



"This time, I really wanted to do something different," says Darius Rucker. "I went straight from my first album into my second, and it really just picked up where the other one left off. So when we went into the studio on this one, we really wanted to take our time and not even start worrying about a record until we had songs that we felt were the right ones. And when I heard what would become the lead single, 'True Believers,' played back, I thought, 'Wow, I've never done anything like that before!'"

"True Believers" - a triumphant reflection of the rewards and challenges of sustaining a marriage - was the first song recorded for this project and became the first single and title track for Rucker's third and most ambitious country studio album. While his previous two albums, *Learn To Live* and *Charleston, SC 1966* both topped the *Billboard* Country Album chart and produced five Number One singles, on *True Believers* he opted to dig deeper, work with new collaborators, and create something more resonant both musically and emotionally.

"I just started with a list of guys I wanted to write with," says Rucker. "The process doesn't really change - you go off in a corner and write - but I really wanted to try not to write 'Alright' again. And I'm very happy with what we got. I love the song choices, the sound is brighter, and even though I'm not big on listening to myself, I'm really proud of the vocals on this record."

Rucker, who first attained multi-platinum status as the lead singer and rhythm guitarist of Hootie & the Blowfish, wrote ten of the twelve tracks on *True Believers* - ranging from the feel-good sing-along "Radio" to the sophisticated narrative of "Shine." He expresses special pride in the raw and realistic sentiments of songs like "Miss You" and "I Will Love You Still," a duet with young powerhouse vocalist Mallery Hope. ("I don't write a lot of break-up songs," he says, "but on that one, I think there's a whole new freshness to the pain in my voice.")

The two songs Rucker didn't have a hand in writing are both major events of their own. "Love Without You" features Sheryl Crow, with whom Rucker had wanted to record ever since they sang together at a VH1 function almost twenty years ago. For his version of the popular Old Crow Medicine Show song "Wagon Wheel," initially based on a sketch by Bob Dylan, Rucker, never expecting them to say yes, invited his tour partners and Capitol Records labelmates Lady Antebellum into the studio. When they came in for a session, Rucker says, "they took the whole song three steps up."

The singer is quick to give credit where it's due for the fact that all of these elements hang together so cohesively on *True Believers*. For the third time, Frank Rogers served as producer for a Darius Rucker album, along with co-writing three songs. "Frank's the guy," says Rucker. "He just gets what I want to do. He's my George Martin - not to compare myself to the Beatles, but I want him to do everything I do."

Since re-introducing himself to the world as a country artist, Rucker has had a truly remarkable few years. In 2008, he released *Learn to Live*; the album's first single, "Don't Think I Don't Think About It," made him the first African American with a Number One country song since Charley Pride in 1983. It was followed by two more singles that topped the chart - "It Won't Be Like This For Long" and "Alright" - and earned him the New Artist award from the Country Music Association. His 2010 follow-up, *Charleston, SC 1966*, included two more Number Ones, "Come Back Song" and "This." Recently, Rucker was nominated for the CMA's Musical Event of the Year award for his performance of "Stuck on You" with Lionel Richie, and in October, he achieved a childhood dream when he was inducted into the Grand Ole Opry.

Asked if he can believe the unprecedented success of his second career, Rucker just laughs. "From where I was five years ago to the CMA's and the Grand Ole Opry, why would I believe that?," he says. "I didn't even know if country radio was going to play my song, but you can't think about things like that."

With the twelve songs on *True Believers*, Darius Rucker takes his accomplishments to impressive new heights. Staying true to the real-life stories that define country music, he has crafted an album that is consistent and complex, full of joy, pain, and passion. Now Rucker is looking forward to the next chapter - bringing these new songs to the stage.

"When I cut a record, I really think about what it will be like to play live," he says. "We're already doing some of these - 'Radio,' 'Shine,' 'Wagon Wheel' - and I can't wait to start playing a song like 'Heartbreak Road.' These songs were all fun to play in the studio, even just as a jam session, and that's what it's all about. If I don't have fun, I know that the audience won't. So when I make a record, I look for songs that I'll want to play for the rest of my life."

Contact:

Lori Christian

UMG Nashville

Lori.christian@emicap.com

615.524.7563

Ebie McFarland

Essential Broadcast Media

ebie@ebmediapr.com

615.327.3259