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Music Review: Kip Moore Explores Gray Areas on 'Wild Ones'

Kip Moore, "Wild Ones" (MCA Nashville)

Of all the backward-ball cap-wearing male country singers, Kip Moore takes the dirt road less traveled. The songs on his debut album tended to search his soul, suggesting Moore realizes that sometimes follow a good time.

On "Wild Ones," Moore occasionally explores gray areas. The song "I'm to Blame" features a guy who regularly makes bad choices — an alternative to the confident chest-beating so common in contemporary country music. The mid-tempo "Comeback Kid" is as subtly dramatic as a good Bruce Springsteen ballad, and "That's All Right With Me" advances a loopy, laid-back vibe reminiscent of Joe Walsh's stoner anthems.

Too often, though, Moore retreads clichéd themes. He links drinking and staying up late with being wild and reduces love songs to creepy sexual come-ons. "Come and Get It" and "What You Got on Tonight" both deliver the title lines over the phone to a lover — sentiments that were creepy even before Internet chatrooms.

Musically, the album consistently serves up clever roots-rock riffs and rhythms that separate Moore from the rock-meets-rap focus of his Nashville peers. If more of the lyrics matched the best efforts here, "Wild Ones" would be a triumph. Instead, it's an album ripe for cherry-picked downloads.