

# CHASE RICE

Fame often has a chilling effect on one's psyche. However much as he's done his entire life, when faced with a No. 1 major label debut album in 2014's *Ignite the Night*, as well as a pair of Top 5 singles with the RIAA Platinum-certified "Ready Set Roll" and Gold-certified "Gonna Wanna Tonight," Chase Rice turned his cheek and took the path less traveled. As he readily recounts, the country music maverick has only grown more self-aware, mature and grateful in the wake of his success. "I'm a different person in a lot of ways," Rice says looking back at his younger self, who moved to Nashville following the sudden death of his father "having no clue what the hell I was doing," wrote a batch of killer songs and went for broke in the country music industry. "I was searching," Rice says. "I didn't know who I was as an artist. But now, it's a new me. It's a whole new deal. Now I know exactly where I am in life." He laughs. "Well, not exactly. But I've got a better idea, anyway."

The past few years have been monumental ones for Rice: following the release of *Ignite the Night*, the 31-year-old budding superstar toured the world with four massive headlining tours and stadium-show opening runs for country megastars including Kenny Chesney and Dierks Bentley. "I was just having fun. I was riding the wave," he says.

Most recently, Rice released a new single from his forthcoming studio album, "Everybody We Know Does," a rowdy rocker he says instantly took him back in his mind to the Fairview, North Carolina farm on which he was raised. "I wanted to have an in-the-moment song of what me and my friends do and how we live," he says of the song, which his ultra-dedicated fanbase has already responded to with adoration. "People showing up, being so passionate about my music, that makes me proud of this life and what we – my band, my team and I – have built, man," he continues. "When crowds are showing up singing non-singles louder than the singles, that gives me the confidence that they've got my back and that these songs are their lives, too."

Despite his swelling popularity, Rice still says he sees himself and his longtime band as underdogs. It's a healthy mindset, he says, that keeps the fire burning in his belly. "It allows you to still have that drive, still have that reason to keep trying to move forward and make the music better," he explains. "When I'm the underdog, look out. When someone tells me we're not going to do something, you'd better get your ass ready, because we're gonna do it!"

Rice admits the enormous success of the Gold-certified *Ignite the Night* caught him by surprise. It's not that he wasn't confident in his songs, he says, but rather that the project was him "throwing darts on a map and seeing where we were gonna go." Still, even as his career exploded, Rice says the death of his father when the singer was only 22 loomed large. Turning to God and, in turn, releasing himself of the associated burden of his pain gave him permission to be his best self. "You'd be shocked at the amount of pressure it

takes off your shoulders,” he says. It also freed him up to follow his creative muse like never before. “Someone who is lost is going to follow the crowd,” Rice says. “Someone who knows where they’re going and is their own person is going to chart their own course.”

“It’s still a continuous climb up the mountain,” Rice, who says he’s never been more “open and honest” in song, says of evolving his craft and looking forward to what the future holds for him. Ask him though what propels him forward and the country star will tell you it’s undoubtedly a continuous drive to prove his earliest fans right. “You guys chose to bet on me as one of your favorite artists back when it was just 500 people in a room,” he wants them to know. “I told you we were doing this thing and that I couldn’t do it without you. And now we’re doing it!”