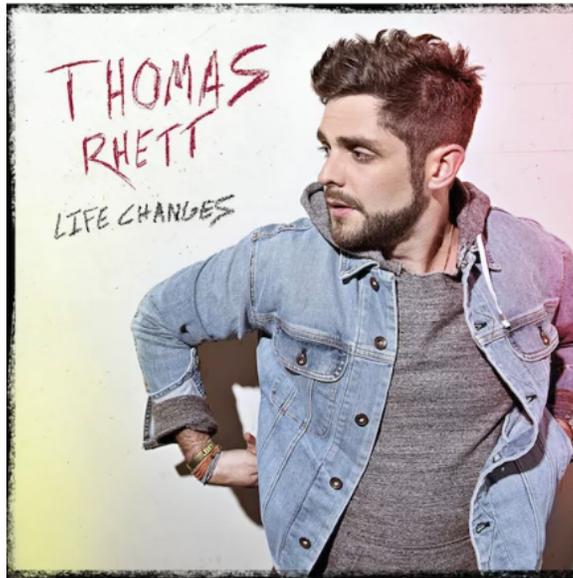


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Thomas Rhett Evolves On New Album 'Life Changes'



Singer-songwriter Thomas Rhett has been going non-stop in 2017, running at full-throttle both professionally and on the homefront. Earlier this year, he launched the headlining Home Team Tour. In May, Thomas Rhett and wife Lauren brought home two-year-old Willa Gray from Uganda, following a lengthy adoption process. On Aug. 12, they added a second daughter, newborn Ada James to their family. Now, less than a month later, Thomas Rhett is releasing his third album for Valory Music Co., the aptly titled *Life Changes*, out today (Sept. 8).

“This is the most insane time to release a record,” Thomas Rhett told MusicRow a few weeks before the album release. “But with that happening, I don’t think it could reinforce the name of the album any better. Not that I’m trying to use my baby as a marketing piece by any means, but it really does sum up, it is really the last bit of life-altering moments that started a few years back for me.”

Several of the tracks on Thomas Rhett’s new album, *Life Changes*, and most transparently on the title track, read like a journal into Thomas Rhett’s journey from single-guy singer-songwriter, to newlywed, to now a father of two. Over the years, Thomas Rhett and Lauren have been open about sharing their story with fans on social media and through his songs.

“I just love to tell my love story because I think we went through a period in music where love was not cool,” Thomas Rhett says. “It was like, ‘Single life all the way,’ and I do believe that what me and my wife have is special and I love being able to share that with my fans in hopes that it encourages them to not ever give up on that aspect of their life. In that aspect, I love being personal and saying whatever.”

Life Changes serves as the follow-up to 2015's platinum-selling Tangled Up, which introduced fans to Thomas Rhett's larger landscape of musical muses, not to mention the three-times platinum, six-week chart-topper "Die A Happy Man." The popularity of the ballad's earnest, vivid lyrics and throwback r&b groove earned the Academy of Country Music's 2017 trophy for Song of the Year, as well as a Male Vocalist of the Year win for Thomas Rhett.

Thomas Rhett continues that old school-meets-new school approach on the new album. While some artists might turn to streaming services to uncover new (and old) sounds for inspiration, Thomas Rhett puts in a call to his father, fellow songwriter Rhett Akins, or to his grandparents.

"I'll say, 'Tell me about an artist in the '70s that I never would have heard of.' I'll start dialing into era and generations of music and live in that for a minute. We'll probably continue to do that forever. I love dipping back into the way things used to be and getting a good blend of a lot of different decades of music."

Life Changes samples from '50s doo-wop ("Sweetheart"), Marvin Gaye-inspired '70s R&B ("Kiss Me Like A Stranger"), the '80s heartland rock of Tom Petty and Bruce Springsteen ("Renegade") and classic country ("Drink A Little Beer," featuring Akins).

"It's very all over the place, but somehow it's all me," Thomas Rhett says. "I think it just gives you a greater respect for those time periods. When you go back and try to replicate a sound being made in the '70s, it's hard to pretend that you don't have the technology that you do. It's like, 'How did they get those drum sounds?' Or, 'What amp were they using that we don't have access to? Do they even still make that brand of amp?' For 'Sweetheart,' we turned on a vinyl, put a mic up to it, and sampled it."

The freewheeling experimentation process allowed Thomas Rhett and his co-producers Dann Huff, Jesse Frasure, Julian Bunetta and Joe London to challenge themselves to find the precise instrumentations and sounds needed to make Life Changes into a cohesive project.

"I do a lot more falsetto on this record," Thomas Rhett offers as an example. "I didn't even have a falsetto voice until last year. It's fun to write songs with the challenge of singing in a way you never sang before. I think it helps you progress as a singer/songwriter."

Over the past two years, between opening shows for Jason Aldean, as well as headlining his own 2017 Home Team Tour, Thomas Rhett estimates he penned over 100 songs, and listened to more, while carefully whittling the possibilities down to 22 recorded tracks, with 14 cuts making the album. Thomas Rhett penned 10 of the final 14 tracks. With so much additional recorded music in the can, the singer-songwriter muses the unreleased tracks could be included on an EP or deluxe edition.

The album is led by the chart-topper "Craving You," a soulful, danceable collaboration with fellow singer-songwriter Maren Morris, which was penned by Dave Barnes and Julian Bunetta.

"I've always wanted to work with Maren. I love her voice and how soulful and powerful it is, and her vibe just fit that song to me. My manager [G Major Management's Virginia Davis] mentioned it might be cool to have a female on it and that conversation turned into who should we feature. Maren came in and sang in the studio for like an hour. I was blown away by how quick it took her to do it. Now if I listen to the song without her on there, it sounds miserable. She made the song what it was."

Though the two red-hot singer-songwriters collaborated on “Craving You,” Thomas Rhett says they have yet to collaborate in the writing room. And Morris is just the beginning of his lengthy wish-list of co-writers.

“I would love to write with Pharrell or Justin Timberlake or Bruno Mars or let Adele grace me with her presence, that would be insane,” he quips. “Eric Church and I have written once. I’d like to get in the room and write something amazing again, but it really is hard to get in a room with artists unless you plan it like two years in advance.”

For *Life Changes*, Thomas Rhett reconnected with a loyal stable of co-writers, including his “Die A Happy Man” co-writers Joe Spargur and Sean Douglas, while also welcoming newer collaborators including Josh Miller, Dave Barnes, and Emily Weisband.

The album’s final track, and one of TR’s latest releases, “Grave,” wraps the album with a gospel-tinged, choir-backed number. Hillary Lindsey, Chris DeStefano, and Miller, who also contributed vocals to the demo version, penned the track.

“His voice was so honest on that song that I think that turned me off the song at first,” Thomas Rhett notes, “because I was like, ‘I don’t know if I can sound as honest on a song that I didn’t write as he did.’ But when I got in the studio and got the choir background, it felt churchy and religious in a way, and it came to life to me. It just seemed like a perfect ending as you listen to the album top to bottom and you try to follow the story that I tried to put together in my head.”

When you are a songwriter at heart, the writing never stops. Though *Life Changes* releases today, Thomas Rhett is already working on new songs.

“I try to write for the next record before the current one even comes out, which is kind of impossible but I love to get a head start on it. One of my biggest fears as a writer and artist is to be on the last single of a project and not really know where you are headed next.”