

THIRTY-THREE YEARS ON FROM *THE ONE AND ONLY*, CHESNEY HAWKES IS BACK WITH A NEW ALBUM AND A VERY BOLD MUSIC VIDEO...

STEVE O'BRIEN

In 1991, there were few teen stars bigger than Chesney Hawkes. But since breaking through with the No.1-charting, Nik Kershaw-penned *The One And Only*, the singer has released just five albums, with his sixth long-player, *Living Arrows*, about to hit the shelves. "It's taken a long time to feel confident enough to really throw myself back into a project," the one-time pin-up tells us about his long-awaited comeback.

**It's been 12 years since your last studio album, *Real Life Love*. Why now?**

For those 12 years, I was in L.A. and busy bringing up kids. I had this album in my mind since before Covid, but I felt like it's such a personal record and so English that I didn't want to be over there when I put it out. I knew we were coming back to the UK to live at some point, and just wanted to be on home soil, back in the motherland, before releasing anything.

**Though there are rock flavours on the album, it's still very pop. Is that the songwriting tradition you come from?**

My songwriting background is still The Beatles, Stevie Wonder, Elvis Costello and David Bowie, slightly old-school. But [on *Living Arrows*] I collaborated with a guy called Jake Gosling, who's worked with Ed Sheeran and Lady Gaga and One Direction, so I feel like he took my traditional songwriting ways and brought a fresh commercial feel to it, production-wise.

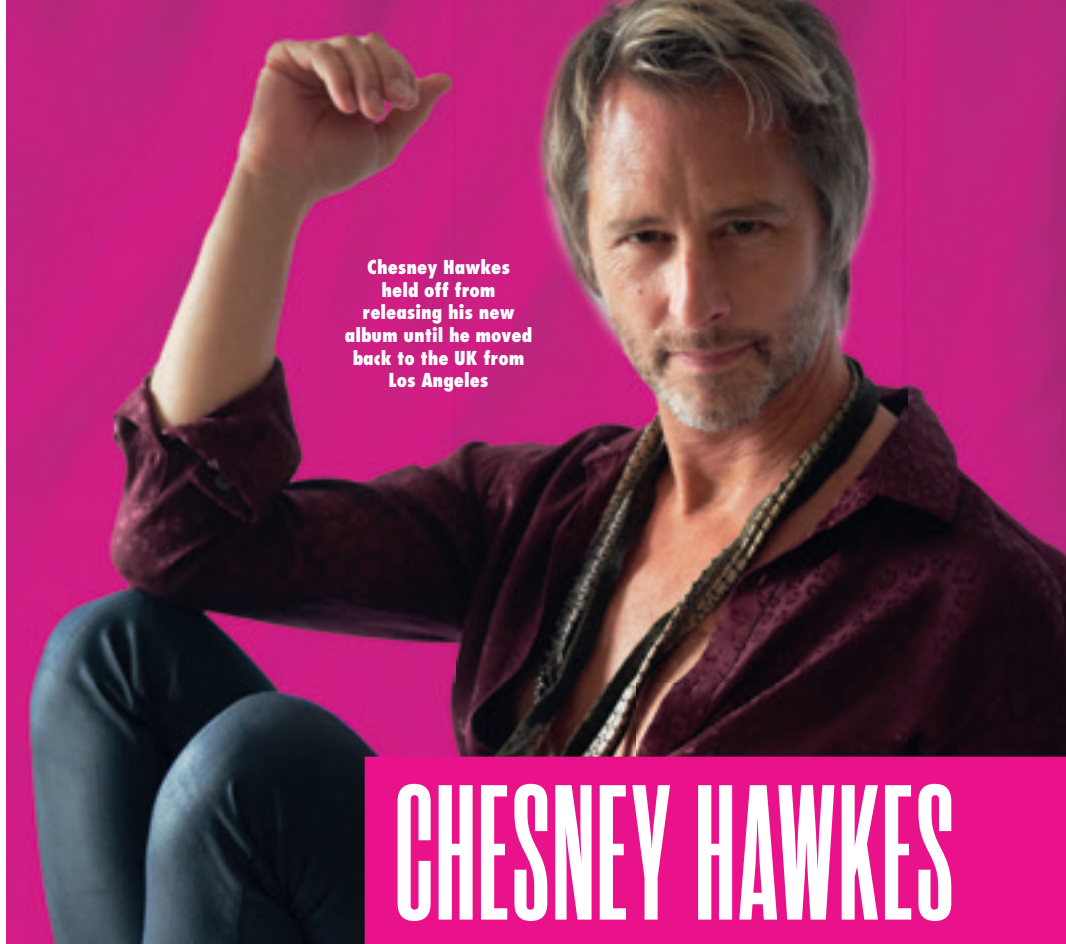
**And you're working with Nik Kershaw again on the new album...**

On three songs, I think. I always say there are two types of people in this world – Nik Kershaw fans and people that should be Nik Kershaw fans. He's one of my besties. We've written hundreds of songs together over the years. There are so many little tricks and fun things that he does naturally that I've just gone, 'oh, I'm taking that.' He's such a mentor to me.

**The video for the first single off the album, *Get A Hold Of Yourself*, has you dancing naked around a British stately home. That's a brave thing to do in your fifties.**

The song is very much about freedom of self-expression, when you get to a certain age and you've overcome

Chesney Hawkes held off from releasing his new album until he moved back to the UK from Los Angeles



# CHESNEY HAWKES

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adversities in life, and realising you don't give a shit what anyone else thinks, that it's okay to be you as long as you've got your moral compass in the right place. So I wanted to do something bold and brave to reflect that, and then I saw [the movie] *Salisbury*. You may have seen it, the lead character prancing around, swinging in the wind, totally naked, free as anything, and just liberated. It clicked something in me, and so when we were looking to do a video, I kept coming back to it. I brought it to the team, and they were like, "You're fucking mad, you realise that you're 52!?" I did ask my manager if I'd get the piss ripped out of me, because I do have a slightly dad bod.

**So did you have time to hit the gym before filming?**

We only had a week to get this together so I wasn't able to make myself look like Ryan Gosling! My wife was very supportive, she came along to the video shoot. And my kids were hilarious – they were like, "Oh, it's just dad doing his midlife crisis thing!"

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"I'VE HAD THIS ALBUM IN MY MIND SINCE BEFORE COVID – IT'S A PERSONAL RECORD AND SO ENGLISH"

**The *One And Only* is still the song you're best remembered for. It's an incredibly catchy track – do you ever find yourself humming it around the house or in the shower?**

I've got a very high radar for that song. Listen, I'm a music consumer, and I do get stuff stuck in my head, so I am always wandering around singing. I often wake up with a song in my head, and wonder, 'where did that come from this morning?' Today, I've been singing *Oliver's Army* all day. But if *The One And Only* gets in my head, I'm like, 'Get away!' Just the other day I was in a hotel, walking down a corridor, and *The One And Only* started playing through the speakers, and I thought, 'Great hotel, shit choice in music!'

**You've had big gaps between albums before. Do you think it'll be another 12-year wait until LP number seven?**

I've already started thinking about the next album. This particular gap was a little bit different because of where I was in life with the kids and moving to L.A. and concentrating on writing and producing for other people, and stuff like that. But now I definitely have the bug again. Hearing the single being played on Radio 2 was really emotional for me. I'm ashamed to say I shed a tear. Hearing Scott Mills saying, "New music from Chesney Hawkes!", it just took me back to 1991 and hearing *The One And Only* on the radio for the first time. ■

● ***Living Arrows* is released on 28 February 2025 and will be reviewed in Issue 92**