



DUCK DYNASTY
CAROLS
AND CAMO

JAKE OWEN
Forging Real
Fan Friendships

JENNIFER NETTLES
GOES SOLO AND
COMES BACK TO
"CMA COUNTRY
CHRISTMAS"

CMA AWARDS
ONE MORE
FOR THE
BOOKS

DECEMBER 2013 | JANUARY 2014



FOCUS

OH,
THAT GIRL!

JENNIFER NETTLES

GOES
IT
ALONE

by KIP KIRBY

THEY SAY IT BEGINS WITH A SONG. FOR JENNIFER NETTLES, IT BEGAN WITH A PHONE CALL.

Rick Rubin had long been at the top of the singer's wish list of producers, but it wasn't until her manager, Gail Gellman, suggested she make the call that Nettles picked up the phone.

Best known for her front-and-center work with the duo Sugarland, Nettles had been quietly preparing for three years to cut her own album, writing songs she believed took her to a whole new level of artistry.

"I approached it like I do most everything in my life, with a lot of forethought and a lot of dreaming ahead of time," she said. "I love what Sugarland has done, but for quite a while, a part of me has not only wanted to prove myself to myself, but also to share with my fans a part of me that just can't happen in a duo. There are parts of me that are special and intimate that I'd like to share with my fans, but I can't go there in an ensemble situation with Kristian (Bush). So for personal and artistic reasons, I wanted to do something new and fresh, to shake things up and put a different part of myself out there."

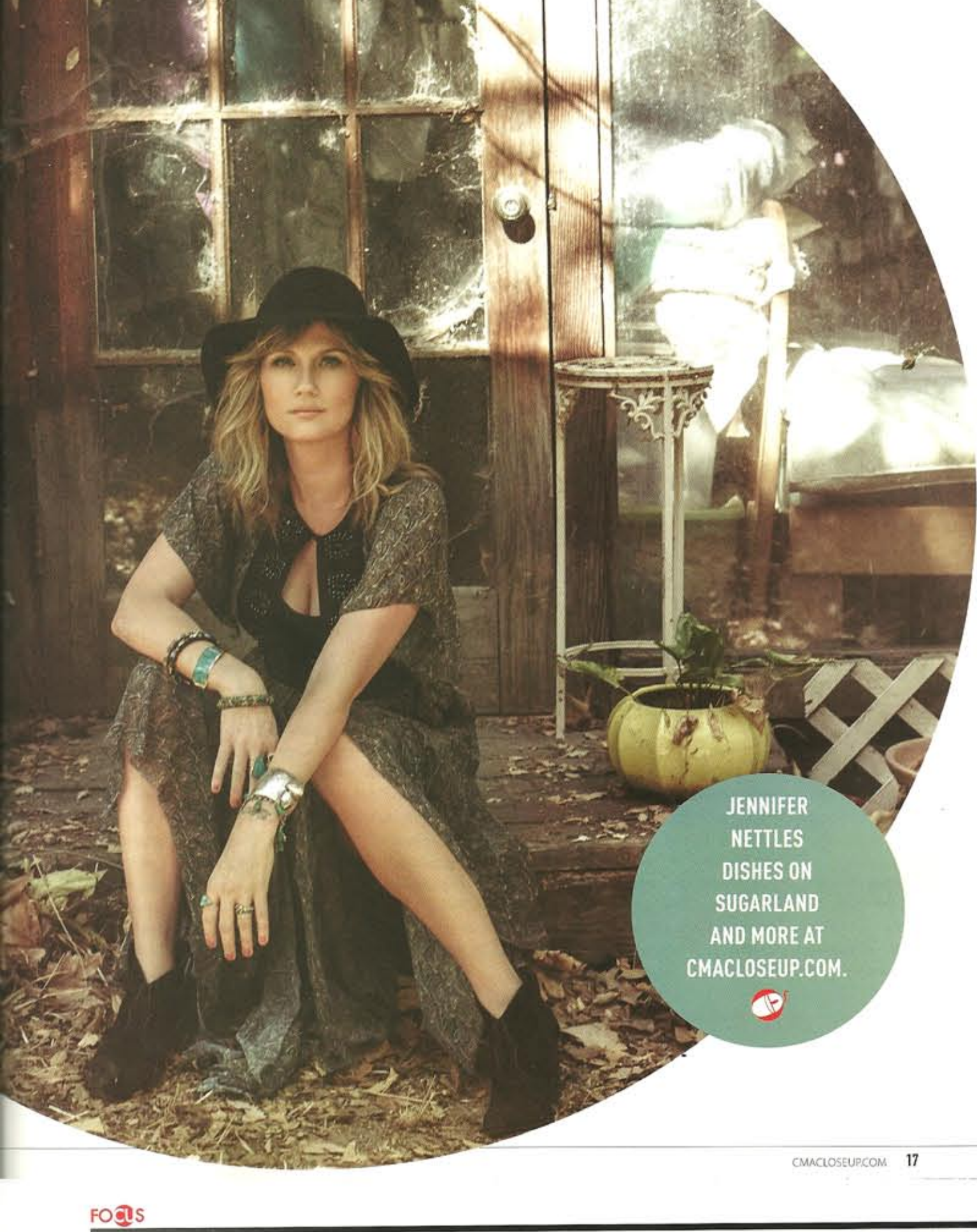
Rubin possesses a jaw-dropping list of production credits, which include Adele's Grammy-winning *21* and Johnny Cash's majestic final *American Recording* series, not to mention works by Aerosmith, LL Cool J, Metallica, Tom Petty and U2. Still, Nettles didn't have to camp out on his doorstep to get his attention.

