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## Kip Moore Announces New Album, Talks 'Double Edged Sword' of Success

"People say they want honest, but I don't know how true that is," says the singer of his upcoming leave-it-on-the-table LP 'Slowheart'



Kip Moore's third album, *Slowheart*, ends with a song that looks at where he began: "Guitar Man." It's an almost six-minute ode to the delirious highs and gut-wrenching lows of a musician's existence, told through the story of a guy he spotted one night at a bar, singing for his supper. Moore delivers the LP's closing track on a stripped-down recording, done all in one take. His voice is intimate, while the lyrics trace each thrill earned from an audience that will move on and forget once the house lights come on. "Another day in the life of a guitar man," he sings.

"That song is my life story," says Moore, sitting on a couch at a Nashville restaurant, sipping a coffee with a lone American Spirit cigarette resting in front of him on the table, which he'll save and smoke later. "I remember being that guy, having all those dreams. Constantly feeling like, 'Am I ever going to get where I want to get?' And that night, I overheard someone say, 'Man, that guy is good.' No one knew his name, he was faceless. I just remember being him, giving everybody the time of their lives one night. And then I would go home by myself and feel empty, because there was so much more I could accomplish."

After two records, 2012's *Up All Night* and 2015's *Wild Ones*, Moore is no longer nameless or faceless – those days of playing covers in lonely bars have long faded into venues packed with diehard fans from Atlantic City to Australia who hang on every note and word. But Moore's still that "Guitar Man."

*Wild Ones*, a terrific, sonically adventurous record, was a critical but not commercial success, and the pressure to leave that stage with every last bit of himself wrung out on the floor was taxing to the core. So he took a break, traveling through Costa Rica, Hawaii, Utah, Iceland and along the East Coast. He surfed, backpacked and spent time alone at a coffee shop in Lahaina, Maui, leaving his phone behind and finding company in his own head after a morning surfing. It was a salve, in a way.

"I believe in music so much, and I care so much, that it's a double-edged sword," he says, sitting forward on the couch in well-worn boots, jeans and a T-shirt. "It's what has made me successful, and it's what has made

me a depressed human being at times. I face that pendulum swing so much. The toils of facing a crowd, 175 shows a year. Maybe other artists can have a show that is not that great and walk away. Me? I will spiral. I'll think of that one despondent face in the crowd and ask, 'Why couldn't I sway that one person?' That's the fiery human being I am.

"I'm trying to find that balance better, and I've come to be more at peace with knowing that," he continues. "So I took this year and let go of the steering wheel. I let the music make itself."

That music – Slowheart, styled in all caps and due September 8th – came casually at first. Moore didn't even tell his label he was settling down to make another record, and the process was more organic than it had ever been, landing somewhere between the rough edges of Americana, rock and the evocative storytelling of country, produced to let every guitar lick ring true and every edge and wail of Moore's voice reverberate raw but strong. The first single, "More Girls Like You," gives a sonic clue, but things only expand from there. Moore made the LP on a relatively cheap mic often used for demos, played much of the instruments himself and came out with his own kind of near-analog sound. Though Wild Ones often captured that "band in a room" feeling, these tracks have the gut-punch of a vintage album, the vocals out front and clear as crystal, not muddled by dials and tricks. Moore simply laughs and calls it "magic."

"I sang through an SM-7, which is about a two hundred dollar mic," says Moore, who performed most of his own harmonies and produced about 75 percent of Slowheart. "It's a very aggressive mic, and if you're not 'on,' it's going to show. It's very unforgiving. But if you hit it right, it fit for my voice."

Moore was messing around in the studio, never quite intending to use the mic in the final recordings, but he loved the richness and authenticity it gave to the song. Every emotion, wail and chuckle comes through, which sums up Moore: He'd rather open himself up to both the beauty and the flaws than exist in a more comfortable middle ground.

"I've also been so blessed to have amazing players around me that played with their heart, and not just going through the motions," he says, often giving nods to Dave Salley, his engineer, frequent co-writers like Westin Davis and David Garcia, and his band, the Slow Hearts. "That makes a big difference."

Nowhere is this more clear than on songs like "Bittersweet Company" and "Just Another Girl," which both boast a loose, rock & roll spirit – conjuring everything from the J. Geils Band and Foghat to the Black Crowes and Lynyrd Skynyrd – with infectious, sticky melodies. Moore's a believer in those melodies, and he thinks they're often missing from modern music. "Bittersweet Company" has it in spades, so much so that the label was hoping it could be a single from Slowheart. That is, if he made just a few small tweaks and skewed the lyrics a little more positive. Moore's answer? Hell no.

