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THE SCENES

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Far Away From L.A.

iCarly actress and singer Jennette McCurdy learns about music video-making—a long way from her California home.

STORY BY JESSICA PHILLIPS

The sleepy map-dot town of Watertown, Tenn., has seen its share of star power before—scenes for Carrie Underwood’s video “Jesus, Take the Wheel” were shot in the town’s old theater. But the picturesque city, located less than an hour east of Nashville, got another jolt of celebrity when megapopular teen actress/singer Jennette McCurdy (who portrays Sam on the sitcom *iCarly*) rolled into town with a video crew to shoot her debut country video, “Not That Far Away.” Though Watertown is far from the bustling scene of Los Angeles, the bubbly Jennette was taken with the town’s quaint atmosphere. “Watertown was one of the cutest little towns I’ve ever seen,” she tells *Country Weekly*. “I don’t know the exact population, but everyone in Watertown came out to watch the making of the video, so that was cool.”

The video’s story line is a familiar one—the tale of a young woman leaving home to follow her musical dreams. “At one point, I’m in a little coffee shop writing music and playing guitar,” Jennette explains. “I’m on my own and taking in all the people around me—a single mom, a young couple. My character is just learning and getting that outside perspective. Later, my character sees an open mic night and walks right back into that same coffee shop and sings her music, and everybody’s there. It ends on a nice happy note. The road may be rough ahead, but if you are doing what you love, nothing else matters.”

With her background in television, it appears Jennette’s transition from the fast-paced television world of sets, wardrobe and scripts to the music video world of, well, sets, wardrobe and scripts would have been an easy one. It wasn’t quite so seamless. “I was actually a nervous wreck before doing the video shoot,” Jennette says with a laugh. “I thought I was going to throw up. But after talking with [video director] Roman White, I think the best moment was after I did the first [shot]. Roman gave me some notes and when I did the second take, I felt so much more comfortable, like everything was making sense. I felt I was soaking it in. I felt like those were exactly the emo-



Jennette walks through Watertown, Tenn.—the town where her new video was shot, as well as videos by Carrie Underwood and Tim McGraw.

tions that needed to be channeled for the video’s character, so it was a great revelation moment.

“When you’re acting you are portraying another person,” Jennette continues. “You can have the normal mannerisms that a regular person would. You don’t worry about how you look, because you’re just acting. For a music video, you have to be more aware of your gestures to make sure it looks smooth. I had to grab a pillow at one point for a scene, and I just grabbed the pillow like I normally would. And they were like, ‘No, no . . . grab the pillow.’ I had to be more aware to grab it in a way that looked appealing. Almost as if I was caressing the pillow,” she says with a laugh. “That was new. It was a challenge, but it was fun.”

The lyrical honesty of “Not That Far Away” is echoed throughout the rest of Jennette’s forthcoming album, *The Story of My Life*. “Every song [on the album] is really special to me,” she says. “They are all heartfelt and come from my soul. I put everything I had into them. When you do that, all you can hope is that people react to them when they hear the songs. [You hope] they think, ‘Oh, I know exactly what she’s talking about. I’ve had the same situation or same thing happen to me.’ I hope that people can 100 percent relate to what they hear, and it will become the story of their life, too. I want them to listen to the album and say, ‘This is my anthem song’ or ‘This is my sad song’ or ‘This is my happy song.’ I hope there is a song for everybody on this record.”

iParty

Jennette celebrates her 18th birthday by giving back.

Jennette McCurdy recently celebrated her 18th birthday with a party at Nashville's aVenue. The cost of entrance was a pair of socks to be donated to Nashville flood victims through Hands On Nashville, a local volunteer organization. The *iCarly* actress/singer's thoughtfulness did not end there. She invited several kids from Bellevue Middle School, many of whom were displaced by the floods, and children of stars Martina McBride, Phil Vassar, Jamie O'Neal and others were at the bash as well.

"I got some amazing things. I got an iPad, which is incredibly cool," Jennette says of the party. She was also given a six-foot-tall Uglydoll, which she affectionately named George Michael. "I have so many of them. They look like little colorful monsters."

But stuffed dolls and the latest technology couldn't hold a candle to her favorite gift. "That would have to be the video that everyone at Capitol put together," Jennette says, referring to a video montage of birthday wishes from Jennette's best friends and labelmates, including Lady Antebellum, Luke Bryan and Darius Rucker. A video birthday serenade by an Aussie guitar slinger had Jennette squealing with delight. "I couldn't believe it when Keith Urban sang 'Happy Birthday' to me," she says. "It was the most amazing moment. I can't stop smiling. I've watched that video everyday since, and I'm going to keep it forever."

Asked how it feels to be turning 18, Jennette instantly grows reflective. "It's cool, I guess, to have people talking to you on an adult level. But then I've dealt with that for a while now. Being in the entertainment industry, you have to be talked to as an adult. I enjoy childhood, I embrace the innocence of childhood, but as long as you keep that outlook, you don't have to lose that.

"I'm old now, I'm an adult," she adds with a laugh.



Jennette invited kids from Bellevue Middle School, along with singer Jamie O'Neal and her daughter, Aliyah (in black shirt), to help celebrate her birthday.



Highlights of the evening included watching labelmate Keith Urban's well wishes and getting a life-size Uglydoll (below).

