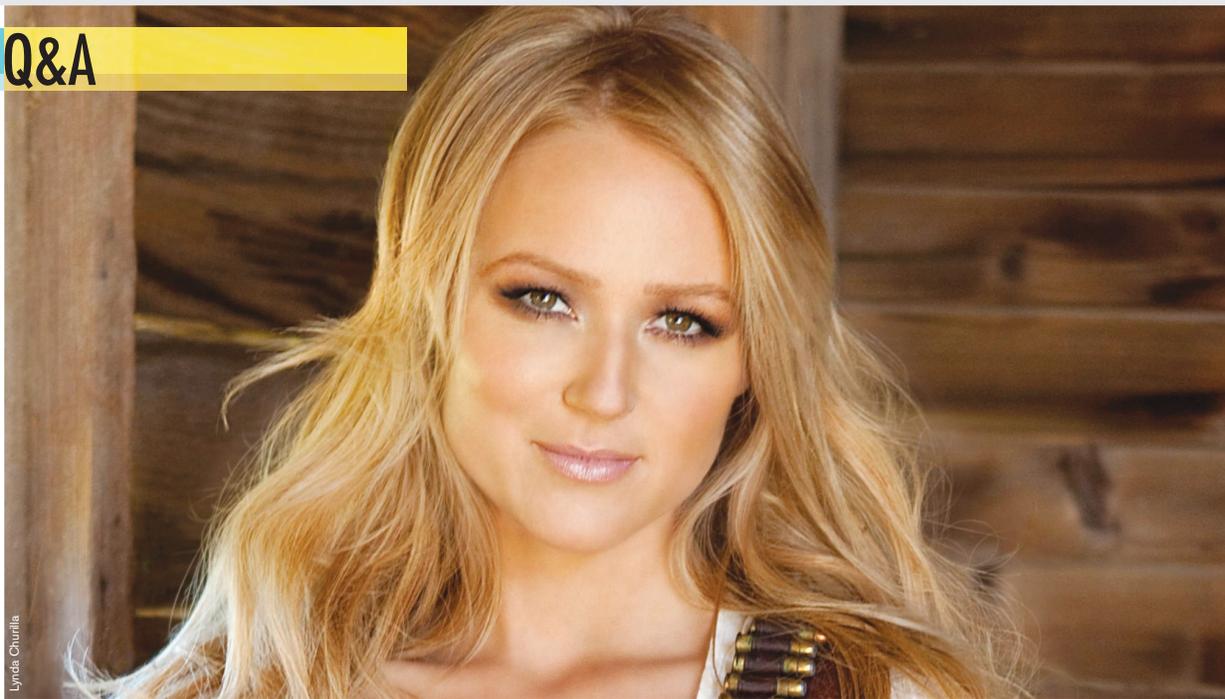


Q&A



Lynda Churilla

JEWEL

Learning to let both sides of her personality shine through

"I'M A GEMINI," SAYS JEWEL, BY WAY of explaining the title and theme of her latest album, and second country effort, *Sweet and Wild*. "I'm introspective and write poetry, but I also like to smoke a good cigar every once in a while and shoot guns." Her multifaceted personality might also explain why the singer-songwriter's 15-year career has spanned genres from folk to pop to electronica to lullabies. Fittingly, a deluxe version of the new album features a twin of its own—an all-acoustic take on the songs cheekily titled *Sweet and Mild*. The Alaska native, who now lives on a ranch in Texas, spoke to us about her voice, her vision and the virtues of virtual recording.

How did you approach the vocals on the new album?

I sing much better live because I'm feeling the audience, and I'll hear something new and just go for it. In the studio, that's not always appropriate—it will sound like over-singing. At the same time, I am lazy in the studio. (*laughs*) It feels like homework. But I noticed on my last album, *Lullaby* [2009], that when I was recording by myself I tended

to relax and take a little more time with it. So I tried to make it a goal to push myself.

Some of these songs you wrote some time ago. Did you tweak them?

I cut 60 songs for this album, and some of them were really old and needed some re-shaping. "Summer Home in Your Arms" was a waltz, and it lacked a little bit of structure. So I converted it to 4/4, wrote the little guitar riff for it and wrote a new bridge. But "Fading" is quite an old song, and I didn't change anything.

How did the acoustic version of the album come about?

I recorded the album by building it off acoustic demos I made at my ranch. I started out with just me and my guitar and then I took that to Nashville, and the band cut to that. We built the band tracks around that core acoustic experience, and I think it really helped keep a kind of live feel to the material. But I wanted people to hear those acoustic versions. They're remarkably different. It's amazing what you can do with a band and how it makes the songs sing in a different way.

How involved were you with the production?

I had a very strong vision of how I wanted this to turn out, which is another reason I wanted to start it on my own. Partnering with [producer] Nathan Chapman was great, and it was a cool process. We spent about two days in the studio with the band, and that's it. I finished the vocals doing all the harmonies and background in my home studio, Nathan cut guitars in his home studio, then we'd send the tracks to, say, L.A. for my friend to play piano on them. In a way this was largely a virtual album. And the reason we were able to still make it sound organic, I think, was starting with that core acoustic and vocal.

What guitar did you play?

I'm using a 1990 Taylor that's made of Brazilian rosewood. I tested it against vintage '50s and '60s Martins and it stood up!

Do you collect guitars?

A little bit. I have an amazing Martin from the late 1890s that was given to me and it's beautiful. It's like owning a bit of history.

—Katie Dodd

'I sing much better live because I'm feeling the audience.'

