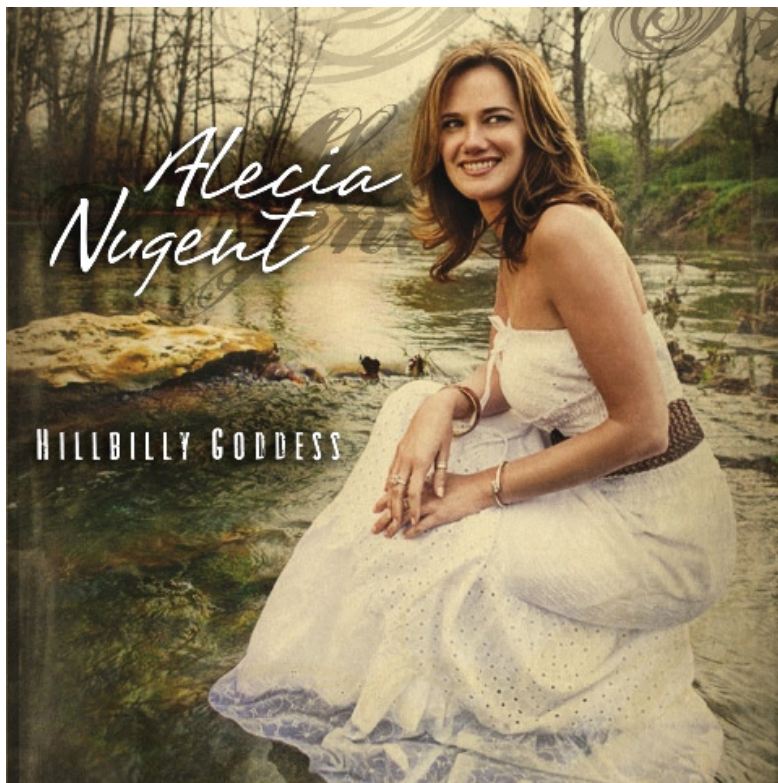


Hillbilly Goddess

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In the five short years since Alecia Nugent's debut CD, she has gone from being the toast of Hickory Grove, Louisiana to one of the most celebrated bluegrass & country singers across America's heartland. Her new CD, *Hillbilly Goddess*, delivers on the promise of 2004's *Alecia Nugent* and 2006's *A Little Girl...A Big Four-Lane* with a confident collection of sassy barnburners and heart-rending ballads, all delivered with smooth precision, gorgeous tone and unbridled exuberance. Featuring stellar support from producer Carl Jackson, duet partner Bradley Walker, J.D. Crowe, members of Ricky Skaggs and Kentucky Thunder, Blue Highway, The Dan Tyminski Band and The Infamous Stringdusters, *Hillbilly Goddess* is major step forward from one of the great new voices in American music: Alecia Nugent.



Hickory Grove isn't close to anyplace even remotely famous. But a voice as precious as hers simply demanded to be discovered. As Alecia sings in the upbeat "Nugent Family Band," her upbringing was saturated with the sounds of bluegrass and gospel. Her father's Southland Bluegrass Band trained her in tradition. By the time she was in her teens, she was the group's lead singer.

Alecia was schooled in the sounds of The Stanley Brothers, Flatt & Scruggs, Jimmy Martin and other bluegrass masters. On her own, she developed a taste for country-music greats such as George Jones, Conway Twitty, Merle Haggard, Reba McEntire and Dolly Parton. That's why she can pull off a honky-tonk weeper like "Dyin' to Hold Her Again" as brilliantly as she can.

Her sublime harmony vocalists on that track are Bluegrass Male Vocalist of the Year Bradley Walker and Alecia's producer, Carl Jackson. Carl has been in her cheerleading section for years. When Mississippi bluegrass promoter Johnny Stringer volunteered to bankroll Alecia's debut album in 2004, she turned to Carl for help. Carl had sung with her at a festival 15 years earlier and had never forgotten the sound of her extraordinary voice.

