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## THOMAS RHETT RINGS IN SUMMERFEST WITH BRIGHT SET AT AMERICAN FAMILY INSURANCE AMPHITHEATER



Welcome back, summer. Where ya been?

After an unseasonably cold start to what's supposed to be the warmest time of the year, Summerfest was blessed with wonderful weather for its opening day Wednesday. And country pop star Thomas Rhett — playing a breezy American Family Insurance Amphitheater show — was perfectly suited to the climate.

A gentlemanly romantic unafraid to show his feelings — with help at times from [recurring co-writer and Greenfield native Joe London](#) — Rhett Wednesday offered a couple of contemplative tunes just shy of misty-eyed from “Center Point Road,” which debuted this month at the top of the Billboard 200.



There was “Remember You Young,” Rhett’s next country single, and likely his 14th to go to No. 1, with Rhett reminiscing about his wife when they were college kids, and treasuring his own child’s fleeting innocence. And on “Old Town Truck,” he looked back at his first set of wheels, and all the freedom he felt, “Playing our song on the stereo/Driving till we ran out of road.”

These sweet tunes — less than a month old but with plenty of admirers Wednesday — fit right in with set-list staples like the London co-written “Sixteen” and “Die a Happy Man,” which drew swooning singalongs from the sold-out crowd of about 23,000.

Yet despite all the contemplation, Rhett made sure to live in the present. With a sax and trumpet player in frequent lockstep by Rhett’s side, “Make Me Wanna” evoked “20/20 Experience”-era Justin Timberlake, the song suavely sliding into “Suit and Tie.” There was a nod to James Brown soul-funk showmanship — albeit without nearly as much of the punch — toward the end of “Vacation.”

And en route to a secondary stage in the back of the amphitheater right in front of the grassy hill — where Rhett did stripped-down takes of “Truck,” “Star of The Show” and a hit he wrote for Florida Georgia Line, “Round Here” (with a surprising touch of Eric Church’s “Creepin’”) — Rhett sang the uplifting “Life Changes” running through the crowd.

Rhett’s life, and career, have changed pretty dramatically. During a pause from the music while sipping New Glarus’ Spotted Cow beer, Rhett recalled his past two Summerfest amphitheater appearances — both opening slots, for Jason Aldean and Florida Georgia Line — and expressed gratitude and awe that he was finally able to headline the place himself.

I can't fathom any fans were surprised by that development. Like summer's (eventual) return, Rhett's country stardom has long seemed inevitable.

### **The openers**

Rhett's opener Dustin Lynch is leaning much closer to pop than country these days, with crowd-pleasing results, performing in front of a fancy lighting rig Wednesday and channeling Sam Hunt with newer tunes like "Red Dirt, Blue Eyes," which contrary to the title, doesn't possess a single drop of Texas twang.

### **The set list**

1. "Look What God Gave Her"
2. "Crash and Burn"
3. "Get Some Of That"
4. "Craving You"
5. "Sixteen"
6. "Don't Threaten Me With A Good Time"
7. "It Goes Like This"
8. "Remember You Young"
9. "Life Changes"
10. "That Old Truck"
11. "Star Of The Show"
12. "Round Here" (Florida Georgia Line cover; with a snippet of Eric Church's "Creepin'")
13. "Make Me Wanna" (with a snippet of Justin Timberlake's "Suit and Tie")
14. "Vacation"
15. "Marry Me"
16. "Die A Happy Man"
17. "Unforgettable"
18. "T-Shirt"