

Title: This Is M.E.

Subtitle: Melissa Etheridge Dives Deep into Her Newest Album, Life, and Love

Section: Press Play; Heavy Hitters

SEO keywords: Melissa Etheridge, This Is M.E., Melissa Etheridge Tour, Rock the Boat Cruise, Joan Jett and the Blackhearts

Written by: Marie Spada

True musicians seem to be a dying breed in an era where pushing a button and “dropping the beat” brings people to their knees at a concert or music festival. While there is no doubt that mixed sounds on a computer can have a catchy beat, there is nothing better than a true artist who can pick up an instrument, jam out on the spot, and show a display of true, natural talent. That’s what happens when Melissa Etheridge steps onstage. With the ability to play a wide array of instruments and sing her heart out, it is no wonder that this Grammy Award-winning, Oscar Award-Winning, hard-working superstar has stood the test of time as a true blue rock and roll goddess. We got a chance to catch up with her the other day and trust us--the music that this soulful legend is putting out will melt your face way faster than any beat drop.

**Q: This Is M.E. has such a wide variety of sounds that, while all different, still fit together perfectly. What was your goal with this album in mixing up the styles and blending genres?**

Melissa Etheridge: Well, my goal was the belief that I could go out and play in anyone’s playground, in any genre that I wanted, and I would still have the center--the part of me that is truly me. My guitar, my voice, and my writing would anchor this album and keep that continuity, whatever flavor I chose, and I believe I accomplished that.

**Q: Your song, “Who Are You Waiting For?” was written for Linda Wallem for your wedding. Describe the writing process and experience of writing that song for you.**

ME: The first half was written before I decided to use them as my vows. I was just writing it as a sort of state of the union of my personal relationship life, as I often do. I often write just from that place. I was telling the story of the relationship in the first verse and it had taken me a few weeks to actually write this song. I revised it many times, as I do with the most personal songs. The most personal songs hang out for a while and take a little while to hatch. When I finally sat down to write the third verse, I said, “Oh my god! This is my wedding song! It’s about ‘who are you waiting for?’ and oh my god, I’m waiting for you down the aisle!” When that sort of dawned on me that *that’s* where the song was going, I thought, “I can sing this at my wedding” and it all sort of lined up! I think I had played the first line for Linda when I first started writing it, but it had been a while, so I thought, “I’m not going to tell her.” I told her that I was singing for her, because I didn’t want to surprise her that much, she deserved a little heads up, so I told her just that much. The experience was just so beautiful. We’re a very loving couple. We love and the expression of love is extremely important to us every single day. Every day, we affirm our love for each other. We make those vows every day. I wanted to take the moment and put it in music and sing the words that I know I’m going to be telling her for the rest of my life every single day.

**Oh my god, I love that. That’s beautiful. People do lose sight of the fact that it is important to keep affirming that.**

ME: Every day. It's so important. People can drift and, the funny thing was, Linda and I were best friends for almost 10 years before that, and we had that connection. We took it a step beyond that, and it's that step beyond that that you can't forget. You can't just fall back into, "Oh, we're just best friends," because it's great to be best friends, yet it's keeping the polarity, as I call it, that sort of draw and alignment and that feeling of, "Wow, you in my life makes all of the difference. You give me strength and I am grateful." You just have to take care of each other that way and let each other know that.

**I love that!**

ME (laughing): Thanks, me too!

**Q: Well, totally switching gears, tell me about the cruise you'll be taking with Joan Jett & The Blackhearts! What is the cruise going to entail?**

ME: Doesn't that look like fun?! I sort of really resisted the cruise thing for a long time. I think somebody first started talking to me about cruises at the end of the last century and I was like, "Ugh, I don't know..." the idea of what a cruise was to me just didn't fit. Then finally, this year, the people that put these cruises together really came to me and I was like, "Okay, can I do this? Can I have this on it? Can I do that? The food is so important; it has to be good." (Laughing) I'm not going to lie, I'm not going to be stuck on a boat for five days without quality food. That's such a big part of my life! Nutrition is huge! I wanted it to be great music, about the music, and about wellness and all the things that I'm just about! And they said, "Yes, yes, and yes!" and I was like, "Well then, what are we waiting for? Let's do it!" Joan Jett said she'd kick us all off and I was like, "Are you kidding me?" so it's Rock the Boat, and we're going to have a great time. I'm really looking forward to it.

