

Darden Smith

Darden Smith is a singer-songwriter based in Austin whose thirty-year career redefines what it means to be a musician. In addition to fifteen critically acclaimed albums, Smith continues to break new ground using the craft of songwriting in education, entrepreneurship, and in service to others. He is the founder and creative director of [SongwritingWith:Soldiers](#), a nonprofit that pairs award-winning songwriters with veterans and service members in retreat settings to craft songs about combat and the return home.

Smith began writing songs the age of ten, and has been recording since 1986. His music remains rooted in the songwriting traditions of his home state of Texas, while reflecting influences of rock, folk, and Americana rhythms and melodies. Described by All Music Guide as “a singer-songwriter blessed with an uncommon degree of intelligence, depth, and compassion,” Smith continues to write songs and tour across the U.S. and Europe. His latest album, *Everything*, will be released in April 2017 on Compass Records and features musicians Roscoe Beck (bass), JJ Johnson (drums), Charlie Sexton (guitars), Michael Ramos (keyboards) and David Mansfield (mandolin, pedal steel and strings), with vocal help from James House, Beth Nielsen Chapman, Bonnie Bishop, and Kelly Willis. Recorded in Austin during August 2016, the collection features songs written by Smith and with collaborators House, Radney Foster, Matraca Berg, Bruce Robison, and Jay Clementi.

About *Everything*, songwriter Mary Gauthier says, “*Darden Smith has made a beautiful new record, filled with hope and love and heartfelt tenderness. These songs are medicine for a world gone wrong. Give a listen, let them wash over you, receive the balm. This music is magic, and who doesn’t need a little magic right now?*”

Smith’s career evolved in unexpected directions when he began to explore the creative potential in what he calls “writing songs with people that don’t write songs.” He founded The Be An Artist Program in 2001, encouraging students in the US and Europe to discover their own creativity and passions. After a decade spent tapping the transformational possibilities of collaborative songwriting in a range of contexts—from homeless youth at Covenant House to HIV-affected villagers in South Africa and Botswana—Smith founded SongwritingWith:Soldiers in 2012.

The collaborative songwriting process at the heart of SongwritingWith:Soldiers offers veterans “a creative means to cathartic healing” (Anne Marie Dougherty, Executive Director of the Bob Woodruff Foundation). To date, the program has held more than thirty events at locations in Texas, New York, New Jersey, California, Maryland, Florida, Colorado and Virginia, and has expanded to include retreats for military families, military couples and student veterans. The music created during retreats and one-day workshops is shared online and through social media and concerts to raise awareness and help bridge the divide between military and civilian communities.

Smith served as Artist-In-Residence at Oklahoma State University’s Institute for Creativity and Innovation and the Riata School of Entrepreneurship (2011–2013), exploring the connections between art and business thinking with students and faculty. He leads songwriting workshops in the US and the UK, and works with major companies in key areas (conflict resolution, team building, innovative thinking) using songwriting to inspire creativity and collaboration within the traditional work environment. Smith has delivered keynote speeches, contributes to Huffington Post’s Arts & Culture Blog, and has recently completed a book manuscript called *The Trick: Surviving a Life in Creativity*.