

EMERSON DRIVE

by Tamela Meredith Partridge
"The Times" newspaper
Ottawa, IL.
© 2010

According to Canadian country group, Emerson Drive, maintaining stability in life, career, and relationships is simply a matter of believing.

"Our fourth studio album, Believe, was released in Canada in May, with plans of it being released in the U.S. in the near future," says lead singer, Brad Mates. "The album has done very well in Canada. We've released three Top Five country singles there so far, "Belongs To You," "Believe," and "I Love This

Road." We started the group in Canada, got our record deal in Nashville 11 years ago, and now enjoy having a music career in both countries."

Emerson Drive will perform at the Ottawa Fire Fighters, Local 523, 4th Annual Country Music Show on Saturday at the Ottawa Township High School auditorium.

Opening for Emerson Drive will be Hazzard County, a high-energy country & southern rock band from the Livingston county area. Hazzard County consists of Bill Hecht (keyboards), Jardin James (percussion), Rob "Justin" Newell (drums), Dave Craig (bass guitar), Jonny Pichietti (lead guitar), Bobby Duncan (lead guitar/pedal steel), Simon Webb (lead vocals).

Tickets are available by calling Jean Wilson at 815-433-1327.

"We always have a great time whenever we play in the area," Mates says. "Illinois has a lot of country music fans, which automatically makes it a great crowd to perform our past hits to, as well as some songs from the new album."

Emerson Drive -- currently consisting of Brad Mates (lead vocals), Dale Wallace (keyboards), David Pichette (fiddle), Danick Dupelle (lead guitar), and Mike Melancon (drums) -- suffered a great loss in 2007 when their former bassist, Patrick Bourque, committed suicide.



“There have been a lot of ups and downs in our careers and personal lives since we first started making the album, Believe, and where it is today,” Mates says. “We were on a roll when our single, Moments, off our last album, Countrified, became our first number one song. Three months later we were devastated by the loss of Patrick. Two months after that, Moments was nominated for a Grammy. It was an emotional and professional see-saw. On one hand, we’re so excited about our career because of some milestones we had achieved. And then on the other hand, we experienced the most negative, tragic thing that could ever happen to group.”

The Emerson Drive journey began in '95 when Mates, who grew up with his dad's George Strait and Don Williams records, was inspired after an 11th grade talent contest to start a band with some classmates near Grande Prairie, Alberta, Canada. They began life as 12 Gauge, but soon became Emerson Drive, taking their name from the Emerson Trail, which crosses western Alberta to join the Alaskan Highway.

Since their '01 debut country single, "I Should Be Sleeping," Emerson Drive have released four albums and numerous hits including "Fall Into Me," "Only God (Could Stop Me Loving You)," "Last One Standing," "A Good Man," "Moments," and "You Still Own Me."

The driving force behind Emerson Drive lies in their ability to appreciate the past, present, and future beliefs that shape their lives and careers.

“The one thing that has kept us going all these years is believing in one another and believing in what we do for our music,” Mates says. “That belief has carried us a long way.”



EMERSON DRIVE

by Tamela Meredith Partridge

"Our Brown County" magazine

Nashville, IN

© 2007

For country group Emerson Drive, some moments can last a lifetime.

"Our recent single, Moments, became our first No.1 song in early June," says lead singer, Brad Mates, regarding the heartfelt tune about a homeless man reflecting on the twists and turns of his life, and what he might have done differently. "It's been our impact song, a song that other artists shied away from, because it deals with delicate issues of loneliness, despair, and the hope of a new life. We knew the first time we heard its deep lyrics and story that it was a song we wanted to sing."

Emerson Drive will perform at The Little Nashville Opry on Saturday, August 11 at 7pm .

"We play over 220 dates a year," Mates says. "So it's very refreshing for us to be able to perform at an intimate venue like The Little Nashville Opry where we can see all the faces and interact with the crowd. That's what makes it special for us."

The six-man band from Canada currently consists of Brad Mates (lead vocals), Dale Wallace (keyboards), David Pichette (fiddle), Danick Dupelle (lead guitar), Patrick Bourque (bass guitar) and Mike Melancon (drums).

"We all had different backgrounds and musical influences while we were growing up," Mates says. "We paid our dues and found out who we were musically. Once you get each member on stage playing the same song, that's when you hear the unique sound that defines Emerson Drive."

Mates first began playing as a trio with two high school friends near Grande Prairie, Alberta, Canada. The trio evolved into a six-member group, 12-Gauge, which played various gigs all over Canada. The group later changed the name to Emerson Drive, derived from the Emerson Trail which runs through Mates hometown in western Alberta, Canada, and joins the Alaskan Highway.

"We joke that we cursed ourselves by changing the name from Trail to Drive," Mates says. "Because after we changed our name to Emerson Drive, we ended up driving all over the country playing clubs for years! But, the people back home think that it's really cool that we have a name that ties in with Canada and is a part of our home town."

The years spent touring and accumulating musical mileage have turned the young men of Emerson Drive into veteran road dogs.

"We have just as many people spread throughout Canada as the U.S. has in the entire state of New York," Mates says. "So, almost anywhere you go in Canada involves a long ride. A group doing the club scene in Canada can only travel for a few months out of the year before they end up coming right back through the same venues. But you can tour all year in the U.S. and not play in the same place. It's unreal. In the U.S., we can travel about an hour after each gig and be in a new spot with a new crowd. That's very hard to do up in Canada."

Since their 2001 debut single, "I Should Be Sleeping," Emerson Drive have released numerous hits including "Fall Into Me," "Only God (Could Stop Me Loving You)," "Last One Standing," "A Good Man," "Moments," and latest single, "You Still Own Me."

"One advantage that our group has is that we play and sing every note on our albums," Mates says. "That doesn't happen too often anymore where a group can actually do the whole thing on stage or in the studio."

After losing their Dreamworks major label contract in 2004 due to corporate restructuring, Emerson Drive signed with independent label Midas Records. As a result, their 2006 album, *Countrified*, features the production talents of Alabama country group artist Teddy Gentry, record producer Josh Leo, publishing veteran Brad Allen, and hit songwriter Keith Follese.

"Having Teddy Gentry on board our team really helped our group in and out of the studio," Mates says. "Teddy's success as a part of Alabama lent him an understanding of what it takes to be a group, being on and off the road, finding and writing songs, and supporting a project that best reflects who and what Emerson Drive is all about."

The cornerstone of the Emerson Drive foundation lies in their ability to appreciate the past, present, and future moments in their lives and careers.

"The past twelve years have just flown by," Mates says. "It almost feels like a second, or a quick moment in our lives. That aspect is the one thing that we're most proud of -- being able to start this band from where it came from to what it is now -- and still carry on."