening to the radio I always say, "No, I don't. I don't have to do that." I don't have to let myself dance and let go or any of that.

But this time I thought, *Well, people are calling me a preacher now on Sundays, and I've got this Sunday show*. It was almost an arc of what the big picture of what that show had been. I was kind of making up a story about a folk singer who had to stop traveling and do these Sunday shows that were pep talks.

Now that you've been out on the road, what's it been like? How's America reacting to the return?

People are really excited to see live music. It feels like they're excited to be with each other, too. Sometimes they all have masks on. It feels like I'm about to get robbed by a mob.

You have a short speech you say at shows in which you say, "I didn't come down here to change any of y'all's mind about anything, I come down here to ease my own mind about everything." Has being back on the road again helped ease your own mind after such a hard year or so?

Tremendously. More than singing, I like to travel. It's become a really big part of my life. For people who are a gypsy or a traveler, we just don't know how to sit somewhere. It drives us crazy. Once you get used to the water out there, it's like kids—first they don't want to get in the pool and then you can't get them out. □

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