

Tennessean: <https://www.tennessean.com/story/entertainment/music/2020/08/20/tucker-beathard-album-brother-killed-nashville/3392106001/>

Songwriter Tucker Beathard dedicates new album 'King' to late brother Clay Beathard

After his 22-year-old brother died last year, country artist Tucker Beathard found solace in a familiar habit — songwriting.

“I’ve always used songwriting and songs as therapy and my outlet of expressing things,” Beathard told The Tennessean. “That’s just what I do. That’s my way of getting that out. It feels way better than holding it in, ya know?”

He captured the result in “I Ain’t Without You,” a moving ballad that’s as spiritual as it is personal. The song closes Beathard’s new album, “King,” which takes its title from his brother’s middle name.

Tucker Beathard’s brother, Clay Beathard, was fatally stabbed outside Dogwood bar in Midtown last December.

“The impact he’s had on me and the impact that’s had on my life, I just wanted to put a stamp — a piece of him — on this album because his life impacted and shaped a lot of this project,” Beathard said.

And, for “I Ain’t Without You,” he enlisted the “only one who could relate to what I wanted to say” to co-write — his father and notable Nashville penman Casey Beathard.

On the track, Tucker Beathard sings, “So I keep holdin' on with everything I got in me/ To every piece of your memory so the world can see/ I ain't, I ain't, I ain't without you.”

They wrote for a strength that Tucker Beathard said he couldn’t find on his own.

“it’s talking about Jesus, to be honest,” Tucker Beathard said. “I learned pretty quickly after my brother’s passing that I’m not strong enough to get through this but the Lord is. I got my strength and got my indescribable peace and everything through him.”

Beathard recorded much of “King” — a companion to 2018’s self-released “Nobody’s Everything,” the first installment of 20-song debut double-album — prior to his brother’s death. It turned into a “whole different project” as Beathard and his family (he’s the third generation in a line of public figures, including his father, brother C.J. Beathard, a San Francisco 49ers quarterback, and grandfather Bobby Beathard, a hall of fame sports executive) reckoned with last year’s sudden loss.

Instead of doubling-down on defining the album as a “part II” to 2018’s release, he named it after “his biggest fan.”

“When he was on earth, he would come by the studio and hang out with us,” Beathard said. “He was always the first person that I would send songs to and get feedback from.”

And the songs expand from a rock-friendly storytelling that Beathard introduced with “Nobody’s Everything.” While many of his peers lean heavily into R&B grooves and party-ready pop bombast, Beathard finds his musical footing by channeling touches of indie rock and a pop-punk aesthetic — the by-product of influences such as Kings of Leon and blink-182.

Tucker Beathard tracked drums, guitar and lead vocals on “King,” co-producing the album with Ryan

Tyndell and Jordan Rigby.

"It's almost like when you play every part you want [it] to be heard and evenly balanced," Beathard said. "Ultimately I want each song to really bring as much intensity as possible. Even if that means it's just me and as acoustic guitar, I want it to, emotionally, be as powerful as possible."

Beathard kicks out his prescribed intensity from album opener "Better Than Me," a bad-side-of-heartbreak anthem with a rousing chorus. From there, caters to the Volunteer State with Hail Mary charm on "20-10 Tennessee," burns down a highway with progressive road trip-ready number "Paper Towns" and offers a subtle holler for one relationship's last call on "Can't Stay Here."

On "Too Drunk," an unapologetic taste of Southern rock, Tucker said he aimed to "blow the roof off."

"I didn't have anybody telling me I couldn't, so I could go as far as I wanted to go," he said.

From a cathartic dedication to his brother to an uncompromising intensity, "it all works," Beathard said. "I just make music that I feel led to make."