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Country music: Jolie Holliday balances sassy and classy in 15-year independent career



Sonya Hebert-Schwartz/Staff Photographer

Portrait of Dallas country singer Jolie Holliday at Gilley's Dallas on May 29, 2013.

ABOUT MARIO TARRADELL

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Mario has covered a variety of popular music genres, from pop and rock to country and Latin music since he arrived at The News in 1994. A native of Cuba who was raised in Miami, he also enjoys reviewing movies and books. He's an avid music collector, from vintage vinyl albums to CDs and even cassettes. He's also an avid reader of classics and more modern works. And he collects celebrity posters from the 1970s and 1980s. Follow him on Twitter @MarioTarradell

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MARIO TARRADELL COLUMNS

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Jolie Holliday is having a little fun because she can.

The title cut from the Dallas country singer's new album, *Somebody Who Can*, is a sassy number that spells out in no uncertain terms exactly what she wants in a man.

"But if you can understand," she sings, "I want a red-blooded, warm woman lover and a friend, who ain't afraid to be a man. So baby if you can't, I can find somebody who can."

It is Holliday in strong-woman mode. The song, written by Nashville's David Lee Murphy and Kim Tribble, sat unnoticed in a pile of demo tapes. Three years later, she discovered it.

"I don't do a lot of attitude stuff," Holliday, 32, said while sitting in a green room at Gilley's Dallas. "I wanted to find a middle of the road where I can have my traditional sound and some of the current country style. It has a little attitude, and I love that."

Holliday, a Dallas native who lives in Richardson, stays tough in a business that can chew you up and spit you out. She's been an independent recording artist for 15 years with three studio CDs to her credit. *Somebody Who Can* follows 2000's *A Real Good Day* and 2009's *Lucky Enough*.

Back in 2001, Holliday was in the midst of securing a recording contract with Sony Nashville. She was in the developmental stage, on the verge of signing above the dotted line. Then the 9/11 attacks paralyzed the industry. Holliday walked away empty-handed. Her focus shifted; she decided to succeed on her terms. She went independent by necessity.

"Now it is by choice," she said. "It is amazing what you can do. You don't need a label to clone you, limit you. We have a great team with experience. It is a way to market yourself the way you want to do it."

What Holliday wants is to keep her traditional country roots entrenched as she stomps her boots on the pulse of mainstream country trends. That's proved lucrative overseas. Holliday has a following in Germany, New Zealand, Sweden, Ireland, France, Belgium, England and Canada. She's toured Sweden and Canada; France and New Zealand are planned for 2014.

What about the language barrier?

"It's not so much about the lyrics, but it's about the beat," she said. "Traditional stuff does really well over there. There are so many opportunities over there. If I have fans there, I want to go meet them, give them a show and let them know that I am appreciative of them."

But she always comes home. "Soldier," the most powerful song on *Somebody Who Can*, is about the sacrifices of the military written from the point of view of the wives who stay home while their husbands go fight for their country. Holliday sang "Soldier" in February at Cowboys Stadium during the memorial service for the late Navy SEAL Chris Kyle. Holliday met Kyle and his wife, Taya, in late December.

Taya asked Holliday to sing the song at her husband's tribute.

"I just wanted to do it because I thought it would help," she said. "Music is therapy. I thought the song had special meaning even before I met Chris Kyle. It made me open my eyes to what those guys really go through."

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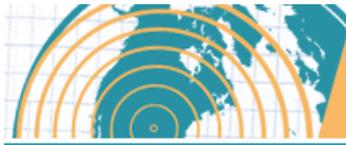
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