The Georgia native is nothing if not steadfast: he does what he wants, how he wants it, and doesn't try to shuffle his emotions under the table. He talks openly about depression and self-doubt, and, on Slowheart, about the life of a grown, modern man, one who wants a family sometimes but seeks a few no-strings thrills at others. He sings about fighting for a relationship at all costs, but also knowing when to pour the last round; and about how music is his real lover, while everything else is just an affair.

Speaking one's mind and being unfaltering in decisions isn't always the best path to success in rule-abiding Nashville, but Moore gives a "so what" shrug. "People always say they want honest, but I don't know how true that is. I know I've gotten in trouble being honest quite a few times."

He pulls no punches on a track called "Blonde," about the odd culture of Instagram celebrities who create artificial lives online while letting their real lives, and real loved ones, sit on the sideline.

"There are a few pros to social media, but, for the most part, it's pretty destructive to the soul," says Moore, who is so unattached to his phone that he leaves it, along with the keys to his black pickup truck, on the table when he goes to smoke a cigarette. "People seek all their validation through it and end up craving other people's lives. It's caused everyone to chase fame for the sole purpose of being famous or insta-famous. Everyone wants a shortcut, and will try to achieve that by whatever means necessary. It causes people to lose their damn minds."

"You can chase the lights, you can chase the fame," he sings with a soulful swing, his knack for the deep grooves of Motown creeping in. "Used to be the captain of the cheer team, now you're just a never coming home coming queen."

## **"That's my middle finger to everybody and saying, 'Fuck that, we're going strong.'" - Kip Moore on new song "The Bull"**

For the first time, Moore chose two outside songs for *Slowheart*. One is "The Bull," written by Jon Randall and Luke Dick around percussive plucks of guitar. Hanging out one day, the eccentric lyricist Dick mentioned to Moore that he'd like to play him a new track he'd just finished, and he decided to cut it instantly. Moore sings of the Grammy awards he's yet to win and the Rolling Stone covers he's yet to be on, but he's not bitter. Instead, he's thanking all those bulls that bucked him off, because he got back on.

"That's my song," says Moore. "Anybody that's had any doubt in me. I heard all the rumbles when I went away for a minute from radio. I heard what other promoters, other labels, said about me. That's my middle finger to everybody and saying, 'Fuck that, we're going strong.' I've always been that guy in the song."

Sometimes, though, Moore thinks about what would happen if he just left it all behind. He burns with everything he's got and, if the world were fair, he'd seal this album with nights at Nashville's Bridgestone Arena and some Number One hits. But, then again, he's not expecting country radio to play songs with references to cocaine or those that are six minutes in length. But he won't change them.

"I'm just one of those kinds of artists going wide open as fast as I can, and one day I might just stop," he says. "Not altogether, but a large part of me could end up walking away from it."

Moore pays for his coffee – he has to make a bus call later for a gig in Biloxi, Mississippi, where he'll sing, play and sweat, leaving everything on that stage for an audience that is enraptured. Except for one woman a little too caught up in her iPhone. Moore will call her out, as he's been known to do, ask her to live in the moment, and then go on with the show. Another day in the life of the guitar man.

Here's the tracklist for Kip Moore's *Slowheart*:

1. "Plead the Fifth" (Luke Dick, Josh Kear)
2. "Just Another Girl" (Kip Moore, Westin Davis, Ben Helson)

3. "I've Been Around" (Kip Moore, Dan Couch)
4. "Fast Women" (Kip Moore, Blair Daly, Westin Davis, Troy Verges)
5. "Bitter Sweet Company" (Kip Moore, Josh Miller, Troy Verges)
6. "Sunburn" (Kip Moore, David Garcia, Josh Miller, Steven Olsen)
7. "More Girls Like You" (Kip Moore, Steven Olsen, Josh Miller, David Garcia)
8. "The Bull" (Jon Randall, Luke Dick)
9. "Blonde" (Kip Moore, Steven Olsen, Josh Miller, David Garcia)
10. "Good Thing" (Kip Moore, Josh Miller, Troy Verges)
11. "Last Shot" (Kip Moore, Dan Couch, David Lee Murphy)
12. "Try Again" (Kip Moore, David Garcia, Josh Miller)
13. "Guitar Man" (Kip Moore, Dan Couch, Westin Davis)