

Taking the bull by the horns

She may have graced red carpets and been nominated for an Oscar – all by age 19 – but as a rock star, Juliette Lewis had to start from scratch, writes **Sally Browne**

THE last place you might expect to see one of Hollywood's royalty – an actor who has worked with directors such as Martin Scorsese, Woody Allen and Oliver Stone, impressed audiences in films like *Cape Fear*, *Natural Born Killers* and *Kalifornia*, and once dated Brad Pitt – is handing out flyers to her own gig.

But that's what Juliette Lewis, 36, was doing ahead of her concert in New York recently, and the video is on her MySpace page to prove it.

"In these tough economic times, that is what I'm doing," the actor-turned-singer jokes down the phone from the US, where she is currently on tour. "That's the difference between music and movies. I'd never be standing outside a movie theatre handing out tickets to one of my movies. Isn't that funny?"

But there's a lot about Lewis that's unusual. When the Los Angeles-born actor decided to reinvent herself as a rock singer, she went the whole way, packing up her gear and touring the world the old-fashioned way – on tour buses and in dirty dressing rooms with a bunch of smelly boys.

I'm not a born debutante and I've always laughed too loud; I don't have the social graces, and I don't like playing it safe

Calling her band The Licks, she entertained audiences with her soulful voice, fiery rock 'n' roll tunes, and commanding stage presence, turning heads in her trademark Native American headdress.

Critics were impressed. Lewis wasn't just pretending to be a rock 'n' roll star, she actually had the goods. And, serving up a classic style that wasn't exactly fashionable at the time – a female version of Wolfmother, you might say – she was doing exactly what she loved.

Lewis is now releasing her third album, her first without The Licks, a record she calls *Terra Incognita* – or undiscovered territory.

It's an experimental, groovy sound that she says is more "her" than ever before.

She may have graced red carpets and been nominated for an Oscar – all by age 19 – but as a rock star, Lewis had to start from scratch. Suddenly she found the playing field levelled.

She also had to learn how to be a businesswoman, which was "crazy".

"I don't like dealing with numbers," Lewis says in her Californian drawl. "But when you start a band, if you want to make a living, you have to understand things like playing venues and selling T-shirts, and we all know in this day and age that records barely sell.

"But what I do respond to is the core of it – this giving what you're loving to create, and getting it out to people. That's what I love about it because it all emanates from my own creative fire, whether it's the T-shirt design, the lyrics, to the album packaging, to the track listing."

Despite her stature, Lewis has never been signed to a major label. *Terra Incognita* is also her most personal record with songs like *Hard Lovin' Woman*, which she describes as "her blues", coming from a statement she jotted down two years ago.

Fantasy Bar, her current single, pokes fun at the Hollywood scene, something she never felt part of, even at the height of her fame.

But it's not a world she altogether turned her back on. In *Whip It*, out now, directed by her friend Drew Barrymore, she makes

her return to film as the nasty roller derby champion Dinah. And she has more films due out this year including *Betty Anne Waters* and *Sympathy for Delicious*.

Though she may have routinely walked the red carpet, the roles she chose were always quirky, challenging or artistic.

How did she relate to Hollywood at the peak of her career?

"I didn't – that was a problem!" she laughs.

"There's certain things of Hollywood culture, the salesmanship of it, I don't do so well with.

"I'm not a born debutante and I've always laughed too loud; I don't have the social graces, and I don't like playing it safe.

"But with that said, the movie-making aspect, and working with brilliant filmmakers and really inspired writers, that's something I relate to and that's fun, you know.

"Those are like circus folk. Artists, whether they're painters or writers or theatre owners or what have you, there's a common bond.

"But the culture, what the general public sees in magazines and stuff, that's not my world. I don't really relate to that."

When she was in her teens she would turn up to photo shoots without make-up and wonder why they wouldn't allow her to be photographed that way. Now, of course, she embraces the dress-ups and drama of rock photography.

Lewis says she got her rebellious streak from her parents, who were bohemian types. Her father is character actor Geoffrey Lewis, who appeared in a number of Clint Eastwood films, and her mother a graphic designer. Her parents were also Scientologists, something which Lewis has embraced in her own life. She credits the L. Ron Hubbard-developed program Narconon for helping her kick her drug addiction when she was 22.

Fame so young was a challenge. Some people she sees today seem conditioned for fame, but for Lewis it was an uncomfortable fit.

"What fame does, is it will exacerbate any dilemma or insecurity you have," she says.

"It's funny when I see some young people are conditioned for it. It's almost like being a politician – you have to smile and talk a good talk and walk a fine line.

"But I was an introvert and my priorities were not in filmmaking.

"When you're young and you're having success in the movies and you're getting nominated (for awards), it's supposed to mean so much to you. But it's not where my priorities ever were.

"I really enjoy the art of cinema, but especially in American cinema it's really unbalanced, the attention that's paid to movie people."

For now, she's enjoying playing in another world – that of music. Lewis has been performing shows with her idol Chrissie Hynde of the Pretenders and has been enjoying the festival circuit too.

