

The Detroit News

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MUSIC

Uncle Kracker to bring 'Coffee & Beer' home

Christina Fuoco-Karasinski Special to The Detroit News

Nov. 27, 2024, 11:42 a.m. ET

Mount Clemens native Uncle Kracker recently left Michigan behind for Nashville. However, to the musician born Matthew Shafer, the Great Lakes State will always be home.

The L'Anse Creuse High School alum will fly north to play to a sold-out crowd at the Machine Shop in Flint on Saturday. His set will be peppered with hits and songs from his latest album, "Coffee & Beer."

"It feels good to be around the hometown area," Shafer said. "Ultimately, hometown gigs mean more than the other ones. It feels better to be close to home."

Released in May, "Coffee & Beer" is a career album for Shafer. His first full-length effort in 12 years, the 13-track collection bounces between country, pop, rock, and hip-hop. However, it's cohesive; a natural progression for Shafer.

"Coffee & Beer" kicks off with the country/Western-sassy, "High on My Horse," and travels through his influences in "Sweet 16," "Reason to Drink," "Cruising Altitude" and reggae-tinged "Beach Chair."

Shafer, 50, began his career around 1994 as the turntablist for Kid Rock's band Twisted Brown Trucker. Since 1999, he has recorded solo material and scored Top 10 hits with "Follow Me" and "Drift Away."

His success continued when he joined Kenny Chesney on the single "When the Sun Goes Down," which achieved gold status. Shafer has since frequently toured with

Chesney, supporting the country star and joining him for the duet.

The audience response to the album “Coffee & Beer,” he said, has been strong among fans, according to social media posts. Shafer peruses through them to read what listeners are saying.

“It’s been a while since I released an album,” he said. “I love people’s comments. I’m always reading stuff here and there. It’s been positive for the most part.”

Reading reviews gives Shafer a good idea of what songs to include in his set list.

“If I can get anything out of a comment section, that would be it,” he said. “I’m not looking for pats on the back. I’m looking to see what people are gravitating toward. I’ll probably start putting the songs into the set list now.

“Then, I’ll have new data to see how the live reaction goes on those songs.”

Nashville and his move away from Macomb County have inspired Shafer. He penned the album “Coffee & Beer” with songwriters via Zoom during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“The process wasn’t normal,” he said. “The pandemic forced us to do the Zoom thing. It was the first time ever I had written with anyone through the Zoom process. It was weird and awesome.”

Collaborating was much easier than he thought it would be. He could still connect with the songwriters, which is key to tracking an album. Another piece of the puzzle was his new home in Nashville.

Shafer’s previous albums were very Michigan/Detroit-centric. He said he felt his songs were a little redundant.

“Nashville has definitely done wonders for that department when it comes to doing something that you do need to be inspired,” he said. “It’s not necessarily Nashville that does that. It’s the change, being somewhere different, doing these things.”

Uncle Kracker

8 p.m. Saturday

3539 S. Dort Highway, Flint

The Machine Shop

Tickets: Sold out