

# Southern Living

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## Rascal Flatts To Release Their 10th Studio Album 'Back To Us' On May 19



The album celebrates a 17-year journey for the trio.

We chatted with band members Joe Don Rooney, Jay DeMarcus and Gary Levox about their journey to releasing their 10th studio album, *Back To Us*, which will be released on May 19th. The album is available for pre-order now.

SL: Your 10th studio album will be released on May 19th. How excited are you for people to finally hear the project?

Joe Don: We've been saying this record has taken us 17 years to make. It feels like we are just in an awesome place as a band and really in control of our own destiny. We can't wait for everyone to hear it, because we put everything into it.

SL: How did you all come to the decision for 'Yours if You Want It' to be the lead single, and 'Back To Us' to be the title track?

Jay: We got pitched 'Yours If You Want It' early on in the song finding process. It was written by Jonathan Singleton and the wonderful late, great Andrew Dorff. It was just one of those songs when we heard the chorus we just felt like we immediately connected to it and I could hear Gary singing it in my mind with our vocals wrapped around it. I feel like there are certain songs the three of us hear at the same time and we just all go "Yes, alright that's it. Let's cut it tomorrow."

Joe Don: Undeniable.

Jay: Yep. and that was definitely one of those. It just felt like it immediately had to be the first single.

Gary: I'm just so glad Andrew got to hear it before his tragic passing. It was just nice to have his blessing and know that he loved our take on him and Jonathan's tune. That made it even more special.

Joe Don: Incredible to be a part of his legacy.

Jay: And then, 'Back To Us' is one of my favorites on the record, honestly. It's just such an honest lyric. It's a guy that has very great self-awareness about himself that he's screwing up for a long, long time and he's not been himself. And it's about him coming full circle and saying, "I'm so sorry that I've screwed up for so long and I know you probably feel like you've been sleeping with a stranger and not the man you fell in love with." And his willingness to go tomorrow it's going to be a brand new day, because you're not going to be waking up in a strangers bed anymore. We're going to get back to us, back to the people, back to the man you fell in love with. I think it's a great message and a wonderfully written song.

Gary: I think a lot of married people go through that and it's about coming back through the other side of that.

SL: There are some recognizable names that are a part of the album, how did these collaborations come about? (Chris Stapleton, Lauren Alaina, Dan + Shay)

Jay: When we heard Chris Stapleton sing 'Vandalized', on the demo, we were like "WOO, we gotta cut that song." But then we had to be careful because Chris was singing it, and he can make any song sound great. The song was so unique though in the way that it said how this girl had messed up this guy's heart, we couldn't deny it.

Gary: Dan + Shay are buddies of ours, and we made a deal with them several years ago that if they were going to steal our sound we had to have first pick of the songs they were writing. And I have to say they've stayed true to that because they've given us some of the best songs they've written. HA! Totally kidding, guys...but really, thanks for the great songs.

Jay: We love those guys so much and we have such a blast with them. I'm thrilled that they think enough of us to write for us. Shay is a wonderfully gifted singer, obviously, and a great songwriter. And the fact that he has such an affinity for Gary, which he makes no bones about, he can write very easily for Gary's vocal style and the kind of melodies Gary loves to sing. 'Hopin' You Were Lookin' is just a great, fun, catchy little pop tune that we had to cut and we put it on hold immediately.

Joe Don: With Lauren Alaina, we've been sitting on the song 'Are You Happy Now' for a little while and honestly it didn't make sense, until we found Lauren. Her performance is phenomenal and she's one of the only vocalists I have seen that can vocally match Gary.

SL: Besides the release of the album on May 19th, what else are you all looking forward to this summer?

Gary: We've been touring non stop for the past 15 years but, because this record is so important to us, we're really taking the time focus on this release. We're still playing some really fun festivals and fairs across the country though, as we'd miss the road too much. We love performing for our fans.