

Kip Moore often lies awake in bed at night. Melodies and lyrics swirl through his head. Sometimes they'll dissipate as seamlessly as they first arrived. Other times, the singer-songwriter can do nothing but begin singing them aloud. It frees his ever-churning mind. It allows him to continually discover his own voice. It grounds him. Most importantly, for a man prone to bouts of self-doubt, it reassures Moore that his path is a righteous one. "I have a complete sense of calm right now," the singer-songwriter says. "During this whole journey, as down as I've gotten at times, I've done this thing my way. I don't have any regrets. I'm always looking ahead."

The journey Moore speaks to is a monumental one: from that of a struggling Nashville musician to a massive country superstar with his mammoth 2012 debut album *Up All Night*; and an artistic adventurer with 2015's sonically bold and critically revered second effort, *Wild Ones*.

Now Moore is set to release his most unflinching, distinct testimony yet: "I know how strong this record is. I know its capabilities," Moore says of *SLOWHEART*, the country star's evocative and profound third album due on September 8th. The culmination of an ever-evolving talent's process of self-discovery, the LP is a warm and honest embrace of Moore's rugged rock roots and a showcase for his innate poetic prowess.

"This album is growing into where I am now," Moore says of a vivid album that bleeds with lyrical raw emotion and rings true with sonic warmth. "I'm never going to be one of those artists that's trying to stay relevant. I'm going to grow as my music grows. I'm going to grow as a human being."

Central to Moore is the knowledge that in *SLOWHEART* he's created a collection of enduring, sturdy songs, ones that showcase his knack for rich storytelling and are not unlike the albums he was raised on. Over 13 tracks, Moore unfurls acute accounts of loss and longing ("Plead the Fifth"), confusion and conviction ("Bittersweet Company"), frivolous falsehood ("Blonde") and always daring to dream ("Guitar Man"). "I want to be an artist that moves people to their core and that they hold onto forever," he says. "That's what got me into this; it was all for the purity of the music. I never gave two shits about money and fame," he adds. "It was all about the songs."

Arriving at his current place of "clarity and peace" required Moore to remove himself from the rigors and oft-grinding politics of Nashville. Following the rigorous *Wild Ones* tour, the singer spent time traveling through Costa Rica, Hawaii and Iceland. He immersed himself in nature and self-reflection. "It helped me to really step away from the whole industry side of things," Moore explains. He'd been previously quietly writing and recording new material, four or five songs, if only to put his thoughts down on wax. "It was a very organic process," Moore recalls of the earliest days of *SLOWHEART*. When Moore returned home from traveling he learned his record label was ecstatic with what he'd created. "They just went nuts over the songs. It was so nice," he says with a laugh. "It was just like 'Hey man, go make the record you want. Nobody is gonna mess with you.' So I had total freedom to do whatever I wanted," Moore, who produced the vast majority of *SLOWHEART*, adds, "So I was going to go in and finish this record the way I heard it in my head and not have one sense of doubt. If I loved it and I felt it I recorded it."

This take-no-prisoners attitude is all over the album, and slathered atop a swath of brutally honest cuts: "The Bull," written by Jon Randall and Luke Dick and anchored by a spiraling acoustic guitar lick, is Moore's rejoinder to those who doubted him along the way. After Dick played him the song, "I flipped out," Moore recalls. "I was like, 'I definitely have to do this. This is exactly how I feel.'" On lead single "More Girls Like You," Moore comes to terms with the prospect of settling down, maturing, and living a more reigned-in life. "Well, I've been living like a wild old mustang/Out in Montana fields," Moore sings with vigor and virtue. "Might've earned me a bad reputation/ But never stopped these wheels." The song, he says, was inspired after he helped a father teach his young daughter to surf while in Costa Rica. "That is the first taste of the idea that I might be ready for my next chapter of life," Moore offers. "It's a very direct reflection of me evolving as a human being."

The musician says he was intimately involved in the recording process for *SLOWHEART* like never before. "Before I might get quiet in the studio but now I'm not like that," he says. "Now I know what I want

and what I hear in my head and that's what I want to be on the record." Alongside his engineer, Dave Salley, longtime co-writers like Westin Davis and David Garcia, and his band, the Slow Hearts, Moore crafted the album exactly as he saw fit: live and decidedly un-slick. The sonic feel then, Moore says, is of "a band in a room just sitting down and figuring out a song and how it moves you. We kept all that warmth and air in the room. We didn't try to suck any of it out." To that end, Moore points to the six-minute reflective album closer, "Guitar Man." Moore sang his entire vocal part live to tape as musicians Tom Bukovac and Dave Cohen unknowingly played the tender guitar lines in the adjoining room. "That's why you hear me taking breaths and catching up with my phrasing," Moore says with a laugh. "I loved it."

The singer says he's immensely proud: not only of his career, his album and his never-compromising attitude, but of the trust and dedication he's fostered in his audience. That symbiotic relationship between Moore and his fans is never more apparent than during one of his reputation-making live performances. Moore views his shows as an emotional roller coaster with both he and his audience hanging on at every turn: the singer's calling card, a Kip Moore show typically swerves from the raucous and rowdy one minute to the intimate and emotional the next. It's led to a deep, profound and poignant bond between the singer and his fans. "There was a huge undercurrent of fan support that's been building for the last couple years," Moore says of him beginning to sell out massive theaters across the country during the Wild Ones tour and, in the process, tripling the size of his audience, many of whom who chant every word he sings right back at him.

"Through this whole experience I've had a sense of peace that I have a real fanbase that's gonna stick with me," he says. "I'm very in touch with my audience and they're in touch with me. I know how they're gonna feel about this project.

"What I'm doing now has deep roots that are not going to break off," Moore continues. "There's never been any gimmicks. I'll get to where I want to go." He pauses and lets out a knowing chuckle, "That's because I'm going to do it the way I want."