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Kip Moore on Touring With Miranda Lambert and Why He's a 'Madman When It Comes to Music'

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Kip Moore has lost his voice and he's fine with it. The country singer is sitting on a sofa at the Roosevelt Hotel in Los Angeles sounding raspier than usual. He's just wrapped up five sold-out theater dates in the U.K. and Ireland in seven days. After each show, he would give a free, hour-long acoustic concert to the fans waiting outside the venue no matter how cold it was.

So even though he sounds a little croaky and is worried about singing later in the day, Moore, 36, has a smile on his face that won't quit as he calls the tour "one of the most amazing experiences of my life."

Wild Ones, Moore's second album for MCA Nashville, debuted at No. 2 on Billboard's Top Country Albums chart last summer. It was the follow-up to his label debut, 2012's Up All Night, which spawned three top 10 hits -- "Somethin' 'Bout A Truck," "Beer Money" and "Hey Pretty Girl" -- and has sold 476,000, according to Nielsen Media. The three-year gap between albums was due, in part, because Moore scrapped a complete album after a single from the presumptive second album peaked at No. 35.

Though Wild Ones, which has sold 82,000 units, landed on several year-end best-of lists, it has yet to spark a top 10 single. But Moore, who kicks off a tour with Miranda Lambert tonight (Friday) in St. Louis, is more upbeat about his career than ever.

Not that many country artists tour outside of North America. What prompted the headlining U.K./Ireland tour?

I knew that something special happened last year when we were the opening act for C2C [country music fest in London and Dublin]. I convinced my team to go back. To see the sold-out crowds off of a record, Wild Ones, that's not been nearly as commercially successful as the Up All Night record -- but has created such a bigger, rabid fan base -- it was magical.

Are you concerned that "I'm To Blame," and "Running For You," the first two singles from Wild Ones haven't been as successful at radio as past singles?

No. Some houses, the foundation is built out of sticks and the minute that radio goes away, the whole house crumbles. I write in hopes that radio's going to love my music and play it because I understand what a powerful engine that is. Wild Ones has helped confirm my conviction in just writing the kind of music that I feel because although we haven't had the commercial success, the fan base has doubled and tripled in size

You're gauging that from ticket sales?

(Nods) We'd go some places and sell 4,000 tickets headlining shows and then go to Australia and Canada and Europe where the shows sold out and everyone knows every single word on the Wild Ones record. That has been a very gratifying thing. When I made this record, it was like "Well, this isn't Up All Night - what are you doing?" and I was like, "I already made that record."

Did the label say that to you?

Just a lot of people in my camp. They all have my best interest at heart, but you have to have a vision for yourself or you'll end up being like the rest of the artists. This new record that I'm making now is not like *Up All Night* or *Wild Ones* and I'm sure that's going to scare them too. You're going to feel colors of Motown, colors of classic rock.

Will there be any more singles from *Wild Ones*?

I don't know. I've already toured off of *Wild Ones* for a whole year. I'm ready to play new music and I know the fans are ready to hear new music. If I put out another single from *Wild Ones* that's another 40 weeks for that [to] work the charts and that's a whole year of waiting on a new album. I can't do it for my own sanity. I can't do it for the fans who are waiting to hear more music.

How is Miranda's audience a good fit for you?

I think that I'll definitely run into different people, but I think they're a crowd that's appreciative of songwriting. Miranda's a great songwriter. What I love is she still writes songs and gets them on the radio that punch me in the gut. When I turn on the radio I want to be punched in the gut. I moved to town [Nashville] because I was so inspired by songwriters and hearing songs like "Marina Del Rey" and "The Dance," Garth Brooks. These songs completely knocked me out and sometimes I feel like I don't hear as many of those songs [any more].

What kind of songs attract you?

I've always been lured to the darkness of music. That's always been more my cup of tea because I have a pretty dark side to me and I'm drawn to that. I fight it a lot. [Wild One's track] "Heart's Desire" is a perfect example of that. That's about as sad a lyric as you could get. I would like to do an entire album of that kind of music.

Like Jack Johnson and Eddie Vedder, you love to surf. What's the best surf spot?

My favorite spot is Honolua Bay in Maui. I go to Playa Grande in Costa Rica, too.

I was in Australia recently playing shows when they had the Quicksilver Pro. There's nobody that could ever make me starstruck, but one person -- Kelly Slater. I had just gotten done talking to my band about knowing that he was out there surfing and I came over the hill and, bam, he was 15 feet in front of me. I saw the crowd of people around him and even though he was being kind, I could tell in his face -- I know that face -- he just wanted to get in his car and go, so I left him alone, but maybe at some point, our paths will cross.

What do you like best about surfing?

I'm a madman when it comes to music and that's why I've never really been able to keep any kind of relationship. When I surf, it's the only time I don't think about music. I'm truly in the moment and it brings out such an inner joy for me. I'm always trying to find that peace and surfing brings me such peace.

You're building your sixth inner-city skate park through your charitable foundation. Why did you feel moved to do that?

There were six kids in my family and my dad was a very blue collar guy who didn't make a lot of money, but we always knew we had two parents who cared about us and had a safe place to go at night. I witnessed a whole different side of life with basketball in the inner cities and I never forgot that. Building these skate parks is just giving these kids a sense of pride and a safe place in their communities. There was a kid named Reggie in Nashville who had never skated. He's 11 or 12, and he's telling me he's never loved anything the way he loves this. His mom is telling me this park has solely kept him out of the gangs because he comes there every day after school. He was being highly recruited by the gangs. If this just gives him a sense of hope and sparks him into a whole other area in life, then the whole thing was worth it.