



RINKSIDER MUSIC UPDATE



Darius Rucker's 'Learn To Live' hits #1

Having your first country album debut at #1 on the Billboard charts – following a multi-week #1 debut country single – is a huge achievement by anyone's measure. When you add to that the New York Times' claim that your debut album is "one of the year's most vibrant country albums," and Variety's declaration that "Country music has a new major star, and the genre may never be the same" – well, it can be pretty heavy stuff.

So it comes as no surprise that Capitol Records Nashville artist Darius Rucker is delighted by the critical and commercial success of his first country album, *Learn To Live*, and very proud of the #1 single, "Don't Think I Don't Think About It" – on which Rucker was a co-writer. And his delight only increased as his second single, "It Won't Be Like This For Long," also landed atop all three country singles charts.

However, what Darius Rucker mostly feels these days is grateful. Grateful that the millions of fans that knew Rucker as the voice of Hootie & The Blowfish, the Grammy-winning group whose album *Cracked Rear View* sold more than 16 million copies, happily followed the singer/songwriter in his natural evolution to country music. Grateful that hundreds of country radio programmers embraced him as a welcome addition to the genre – as did the nation's countless country music fans. Grateful that Nashville songwriters and established country artists have recognized him as one of their own. Grateful that he has been embraced by media and invited to perform on *The Late Show*, *The Tonight Show*, *The Ellen DeGeneres Show*, *The Jimmy Kimmel Show*, and more. And finally, grateful that, as a seasoned performer who has already experienced the fickle highs and lows of fame, he's grounded and secure enough these days to truly appreciate this new phase in his music career.

With the critically-acclaimed *Learn To Live*, the listener realizes that this project is steeped in the country traditions of meaningful lyrics and resonant melodies, yet is still an album that sounds completely modern.

And, as the best country albums do, *Learn To Live* takes the listener on a voyage through life's experiences. The album's arc covers major life themes such as falling in love, birth and death. "This CD is a journey," Rucker says. "I realized I'm 42. I'm not going to write many songs about drinking, chasing girls or booty

calls. I was going to write songs about having kids and stuff - songs about life."

Guests on the album include Brad Paisley on the humorous "All I Want" and Vince Gill and Alison Krauss on the inspirational "If I Had Wings." "To me, he's one of the best guitar players around," Rucker says. Gill and Krauss made Rucker, the ultimate fan, dizzy with delight: "They sounded like angels. You have these two artists singing on top of my voice . . . it gave me chills."

Rucker has always had a close kinship to country music and country

artists. "Growing up in South Carolina, it was always around, always on the radio," he says. First a fan of Buck Owens, Rucker naturally gravitated towards Dwight Yoakam, New Grass Revival and Rodney Foster in his twenties. "When I first heard Rodney's voice on Foster & Lloyd's 'Crazy Over You,' I thought, 'this guy's voice is bigger than Texas.' I'm thinking, 'this is cool songwriting.'"

Fans of the Hootie & The Blowfish - many of whom had already made the natural migration from pop to country radio - realize that the band's catchy songs were rooted in

the same elements that make great country music. In fact, Rucker says, "We talked about being a country band, and I just got outvoted! They also used to kid me about how I always was bringing them country songs that they had to turn into rock songs . . ." Therefore, making his first country CD was not so much a big leap for Rucker as simply a slight shift in Rucker's musical evolution. As *Billboard* magazine noted, "There's a sense of purpose that makes Rucker feel like a member of the country family, rather than an interloper... Sounds like country may

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have a shining new star.”

As a student of great songwriting, Rucker earned his advanced degree while working on *Learn To Live*. “Writing with those songwriters was like going to Songwriting University,” he says. His professors/co-writers included such legendary writers as Rivers Rutherford (Brad Paisley, Tim McGraw, Gretchen Wilson); Frank Rogers (Brad Paisley, Trace Adkins) and Clay Mills (Diamond Rio, Reba McEntire). “So many people in pop try to write all these psychedelic crazy lyrics, and I’m sure I’ve been part of that - but that’s something you don’t find in country music. The thing I like most about country songs is that they keep it simple. I love that, and I love the melodies.”

Fellow South Carolina native Rogers also served as the album’s producer, a job he secured immediately after meeting Rucker: “In the first 30 minutes, we wrote ‘All I Want.’ The label asked if I wanted to meet the other [potential producers] and I said, ‘Never mind. I met my guy.’”

