



BIO

"When I'm on a stage with a microphone in my hand, it's like I'm a puzzle piece that's just found the rest of the puzzle. It's where I'm most at home, most comfortable, most confident. It really is where I'm the happiest."

--Chris Hawkey

In the jigsaw puzzle of life, there's never been any doubt about where Chris Hawkey fits. Music has always been center stage for Chris, even before he auditioned for, and won, a job as lead singer for a rock band at the young age of 15. Sharing his high school years with high energy nights on stages around Ohio and Indiana set a career path for the singer that continues today with the release of Chris Hawkey, his first Nashville solo album.

Although a six-year stint as lead vocalist for the hugely popular Minneapolis band Rocket Club (and three charted Billboard country singles) helped Chris develop a strong sense of musical identity, nothing prepared him for the sheer thrill of coming to Nashville in 2013 to record with an A-team group of studio musicians. Chris and producer Jason Perri spent many months listening to hundreds of songs by some of Music City's top tunesmiths, searching for songs with soul, spirit and a sense of simplicity that would reflect Chris's artistry. Without a major label budget behind him, Chris knew he had to spot-on nail his performances in the studio, making the songs uniquely his own. "It was so important to me when we started this album that I record songs that were really me," he says. "I didn't want to do songs just because they were great songs. I wanted to be able to get onstage and communicate them from my heart. The last thing in the world I wanted to do was come to Nashville and lower the caliber of them by not getting them right."

Then in early 2014, with the CD just weeks away from release, Chris received two more songs from his producer, songs which he says "flat knocked him out" and brought him back to Nashville for a whirlwind second studio session. "When Jason sent me 'Break a Heart,' I thought it was such a perfectly written song that I couldn't ignore it," Chris says. "When I heard it, I called Jason and said, 'how quickly can I come down to record this song?' I wanted to grab it and cut it before someone else did! The other song is called 'Camera,' and it's a fun, upbeat summertime song about capturing a certain moment in time. It adds a lighthearted feel to an album that has a lot of deeply emotional moments." The finished eight song album is a dynamic roller coaster ride that showcases the singer's strengths and vision. From the album's lead off single, "My Kind of Crazy," to the instantly we can all identify with songs like "Underdog," "Prayers," and "All I Can," the album provides a looking glass view of Chris, both as a performer and as a person. Tracks like "All I Can (While I Can)" are relevant, he says, because "the lyrics talk about how our time on earth is limited.

I know I'm not going to be able to do this forever, so I want to get as much out of this life as I possibly can, while I'm still able to enjoy it. That's what this record and this tour -- and this life -- are all about for me."

Following his dream has always been important to Chris. After high school, he went straight to broadcasting school with the hopes of finding a job in radio. He landed an internship with a station in Dayton, Ohio, and then did a morning show on the air in Virginia Beach until the station changed formats. Following a short time in Los Angeles ("where I thought I'd try my luck at being a rock singer"), he moved back to Virginia, got married and took a radio job in Minneapolis. In 2001, he recorded his first solo project, *Minutes to Memories*, which showcased his songwriting. His second solo project, *The Pursuit*, was a benefit partnership for the Tuberous Sclerosis Alliance, Chris' designated charity, and sales of the record ended up raising an impressive \$26,000.

When Chris isn't pursuing his music dream, he can be heard on a different microphone; he's the producer and Co-Host of the Power Trip Morning Show on KFAN in Minneapolis. It's the number one sports talk show in the Twin Cities and syndicated across the Upper Midwest. He also produces all the Minnesota Vikings radio broadcasts. "It's very different from what I do musically," he says, "except that in both cases, I spend my time trying to entertain folks. It helps me build a fan base when I can mention, hey, everyone, I'm coming to Fargo this weekend and I'll be playing with Gretchen Wilson, so please come out and see me. A lot of people will come and you can almost see them sitting in the audience with their arms crossed thinking, yeah, okay, here's the radio guy. But I love that challenge. It's my job to prove to them that yes, I do belong on that stage. My radio job and my music are two separate things, but it's all about building a brand."

That brand is about to expand considerably with the release of Chris Hawkey and what he's calling the "CH14 Summer" tour. Chris and his six-piece band will be hitting the road to promote the CD and its debut single, "My Kind of Crazy." Appearances in the Twin Cities area will be followed by shows throughout the spring and summer at major-draw fairs and festivals such as Fire Fest (St. Cloud, MN), Lakes Jam (Brainerd, MN), and We Fest (Detroit Lakes, MN). Chris couldn't be more ready. As part of Rocket Club, the singer has shared the stage with artists like Luke Bryan, Jason Aldean, Sugarland, Dierks Bentley, Miranda Lambert and Eric Church, opening in front of thousands of country music fans. Now he's hoping it's his turn as a solo artist.

"I grew up in the Garth Brooks era of bringing the show to the people," he explains. "I love it when I hear someone say my shows are high energy, that they're like a big party. When you're performing original music, you have to find a way to keep your audience entertained, and I think that's what I do best. I want to change people's lives, even if only for a chorus, a song, or an entire show. I want my audiences to be as happy and in love with the music as I am. If I can do that, then I'll be the happiest guy alive."