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# Jewel

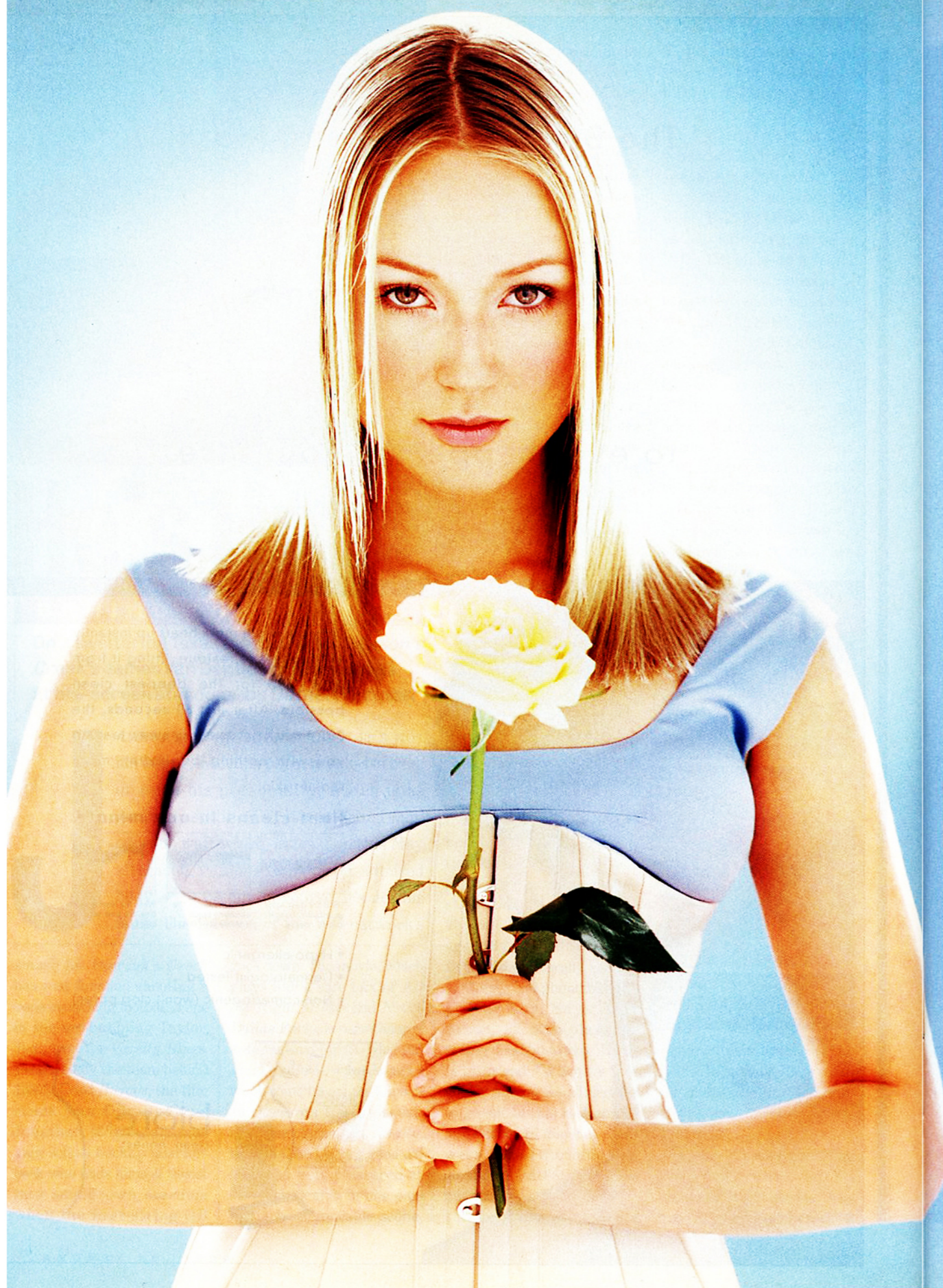
The Saintly Diva Has a Second Hit Album and a Devil Of a Time Dealing With Success

