

## G. Love

### Still Hustling

By Nicole Spiridakis

According to his new album, Philly funkster G.Love is still all about "The Hustle."

A decade after the release of his first album and three years after the impact of his last, G. Love says he's in a good place.

"I had a very emotional couple of years, they were the best and worst of my life, really," he said recently, in Philadelphia where he's lived all of his life. "But everything's cool now, and I'm in a good spot, really happy with the [new] record, happy to get back out there."

That new album, "Hustle," released on August 24-and the current Brushfire tour with Jack Johnson's new label of the same name, should swing the spotlight back to the musician and his band, Special Sauce.

### Musical From A Young Age

The kid from Center City, Philadelphia, probably didn't imagine he'd travel the country-and the world-playing his guitar when his mother signed him up for lessons at age eight.

"I didn't have any musical talent then," Love recalled. "I really didn't have much natural ability but for some reason I stuck with it even though I wasn't feeling it."

When he reached his teens G. Love, born Garrett Dutton in the Philadelphia neighborhood where he still resides, realized he actually enjoyed playing the instrument and stopped resenting the his daily practice.

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"I started coming into my full, conscious personality, started figuring out who I was, and then it became something that spoke to me and became part of who I was," he said.

Writing songs came out of the newfound love for his instrument, and he began to bring his guitar to parties hoping to jam, rather than talk.

Love recorded his first venture in 1992 at the tender age of 19, "G. Love Oh Yeah," a solo acoustic album with tracks later destined to become G. Love classics: "Shooting Hoops" and "Baby's Got Sauce."

The band came together after a chance meeting at a Boston nightclub where Love had been tapped to play the opening act by a street musician friend after a cancellation.

He skateboarded over to the club on a Sunday night, playing to "the band I was opening for, the two bartenders, and the cocktail waitress and her boyfriend," he remembered.

It was hardly an auspicious debut, but it enabled him to meet up with Jeffrey 'The Houseman' Clemens, a percussionist, and James 'Jimi Jazz' Prescott, on the upright bass. The so-called Philadelphonic Sound, or as G. Love calls it, the 'Hip-Hop Blues,' is what defines the group's unique style. They've played together for 11 years.

"They're a ferocious and innovative rhythm section," Love said. "I've really been lucky to get with those guys."

#### New Album Classic, But Still Progressive

As for "Hustle," Love feels good about the album as a whole, calling it a record in the "classic G. Love style," though the first three songs, "Astronaut," "Don't Drop It" and "Love" are a bit of a departure.

"[Those] songs are a progressive sound for me. The rawness of it made me think it would be called 'garage punk'," he said. "But it's a nitty-gritty hip-hop, definitely a G. Love style which is progressive for the band, but still clearly our style."

"Love" was written when he was in high school, Love said, and after recording one take, it 'jumped off the table' to be included in the album.

He wants to keep his music 'funky and front porch' while still experimenting with different styles of music-a tall order for almost any musician. But by playing with other artists and engaging in different side projects, Love is able to keep the essential sound of his records consistent.

Love cites influences as "masters" Bob Dylan and Jimmy Reed and hip-hop artists such as De La Soul and A Tribe Called Quest. He said he doesn't listen to too much current music, though he does like the White Stripes, 'digs' Jack Johnson's music, 311, The Roots, Jay-Z, and Beyonce.

"At the heart of what I do is country and blues, even folk oriented, but we're pretty rock 'n' roll," Love said.

He and Johnson met, according to his press material, in the late '90s while surfing south of Malibu. Currently signed to Johnson's brand new Brushfire Records along with Donavon Frankenreiter, Love said he thinks of them as the "white boy Snoop and Dr. Dre."

G. Love and Special Sauce record at their studio in Philadelphia-the city he most likely will call home for the rest of his life. Love said he dreams about moving to the West Coast from time to time but predicts he'll stay put in the East, especially since he now has a son.

"I'm from Philly and I can't seem to get out of there," he laughed. "I've lived in the same neighborhood my whole life, and I'm definitely pretty rooted there." He calls his hometown a "nitty-gritty East Coast city" with a "good vibe, strong roots and great music," adding that he's "lucky enough to be able to travel around the world" on tour.

It's this connection to Philadelphia that grounds Love's music, particularly apparent in his earlier albums.

Calling himself "G. Love" wasn't so much a rebellion as a departure from his upbringing, he said, and when at 19 he took his demo to be made, he came up with the moniker on the spot.

"They asked me what to call it so I said, 'Let's call it G. Love Oh Yeah,' and that pretty much sums up who I am," he said. "I love music, it's just such a huge part of my heart and soul."

G. Love will be at Merriweather Post Pavilion with Jack Johnson on Sept. 17th and On Tap has a bus trip going to the show. For tickets, please visit [www.ontaponline.com](http://www.ontaponline.com).

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