

Miranda Lambert



Biography

On the caution-vs.-candor scale, it's not hard to figure out where Miranda Lambert comes down. "I'm really not careful at all," she says. "I probably should be. I pretty much don't have anything to hide, though. I never hid anything growing up. My parents were PIs, so I really couldn't."

She may have become a songbird instead of snooper, but in her own fashion, Lambert is following in the family business, as a private investigator of the heart—a trade she recommences with relish in her third album, *Revolution*. The 25-year-old star's biggest hits have tended to be her boldest songs, so she's not about to put a lid on her plain-spokenness now.

"I mean every word I say in every lyric of every song on this record, and every record I've ever done," she declares. "I would never take back one word or lyric or point I've ever made, because it's part of who I am. And there are plenty of artists who wouldn't do so much of that, if that's the kind of music you're into. But if you're into honesty, I have the records for you," she laughs.

In her most successful single to date, "Gunpowder and Lead," Lambert declared that some little girls are made less of sugar and spice than more combustible substances. And the title track of her 2005 platinum debut, *Kerosene*, established her in the country music firmament as a figuratively and maybe even literally incendiary personality. But it may be no mistake that the new album's title, *Revolution*, could be taken as similarly aggressive or just a simple pledge of personal reinvention.

"I'm a little more stable in my life, and not the crazy, wild-eyed kid that was writing 'Kerosene' at 18," she says. "I've been through a lot and grown up a lot on the road. And I've always kind of been a little older than my age anyway. I have the regular 25-year-old small town girl side to me that likes to make cupcakes and live on a farm, and then I have this rowdy, crazy, headbanging, rock-star-girl side that is my life on the road. I feel this record shows more a complete picture of who I am.

On one end of the gamut lies the hard-rocking, vengeful "Sin for a Sin," cowritten by Lambert with Blake Shelton, in which it sounds like there might be the hint of a homicide. "Maybe, maybe not," she laughs, refusing to commit to an interpretation. "It's basically about cheating, love gone wrong, and the death of something, whether it's love or a person... That's trademark Miranda—the song on my record that most sounds like me from 'Kerosene' or 'Crazy Ex-Girlfriend.' Nobody really gets to live out all their fantasies; I just get to sing mine in songs."

At the other end of the *Revolution*-ary spectrum is the tender but still thoroughly realistic “Love Song,” cowritten with Shelton and two members of Lady Antebellum. “A song called ‘Love Song’ I would never think would be on my record,” she admits. “You know what I mean? Because I just don’t sing songs like that. But this song is about real people in real love, not the fairy tale. And you know, I guess I’ve reached a point where, it’s all right to maybe love somebody.”

Lambert is an artist of many complementary qualities that only appear on the surface to be contradictions. You can even see it in some of the magazine covers she’s appeared on. She was recently the focus of her first cover story in *Country Weekly*, after previously fronting an issue of *No Depression*, a publication usually devoted only to non-mainstream, critically acclaimed, alt-country singer-songwriters. She’s equally at home on the cover of *First*, a women’s magazine (“Miranda’s Bliss Tips!”), and *Garden & Gun* (which trumpeted her as “The New Loretta Lynn”). *People* named her one of 2009’s “100 Most Beautiful People”... just a year after *Esquire* named her “Terrifying Woman of the Year.”

She may be comfortable embodying qualities at the far extremes of a particular divide, but don’t call her a centrist. “I just think it’s boring to be straight down the middle vanilla,” Lambert says. “I have people that absolutely love me, and I’m sure I have people that absolutely hate everything that I ever stand for. But that’s good. At least people are passionate about something, and talking about you either way. But just down-the-middle plain, that’s never been my style, personally or professionally.”

That may have come as a surprise a few years ago to anyone who expected a certain acquiescence out of a former reality show contestant. Lambert came in third in the first season of *Nashville Star*, which certainly set up preconceptions about just what kind of artist she’d turn out to be. Yet, with years of playing Texas nightclubs under her belt even as a teenager, she faced down Nashville executives with the same steely determination with which she’d stared down rowdy bar crowds. And despite Music Row’s rep for remaking impressionable artists in its own image, she says she’s never faced resistance on her vision from anyone at Sony Nashville, on up to the label chairman.

“Joe Galante is another person that absolutely let me be myself artistically. I don’t know why, but I’m incredibly thankful for it, and I don’t want to question it too much. I feel sorry for people that don’t have that. But I think a lot of it people might bring it on themselves, because if you don’t know who you are, then it’s a lot easier to be swayed one direction or the other. And I came into this business it with such strong convictions. of: ‘This is me. I can go back home to Texas and do what I do there playing in clubs, or I can try to become bigger. Anybody want to help me out here?’ And it’s worked thankfully.”

Her 2005 freshman effort, *Kerosene*, put her in an exclusive club, as one of only seven artists in the history of SoundScan to come out of the box at No. 1 on the country sales chart with a debut album. Critical support was immediately forthcoming: It was named

one of the year's 10 best albums by the *New York Times*, *Rolling Stone*, and CMT.com, among many others. She picked up key nominations for the CMAs, Grammys, CMT Awards, and other honors, beating fellow newcomers Taylor Swift and Kellie Pickler to be named as the ACMs' top new female vocalist.

