

SCOTTY MCCREERY
SEASONS CHANGE

“I’ve lived a lot of life since my last record,” says Scotty McCreery. “I moved out on my own, I travelled across the country and the world, I got engaged, I was dropped by my label, I was even robbed at gunpoint. So I really wanted this album to show who Scotty is at 24, what’s going on in my life, and I think we accomplished that.”

With his third album (plus a chart-topping Christmas record), the young star takes a huge creative step forward. He co-wrote all 11 songs on *Seasons Change*, working with some of the finest songwriters in Nashville to express a wide range of emotions and musical styles. And after a lengthy legal struggle that kept him on the sidelines for several years, McCreery placed a bold bet with his career that has paid off with a new label and a reinvigorated attitude.

“At first, it actually started pretty simple,” he says. “We were just looking for the best songs. But then as my life got more complicated, I knew I wanted to make a record that was a lot more personal, and I felt that writing more myself would help capture that.”

After winning Season Ten of *American Idol* in 2011, McCreery made history when he became the youngest male artist of any genre, and the first country music artist ever, to have his debut album enter at No. 1 on the *Billboard* Top 200 chart. *Clear as Day* was certified Platinum for sales of one million units in just 13 weeks and became the best-selling solo album released by a country artist in 2011. The singles “I Love You This Big” and “The Trouble with Girls” were also certified Platinum. He won the New Artist of the Year award at both the Academy of Country Music (ACM) Awards and the American Country Awards, and also received the CMT Award for Breakthrough Video of the Year for “The Trouble with Girls.”

A year later, *Christmas with Scotty McCreery* debuted at No. 1 on the *Billboard* Top Holiday Albums chart and was quickly certified Gold. His next album, 2013’s *See You Tonight*, debuted at No. 1 on the *Billboard* Country Albums chart, and “See You Tonight” and “Feelin’ It” both reached the Top 10 and were certified Platinum and Gold respectively. “See You Tonight” earned McCreery both his first BMI Award for writing one of the Top 50 Country Songs of 2015, and his first *Music Row* No. 1 Challenge Coin for landing atop the *Music Row* Country Breakout Chart.

While he had been working on his songwriting craft throughout his rapid rise, McCreery felt that he really needed to buckle down and study if he was going to tell the stories he really wanted to tell on *Seasons Change*. “I wanted to write with everybody,” he says. “I was just trying to be a sponge and soak up all I could. It really set me up to where I could write every song on the record, and not feel like I was compromising the quality of what I was singing.”

Key to his growth was producer Frank Rogers (Brad Paisley, Darius Rucker), who co-wrote six of the album’s songs and helped steer the ship. “Frank worked on my last record, but this time he really took me under his wing,” says McCreery. “I lean a little more to the traditional side, but he does a great job of getting new sounds and traditional sounds and meshing them together.” He also brought in Aaron Eshuis and Derek Wells as co-producers on the album. “Derek had played on my last album and he’s one of the most in-demand session players in town. I knew he had the musical ear and strong musical point of view that would enrich this project. And with Aaron -- every time we sat down, we wrote a great song. Having Frank, Derek and Aaron was a great combination.”

The first song he worked on after his lengthy fight with his old label was resolved was “Seasons Change,” writing with James McNair and Tommy Cecil. “That was my first time diving back into music after dealing with lawyers for a year, and I felt rejuvenated,” he says. “I decided that very day that it was going to be on the

record.”

Another thrill came when North Carolina resident McCreery got to write the beach-music-inspired “Barefootin’” with David Lee Murphy. “He’s had such huge hits, has such a way with words, and ‘Dust on the Bottle’ is one of my all-time favorite songs,” says McCreery. “I never expected to write with him, and then we sat down and wrote one of my favorite songs—that was a great day.”

