

## Jenny Lewis Biography

**Hometown:** Los Angeles, CA US

They say there are two sides to every story, but that old saying might not quite cover it if we're talking about Jenny Lewis. Over the decade she's showed us maybe four or five, depending on where you're standing. With Rilo Kiley, her rock band of the past 10 years, she transformed before our eyes from a shy indie-rocker singing barely above a whisper to the authoritative, take-no-prisoners singer/songwriter/frontwoman we know today. Tack sharp and unafraid of subject matter of any height or weight, channeling songs through either Rilo Kiley or her solo work, her staggering range as a writer has brought her critical acclaim around the globe.

Rabbit Fur Coat, Lewis' soulful love letter to the records of her childhood, was released in 2006 to universal acclaim. Similarly, for Acid Tongue, she was drawn by nostalgia, this time returning to the area where she grew up: Van Nuys, California. Lewis set up shop in Sound City Studios, which boasts a world famous live-tracking room that has produced seminal records over generations; from Tom Petty's *Damn the Torpedoes* and Neil Young's *After the Goldrush* to Nirvana's *Nevermind*. Says Lewis, "The idea was to go one hundred percent live, including the vocals, and as few overdubs as possible. I wanted to use that big beautiful room and get fully realized takes. If the drums bled into the vocal mic and it made for a technically imperfect sound it didn't matter to me. If it felt right, if the emotion was there, we kept it."

Some of Acid Tongue's songs, such as "Jack Killed Mom", "See Fernando", "Carpetbaggers" and the title track, were written and performed on the world tour for Rabbit Fur Coat. Others were written in the same creative burst that yielded Rilo Kiley's *Under The Blacklight*, Some simply appeared in the studio. Says producer "Farmer" Dave Scher: "We were recording this stuff in between smoke breaks and conversations. Some songs, like *Bad Man's World*, just arrived in one fluid gesture in between takes of another song. Myself, Jason and Johnathan Rice were in the control room just kicking ourselves at how naturally it all went down." The all analog, no Pro-Tools sessions were all part of a shared aesthetic between Lewis, her producers, and her musician collaborators. They wanted to work quickly and work up a sweat. Tracking her vocals entirely live and without embellishment gave her the impetus to let the album flow as naturally as possible, the entire recording process taking just 3 weeks.

Some of Lewis' most steadfast collaborators appear on Acid Tongue: Johnathan Rice, Farmer Dave Scher, Jason Boesel, Jason Lader and M Ward (who provided the dazzling guitar on "Pretty Bird"). She also invited other notable musician friends into the fold, including Elvis Costello for the duet on "Carpetbaggers", Chris Robinson (of The Black Crowes) singing on "Acid Tongue", Zooey Deschanel (of She & Him) &

Vanessa Corbala (of Whispertown2000) on backing vocals, Paz Lenchantin (A Perfect Circle / The Entrance Band) and her sister Ana provided strings, Benji Hughes singing on "The Next Messiah" and "Jack Killed Mom," Davey Faragher (of The Imposters) on bass, as well as Laurel Canyon's own Jonathan Wilson on guitar, and even members of Jenny's own family. Her sister Leslie Lewis provided backing vocals on "See Fernando" and "Trying My Best To Love You," while her father, harmonica virtuoso Eddie Gordon, provided rumbling bass harp to the Oedipal epic "Jack Killed Mom."

The album's tracks, disparate as they are, share a sparkling vitality; Lewis' voice has never sounded so expressive and the narratives have never been so hard-hitting and acerbic. There is despair in "Bad Man's World", love and loyalty in "Godspeed", and hallucinatory rage in "Jack Killed Mom". "The Next Messiah" provides the record with its longest and most exciting song on the album; a 9 minute medley which features a swaggering tete-a-tete between Jenny and Johnathan Rice. "Carpetbaggers" was originally written as a Porter Wagoner/Dolly Parton-style duet to be performed by on the Rabbit Fur Coat tour. When revisiting the song for Acid Tongue, Lewis felt it needed something new. Elvis Costello, a longtime and vocal admirer of Jenny's since Rilo's More Adventurous, was invited to take part. A case of perfect synergy, Elvis' searing vocal delivers one of the album's most striking moments. The creative pull of the session was so strong, in fact, that Costello decided right then and there to make an album of his own with Lewis and her team. His Momofuku album was recorded the day after the Acid Tongue sessions wrapped, and was finished in six days.

"Acid Tongue" was the first song written and provides the musical lineage from Rabbit Fur Coat, giving the record its title track and logical lyrical centerpiece. Lewis recruited Chris Robinson, Jonathan Wilson, Rice, and Farmer Dave as a male choir, putting a spin on the gospel choruses The Watson Twins lent to her last record. At the end of the recording Lewis produced a play on words image: an acid blotter-style sheet of her own head for the album's cover art. Pun thoroughly intended, it speaks volumes. Acid Tongue is Jenny Lewis' own long, strange, and beautiful trip.