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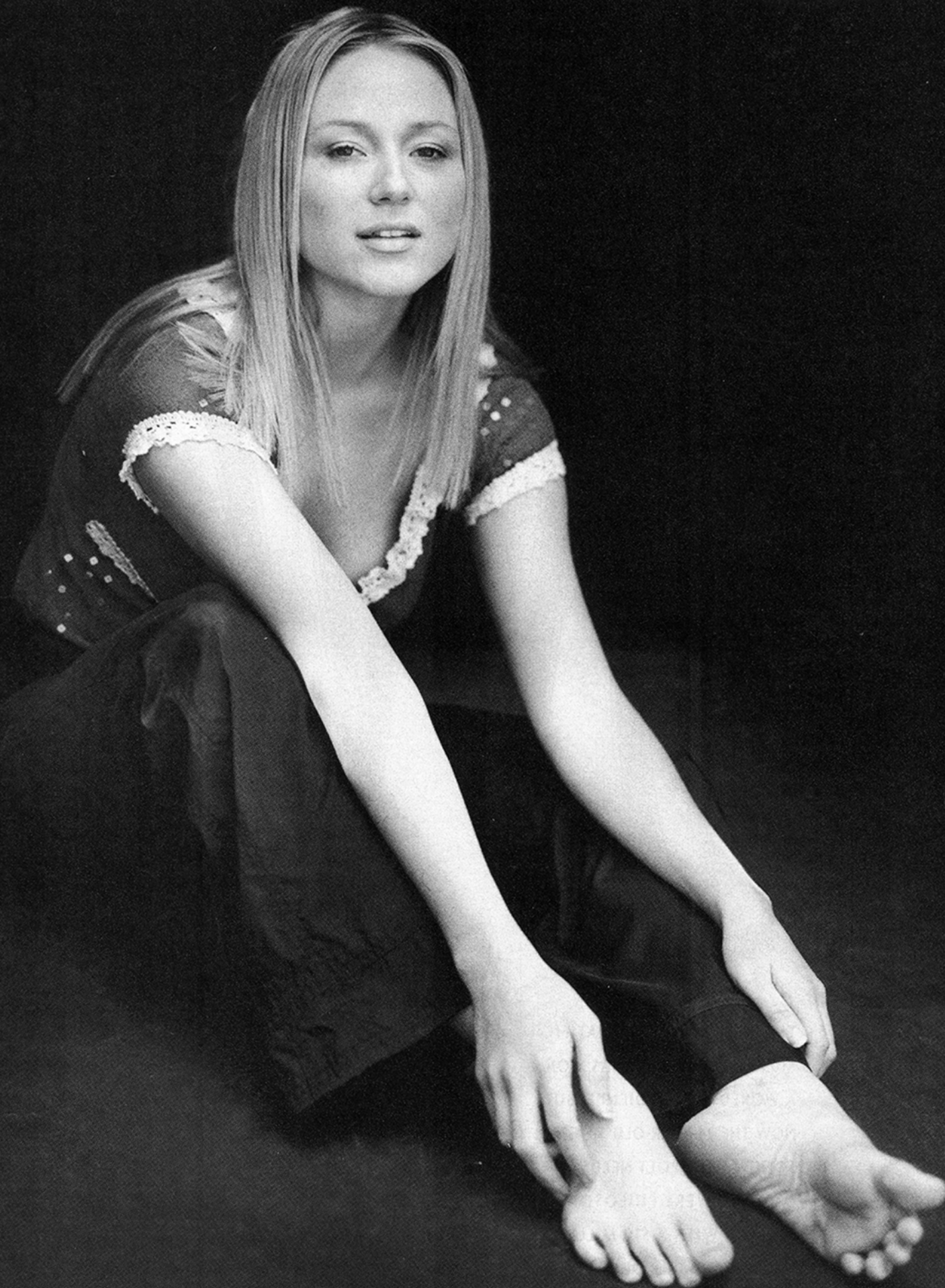
BY JEFF GORDINIER

# Jewel

THE BEAUTIFUL AND BEATIFIC MUSE OF POSITIVITY HAS WON A WORLDWIDE AUDIENCE, BUT NOW THE 24-YEAR-OLD SINGER-SONGWRITER-POET NEEDS HER OWN FLOWERY PHILOSOPHY TO COPE WITH A \$10 MILLION LAWSUIT AND TALK OF DIVADOM

