



Post Star Power

Rising country music star Chelsea Bain talks about growing up as a tomboy in Arizona, and how she's making her mark in the industry while staying true to herself

Not too long ago, if you caught up with Chelsea Bain, she'd be kicking up dust on a dirt bike or wearing jeans and a comfy T-shirt around the barn. These days, the 23-year-old Valley native is just as comfortable in designer clothes and killer, high-heeled boots, performing in front of thousands of country music fans as her star quickly rises. Named one of *CMA Close Up* magazine's "Who New To Watch" artists for 2012, Bain has enjoyed a busy year of recording, touring nationwide, and perfecting her unique style.





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Growing up in the Valley, Bain was a tomboy through and through. "I rode dirt bikes and hung out with the boys. I rode horses and started barrel racing when I was 4 or 5, and my mom getting me to shower and all that was a struggle," she confesses. "It's actually kind of funny because when I started showing horses, which is completely different from barrel racing, it involved a lot of 'girliness' and that's basically the whole reason I learned to put makeup on."

After earning more than 10 National and World Championship titles in the American Paint Horse Association, Bain's showing career honed not just her makeup skills, but her competitive edge. She says the intense competition and dealing with those that did not wish her well (and that, she says, is a kind way of putting it) boosted her confidence in herself and shaped her career. She says the song, "All American Country Girl," which was written for her by her producer and her voice coach, fits her to a "T," explaining, "When we started this whole project, I was like, I'm not going to have songs that people can pick and poke at me. I'm going to have songs that when I'm up on stage I am the person in control and you know, I'm saying the truth and they can't judge me if that's who I'm saying I am."

Bain got started in the industry in Phoenix when she was 17, experiencing both the good and bad sides of the business, saying, "The one good thing that came out of that was my voice coach, who they brought in to help me develop as an artist, and she kind of pulled me aside and said this is how it works."

Bain will tell you that she is true to herself onstage and off, and hasn't really lost her inner tomboy. On a recent visit to Toby Keith's I Love This Bar in Mesa, she took a challenge from friends to take one more ride on the mechanical bull. "I ended up flying off very horribly. I bruised my knee, got a bloody nose and thought, 'Well, this is normal.' I may be wearing things with glitter and rhinestones on them, but this is normal," she says, laughing.

That seems to be the essence of the young singer's style, as she radiates a down-to-earth self-confidence along with a fiery and fun sense of humor. This is reflected in her fashion choices, loving everything from the glamour of Stella McCartney and Alexander McQueen to the toughness of Diesel. "I'm really big into leather jackets. I definitely have that biker-chic style," she says. "I love the whole girly thing, but I don't like anything to be too pretty."

And don't even get her started on boots. "I have my cowboy boots, they're genuine—the ones I wear on my horses. Then I have my trendy boots—the ones you'd wear around Nashville, I guess, and then I have my biker-chic boots that I wear on stage," she explains. "When boot season comes around, I think that all stores just love it when I come in!"

Bain's taste in music suits her personality as well, with strong roots in country music and dashes of classic rock and strong modern female artists. "My mom brought me up on George Strait. Like, don't walk into our house if you don't have something good

to say about that man," Bain jokes. "When I was little, there was a time when I didn't know there was a different genre of music; I thought country was it," she recalls. "Slowly but surely I learned that was wrong and fell in love with different things."

Female vocalists like Shania Twain and the Dixie Chicks were also influences, along with current country powerhouses like Miranda Lambert and Gretchen Wilson, but Bain also loves rock music. "I'm a huge Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers fan, and everybody, including my Dad, thinks I'm a weirdo because one of my favorite artists ever is Bob Dylan," she confesses.

Not surprisingly, she is a huge fan of pop artist Pink, and was thrilled to be surprised with concert tickets to Pink's February show in Phoenix. When asked who she'd love to team up with onstage she doesn't hesitate to say, "Probably Pink, because she's a cool chick and can sing her butt off! And then I'd want her to teach me how to do that trapeze stuff she does. How does she sing and do all of that?"

Bain may not have mastered any acrobatics this year, but feels extremely fortunate to have had a hugely successful year, which included performances at 14 NASCAR Sprint Cup races, 2 NHRA Full Throttle National Series Weekends, and visits to just about every country radio station along the touring route. Next on her list is more studio time, joined by Stan Lynch, the Heartbreakers' longtime drummer. "I had the opportunity to write with him this summer, and he also wants to produce the songs that we wrote together and a couple of new things that I've gotten from other writers," Bain reveals.

She'll also most likely hit the road again for the NASCAR tour, which she credits with supercharging her year. "It's been a really, really great thing for us and I think we're just going to continue pushing forward with that, because being associated with a brand like Coca-Cola, people have a lot of trust in you."

You get the feeling that trust and being true to herself are the things that are important to Chelsea Bain, as she explains the message she wants to convey to her fans. "I've always looked up to the women who say what's real and you believe them when they're saying it to you," she explains. "Whenever I'm performing or anything like that and I see little girls or anybody out there, I want them to take something from that. When you leave a concert you should feel like you can conquer the world," she says with excitement. "I want to inspire people and however they take it, I'm happy with it, but I definitely want to instill confidence in people."

No doubt she's got another exciting year ahead, and is finding her niche in the tightly-knit world of country music in Nashville. "I feel like I'm surrounded by the right people and am going in the right direction." But this all-American country girl says, "I will always call my home Phoenix"—no matter where the road takes her.

Wendy Rubicam can be reached at www.rubicamwriting.com.