

## GAVIN DEGRAW

### The platinum pop-rocker learns to enjoy the art of collaboration

SINCE HIS MILLION-SELLING DEBUT ALBUM, *CHARIOT*—which spawned three hits, “I Don’t Want to Be,” “Follow Through,” and the title track—Gavin DeGraw has served up a steady balance of radio-friendly hits with darker, more introspective material. On his new album, *Make a Move*, he steps even further outside his comfort zone, with a diverse collection of songs designed to suit longtime fans while seeking new terrain. “Even with the elements of the early work, there are parts that are experimental,” he says. “But this time I felt more sure-footed about these decisions, having my audience there to support me.”

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A New York native who splits his time between L.A. and Nashville, DeGraw returned to the studio re-energized by the success of his 2011 album, *Sweeter*. It was his first to feature collaborations with outside writers. Once leery of relinquishing artistic control, DeGraw learned to expand his creative horizons by working with ace hit-makers like Ryan Tedder and Busbee. “On my first few albums, I was adamant about being the only writer,” says DeGraw, 36. “But I was fortunate to have success with co-writing on *Sweeter*. It opened my mind and made me more comfortable with the concept, as opposed to being this hermit singer-songwriter. Co-writing is something not to be feared, but to be celebrated.”

Even DeGraw’s stint competing on ABC’s *Dancing With the Stars* last year reinforced the concept of teamwork. He credits his recent partnerships for “getting more and more out of me, like a magician taking a hat and pulling out a never-ending rope. There

are all of these different colors that appear.” Working with other artists encouraged him to share a kaleidoscope of emotions. “In some ways I feel like it became more personal,” he says. “These collaborators forced me to go that deep. The feeling is that they held me accountable and brought out this reflection of me. I could be more audacious and confess certain things.”

While his work in the recording studio is important, DeGraw always keeps an eye on his live show. After hitting the road with Train in early 2013, he’s now embarking on a run of solo dates. “When you’re building your repertoire, you always visualize what kind of live show it’ll be,” he says. “Having a diverse collection of songs allows you to put on different shows. You can take each audience and change the vibe.” Some songs lend themselves to acting out and having this whole stage delivery. It’s all about what’s right for the song.”

—Blake Boldt

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