

## MUSIC

# Dynamic Lambert sticks to her guns

By **JOEY GUERRA**  
HOUSTON CHRONICLE

Miranda Lambert is *not* your typical blonde country sweetheart. Sweet and girlie, at least when it comes to music, aren't really her things.

"What I'm doing works, so I don't think anybody can argue with that," Lambert says of her tough-chick image.

"It's who I am. It's very easy to be generic, and that's the last thing that I want to be."

No one would ever accuse the Lindale native of being bland. She's arguably the most exciting voice, male or female, in mainstream country music.

Lambert's pair of major-label albums, *Kerosene* (2005) and last year's *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*, pack more punch than a career's worth of whiny singles from so many Nashville pretty boys. "There's nobody like me, and thank God," she says. "But there's room for everybody."

Lambert swept the influential Nashville Scene Country Music Critics' Poll, which surveyed 96 journalists (including myself and former Chronicle music critic



Read reviews of every RodeoHouston show at [blogs.chron.com/handstamp](http://blogs.chron.com/handstamp).

Rick Mitchell) for their top genre picks. She earned top honors for best album (*Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*), single (*Famous in a Small Town*), female vocalist, songwriter and artist of the year.

"It's such a good feeling. But honestly, I'm like, 'Crap. What am I going to do next?'" she says. Lambert is also up for top female vocalist and album of the year at May's Academy of Country Music Awards. "It's so much pressure — in a good way — but still pressure."

Meanwhile, fellow blondes Carrie Underwood and Taylor Swift have taken the safe, mostly sugary route to multiplatinum, crossover success. Lambert, however, is sticking to her guns. Literally.

Current single *Gunpowder and Lead* is a raging tale of violent revenge against an abusive boyfriend. ("I'm goin' home, gonna load my shotgun/Wait by the door and light a cigarette/He wants a fight well now he's got one/He ain't seen me crazy yet.")

That take-no-prisoners attitude has made her a bit of an anomaly at radio. Lambert's most successful tune to date has been the comparatively tame *Famous in a Small Town*, a tale of small-town ce-



ETHAN MILLER: GETTY IMAGES

**HEADLINER:** Texas native Miranda Lambert performs at RodeoHouston tonight.

lebrity life that peaked at No. 14 on the Hot Country Songs chart.

"It's definitely a fine line you have to walk, to have critical acclaim and also be commercial," she says. "Two examples I always use are the Dixie Chicks and Dwight Yoakam. They manage to do both — and so have I, so far."

To be sure, some of Lambert's best tunes — *New Strings*, *Love Letters*, *Desperation* — showcase the subtleties of her lyrics and voice. RodeoHouston has recognized Lambert's dynamic appeal, too. She's one of only six female artists playing the big stage inside Reliant Stadium.

"You don't feed off the crowd energy as much as you would in a smaller venue. It's just a different feel," Lambert says.

"You have to be *bigger*. I'm 5-foot-4, so in a big place like that, I look tiny."

This will be Lambert's debut RodeoHouston performance, but it's not her first time at the, uh, rodeo. She attended last year's spectacular performance by Beyoncé, another fiery Texas female.

"I'm a huge, *huge* fan. I've not gotten to meet her yet," Lambert says, suddenly gushing like a fan. "I just think she's the epitome of a diva — in a good way.

"Everything about her is classy and

## PRAISE FOR OTHERS

Despite their (many, many) differences, Miranda Lambert has nothing but praise for the pair of fellow country blondes currently giving her a run on the charts:

■ **Taylor Swift:** "I think she's got a little (hellion) in her, too. She just hasn't brought it all the way out yet. I really think she's great, as far as just her imaging. She's just being 18, and I like that about her. She's not trying to be 30 years old. She gets excited. I love that she's just herself."

■ **Carrie Underwood:** "I voted for Carrie a couple of times (on *American Idol*). It made me mad for a while. I'm like, 'I voted for you, and now you're beating (me) at everything.' I'm so proud of what she's doing for country music. Whether people like her, or hate her, or whatever, she's bringing such a new audience to country. And we need that right now. Maybe they'll run across my video while they're watching hers. Maybe I can steal some of her fans."

— J.G.

beautiful. And she's one of those girls that represents normal girls, size-wise. Big thighs and big butt and proud of it."

Lambert herself says fans are often surprised to find that she's not exactly the hot-tempered gal she portrays in her lyrics. "People actually say to me, 'Wow, I thought you were going to be a total bitch,'" she says with a laugh.

"I'm a small-town girl. I grew up in church. It's a character. You don't meet Johnny Depp and expect him to be a pirate of the Caribbean. That's ridiculous."

But that doesn't mean she's a push-over. As if there were any doubt.

"Definitely I have an attitude a little bit, and I don't take any crap," Lambert says. "But I'm not running around crazy setting people on fire, either. I'm just a normal, everyday girl."

In fact, Lambert says she felt pretty "girlie" just last week.

"I had 20 chicken eggs I was hatching in an incubator. I got home Sunday, and the one chicken that hatched died. I cried all day about my chicken dying," she says.

"I guess that's pretty opposite of *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* and *Gunpowder and Lead*."

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