**Q: Tell me about your involvement in wellness; I don't feel like I know much about that.**

ME: It certainly came when I was diagnosed with breast cancer 11 years ago and that whole thing really just had me understand the importance of health. It's true that if you don't have that, you don't have anything. It's what makes the difference between, "Well I know I should eat better, but maybe I'll start tomorrow" and just saying no. It starts now. I'm not putting this off anymore; I'm doing this today. Having now made that change over the last 10 years, I see so many things that are just starting to be presented to us. Like 10 years ago, I realized that we have so much more responsibility in our health. The paradigm of us thinking, "Well, I'm just going to work hard and run my body to the ground and be stressed and eat crap food and then a doctor will fix me," does not exist anymore. The reason we haven't cured cancer is because the cure comes from within ourselves. Cancer comes from our own bodies breaking down. I've gotten some pushback on this over the last 10 years, but I stand very firm on this belief that I have researched myself and read about and gone very deep into. Now, with my own experience of being cancer-free for the last 11 years, it's been about the balance in our bodies. It's about not allowing things in it, like sugar. Sugar is the worst thing! We are just starting to find it out! Watch the documentary "Fed Up." I just saw today that the government is like, "Okay, we probably shouldn't have sugar" and it's killing us! It's hard for people to believe because it's in everything and it's like, why would they let that happen to us? We've made some horrible mistakes in our food systems. Don't get me started on this, I'll go on forever!

**I'm the exact same way. People do not want to talk about this with me, because I will hop on my soapbox and not get off!**

ME: Totally! People don't want to talk about it, but it's life or death! My children look at me and scream, "Why can't I have regular food?" and I'm like, "Because you have a crazy mom. You'll thank me in 20 years when your body is not broken down!"

**They totally will. What really grosses me out is that when there is mold inside of our bodies, the second you put sugar in your body, it feeds that mold and grows! That's so vile to me!**

ME: Yes! I tell people that all the time! You know about PET scans, right? That's what you have to determine if you have cancer. What that is is glucose juice, which is sugar, in your body. They dye it and, if anything eats it, those are cancer cells because cancer eats sugar! Hello, if cancer eats sugar, shouldn't the doctor tell you not to eat sugar if you have cancer? Sugar feeds cancer.

**That just backs up your whole view that cancer comes from within and we have to be careful with what we put in our bodies.**

ME: Yeah, and our whole thought process on the health system is the belief that on the outside, someone can cure whatever is going on on the inside of you, and we've got to balance that out. We have our own responsibility for our insides. We have to make our insides healthy!

**I hear ya, sister!**

ME (laughing): Come on, people! Get on board! Let's go!

**Q: Well, I guess we'd better move off of the subject of sugar, and though I could go on for hours, I doubt readers want to hear more about that. How does your album "This Is M.E." differ from your previous albums?**

ME: Oh god, so many ways! For one, this is my first independent album not on Island Records, and that came because the music industry has just changed completely. I can reach all of my fans on social media now, and I don't need a middleman to go through anymore. We let that go and, in doing so, I had 100% creative freedom and responsibility. I have to take responsibility for everything now. I think this is one of my favorite albums because I was able to really branch out really far, yet keep the core of my voice, guitar, and lyrics as the anchor of the album.

**Q: You've talked about This Is M.E. being a truly collaborative experience. What can listeners expect from you in this album that they didn't see coming?**

ME: I think that people who listen to me don't have a huge expectation. They expect me to write from a center of truth, of myself, and I will always come from that. I think sometimes what I'm writing about might surprise them, that things like that are inside of me. I think that this album is a lot sexier than they think a 54-year-old woman would be! But it's my truth; it's better than ever! I think that might surprise them.

**It was a surprise! "All the Way Home" is so hot!**

ME (laughing): Yay! Thank you very much; I appreciate that! That's what I want, because that doesn't stop! That's the juice of life. That's as important as anything else!