## Will Save Her Soul

▶▶▶ THEY'RE HOLDING ME hostage in Rockefeller Center. My captors, agents of a vast international syndicate known as Atlantic Records, have given me an "all access" pass to the ceremonial lighting of New York City's 73-foot Christmas tree, featuring Jewel. In this case, "all access" means I have access to a



OPPOSITE AND PREVIOUS PAGES: HAIR: CHRIS MICHALAN; MAKEUP: TROY; INTERVIEWS: GREGG KUMPT; STYLING: INGA FONTAINE; THE AGENTS; GUNES; DOUGIE W. HARRIS; AT RAINIER; NY; TUSTIN; HUBERT BARBERE AT RAINIER; NY; TOP: VOYAGE AT BERGDOFF; GORDMAN; PANTY: KATYON; ADEL; AT RAINIER; NY

bounty of dry muffins and warm soda, and I'm allowed to watch the yuletide high jinks of Al Roker and Kristi Yamaguchi on a closed-circuit television in a windowless eighth-floor waiting room. I do not, however, have access to Jewel.

Jewel is only a few feet away, in another room, but my captors won't let me talk to her. *She is about to go on television*, they say. *She needs her space*. I must content myself by nodding along with my fellow hostages, most of whom consider Jewel nothing less than a gleaming seraph sent to rid the earth of pain and despair.

"She's 24. I'm 36. And she's taught me infinitely more than I've taught her," testifies Jewel posse member Kevyn Aucoin, the Michelangelo of celebrity makeup artists, his eyes possessed by a piercing zealot bliss. Aucoin is going on about "Hands," Jewel's new hit single. "There's just something about the first line: 'If I could tell the world just one thing/It would be that we're all okay.' I mean, people might think of it as being so simple that it sounds ridiculous, but I remember hearing that on an airplane to Europe and thinking, God, it *is* that simple. I was really depressed, and I thought, I can make this plane ride really awful, or I can sit here and make it fun! And it was so much better. It was so much better."

Escape is impossible. I try to sneak out to the john and a publicist, clearly trained by samurai masters, intercepts me. Suddenly some sort of Christmas-tree field marshal arrives and escorts us down an elevator to the lobby. Jewel is about to herald the holiday season with "Hands"—the song that reminds us that "in the end only kindness matters."

She is standing in the lobby, as stoic as an Easter Island colossus, having her blond locks misted with hair spray. She is dressed in a style you might call "Davy Crockett and Versace duke it out on the tundra"—buckskin pants and a shearling top. She smiles for a few photos for fans—two little girls, a cop—but her face is an ivory mask.

Then, just before she heads out, there's a fluttering on the periphery. *Click. Click. Click*. A camera. Jewel lifts her head, narrows her eyes, and unleashes a lacerating scold. "Do you *need* any more pictures?" she snaps. "You've already gotten several!"

Huh? Is the Angel We Have Heard on High gettin' snippy with the mortals? Weeks later, Jewel will call and confess that no, she wasn't overflowing with Christmas cheer that evening. "That was one day where I was very depressed," she'll say. "I just couldn't stop crying." (Ahhh. That explains my Patty Hearst-style lock-down.) "It was a hard day. My eyes—I kept ruining the makeup because I kept crying, and I had to go on stage. I was really trying to keep myself together."

LIKE PRESSURE," JEWEL IS SAYING THE SAME DAY, A FEW hours earlier. "I do very well under pressure. I prefer pressure to a non-pressure situation." She's slumped sideways on a couch in a massive hotel suite overlooking Central Park. She sounds like she's trying to convince herself. Today, Dec. 2, pressure is leering back with a vengeance. The promotional blitzkrieg for

Jewel's new album, *Spirit*, just went into hyperdrive. Yesterday she climbed out of bed before dawn for *Regis & Kathie Lee*, then raced downtown to strum for a roomful of people in wheelchairs at an AIDS residence called Rivington House. "She empathizes so much with pain and suffering that it throws her off course—not as a human being, but as a machine that has to market a record for a corporation," says Atlantic vice president Ron Shapiro. "Like, she walks out of Rivington House and literally wants to sit by a river and ponder why AIDS exists and maybe write a song about it."

