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Behind the Scenes at 'New Year's Rockin' Eve': Thomas Rhett, Gloria Estefan & More



Erika Goldring/FilmMagic

Thomas Rhett performs onstage at the 50th annual CMA Awards at the Bridgestone Arena on Nov. 2, 2016 in Nashville, Tenn.

Dick Clark's New Year's Rockin' Eve With Ryan Seacrest is about to kick 2016 to the curb, but before the show hits the air at 8 p.m., Billboard is giving a sneak peek of the party, which

features performances by Mariah Carey, DNCE, Thomas Rhett and Gloria Estefan, who is set to perform with the cast of her Broadway musical, *On Your Feet!*

Rhett rehearsed his set earlier on Saturday (Dec. 31) in Times Square at the stage located at 46th Street, and his two-song set -- which included the Grammy-nominated "Die a Happy Man" and "T-Shirt," plus "Vacation" -- received big reactions from revelers peering over the barricades. Rhett was relaxed in a brown suede jacket, print T-shirt and black ripped jeans as he led his band through two soundchecks. By the second run-through, Rhett was fully engaged with the audience, working both sides of the stage and clearly ready for his big night.

"I've watched this show in my living room since I was seven or eight years old," the 26-year old Tennessee native tells *Billboard*. "It's always been a tradition in my family to watch the ball drop on New Year's Eve, so to actually be here in Times Square and in the middle of all of these people, and performing on the show, is a dream come true."

Rhett is gearing up for a big 2017: he is nominated for a Grammy for best country song for "Die a Happy Man" (co-written by Sean Douglas and Joe Spargur) and is about to hit the road for his Home Team tour on Feb. 23. To promote the trek, Rhett donned a "Home Team" guitar strap as he strummed an acoustic guitar for "Die a Happy Man."

Speaking on the song's success, Rhett humbly tells *Billboard* he "just happened to hit at the right time with a song about my wife."

As for his New Year's resolution to "get back in the gym, quit a couple of bad habits and be a better person," he does have a goal set to start work on his next album. Rhett says he is looking into "duet options" for the next album.

"We are getting in the studio in January, and we have so many songs," he says. "We are going to keep cutting songs until we figure out which 10 or 15 songs we want to present to our fans. Making a record is one of the most fun times of the year for me, just to get in there and be creative."

Carey rehearsed earlier in the afternoon, and Estefan was on the tightest schedule of all -- rehearsing her number with the cast of *On Your Feet!* at 7:22 p.m. -- one hour before broadcast. Other songs on her set include "Rhythm Is Gonna Get You," "Everlasting Love," "Turn the Beat Around," "Conga," "Get On Your Feet" and "Oye."

