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Kip Moore premieres first single from forthcoming third album

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Kip Moore has made a name for himself weaving vignettes of Southern, blue-collar life and love into rollicking country anthems over the course of two stellar albums. Bursting with Mellencamp-style fire and Seger-style romantic meditations, his most recent release, the chest-pounding *Wild Ones*, dropped to high critical praise and landed on a number of Best of 2015 lists.

But while that set expanded Moore's live audience enormously — even into far-off markets like Australia and Europe — it struggled to find the same success at country radio as his 2012 debut *Up All Night*, which notched three Top 5 singles in a row. So last October, after years of heavy touring and with plans to take the first extended break in his career, Moore released *Underground*, a five-song EP. “That was to be like, ‘Hey, I appreciate you guys waiting on the record, I know I take forever,’” he says.

The end of that “forever” is now in sight. EW is thrilled to premiere “More Girls Like You,” the first single off the singer-songwriter's upcoming third LP below. We also caught up with the 36-year-old about how the collection was influenced by Motown, surfing in Hawaii, and staying positive.

ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY: “More Girls Like You” is your first single since *Wild Ones* finished its cycle last year, and it's much breezier than anything on that album. How does it fit in with the music you're writing for your third LP?

Kip Moore: I think there are more flavors on this one than I've ever had on a record. It does have more of a happy feel than anything I've ever had. There are a couple heart-wrenching lyrics that I

have with really happy grooves, which is kind of like the old Motown juke. Even when it's heart-wrenching, you might be fooled when you're singing it to thinking you're singing something happy.

Who are you working with?

["More Girls Like You"] is with people I've never written with before, Steven Olsen, Josh Miller and David Garcia. [Elsewhere] Jaren Johnston [of the Cadillac Three], it's the first time I'm having a cut with him. I co-produced the first two albums but this one, 80 percent of it I produced myself. So these songs are coming out just like I've heard them in my head.

What's been the biggest challenge of self-producing?

Challenging your own ideas, battling your own demons, and being content with knowing this lick is right, this bass groove is right, and all the stuff that you have in your head—it's good enough.

This winter you took your first extended break in six or seven years. How's that been?

I feel like I'm in constant search of inner joy and peace. It's such a fleeting thing for me. I get [moments] of it through a lot of different aspects of my life...but there's a natural thing that happens to me the minute I get out of that Maui [Hawaii] airport. It's the most pure, child-like joy that I can describe. And when I get in the water and I'm surfing, it's six in the morning and the sun's coming up, and I don't think about anything! I feel everything—and I feel it deeply, whether its good or bad. It can send me into dark places really fast but when I'm out there, it's total peace for me.

Why do you come back?

[Laughs] Oh man, you know, I was just asking myself that same damn question! No, I love what I do. I love to write a song and perform and hear people singing it in different countries. That's an amazing feeling. And like I said, I do get that joy and peace in a lot of different ways and a lot of times it's during shows.

Your touring audiences grew enormously through Wild Ones but the singles, "I'm To Blame" and "Running For You," struggled at radio.

That was such a battle for me. A lot of the times, the real work is separate from the industry. Here in Nashville, they're not going to know what you're doing out there if you're not on radio. You see a lot of people that are having all these hits and that can't sell tickets, but they'll be perceived as the people that got a lot going on. So you're left putting your hands up like, "Well, wait a f—king minute. Do y'all know what's going on with this record? This underground, cult-like record?" It was a weird time for me. I felt like we were doing something special but [also] like the people that weren't out there to see it thought we were falling off the cliff.

Has that experience left you feeling more or less pressure going into album three?

Less, in a couple different ways. I'm not setting the same goals that I used to. It used to be "If I don't win Record of the Year..." or "If I don't sell out an arena..." then I'd be bothered by it. Now, it's more "I'm having success because I'm getting to play the music that I write for a living and getting to do that with my closest friends." That's become success for me. Plus, the way people reacted to Wild Ones, which was not a commercially successful record, shows me that I should just do what I do and a fan base will show up to love it.

Hear "More Girls Like You" above. Moore's upcoming album is currently untitled but anticipated a summer release date. Moore has also released a BTS video of what inspired the single here.