

From small town girl to superstar

East Texas native Lee Ann Womack jump starts career with debut album; set to play show with Clay Walker tonight

BY BRANDI BALLARD
Staff writer

Lee Ann Womack, one of country music's newest stars, takes the stage tonight at the "Four Star Blowout" in G. Rollie White Coliseum with Clay Walker, Kevin Sharp and Mark Wills.

Womack struggled in Nashville for 10 years before she made her debut with "Never Again, Again."

"I think the reason that song broke through the charts is because it is so country," Womack said.

Since the release of that single, it has been non-stop in this East Texas native.

Born and raised in the small town of Jacksonville, Womack has always had dreams of making it big.

Ann Womack, Lee Ann's mother, said Lee Ann has been around music forever.

"She has always wanted to do what she's doing now," Womack said.

Lee Ann's father was a disc jockey at a local radio station and would take her to the studio and let her pick out albums for him to play. She grew up listening to the Grand Ole Opry. She said she loved the music of Ray Price, Tommy Duncan, Bob Wills, Tammy Wynette and Lily Parton.

"My biggest music influence would have to be George Strait," Lee Ann Womack said. "He really ex-

posed a lot of people to country music. He introduced a whole new generation of music lovers."

As a senior in high school, Womack skipped her senior trip and went by herself to Nashville to see the country music landmarks. During that trip, she started planning her move to Music Row.

After graduation, she wanted to head straight to Nashville, but her parents insisted she go to college. She attended South Plains College in Levelland, Texas.

"They had a country music program there, and I planned on getting a degree in country and bluegrass music," Womack said.

She only lasted a year at South Plains before she decided to move on. She transferred to Belmont University as a sophomore music major. At Belmont, students have to be a junior before they can qualify for internships at record companies. When Womack saw an opening at MCA Records, she decided she had to have it. She told them she was a junior and she got the job.

She soon realized that interning was not the same as actually recording for the company, so she left.

Ten years later, Womack released her self-titled debut album which sold 9,700 copies during the first week. Country fans enjoy it so much, even Alan Jackson bought 25 copies.

"I think it's hilarious that he bought so many," Womack said. "He apparently really likes it."

Most of her performances this fall are with Clay Walker.

"My manager also manages Clay and George Strait," Womack said. "That's part of the reason Clay and I are touring together."

When she is not with Walker, she is performing with Tim McGraw, George Strait or being nominated for the Horizon Award.

Her parents saw her perform last week at the Country Music Association awards show.

"She was wonderful," Ann Womack said. "We saw her in concert for the first time last weekend in Hempstead. She did an excellent show. I'm so very proud of her."

The residents of Jacksonville also show their pride. Her picture is in the windows of downtown shops, and teachers remember her as a student singing in the high school choir. A local restaurant even has her name on the front of their menu, boasting that she is from Jacksonville.

With her busy concert schedule, Womack said she does not get home very much.

"I usually get a chance to go home during the summer," Womack said. "But I only have time to see my family and my best friend. When I do run into someone in town, they always tell me how excited they are, and that makes me feel good."



Lee Ann Womack

The Adults performs like children, brings 'jerk rock' to B-CS

BY RHONDA REINHART
Staff writer

Do not be fooled by the name. The Adults is an alternative rock band from Austin who loves to play—in more ways than one.

Lead singer Paul Ahern said the band is always goofing around onstage.

"We like to provide a visual aspect when we play live shows," he said. "We like to dress up, but we are serious about the music. It brings our live shows to another level."

Ahern said The Adults plays some covers at their live shows, but most of the music is the band's own material.

Luke Gosselin, bass guitarist for The Adults, said the band members use a lot of

theatrics at their shows.

"It gives people something to look at other than a band playing music," he said.

"It's not spoon-fed, it's not subtle, and it might not settle well. It's creative and energetic."

LUKE GOSSELIN
BASS GUITARIST, THE ADULTS

"We don't want people to be bored. It's fun to see a band that looks weird."

Gosselin said The Adults' live shows are wild and crazy and a lot of fun for people who are in the right frame of mind.

The Adults has been together for three years and has made two albums. The newest album, *Soothing Songs for Baby*, is set to be released Oct. 10.

Ahern said the band is taking its music in new directions.

"We've got a wide variety of different-sounding songs on this album," he said. "We like to experiment, especially in the studio."

Ahern said the band spent six months working on the new album.

The Adults' music is loosely classified as alternative rock, but Gosselin describes the band's sound as "jerk rock."

"It's quirky and off-balance," he said. "It's not spoon-fed, it's not subtle, and it might not settle well. It's creative and energetic."

Gosselin said the band's new album is totally different from its first CD.

"It's more like the album we wanted to make the first time," he said. "We poured a lot of creativity into it. It's really in-your-face rock 'n' roll."

Ahern became interested in music when his sister convinced him to join the school band in seventh grade.

He said he dropped out of the band after he got sick of the stigma of being called a "band nerd." His musical goals were not forgotten. However, he then started playing guitar and eventually started writing songs.

Ahern said he likes working with musicians and enjoys making band Web sites.

"I'm planning to make music my main career," he said. "We don't want to end up

playing in Austin forever. We've got our eyes on Europe."

The Adults will be leaving on Oct. 12 for a West Coast tour. The band has plans for a tour of the southeast after that.

The band is also no stranger to Bryan College Station. The Adults have played at the former Stafford Opera House (now Dixie Theatre) and Vertigo, and on Saturday, Oct. 4, the group will be playing at the Cow Hop.

Ahern said the last time he came to College Station, he thought the crowd was docile and a little more preppy than he expected.

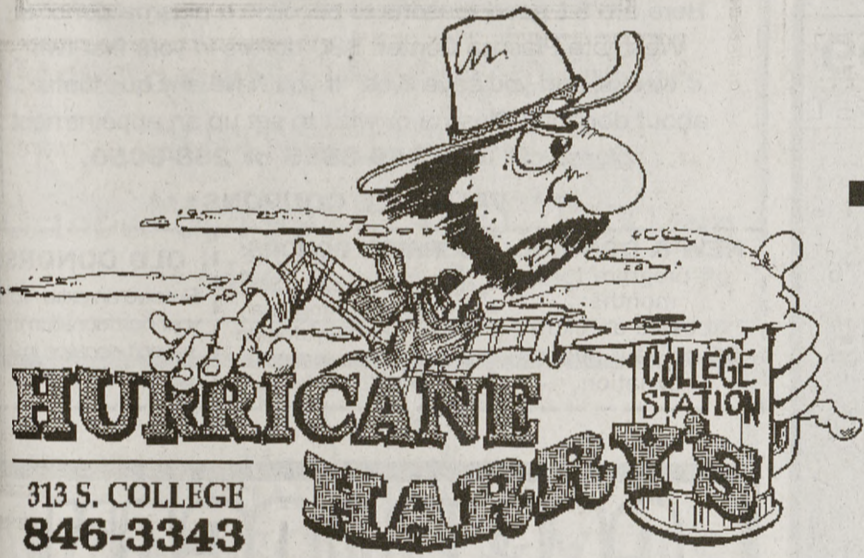
"You can't let a tame crowd get you down," he said. "I think a lot of people play worse when the crowd's not going their way."

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