"At festivals that's like a big old summer camp and it's really wonderful actually because you get to stand on the side of the stage and watch all the bands you love. I remember Eddie Vedder (of Pearl Jam) was on the side of the stage watching my band and that was the one time I really lost my cool," she laughs.

Lewis is set to return to Australia some time next year and says fans should watch her MySpace page for updates.

***Terra Incognita* is out now. *Whip It* is in cinemas now.**



Rock chick: Juliette Lewis has a new album, *Terra Incognita* – or undiscovered territory



gig guide

Ian Muir Country. Queen Street Mall, Brisbane. Today, 11.30am, 12.30pm, 1.30pm. Free.
Hanna Macklin and the Teapotter Party Jazz. Queen Street Mall, Brisbane. Today, noon, 1pm, 2pm. Free.
The Ten Fours + Jim Rockfords Indie pop/rock. Brisbane Powerhouse, 119 Lamington St, New Farm. Today, 3.30pm. Free.
Alex Hallahan Alt-country/blues. The Troubadour, 322 Brunswick St, Fortitude Valley. Today, 9pm. \$10-\$11.50. 1300 762 545.
Ian Moss (pictured) With Wes Carr, Rock. Iron Bar Hotel, 5 Macrossan St, Port Douglas. Today, 8pm. \$40. 4099 4748; Magpies Sporting Club, Glenella Rd, Glenella, Mackay. Tue, 8pm. \$49. 4965 6100; Gladstone Entertainment Centre, 58 Goonoon St. Wed, 8pm. \$45. 4972 2822; Brolga Theatre, cnr Walker and Lennox sts, Maryborough. Thu, 8pm. \$45. 4122 6060; Caloundra RSL, 19 West St. Sat, 7.30pm. \$45. 5491 1544.
3OH!3 Hip-hop. The Hi-Fi, 125 Boundary St, West End. Wed, 5pm. Under 18. Thu, 8pm. 18+. \$43.60. 1300 843 443.
The Show: Qld Hip-Hop Summit The Zoo, 711 Ann St, Fortitude Valley. Wed, 8pm. \$15. Door only.
Shoebox Acoustic reggae. Gold Coast Arts Centre, 135 Bundall Rd, Surfers Paradise. Thu, 8.15pm. \$13. 5588 4000.
No Anchor Metal. The Zoo, 711 Ann St, Fortitude Valley. Thu, 8pm. \$8. Door only.
Francesca de Valance Acoustic pop. The Troubadour, 322 Brunswick St, Fortitude Valley. Thu, 8pm. \$12. Door only.
Chase the Sun Blues/roots/rock. The Joynt, 48 Montague Rd, South

Brisbane. Thu, 8pm. \$10. Tickets at door; The Sound Lounge, Currumbin RSL, Currumbin Creek Rd. Fri, 8.30pm. \$14-\$16. www.thesoundlounge.com.au.
Nathan Leichtman Trio Jazz/lounge. Melbourne Street Green, QPAC, South Bank. Fri, 5pm. Free.
The Andrew Sisters Jazz. Gold Coast Arts Centre, 135 Bundall Rd, Surfers Paradise. Fri, 6.15pm. \$20-\$25. 0405 143 720.
The Girl with the Golden Flute Australian Chamber Orchestra. QPAC, South Bank. Fri, 8pm. \$38-\$79. 136 246.
I Heart Hiroshima Indie pop. The Zoo, 711 Ann St, Fortitude Valley. Fri, 8pm. \$13.50-\$15. 1300 762 545.
Diana Anaid (pictured) Indie. The Hi-Fi, 125 Boundary Rd, West End. Fri, 8pm. \$15.50. 1300 843 443.
Drawn from Bees Indie. The Troubadour, 322 Brunswick St, Fortitude Valley. Fri, 8pm. \$13.50-\$15. 1300 762 545.
The Stafford Brothers The Met, 256 Wickham St, Fortitude Valley. Fri, 9pm. \$12.50. 3257 2557.
Rohan Somasekaran Sextet Jazz. Powerhouse, 119 Lamington St, New Farm. Sat, 5pm. Free.
A Night at the Proms Brisbane Regional Youth Orchestra. Coorparoo Secondary College, Cavendish Rd. Sat, 7pm. \$10-\$15. 136 246.
Don Bennington Jazz. Gold Coast Arts Centre, 135 Bundall Rd, Surfers Paradise. Sat, 7pm. \$15. 5588 4000.
Micheline Van Hantem: Brel with Chocolat Belgian singer. Judith Wright Centre of Contemporary Arts, cnr Brunswick and Berwick sts, Fortitude Valley. Sat, 7.30pm. \$34-\$45. 3872 9000.
Susanna O'Leary Brisbane singer/songwriter. Powerhouse, 119 Lamington Rd, New Farm. Sat, 8pm. \$24. 3358 8600.
Hazards of Swimming Naked Post-rock. The Zoo, 711 Ann St, Fortitude Valley. Sat, 8pm. \$12. Door only. event@thesundaymail.com.au



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