



In His Latest Country Song, David Michael Hawkins Tackles HIV Stigma and Self-Doubt

Nashville crooner David Michael Hawkins is gay, HIV positive and newly married! He talks with POZ about his latest country release, “SIN.”

July 21, 2025 By [Trent Straube](#)

It’s not often that you hear a talented country singer-songwriter also described as [openly gay](#) and [HIV positive](#). But the adjectives fit David Michael Hawkins like a pair of worn-in work jeans. He’s also recently married—and promoting a new song.



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A post shared by David Michael Hawkins (@davidmichaelhawkins)

POZ caught up with the [Nashville-based](#) talent to chat about his latest single, “SIN.” Click at the

top of this article to listen to it, and scroll to the bottom for the lyrics. The song tackles the self-doubt, [stigma](#) and struggles that often come with feeling like an outcast—whether that stems from being gay, [battling addictions](#) or learning you have HIV. The stigma associated with is real and can be ostracizing, Hawkins says, but he offers advice on persevering—and finding [love](#).

A lot has happened since [we first chatted in 2023](#). For one, you're married! Can you tell us about meeting your husband, how HIV disclosure played out and whether the relationship has changed you?

Thank you for asking! I think one of the reasons I was finally able to receive love was because of the work I had done on myself. Alex and I met on Tinder. Our profiles were all about our love of food and intentional dating—two very important things to have in common. Alex, who had only come out a few years earlier, had also done his work in therapy. And he was an active participant in his own process—he knew about HIV, he was on [PrEP \[pre-exposure prophylaxis to prevent contracting HIV\]](#) and because he knew facts like what an undetectable status is, when I shared my full story, instead of it being a mark of failure, he saw my journey as a mark of success. Because of my journey with HIV, Alex sees me as strong, resilient and empathetic—values he wanted for a partner. He is my ultimate safe space.



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Also, your name changed from David Michael to David Michael Hawkins—is that due to the marriage, or is it a stage name change?

When we last spoke, I wanted to keep my music and advocacy separate from my professional work in public relations. When I decided to release “SIN,” the most autobiographical song of my career, I thought, Why should I continue to use my stage name of David Michael when this song is all about being vulnerable? So I have merged all aspects of my life— my past, my current and my future is David Michael Hawkins. I guess I’m still doing the work.

What has been the reaction to the song?

Overwhelming! The week “SIN” was released, I received hundreds of emails and DMs, from people who share my diagnosis, from those who lost loved ones to the AIDS epidemic, from people with trauma related to church and religion and so many others. It’s every songwriter’s dream to write something that really truly moves people, and I’m certain “SIN” did that.



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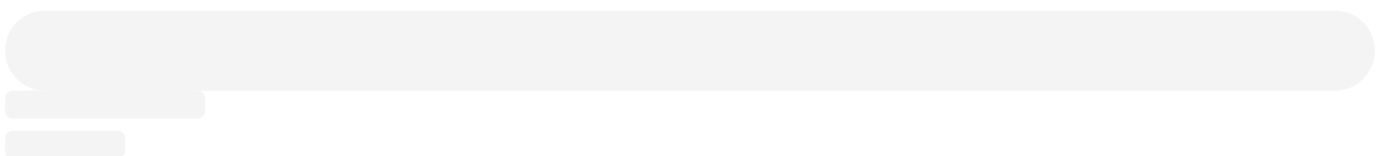
You planned the release of your song to coincide with Pride month and [National HIV Testing Day](#) (June 27) to encourage folks to know their status. In addition, [Zero HIV Stigma Day](#) is marked each July 21. Can you tell us how HIV stigma affected you and how it influenced “SIN”?

There’s a lyric in “SIN”: “Who’s going to love me?” For many years, this narrative played on repeat [in my mind], reinforcing fears that I was stained and undesirable. These were very low and lonely moments for me, causing extreme depressive episodes and substance abuse. It was a cycle that seemed impossible to break.

Regarding HIV, the stigma is real. It is still rampant in the LGBTQ community and, of course, manifests in the form of ignorance and fear in our family and community members. It was ostracizing during a time when what I needed most was grace. I’m grateful for this day—Zero HIV Stigma Day—for giving us an opportunity to have tough talks and live in the awkward, ask questions and ultimately lessen stigma.

What message do you have for anyone dealing with self-doubt and stigma?

There’s power in numbers. Find support groups and safe spaces where you can fall apart. With an HIV diagnosis, there should be an invitation of grief. We must go through the process of grieving and ultimately healing. And it’s impossible to be vulnerable enough to grieve if all you’re battling is the stigma.





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A post shared by David Michael Hawkins (@davidmichaelhawkins)

Finally, since you're in Nashville, tell us about the queer and HIV communities there.

I love Nashville! It's way more queer and affirming than most would expect. We have a large variety of safe spaces, including Lipstick, the third oldest lesbian bar in America, a statewide LGBTQIA Pride Chamber, a variety of gay bars and restaurants and even a monthly queer dance party that brings us all together. There's always more work to be done, but I see myself thriving in Nashville for years to come.

Watch an interview with David Michael Hawkins on Nashville's [WKRN News 2](#):

"SIN" lyrics:

Growing up

Just me and mama

Living life just one something at a time

Told her my dreams

Every morning

She'd shield me from those evils in the wild

Healed me from those evils in my mind

But there's no way to avoid the tests of time

Like a phoenix from my mamas Marlboro ashes

I soared new heights never knowing what the catch is

Standing on that stage, holding up that page

Searching for my triple white light

They won't hear my melody

They said I'm S I N and the I in the middle is me

Walked in the room

Told her I was shaking

Today was the day for make or breakin'

Got the news

felt shame felt guilty

Where's the shield from these evils in the wild

Who's gonna heal me from these evils in my mind

Like a phoenix from my mamas Marlboro ashes

I soared new heights never knowing what the catch is

Now a man on that stage, reading from that page

Searching for my triple white light

Who is gonna love me

They say I'm S I N and the I in the middle is me

Were they right

Will I always be alone

When I call

Who will answer the phone

Instead of reaching out

Maybe I should look within

Don't care what they say

Cause I'm not the I in S I N

Like a phoenix from my mamas Marlboro ashes

I soared new heights never knowing what the catch is
Not afraid to stand my ground, you can be lost and can be found
I found my triple white light
This is my melody
I'm W I N and the I in the middle is me

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