

# The Boston Globe

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## **Kip Moore stays true to principles, fans on new LP**

Kip Moore is a little groggy. It's early in the morning after a late night on the road, touring in support of the country singer-songwriter's slow-burning new album, "Wild Ones." The follow-up to his 2012 debut, "Up All Night" — which spawned the hits "Beer Money," "Hey Pretty Girl," and "Somethin' 'Bout a Truck" — "Wild Ones" finds the Georgia native pushing further into grittier rock territory, and singing in more dynamic ways.

"It's going to end up killing me, too," says Moore with a raspy chuckle, on the phone from a Pittsburgh tour stop. "I just had my first headlining show last night, and [expletive] this record is hard to sing live."

But sing it he will for a sold-out crowd at the House of Blues on Friday. After a few false starts, as a couple of underperforming singles created some confusion about how his second album should sound, Moore is happy that the 13 tracks — all of which he co-wrote, largely on the road — reflect who he is as an artist, not what others in Nashville expect him to be.

Before his show on Friday, Moore will dedicate his brand new "Comeback Kid Skatepark" on Copeland Street in Boston. The space, which is designed for use by both experts and beginners, is one of four such parks planned for the first phase of his charitable initiative, Kip's Kid Fund.

Q. So even if it ends up killing you, do you take pride in the fact that you stretched yourself vocally and as a songwriter on "Wild Ones"?

A. Yes, I do. I feel like people recognize that with the record, that it doesn't just lay linear.

Q. It does bounce about, sometimes within the space of one song, like "Complicated," which veers from sexy to melancholy to raging.

A. I feel like I've always really dug deep for that kind of stuff. That's my main thing that I'm trying to do: I'm trying to make records that make you feel something.

Q. Since scrapping the first version of the record and going in to record the way you wanted to, have your aspirations in terms of sales and commercial success changed?

A. There's a lot that the fans don't know, so many things behind the scenes that they don't understand — things that I've turned down, that I have fought for, that I think have really hindered me at times — in my quest for staying honest and true to my craft and true to my fan base. I've been punished a few times for that. It's really been a difficult time for me. But I know myself. There were a few songs that were sent to me a while back, when I had a couple of songs that didn't work on the radio, and they said, "We would kind of like for you to maybe go this way." They probably could have been hits. They fit in the mold of what was going on. And I simply replied, "I'll quit doing music before I do these, sorry." I think I know my fan base, and I continually strive to be authentic with them. And if that means I'm never playing arenas and stadiums, that's just what it means. I refuse to cheapen my road, and I'll always make the music that I want to make.

Q. In that vein, "Comeback Kid" — which you named the skateparks after — feels like the record's real manifesto, a statement about doing things your way, maybe with a little help from inspirations like Bruce Springsteen, Bob Seger, and John Mellencamp.

A. That is what that song was. That song was done toward the end, and not only did I want to have a song that spoke to what my fan base is, which is blue-collar America — it was a very personal song to me. I feel like I've always been that guy that has the chips stacked against him. I've always been super-confident in believing that I'm going to find a way to get done what I want to get done, and do it my way.

Q. What was the inspiration for the skatepark project?

A. These kids that are in some of these areas of town, I feel like they're the scrappers, and they're fighting and scrapping for every inch they're going to get in life. And I'm just trying to give them a really cool place to go, and maybe spark their mind in a new way, give 'em a new hobby and a place to stay out of trouble. I'm just trying to provide them with a little bit of hope.

Q. In a recent online interview, you said Boston is your favorite place to play. What is it you love?

A. It is, because I just know that it's one of those places where they're going to know the entire new record, and I can't wait to play it for them.