



## Just a country girl

Rissi Palmer turned down pop success to concentrate on the music she loves

BY JENNIFER CHANCELLOR  
World Scene Writer

When country music starlet Rissi Palmer wins that big Grammy award she's been fantasizing about since she was a little girl, chances are she'll thank her mother.

"She was a huge Patsy Cline fan," Palmer said in a recent telephone interview. "Patsy, Tammy Wynette, James Taylor, Hank Williams, Willie Nelson — it's all classic music. I just love it."

Yes, she wrote her Grammy acceptance speech when she was 12, then promptly sealed that dream in an envelope.

"I always saw people get tongue-tied," she laughed of her precociousness. "But now, people tell me they want me to win one just so they can hear me read it."

What's in it, she isn't saying. But, it's not like she's been nominated for anything, either, she said with a frank giggle.

All fantasy aside, Palmer still thanks her mother, who died when Palmer was only 7 years old, for implanting in her an enduring passion for country music.

"We were always singing together. My career is her legacy."

Indeed, her race up the charts — and into American hearts — is gaining unprecedented momentum, and she's also agreed to help launch this year's monster music festival Country Fever with a performance on June 12 in Pryor. The festival will run through June 15.

Aside from Charley Pride, it's hard to name another black country music star. Recently, Cowboy Troy's been treated more like a novelty than a

legitimate act.

Yet the influence of black music and black musicians on the genre is well known, from Jimmie Rodgers to Bob Wills, Hank Williams, Bill Monroe and even Elvis Presley.

Palmer's first single, "Country Girl," was the first song performed by a black woman to hit Billboard's Hot Country chart since Dona Mason's "Green Eyes (Cryin' Those Blue Tears)" peaked at No. 62 in 1987.

Likewise, Palmer's newest single has created a buzz on country radio, too. The song "No Air" made its entry at No. 58 on Billboard's Country Singles chart.

"It was a musical experiment gone awry," Palmer said. "I wanted to work with (producer) Nathan Chapman, but our schedules did not allow time for us to write something together."

"We were just listening to CDs, and decided to track the song," she said of "No Air," written by "American Idol" winner Jordin Sparks. "The label loved it. I never expected it as a single so soon."

Radio stations across the country have added the song to their playlists. And with her surging popularity also comes that "black thing" she has to deal with, she said.

Conjuring up an image similar to a classic scene from the movie "Blazing Saddles," she said, "I try not to think about it. It's just what I am."

"I'm a new artist — a female artist — on an independent label ... That's unusual, too. But I'm an artist, just like any other of my peers."

More important to her success is Palmer's determination to stay true to her musical roots.

SEE RISSI H2

"I'm a new artist — a female artist. But I'm an artist, just like any other of my peers."

RISSI PALMER

Meet country music's newest star. She'll help kick off this year's Country Fever music festival in Pryor, which runs June 12-15.

## New Scene and SPOT editor named

Mark Brown has been named editor of the Tulsa World's Scene section and SPOT magazine.

He replaces Cathy Logan, who has stepped down from her long-time position to take a leave of absence from the newspaper.

Brown, a former food writer in the Scene section, has been the World's design editor since 2005.

He started his career at the World in 1992 as a copy editor. He took over the newspaper's Sunday magazine in 1993 and then helped create SPOT magazine, the World's weekly entertainment preview, in 1995. He served as its assistant editor and designer until he joined the Living department in 2001 as the food writer. Readers quickly responded to his ability to tell and illustrate stories about people and food. Brown and his wife, former Associated Press correspondent Kelly Kurt, took a year off to travel and write about life in France. He returned to the World in 2005 as design editor and has been instrumental in implementing the World's new fonts and type face to focus on clarity and readability.

The Browns are the parents of two sons, Lucas and Jonas.



MARK BROWN



CATHY LOGAN

# Oklahoma attitude

Carol Snow turns in almost a decade of performances at Discoveryland

BY KAREN SHADE  
World Scene Writer

After playing a role for almost a decade, certain characteristics are bound to rub off on an actor. At least, that's the hope of Carol Snow, whose Aunt Eller graces the Discoveryland outdoor stage for another sweltering summer in "Oklahoma!"

"The first night I went on, I went on as an understudy, and it was strange being out on that stage," she said of her debut as the matriarch in the perennial Rogers and Hammerstein musical nine years ago. "I was asking myself, 'What am I doing out here?'"

Her fears have mellowed since then, making way for the sheer joy and love of playing the role.

"So many times as actresses, we play two-dimensional roles that don't really go anywhere, but Aunt Eller is three-dimensional and she has grown and she has changed," she said.

