

LILA McCANN  
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18-year-old country singer and songwriter, Lila McCann, is an expert when it comes to juggling a successful music career with that of a normal and fulfilling childhood.

"There are so many everyday experiences that makes you the kind of the person you are," McCann said during a recent phone interview. "And especially the kind of people you are surrounded by have a lot to do with the kind of person you turn out to be. I have been fortunate to have a very supportive family, great friends and music industry peers that have been accept-

ing and never pushed me to be somebody that I wasn't. It was nice being one of the younger recording artists that wasn't having the label push them to hurry up and get out of school, get out on the road and make money. Music has been a priority, but childhood was always my first priority. You can never recapture your youth or get it back once it has passed, and I really didn't want to be one of those people, who, 20 years down the road from now is telling my kids, 'I would sure love to tell you all about high school, but I can't.' So, I am very glad that I decided to stay in high school instead of home schooling."

McCann made the most of her high school years by serving as a varsity basketball and football cheerleader, attending prom and singing in chorus. Graduating in June from Steilacoom High School in her hometown of Tacoma, Washington was a fun, yet fashionable time for the young vocalist.

"We didn't really dress up that much for graduation because the girls wore white robes and the guys wore red," McCann said. "I thought to myself, 'I'm just going to wear something funky because no one is going to see it anyway due to my robe.' So, I wore some really funky white pants with beads all over them and a white tank top that says No. 1 on it in rhinestones."



McCann's graduation ceremony was filmed by CBS television's "48 Hours" as part of a June 22nd "Class of 2000" segment.

"48 Hours had originally done a Class of 2000 show that aired in November of '98," McCann said. "I was part of that '98 show and it was basically about different young people throughout the nation they thought were doing really interesting things. They ended up wanting to kind of come back to my part of the story and see what I was up to now. So, they came to several of my concerts, attended a Teen People magazine "20 Teens Who Change The World" awards show in New York City with me in April and finished by filming my graduation. It was pretty cool that they wanted to do a story on me again. It was quite a nice honor."

Just one day after graduation, McCann hit the road for a lengthy national tour, which will include a stop at Little Nashville Opry on Saturday, August 12. Tickets are available at the Little Nashville Opry box office or by calling 812-988-2235.

Even though she is a teenager, McCann has been singing professionally for more than half her life.

"The first time I got up on stage to sing with my dad's band, The Southlanders, I was just 4 years old," McCann said. "It was my idea to go up and sing, it wasn't anybody else's. I had always seen dad on stage singing, laughing and having a good time and I thought to myself 'Hey, I can do that.' I really didn't know if I could sing or not, I just figured it would be fun to get up on stage and be cool like that."

One of McCann's fondest memories in regards to singing every weekend with The Southlanders occurred when she was just ten years old and wishing to earn a little extra cash.

"The coolest thing for me was when I started telling my dad that he should pay me ten bucks to come up and sing," McCann said with a laugh. "I would sing for an hour for ten bucks and I was like 'Yeah ! This is all right !' When I tried to up my price later to \$20, my parents just looked at me like they thought I was funny!"

McCann was first discovered at age nine by her long term manager, Kasey Walker, while singing with The Southlanders at her hometown Eagles Club in Washington state. Walker instantly recognized McCann's amazing vocal ability and asked to represent her. Time, patience and singing every chance she could eventually paid off by age 13 with an Asylum Records contract.

Capturing McCann's incredible vocal range, fresh interpretations and youthful honesty within '97 debut album, "Lila," and '99 sophomore project, "Something In The Air" is evident in hit singles "Down Came A Blackbird," "I Wanna Fall In Love," "Almost Over You" and "With You."

"Recording my two albums has most definitely been a building process," McCann said. "The neat part about being a young recording artist is that I get to change with every record because I am growing up, learning and experiencing new things. I think my second album is definitely different from the first. The style of music is still somewhat the same, but my voice has changed quite a bit from the first to the second record. And it has changed even now. So, things are always going to be different from one record to the next."

Change seems to be quite a prevalent theme lately in McCann's life and career. Her recent high school graduation meant bidding farewell to the daily routine and camaraderie of classmates and friends as well as being given the opportunity to concentrate on her music career full-time. McCann has also been busy packing and boxing up her belongings for a late summer move from her parents Washington state home into a place of her own near Los Angeles, CA.

"I have had the same small group of friends since kindergarten," McCann said. "It is going to be hard for my friends and I to kind of be going our own separate ways, but we are all kind of ready. My best friend is only going to be about a half hour away from me because he is going to be attending college in California. So, that will be cool. As for myself, I'm going to be putting college on hold for awhile. It's because for the past four years I have not been able to fully do music and I have been waiting so long to do so. I will go back to school, maybe, in a couple of years."

In-between tour dates on the road this summer, McCann will be recording her third album and hopes to release a single from the new project in September.

"I think I have really come into my own from the first album to working on this third album," McCann said. "I was listening to the last two records the other day and I thought, 'You know, I could have done this so much better.' I always had fun recording before, but I think I was just afraid to really, really let myself go. So, I am excited to get back into the studio this time and just let it all out."

When it comes to her singing career, McCann possesses a musical wisdom far surpassing her young age.

"A great song to me is one about relationships," McCann said. "Songs that are going to reach out and touch someone, whether it be a funny song, something serious or a tear jerker. And that is the great thing about country music. It has this depth that allows people to hear a song on a radio and think, 'Wow, that is me right now in my life, that is what is going on.' If I couldn't relate to song, feel emotionally for it or at least put myself in those shoes, I don't think I would really want to be singing it."