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Kip Moore Pledges Financial Assistance to Nashville Songwriters With Yearly Bonus: Exclusive



For years, songwriters and organizations like the Nashville Songwriters Association International have been fighting an ongoing battle in Washington, D.C., regarding fair pay for songwriters -- with little regard from politicians. As a result, country artist Kip Moore has decided to take matters into his own hands by providing a yearly bonus to his fellow co-writers. The "More Girls Like You" singer hopes the money will give them a cushion to continue writing songs that matter instead of solely focusing on penning the next radio single, which guarantees money in the writer's pocket since album cuts no longer have that capability.

According to NSAI, full-time songwriters in Nashville have decreased by 80 percent since 2000 due to the rise of streaming. While Nashville's Music Row used to be the home to thousands of staff writers, since Moore moved to town in 2004, he has seen that number dwindle down to 200. It's a problem close to his heart, and as Moore exclusively tells Billboard, his solution is to give the songwriters on his forthcoming albums a bonus every December if their song isn't selected to be a single.

"I want to bonus people who had a cut on my record," he explains. "I'm hoping that this sparks something amongst the artists that are actually making a living out on the road. I know that all artists can't do this but my hope is that the big guns out there doing well on the road, that we can help kick back to the songwriters that are struggling in town. You hope that Congress fixes the songwriting problem and the rates that we're getting, but until then we artists have to be proactive and help our writers out."

The Last Songwriter, a film that debuted at the Nashville Film Festival in April, also brings this issue to light. Hit songwriters Lee Thomas Miller ("In Color," "You're Gonna Miss This"), Tom Douglas ("I Run to You," "Raise 'Em Up") and Matraca Berg ("Strawberry Wine," "You and Tequila"), among others, discuss the difficulties songwriters face making a living. Douglas, who co-wrote Miranda Lambert's "The House That Built Me" with Allen Shamblin, broke things down by the numbers. As he explains, the ACM and CMA Award-winning hit was streamed 20 million times, and he and Shamblin made about \$1,000 each from streaming.

"If that had been played on radio 20 million times we'd all be wearing silk shorts and lighting our cigars with \$100 bills but that's not the case," Douglas says in the film.

Jason Isbell adds to the argument, saying when a songwriter looks at the check he gets from streaming "it's pretty heartbreaking." This is an issue at the forefront of not only the country community but every music genre, and it's something both Blair Daly ("Beer Money," "Running For You") and David Garcia ("More Girls Like You") -- who frequently write with Moore -- have witnessed firsthand.

"In 2017, being a paid songwriter who is not an artist, who's not getting merch, who's not selling records, it is hard to make a living if you're not getting singles consistently," Daly explains. "If you go a year without a big single on the charts, financially it's tough. With every passing year that goes by, we're making less and less whether it is from performance royalties or from record sales."

Daly has seen many friends leave the field as they couldn't survive on solely having their songs cut for a record -- they needed a radio single. He thinks Moore's end-of-year bonus will help writers focus on creating timeless songs instead of stressing about that much needed radio cut.

"What he's doing, it's another way to allow us to keep food on the table and not have to pray we get the next single," Daly adds. "He's taking care of his team and also really hoping to start a movement."

Garcia also applauds his frequent collaborator for the idea to give year-end bonuses. "I think it just takes a couple artists to address the problems and say, 'Hey, we know there's something going on with streaming right now.' How come the songwriter isn't seeing the larger portion of that money? What do we have to do to fix that?" Garcia says.

The concept of a bonus for songwriters isn't a one-time thing for Moore. He says every December his co-writers who haven't had a single during his album cycle will be rewarded. The money is coming directly from his pocket from touring and he hopes this initiative will revitalize the spirit of the Nashville songwriting community.

"Songwriters that have three or four cuts a year, if each artist is doing this, all of a sudden they've got several thousand dollar bonus at the end of the year, which can really turn their year around," he says. "My only hope is that we can find a way as a town to take care of each other, and it not be such a dog-eat-dog thing where everybody's trying to hustle to get with the artist and that these artists, these writers that used to all write together and just try to write amazing songs, can get back in the room and focus on that because they're not so worried about writing a single for the radio."

Moore recalls his early days living in a one-bedroom garage apartment in Nashville and says if someone had given him the same generosity it would have helped him focus on writing the best song he could that day. This is what he's aiming to accomplish with his own co-writers following the release of his third album later this summer.

"I want to look back on my life and know that I tried to do things for other people that needed help," he reflects. "It doesn't mean that this is going to fix anything, but I tried. That's what I feel like we're all here for -- we're put on this earth to help each other, so that's my goal. I want the writers of the town to feel appreciated. I hope that it spreads in our genre."