

DAN + SHAY *OBSESSED*

The music blaring from the second-floor stereo speakers was so loud it rattled the third floor windows, setting off a late-night alarm. It happened often enough – at least 30 times in two months – that everyone working after hours at the Warner Music Nashville building collectively knew, “It’s just Dan + Shay.”

The duo – Dan Smyers and Shay Mooney – literally obsessed over the song selection for their latest album.

Even after finishing their debut album, *Where It All Began*, which landed them their debut Platinum-Certified “19 You + Me” and first No. 1 hit, “Nothin’ Like You,” that is Gold-certified by the RIAA, the pair continued writing songs almost daily. By the time they seriously thought about their second album, they had a collection of more than 80 songs already demoed. “At the end of the night we would get the board rocking, turn it up and just sit there and listen,” said Smyers. Mooney added, “We just want it to be Dan + Shay. Whenever you make your own lane and you’re not trying to chase anything else, that’s when you can truly create.”

The duo’s most recent single off the album, “How Not To” was the most-added single at country radio the week it debuted. Written by Adam Hambrick, Paul DiGiovanni and Kevin Bard, the single laments a hard-to-forget relationship. It’s one of just two tracks the duo didn’t write.

One of the more personal and perhaps most enduring songs the two have written is their first single from *Obsessed*, “From the Ground Up,” that hit No. 1 and is Gold-certified by the RIAA.

Smyers, who believes a great song starts with powerful lyrics, had just returned to Nashville following a heartbreaking trip to home for his grandfather’s funeral. Mooney, who recalled it being “a real emotional time,” also lost his grandfather a short time later.

“That song is so personal to us, and the message is so close to our hearts,” Smyers said, “which made it a vulnerable moment when we put it out there. Everybody has been supportive and we’ve received so many messages on social media from people who connected to the song.”

Mooney explained, “The reaction has been pretty crazy. It’s such a personal song to us and to have so many people tell us that they want to use it as a first dance song at their wedding is a huge honor for us because that’s such a huge moment in their life. I think we all have those songs that can be related to a memory. Songs and memories are very powerful.”

For the two friends, that powerful moment came when they were recording vocals for another track. They started talking about the love their grandparents had for one another.

Both couples were married for more than 65 years, and that kind of long-lasting love is almost unheard of these days.

“When we had those conversations, that’s when we realized that kind of love is the example that we strive for in our own personal relationships,” said Smyers, who initially worried it might be too personal before concluding, “that needed to be said in a song.”

“Like the song says, they lived in this tiny, tiny house and lived right up the road from us,” said Mooney, who became passionate about country music because of the stories told, like the one of his grandparents’ relationship. “All they had was each other and us - that was it.” The vulnerability of “From the Ground Up” has made an impression on listeners, evident by the fact that it was the No. 1 most added song at country radio two weeks before the official impact date. “It connected to people of all ages,” said Smyers.

Mooney noted, “Even though it’s a very specific story to us, anyone can relate to it.”

No one knows the Dan + Shay sound better than themselves, so whether it’s a heartfelt ballad like “From the Ground Up” or an up-tempo track like “Obsessed,” this album has largely been the two of them in the studio working all night on one song after another.

“It was one of those days where we had been writing all week and everyone was kind of tired,” recalled Mooney of the afternoon they wrote “Obsessed” with Nolan Lambroza. “We hadn’t hit on anything. We were all looking through Twitter and I had written down the title “Obsessed” because our fans always say, ‘I’m obsessed with Dan +Shay.’ It pretty much came from the fans. We ended up writing the song that day, but it really came to life when we got in the studio. Jim Horn is a legend. He put a saxophone on there and arranged the horns and it just came to life.”

Dan + Shay ultimately determined that “Obsessed,” the song derived from their fans, would share its name with the title of the album.

The 10-song collection, which was produced by Smyers along with the award-winning Scott Hendricks, coincidentally opens with “All Nighter” and the summer anthem “Road Trippin’,” two songs that, according to Smyers, “set the tone for the record.”

“‘All Nighter’ just felt like the first track – especially when we got in and recorded the band,” said Smyers of the lead track, which was written by Nicolle Galyon, Jimmy Robbins and David Hodges. “Our thought has always been, ‘let the best song win no matter what.’ There are so many great songs being written in Nashville every single day, and some folks wrote some amazing songs that fit with our record. We felt a huge honor that those people gave us their art, let us make our own interpretations and put it on the album.”

Mooney continued, “When we cut someone’s song we kind of have to take and make it our own – put the Dan + Shay spin on it.”

Dan + Shay are looking forward to playing those first two songs live along with “Sway” and the energetic “Round the Clock,” which was written during a week-long songwriting retreat

outside Nashville. That week, they wrote with Lambroza, Jesse Frasure and Hodges. Robbins co-wrote “Already Ready” with Smyers, Mooney and Shane McAnally, while Gaylon helped give “Lipstick” a female perspective.

“It’s one of my personal favorites,” said Mooney of “Lipstick.” “It’s a breakup song. It’s about a girl going out and, as the line goes, ‘Even though she knows that it ain’t going to fix it, she’s putting on her lipstick.’ It’s about putting on a front – a face – and going out and acting like everything is OK. The lyrics in that song are some of my favorite. We wanted to dig in and get some emotion on the record.”

Dan + Shay’s memories captured in this collection and their many personal touches equate to powerful moments that resonate with listeners throughout *Obsessed*. Fans immediately connected to the songs as the album soared to No. 1 on both Mediabase and *Billboard* Country Charts.

Mooney has been bound and determined to make his mark as a songwriter in Nashville ever since his father brought him to town when he was eight, and again when he was 12 years old, but it wasn’t until meeting Smyers that he found someone who he naturally felt comfortable with when it came to songwriting, singing harmonies, recording and eventually performing live.

Whether it’s another late night with their acoustics jamming for close friends, or on stage for thousands of fans on tour, Dan + Shay enjoy what they’ve been able to create together. Their layered voices – Mooney brings a gospel and R&B flavor, while Smyers is influenced by the harmonies of Fleetwood Mac and The Eagles – give each of their songs, especially a song like “Obsessed,” a lively feel that stretches the boundaries and creates its own unique place – the soundscape that is contemporary country music.

“We’re so proud of the way this album turned out,” Smyers concluded. “We made the best possible record we could. We wrote the best songs we could. We recorded the best songs that were submitted to us. Front to back we feel like we made a dynamic record.

Racking up more than 49 million YouTube views, the pair has impressively sold more than 2.2 million digital tracks and more than 600,000 album equivalents to date, including 230 million streams.

“Whenever Dan and I got together, there was just a magic in the room,” Mooney said. “This is what we’ve been trying to do—capture that energy. Everything on our iPods that we have listened to for years came together in those moments. This *is* Dan + Shay.”

The pair has earned three consecutive nominations for both ACM Vocal Duo of the Year and CMA’s Vocal Duo of the Year award as well as nods for an American Country Count-down Awards, CMT Awards, and Radio Disney Music Awards.