In 2007, *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* also debuted at No. 1 on the country chart. After a slew of top 20 singles, the sophomore album generated her first top 10 hit, "Gunpowder and Lead." It was named one of the top 10 albums of the year by *Entertainment Weekly*, *Blender*, and "dean of rock critics" Robert Christgau. In the *Village Voice*'s annual all-genre poll of America's music critics, it placed No. 15, the highest showing ever by a country album amid the usually rock- and hip-hop-favoring survey. It fared even better—No. 1, to be exact—in the *Nashville Scene*'s annual poll of national critics who specialize in country. "This year, our 96 voters handed Texas singer [Miranda Lambert](#) one of the most dominating victories in the poll's history," the *Scene* wrote in announcing the results. (The critics also named "Famous in a Small Town" the year's best single, as well as naming Lambert female vocalist of the year, songwriter of the year, and artist of the year.) It wasn't just journalists handing out the accolades, but the music industry, as *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* won the coveted album of the year trophy at the 2008 Academy of Country Music Awards.

What to do for a three-peat?

To some degree, "we went with the school of 'If it ain't broke, don't fix it,'" she says. "We worked with the same guys to do the record that did my last two—same musicians, same producers." In the latter category are Frank Liddell and Mike Wrucke. "Frank is such a great song guy... And Wrucke's the total brain behind the way my records sound."

But there are crucial differences, too. For one thing, *Revolution* includes 15 tracks instead of the Nashville-standard 10 or 11. "To me, if there's a story to tell in 15 songs, then people get 15 songs. I really wanted it to feel like a piece of art—a real body of work, a musical journey if you will. And it *is* an album. The whole album is this huge circle with a picture of my face at the end. If you don't have the whole thing, then you don't have the complete picture."

To ensure the album had both cohesiveness and spontaneity, the vast majority of it was recorded in one whirlwind session in early 2009 (excepting two tracks that were laid down last November). "It was old school," says Lambert. "We went in and cut the whole project in a week. I didn't want to go record two songs one day and then two weeks later go record some more, and so on. We did it all as a single project, a vibe record. Usually the studio is really stressful, and this time it was just fun. It just felt like making music... not work."

Stylistically, she says, "This record is country—a lot more country than the other two. And I'm so glad about that. I didn't plan on writing more country songs or go into it with a style in mind, I just wrote what I felt and put it on the album." Of course, diehard traditionalists should be warned that, while she's capable of getting as pure honky-tonk as any young performer out there, Lambert is definitely a volume dealer. "My bass player

brought up a good point: ‘You write country songs and put a rock beat to ‘em.’ So ‘Maintain the Pain’ is definitely a country lyric, but it’s got a classic rock sound to it.”

And mind-set? “I still hear the classic Miranda Lambert lyric and voice and attitude. But I definitely feel like this record’s more well-rounded than the other two. I feel like it’s a little more grown up.” Not that she didn’t always have a certain precocity. “My parents were private investigators, and I saw a lot and heard a lot growing up. As a family we went through financial hard ships while growing up, off and on we had to “grow” our own food. Going through all that really does stick with you, builds your character and lets you know who you are.

Miranda has been through some changes in the last 2 years, like moving from Texas to Oklahoma, where she bought a farm a few miles away from her boyfriend Blake Shelton’s.

“It *is* like moving to another country, if you’re from Texas!” she interrupts, laughing. “I have a little house on my parents’ place that I’ve had for a long time. But I felt like I couldn’t live 100 feet from my parents the rest of my life.

So I bought a farm, and it’s been the most amazing place. I feel like I gained some independence by buying some land and some animals and raising chickens. I really feel very grown-up now!”

There is a measure of romantic contentedness in some of *Revolution*’s songs, like the aforementioned “Love Song,” or even the wryly mocking opening track, “Only Prettier.” But if you’re worried that Lambert might get a little too settled for her own musical good, don’t. Was it hard to tap into tension when she was feeling that good about her personal life? “I found it amazingly easy,” she counters. “Being happy and in love is the worst thing for your figure and your country music songwriting. But even though I’m happy and have a really great life right now, I found some angst.”

The maturity of ballads like “Virginia Bluebell” and “Love Song” doesn’t preclude a fair share of new material in which Lambert definitely still acts her impetuous age. “I wrote from my perspective and where I am at 25 years old. It is who I am, and it’s pretty honest.” That bluntness extends to interviews. “I’ve always been open and really say my opinion. Not in a rude way; I don’t ever want it to come across as cocky. I’m not cocky, I’m confident. I just think I have something to say. If people don’t like it, then they don’t like it. You can agree to disagree.”

You may get an even greater sense of Lambert’s firebrand side from “Heart Like Mine,” in which the singer writes about her expectations of the hereafter... which involves Jesus greeting her with a couple of wine glasses.

“I grew up in church, and I’ve been a Christian my whole life. My mom always says I cut my teeth on a church pew. It could be autobiographical in a way, because I’ve definitely had my share of being judged but I’m playing a character a little bit in every song, too.”

Lambert *is* a character, in a lot of people's minds—and while she doesn't actively try to go against the Music Row grain, she doesn't mind if she's perceived that way.

“I hope I've been able to break open some doors for more open-mindedness in country. People have told me I have. But it's been a lot of work, and it's been a lot of putting my feet in the dirt and saying, here's the line I won't cross. I may have lost a lot of things for it or I may have gained a lot of things. But I know that I sleep great at night.

I hope to do this forever, whether it will be performing for 10,000 fans or singing in some bar, 20 years from now.

Fortunately for country fans, we're still at the relative beginning of Lambert's career, able to relish a performer who only seems to be as seasoned as someone in her 40s while really having decades ahead of her. May she continue maturing in all the right ways—and failing to lose her youthful feistiness in all the right ones, too. As they say: Viva la *Revolution*.