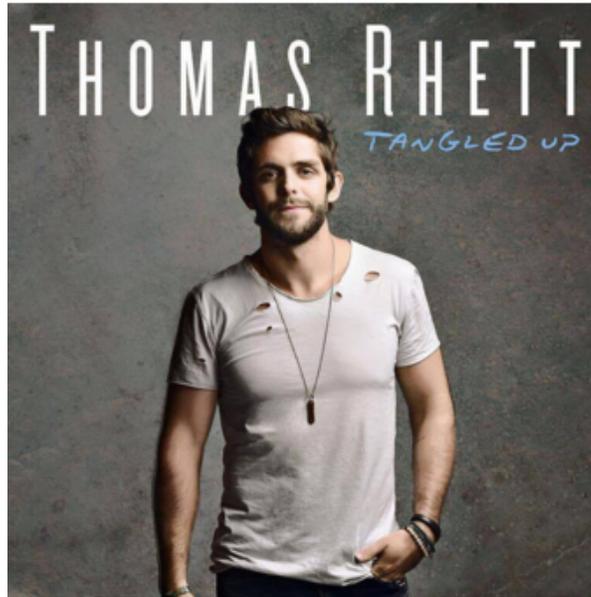


# Parade

## Parade Gets Tangled Up With Thomas Rhett



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With a number one single, a CMA Award nomination for Best New Artist and a sophomore album, *Tangled Up*, out today, singer Thomas Rhett isn't likely to "Crash and Burn" anytime soon. We chatted up one of country music's hottest singers to get the story behind his genre-crossing new record.

Parade: *Tangled Up* has such a different sound than your first album, *It Goes Like This*. How have you evolved since your 2013 debut?

Thomas Rhett: For the first time, I feel like I'm the artist I was meant to be. When I started out, I had zero fans. I had maybe played five shows when I signed a record deal. It was like just one of those things God just wanted to happen. So it took me a long time to figure out who I was as an artist. I went from wanting to be Eric Church, wearing sunglasses on stage, to being Luke Bryan, wearing a backwards baseball cap. When you're trying to figure [yourself out], who you are is who your idols are. And to this day they still are my idols, but the more shows you play, the more you figure out How do I want to entertain the crowd? What's going to set me apart from the rest of the guys in our genre?

Parade: The new album is so eclectic—it's almost like a mixtape with your voice as the common thread. How did you pick the songs?

Thomas Rhett: When I was making *Tangled Up*, there were five or six songs that I

wanted to put on the first record; Songs like “Like It’s the Last Time” and “The Day You Stopped Looking Back” and “Playing with Fire” and “T-Shirt.” There’s that true Thomas Rhett that everyone knows, but then there’s this guy who’s been wanting to kinda bust out for about a year and a half. So, yeah, there’s a lot of craziness on this album. Which [fans] who are strictly listening to the radio might find a little odd. I think once you give the album a chance, you can’t deny that it makes you feel good, it makes you smile and that it really makes you feel all kinds of things. I love the balance and the mixture on this record. We definitely went for it on certain songs that take you to a place you’ve probably never been before. But I love doing that. I love challenging people a little bit to get outside their day-to-day bubble. That’s what I did. I challenged myself to get out of my bubble. And there came Tangled Up.

Parade: The collaborations on this album (Jordin Sparks, “Playing With Fire” and LunchMoney Lewis, “Feel Good”) are not your typical country collaborations. How did those come about?

Thomas Rhett: They’re both pretty random. “I Feel Good” is a song I wrote with two guys out of L.A. and they know LunchMoney Lewis. I’d never met him; but I was a huge fan of [his hit single] “Bills.” We finished the song but didn’t have a bridge, and I had to go play a show. While I was on stage, they were like, “We’re going to send this track to Lunch and see if he wants to put a little verse on it.” He did and sent it back and it went on the record. I’ve always been a fan of Jordin Sparks; she’s got a killer voice. I’ve always wanted to do a duet with such a powerhouse like that. She came to Nashville and knocked the song out in literally thirty minutes. I got chills watching her in the studio.

Parade: You’re featured on Brett Eldredge’s new album Illinois. Were his feelings hurt you chose Jordin Sparks to duet on the ballad instead of him?

Thomas Rhett: [laughs] Me and Brett singing a love ballad on my record....I don’t know how that would have gone. There wasn’t a song on the album that I felt I could do with a dude. I guess I could have been like “Brett, will you write a rap for ‘I Feel Good?’” After Brett heard my album, he had just written a song called “You Can’t Stop Me,” which was right up my alley. It’s probably my favorite song on his album—and it’s not because I’m on it. I love that song. You can’t help but want to move to that one.

Parade: You’re about to debut most of these songs live for the first time. Which new songs are you most excited to play live?

Thomas Rhett: “Crash and Burn” [the lead single] has become my bounce song. I’ve never had a bouncing song before. People move to “Get Me Some of That” and they sing to “It Goes Like This” and they kind of move to “Make Me Wanna.” But no one really jumps. And it’s been an ongoing thing for the last like three weeks that when that last chorus comes on, people just bounce. Hopefully we can have a couple more of those.

Parade: What makes you most excited about performing this record?

Thomas Rhett: It’s always fun to get in with the band and our live thing is always different from the record, so we love trying to figure out our own twist on the songs. The biggest thing is that, yes it is a bit different [from the last album], and it is a bit shocking to hear some of these things on my record, but at the end of the day, I’m still me—the guy you became a fan of three years ago. I’m just putting my voice on a bit of a different

melody. I am 25 years old; I love to have a good time. When I go to a concert, I want to be entertained, I want to smile, I want to laugh and have fun with my friends. Those are the kind of songs I try to cut, so I basically made my album as a set list. I'm always thinking about my live show when I'm putting together a record. I just feel like we could play tracks one through 13 and have a pretty fun show.

Parade: You put out several music videos in the weeks leading up the release of Tangled Up. What was your thinking behind that?

Thomas Rhett: I wanted to put the most whack ones out first so when you heard the record, you weren't like, "What did I just purchase?" "Vacation" and "I Feel Good" are very different. Plus, it's fun when [the fans] get to hear the songs, and also see the content of the videos.

Parade: You're nominated for a CMA Award for Best New Artist for the second time. Do you still feel like a new artist?

Thomas Rhett: Gosh, no. I don't even think new artists feel like new artists. Because most people only see your success, they don't remember your missed singles. I bet there's a lot of fans out there who think "Crash and Burn" is my first single, which is fun. Because if you're still considered a new artist, that means you're fresh.

Parade: What's the best part of your job?

Thomas Rhett: Every show is not a 10. There's some nights where I can't sing as well as I did the last night, or it's a Thursday and people have to work on Friday so they're not letting completely loose. But those three out of 10 you just destroy it. You and the band don't care, you're just playing music; and the fans don't care, they're just having a good time. I think the fact that my job is giving people memories to take home, and songs to sing along to, and to put smiles on their faces, I mean, that's why we do this stuff. It's not really the records or how many number ones you had in a row, if you can just play shows for a while and be the reason people are having a good time, that makes it all worth it.

