

# Hilary Duff

A TEXAS METEMORPHISIS



by William C. Reynolds

**I**t was a scene last summer that could have happened anywhere in the West, a young girl greeting a horse as the midday sun painted the moment with summer's warmth. They stood together in a pasture on California's Central Coast, where mountains meet the sea. Here in this coastal canyon the land is a blur of buckskin and blue — a place where the green pastures of spring have turned golden, rising up to meet the sky. On that summer day, this one young girl and a special horse shared a time with the only audience, the sky and the land. It was a unique moment of quiet for the teenager and she relished the private time.

Hilary Duff doesn't get many solitary moments — especially with a horse — at this point in her life, let alone with Spirit, the little mustang who was inspiration for DreamWork's animated blockbuster *Spirit, Stallion of the Cimarron*.

"I had to catch my breath when I saw him," she said. "He's absolutely stunning." Spirit is no ordinary horse and the place he lives, Return To Freedom, Neda DeMayo's Central California wild horse sanctuary, is no ordinary ranch. Hilary had traveled from her Los Angeles home to the Buellton, California, facility, where along with Spirit, 130 other horses live out their lives in peace. Return to Freedom is a refuge dedicated to preserving the last of America's

*photography by Charles Bush*

**OPPOSITE:** Pink sleeveless T-shirt from Roper; necklace with heart pendant from Happy Trails de Santa Fe; sterling silver heart bracelet from Island Cowgirl.







wild horses, and Hilary had been named its official youth ambassador. She was obviously moved by the visit.

"It's important to raise the awareness of other kids about these horses," says Hilary. "This is really an honor; horses have always been special to me and I look up to people who are involved with organizations that help people and animals. It's very special to give back to your community — that's the best part of being in the position I'm in right now."

That position is one of a highly influential superstar. In fact, in her young 16 years, Hilary Duff has performed and worked more than many in Hollywood will in their entire careers. If you're asking yourself, "Who is Hilary Duff?" Get ready, you're about to see a lot of this household name to most kids under 18. Her film and television careers are booming along with a 2004 booked-full summer of a concert tour in support of her hugely successful debut CD. Yes, she's a recording artist as well. As for movies, she's just wrapped *Heart of Summer*, an urban, romantic drama, in which she stars with Rita Wilson and John Corbett (*My Big Fat Greek Wedding*) along with Rebecca De Mornay and David Keith. She also just completed the romantic comedy feature *A Cinderella Story* with young hunk Chad Michael Murray. It's a contemporary Cinderella story set for U.S. release this July. Next, she's slated to star in *The Perfect Man*, a romantic comedy based on the true-life stories of Heather Robinson, a teenage daughter searching for the perfect man for her single mom. This followed with another comedy, *Outward Blonde*. A film about a snotty, teenage New Yorker, who, after failing gym class, is sent to an Outward Bound program - sort of an Elle-Woods-meets-the-backwoods.

In 1998, she starred in a direct-to-video feature as the young witch in *Casper Meets Wendy* opposite a dream ensemble cast for anyone in Hollywood (let alone a young 10 year old girl) including Shelley Duvall, Cathy Moriarty, Teri Garr, George Hamilton, Pauly Shore, Allen Thicke, and Ben Stein.



**OPPOSITE:** Pink sleeveless T-shirt from Roper; striped cotton skirt from Billabong; Pink Applique boots from Liberty Boot Co.; necklace with heart pendant from Happy Trails de Santa Fe; sterling silver heart bracelet from Island Cowgirl.

**ABOVE:** Long-sleeve lavender snap-front shirt and red Vintage Collection boots with white stitching, both from Roper; denim skirt and yellow cotton T-shirt, both from Wrangler; sterling silver beaded necklace with cross from Happy Trails de Santa Fe.

Last year she starred in three features including the rollicking Steve Martin family comedy *Cheaper by the Dozen* along with Bonnie Hunt and Demi Moore's squeeze, Ashton Kutcher. Also came the wacky spy comedy *Agent Cody Banks* with Frankie Muniz and her own starring vehicle, *The Lizzie McGuire Movie*, these all released in 2003. The later *Lizzie* film is the big screen follow-up to her mega successful Disney Channel television series, "Lizzie McGuire." A series that continues to run after three years of consistently winning its ratings time slot.

The Disney Channel cable show also marked Hilary's singing debut lending her fresh vocals to "I Can't Wait," a song from the certified platinum, million-selling *Lizzie McGuire Soundtrack*. Singing has seemed to be another of Hilary's talents, along with acting, looking at the success

of her debut album on Hollywood Records, *Metamorphosis*. A now multi-million plus, triple-platinum selling album; the CD initially shipped to stores well in excess of gold record status with over 800,000 copies sold with its initial release last August. With impressive continuing sales today, Hilary's singing career is exploding on Top 40 radio, MTV, and the top 200 retail charts. Just like her song "Come Clean" says on her album, Hilary is spreading her wings and no more "trying to fit a square into a circle." The album has caused quite a stir as Hilary is dealing with growing up and the pull of her millions of fans to stay just Lizzie McGuire.

"Change is a very important and natural thing," says Hilary. "We called the album 'Metamorphosis' because it's about changes that everybody experiences, especially kids. It's not just about me, but it is very personal. The change might seem a





**ABOVE:** Short-sleeve cactus shirt from Roper; jeans from Rock & Republic.  
**OPPOSITE:** Suede Wild Child shirt in baked apple red from Patricia Wolf; El Muerto buckle set with black calf strap from Douglas Magnus; silver horseshoe necklace from Island Cowgirl; jeans from Rock & Republic.

little sudden as most people are used to seeing me as a character on TV through “Lizzie McGuire” and movie parts I played. This music is a good way to get everyone to know the real me. Everyone evolves and changes.”

