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CARLY PEARCE BRINGS NEW MUSIC TO WATERSHED

Carly Pearce fans who happened to visit Dollywood, the theme park owned by country legend Dolly Parton in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, in 2007 and 2008 very well could have the ultimate “I saw her when” story.

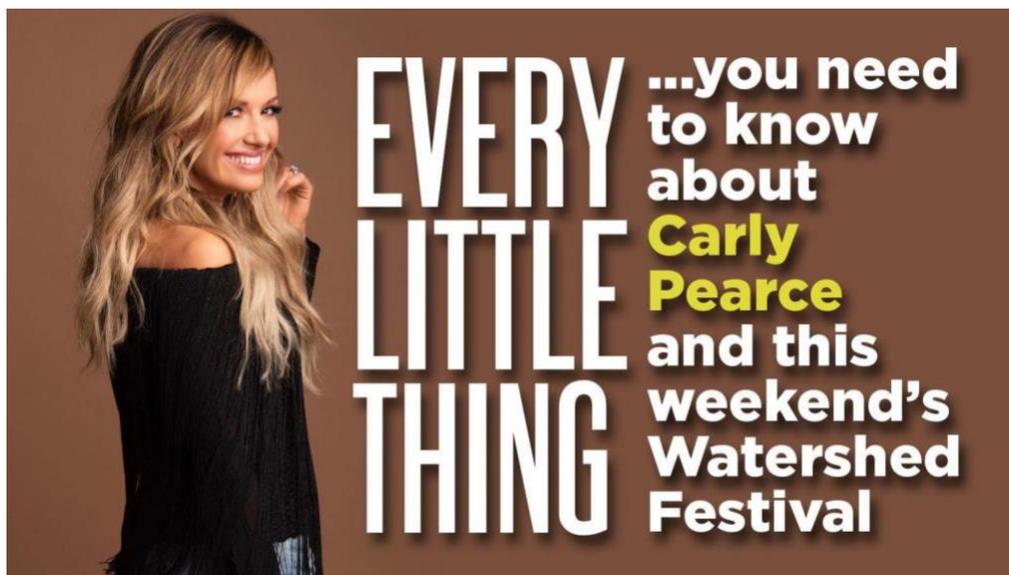
Before her upcoming sophomore album, tours with the likes of Jason Aldean, Rascal Flatts and Luke Bryan, and breakthrough singles like “Every Little Thing” and “Hide the Wine,” Pearce was a Dollywood performer.

Six times a day, five days a week, Pearce performed in a show that highlighted music from Pigeon Forge, classic country tunes and more modern hits.

As the story goes, Pearce persuaded her parents to trade traditional high school for home schooling and move from her native Kentucky to Pigeon Forge to perform at Dollywood.

Dollywood wasn’t always in the cards for Pearce, but she saw it as a big opportunity and a step in the right direction toward her ultimate goal.

“The plan was how do I get to Nashville,” Pearce said. “For me, that opportunity came up and allowed me to go and really hone in on my skills as a performer.”



Performing at Dollywood, Pearce said, taught her how to make sure her voice was healthy and work with others. It also gave her a chance to see which songs her voice naturally gravitated toward when it came time to pursue a career of her own.

Pearce moved to Nashville at 19 and, a few years later, signed publishing and development deals with Sony Records.

Those deals were short lived, but soon after Pearce found herself writing with a producer named busbee, who has written with everyone from Maren Morris and Rascal Flatts to Better Than Ezra and Timbaland.

In 2016, Pearce added guest vocals to the Josh Abbott Band's surprise hit "Wasn't That Drunk," which peaked at No. 37 on the Billboard U.S. Country Airplay chart.

The next year, Pearce had a surprise hit of her own with "Every Little Thing." The song debuted on Sirius XM's the Highway before being sent to country radio.

Shortly thereafter, the song reached the top of the Billboard U.S. Country Airplay and Canadian Country charts.

"We knew that it was special," Pearce said, thinking back to her time writing the song with busbee and Emily Shackelton. "Did I ever think it would go to country radio and change my life? No. I thought it was just going to be a song I loved."

Pearce said the song featured the two things people say a new female artist shouldn't release: a slow tempo and heartbreak.

"I'm very proud that in the middle of the summer, I broke every rule and showed them that good songs and good music will always come through," she said.

Pearce followed the song with her debut album, also called "Every Little Thing," which peaked at No. 4 on the U.S. Top Country Albums chart and includes the singles "If My Name Was Whiskey" and "Hide the Wine."

Earlier this year, Pearce released "Closer to You," a song about Pearce's relationship with her fiancé, country singer Michael Ray, as the first look at her upcoming sophomore album.

"I'm more sure of who I am and the genre," she said about the new album. "I don't feel like I'm trying to prove myself as much anymore. I feel like people know, and I'm more relaxed and more confident."

Pearce will share "Closer to You" and another new song with fans at the Gorge Amphitheatre on Saturday as part of Watershed Music Festival.

Watershed headliners include Jason Aldean, Zac Brown Band and Miranda Lambert, solo and also featuring the Pistol Annies, Lambert's trio with Ashley Monroe and Angaleena Presley.

The festival also will feature performances from Brothers Osborne, Kane Brown, Midland, Kip Moore, Maren Morris, Chris Young, Danielle Bradbery, Cam, Cody Johnson, Randy Rogers Band, Michael Ray, Mitchell Tenpenny, Chris Young and DeeJay Silver.

The Next From Nashville stage will feature performances from Travis Denning, Austin Jenckes, Brandon Lay, Matt Stell, the James Barker Band, Seaforth, Dillon Carmichael, Caylee Hammack, Waterloo Revival, Ross Ellis, Steven Lee Olsen, Lauren Jenkins, Ingrid Andress and Cort Carpenter.

Pearce is excited to make her Watershed debut and said her festival setlist won't change too much from her current set as part of a tour with Aldean, though it will likely be a little longer.

“(I’ll) try to still bring the same amount of energy and leave people wanting more,” she said.