

# LYNYRD SKYNYRD

## *God & Guns*

**Gary Rossington- Guitar**  
**Johnny Van Zant- Vocals**  
**Rickey Medlocke- Guitar**  
**Mark "Sparky" Matejka- Guitar**  
**Michael Cartellone- Drums**  
**Robert Kearns - Bass**  
**Peter Keys - Keyboards**

### **Honkettes:**

**Dale Krantz Rossington- Backing Vocals**  
**Carol Chase- Backing Vocals**

Beyond the tragedy, the history, the raging guitars and the killer songs, ultimately, **Lynyrd Skynyrd** is about an indomitable will. About survival of spirit; unbowed, uniquely American, stubbornly resolute.

With their first set of new studio material since 2003's *Vicious Cycle*, legendary rock band Lynyrd Skynyrd returns with *God & Guns*, due out September 29 on **Loud & Proud/Roadrunner Records**. Recorded in Nashville in 2008-2009, the project was interrupted—but, tellingly, not ended—by the deaths of founding member/keyboardist **Billy Powell** and longtime bassist **Ean Evans** earlier this year.

Driven by core members **Gary Rossington** (guitar), **Johnny Van Zant** (vocals) and **Rickey Medlocke** (guitar), along with longtime drummer **Michael Cartellone**, Lynyrd Skynyrd have recorded an album (“under duress, as usual,” according to Van Zant) that very much lives up to the legacy begun some 35 years ago in Jacksonville, Florida, and halted for a decade by the 1977 plane crash that killed three band members, including Ronnie Van Zant and Steve Gaines. Since then, the band tragically lost Allen Collins, Leon Wilkeson and Huey Thomasson, yet they rock on.

With the passing of Powell and Evans, “a lot of people probably expected us to say enough is enough,” admits Medlocke. But that would not be the way of this Rock & Roll Hall of Fame powerhouse. With a catalog of over 60 albums and sales beyond 30 million,

Lynyrd Skynyrd remains a cultural icon that appeals to all generations, and *God & Guns* is a fitting addition to the canon. The *Skynyrd Nation* awaits.

“We wanted to show the people that not only are we doing the old material, keeping the music going, but we still have some new tricks up our sleeves, too,” says founding guitarist Gary Rossington.

Returning to the studio after the death of Powell, whose keyboards can be heard on more than half the songs on *God & Guns*, was “very difficult, I ain’t gonna lie to you,” says Van Zant. “But we got through it, as Lynyrd Skynyrd seems to always do. Music’s a great healer. These songs needed to be out there, this record needed to be made. Gary, Rickey and myself just said ‘let’s go for it, let’s get this thing done.’”

Unfortunately, coping with loss is familiar to this band. “We just kind of fell back in,” says Rossington. “We’ve been doing this a long time, so you just kind of do what you do. As you get older, you get a little more used to it. You know it’s coming, and it’s coming to you, too. I just thank God for every day and all the time I had with the guys that aren’t with us anymore.”

The crying is over and now it’s time to rock. “We’ve had some really bad moments this year already, and I’m glad we’re able to pick ourselves up by our boot straps and just continue to play,” says Medlocke. “For us to weather through this makes this record even more special. I’m sure Billy and Ean are looking down upon us with big smiles.”

With noted rock producer **Bob Marlette**, input from guitarist **John 5**, and a wealth of material written by the band and a cadre of elite Skynyrd-minded songwriters, a remarkable album emerged. “We never really worked with producers that well, we kind of always wanted to do it our way,” admits Rossington. “But Bob Marlette came on and he’s such a great guy; he figured out how to talk to us musically, and we became friends instantly. He had a lot of fresh ideas and ways to do things, and also wanted to capture the old sounds, too.”

Of John 5, Rossington adds, “he’s probably one of the best guitar players I’ve ever played with, and I’ve played with a lot of great ones. He just lives with a guitar on him, and he knows that neck like nobody I’ve ever seen.”

With a backbone of Southern rock and country, passionate Van Zant vocals, and trademark layered guitars, *God & Guns* manages to maintain the iconic Skynyrd punch while sounding completely contemporary. Sure to attract attention in these politically divided times is the title track, which harbors a sense of menace and unwillingness to back down that harkens back to Skynyrd’s earliest days. The band knows the song, and others like “That Ain’t My America,” will have their critics, but Medlocke says listeners should get beyond the title.

“It’s not just the words ‘God and guns.’ you gotta look past that and look at what this country was founded on: freedom,” Medlocke says. “Everybody should be able to make

their own decisions and not be led around by a nose ring and told what to do and when to do it.”

And if some critics don't like it, “that's called freedom of choice,” says Medlocke, who carries his Native American heritage with pride. “I'm sure some critics will look at it, *God & Guns*, the rednecks are back.’ Well, the guys in this band aren't rednecks, Rickey Medlocke's the only damn redneck in this band ‘cause I got red skin.”

The title track, along with the unmistakable Skynyrd bite of the first single “Still Unbroken,” form thematic songs for an album laden with attitude, heart and purpose. “Skynyrd's about tradition,” says Medlocke. “We are guys that don't go around preaching about our own personal or political beliefs, although I'm sure you could probably guess mine. In this record is personal tragedy, personal relationships and being on the road, all under that umbrella of real life. That's what we think, that's what we believe, and we stand next to that title, *God & Guns*.”

To portray Skynyrd as a bunch of “gun nuts” would be incorrect, according to Van Zant. “I'm kind of like Ronnie, ‘handguns are made for killing,’ and I've never seen anybody shoot a deer with a .38,” he says. “I do own a bunch of rifles, I live out in the swamp, and you've got to protect yourself.”

Skynyrd is a band, after all, that has never shied away from standing up and speaking for a segment of the population whose voices are seldom heard. “Everybody's so scared to say stuff these days, that's not what I'm about,” says Van Zant. “We live in America, we can speak our minds. These are our values. That doesn't mean we're always right in everybody's mind. Hopefully, we don't offend a bunch of people. And if we do, well, get a record deal, man, and make your own songs.”

This is a band well aware of the responsibility that comes with putting the name ‘Lynyrd Skynyrd’ on anything, be it an album or a concert. “We feel like we have to keep the standards high,” says Rossington. “I wouldn't put this record out, I'd fight not to, if I didn't think it was good.”

And so Skynyrd stands, “still unbroken,” in 2009. “People may say, ‘they need the money,’ well I don't think any of us need the money,” Van Zant says. “It's just that we love the music, it's bigger than the money, it's not even about that any more. We have to make a living, sure, but it's about the legacy of Lynyrd Skynyrd, and what it stands for, what the fans are all about. There's nothing like getting out there playing a great show with Skynyrd and seeing people love this music.”

Adds Rossington, “We're still standing, still keeping the music going. We wanted to do the guys who aren't with us any more proud, and keep the name proud, too.”

***God & Guns* will be released on Loud & Proud/Roadrunner Records on 9/29/09.**