

JOANNA

THIS CRAZY LIFE

Spend your formative years on the road with a national touring company. Dedicate your teens to preparing to take the music world by storm. Throw in the scrutiny of MTV cameras documenting your every move. If this had been your day-to-day existence, you'd probably call your debut album This Crazy Life too. And if you happened to be Geffen recording artist, **JOANNA**, you'd have the confidence and talent to come through it all with aplomb. "The title represents my journey," Joanna explains. "I've struggled, been on such a high and such a low. But my purpose in life is to touch people with my music. I've always turned pain into strength."

Joanna will touch you with This Crazy Life, an insightful collection of pop gems that showcase her incredible vocal ability. Whether soaring through independence anthems like the first single "Let It Slide," bearing all on emotional ballads like "Miracle," or even stirring soulful rock on "Tip Toe," the main thing that knocks you out is Joanna's powerful voice.

Joanna first started entertaining folks as a blue-collar kid growing up in Philly. "I'd sing for the customers in my father's barbershop, and they'd give me tips—then I'd go down to the corner store for candy," she recalls. The young girl with the powerhouse pipes soon began branching out from a local TV talent show to big-time Broadway auditions. She landed roles with a number of musical productions and, after 106 performances of the 20th anniversary national tour of "Annie," Joanna was bound to take the show back to the Great White Way. That, unfortunately never came to fruition as Joanna came down with bronchitis and the show went on without her ensuing a media blitz of attention and support. This only made Joanna stronger and she decided to focus on her music.

"Knock me down, it makes me want to get up and soar higher. I realized I wanted to do my own music, but first I had to define who I was," she says. One big step in that direction was allowing herself to have some typical teenage experiences. "I'd been in the industry professionally since I was nine, and I needed to just experience normal teen life."

Joanna also had to deal with the blessing/curse of her multifaceted instrument. "My voice can go from quiet and intimate to raspy to opening up huge," she says. "I can sing any style you throw at me, and that's bittersweet, because I needed to discover the style that was me." When she started turning her poems into lyrics and her concepts into melodies, Joanna was on her way. Once she'd saved enough money to travel to California and make a demo she already knew the person she wanted in her corner.

"I kept on hearing about this guy Ron Fair, what a genius he was," she says of the now Geffen Records Chairman who molded the career of Christina Aguilera, among others.

So although she'd received calls from various labels, Joanna held them at bay. "I didn't want to meet with anyone until I met Ron Fair." She got her way, and sang one a cappella number after another for Fair. "I'd been warned that he wouldn't tell me how wonderful I was or anything," Joanna recalls. "So I was surprised when he said, 'I'd sign you right now if I wasn't in the middle of a career transition myself.'" At the time Fair was leaving RCA to head up A&M Records. Suffice to say, Fair didn't waste time working with her to ready her Geffen debut.

Then he gave her time to deliver her debut. "I'm so lucky, because record companies don't really develop artists anymore," says Joanna, now 21. "I was only 16 when I was signed, they could have thrown things at me, like, 'You're singing this and you're wearing this,' but they really left it in my hands." Working with young, up-and-coming producers and writers, as well as Fair and hitmakers like Linda Perry, Joanna got down to honing her sound.

During this time, Joanna became the subject of MTV's "True Life" documentary series. "They followed me around for a year to show what really goes in to making a record because it's so tough!" Joanna says of the two-hour episode. "People have no idea how intense it is. Now that my record's coming out, anyone who saw the show will be like, 'Wow, she really kept at it.'"

The result is an album that showcases Joanna's vocal talent and electric personality. This Crazy Life is an album of awakening—it's all about breaking free, taking chances, getting hurt and letting go. Rock guitar and compelling percussion build to a crescendo on "Let It Slide," with Joanna's vocals ascending to heart-bursting heights. "I began to cry when I listened to it for the first time—I was like, 'That's me!'" she says of the first single. "It's so close to me, so personal, and I love what it represents about being independent and taking off to do your own thing."

Another song Joanna's especially close to is the title track. "It's a story about my mom, who had the craziest life—she was abandoned as a child, was in an orphanage, went through a series of foster homes," Joanna says. "My mom is the strongest woman I know, and a lifetime of lessons couldn't teach me what she has taught me. It took me a long time to write that song, and when I finished I sent it to my mom for Mother's Day."

This Crazy Life also features the emotional Linda Perry-penned "Miracle," the ruefully romantic "Just When You're Leaving" and "4th of July"—which Joanna wrote when she was just 16. "I shout out independence and strength but also that you shouldn't be afraid to open up and be vulnerable, let yourself love, even if it means getting hurt," Joanna says of the album in sum. Universal, classic themes rendered by a truly unforgettable voice—that's Joanna's debut album, but certainly not her last. "I hope to be a credible artist, someone who will stick around," she says. Undoubtedly—no matter how crazy this life gets, Joanna will be here to sing about it.

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