



## Silverada

Evolution. It's what keeps the best bands afloat — song after song, show after show, record after record.

Mike Harmeier was still in his early 20s when he formed Mike and the Moonpies. From the start, they were the definition of a workingman's country band, cutting their teeth with five-hour sets on Austin's dancehall circuit before spreading their music to the rest of America. By the early 2020s, they'd become global ambassadors of homegrown Texas music, flying their flag everywhere from Abbey Road Studios (where they recorded 2019's *Cheap Silver & Solid Country Gold* with help from the London Symphony Orchestra) to the Grand Ole Opry.

The growth was remarkable, but all that momentum left Harmeier and his four bandmates — drummer Taylor Englert, guitarist Catlin Rutherford, bassist Omar Oyoque, and steel guitarist Zachary Moulton — looking for something new. After all, their music had decidedly changed. Why shouldn't their name do the same?

*Silverada* marks a new chapter in the band's history. It's not just the title of the boldest release of the group's critically-acclaimed career; it's also the name of the reinvigorated band itself.

"Back in the day, all we wanted to do was play the Broken Spoke," says Harmeier, nodding to the hometown honky-tonk in Austin, TX, where *Silverada* began sowing the seeds for a sound that mixed timeless twang with modern-day dynamics. "We had different aspirations back then. We were still figuring out what kind of band we were gonna be, and that took a lot of time and a lot of records."

A lot of records, indeed. *Silverada* marks the group's ninth release, and it balances the strengths they've accumulated along the way — sharp, detailed songwriting that bounces between autobiographical sketches and character studies; gorgeous swells of pedal steel that drift through the songs like weather; a rhythm section capable of country shuffles, hard-charging rock & roll tempos, and everything in between — with a willingness to break old rules and open new doors. "Radio Wave" is a roots-rock anthem for the highway and the heartland, peppered with Springsteen-worthy hooks and War On Drugs-inspired

atmospherics. "Eagle Rare" launches the band into outer space during its explosive middle section, which the band improvised in the recording studio. "Stay By My Side" showcases Silverada's road-warrior credentials — the band recorded the track live during a tour across the American Southeast, capturing it in a single take at Capricorn Sound Studios in Macon, Georgia — while "Wallflower" blends the organic with the otherworldly, finding room for harmonized guitar solos, driving disco beats, and 808 percussion.

"Going into the studio, everybody in the band felt inspired to do something bigger than what they'd done before," Harmeier explains. "We all knew we were at a precipice, and we wanted to jump. I brought in some songs that were metaphorical and not always straightforward, and that showed the guys that I wanted to take this music somewhere new... so they threw their own rulebooks out the window, too."

Harmeier wrote the bulk of *Silverada* in his backyard studio, surrounded by dozens of books he'd picked up at a local Goodwill. "We'd been on tour for so long, playing the same set for almost two years, and I wanted to write something that was a departure," he remembers. Jeff Tweedy's books on songwriting were a big help, but Harmeier pushed himself to get weird, too, finding inspiration in everything from astronomy texts to sci-fi novels. "I would read some, work a little bit, read some more, and work a little more," he says of the creative process. "I spent a full month in that studio, going there every night, making word ladders and highlighting lines and learning to free write."

Recorded at Yellow Dog Studios with longtime producer/collaborator Adam Odor, *Silverada* propels the band forward without losing sight of their roots. "Stubborn Son" — a loving, unsparring sketch of the family patriarch who set Harmeier's creativity in motion — unfolds like a close cousin to *Steak Night at the Prairie Rose's* title track, laced with fiddle solos from longtime George Strait collaborator Gene Elders. "Doing It Right" channels the same throwback, slow-dance ambiance that informed 2019's "You Look Good in Neon." "Load Out," which chronicles the grind of blue-collar jobs both on and off the road, could've found a home on 2021's *One To Grow On*.

There's a smart sense of history here — a celebration not only of where the band is headed, where they've been, too. Even so, *Silverada* doesn't spend much time looking in the rearview mirror. Instead, it keeps its gaze focused on the road ahead. This is a snapshot of a band in motion, chasing down the next horizon, writing the soundtrack to some new discovery. It's the sound of alchemy, of some new metal being forged. And like silver itself, *Silverada* shines brightly.

"We spent the first part of our career figuring out who we are and what we're good at," says Harmeier. "Now we want to evolve not only the sound of the band, but the dynamic of the live show, too. We're all lifers here. We're in this for the long haul. *Silverada* is us setting the stage for the next leg of the journey."