

Jewel to make high-tech album debut in Pittsburgh

Preview

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By Scott Mervis, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Fans can interact with Jewel as she debuts "Sweet and Wild" through a "private performance platform" being launched from Pittsburgh.

The night before she releases her latest album, "Sweet and Wild," Jewel will reach out to two continents -- from the WQED studios in Oakland.

Pittsburgh will be the launching point Monday for a "private performance platform" called First Spin, created by the Pittsburgh-based Velocity Broadcasting.

Her performance will be broadcast live to clubs, restaurants (including numerous Morton's Steakhouses), and movie theaters in more than 75 cities throughout the country and 34 in Australia, where she has a hot fanbase. Here, it can be screened at the Rivers Club in Oxford Centre, and Carmike 10 on Fort Couch Road in Bethel Park. The opener is Steel Magnolia, which has a Top 5 country hit right now with "Keep on Lovin' You."



Although only 80 people in the studio will see it live, thousands of others will be able to interact beyond the usual yelling things out. Audience members, with the use of a Mindshare handset and small hand-held cameras, will be able to help select what songs she performs and ask her questions live on the air. They also will be able to purchase an autographed copy of the CD at the event for \$7.50.

Jewel

Where: Broadcast live at Rivers Club, Downtown (\$42.50, with food), and Cinemark 10, Bethel Park (\$25 including CD).

When: 9 p.m. Monday.

Tickets: www.VelocityBoxOffice.com.

"We want to make sure that the fanbase gets a total experience with an artist, not just a download," says Philip Elias, president and CEO of Velocity Broadcasting, a 5-year-old company that specializes in producing programming live via satellite to invitation-only audiences. Velocity did a similar set with Wynton Marsalis in the fall of 2006 and is launching First Spin this year as a way for artists to make their album release an event.

"This allows Jewel to be in other markets than the 22 cities she's hitting on her tour. This allows her to fill in the gaps," says Mr. Elias, who adds that "Jewel isn't a good artist for a large venue, but a great artist for a small venue, where people get in touch with her emotions."

With 20 high-definition cameras, the Velocity First Spin concert will also offer a backstage perspective of how Jewel prepared for the concert.

Jewel, who endured homelessness before launching her career with the 12-times platinum "Pieces of You" in 1995, is in the midst of a theater tour for this ninth studio album, which has spawned two singles, "Stay Here Forever," a sugary country-pop song from the movie "Valentine's Day," and the sultry ballad "Satisfied."

The genre-hopping singer-songwriter -- born in Utah, raised in Alaska, sprung from San Diego and now living on a Texas ranch with husband and world champion bull rider Ty Murray -- moved into the country market two years ago with "Perfectly Clear." It debuted at the top of the country charts and featured three singles, including the Top 20 entry "Stronger Woman."

Mr. Elias notes that First Spin is launching with Jewel, because of the interest from the label Big Machine. He says that another segment with a major artist is being planned for August and will be shot in Pittsburgh.

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