

## MONA

*"It's like a classic rock and roll cliché," Mona frontman Nick Brown says with a laugh. "My father was a pastor and I was raised in the Assembly of God, the same church as Elvis and Jerry Lee Lewis and Johnny Cash. There's some mystic magic that's involved with any kind of religion that believes in emotion and art the way they do. Singing and dancing isn't entertainment for them. They're responding to something they believe is much bigger than themselves."*

*Brown may have outgrown the church, but that ultimate belief in the power of music to bind and transform is at the heart of everything Mona does. The band's arresting new album, 'Soldier On,' is their first in three years, and it's an explosive, expansive showcase for their unique blend of emotional depth, punk rock swagger, and anthemic grandeur. Pushing beyond previous boundaries and fully embracing their studio environment like never before, it's an exhilarating collection that's both intimately personal and wildly liberating, the kind of music that's equally at home in headphones and arenas. The album reflects not only the Nashville rockers' artistic growth over these past few years, but also the immense personal changes they've undergone through their time in the spotlight.*

*"We put out two albums on a major label and toured the world for four years straight," Brown says of Mona's whirlwind breakout. "We learned what we wanted to be as a band and what we didn't want to be, what we liked about the music industry and what we despised about it. The landscape was changing so fast around us that we decided we wanted to take our time with this album and make something that we truly believed in and loved. Sometimes that's a process, like learning to walk all over again."*

*Named after Brown's grandmother, Mona first emerged in 2010 with a series of infectious singles that had The Guardian swooning for their "pounding drums, ringing guitars, [and] propulsive bass lines." They landed a high profile major label deal, and after a showstopping performance on Later... With Jools Holland, the group was shortlisted on the BBC's Sound of 2011 poll, named one of NME's Best New Bands, and took home MTV's Brand New award for emerging artist of the year. They delivered on the buzz and then some with their self-titled debut album, a fierce and ambitious collection that cracked the Top 40 in the UK and earned them performances on The Tonight Show and Conan in the States along with sold-out headline shows and support bills with the likes of Robert Plant, Arcade Fire, Kings of Leon, and Noel Gallagher. The New York Times hailed Brown's "beautiful, thrusting snarl," and the band soon found themselves playing massive festivals around the world, from Glastonbury and Leeds in the UK to Summer Sonic in Japan to Splendour in the Grass in Australia. In 2013, Mona followed it up with their sophomore album, 'Torches & Pitchforks,' which was praised by Rolling Stone for its "high-energy garage-rock" and found the band keeping up their breakneck pace of touring.*

*When the dust finally settled, Mona's success enabled Brown to take a step back and search for some breathing room. He bought a home and built a studio where he could focus on his production work. He listened voraciously across genres, from country to hip-hop and ambient music along with the rock and roll he grew up on.*

*When it was time to finally begin cutting 'Soldier On,' the band reinvented their recording process, spending more time than ever before shaping songs and*

*introducing digital elements in the studio as they erased boundaries between eras and genres.*

*“We approached this album way differently than the first two,” explains Brown, who has produced all the Mona records. “Those albums were just a band in a room, like they did in the 50’s. I used to consider myself a purist about recording, but when I finally decided that was silly, I realized that the sky is the limit for us in the studio.”*

*On album opener “Out Of Place,” they build a soaring epic off of an 808 drum machine loop. It’s something Brown says Mona never would have even considered in the past, and the result is a powerful mix of man and machine that sets the stage perfectly for an album defined by its blend of raw human emotion and seductive studio sophistication. The slow-burning “Losing Time” offers up tinges of psychedelia, while “Thought Provoked” draws on the bombast of 70’s glam rock, and the poignant “All I’ve Known” tugs at the heartstrings with vulnerable vocals and propulsive percussion. Lead single “Kiss Like A Woman” finds the band at their most addictive, with razor-sharp guitar hooks slicing in and out of a tight, dancefloor-ready groove.*

*“That’s a song about being who you want to be,” says Brown. “It doesn’t matter who you love, who you pray to, what color you are. It’s a daily reminder to be yourself and love the people around you for who they are.”*

*Though the Dayton native writes from the perspective of a variety of characters on the album, it’s not difficult to find his own never-give-up personality in the lyrics. On “Not Alone” and “Some Kind Of Rage,” he pushes forward by channeling frustration into fuel, and “Don’t Let Go” and the title track play like notes-to-self to persevere in the face of adversity.*

*“I look at music and religion as the same thing,” says Brown. “I wasn’t born into money. I grew up in a trailer park around people who were looking for something bigger than themselves, who knew there was something more out there. I always believed your whole world could change with one song.”*

*It’s all part of a mindset Brown sums up with the mantra, “Dead serious, just kidding.” Success, he believes, lies in the ability to live inside that contradiction, to embody both attitudes simultaneously. There’s magic in the friction between faith and doubt, pride and humility, ambition and satisfaction. Only by walking the line can we hope to reach our true potential.*

*“There’s a lunacy to believing that what you do matters,” Brown explains, “but the mere act of believing it is what makes it so powerful. One minute you could be blue-collar working class, and the next, you could be king of the world. We’ve all got more inside of us than we feel like we have sometimes. The key is to soldier on.”*