

"It is better to fail in originality than to succeed in imitation." - Herman Melville

On their third album, *Sisters and Brothers*, the Vespers combine Americana roots with pop melody and rock & roll muscle. It's an album about growth and discovery, about finding your place in the world — *and* your sound — by leaning on the support of those around you. For the Vespers, those supporters include one another.

Comprised of two pairs of siblings — the Cryar sisters and Jones brothers, all natives of Nashville, Tennessee — the Vespers began making their own kind of rootsy, southern stomp in 2009, throwing themselves into a music scene that was rich in history and high in competition. Playing as many as 115 shows a year and selling more than 10,000 copies of their second album, *The Fourth Wall* (2012), The Vespers found themselves at a crossroads. They could make another album of bluegrass-influenced folk music — a genre that had grown quite popular since the group's early days — or they could throw some newer influences into the mix.

"We wanted to make a new sound, something people hadn't heard from us before, and *Sisters and Brothers* came out of that desire," says Phoebe Cryar. Over five years, the Cryars' and Jones' had laughed, fought, cried, smiled, learned about life and played their hearts out. Without the influence of a label or an A&R team, they'd learned to rely on each other, trusting few outside influences apart from the support of their own fans. Those fans had helped The Vespers through the hardest of times, becoming not only the band's supporters, but their family, as well. The time had come for the Vespers to make an album birthed from the ups and downs of traveling in a band, an album that focused on the great things that can happen with the support of your literal *and* figurative sisters and brothers.

The Vespers didn't abandon their old sound for *Sisters and Brothers*; they just expanded it.

"Phoebe and I were fresh out of high school when we started the band," Callie Cryar adds, thinking back to the days when they were teenagers working the 5 a.m. shift at a Nashville donut shop. "You're never more vulnerable or unconfident than you are at that time. But in the years leading up this album, we all became more comfortable with each other, with our emotions, with ourselves. We became adults, and we started delving into some of the emotions that we wanted to make people feel. People want to *feel* when they listen. They want to feel something intense, and that's the kind of album we hoped to record."

Looking for the right collaborator to help them evolve, The Vespers turned to Paul Moak, a Grammy-nominated producer and accomplished songwriter who operates his own recording studio, Smoakstack, in south Nashville. Moak pushed the musicians to create music that was raw and *real* instead of polished and perfect. The goal wasn't to sound flawless. It was to find imperfect performances that captured a genuine moment, performances that raised the hair on everybody's arms. If a take didn't evoke that sort of response, it was scrapped.

"We used to record our vocals over and over, separately, until every single note was perfectly correct," Callie remembers. "But *Sisters and Brothers* was completely different. We wanted it to be raw. We realized there was more attitude and more emotion whenever Phoebe and I sang together, even with that slight element of imperfection."

"Every time you make a record, you're summing up where you've been for the last few years, says Bruno Jones. "Our band went through some challenges in those years, but we also went through a lot of growth, both onstage and off. We came out of it and realized we still cared about each other."

Bruno adds, "*Sisters and Brothers* is a rallying cry for the band."

Indeed, *Sisters and Brothers* does feel like a battle cry. It's an album about beating the system, banding together, taking care of those around you and focusing on what really counts.