The greatest breakthrough, however, may have come in February 2015, when he wrote “Five More Minutes” with Rogers and Monty Criswell. “I knew it was a special song,” he says. “I tweeted that day that we just wrote my favorite song I’d ever written.” As the search for a new label continued, McCreery and his team made a brave decision, and released the song on their own, with no record company behind it.

“Most sane people would have said to wait,” he says, “but my management and I really believed in it—and at the core of country music, it still comes down to the song. And we were willing to bet on that. We knew it might take a while, but we felt like we could do it and build something one step at a time.”

It didn’t take a while. On its first day of release, “Five More Minutes” was ranked No. 2 on the iTunes country singles chart and No. 9 on the iTunes all-genre singles chart. It debuted at No. 6 on the *Billboard* Country Digital Sales Chart, McCreery’s highest ranking on that chart since his debut single in 2011.

The emotional music video, with home movies of McCreery as a boy alongside his family and friends, was the No.1 country music video and the No. 2 music video overall on iTunes. It stayed at No. 1 on the GAC Top 20 Countdown for six weeks. His powerful performance of “Five More Minutes” on the Grand Ole Opry stage during CMA Music Festival won the 2016 Rare Country Award for “Grand Ole Opry Moment of the Year.”

“Sometimes you feel like you’ve really got to sell something,” says McCreery, “but this one, from the first time people heard it, everybody started telling me their own stories, and I enjoyed that more than anything else. It would have put us in a predicament if it hadn’t succeeded—looking back, yeah, it was a crazy thing to do, but we just went full steam ahead.” The final piece fell into place when, just as “Five More Minutes” hit the Top 40 on the *Billboard* Country Airplay chart, McCreery signed with Triple Tigers Records/Sony Music Entertainment.

“Triple Tigers is a great fit for me,” said McCreery. “They are music people and they work hard. With this label on my side, ‘Five More Minutes’ has become my fastest rising single to reach Top 15 since my debut single. And we’ve only just begun.”

Of course, there’s one other big story that underlies *Seasons Change*. In September 2017, the guy who was voted both “Country Music’s Hottest Bachelor” and “Country Music’s Sexiest Man” by the readers of *NASH Country Weekly Magazine* proposed to longtime girlfriend Gabi Dugal in the mountains of North Carolina.

“She’s a huge part of this record, the inspiration for all the love songs,” he says. “We met in kindergarten—her kindergarten diary has ‘Mrs. McCreery’ written in it with hearts around it. We started dating senior year of high school, and became best friends in the last few years.”

The song “This Is It” even spells out a play-by-play blueprint for popping the question.

“I had the ring in the closet for months and had the day all planned out,” he says. “And it all went great, just like the song lays it out—it would have been awkward if she had said no!”

Now, with a wedding on the way, a hit on the charts, and a new lease on his musical life, everything looks great in McCreery’s world. Things get sunnier. Seasons change.

TRACK-BY-TRACK

1. SEASONS CHANGE

Scotty McCreery/James McNair/Tommy Cecil

“This was the first song I wrote for this album. It was the song that really got me going to write again, go after it all again. It’s the perfect song to show where I’m at in life—I got engaged, we’re planning a wedding, it’s all great—and a good introduction for me going forward. I have to just pretend that 2016 didn’t happen, it was not fun for me, but you gotta learn from it, stay persistent and work hard and good things will come.”

2. WHEREVER YOU ARE

Scotty McCreery/Frank Rogers/Dan Isbell

“Frank Rogers has really been a mentor to me, and he meant so much through this whole project, but Dan Isbell is one of my favorite guys that I met working on this record. He’s a happy-go-lucky dude, a real ball of energy in the room. This one was his idea, and we just had fun with it. It’s contemporary and upbeat—and it’s all for Gabi, she’s the inspiration on all the love songs.”