Making things worse, Saint Jewel was slapped with a lawsuit two days ago. Inga Vainshtein—her ex-manager, and one of the first industry scouts who took the time to listen when Jewel was just another coffeehouse Phoebe in San Diego—is suing Jewel and Nedra Carroll, Jewel's mother and manager and budding duet partner, for \$10 million. The suit charges the duo with fairly standard showbiz shenanigans—elbowing Vainshtein out of the picture before her contract was up—but it also plows into weird terrain:

**Jewel on journalists:  
A lot of them "read  
the press on me, they  
don't listen to the  
record.... You guys  
are taking copies of  
copies. You don't have  
an original thought  
in your head."**

It says that Carroll ran her business ideas past a channeler who prayed to a cosmic deity known as Z. "Apparently they would go up to mountaintops and commune with this spirit who has a really long name that starts with a Z," says Caryn Brotzman Sanders, one of Vainshtein's lawyers. "It's difficult to manage when your business decisions are being questioned by an ancient spirit."

What the legal document doesn't say is that Jackie Snyder, the alleged channeler, was Jewel's close friend, that she died of cancer last July, and that Jewel dedicated a song to her ("Life Uncommon") on *Spirit*. Jewel won't talk about the lawsuit ("I am a clam," she says), but the fact that Vainshtein (who also declined to comment) has dragged

Snyder's name into the legal melee clearly grinds salt into some half-healed wounds. "I don't know what on earth she's doing talking about anything having to do with that," Jewel says, her soprano wisping away. "I don't think she knows that she's dead...."

So it's not the sunniest day for an interrogation. Even though *Spirit* is defying the sophomore jinx (by New Year's Day, the Nov. 17 release will already be certified triple platinum), and even though Jewel keeps scattering the gloom with her brash, open laugh (the kind of roar that suggests there's a horse-ridin', cow-ropin' gal underneath the mystic robes), she's having a hard time hiding her fatigue. She shuts her eyes. Burrows into the sofa. Yawns like a 7-Eleven security guard. ("I'm so tired," she moans. "How could one girl be so tired?") Gripes about the press. "A lot of people come to me and they read the press on me, they don't listen to the record, and that's the most annoying thing on the planet," she says. "Because you guys are taking copies of copies. You don't have an original thought in your head."

Nor shall I be spared. Jewel feels that I haven't delved properly into one of her poems. The verse in question—a selection from last year's best-selling book *A Night Without Armor*, now in its 20th printing—goes like this: "I'm writing/this letter to tell



THE DEVIL MADE HER DO IT Rumors swirl about Jewel's uncivil behavior on the set of Ang Lee's (right) Civil War drama

you/I don't love you anymore./I don't miss you./I never have."

For those who track such things, Jewel is dating soap star-turned-Montana rodeo cowboy Chris Douglas, seen at Rivington House wearing Wrangler jeans and a cap that says "King Ropes, Sheridan, Wyo." ("We've both been learning to team-roped a cow," Jewel explains. "One gets the head and one gets the heels.") But Douglas isn't the recipient of the poem. Which is good, because it seems like a pretty merciless kiss-off.

"To me that poem is very transparent," Jewel counters. "I'm writing to tell you I don't love you anymore' always means 'Ouch, I'm hurt.' I put a lot of layers in my writing. If you look at it on the first level, you won't get very far into it. But if you look for the unspoken, there's always a lot more to the poem. A lot of people don't do that." Whoa. To be a pop star who publishes a book of poetry is to tempt mockery. To suggest that people are too shallow to "get" that poetry—that's brave. Especially when a couple of the verses that landed Jewel a \$2 million advance—"Listen!/Do you hear it?/I do./I can feel it./I expect a miracle is coming"—are what you'd expect to find on the side of a box of Sleepytime tea.

But Jewel is nothing if not brave. "When we were editing the poems, there wasn't a sense of 'Oh, I don't want this in there because I sound stupid,'" says Mauro DiPrea, the HarperCollins executive editor who oversaw the book. "It was more like 'Maybe this will help somebody.' If something good was going to come out of it, then risking embarrassment was no big deal." Besides, Jew-

el's analysis of her own verse—"Ouch, I'm hurt"—tells us something about today's sulky mood.

