

RUSTON KELLY'S ADDICTIONS AND SUPPORT BEHIND 'DYING STAR'

KELLY SAYS UNCONDITIONAL LOVE AND MUSIC SAVED HIM

By Lauren Tingle

January 31, 2019

1:28 PM



They Don't Want You To Carry One, But It's Not Prohibited

TactiStaff

ADVERTISEMENT

Ruston Kelly has always loved Johnny Cash. But the drugs Cash used to do were the same ones that nearly killed Kelly.

Since his overdose, Kelly refuses to let substances control his life and creativity. He quit smoking cigarettes just to get back in championship ice skating shape for the “Son of a Highway Daughter” music video.

In a recent interview with CMT.com, Kelly spoke candidly about the past addictions that gave him trouble and put to rest in his breakthrough, major label debut, *Dying Star*. The 14-song collection is a bold, reflective look at overcoming his past thanks to the unconditional love and support from his family.

“It took me a long time to do this first record because of the lifestyle that I chose to live,” Kelly told CMT.com. “I kept quitting and relapsing probably eight times. I just couldn’t get a handle on it. But you can’t control the darker sides of yourself if you haven’t really explored the areas that are important in wrangling those sides in.

“I fought a long time to get a chapter one, and I’m proud that chapter one is everyone has their demons and thorns. To be transparent about that, and to use artwork as a means to remove that thorn and understand yourself better, that’s a statement I wanted to make.”

CMT.com: What were the hardest lyrics to write?

Kelly: “Dying Star.” I knew what to say, but it was just really painful to say it. To me, that song sums up anyone that has ever loved me in my life despite the issues and some pretty wild moments I subjected my family and loved ones to. It’s really reflective of how important that love was to me in getting out.

That song was an owning up and a decision to do the hard work necessary to better myself. I couldn’t have done it without my family. My dad is in my band, and he plays steel guitar on the whole record. It’s almost like he had his own narrative like a secondary narrative watching his son go through that, and his steel playing is his take on what happened. He’s an emotional player. That about wrecked me. I asked dad, “Where did your inspiration come from because that’s not easy to put that out there.” He said, “I just played from the perspective of how I felt when I watched you go through that.”

Talk about the statement you wanted to make with your major label debut album because you have your whole life to make your first album.

I wasn’t quite sure what it was yet until I overdosed. Then life took on a whole new perspective. These songs came from those times. When you die for a second, it can change your perspective pretty quickly about what’s important to you.

I’m always going to be an artist that has something to say, and I was proud that chapter one is everyone has their demons, everyone’s got their thorn. To be transparent about that and to use artwork as a means to remove that thorn and understand yourself better, that’s a statement I wanted to make. I feel like we did.

What substances gave you trouble?

Which one didn’t? It was stimulants — cocaine, amphetamines, mixing that with hard psychedelic use and constant. Then I started doing speedballs pain killer and an upper. An upper and a downer. That was the kicker as they say.

It’s safe to say music saved you.

Definitely. It’s always been a redemptive force of understanding myself in the world. That’s what art has been. I think that’s why my lyrics are so transparent almost like what would make you uncomfortably laugh in mixed company, but that’s the only way I know how to do it. That’s just what art always is. It’s been a saving grace for me. I’m not going to butter it up any other way than shooting it straight.

Kelly is a CMT Listen Up artist for 2019. He will headline two sold-out nights at Nashville’s Basement East on Feb. 2 and 8. He and Kacey Musgraves will celebrate two years of marriage this fall.

LATEST NEWS

RUSSELL DICKERSON TALKS FINDING SUPPORT IN GOD AND FAMILY FOR JOYFUL LIFE

Russell Dickerson's new song "Good Day To Have A Great Day" is out now.

05/06/2024

CMT ROUNDUP: NEW MUSIC FROM MIRANDA LAMBERT, KEITH URBAN WITH LAINEY WILSON, TRACY LAWRENCE AND MORE

Hear the newest country songs in CMT's playlist The Roundup.

05/03/2024

KIMBERLY PERRY TO HEADLINE CMT'S NEXT WOMEN OF COUNTRY TOUR

Tickets are on sale now.

05/02/2024

CMT PREMIERE: WYATT FLORES SHARES HIS FAVORITE VIDEO "MILWAUKEE"

Wyatt Flores: "This song was one of the few for me that was written from a feeling instead of an experience."

05/02/2024

CMT PREMIERE: GABBY BARRETT TURNS TO LUKE COMBS' SONGWRITING CATALOG FOR "DANCE LIKE NO ONE'S WATCHING"

Josh Gicker directed the video that Gabby Barrett said brings the song to life.

05/01/2024

CMT'S NEXT WOMEN OF COUNTRY IS COMING TO CMA FEST 2024

The concert includes Tanner Adell, Mae Estes, Kylie Frey, Emily Ann Roberts and Tigirlily Gold.

04/30/2024

LOAD MORE