

# Review: John Moreland has something urgent to say on new CD

By **Scott Stroud** | AP May 1 at 4:08 PM



JOHN MORELAND / BIG BAD LUV

John Moreland, “Big Bad Luv” (4AD)

Singer-songwriter John Moreland sings like a man on the edge of his seat, leaning forward as though he has something urgent to say. And on his latest album, “Big Bad Luv,” it turns out he does.

Heavy-set and bushy-bearded, Moreland looks like the guy who shows up when you call to get your plumbing fixed. He has “OKLA” tattooed across the knuckles of his right hand and “HOMA” on his left. But he sings achy songs with rare tenderness, his voice a weathered vessel of remorse.

“I never meant to be your woe-is-me emergency,” he sings on one of the album’s most tortured ballads. “But I ain’t dead yet, and I know there ain’t no glory in regret.”

He rocks more than on previous albums, working the territory between Springsteen and Chris Stapleton to good effect.

But it’s the ballads that stay with you. Along with “No Glory in Regret,” songs called “Latchkey Kid” and “Lies I Chose to Believe” will either find a wider audience or be covered by someone bigger who has an ear for sad beauty.

Moreland has said he sometimes writes to exorcise demons and move on, and that’s probably what gives his music such urgency. He sings like he needs to get things off his chest.

It’s the kind of fierce honesty that will lead many listeners to explore all that came before — and will confirm that, one way or another, Moreland’s talent won’t stay hidden any longer.