

Singer waiting for big break with debut album

by Wanda Blimkie
Mercury staff

Singer Jennifer Johnston is planning a release party in Renfrew this fall to introduce her debut CD album, recorded in April at Lakeside Studios in Clayton, owned by Randall Prescott and Tracey Brown.

The album was produced by Prescott and Renfrew's own Dan Paul Rogers and features Jennifer's single 800 Reasons.

For fans of pure country music, there are 11 more reasons not to pass up this album, namely Trouble is a Woman, Last Train Home, Goodbye Comin' to You, Slow Dance, Draggin' My Chains, Tonight My Broken Heart, One of These Days, New Memories (a duet with Barry Brown), Why Did You Tell Me That, Even If I Cried and Shadow of Your Wings. Enclosed with the CD is an insert with the words to every song.

The CD was recently given rave reviews by Country Music News. "Jennifer possesses one of the purest country voices to come on the Cancountry scene in years," the reviewer said.

Renfrew audiences have watched Jennifer, the daughter of Bob and Julie Johnston of Horton, grow up singing on stage and following in her parents' footsteps. This lovely young lady won the hearts of everyone the year she was crowned Miss Renfrew and later when she captured the top award in the CJOH talent search show Homegrown Cafe. Afterwards she did some singing in New Brunswick while attending the prestigious Mount Allison University but still made

guest appearances at benefits, telethons and shows whenever she was home.

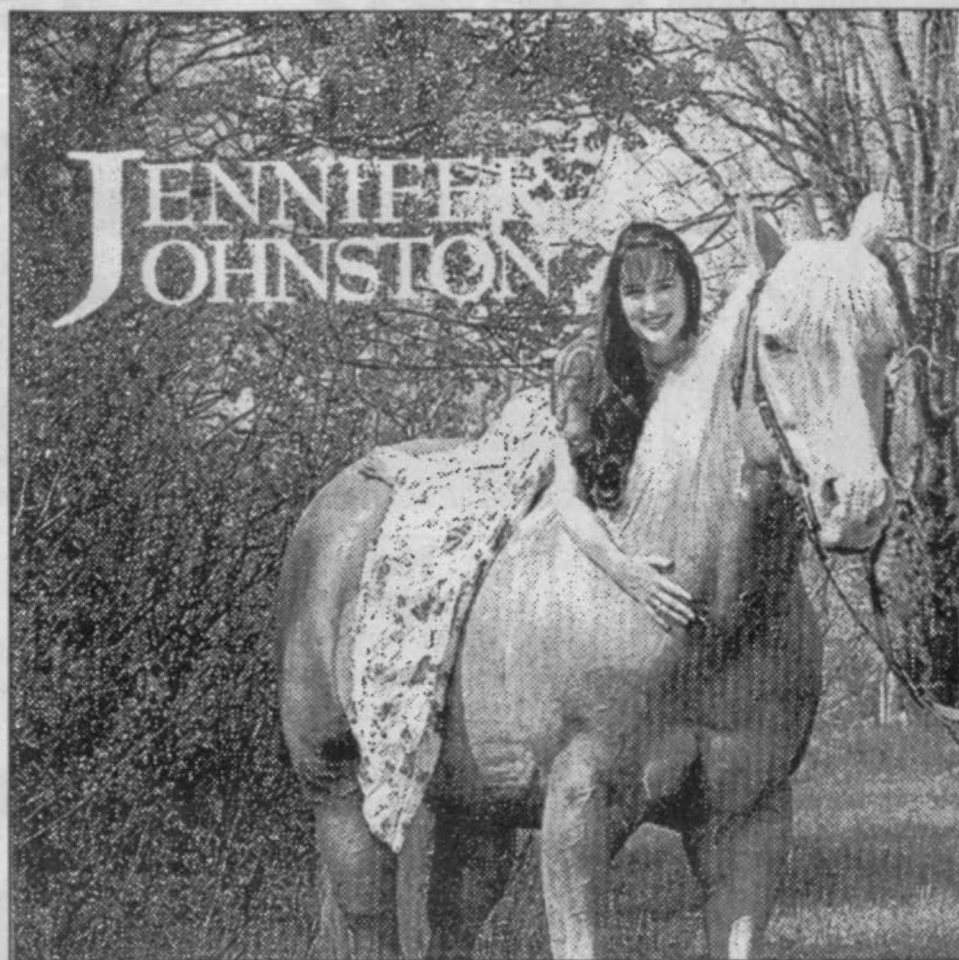
Jennifer, 24, said Tuesday music is a tough business to break into and it takes a long time to get established. It is a big misconception that all country singers have to do is go to Nashville and all the doors will automatically open for them. Another big misconception is that everyone in the music business full-time is rich, when in fact most just make an average living.

While a full-time singing career may be a far-off dream, Jennifer is not sitting at home waiting for the big break. She has a full-time job at Newbridge in Kanata, a highly successful telecommunications company, and drives to work each day from the log home she and her husband of a few months, Lyle Armstrong, built in Horton.

Jennifer said the hour-long drive each way gives her an opportunity to sing in the car when no one is around. At the same time, her husband and parents are very supportive of her singing career and love of music.

The best part is performing on stage before an audience, although she admits to being quite nervous beforehand. She also credits two investors from Newbridge for making her sleek, polished — and expensive CD possible.

However, Jennifer said the music industry is unpredictable, money driven and it is very difficult for Canadian artists to get air play in the United States unless they have recorded on an international label. It's almost as hard for new independent artists to get air play on



Shown above is the cover of Jennifer Johnston's new CD and shows the lovely singer on her horse near her parents' home in Horton Township. Jennifer is planning a release party in Renfrew in the future. (Photo by Girard Photography)

Canadian radio stations which are so accepting of American artists.

Jennifer's CD will be played on Star 96 radio and, if listeners like the music, she hopes they will call the station and tell them.

While Jennifer has no plans to give up her day job, she hasn't ruled out a career change

in the future should things begin to happen in her music. For the time being she and her agent are concentrating on getting the CD played on radio and possibly having it picked up by a major label.

"It's all contacts, being in the right place at the right time," Jennifer said.