"So few things matter," she says, out of the blue. "Do you ever think that? I don't want to waste myself on what's frivolous. I don't want to get on my deathbed and look back at my life and realize I worried about what just doesn't matter. When I look back, I really don't think I'm going to care that I sold 10 million records, or what people said about my poetry book.

"Everybody says I'm successful," she goes on. "I don't feel successful. I feel accomplished, but I don't necessarily feel 'successful.' The part that doesn't sit well with me is that it seems a little arbitrary. I went from being homeless to being rich in four years. And granted, I am blond and I am talented and thus the world feels like they should pay me a lot. And I am damn thankful. It's just, I don't see how that makes me any more worthy than the guy next to me who was homeless."

ARBITRARY OR NOT, THE TALE OF JEWEL KILCHER'S destiny is so familiar by now that, like the Pledge of Allegiance, millions of Americans can recite it from memory. She grew up on an 800-acre homestead in Alaska, where her upbringing was a mix of Grizzly Adams and Allen Ginsberg: husky, self-reliant pioneering and yodeling, basket-weaving bohemianism. "There were no locks on doors," she says. "I didn't have a doorknob on my door." Raised by musician parents who divorced when she was 8, Jewel marinated in big-band swing, Irish folk ballads, the blues, Cole Porter, Woody Guthrie, and Edith Piaf, but the whole Nintendo Nation brand of pop culture remained a blank. She sang in bars and quaffed the poetry of Charles Bukowski—the late L.A. scribe and hooch hound—but she's been drunk only once, and she "hated it, hated it, hated it. I like being cognitive. And I don't like losing that ability."

After her mother's health required a move to a warmer climate, Jewel migrated south to San Diego in 1992. She lived in a van. (Note to skeptics: "That van thing is for real," insists an early acolyte, Jenny Price. "It was this little blue Volkswagen bus and she parked it in different places. She carried a big knife in case anyone bothered her.") She got a regular gig at a java shop called the Innerchange. "A lot of the coffee shops there were really ripping off artists," Jewel says, displaying the Horatio Alger savvy that's marked her every step. "I said, 'Look, I have no fol-

lowing, but if I get the door money I'll let you keep the coffee sales.' I ended up getting a good following."

Two of the first people to catch word of it were Jenny Price, then a hungry talent scout in the A&R department at Atlantic, and Inga Vainshtein. A Russian immigrant and a Princeton graduate who'd once worked at Paramount Pictures, Vainshtein was managing the San Diego alt-rock band Rust, an Atlantic act. She and Price shared a ride down from Los Angeles. "We saw Jewel and our mouths just dropped," Price remembers. "She was just like this little wildflower that had so much raw talent, and she was in some kind of purple jumper, and she was yodeling. The next day I called my boss at Atlantic, and I said, 'We have to sign this girl. She's amazing.' It was so clear to me."

It was clear to Vainshtein, too: She became Jewel's manager. According to Sanders, Jewel might never have found a home at Atlantic without Vainshtein's nudging and nurturing. "Inga knew the people at Atlantic, and she presented Jewel to Atlantic, without any question," the lawyer says. "Because of the financial situation, quite often Jewel would stay at Inga's home. Inga would give up her bedroom for Jewel and sleep in the living room. It was truly a take-under-the-wing sort of relationship." Read the liner notes to *Pieces of You*, Jewel's debut, and you'll find a shout-out to "Inga Vainshtein, the best, most stupendous manager on earth."

Now, when I chat with Jewel, Vainshtein's name never comes up. Jewel says she went with Atlantic because the label promised to keep things at a slow boil. *Pieces*, released in February 1995, was a slapdash affair, a patchwork of wobbly live songs from the Innerchange and studio tracks taped at Neil Young's seaside ranch in Northern California. Jewel felt it couldn't shoulder the burden of great expectations. "Nobody mentioned the word *single* to me while making the record. It was supposed to be an underground record. Period," she says. "I didn't think I had one hit on there. When 'Who Will Save Your Soul' did start to become one, I was just freaked."

