

MICKIE JAMES

A Little Bit Country

MS. JAMES jumps from the

**RING to the
HONKY
TONKS**

with her debut country album.
Strangers & Angels. We sat down with the Diva
to acquaint ourselves with her

SINGING STYLES,

*Cowgirl
Cred*

and new music-inspired finishing maneuver.

*As told to John Michalsky • Photography by Chad Griffith
Typography by Ivan Manolos*





Mickie on her first single...

"Are You With Me" is a kick-ass power anthem. I thought it was really cool to come out of the box with it because it so powerfully represents me. There's going to be a lot of people saying, "You can't do this. You're a wrestler, not a singer. You're already on the road 250 days out of the year, how are you going to make time for this?" I certainly didn't make it to WWE by saying, "OK, I'll just be this girl." You bust your butt and you make it or break it—sink or swim.

Mickie on her country roots...

I've been riding horses since I was four. For me, it's like riding a bike. A lot of people say, "Oh, I had horses," and what they mean is that they went on a trail ride as a kid. They paid some guy to lead them through paths. Trail riding is awesome, but it's not horseback riding. Try getting bucked off a few times, then talk to me.

Mickie on old school vs. new school...

I'm a mix. I love old-school country. That's what I grew up on. But I love all the new stuff, too. One of my favorite bands right now is Lady Antebellum. They are amazing. I also love Darius Rucker, who crossed over from Hootie & the Blowfish. As you know, Shelton Benjamin sings a great Hootie. We've been

known to sing on the tour buses. Sometimes you get a little party going and start your own karaoke.

Mickie on country singers who would make great Superstars...

Everyone knows that Toby Keith is a huge WWE fan. He's also six-foot-something tall. I thought he might've hosted *Raw* when we were in Nashville or Memphis. Reba McEntire would also make a great Diva. She's a fiery redhead and I think she would whoop some butt with sass and style.

Mickie on country fashion for men...

Every guy should own a cowboy hat; everybody has a little country in him. I find that there's something about a man in a cowboy hat that just drives me mad. But it has to be the right cowboy hat. Don't get an oversized one. There are millions of different types. You don't have to get a JBL hat. Go for the straw ones, 'cause they're stylish.

Mickie on the crossroads where WWE meets country music...

Country music fans are WWE fans. They're the same breed, the same people. It's just like NASCAR—it all works together. I think it comes down to loyalty. WWE and country fans stick with you through thick and thin. They're by your side no matter what.

Mickie on the chances of hitting future opponents with a guitar...

Probably slim to none. Hitting people with a guitar has been done at this point. Maybe a fiddle would work, because it's a little smaller and easier to carry. We can call it a "Con-fiddle-to," which would be a much more musical version of the "Con-chair-to."

Strangers & Angels hits stores March 23.



MICK'S PICKS Five country artists who influenced Ms. James' music career.



Johnny Cash
You Should Own:
The Legacy Edition of the 1968 Classic At Folsom Prison and/or 1996's Unchained.



Tanya Tucker
You Should Own:
1976's Here's Some Love, her only album to hit the top spot of the Billboard country chart.



Tim McGraw
You Should Own:
Almost all of his albums have gone platinum or hit number one. You can't lose.



Willie Nelson
You Should Own:
1975's concept album, *Red Headed Stranger*, and *1978's Stardust*. Both went platinum.



Waylon Jennings
You Should Own:
1976's Are You Ready for the Country? *1977's Ol' Waylon*, both #1 on the country charts.

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