



Saint Lewis?

Hardly! With her third album, no-holds-barred actress/singer Juliette Lewis lets it all bang out

| By Alexis Johnson |

| Photography by Ryan Pfluger |

"I never really cared whether people took me seriously—maybe that's the secret!" says Juliette Lewis of her six-year-old rock career, which has seen her playing sold-out stadiums of 20,000 in Europe and opening for The Who and The Killers.

This month, the singer—known for her sexually aggressive lyrics, writhing-and-twisting stage act and otherworldly costumes (body paint, spandex unitards, feather headdresses)—debut her first solo album, *Terra Incognita*. Her original band, Juliette and the Licks, dissolved earlier this year after releasing two albums. "Music allows me to be everything that I already am: the broken child; the haunted woman; the bluesy, gut-wrenching soul sister; the angst-filled, ferocious rock animal. But it allows me to be all this times 10," says Lewis, 36, who also stars next month with Ellen Page in *Whip It!*, Drew Barrymore's roller derby-themed directorial debut.

Precious few actors who want to sing break on through to the other side, but Lewis—who stole her stepmom's car at age 13 and was legally emancipated from her parents a year later—has never been lacking in defiant, go-for-broke attitude. At 18, she won a Supporting Actress Oscar nom for Martin Scorsese's *Cape Fear* remake. The actress then moved on to such provocative roles as a troubled teenager/rape victim in *Kalifornia* (opposite former flame Brad Pitt) and as a rampaging mass murderer in Oliver Stone's *Natural*

Born Killers. And who can forget the love-'em or really-hate-'em cornrows she wore to that first Oscars ceremony? "I can be beautiful... and I can be ugly. A lot of attractive actresses can't be ugly," Lewis once said of her success.

Blockbuster fame seemed in the bag. But, soon after, the major roles began to subside and Lewis found herself contending with drug addiction. "When I was 22, I quit drugs and had a profound awakening. I was listening to lots of Neil Young and Bob Dylan and incessantly writing. I was busy rebuilding my soul and my life."

At 30, Lewis—a Scientologist who divorced her actor/skateboarder husband Stephen Berra in 2005—formed the Licks, which first cranked up its Van Halen-meets-Iggy Pop sound at Silver Lake's El Cid. "I love drama [but] I needed more to sink my teeth into," says the raspy-voiced Lewis. For her third outing, she hunkered down at a piano in a rented house in the Valley. "I made friends with that piano and made friends with melody," says Lewis, who worked on the album with Mars Volta guitarist Omar Rodriguez-López. With *Terra Incognita* Lewis expands her rock résumé, moving into blues and even pop territory, while keeping her off-kilter cred intact. "[With the Licks] I was a rock and roll warrior. This is a new incarnation for me. Now I feel like this little pixie who fell from the moon, living in the forest." **▲**