



Traveling Troubadour: Jackie Bristow has traveled continents to find the right pitch between radio-friendly appeal and personal stories.

Country Girl

Kiwi songstress follows path from New Zealand to Australia to LA.

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By Stuart Thornton

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Under slate grey Scottish skies and a beaded curtain of constant precipitation, singer/songwriter Jackie Bristow wrote the song “This is Australia.” The native New Zealander, who moved to Australia in 1995, was traveling around Scotland with her sister when she started to miss the warmth of the weather and people of her adopted homeland. “I think I was just homesick,” she says.

Later, Bristow decided to enter the number into the Song for Australia Competition held by the nation’s tourism bureau. She won the contest, beating out 500 other entries. Following the big win, Australian airline Qantas decided to play the song on all domestic and international flights. Bristow says she had the surreal experience of hearing her own song piped in on the airline’s speakers during a flight from the US a few years ago. Rather than elbowing the passenger next to her and exclaiming that it was her song, Bristow didn’t draw any attention to herself. “I just sat there quietly with my glass of wine and smiled,” she says.

Bristow grew up in Gore, a town on New Zealand’s South Island known for its illicit whiskey production and country music. Throughout her childhood, the young musician would travel around New Zealand and perform at wine and food festivals with her sister.

When she turned 21, Bristow relocated to Sydney to try her luck in the city’s music scene. “I moved with absolutely no money or job,” she says, “but I had my guitar.”

After being signed to the Liberation Music record label, Bristow recorded her debut album, *Thirsty*, in Sydney, Los Angeles and Nashville. She collaborated with the songwriting team known as the Matrix—which is responsible for writing and co-writing hits for artists including Avril Lavigne, Ricky Martin and the Backstreet Boys—on “Look at Me Now.”

“They were looking for a pop song to break me,” she says. “It’s a nice catchy song, but it doesn’t represent who I am.”

Bristow, who is currently residing in Los Angeles, just released her follow-up to *Thirsty*, titled *Crazy Love*. The CD features the songwriter’s airy vocals over polished pop with a slight country tinge. For Bristow, *Crazy Love* is a step forward as an artist. “I think it’s a little more developed,” she says.

Bristow is already halfway through writing songs for her next CD. She is hoping to make the release “really earthy and not as poppy” as its predecessors. She says that one song, titled “Wild

Child,” will describe her mother’s experiences as a young parent in New Zealand’s sometimes harsh and rural South Island. Maybe the song will strike a chord with her native New Zealanders, but it’s hard to imagine it becoming an airplane anthem.

JACKIE BRISTOW plays 7:30pm Saturday, Aug. 4, at the Ol’ Factory Café, 1725 Contra Costa St., Sand City. \$15/advance; \$18/at the door. 238-7425.

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