Carl not only co-wrote three tunes for *Alecia Nugent*, he produced the sterling-silver singer's reinterpretations of Flatt and Stanley classics, her delicious revival of Jenny Lou Carson's "Jealous Heart," dynamic performances of tunes from the pens of Larry Cordle and Jerry Salley, among others, and even a bluegrassified arrangement of "But I Do," an obscure bopper by the former Louisiana Hayride rockabilly act Tibby Edwards.

Carl Jackson's endorsement attracted such stellar sidemen as Ronnie McCourey, Aubrey Haynie and Randy Kohrs to Alecia's debut disc, not to mention harmony vocals by the likes of Sonya Isaacs, Rebecca Lynn Howard and Rhonda Vincent. It also attracted the attention of famed WSM disc jockey Eddie Stubbs, who became a booster. And then it attracted Rounder Records.

In 2006, Rounder issued Alecia Nugent's breakthrough album *A Little Girl...A Big Four-Lane*. Carl Jackson was once again in the producer's chair. Once more a group of bluegrass A-listers gathered for the project – Adam Steffey, Jim Van Cleve, Cia Cherryholmes, Rob Ickes, Doyle Lawson, Jamie Dailey and Alison Krauss among them. And once again, the repertoire was drawn from the finest country and bluegrass tunesmiths. Not the least of them were Dixie and Tom T. Hall, whose rippling, nostalgic “I Cried All the Way to Kentucky” was one of the album's many highlights.

When Alecia showcased those 2006 tunes in Nashville, she was proclaimed a “hillbilly goddess” by Nashville music critic Robert K. Oermann. That offhand nickname has now been transformed into the title tune of her third Rounder album.

A Little Girl...A Big Four-Lane contained a duet with Bradley Walker called “When It Comes Down to Us.” *Hillbilly Goddess* has one, too, a classic-sounding heartbreaker titled “The Writing's All Over the Wall.” As before, Alecia proves she can rip off a zippy bluegrass romp with ease – the feisty-female “Wrecking the Train” and the tongue-in-cheek “Cryin' All the Way to the Bank,” to name just two examples on the new album.

But *Hillbilly Goddess* also plows some new ground. Alecia is digging into lyrics with more poetry, complexity and depth than ever before. This is particularly true in such ballads as “Wishin' Hard,” “Already Home” and the delicately lovely “Don't Tell Me.” Her story telling abilities are also better than ever on this collection. In “The Last Greyhound,” her character can't wait to get on the last bus leaving town, then can't wait to be on the last one coming home. Even more vivid is “Just Another Alice,” the tale of an aspiring country singer performing in the seedy bars of Broadway who may or may not be The Next Big Thing.

On this collection, Alecia emerges as a songwriter, as well. In addition to her autobiographical “Nugent Family Band,” co-written with Dixie and Tom T. Hall, she was inspired to write the wry “Hillbilly Goddess” title tune with Sonya Kelly and her stalwart supporter Carl Jackson.

Alecia Nugent brings extraordinary believability to everything she sings. And once again, Carl Jackson has surrounded her with instrumentalists who underscore her emotions at every turn – Andy Leftwich, Tim Stafford, J.D. Crowe, Andy Falco, Rob Ickes and Adam Steffey among them.

So it comes down to this. Are you ready to have your heart busted into itty bitty pieces as this hillbilly goddess and her band of angels ache together on “Don't Tell Me?” Are you ready to let fly with a rebel yell when she finishes “Cryin' All the Way to the Bank?” Are you prepared to hang breathlessly onto every line of “Just Another Alice?” And are you ready and willing to fantasy-harmonize with her on “The Writing's All Over the Wall?”

If so, start listening to Alecia Nugent's *Hillbilly Goddess* right now. But be forewarned: she can be habit forming.



1025 17th Avenue S, 2nd Floor – Nashville, TN – 615-327-4646
www.keithcase.com

