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ZZ TOP
The Doobie Brothers

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DOG MAN BLUES

“The problem with genres is you don’t get to pick,” Minnesota musician **Charlie Parr** tells me over the phone from his favorite Eugene café. He doesn’t play Eugene for a few days yet, but he’s pit-stopped here for lunch on his way to California. “They just assign you one,” he says.

Parr’s talking about how his stuff often gets called blues music but he doesn’t like to be defined by that. “A lot of the music I really love comes from a time before categorization,” he explains. “That’s something that was done by record labels and radio stations in the ’20s, and a lot of the music I really love comes from right around that era.”

Parr’s touring in advance of his new album, *Dog*, released Sept. 8 on Red House Records. The album’s advance single, also called “Dog,” is a deceptively simple acoustic-blues meditation on the meaning of soul, inspired by long walks with Parr’s dog during a period of deep depression leading to the recording of his latest record.

Parr says writing *Dog* helped him through that difficult time. “It’s cathartic,” he explains. “Music is a thing in itself. I don’t really think it’s a means to something else. But it sure helped me a lot.”

From the song “Dog,” Parr sings over solo country-blues-style slide guitar: “How can you look me in the eyes and tell me no/ A soul is a soul is a soul is a soul.”

I ask Parr why humans are so *human-centric*, denying — even in dogs, some of our most-beloved companions — the virtue of having a soul all their own.

“We’re not even just human-centric,” Parr claims. “When we’re on the freeway I don’t think a lot of people are even thinking of a soul in another car going by. It’s a pretty deep, dark well.”

Charlie Parr plays 9 pm Sunday, July 23, at Hi-Fi Music Hall Lounge; \$10 door, 21-plus. — *Will Kennedy*

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