

**PEOPLE:** <https://people.com/country/tucker-beathard-releases-king-album/>

## **Tucker Beathard's New Album KING Rises from His Growing Pains and His Brother's Senseless Death**

The album reflects the singer-songwriter's life changes as he's navigated a label change, unplanned fatherhood and the loss of his "best friend." "It all comes out in my songs," he says

Tucker Beathard says he's done "a lot of growing up" since breaking out with his Top 5 debut single "Rock On" in 2016. But then life has given him lots of opportunity for growth: a parting of the ways with his record label, unexpected fatherhood, and most profoundly, the senseless slaying of his beloved younger brother.

"A lot of ups and downs, a lot of kicking my own ass and a lot of learning," Beathard tells PEOPLE, summing up the past few years. And given that he calls songwriting his "therapy," it's not surprising when he adds: "It all comes out in my songs."

The 25-year-old Tennessean originally intended his new album, KING, released on Friday, to debut last year as the second half of a double album, but the timing changed after he signed with a new label. Maybe that was a good thing: the original nine tracks have since expanded to 13, in no small part due to Beathard's life experiences. And though it's the companion to Nobody's Everything, independently released in 2018, this "half" of a project clearly stands on its own.

Surely the most touching addition to the new album is its final track, Beathard's first creative response to the death of his brother, Clay. The 22-year-old college quarterback was stabbed to death last December outside a Nashville bar after he and two friends stepped in to defend a woman against unwanted advances, according to witnesses. One of the friends also was killed; the suspect has since been indicted on two counts of first-degree murder.

Beathard was raised in a tightknit family of five children— including older brother San Francisco 49ers quarterback C.J. Beathard — and he calls his late brother "my best friend." The loss, he grimly shares, was his absolute worst nightmare come true.

"I've always been scared of losing someone in my family," he says. "I always wanted to be the first person to go just because of being scared of that. And then it happened."

Only his faith, he says, has helped him endure the pain. "I knew I wasn't strong enough," he says, "and I wasn't necessarily wrong about that. It is something that no individual can fully handle by themselves. I was to a point where I had to just rely on and cry out for the Lord to get me through it, and I've never experienced a strength or a foundation like that. What he did for me — getting me through this chapter and growing me in this way — it's unexplainable. It doesn't make sense, honestly, but it's something that I experienced and am still experiencing every day."

No doubt Beathard also found solace in his constant impulse to respond to life with songwriting. "I Ain't Without You" is strong evidence of that.

On first listen, the gentle ballad that Beathard co-wrote with his songwriter father Casey Beathard, is all about finding his brother's presence even in the midst of loss: "You're the sun on my face / You're a cool breeze blowing / You're a second wind / whispering, "Keep on going." / ... You're a feeling and a knowing / I ain't without you."

But, Beathard says, he hopes listeners also hear a testimony to his faith, especially in lines like

the refrain, "Let 'em call me strong / but we both know / I ain't without you."

The album's title obviously holds the same double meaning: "King" is Clay's middle name, and of course, it also evokes a Christian theme.

Beathard's growing pains are scattered throughout the entire album, couched in pungent lyrics and memorable melodies that lean toward his rock tastes. He shows he knows his way around crafting clever country hooks ("One Upper," "20/10 TN"), but his most soul-piercing tracks, such as "Find Me Here" and "Faithful," trace a sinner's journey to redemption.

"Yeah, I was living the whole 'sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll' life," Beathard says. "It was just leaving me so empty, and at some point, I kind of burned myself out. I was like, I gotta get my s--- together, because this is not good."

Perhaps his biggest wakeup call was his surprise fatherhood. Beathard revealed to fans last month that he has a 2-year-old daughter, the result of a short-term liaison. He learned he was going to be a dad in late 2018 in the middle of his struggle, over creative differences, to extricate himself from his recording contract.

"Right when I thought things couldn't get more overwhelming or more stressful, I got a call saying that I was going to be having a kid all the way out in Seattle, Washington," Beathard, who is based in Nashville, shared in an Instagram post in July.

He admits the baby "was a product of the 'Find Me Here' life" — a reference to the remorseful song about his wayward ways: "Kicking myself staring at this cross on my skin / too jacked up to just black out in this mess of a bed I made / with some girl I'll just call Omaha 'cause I'll forget her name."

But the news that instantly complicated his life, Beathard says, has since become "the greatest blessing I could possibly ask for."

He says he finally decided to announce the existence of the little girl named Sage, who resides in Seattle, simply because he was missing her so much during the pandemic. "I've never been really passionate about social media," he says, but "it was Sage's second birthday. Unfortunately, I couldn't fly out there because of all this coronavirus stuff. I just wanted to share a piece of my life that I haven't shared with a lot of people."

At the moment, he says, his interactions with his daughter are limited to frequent FaceTime calls. He and Sage's mother are on good terms, he says: "We both just want what's best for our little girl, and she's a great mom."

Sage's presence, he says, has forced maturity on him, and for that, he's grateful. "You can't go back, you gotta grow up," Beathard remembers telling himself. "This isn't about you anymore. This is about your daughter. You have to man up and try to be the best father that you can."

"And it's been great," he adds. "She's definitely grown me up more than I could have ever thought."

Looking back over these past pivotal years, Beathard says it's now clear that "the only thing you can plan on is uncertainty."

But that realization has helped to give him a solid outlook for his life and his career. Yes, he easily admits, "I would love to be super-popular and famous with my music."

He now knows, though, that other things are more important, including his artistic freedom.

"I could be totally happy as long as I can just do my music for the rest of my life," he says, "and just support myself and my daughter and my family. At the end of the day, I'd like for my music to blow up and be as big as possible. But if it doesn't, as long as I can do it and keep reaching people, I can die happy."