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Meet Kip Moore, hard-driving country star



Keep on truckin': For Kip Moore, a good truck means everything. "I learned about life and relationships with a truck," says the country singer from Tifton, Ga. He came to Nashville in a truck (a black Nissan) in 2004. Now Moore has a gold-selling hit (No. 4 on USA TODAY's country airplay charts) called Somethin' 'Bout a Truck, which has sold 673,000 downloads, according to Nielsen SoundScan. "Trucks are changing my life and giving me an opportunity to do what I want to do, which is music. They've given me a career."

Pickup man: Moore also associates a truck, a 1988 Chevrolet Silverado, with the blue-collar rock and classic country music his father played for him, the music Moore draws from for his first album, *Up All Night*. The album made its debut at No. 3 on Billboard's country albums chart and has sold 58,000 copies in two weeks.

"I looked up to him so much," says Moore, 32, of his dad, who passed away last year. "Whatever he liked, I liked. He was a fanatic for (Kris Kristofferson's) *Sunday Morning Coming Down*— he thought that was the best-written song ever. Bob Seger was his favorite. And (Bruce) Springsteen. If they were cool to him, they had to be cool."

Those musicians were all he listened to, "even before I could understand what the lyrics were about, because I hadn't lived enough life. Once I had, I rediscovered those guys and found out how powerful those songs were." Moore once borrowed the Silverado for a date that wound up being the inspiration for his hit single.

Guitars over golf: Moore bought his first guitar, a black Alvarez, at a small Alabama pawn shop. "The first song I learned to play was *The Weight* by The Band," he says. By his late teens, he was writing his own songs. Eventually, he made his performing debut at a pizza place called the Mellow Mushroom in Valdosta, Ga. "I about threw up all over myself before I got up and played," Moore recalls. "I drank so much before I went onstage that I was downright drunk. I was nervous."

He played college basketball, then golf, on scholarship but wound up giving up both for music. "I was out till 3 or 4 in the morning playing these bars, and I didn't have the energy to get up at 6 and do golf practice," he says. "I ended up saying, 'My heart's in this, and it's not in playing golf.' So I dropped the scholarship."

Working on a dream: Moore spent four-and-a-half years in Music City before securing his first song publishing contract and another four years before getting his record deal. Without the mentoring of Brett James, a songwriter whose credits include Carrie Underwood's *Jesus, Take the Wheel* and Jason Aldean's *The Truth*, Moore might not have made the transition. James wound up producing *Up All Night*. "Brett allowed me to grow as a writer, where I think a lot of people wouldn't have," Moore says. "He kept believing in what I was doing. He felt it was different, but he wasn't trying to put me in a box."

Songwriting buddies: Another key contact for Moore was Keifer Thompson of Thompson Square, a duo that topped the country charts last year with *Are You Gonna Kiss Me or Not*. "We became really close friends, starting writing a lot together, hanging out," Moore says. "We helped each other get through the rough patches that Nashville brings." Two of their collaborations wound up on Thompson Square's 2011 debut. Another, called *Drive Me Crazy*, opens *Up All Night*.

Road shows: Moore is touring as a support act for Billy Currington. "Billy's a total pro," Moore says of the singer. "You can learn so much just from watching his show. He's super-gracious with me. I couldn't have asked for a better first tour to be on. They've all been packed houses, so it's fun."