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‘I JUST WANT TO MAKE GREAT MUSIC’: KIP MOORE CLEARS UP MISCONCEPTIONS THAT HE’S TRYING TO BUCK THE SYSTEM



"I've always felt like somewhat of an underdog," the country rocker tells PEOPLE. "I think that's why people relate to that so much"

Just hours before kicking off the second leg of his highly praised headlining [Room to Spare: Acoustic Tour](#) in Chicago, [Kip Moore](#) sits quietly backstage, his ball cap flipped backwards and his beard a little fuller than before.

"When you take off for two and a half months, you are a little worried that you might not have your mojo when you get back," he tells PEOPLE. "I was [surfing in Maui and Costa Rica](#), and I didn't do any singing. I didn't do anything, so sometimes, you are a little worried if people are still going to want to show up and see the shows. Am I going to be as strong as I was before I left?"

The multi-platinum singer/songwriter answered his own question later that night, as a sold-out crowd packed into a Chicago venue and swallowed up every ounce of a mouth-watering set that included

deep album cuts such as “Backseat” and “Magic” alongside favorites “Last Shot” and covers such as [Tom Petty](#)’s “Learning to Fly.”



“This is probably the most unnerving thing I can do,” Moore, 38, says of the acoustic nature of these shows. “It breaks down the songs to the essentials. The melody and the lyric has to be there because they are both completely exposed in a setting like this, but I love that. I love the feeling of breaking it down like that. I don’t feel like I have to entertain during these shows. The songs just kind of do the talking.”

Currently, Moore’s latest single “The Bull” from his current album *Slowheart* is doing more than talking. It’s speaking the truth of a Georgia native who has seen his share of ups and downs during a career that shot to stardom with 2011’s “Somethin’ ‘Bout a Truck.”

“I really felt like ‘The Bull’ was something I wanted to put out there and I wanted it to be heard amongst our fan base,” Moore says of the powerful song. “I feel like I have had to fight my way out of a lot of things throughout my life. I’ve always felt like somewhat of an underdog and I’ve always embraced the challenge of life knocking you down and you getting back up. I think that’s why people relate to that so much.”

Granted, Moore admits that the song is somewhat polarizing and may not play well with the other songs currently on rotation on country radio. But that’s okay by him.

“People have misunderstood me a lot,” Moore says, adamantly. “There is no f—ing artist out there that doesn’t want to have hit songs. Tom Petty wanted hit songs. Merle Haggard always said he was dreaming one more hit record. Hit records allow for a whole other audience to hear them, and that’s the power of radio. The trap is trying to write for commercial success. I write, trying to make good music and what feels right to me.”

And heck, that philosophy has resulted in some mighty big hits throughout the years, including “Beer Money,” “Hey Pretty Girl” and [“More Girls Like You.”](#)

“That’s been the misconception about me,” Moore continues as he leans back into the backstage couch. “People think I’m just trying to buck the system and that’s horse s—. I just want to make great music and if one of those songs hits at radio, it’s amazing. I love that.”

Moore stops for a moment to gather his thoughts.

“Nashville can walk around with blinders a lot and they don’t know what is happening in the real world,” he confesses. “They think when an artist has had a couple of hit records, all of a sudden that’s the artist they need to be for it to keep working. That’s really not the case.”

Rather, Moore looks to his fans to ensure that he [continues going in the right direction](#) when it comes to both his music and his career.

“There are a lot of people throwing up these little shell houses — I feel like we built this fan base from solid oak and it’s a house that is not going to get deterred by a storm,” says Moore. “I always want to sing to our fan base. I get frustrated when I hear music where nobody is really saying nothing and it’s just kind of air. It’s okay to have fun songs, but I just feel like there is a lot of people — especially in the modern day of social media — that are battling a lot of insecurities. As you get older, life is tough and I don’t feel like we are singing to those people. But I’ll be singing to them, that’s for sure.”



Indeed, Moore is currently working on a brand new album that not only has him listening to the concerns of his avid fan base, but the troubles that he finds in his own heart.

“There is a lot of questioning about who I am in this world and where I fit in with God and what is God to me,” Moore says about some of what his songwriting is conjuring up on the new record, which he

says is the best body of work he has ever done. “There are also lots of questions about trying to get back to the core of your faith and questions about where I fit in this world. I’ve slipped and fallen all through my life, but my faith has never wavered. I have always felt it’s been rock solid at its core.”

As Moore approaches his 39th birthday on April 1, he tells PEOPLE he tries not to dwell too much on getting older. He still feels young and vibrant and says he has as much energy as he ever has. But like the rest of us, he is always evolving and always seeing things differently from one year to the next.

“Sometimes I feel like I love [music] too much, to where I’m not able to find balance in my life,” admits Moore, who says he would like to do more mission work in the coming years. “I’m not able to give much of myself to anybody else because of the stage, whether it’s friends or relationships. Sometimes the love I have for all of this hinders me from experiencing those things to where that might force me to step away from this at some point, but it will never be because I don’t want to do it anymore. I love music way too much.”