Actually, Jewel's chamomile canticles were about as underground as Mount McKinley. *Pieces of You* went platinum eight times over, and Jewel's blithe fondness for the middle of the road—blanketing the cheesiest of talk shows, singing at the Super Bowl, staging a Madison Square Garden hootenanny with E-Z listenin' Valkyries Judy Collins and Helen Reddy (!), getting dolled up like a debutante for the cover of *Vogue*—shows little trace of Dylanesque subversion or cool. "Times have changed from when Neil Young and Bob Dylan broke," Shapiro says. "We don't have the

luxury of being as precious about music. Frankly, today, if you have any interest in selling beyond a quarter of a million records, you have to consider everything." Besides, it's a fallacy to think that Jewel has *too* much to do with the shaggy troubadour tradition of Dylan, Young, and Joni Mitchell; it was fellow folkie Steve Poltz, a close friend from San Diego, who introduced the 18-year-old van dweller to everything from the Beatles' *Let It Be* to the Replacements' *Let It Be* in sessions they dubbed Music 101. "I'm not sure how well we can accept Jewel's 'idols,'" says one record-industry figure who's worked with her. "Because she never knew much about music. She's always been told what to like. This is not a person who has grown up clutching her copy of *Blood on the Tracks*."

"Cool is all about not being mainstream? Is anybody really thinking about that?" muses Carroll. "I wouldn't say that our focus is on playing to a handful of critics." Indeed, Jewel may have saved her own soul—and her keister—when she cut short a post-*Pieces* studio session in 1996 and tossed the tapes into the heap marked *Do not open 'til Christmas 2021*. "I was writing reactionarily against the press that I'd been getting, and I wrote tougher music—stuff that I thought would be cool," she says. "I was just angry. Listening to it later, I realized: What a weak position to write from!"

*Spirit*, on the other hand, started out as a batch of Christmas tunes and turned into a collection of "spiritual" ballads; it's as downy-tufted and low-angst as a basket of napping puppies. "There was never a moment of incredible strife," says producer Patrick Leonard. "It never came." During breaks, Jewel would step outside and practice her roping technique on a plywood calf.

Jewel picked up roping last year, on the set of *Ride With the Devil*—an upcoming drama about Civil War border skirmishes between Kansas and Missouri—but the movie set proved less tranquil than the studio. Even though *Devil* is directed by Ang Lee, the delicate maestro behind *The Ice Storm* and *Sense and Sensibility*, it's the first time Jewel has ever acted in a film. Lee makes allusions to stress on the set. "I sort of underestimated the difficulty of putting her against all those experienced and talented actors," he concedes. "Once that first week passed, the tension eased off." But a person who observed the shoot says that Jewel's lack of acting experience, mixed with a dash of Viva la Diva, whipped up an ice storm on the plains. "She would do really distracting things," says the source. "Say the camera was on another actor. She's off camera, saying her lines and doing little dances—not staying in character—and getting frustrated. 'Uhhh. I can't believe we have to do this again! Uhhh!'"



YOU WEREN'T MEANT FOR ME Jewel sacked manager Vainshtein (top, left) and put her career in the control of her mother, Carroll (below, left). Vainshtein responded by filing a \$10 million suit.

Just making things generally difficult for people.” Jewel, says the observer; also irked fellow actors by strumming a guitar on the set and addressing crew members in a high-pitched baby voice. “She spoke to people like trash. ‘Oh, can I please have a glass of water!’ She’d use that tone, and then she’d turn to somebody and go, ‘See, that’s how you have to talk to them.’”

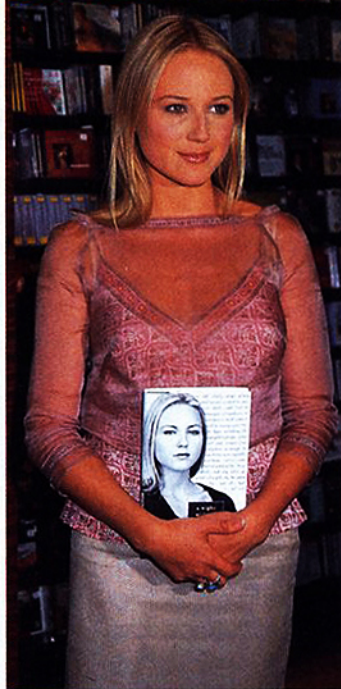
“To tell you the truth, I’m not sure exactly what they’re talking about,” Jewel responds. “I tried to do the best job that I could, and I’m sure I didn’t do everything perfect.” If the chemistry went sour, she blames it on a misunderstanding. “A lot of times I would joke,” Jewel says. “Like, I’d come into the craft-service room and go, ‘Everybody out!’ Kidding. But they didn’t get that it was a joke. I think they expected me to be a real music diva, and I’d always joke around about that. But I had to quit doing it.”

