

JUSTIN MOORE



The title to country-radio hitmaker Justin Moore's fourth studio album may suggest he doesn't give a damn, but when it comes to the music, nothing could be further from the truth. On *Kinda Don't Care* (The Valory Music Co.), the Arkansas singer, outdoorsman and family man reaffirms his commitment to recording honest, entertaining country songs. Sure, they may be unapologetic at times, but that's Moore, an artist who refuses to ever project anything he's not.

"The title refers to how uptight our society has become. It's in a place right now where we are consumed with being politically correct. Sometimes you just have to worry about being *correct* and telling it like it is," says Moore.

Which is what he's always done with his impressive string of hits, from his five Number Ones, including "Small Town USA" and "If Heaven Wasn't So Far Away," to the gold-certified singles "Bait a Hook" and "Backwoods." All of those songs, as well as his most recent chart-topper "Point at You" and his current rising single "You Look Like I Need a Drink," possess an undeniable confidence and attitude that distinguishes Moore from the crowded Nashville pack.

And, above all else, there's that unmistakable voice, which propels *Kinda Don't Care's* 12 songs and a 16-track deluxe version of the album.

"The goal was to create a feel-good record. There is still the same hillbilly and redneck stuff on the album, but we also made the most modern-sounding record of my career," says Moore, the 2014 ACM Awards' New Artist of the Year winner. "I wanted to release a record that would fit in perfectly on country radio, but one that also pushed myself creatively. Besides, in the end, if I'm singing, it's always going to sound country."

Co-produced by Moore's long-time collaborator Jeremy Stover, as well as Scott Borchetta and Julian Raymond, *Kinda Don't Care* opens with a bang, a Wild West fantasy titled "Robbin' Trains" that imagines what Moore and his crew might be doing had they been born in the 1800s. "It's like the modern-day country version of Bon Jovi's 'Wanted Dead or Alive,'" says Moore.

Equally evocative is "Rebel Kids," a snapshot of those rowdy teenage years that Moore delivers like a rural Springsteen, full of lived-in small-town pride. "That song is totally me and speaks to my fans," he says. "It's one of those kinds of relatable songs we've had on every album, like 'Small Town USA' and 'For Some Ol' Redneck Reason.'"

Likewise, *Kinda Don't Care's* title track, bolstered by weeping steel guitar, celebrates the merits of just letting loose: saying to hell with watching your weight, pouring a cold one and even lighting up a smoke — at least for one night.

But Moore doesn't allow himself to get comfortable or too lost in country's past. While he honors the genre's tradition, he isn't afraid to push the envelope. The funky "Somebody Else Will" cries out to be a radio hit, bouncing forward with a moody bass line and Moore's atmospheric vocals detailing a now-or-never moment in a bar. "We discovered a really cool R&B feel, especially in the verses," he says. "It's a song that everyone who has heard it just loves."

"Got It Good," written by the Cadillac Three's Jaren Johnston and Neil Mason, along with producer Stover, also elevates Moore's game. Mixing simple acoustic guitar over drum loops, it's proof that country boys like Moore can be at home in the club.

But it's "Hell on a Highway" that best marries the singer's twangy vocals with modern-day production. A classic "she's gone" song, the mid-tempo track is custom-made for burning up the pavement with the setting sun in the rearview.

"This record just feels different to me," says Moore. "My favorite artists and albums are those that have unique voices or sounds, and that's what *Kinda Don't Care* is like. There are not a lot of people who sing like I do, and mixed with Jeremy's production, it's really special. I've been fortunate to have had success because of it."

The album also reunites Moore with Brantley Gilbert, one of his closest friends and duet partners. Together, they team up for the irreverent rocker "More Middle Fingers," a one-finger salute to politicians, bankers and all-around haters.

"It's the evolution of 'I Could Kick Your Ass,'" says Moore, referencing the fan favorite off his 2009 debut. "I loved it because if you just heard the idea, someone may be offended by it. But if you take a second to listen to the lyrics, who wouldn't agree with it? And I knew I needed Brantley for it. We actually recorded that together in the studio and it really helped raise the energy level."

The pair are doing just that right now on the road, bringing their Take It Outside Tour to amphitheaters around the country. Moore relishes being onstage, where, even in the glare of the spotlight, he's able to connect with fans and show them he's just like them.

"One of the things I hear most often after shows is, 'Man, you're so normal.' I guess people have this idea that, if you have any small amount of fame or success, you're supposed to be some kind of freak show or superhero. But I'm the same guy I was before I signed a record deal. When I look in the mirror," he says, "I still see Justin."

Justin Moore, a guy who, despite what is emblazoned on his strongest album yet, really *does* care. About his fans, his family and, especially, country music.

"Everyone growing up has dreams," says Moore. "Mine just happened to come true."



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