3. BOYS FROM BACK HOME

Scotty McCreery/Dan Isbell/Jason Gantt

“This is one of my favorite songs. Every name in here really is one of my boys from back home. Every guy is a friend, and these are actual stories from us growing up—literally every one is true. It really takes me back home to those guys. I like to reminisce, to kick back and laugh with friends. It was kinda tough to write, though, because it was just me who knew the stories I was trying to convey!”

4. FIVE MORE MINUTES

Scotty McCreery/Frank Rogers/Monty Criswell

“It was a special day writing this. We all sat down, and at first I was just talking about my granddaddy. Monty Criswell has written some of the most meaningful songs in country music. I always believed in it and thought it was a story that everyone could relate to—I feel like everyone has these things that they go back to and wish they had more time. We worked on this song for three or four different days, and a lot changed and it took a while, but I wanted it to be perfect.”

5. IN BETWEEN

Scotty McCreery/Frank Rogers/Jessi Alexander/Jonathan Singleton

“This was my first time writing with Jessi Alexander and Jonathan Singleton. It’s very autobiographical, and I thought I could really tell fans who I was through a song. I sometimes get painted as lily-white or holier than thou, but I like to have fun. I’m not this and not that, and I feel like a lot of folks are like that—‘I ain’t all holy water and I ain’t all Jim Beam’ is one of my favorite lines on the record, and I think it speaks for a lot of people.”

6. THIS IS IT

Scotty McCreery/Frank Rogers/Aaron Eshuis

“We wrote this two weeks before I proposed to Gabi. Frank knew that I was going to propose, but I hadn’t told Aaron. I set out to write an engagement song, with me laying out a real picture of how the day was going to go. I got us lost in mountains one time, and we were driving on a dirt road, got out and hiked and it took us to these cliffs, and now that’s our spot. I knew that’s where I was going to ask her. I just love the song and the picture it paints.”

7. WRONG AGAIN

Scotty McCreery/Frank Rogers/Phillip White

“This is just a fun one. Every guy out there can relate—‘I’ve been wrong once with the ladies out there, I’m gonna be wrong again.’ I thought it was a funny way of saying it.”

8. MOVE IT ON OUT

Scotty McCreery/Dan Isbell/Aaron Eshuis

“I was just in the mood to go to the beach or craving the place where I go to get away and recharge my batteries in North Carolina. It’s a fun beach song, for when you’ve been working all week and you’re ready to get away from the office.”

9. BAREFOOTIN’

Scotty McCreery/Frank Rogers/David Lee Murphy

“I love the style called ‘Beach Music.’ It’s big down in the Carolinas—the Shag is the dance you do. I think I’d been to the beach before writing this, and I was just in that mood. Now, David Lee Murphy had never heard of beach music, so we had to explain it to him. We even name-drop the classic song ‘Carolina Girls.’ The horns really took the song over the top—I’ve probably listened to this one the most so far out of all the songs on the record because it puts me in such a good mood.”

10. STILL

Scotty McCreery/Aaron Eshuis

“These last six years with Gabi were kind of the inspiration for this song. I had this idea on my phone forever, but I could never figure out just how to say it. Then on the first day Aaron and I met, we got it written. ‘After all this time, I still need you, still want you’—you kind of have to sing ‘still’ a lot, but we figured it out and turned it into a cool love song. I hope the ladies all love it and latch onto it and that the guys all get it, too.”

11. HOME IN MY MIND

Scotty McCreery/James McNair/Tommy Cecil

“This one is really personal. The main road in my hometown is Timber Drive, just like in the song. This is me thinking back to my family and friends in North Carolina and all the good times I had growing up there. I travel 150-200 days a year, so I’m not home like I used to be, but this kinda takes me back. And it’s me saying to Gabi, because she can’t really travel with me because of her job, that I’m thinking about her.

“I didn’t really hear the echo of James Taylor at first, but I always send my demos to my friends, to see what they think as a sounding board, and when I sent this one my friend Will was like ‘Hey, Scotty Taylor,’ and then I got it. Of course, coming from North Carolina, he was always a big influence on me.”