

## JESSICA RIDLEY

One look into Jessica Ridley's dancing green eyes and you can tell she's a dreamer. Sure enough, growing up in western Canada, Jessica harbored a dream for as long as she could remember: to become a country singer. She spent hours listening to George Strait, Reba McEntire, Shania Twain and Martina McBride. While her friends were listening to whatever was popular on the radio, Jessica sang along to her country favorites, picturing herself in the studio recording her own songs and touring with her own band some day.

Now fast-forward a few years to 2011. That magical childhood "some day dream" has come true with the release of *Fit to Be Tied*, Jessica's debut CD, featuring "Flaming Red," her first single and video. Not every artist gets the chance to see their childhood fantasies realized, but with talent like Jessica's, it was truly just a matter of time.

A natural-born performer, Jessica remembers shining in the spotlight as early as kindergarten. "My parents always told me I talked really early," Jessica recalls, "and they had me singing at 18 months old. At family gatherings, I'd get up on the table and entertain everyone. My parents bought me a t-shirt for me that said, „Help, I'm talking and I can't shut up.“ When I was seven or eight, I started writing, and I'd make people listen to my little songs."

Eventually, Jessica began singing at church in her hometown of Calgary where she caught the attention of her manager/producer Don Somerville. He heard her singing and asked if she'd ever thought about performing professionally. "I said, well yeah—when I was 11 singing into a hairbrush in my room, of course I wanted to be a star. But it wasn't something that seemed realistic at the time."

Somerville thought otherwise. He saw something unique in the young artist, and began developing her singing and songwriting skills. He sent her to Nashville regularly to write with seasoned Music Row tunesmiths, and put her in the studio where she could hone her vocal abilities.

"I was 21 when I came to Nashville the first time," Jessica remembers. "I'm very much a „go big or go home," all-or-nothing kind of person, so I knew I either had to throw myself into this and give it everything I have, or not do it at all." Ultimately, the choice was never in doubt!

Jessica's debut album features 13 tracks, all showcasing her distinctive vocal style. Jessica co-wrote four of the songs, including "Undone," "Because I'm Not," "Fit to Be Tied" and "Home to Me." Other top writers represented on the album are James Dean Hicks (Kenny Chesney, Jessica Simpson), Bob Carlisle ("Butterfly Kisses"), Jeff Silvey (George Strait), Billy Simon (Mark Wills) and Bill Champlin (former frontman for the group Chicago). Acclaimed producer Chris Omartian contributed to the project.

“I think I’ve grown leaps and bounds as a songwriter over the past couple of years,” Jessica says. “My manager calls it „writing up.“ When you write with people who are better than you, you can’t help but get better yourself. I love co-writing, and I always want to write with people better than me because you learn so much!”

Much as she loves the studio, though, it’s entertaining live that really lights a fire in Jessica. “I want everything I do onstage to have a real connection,” she says passionately. “I want people to come away emotionally connected to what they’ve seen in the show. I also want what they hear live to be different from what they hear on the record. This way, audiences get to know me better and there can be a real relationship.”

The video for “Flaming Red” provides a perfect backdrop for the singer’s talents. Shot at a beach in North Carolina, it gives Jessica a chance to showcase her natural performing skills against the scenic backdrop of a colorful carnival. As the song unfolds, lyrics like “*I’m going crazy/My life is no longer my own*” show Jessica discovering new ways to find time for herself so she can give more to others in return. She romps at a carnival, soaks in the tub, dances in a fountain, and even eats Oreos in bed, looking for all the world like someone who’s spent her whole life in front of the camera.

Jessica has already captivated fans’ attention with her effervescent personality, fresh-faced beauty and undeniable talent. Now she’s ready to make this her year. As things get underway, look for her to spend a lot more time on the road showcasing with her band, promoting her CD in the U.S. and Canada, visiting radio stations, and making a name for herself in country music.

It’s no wonder with a fast-rising career to oversee, Jessica relishes the limited time she gets to spend at home in Calgary, Alberta. “I have a big, really close family,” she explains. “When my husband and I got married, we bought a small house just down the road from my parents. Then when they decided to upgrade and move, we bought their house. So believe it or not, I’ve been living in the same house since I was three years old! It’s very special to me.”

Jessica is considering a move to Nashville sometime this year so she can spend more time in the heart of country music. But for now, she says, the balancing act helps inspire her creatively.

“Success to me is getting to do what I love and making a living at it,” she says. “People ask me all the time how I do it, and I tell them, „When you’re doing what you’re meant to be doing, it gives you energy instead of taking it away.“ Singing gives me so much joy. It’s something I love and I’ve always loved. I’m just so excited that now I can do it as a career.”