



A Rose Is A Rose

story by
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'80s pop star **Tiffany** is finishing what she started years ago: a country career.

Six years before Tiffany became an overnight teenage sensation in the '80s, packing shopping malls across the U.S. in support of her No. 1 pop hit "I Think We're Alone Now," she came to Fan Fair in Nashville. She performed. She signed autographs. She sold T-shirts that her dad printed up for her ("Tiffany Renéé—Love That Country Music"). And she went knocking on the doors of Nashville's biggest labels looking for a record deal. In the pre-Taylor Swift era, however, Music Row wasn't the least bit interested in signing a 10-year-old, so Tiffany returned to California with her dream of country stardom unfulfilled.

Fate, of course, intervened. Smash singles such as "I Think We're Alone Now," "Could've Been" and "I Saw Him Standing There" (a cover of the Beatles classic "I Saw Her Standing There") turned Tiffany into a household name and an international teen superstar.

But that was then. Today, Tiffany lives in Nashville, pursuing her long-time dream. She moved to Music City four years ago and spends her time writing songs, touring and working to establish herself in country music. And when she hits the road this summer with friend and fellow '80s pop star Debbie Gibson to co-headline their Journey Through the '80s Tour, it won't be just dance and rock tunes Tiffany will be performing, but music from her brand-new country album, *Rose Tattoo*.

Released on her own label, Only the Girl, Inc. Productions, *Rose Tattoo* features eight songs, seven co-written by the singer herself, something she's enormously proud of. "I grew up being an artist—I didn't play an instrument and I didn't write songs," she explains. "But everyone I admired was able to write and perform their own songs. So it became really important to me to be able to learn to write songs and have not just a musical career but a strong writing career, too." Her first single, "Feel the Music," has just been released, and she's encouraged by the response it gets in her shows. Still, Tiffany knows she's got an uphill battle to find her place in country music.

"I'm playing mostly small clubs, casinos and venues right now because obviously it's not like you can just throw

the name Tiffany out there in country music and get festivals with Darius Rucker," she says, exploding with laughter at the notion. "That's just not gonna happen. I've got to build an audience. I've got to prove that I can be in those spots. In a way, it's kind of like I'm doing the mall tours all over again."

This past June, Tiffany had the chance to perform at Nashville's CMA Music Festival on one of the event's downtown stages. Her 20-minute set contained "I Think We're Alone Now" (which she does these days with a decidedly country bent) as well as several tracks from *Rose Tattoo*.

"People responded really well to the new songs for not having heard them

the infamous shopping mall tour that launched her recording success, Tiffany sees a lot of parallels in her career today—as well as in the career of Taylor Swift, whom she singles out with admiration for her spirit, independence and personal connection with her fans.

"The mall tour I did was all about creating a relationship with fans," she explains. "Because you're never bigger than your fans. It's always about winning them over, spending time with them, signing their autographs, and most of all, being grateful. I may have been 16 years old back then, but in so many ways, I'm still very much that girl."

When Tiffany hits the road with Debbie Gibson, she'll have plenty of oppor-



(Above) Teenager Tiffany in her big-haired '80s rocker-girl days; (right) Tiffany's newly released album, *Rose Tattoo*, which marks a return to her first love, country music.

before," she says. "I know a lot of people come to see me because they're drawn by my name and they wonder what I'll sound like. They'll say, Tiffany? *The Tiffany?* Oh, you're from the '80s . . .!" Again she laughs, obviously unconcerned by this reaction. "And that's all right. I totally understand that people in country might have a resistance to me as Tiffany the pop singer. But I always say, just let me perform for you. Just come see one of my shows before you make up your mind. There's nothing I love more than a mic in my hand, working an audience, getting to entertain. It's who I am."

And while it's been decades since

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tunities to carry her countrified sound to new audiences. She knows it's all part of the starting-over process for her, and it doesn't come with any guarantees.

"Sure, I would love to have a song on country radio," she concludes. "And I would love to sing on the Grand Ole Opry. I would love to win an award one day. But right now I'm just happy to be here in Nashville. I'm happy that people know I'm serious about returning to country music, that I'm getting good reviews on the album and that people are starting to take me seriously as a songwriter. I really feel I'm coming full circle." **CW**