

GIANT

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Q & A

RISSI PALMER **HOT, TALENTED AND CRACKING THE** **COUNTRY CHARTS.**

AT 26, RISSI Palmer's stunning voice isn't the only thing that makes her stand out. Despite having piqued the interests of top pop and R&B producers, the Missouri-raised singer stuck to her roots and chose to pursue country music. With her self-titled debut album and hit single, "Country Girl," Palmer

is already proving country music isn't all about broken hearts and lost dogs.

GIANT: You were the first black female singer on the *Billboard* country charts in twenty years. Did that add to the pressure?

My publicist had asked me what I wanted for my birthday,

and I said I wanted to be on the *Billboard* charts. I wasn't aware that it had been twenty years. I just thought that surely someone else had done it in that amount of time. It's a blessing, but it's also really sad. It's just like, damn, why hasn't anybody else been able to crack it?

Country music is largely appreciated in Middle America. Have you had any bad touring experiences on account of your race?

It's very interesting to be the only black person in the

whole venue—and you're onstage. But honestly, people have been really good to me. There's always going to be somebody that has a little comment, but for the most part, because of our day and age, it really wasn't a big secret that I was black. My video came out before the single, so people already knew what I looked like.

"IT'S VERY INTERESTING TO BE THE ONLY BLACK PERSON IN THE WHOLE VENUE."

Why country?

Country is universal. Everyone's been in love. Everyone's had their heart broken. Everybody's got a family. I gravitated toward the songwriting aspect of it. It was the kind of music that I was writing without even really thinking about it. I love R&B and pop, but when it came down to something I felt sincere and genuine about, country fit me best.

Who are your influences?

Patsy Cline was one of my earliest influences and still is. I really love strong female singers, especially when they write their own music, like India.Arie. I respect when artists write incredible songs and both play and sing them. It doesn't necessarily make or break you as an artist, but in getting my own music across, I want to make sure you're not just hearing the pretty voice but also getting a little bit of me. And if that means I have to write the songs so that they're a reflection of my perspective on things, so be it. I want to make sure that my intentions are clearly put out there.

ALYSON MANCE



She's a little bit country...