

# Chris Jones and the Night Drivers

## We Needed This Ride: Chris Jones and the Night Drivers

He's been called a singer-songwriter who happens to front a bluegrass band, and though the choice is a little more deliberate than that phrase might suggest, there's still a nugget of truth in the observation, and it arguably applies more than ever to the music on ***Make Each Second Last***, the newest full-length release from **Chris Jones and the Night Drivers**, out now from **Mountain Home Music Company**. Filled entirely with material written by **Jones** and a handful of collaborators that includes both former and current **Night Drivers**, it's the veteran artist's most original and most varied outing yet – and one that, for good measure, introduces two new members of the ensemble.

Given **Jones'** hit making track record, it's no surprise that the first five singles from the album have already reached **#1 on Bluegrass Today's airplay chart**. The title comes from "**We Needed This Ride**," the first of those to introduce new members **Grace van't Hof** (banjo, ukuleles, accordion, vocals) and **Marshall Wilborn** (bass, vocals) and, with its thrumming baritone ukulele-driven rhythm, a sign that the band would be serving up a broader range of tones and textures than before. Sure enough, the group's latest single, "**Riding The Chief**," goes still further, with its western swing foundation – right down to the twin mandolins, "sock" style guitar and tasteful fiddle from ace session player **David Johnson** – reintroducing a sound **Jones** hadn't brought into the studio in decades.

Yet while the **Night Drivers'** tonal palette might have expanded, there's no doubt that ***Make Each Second Last*** is a **Chris Jones** album, focusing prodigious songwriting talent on enduring **Jones** themes that encompass more than the usual bluegrass subjects. There are takes on travel, from "**We Needed This Ride**" to "**Whither You Roam**" to "**Riding The Chief**," lost love ("**Quiet Click**") and life at home ("**Leave It At The Gate**") and abroad ("**Silver City**"), but there are also meditations on less intimate matters, whether it's the encouragement to speak one's mind in "**We Need To Hear From You**," the compelling observation of "**Everybody's Got A Line**" or the compassionate consideration of common humanity in "**They're Lost Too**" and cautious, almost wistful hopefulness of "**Bed Of Snow**." Whether written with **GRAMMY-nominee Thomm Jutz**, frequent collaborator **Jon Weisberger**, new colleague **van't Hof**, veteran mandolinist **Mark Stoffel** – that would be the album's lone instrumental, "**Groundhog's Retreat**" – or by **Jones** himself, there's not a song or performance in the collection that doesn't bear **Jones'** indelibly distinctive stamp.

With each of the albums he and the **Night Drivers** have made for **Mountain Home** – ***Run Away Tonight*** (2015), ***Made To Move*** (2017), and ***The Choosing Road*** (2019) – **Chris Jones** has dug deeper into a deeply personal synthesis of unique sounds, compelling themes and world-class songcraft, all embedded in a recognizably bluegrass setting, creating a sound whose appeal reaches far beyond the world of bluegrass while remaining firmly grounded within it. On ***Make Each Second Last***, he serves notice that the journey continues.

***Make Each Second Last*** isn't so much a departure for us, but a stretching of boundaries, and a fuller embrace of what makes us unique as a band, including some of the instrumental and vocal versatility brought in by new band members **Grace van't Hof** and **Marshall Wilborn**. **Mark Stoffel's** instrumental presence and creativity, always important to the **Night Drivers'** sound, is also given an even bigger spotlight than on past releases,"

says **Jones**. “This is our first record in which I’ve written or co-written all of the songs. The majority of the songs were solo writing efforts, or co-written within the band. I also wrote two with **Thomm Jutz**, which was really rewarding, and I’m also very glad to maintain my long co-writing relationship with former band mate **Jon Weisberger**, who co-wrote two of the songs.”



“The phrase ‘make each second last’ from the opening track ‘**We Needed This Ride**’ is all about savoring and being grateful for experiences,” **Jones** continues, “especially those involving human contact, now that we know how much of that we had been taking for granted.”