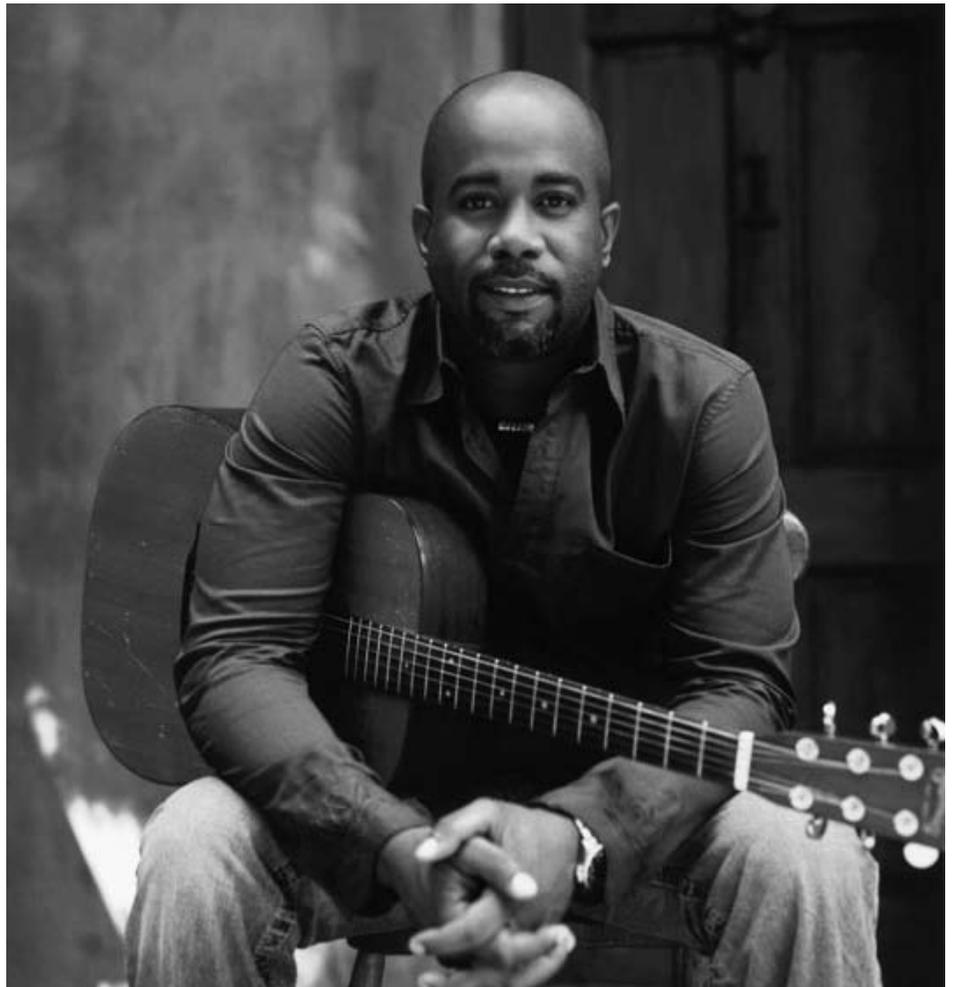
The success of first single, the bittersweet “Don’t Think I Don’t Think About It,” shows that Rucker had country fans at hello. The single, co-written by Rucker with Clay Mills, soared to number one at radio even more quickly than anticipated. “It just breaks your heart,” says Rucker

of the song. “And it was country enough that it wouldn’t be perceived as me being pop and just putting fiddle on a song.”

That song and the universal emotion it evokes typifies the stripped-bare nature of *Learn To Live*. “I want people to take away a sense of realness,” Rucker says. “I want everybody to find a song on it that they can relate to and go, ‘Wow, I did that, too.’”

For Rucker, the welcome mat that country radio has laid out for him has been extraordinarily gratifying. “The reception has been unbelievable,” he says. But smart programmers know that teens raised on Hootie are now confirmed country listeners, so hearing Rucker is like hearing an old friend. “People listen to country music because they know it’s where you can find songs.”

Rucker’s solo career is taking center stage, and he is devoted to



Darius Rucker

promoting *Learn To Live*. Rucker will soon be launching a third single from the album, “Alright.”

“You know, I had been in that rock cocoon for a while . . . But now I

get to come out and sing these songs,” says Darius Rucker. “I plan to be doing this for a long time. This isn’t a one album deal – it’s a career thing.”

Fun Expo 2010 launches new campaign

During its IAAPA Attractions Expo 2009, held in Las Vegas this past November, the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA) rolled out its “Same Name, Brand New Game” campaign, promoting Fun Expo International 2010, to be held March 10-12, 2010 at the Las Vegas Convention Center.

IAAPA joins the American Amusement Machine Association (AAMA) and the Amusement and Music Operators Association as the new co-owner of Fun Expo International. William T. Glasgow, Inc., Fun Expo Show Management, unveiled the Fun



Expo International 2010 floor plan, which features a co-mingled show floor with the new Spring Show, AAMA/AMOA Amusement Expo.

For more details, go online to www.funexpo.com, or contact show management, William T. Glasgow, Inc., at 708-226-1300 or email info@funexpo.com.

Promo Only Top 20 for November, 2009

1 Paparazzi	Lady GaGa	Streamline/Kon Live
2 Whatcha Say	Jason Derulo	Beluga Heights
3 Down	Jay Sean	Cash Money
4 Party In The U.S.A.	Miley Cyrus	Hollywood
5 Sweet Dreams	Beyonce	Music World/Columbia
6 Three	Britney Spears	Jive/Zomba
7 Already Gone	Kelly Clarkson	19/RCA
8 Fireflies	Owl City	Universal Republic
9 You Belong With Me	Taylor Swift	Big Machine
10 Meet Me Halfway	Black Eyed Peas	Interscope
11 Use Somebody	Kings Of Leon	RCA
12 Replay	Iyaz	Beluga Heights/Reprise
13 Run This Town	Jay-Z f./Rihanna	Roc Nation/Atlantic
14 One Time	Justin Bieber	Island/Island Def Jam
15 I Gotta Feeling	The Black Eyed Peas	Interscope
16 Sexy Chick	David Guetta	Astralwerks/Capitol
17 Love Drunk	Boys Like Girls	Columbia
18 Evacuate The Dance Floor	Cascada	Robbins
19 Bad Romance	Lady GaGa	Streamline/Kon Live
20 Fallin' For You	Colbie Caillat	Universal Republic

Chart compiled from national airplay charts and Promo Only feedback

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