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Kip Moore Is Country's Favorite New Nonconformist



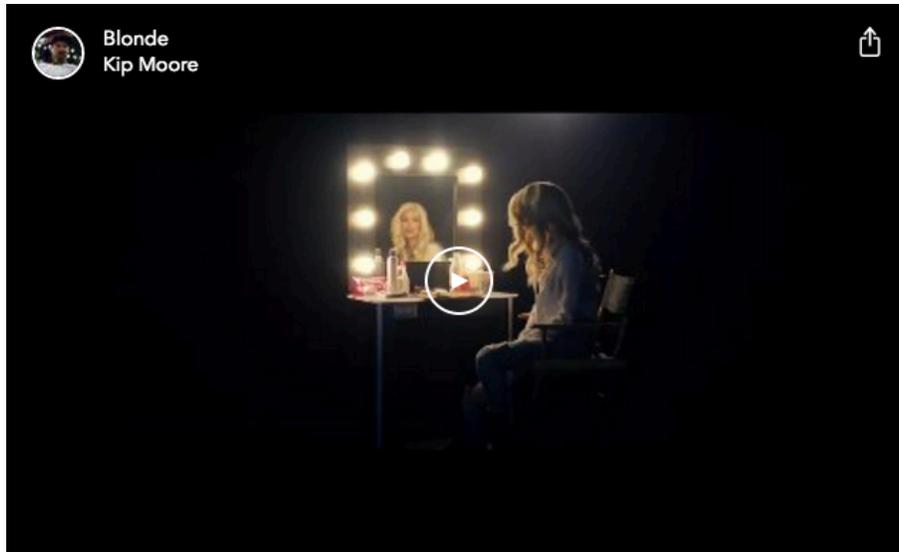
The kickass country singer premieres the video for "Blonde" from his upcoming record 'Slowheart,' out September 8.

Kip Moore is feeling prideful. This well-mannered South Georgia man isn't one to gloat, but you can't help but hear some palpable satisfaction in his wry chuckle. "It's a beautiful, beautiful thing, man," the country singer says. He could be talking about his ever-growing career or the fact that his breakout single "Somethin' Bout A Truck" off his mammoth debut album *Up All Night* has been certified platinum. Moore is instead getting a dose of self-fulfillment for the fact that he proved his doubters right. Namely: his record label, his management, and all those around him who thought the guy was nuts when he insisted on releasing the less-commercially viable and more artistic-minded 2015 album, *Wild Ones*. The LP failed to land any successful radio singles, but his diehard fans loved it: They showed up by the thousands at venues across the country, bought tons of merchandise, and sang every word of his songs back to him every night. The best part of it all? When the singer began thinking about starting work on his new album, *Slowheart*, due on September 8, the Nashville bigwigs could do nothing but step back and watch him work his magic yet again.

"Everyone was like, 'Go do whatever the hell you want because it's working,'" Moore recalls with a laugh. "That was probably the most gratifying moment in my career. I had finally gotten everybody's attention."

That's not about to stop anytime soon: as much influenced by a longtime love of Southern rock as traditional country music, *Slowheart* is the sound of an uncompromising, genre-defying artist firing on all cylinders. It's as much a toast to his love of Tom Petty and Bruce Springsteen, as exemplified on the standout "Bittersweet

Company," as celebrated outlaw country artists like Merle Haggard ("The Bull"). And on "Guitar Man," arguably the most accomplished song of Moore's career yet, he takes a stab at what could be viewed as his version of "Piano Man": his gravely voice echoing sweat and stamina, the song recounts his early days as a down-and-out ax slinger playing cover tunes at dive bars to little fanfare. "That's the only song that I've ever written where I haven't been hard on myself when I've gotten done with it," Moore says of the song, which he recorded live in a single take.



"Blonde," the music video premiering today on Noisery, is of the timely variety: it's Moore's rebuke of social media and Instagram-based fame. "Every girl now is trying to start an Instagram page by showing how amazing their ass is," he says. "You'll sell your soul for whatever it takes to be famous nowadays." But says he's not one to cater to what's trendy.

"I'm never going to be one of those artists that's trying to stay relevant with a super-young pop-culture centered audience," Moore adds. "That's what we're pushed to do. That's what's been shoved down my throat over and over. I see it all the time with artists trying to hold onto that. I refuse to fucking do that. I'm going to grow as my music grows. I'm going to grow as a human being."

Moore has long been the type to trust his instinct. It's why on a whim he moved to Hawaii in his early-twenties if only because he wanted to surf more often. He'd surf by day, play music for whoever would listen at night. "But there was still a void. I was still searching for something else. One night, while playing a gig, "this guy out there said, "You need to move to Nashville. One of my friends is a songwriter out there and he's had a little bit of success."

So Moore packed his bags, moved to Nashville only knowing "this friend of a friend. Actually I didn't really know her," lived in one shitty apartment after the next, took three years to land a publishing deal, and even then he still couldn't get anyone to give a shit about his own songs. "It was tortuous, man," he recalls. "I couldn't even get in the door to play hardly anybody my music. It was virtually impossible. But it was one of those things where I was totally in it to hone my craft and I studied and I studied. I'd lay up at night and I'd listen to old records I loved and I would study the lyrics and I'd write them out and try to understand why there were certain artists I gravitated to. I was a true student of the game."

It paid off: After inking a major-label deal with MCA Nashville he released *Up All Night* in 2012 and soon saw its bluesy second single, "Somethin' Bout A Truck," hit Number One on the Billboard Hot Country chart. "The whole thing was surreal and it was too fast-paced for me to even grasp what was happening," Moore recalls. Not until two additional single—"Beer Money" and "Hey Pretty Girl"—also exploded on the charts did the singer come to terms with his newfound success. Though he didn't exactly love how he's become that "radio-single" guy. So he doubled down on his artistry, singles be damned, and released *Wild Ones* in 2015. "People were not really for that record. Not in my camp, at least," he says. "That was not a popular decision as far as music to make. And I felt it. But I was convicted. I felt like I knew what the fans wanted for me and I was certain what I wanted to do."



Radio hated the album but his fans felt differently; Moore says his audience tripled in size on the *Wild Ones* tour. When he began work on *Slowheart* he had no hesitation about pushing the boundaries of what constitutes traditional country music. And on crunchy rockers from "Just Another Girl" to "Fast Women" it's readily apparent he's going aiming to be a country-influenced rock artist territory rather than a Nashville puppet. "I don't think about the commercial gain while I'm writing a record," he says. "I do think about it once I'm finished with it. I look at it and I'm like "Oh shit, do I have anything here? I sure hope I do." But when I'm in the midst of it that's never on my mind. I'm truly thinking about just trying to write the most perfect song."

Moore says he's feeling good about *Slowheart's* chances. Sure, he'd love it to hit at radio ("Every artist still wants to be heard on the radio and wants those hits to reach the masses"), but he isn't overly concerned if it flames out. Moore says he knows what he has in his back pocket with the album and that's enough. "I don't lay my head on my pillow at night the way I did with *Wild Ones* not knowing how people were going to respond," he says. "It's not arrogance. It's more that I did exactly what I wanted to do. So even if it doesn't work I'm OK. I did it my way."