

Mike and the Moonpies Are Changing Their Name to ‘Silverada’

After 16 years of recording and performing under a name that started as a joke, Mike Harmeier and his Texas band are rebranding for a more serious future

BY JOSH CRUTCHMER

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MIKE AND THE Moonpies are changing their name. After 16 years of recording and performing under that moniker, singer Mike Harmeier and his barnstorming Texas five-piece are rebranding as “Silverada.”

Harmeier announced the overhaul during an intimate performance moderated by Rolling Stone at Key West’s Mile 0 Festival, a prestige gathering for Red Dirt, country, and Americana artists and fans. On Friday night, the group will publicly retire the Moonpies moniker for good during their main-stage performance, finishing their set and leaving the stage as Silverada. For all five members, the change has been a long time coming.

After watching the Red Dirt and Americana country scene explode over the last few years, with artists like Turnpike Troubadours, Zach Bryan, and Flatland Cavalry garnering national attention, the Moonpies felt their name — started as a joke when Harmeier used to play cover songs — was hindering their progress.

“We have been talking about name change for many, many years,” Harmeier tells Rolling Stone. “The climate for the music that we make is very good right now. This scene that is happening now is a mainstream country scene. When we started out, it wasn’t really that way, and here we are — old hat at it now. It’s like we’ve climbed to the top of a ladder and there’s no escape hatch up there. How do we go to that next level? It seems to me like I need to refresh the idea of what we’re doing to new listeners.”

Silverada have a plan in place to win over skeptics or fans who can't let go of the Moonpies name. They are releasing a new album, titled Silverada, on June 28. The midnight/ET release means the record will drop right as Silverada are walking onstage to headline the first night of the Jackalope Jamboree in Pendleton, Oregon, the night before. The album's first single is called "Wallflower" and will be released on Feb. 2.

For an album release party, the band will headline Nashville's Ryman Auditorium for the first time on July 5, with Uncle Lucius opening. (Tickets are on sale now.) After doing all they could as an opening act to steal the show from Reckless Kelly and Jason Boland and the Stragglers at a sold-out Ryman last September, topping a bill at the Mother Church is a natural next step.

"It's all guns firing at once," Harmeier says. "But I'm also giving venues their fair shake, too. If they want to say 'Formerly Mike and the Moonpies' on a poster, I'm not trying to ruin that for them. So much of this is coming out of the gates strong, to prove that we're all dedicated to this, and hopefully our fan base will be as well."

According Chase Harmeier — Mike's wife and the band's manager — the idea of a name change dates as far back as the band's 2012 LP *The Hard Way*. Mike Harmeier says that when 2019's *Cheap Silver & Solid Country Gold* — the album the group recorded with a symphony at Abbey Road Studios in London — was released, he knew a rebrand was inevitable. That album ended up playing a major role in leading the band to the new name.

"When *Cheap Silver* came out, we were progressing in a way that did not fit into the perception that people had about us," Harmeier says. "We've come to a point where we're at the right time and have a record in the can that is a departure for us — a record with a little bit more freedom than we ever made before."

Silverada is Harmeier, drummer Taylor Englert, guitarist Catlin Rutherford, bassist Omar Oyoque, and steel guitarist Zachary Moulton. The entire identity of the band is practically stamped in the new name.

"We went through a lot, and it's hard to get five grown men to agree on anything," Harmeier says. "We really wanted something that was one word. When we wrote *Cheap Silver*, that was our identity. We were drinking silver tequila. Then we wrote the last Moonpies record, *One to Grow On*, which is kind of based on a Chevy truck. So, we just put the whole thing together. We feel like this encompasses everything that we are."

There is little arguing that the band is making the name change at the height of their popularity. At the Ryman show in September, Harmeier and co. had the entire crowd on its feet for their 45-minute opening set. (Even at that hallowed theater, this was not something an audience typically does for the first of three bands.) There were other examples in 2023, including an end of the year gig at Cain's Ballroom in Tulsa, where the band headlined a bill with the unflappable Joshua Ray Walker and cowpunk darlings Vandoliers. The latter take particular pride in opening shows for the hard-country band formerly known as the Moonpies.

“This is my favorite Texas country band,” Vandoliers frontman Josh Fleming says of Silverada. “Over the past decade, they have been one of the few bands who puts on a real show. They don’t stare at their boots, and their songs say something. They have earned every fan in the crowd, because the dancers can dance, the cowboys can cry, and everyone can sing along.”

Fleming is in favor of the Silverada transition. “I think a band name is the first introduction you get to someone’s art,” he says. “When you see them live and listen to what’s being said, this is a serious band. If their identity doesn’t fit the band name, it’s time to change.”

While the Moonpies name originated as a joke, it ending up sticking with the group’s fans. For Harmeier, that devotion from fans is both the reason the rebranding took this long and a source of confidence that it’s the right time for change. The Mile 0 Fest in particular is Harmeier’s preferred setting to announce the news.

“We definitely have the cult following type of demographic,” he says. “People pride themselves to know about us, arguably more than bands that are far more popular. And, in Key West, it’s all of our diehards. Our ‘Mockingbird’ fan group is all there. I couldn’t think of a better way to do it.”

With the buzz from last fall’s Live From the Devil’s Backbone yet to die down — Rolling Stone called it the album you’d play to introduce Martians to country music — Harmeier is also quick to reassure fans that Silverada’s high-energy personality and the group’s back catalog is not about to change.

“It’s still going to be us,” Harmeier says. “It just sounds like us re-imagined. It’s evolutionary.”

Still, he admits the decision to become Silverada initially kept him awake at night.

“It’s terrifying. It’s a big change. But I have confidence in the product, and I have confidence in the fans,” he says. “It’s not a new band. It’s the same band, and it’s really just us trying to expand, make it bigger, and make it clear that this is what we’re going to do forever.”

Josh Crutchmer is a journalist and author of the 2020 book Red Dirt: Roots Music Born in Oklahoma, Raised in Texas, at Home Anywhere and the 2023 book The Motel Cowboy Show: On the Trail of Mountain Music from Idaho to Texas, and the Side Roads in Between.