

Jaelee Roberts

Biography

Standing in the penumbra between tradition and innovation, Jaelee Roberts embraces the magic of the space between. Like so much of country music, hers is an exercise in contradictions—inviting its listeners to both plumb the depths of their sorrows while simultaneously reveling in the joy of the sound. Neither treacly sweet nor rough around the edges, her voice blends dynamic technical power with heartrending expression, all while carrying a depth that is uniquely hers and hers alone. Her songwriting and composition breathe fresh life into the well-worn instrumentation and rhythms of bluegrass, providing a 21st century perspective on timeless tales of heartbreak, betrayal, love, and faith. It is this push-and-pull that gives Jaelee Roberts her unique magnetism—seamlessly bringing warring factions together in her music to form a sound that is as entrancing as it is beautiful.

“I started singing before I could talk,” says Roberts. “Singing was just something I always did.” As a child of Music City, Jaelee Roberts was raised on bluegrass. She spent her formative years alternating between watching her dad make music on stage and watching her mom make music happen behind-the-scenes. Her father, Danny Roberts, is a founding member of the three-time GRAMMY-nominated bluegrass band, The Grascals. Her mother Andrea, a talented musician in her own right, pivoted her career towards the business end of bluegrass—becoming a booking agent and manager to help touring bands and artists achieve the success they deserved. Between listening to rehearsals and business calls at home and dancing in the crowd during balmy summer festival sets, Jaelee was raised knowing exactly what she wanted to be and what it took to get there.

Her lifelong dream was to one day perform onstage at the Grand Ole Opry. And at just four years old, she started making her way there. Roberts began playing the fiddle and sang in her church every Sunday. She made the most of all the time she was already spending at music festivals by competing in contests ranging from singing and fiddle to clogging to full-band performances. She learned how to play more instruments—adding guitar, mandolin, and piano to her toolkit. And she got to know the other kids who came to the events, jamming with them at campsites after hours and mastering the art of playing well with others.

It was a good start, but she knew she wanted more. Much like the legends of early bluegrass and country music whom she so admires, Roberts wasn't content to just do what had been done before. She wanted to create something new—something that could be passed down like the canon she was born nestled within. While sitting in the driveway with her mother one night, listening to WSM AM 650 after the Grand Ole Opry

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as was their tradition, she heard the song “Heartbreaker” by Dolly Parton for the first time. That moment, and the depth of emotion she felt listening to Dolly’s words and voice, revealed a new horizon to conquer. She wanted to give people that same release and catharsis—to crack people open and make them feel seen with her words and her music. She wrote her first song the very same night.

By her teenage years, Roberts was pursuing her goals with single-minded focus. She switched to homeschooling to give herself the time and flexibility to play music professionally, joining Rebekah Long’s touring band at just 16 years old as a mandolinist and supporting vocalist. A year later, she released her debut single “All My Tears,” to critical acclaim, earning effusive praise from 2023 Country Music Hall of Fame inductee Patty Loveless, who said of Roberts, “She brings a vocal performance [...] that touches the core of what fires me up about music.”

From this point on, things started moving quickly in Jaelee Roberts’ career. She applied for and earned a spot in the highly competitive GRAMMY Camps for two consecutive years, first in 2017 in Nashville, TN and then in 2018 in Los Angeles, CA. The following year, she graduated from high school and began her undergraduate studies at Middle Tennessee State University—and recently graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Commercial Songwriting with a focus in Music Business from the school’s College of Media and Entertainment.

Although the global COVID-19 pandemic slowed some things down, Jaelee Roberts couldn’t be stopped. She signed a recording contract with Mountain Home Records, beginning work on her debut full-length album. Not long after, she was invited to audition for reigning IBMA “Entertainer of the Year” and recent GRAMMY Award-nominated band, Sister Sadie. Her first show just so happened to be the Opry’s “75 Years of Bluegrass” concert, commemorating the famous December 8, 1945 show where the “Big Bang” lineup of Bill Monroe and his Blue Grass Boys introduced the world to the unique and compelling sound that would come to be called “bluegrass.” It was a dream come true. She was invited to join the band full-time and has been playing guitar and singing lead vocals for them for nearly three years. This role has earned her international recognition. In 2021, she was awarded Vocalist of the Year at the International Bluegrass Music Association (IBMA) Momentum Awards, a presentation dedicated specifically to recognizing and rewarding the talents of emerging artists and up-and-coming industry professionals.

By 2022, she had released her debut full-length album *Something You Didn’t Count On* which became an immediate commercial and critical success. The album debuted in the Top Ten on the Billboard Bluegrass Album chart and peaked at #2 on the Bluegrass Unlimited album chart. Multiple singles from the album—including “Think Again”, “You Can’t Stop Me From Staying”, “Sad Songs”, and “The Best of Me”—appeared on the Bluegrass Unlimited singles chart, and “Still Waters” and “I Owe Him Everything” have made appearances on multiple gospel music charts. The album and the musicianship behind it earned Roberts a nomination for IBMA New Artist of the Year in 2022. Not even six months later, she was awarded

Female Vocalist of the Year at the 2023 Society for the Preservation of Bluegrass Music in America (SPBGMA) awards show, and *Something You Didn't Count On* took home the title of Album of the Year. And she's only just getting started. "It's been a lifelong dream and I'll never stop chasing it," says Roberts. "I'll keep chasing it until I can't chase it anymore."

Jaelee Roberts is an internationally recognized vocal performer, multi-instrumentalist, recording artist, and songwriter. She has performed with Ashley McBryde and alongside Ricky Skaggs on the Grand Ole Opry with bluegrass supergroup, Sister Sadie, as well as recording with Vince Gill. She has played such historic and hallowed halls as the Station Inn, The Bluebird Cafe, and the Freight & Salvage Coffeehouse. She has received numerous awards and nominations, including a 2023 nomination for IBMA Female Vocalist of the Year. She has also been recognized as a member of bluegrass' preeminent all-female band, Sister Sadie, with a 2021 win for IBMA Vocal Group of the Year and 2023 IBMA nominations for Vocal Group of the Year and Song of the Year ("Diane").

Jaelee will make her Opry debut as a solo artist on September 19, 2023.

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