

## Silverada Blend Country and Indie Rock on a Strong Self-Titled LP

The Texas country band used to be called Mike and the Moonpies. Changing their name and rebooting their sound was a really good idea



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*Silverada refine their Texas country sound on their self-titled album — their first since changing their name from Mike and the Moonpies.* ERIC CAIN\*

SOMETIMES A CHANGE will do you good. After nearly 15 years of recording and performing as Mike and the Moonpies, the Texas country group led by singer-songwriter Mike Harmeier shot for the moon and jettisoned their snack-cake name, choosing to rebrand as Silverada. To some fans, it seemed unnecessary: What was wrong with the old name, after all, and why now?

The answer lies in the self-titled Silverada, the band's first album since promoters were forced to update their marquees. While all of the hallmarks that made the Moonpies such a celebrated live act remain — Zachary Moulton's elegantly loopy steel, the twang-and-grit of Catlin Rutherford's Telecaster, Harmeier's distinctly country voice — the studio production and songwriting of Silverada eclipse the barroom fare and vibe that defined some of the group's earlier records.

Produced by Harmeier and longtime collaborator Adam Odor, their ninth album is a concise blast of alt-country and indie-rock that at times has more in common with Wilco, one of Harmeier's favorites, or Fastball, Silverada's Austin peers, than George Strait. The group plant a flag for their evolved sound with opening track "Radio Wave," a majestic anthem with U2 guitars and a whoa-whoa pre-chorus. "A rough and tumble refugee with a bone to pick and a place to be," Harmeier sings deliberately in the bridge: He and the band know they deserve a seat at the table, dammit.

Lead single “Wallflower” is equally defiant, propelled by Omar Oyoque’s slinky bass and drummer Taylor Englert’s breakneck beat. Harmeier writes about being pulled toward an anonymous face in a crowd of bar flies. On the surface, it’s a woman. Listen closer though, and he’s singing about his band, issuing a declaration that while Mike and the Moonpies might have been dismissed in the past, Silverada will command your attention or die trying.

The acoustic ballad “Stay by My Side” is the album’s traditional country moment. Sonically, it plays like an outtake from Red Headed Stranger and Harmeier summons his best nasal Willie Nelson when he croons, “I won’t take it for granted/it won’t last forever/I’ll stay on the stage till they turn out the light.” (The Red Headed Stranger allusion isn’t out of bounds: That album confounded the industry too when Nelson released it nearly 50 years ago.)

But Silverada reaches its peak with “Eagle Rare.” A hypnotic five-minute opus named after a bottle of bourbon, the track finds Harmeier bewildered by a younger generation who “all dance like Davy Crockett” and carry flasks into the club in their hip pockets. Here, he’s a man in danger of feeling old and left behind — until the band roar in behind him with a frenetic jam that sounds like Pearl Jam onstage with the Allmans. It’s invigorating. Could a band called Mike and the Moonpies have pulled that off? Who knows. But Silverada did.