"He said, 'Send me some songs,' which I did — just work tapes of myself with instrumental accompaniment," she recalled. "He listened and reached back and said, 'I like what I'm hearing. Send me everything you've got and keep sending as you continue to write. Oh, and by the way, I'd love to do this project.' I think when

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JENNIFER NETTLES



JENNIFER NETTLES DISHES ON SUGARLAND AND MORE AT CMACLOSEUP.COM.

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doors open this easily and there's no resistance, you know you're on the right path."

"I love her voice," Rubin said, recalling their initial communication. "When she sent me some early demos of the songs she was writing, I got even more excited about making music together. It was a fantastic experience. Jennifer is as great a person as she is a singer and songwriter, and I hope people feel the positive energy we all felt in the studio."

Recording together was an exercise in collaborative trust. Nettles relocated to Shangri-La Studios in Malibu, working with Rubin's team of musicians and engineers. She found his emphasis on organic, live-within-the-moment ambience exactly what she'd hoped for.

"When we started talking about this album I told him I didn't want it to be super-slick," she said. "I wanted it to be a raw, real, beautifully simple representation of what the songs are. It's great that we have the tools that we do, where we can layer 45 guitars and make a big wall of sound with computers and technology. But at the same time, I think it's gotten exaggerated and sterile. With this record, I wanted there to be mistakes. I wanted there to be 'human-ness' on the record that people could hear."

The resulting 14-track album, *That Girl*, scheduled to drop Jan. 14 on Mercury Records, showcases Nettles' genre-crossing vocal artistry and songwriting strengths. Except for a striking cover of Bob Seger's "Like a Rock," each song bears her name as a writer. Her co-writers include people she'd worked with in the past and others she'd phoned on a whim because she felt they'd be right for the project, including Sara Bareilles, Richard Marx, Mike Reid and Butch Walker.

Nettles altered her usual writing process for *That Girl*, spending hours alone at the piano rather than relying chiefly on guitar, as she'd done previously. "I left myself completely open from the beginning in writing for this project," she said. "I'm in a different place in my life now. I'm more mature as a woman, and I've had my child. I didn't want to put any constraints on myself. I needed to trust my voice and my songwriting in order to be vulnerable and trust someone else in the studio. Really, what I hope people will say when they listen to this album is, 'Wow. Wow, that really took me on a journey. And wow, she is a much better singer and songwriter than I would ever have known.' I hope they see another side of me."

Besides the album, Nettles has something else to be excited about: her return for the fourth consecutive year as host of "CMA Country Christmas," airing Dec. 2 on the ABC

JENNIFER NETTLES CONFERES WITH PRODUCER RICK RUBIN.



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JENNIFER NETTLES



JENNIFER NETTLES WELCOMES SNOOPY TO A "CMA COUNTRY CHRISTMAS" PRESS CONFERENCE.

"WITH THIS RECORD, I WANTED THERE TO BE MISTAKES."
— Jennifer Nettles

Television Network. "What I love about working with Jennifer is that she's exactly in real life who she is on television," said Robert Deaton, who has served as Executive Producer of the special since its launch in 2010. "She's like a bright light that never dims. She loves the entertainment side of what we do. We try to pay homage to the old Bing Crosby/Dean Martin variety shows where Jennifer comes onstage and does interviews. That's a talent in itself, to be able to do an interview in front of thousands of people and yet still be listening to the person you're interviewing and moving it along."

Nettles has several favorite moments from her ongoing run. "I absolutely loved Miss Piggy and Vince Gill (singing 'Baby, It's

Cold Outside' in 2011)," she recalled. "And I love that last year, we added interviews with the kids. That was super fun for me. I love seeing the evolution from where it's been to where it is now. To be a part of it is a really big honor. I hope it's something that keeps happening for years and years."

For all that she has achieved, for all the CMA and Grammy Awards she's won, and even for launching her first solo tour in February, Nettles does have one more goal. "How fun would it be to be nominated by CMA for Female Vocalist of the Year? Or to win awards as a solo artist? That would mean the world to me."

JenniferNettles.com; [@JenniferNettles](https://twitter.com/JenniferNettles)

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