

## **Chris Koster is a solo machine; Kingston musician reflects on life after breakups in his new album, Sex, Love & Morality, a disc that has him wearing a million hats**

**Posted 7 days ago**

Chris Koster will do anything for his art. For his new album, Sex, Love & Morality, he wrote his own songs, played most of the instruments and produced the whole thing.

Doing it all also includes putting on a wolf's head and posing for a dozen pictures while playing a different instrument to get the cover for his sophomore album.

The CD comes three years after the release of Koster's first solo effort, Secrets of the Lonely, and, in the intervening years, he was courted by at least one major label, Universal.

According to Koster, the label brought in legendary producer Bob Ezrin to do some sweet talking. Ezrin produced Pink Floyd's The Wall and Alice Cooper's biggest hits and has also worked with other rock groups such as Jane's Addiction and Nine Inch Nails.

In the end, Koster signed with a boutique indie label, Orange Records, which is distributed by Universal. But he was inspired by the time he spent with Ezrin, a Toronto native.

"He held a mirror to who I am and what I'm trying to say," says Koster, who gave Ezrin 180 of his songs to listen to and critique.

"It helped define what kind of artist I want to be. Bob's a busy guy but one of the first things he said to me was that I'm the best producer of my own music. I don't know if that was a way of getting rid of me but a lot of people have told me that."

Before he was a solo artist, Koster was the frontman for the bands the Vibewell and Color.

Koster's first album was what he calls "a living-room record" - one to be listened to in the comforts of home - whereas Sex, Love & Morality better reflects his live act, which is an emotional and operatic rock 'n' roll show.

Both albums were recorded at the Tragically Hip's studio in Bath.

"For this one, I wanted to turn the volume up and do a more theatrical album," Koster says.

"It's pretty unrelenting. I've got no problem if you hate it.

"It'd be creative death for me if it was middle of the road."

The CD's big sound is helped by some big tunes. Aside from big-time rockers like the title track, Sex, Love & Morality, and the first single, Heavy Hearted, there's still room for the wistful Montreal and the Prince-like Temporary Lovers.

Koster says every track is about either sex, love or morality, but a lot of them do seem to be about the after-shock of a relationship breaking up.

"I like the idea of characters in each song," he says.

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"And I think I have a wide understanding of the multiple variations of these themes on the album."

As for the wolf theme, it pops up in the song I'm Just Trying To Break Your Heart when Koster sings, "I'm the wolf in disguise" and Koster says he'll be hanging around for awhile.

"He'll be popping up in other songs as time goes by," Koster says.

Koster is managed by The Management Trust, who, for 17 years, guided the fortunes of The Tragically Hip, starting as an unknown bar band and becoming one of Canada's perennially popular groups.

Manager Jake Gold, one of the judges on Canadian Idol, has high hopes for Koster.

"We wouldn't have him if we didn't think the sky was the limit for him," Gold says.

"He's a really talented singer and performer and, in the vein of Prince, he does it all."

How would Koster do on Canadian Idol?

"He's a really strong singer but right now he's a little bit of a niche artist," Gold says, noting Idol is not something Koster would do.

Breaking a new artist today is done differently than it was when the Hip were starting out, Gold says.

"We've been focussing on the Internet. Chris has been building up his Myspace website, blogging and has even made a few videos about the making of the album. It's a way of getting much more personal with your fans.

"Ultimately though, our strategy is the same as it was with the Hip. It's better to take your time getting there than be a one-hit wonder."

Although Koster did make most of the album himself, he did have his band The Lonely play on a couple of tracks. His band includes guitarist Joe Carscallen, drummer Colin Blamire, and guitarist and backup singer Cheri Rose.

Koster says he's hoping to hit the road as soon as possible with band and new album in tow.

His first show will be at the Ale House on Friday night. T

Chris Koster

Who: Kingston musician Chris Koster releases his second solo album, Sex, Love & Morality.

When: Friday, Feb. 15.

Where: The Alehouse, 393 Princess St.

Tickets: \$10. Available in advance at The Ale House, The Brass Pub, 403 Princess St., Sunrise Records in the Catarqui Town Centre and Destinations at the John Deutsch Centre at Queen's University.

More: [chriskoster.ca](http://chriskoster.ca)

[myspace.com/chriskoster](http://myspace.com/chriskoster)

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