So has Snow, who's become more comfortable in the skin of a character upon whom the weight of the "Oklahoma!" world rests. In fact, you would be hard pressed to get a genuine complaint about working outdoors from Snow.

"Being out there in that setting — it's such a privilege to work out there in those beautiful surroundings and to be able to see the fireflies and hear the insects and hear the birds," she said.

There are more fireflies this year, it seems. But not as much rain. She remembers the mud-slick paths from a few years ago. They couldn't even bring in the horse and wagon from off stage because of the rain-drenched roads.

## theater

DISCOVERYLAND'S "OKLAHOMA!" AND "SEVEN BRIDES FOR SEVEN BROTHERS"

**When:** 8 p.m. Mondays-Saturdays beginning Friday-Aug. 16 (Other park activities start at 6 p.m.)

**Where:** 19501 W. 41st St. southwest of Sand Springs (about four miles west of Oklahoma 97 on West 41st Street)

**Tickets:** \$19.95 adults, children free (price excludes ranch dinners)

For a complete show schedule and details, go to [www.tulsaworld.com/discoveryland](http://www.tulsaworld.com/discoveryland) or call 245-6552 for reservations.

Looking forward to a lively new season, which begins Friday, Snow is hoping for some good weather to go with the hard work it takes to make "Oklahoma!" come alive in Oklahoma.

"One thing about it — it's always cooler out there than it is in Tulsa. Sometimes I can feel the temperature change when I drive out there ... Usually it's comfortable out there, for the audience anyway," she said. "Now, we're under those hot stage lights and moving around, of course."

It's enough to make a real professional return again and again.

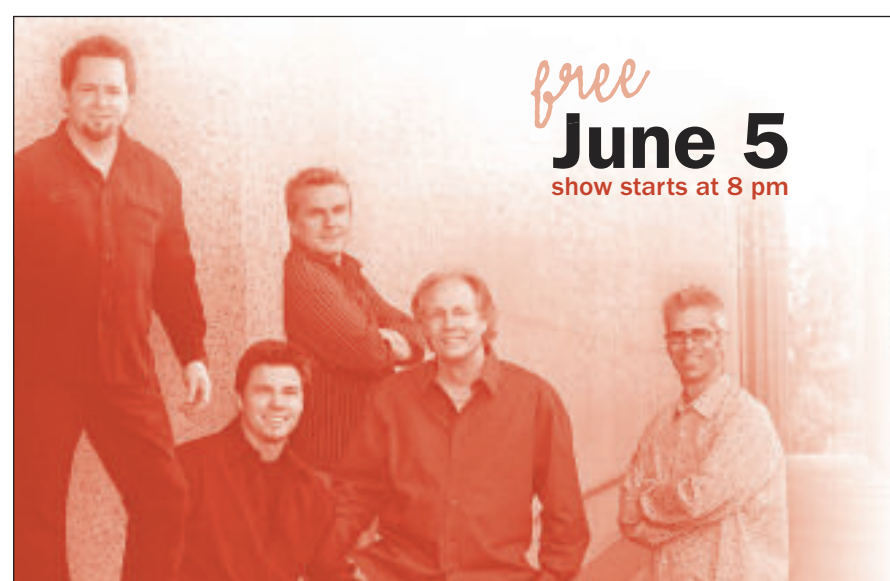
"It's not just fun. But it's really good to do something you're really good at. It's kind of like finding where you belong," Snow said.

This year's season runs through Aug. 16. A cast of 30 performers (35 to 36 counting the horse wranglers) is set to continue the outdoor tradition of Discoveryland's annual tryst with Curly and Laurey as well as the tale of "Seven Brides for Seven



Carol Lavelle Snow gets ready for another long, hot summer at Discoveryland as the spirited Aunt Eller in the outdoor musical "Oklahoma!" The new season starts Friday. CORY YOUNG / Tulsa World

SEE SNOW H2



free  
**June 5**  
show starts at 8 pm



Tulsa | 81st & Riverside | [www.creeknationcasino.com](http://www.creeknationcasino.com)

Get ready to rock like it's 1981 at 8 pm on June 5 with one of Australia's most significant bands, the **Little River Band!** From 1978 until 1981, Little River Band achieved six consecutive Top 10 singles with *Reminiscing*, *Lady*, *Lonesome Loser*, *Cool Change*, *The Night Owls* and *Take It Easy on Me*. During their career the band has sold more than 25 million records and has scored thirteen Top 40 hits and they are performing for one night only at Creek Nation Casino-Tulsa.