Jewel owns up to the strumming; she says it helped her get into character. “I was very, very, very nervous, and so I wrote a song that was from my character’s perspective.” “When she arrived for the first rehearsal, she said she wanted to sing a Sue Lee song—that’s her character’s name,” says Ang Lee. “It was a beautiful moment! She was totally devoted to the part.”

Tobey Maguire, Jewel’s costar, joins Lee in defense of his flaxen-haired colleague. “If people are talking s---, I’m gonna get in her corner. Because whatever people are saying, it wasn’t that big a deal. My first four years of acting, I wasn’t as good as Jewel was on her first job.”

On Valentine’s Day, 1998, a month before *Devil* began shooting, Inga Vainshtein got her walking papers. While Jewel had been on the way up the charts, Carroll and Vainshtein had shared the task of helming her career. Now Carroll was planning to do it alone.

David Koropp, another one of Vainshtein’s lawyers, claims that Carroll had a clear goal in mind: “to enrich herself.” Carroll, a 48-year-old woman of striking calm and composure, declines to talk about either the suit or its New Age trimmings. “I would say that my spirituality and my love of God are very important factors in my life and my decision making,” Carroll says. “At another time I would be interested in going into it more, but this wouldn’t be good timing.” It’s a testament to their closeness that mother and daughter still live together in San Diego. “You can’t bulls--- her,” says Jewel. “We’re incredibly straightforward.”



**VERSE FOR WEAR** (From top) The author with her tome at a book signing; cowboyfriend Douglas, clearly *not* the subject of *Armor*’s kiss-off; a teen Jewel with pals at Interlochen Arts Academy in 1992

Nobody’s doubting that Vainshtein devoted thousands of hours to Jewel, but several people close to the scuffle hint that she might have jeopardized her job by becoming scattered and unreliable. “Inga became increasingly tough to find,” recalls a former Atlantic publicist. “It was always a bit of a pain in the a---. The tougher it became to find Inga, the easier it became to find Nedra. Nedra was returning calls.”

So, apparently, was Z. While it’s pretty clear that Jackie Snyder did act in a spiritual capacity—“Many people would call her a minister, but it was much more than that,” says her son, Sean Ebnet—the irony is that Vainshtein supposedly has a jones for the psychic hotline too. “Knowing Inga, it is kind of like the pot calling the kettle black,” says an industry executive who’s worked with both parties. “It’s just very trashy for her to bring all that stuff into the press.”

**S**O, WHO IS JEWEL? CELESTIAL SEASONINGS cherub or Joan Crawford with a six-string? A month after the languid interview and the bedlam in Rockefeller Center, she calls. In the end, the most illuminating disclosure about Jewel comes from Jewel herself—not Jewel the saint, but Jewel the human being. “I’m quite sensitive to room noise,” she says. “TV shows, crowds. I get really overwhelmed. Real frazzled. Sometimes you just fall to s---, and that’s how it is. That last day you saw me, at the tree lighting, I was pretty dead. I was sort of going on autopilot. Some days it doesn’t even faze me, and some days it just annoys me to no end when people *keep* trying to sneak pictures, as if they didn’t get enough yet.

“I try and be real when I’m in a bad mood. When you start faking it, you just start faking a lot of your life. That’s damaging to me, and it’s damaging to the fans, because they start thinking that all stars are a super-breed of human. So I hope—just for my own liberation—to stay as real as I can. Which means I lose my temper sometimes. And I feel s----y for it the next day.”

She goes on. “If you talk about kindness, you have to be kind all the time: Do you believe that? How is that possible? I get that attitude a lot. People think that if I’m impatient once, that means I’m a fake. Sometimes being unkind is when you’re mad at a person and you act like you’re not. To me, that’s not kindness. Niceness. That’s just niceness. And nice, you know, what’s that? That’s nothing.” ■