

Entertainment WEEKLY

MUSIC

Go behind the scenes of Thomas Rhett and Jordin Sparks' duet

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10.7.15.

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Thomas Rhett's second album, *Tangled Up*, did not drop quietly. It arrived when conversation about the country genre — its sub-genres and what they mean — was peaking. *Tangled Up*, his collection of 13 confident tracks that mesh country, pop, funk, and even a touch of disco, further fueled the fire.

Current single, "Die A Happy Man," a love-letter to Rhett's high school-sweetheart-turned-wife, will be a career song for the singer. "The Day You Stop Looking Back", written by The Cadillac Three frontman Jaren Johnston and Luke Laird, is, without reservation, beautiful. Most recent country radio No.1 "Crash and Burn", penned by Chris Stapleton, is irresistible. But his duet with pop star Jordin Sparks, "Playing With Fire" is also a highlight. EW is excited to premiere a behind the scenes look at the making of that collaboration below.

Speaking to Rhett, he beams with praise for Sparks. "I think it took her, like, 18 minutes to record her part," he says. "She's just as talented as can be." Rhett wanted to cut a duet because it was something he hadn't done before, and while he originally looked at finding a guest from within the genre, everyone seemed to already be recording their

own. They began looking in other circles. “Scott Borchetta, the head of our label [Big Machine], was out in L.A. for American Idol and ran into Jordin,” Rhett says. “He told her about me and the song and she said yes right away.”

Sparks was clearly thrilled with the process. “I was so excited,” she tells EW. “I grew up listening to everything and I love country music — one day I will do a country album. I will! [And] the song is beautiful and we had a really great time in the studio. He had already done his part but he was with me the whole time and it was a really, really good time.” Part of that good time includes a visit from an unexpected icon. “Reba walked in!” Sparks says. “And she listened to the track! I mean, that was pretty nerve-wrecking, but she loved it.”

Rhett, who grew up surrounded by Country Music’s A-List — his father is Rhett Akins — remembers Sparks’ reaction. “I’ve been around Reba my whole life with dad and whatever, so it wasn’t really anything at first but Jordin was pretty excited. It was fun to see.”

Check out a video from the studio below and the final product [here](#).