

MusicNotes

Pauline Reese: She's A Cowboy, Baby!

Amy Edgerly

The young and pretty Miss Pauline Reese may give the first impression of a petite, sweet, fragile, delicate young thing. After you hear her speak in her refined, quiet, bell-like voice, that impression will take deeper root.

But don't let any of that fool you for a minute. Pauline Reese is a cowboy trapped in a cowgirl's body.

Listen to Pauline's music and you might infer she enjoys ropin', ridin', drinkin' and honky-tonkin'. See her live performance and you'll tell yourself you were right. Have a chat with Pauline, and she'll tell you you were right!

As she told **Motorcycles: On The Road Again**, "I like songs about western lifestyle and honky-tonkin' and horses, you know, real western lifestyle. Not 'I want to be a cowboy's sweetheart' type stuff, but hard core ropin', ridin', honky-tonkin' stuff."

Which is probably why she covers songs from an eclectic mix of artists including Lyle Lovett, Christopher

Cross, Charlie Daniels and Bad Company on her latest CD – because each song tells a story about being a "Long Tall Texan" and wanting to "Ride Like The Wind" and running with "Bad Company" and a "Caballo Diablo" (devil horse). It's also why she learned and recorded a song from the soundtrack of the old Steve McQueen movie, *Junior Bonner* – because it's a song about a "Rodeo Man" and it reminds her of her re-

tired professional bull-rider husband, John Burris. It is also why the songs she writes herself are about "One Last Honky Tonk" and "Yellow Wine" the "Trail to Monterrey" the "Lone Star Flag" and the "Cowboy Way". You see the connection, right?

The fact is Pauline wanted to be a cowboy ever since she can remember, a result of hero-worshipping her grandfather. Her family history is



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cowboys, ranches and rodeos, and not just the movie versions either. She proudly talks about her grandparents: "My grandfather was the real deal, he and my grandmother never owned a house until 1998 and that was their one and only house. They moved around the U.S. so much, they lived in Mexico, and they lived in Argentina. When they lived in Mexico they would break broomtail horses and bring them up to the U.S. and sell them. So he was an all-out working cowboy. Not just in rodeo, but the rest of his life. He worked ranches - never had any money - eating beans and deviled ham... Ever since the time I was born I was wearing boots with my holster and my guns and my cowboy hat, and I told my grandfather I wanted to be just like him. I wanted to be a cowboy."

We could talk all day about how so much tomboy can fit in such a delicate little package, but we'd be neglecting the really good stuff - her music! Pauline will be releasing her fourth CD near press-time for this article, and it will be titled "Too Texas".

We got an advance copy to preview and we give it an enthusiastic two spurs up. We also caught a Pauline Reese show at Blanco's in Houston and she and her band rocked the house.

In 2005 we also saw Pauline perform at the Willie Nelson Fourth of July Picnic, her performance complemented by an onstage visit from Willie Nelson - the host of the whole shindig. This is no big surprise however, as Willie is one of Pauline's big-





gest fans as well as a close, supportive friend. Nelson recorded a duet with Pauline on her third album; *"The Good, The Bad & The Ugly"* entitled *"Pick Up The Pieces"*. The duo is currently collaborating on another project that is a compilation CD of Texas songs by various artists. Willie has chosen to record the Gary P. Nunn classic; *"What I Like About Texas"* and Pauline will do a duet on that one with him as well.

On a more altruistic front, Pauline is partnering with Willie Nelson on two very special projects; Farm Aid, and Hepatitis C awareness.

A Public Service Announcement (PSA) will soon begin running on CMT and VH1 to raise awareness of Hepatitis C. The PSA is a collage of country music artists speaking about the dangers and the scope of Hepatitis C. It includes dialogue from Reese, Nelson, Billy Joe Shaver and Shooter Jennings, among others, and has already won a Remington award, which is a Clio-type award for PSA's. Reese got involved with the project for personal reasons – she lost her friend, and former soundman, Fred Beach to the disease. Nelson is involved because his bass player's wife Julia Spears is a Hepatitis C sur-

vivor and founder of the Julia Spears Foundation, which produced the PSA.

She had just that day received the phone call from Poodie Locke (Nelson's tour manager and owner of Poodies Hilltop outside Austin) inviting her to play Farm Aid in Chicago on September 18, 2006. She'll be sharing that bill with such legends as Nelson, John Mellencamp, Neil Young, Arlo Guthrie and Emmylou Harris.

Finding oneself amid all that star power would be a daunting experi-

ence for most, but Reese has been surrounding herself with the best for years. Willie Nelson is not the only super-power to have discovered this rising star's formidable talent. Her smooth alto has won admiration from many of Texas music's cornerstone artists including Freddy Powers, Ray Wylie Hubbard, Steve Fromholtz and Sonny Throckmorton. Reese credits Powers and his songwriting partner Bill McDavid, as well as Poodie Locke for turning Nelson on to her music in the first place by passing along her CDs. She also holds a co-writing credit with Powers for "One Less Honky Tonk" on her *The Good, The Bad & The Ugly* album. This is no rare feat, ladies and gents, as Freddy only writes with Merle Haggard, Willie Nelson, Bill McDavid and most recently, Big & Rich.

So she can sing, she can write, she can rodeo, she can help make the world a better place. But can she ride? Absolutely! Not her own bike, but she does share with friends and family and rides with them whenever a break in her grueling tour schedule allows. One such break found her hanging out at Town Luck for a Kinky Friedman for Governor bash, at which time she and her blue heeler Baby posed on *The Bootlegger*, built by Thompson Choppers of Springfield, Missouri (pictured). (Pauline reports that not only does this copper chopper run on corn whisky, but it sports a spigot tap from the gas tank which will fill a shot glass on the bike so the rider can run on alternate fuel as well! – though not recommended, of course.) Reese plays an annual fundraising event for B.A.C.A. (Bikers Against Child Abuse) and bik-



ers around Texas who frequent venues like Poodie's Hilltop and Cindy's Gone Hog Wild continue to join the ranks of her new and loyal fans.

If you're like me and you don't usually fall for female vocalists because they don't have the grit and guts the

guys do, I bet you'll make an exception for Pauline. It won't be long before Pauline Reese has roped, rode and honky-tonked her way into your CD player and your heart as well.

Visit www.paulinereese.com to check out Pauline and her music.