

COLBIE CAILLAT

Listening to *All of You*, the third and most intriguing release from Colbie Caillat, is like turning a page of a book you've savored for two chapters only to be surprised and delighted by what awaits in Chapter 3.

This is, first of all, definitely and unmistakably a Caillat gem. Those qualities that burst from the first notes of her 2007 debut *Coco* like bouquets of sonic joy, and flowered in 2009's *Breakthrough*, emanate from every track on *All of You*. But now they bloom with a richness of emotion and insight that comes only when a gifted artist can channel lessons learned into her music.

Think about it: *Coco* debuted at No. 5 and raced its way past the multi-Platinum barrier. Her first single, "Bubbly," caught a generation's imagination and has become one of the best-selling digital tracks of all time. *Billboard* took note by naming Caillat its Breakthrough Artist of the Year. Fittingly, *Breakthrough* broke at No. 1 and was honored with two Grammy nominations; that same year, Colbie won two Grammys for her collaborations with Jason Mraz and Taylor Swift. She has sung the national anthem on the kickoff to the 2011 NFL season and performed at the Nobel Peace Concert in Oslo. She and her original music have been featured in commercials for cotton and in ABC Family Channel's "25 Days of Christmas," whose theme song she wrote and arranged. Her embrace has stretched to include work for honorable causes including the Surfrider Foundation, Save the Music and the Humane Society, for which she has recently become a spokesperson.

Yet all of this was achieved by an artist just beginning to stretch her wings. Even as her music and disarming personality warmed listeners like a sunrise over the Western horizon, she continued to enjoy life's adventures. All of these, especially a new love, have invested *All of You* with a depth that signifies an important forward step.

"*All of You* is a more advanced version of me," Colbie explains. "I like to keep my music acoustic, sunny and optimistic. These songs still have the bright feeling and California vibe I love. But they're also songs that I write from my experiences."

The most significant of those experiences involves her relationship with Justin Young. The two had worked together for years, with Justin singing backup at her shows. Then, as she sings in "Brighter Than the Sun," "this is how it starts – lightning strikes the heart." "He was in my band for two years before we noticed that we like each other," she says, laughing. "I wrote most of this album about us, our ups and downs. All the songs are about life experiences, so I guess this record is more grown up, with a somewhat wiser perspective."

That wisdom shows in "Shadow," which she and Justin wrote about a friend not getting what she deserves from her boyfriend. It's there too, in a different way, in the playfulness of the album's first single, "I Do," written by Colbie and Toby Gad. Set to an infectious, finger-snapping beat, it dances around the hallowed marital vow – all the way to an unexpectedly sweet, teasing finale.

“When we had video treatments for ‘I Do’ come in from directors, everyone wanted to do a wedding scene,” Colbie says. “But it’s not about getting married, it’s about saying ‘I love you.’ Really, it’s another song about Justin, about wanting to say ‘I love you’ to someone and still picture yourself growing older with them.”

Colbie’s escalating finesse as a writer and singer in no way diminishes the positive spirit that’s at the core of her creativity. But *All of You* spreads that spirit wider than ever, from the gleeful overlay of styles in “Favorite Song,” written and performed by Colbie, Ryan Tedder and the rapper Common, to the subtle country flavoring of “In Stereo and the flamenco-inflected “Brighter Than the Sun,” which kicks off *All of Me* with a full blast of beach-party energy and a lyric about being love-struck at first glance.

“I usually like to start my albums by easing my way in,” she says. “But ‘Brighter Than the Sun’ has a punch. It’s so up-tempo and happy. My manager actually requested that it be No. 1, and he was right. This song is awesome because it just gets people started right away and interested in what’s next. A different instrument leads into each part of the song. It never stays the same, which keeps listeners wanting to hear what’s next.”

Similarly, “What If,” also featured in the film *Letters to Juliet*, suggests that first loves, whether real or fantasy, can stir feelings that endure for years. “I’ve done it and I know we all do it,” Colbie admits. “You see someone from afar or you just meet them, and they look like the person you’ve always imagined. You start putting their last name as yours, like you do in high school; you write the boy’s last name as yours on your notebook. It’s a funny, cute thing when you’re daydreaming. But you still wonder, what if we were meant for each other? What if we were born to be together?”

Perhaps the most revealing song is the title track. Written by Colbie with Jason Reeves, it addresses the subject of love built on such a strong foundation of friendship and empathy that it’s able to overcome even the pain of betrayal. “I didn’t hold back for fear of being embarrassed over what people would think of my writing or the person I’m writing about,” she says. “I didn’t hold back from anything because I think people need to be more honest and open in every situation instead of keeping secrets or hiding their true selves. That’s the concept of this whole record.”

Working with five producers and a cross-section of creative musicians, Colbie turns *All of You* into a self-portrait in multiple dimensions. But unlike many artists, seasoned as well as young, she demonstrates here that she has balance as well as a taste for pushing toward new territories. In a way she has never revealed before, she opens herself while also pointing toward where she is going in these 14 original songs.

“They say when you write your first songs, you don’t have expectations,” she reflects. “I just wrote the songs on *Coco* for fun with my friend Jason Reeves at home. With *Breakthrough*, there was a fine line of wanting to open your mind up to people’s suggestions while also staying true to who I am and what I want. Honestly, I don’t take the business as seriously as that on *All of You*. This is just more me than anything I’ve done.”