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Thomas Rhett Was Inspired By Bruno Mars for His Soulful New Tunes



Thomas Rhett has been paying a lot of attention to soulful pop star Bruno Mars lately. He's even recorded his own country version of the ballad "[When I Was Your Man](#)" and started [covering](#) Bruno and Mark Ronson's smash "Uptown Funk" in his shows.

That influence is even more pronounced in the "Make Me Wanna" singer's new music, which he previewed for a small group of journalists in Nashville yesterday (March 10) and described as "not your average songs you might hear on a country album." The four tracks he played were produced by Dann Huff (Keith Urban, Billy Currington) and Jesse Frasure, and sounded like bold moves away from hits like "It Goes Like This" and "Get Me Some of That," which he's enjoyed with radio thus far.

"I've definitely been inspired by the more funky, soul side of myself lately, as of the past year or so, and it's just been fun to delve down that path," he said.

“There’s obviously going to be songs on the records that definitely are a lot like the first album. But I thought it was fun to get out there and try new things with my voice and try new things with my songwriting.”

Among the offerings were “Southside,” constructed on a rubbery bass guitar groove, subsonic bass drops, a baritone sax riff and lots of *ooh-ooh* backing vocals. The title is a euphemism for one’s posterior, and it almost certainly gets that part of the body moving. There was also “T Shirt,” a sexy hookup song that rides a crunchy set of chords and record squiggle noises, as well as the power ballad “Single Girl.”

The likely next single is a Chris Stapleton song called “Crash and Burn,” which marries “Chain Gang” grunts and a lively Motown melody to unbearably sad lyrics about wrecking a good relationship. Chris also provided backing vocals on the song. For Thomas Rhett, it fit perfectly with his own taste at the moment.

“I’ve noticed that whatever I’m listening to in that current time period is what I’m trying to write, if that makes sense—like In my own style, if you will,” he said. “If I get pitched a song like ‘Crash and Burn,’ it’s like, let’s do it.”

While the more disco-indebted “Make Me Wanna” helped lay the foundation for this new, funkier iteration of Thomas Rhett, he also explained that there will be some things on his sophomore album that could have worked on his debut. He also acknowledged that this new music might push country radio to new places (“There’s not really a lane for it just yet,” he noted), but the reaction he gets from trying on his “Country Bruno” guise at shows makes him feel confident about his decision to follow his own interests.

“When you get out there and you’re singing ‘Uptown Funk’ and you’re watching all these dudes in cowboy hats and huge belt buckles just freakin’ grindin’, just getting after it, it’s like, why can’t I do some form of that?”