**Jess Wright - Biography**

*Full Length*

When musicians discuss their art, they usually try to explain their creative process. But singer-songwriter Jess Wright digs deeper, choosing to express how she actually perceives music, because that sensory relationship fuels her very existence.

“It’s literally in the air; it hangs on the notes birds sing, on the way the ground shakes,” she observes. “It hangs on the cadence of people's voices and the bark of a dog.” Wright hears the world as a symphony — and she loves every riotously cacophonous, sweetly harmonious note.

But thoughts of shaping actual notes into songs, much less adding words, didn’t start percolating until her senior year as an ethnomusicology minor (and math major ) at Vanderbilt University in Nashville. During her last semester, Wright took a songwriting class — and got hooked.

It took nearly a year — and a move to San Diego — before Wright felt ready to share her songs with an audience, but once she played her first open-mic night, she quickly became a regular — and even challenged herself to introduce a new song each week.

When Wright reveals that early-2019 debut took place less than six months after she started teaching herself to play guitar, her rapid progress becomes even more impressive.

Wright finally got her COVID-delayed chance to step inside a professional recording studio in late 2021, and stepped out a few days later with Blue Rock Sessions, her debut EP.

Named for its recording site, the beautiful Blue Rock Artist Ranch in Wimberley, Texas, Wright’s musical introduction fits solidly on the folk side of Americana, with hints of country, rock and jazz influences. Accompanied only by her guitar, she sings with the confidence of a far more seasoned veteran.

Even off-mic, Wright exudes an aura of relaxed self-assurance, further enhanced by her optimistic attitude, grounded demeanor and natural attractiveness. Only her songs reveal just how hard she struggled to build that confidence.

Born and raised in Maine, Wright fell in love with music before she was old enough to know it was happening. As a child, she always seemed to be singing or humming a melody or plinking the keys of her electric piano. Every car ride became a family sing-along; not only did her parents turn their middle child and her two brothers into quite the sibling chorus, they also built fun memories and cultivated tight bonds.

As soon as Wright hit grade school, those car rides became shuttles to choir practice, musical theater rehearsals and talent shows. But as a sensitive kid who didn’t quite “fit in,” she endured bullying that contributed to serious anxiety and stress issues. Music became her refuge; she made up piano melodies to tune out her pain and loneliness.

When she found herself battling depression in college, Wright’s earbuds became her armor.

“With the right song in my ears, limits looked more like obstacles than ends,” she explains. “I could walk around and feel like I belonged just as I was. It took me out of my head and helped open my eyes to the world around me.”

It also piqued her analytical side. “I wanted to know how someone gets started with making the songs that had welded themselves onto my life,” she recalls. (Among the songs to which she’s “irrevocably attached”: Sting’s “Seven Days,” the Spinners’ “(They Just Can’t Stop It The) Games People Play,” Vince Guaraldi’s “Christmas Time is Here” and Martina McBride’s “A Broken Wing.”)

Of course, living amid some of the world’s best songwriters — including those who wrote McBride’s hit — certainly didn’t hurt.

“Nashville allowed me to explore and expand my understanding of music and what it means to share it with people,” Wright says.

In songwriting class, she discovered she enjoyed the writing process; it felt comfortable, and empowering. But she regarded it as just a hobby, unrelated to her status as a soloist in Vanderbilt’s Blair Jazz Choir or her performances with the Nashville Jazz Workshop.

The day after graduation, Wright left Nashville to start a new job in San Diego. It wasn’t an easy transition. Still plagued by depression, she lost interest in songwriting.

But after a few months, she missed it so much, she bought her first guitar, figuring she’d need something to play if she intended to develop as a singer-songwriter. She also started singing during Sunday jazz jams at an area club. Once she added open mic nights, she began building a network.

“I met people who really opened my world to everything else in that community, and it just snowballed,” she says. One of them helped her obtain paying gigs; she booked her first slot as a solo singer-songwriter in August of 2019.

“I kept saying yes to opportunities,” Wright recalls. “It started off as the thing that I spent my spare time on. And then it became the career that I spent my spare time on. And now it's turning into the career that I want.”

Her growing fanbase includes supporters like the one who approached her at a vineyard to report her voice had lured him over from the other side of a hill, like Odysseus to the sirens.

Blue Rock Sessions provides solid evidence of Wright’s vocal appeal, as well as her writing talent. Honed with the help of producer Billy Crockett, her songs carry an energy that gives them momentum.

“Heel Toe” grabs attention with its wide-open-range vibe, bold attitude and passionate protagonists — a pair of reckless, ready-to-roam “outlaw kids.”

The upbeat, assertive “Act Like Me” channels the strength of a woman who finally pushes back at her demons and declares she’s taking charge.

But it’s “Quitting Kind” that holds the most power; it’s the sort of confessional ballad that turns audiences pin-drop quiet as they become drawn in. As Wright sings On the phone I told you I was fine/Could you tell that I was lying — words addressed to a mother, but never meant to be sent — the beauty of her melancholy voice leaves no doubt those audiences will be captivated. Just like her vineyard wanderer.