**Q: “Ain’t That Bad” and “All the Way Home” are the types of songs I want to blast with my windows down, screaming along at the top of my lungs. I can only imagine how fun they are to perform. What are some of your favorite songs to perform, or do you have a favorite?**

ME: Do it! Yay! Oh, from this album, those really are a couple of my favorites. I have lots of favorites. My favorite thing about performing is to then share that experience! I love looking out into the audience and seeing people scream at the top of their lungs, with their fists pumping in the air singing along. For however many years or months they’ve been singing it, sharing that with them is just so intimate, and I love doing it in concert and stretching those songs out. It’s just a blast!

**Q: You are a true musician with the ability to play an array of different instruments. What instruments can you play, and are there any that have ever posed a challenge for you?**

ME: Oh, yeah. I mean, my talent is in guitar, piano, and harmonica. I play some percussion drums onstage, though I’m not the greatest drummer. Then, I know how to play a clarinet, I know how to play a saxophone, but am I going to get up and play a saxophone solo? No. One of the reasons I’m so good at guitar and some other instruments is because I play them every single day! I’d have to sit down and play the saxophone more. I can even play the French horn but, again, it’s not going to be very good! You have to really put the time in to be a master.

**Q: Describe the process of how you are playing your music for your current tour.**

ME: I wanted to do a solo show because I love the intimacy and freedom of solo shows, but I also wanted to maintain a certain level of energy. I didn’t want it to just be an acoustic guitar and singing songs. I mean you can still rock out with that, but having the technology there now, I can make loops and start with a drum beat and put a tick. Nowadays people love this more tribal sound, beat, and rhythm that’s going on. Next, I can pick up acoustic guitar and sing the song and play to it. After that, I can loop that acoustic guitar, then I can pick up an electric guitar and jam to my heart’s content! Some little three minute songs turn into ten minute songs because I’m like, “I’m going to play the guitar and not worry about the rest of the band, because it’s just me!”

**Q: Your songs “Ain’t That Bad” and “All the Way Home” have a fun R&B feel to them. How was it incorporating different genres together for you?**

ME: That was some of the most fun I had on this album. I have a deep belief that these genres come from the same place. Rock and roll, country, soul, R&B all come from the blues, gospel, hillbilly music. It all came from the same center there in the Tennessee, New Orleans, and Appalachian areas. When you pull out those roots today, going in and recording “Ain’t That Bad” with Roccstar, you’d think, “Well, that’s really far away; that’s rap!” Yet, that’s probably the most rock and roll song I’ve made in a long time. All you have to do is throw a guitar on that beat and it’s the same. Rock and roll is an attitude; it’s not really a genre. I think rap today has more attitude than anything else on the radio.

**Q: Your album cover is comprised of several tiny photos of your fans into a mosaic to form a photo of you. How many photos did you get from fans, and how has the overall response been?**

ME: It was huge! We actually couldn't use all of the photos we got. We used about 900 in the photo, but the fun thing was we had an app where you could find your photo on me and mark it, so that was cool.

**Q: What have been some of your most fun memories during this tour?**

ME: Oh, wow. Hmm...well, just getting thousands of people on their feet with just me and my guitar, that was pretty fun! That's pretty cool, having people sing along and me just playing the guitar, I've just loved it, night after night!

**Q: If you could put your dream tour lineup together, who would be on the list? They can be people who are no longer with us, people from current times, or both.**

ME: Wow, that's so hard because I love music so deeply, that we'd be here all day if I told you everyone! With a dream lineup, I guess you're going to have Nirvana, Janis Joplin, Bruce Springsteen, Peter Gabriel, Joan Armatrading, Joni Mitchell, and I'd just keep going from there.

**Well, that kicks Coachella's lineup's ass pretty hard.**

ME (laughing): So far!

**Q: What would you say is the overall message you're trying to convey with your This Is M.E. album?**

ME: Life is to be experienced and lived fearlessly. Age certainly doesn't have any bearing on your experience of life and what you're getting out of it.

For Melissa's current tour schedule, visit [www.melissaetheridge.com](http://www.melissaetheridge.com), and her album is also available on [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)