

# Cline fan no patsy

By DAN AQUILANTE

ONE of Nashville's top twangers, Keith Urban, is an Australian. Another of the genre's elite is Canadian Shania Twain. So it's with laughter and more than a dose of homegrown pride that country newcomer Rissi Palmer declares "Yes, I am an American doing country music."

While her US credentials might not be all that unusual, 26-year-old Miss Palmer is also stunningly beautiful, has a voice that rivals the late Patsy Cline and she's African-American. In fact, with her sassy stomp "Country Girl," Palmer ranks as the first black woman to land a single on the country music charts in 20 years.

Palmer, whose vocal skill has earned her a slot on the hallowed stage of the Grand Ole Opry, will test her music on city slickers here in Skyscraper Park tomorrow with an all-acoustic show at Baruch Performing Arts Center.

"I really don't feel I've done anything different from anyone else," says Palmer modestly. "The difference has been, that

for whatever reason, people have gotten into what I do.

"Any singer worth their weight is able to sing in different styles — that's just

the art of singing — but I've never wanted to sing anything but country," she adds. And that's not just talk. A couple of years back, Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis, the production architects of Janet Jackson's sound, wanted to work their urban magic with Palmer at the microphone.

"I didn't turn down their offer because I didn't want to work with them, they're musical geniuses," she says.

"The reason we didn't get together was creative. I wanted to sing country, and they wanted me to go in a different direction. It was nothing personal, because they're amazing.

"I wanted to write real songs, and country music is one of the last forms where a girl can do that. Country music is about the voice and about the message — rootsy and organic."

On her recently released self-titled album, Palmer wrote nine of the dozen tracks. One of the three cover songs is a Patsy Cline tune.

"Doing the Patsy Cline song wasn't me



Jimmy Bruch

**Country crooner Rissi Palmer brings her great voice and looks to the Baruch Performing Arts Center tonight.**

saying 'Look at what I can do, look at my chops' — it was more about paying respect to her and to my mom," she says. "She was a huge Patsy fan, and my earliest memories are of her and me listening to a Patsy Cline record."

The Nashville resident logged time in New York in her early 20s, calling it "the kind of place that has a pulse. You get this feeling that everybody is on a mission to do something. It's that energy that makes you want to work harder."

And working — hard — is certainly something Palmer is used to. When she lived in the city, she held down two jobs just to make rent, while simultaneously writing and performing songs.

Palmer's love of music is no trifling thing; she's wanted to be a singer since age 4, and even penned her Grammy thank-you speech at 12.

"It's true," Palmer confesses.

"I was a kid and I just watched the Grammys. I wrote the speech, sealed it in an envelope, and stuck it in my Bible. It's still there."

Maybe not for long. Palmer is one of the hottest women singers in country, and her debut record just might propel her to the podium at next year's Grammy party.

Rissi Palmer plays tonight at Baruch Performing Arts Center (55 Lexington Ave., at 8; tickets are \$15-\$35; (212) 352-3101.

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## NOTE BOOK

NEW MUSIC TUESDAYS

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### The Black Crowes, "Goodbye Daughters of the Revolution"

The first single off the band's recently released album, "Warpaint" — the first in seven years — is typical of the disc's perfect blend of bluesy, country and Southern rock.

### Rissi Palmer, "Hold On to Me"

The Nashville singer ditches the boot-stomping beats of "Country Girl," the breakthrough single off her self-titled debut disc, in favor of a melodic love song.

### Saving Abel, "Addicted"

The first single off the self-titled debut

album by this quintet from Corinth, Miss., mixes post-grunge with Southern rock for a truly dirty sound — dirty in the "full of sexual innuendo" sense.

### David "Honeyboy" Edwards, "Boogie Rambler"

The Delta blues guitar legend may be 92 years old, but he's still kicking it like a youngster with up-tempo blues shuffle songs such as this one off his new disc, "Roamin' and Ramblin'."

### Black 47, "Sunrise on Brooklyn"

This track, off the Celtic rockers' new album, "Iraq," is one of many written from the point of view of those serving in the military. They're at B.B. King's on Monday.

— Maxine Shen  
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