Change is one thing, doing it smart is another and *Metamorphosis* shows that Hilary was very smart in wanting something different on a debut album from what would have been expected from other pop princess efforts — a potentially dicey move in a very congested and competitive field. But in Hilary’s case, she did her homework. The 13 pop-rock songs were written, produced, and arranged by the very best in the business including nine tracks by Charlie Midnight (Joe Cocker, James Brown and Joni Mitchell). The Matrix (Avril Lavigne, Christine Aguilera) produced three tracks including “So Yesterday” and “The Math.” Others contributing their sizable

talent included singer-songwriter-producer Meredith Brooks, producing mastermind Chico Bennett (Madonna, Usher, Destiny’s Child), and some of the best pop-rock musicians anywhere.

Of the experience, Hilary was ecstatic, “Can I tell you how awesome everyone was to work with? Here were the very best writers, musicians, and producers ever and they were so open to my opinions. I got to talk with some of the writers and say, ‘You know, I feel like this’ and they got it. It is so cool. I loved the whole process.”

The album had a real family aspect as well. Two songs were written by Hilary’s number one idol, her talented big sister, Haylie. “She knows me better than anyone else,” Hilary says proudly. “She wrote ‘Sweet Sixteen,’ a fun song that really relates to my life now. She also wrote ‘Inner Strength,’ a really uplifting and beautiful message.

It’s a song that says a great deal about

kids today and their doubts of relationships lasting. A burden placed on ones so young but a reality just the same that in the end everyone is accountable to themselves: “Gotta find your inner strength/If you can’t then just throw life away/Gotta learn to rely on you.”

Yet with all this huge, seemingly overnight success and with all the pressure forced upon her, Hilary is somehow succeeding at staying a teenager while also being TV and pop music’s favorite girl-next-door — a substantial achievement in keeping values first. To maintain that achievement it takes a strong foundation to hold up to the pressures of the entertainment industry. Hilary’s foundation is a strong and grounded family, something parents Bob and Susan Duff have nurtured and closely protected, right from the beginning.

Hilary Erhard Duff was born in Houston Texas, on September 28, 1987. A sixth generation Texan, she and older sister Haylie come from time-tested stock, their great-great-great-grandparents having emigrated from Munich, Germany, and settled near Austin back in 1840, four years after Texas won independence from Mexico.

“It does create a bit of permanence,” she says. Permanence that makes for deep ties to her home state of Texas and the one thing that really matters to Hilary and her family - each other. With all that’s going on with her life, Hilary Duff is growing up pretty Western in all the good sense of the word with roots that are faith based and strong. No matter how far her fame might take her, she says she “feels grounded” and gives thanks to the very real connections of her supportive family and friends. “Texas, to me, is all about that — family and friends, and courtesy,” she smiles.

“‘Please’ and ‘thank you’ were probably some of the first words my kids learned,” says mom Susan Duff. “Our parents taught us it’s the little things you can do that can make such a big improvement in our lives as well as the lives of others,” says Hilary, recalling Christmas parties where her parents asked guests to bring items for charitable donation rather than gifts, and







bike rides with her dad where they would often stop to pick up trash left in their neighborhood.

Both Duff girls received more than just a good education in civic responsibility. They were fortunate to be enrolled at St. Mary's Hall, a San Antonio school founded in 1879 and renowned for its academic excellence. It also happened to have a top-notch performing-arts program.

"Haylie got involved in ballet and school plays," Hilary says. "At home she would teach me all these dances and stuff, and then I wanted to start doing them, too. We had been traveling in a local ballet company when Haylie decided she wanted to be a singer. I was 6 so I wanted to be a singer also. She wanted to be an actress, so I wanted to be an actress. She's three years older than me, so everything she does I want to do, too."

Hilary's first real part was a TV miniseries shot at a neighboring place in Texas — Hallmark Entertainment's *True Women*, which aired on CBS in 1997. It starred Angelina Jolie, Dana Delany, Powers Booth, and Rachel Leigh Cook and was filmed partly in Hills Prairie, Texas, at what Hilary calls "the Hill place." It's a two-story wooden home built in 1852 by Abraham Hill, a veteran of the famous Battle of San Jacinto. It was restored with work started in the early 1970s by Hilary's grandparents, Ken and Mary Duff. The home ultimately caught the attention of movie location scouts in search of authentic settings. *True Women* was one of many productions shot there and ironically gave Haylie and Hilary the chance to work as featured day players. "That experience had an awful lot to do with their getting to see the business firsthand," says Susan Duff, who now directs Hilary and sister Haylie's careers. One of Hilary's first co-starring roles was in 1999 as young Ellie in NBC's *Soul Collector* alongside veteran actors Ossie Davis, Melissa Gilbert, and Buck Taylor. It was in *Soul Collector* that young Hilary won a Best Performance in a TV Movie or Pilot (Supporting Young Actress) Young Artist Award.

Bob and Susan Duff were determined to give their girls a normal, Texas child-

hood. They kept horses on their family ranch in Bastrop, outside of Austin, including twin Shetlands — Cinnamon and Sugar, bought at their church auction, along with Lady, a Welsh pony that Hilary and Haylie loved riding. For several years they would participate in the Family Fair at the San Antonio Livestock Show and Rodeo and occasionally would go to dances at Gruene Hall, the oldest dance-hall in Texas, near New Braunfels. It was a wonderful time, Susan remembers. "Everybody was dancing — kids standing on their parents' feet learning to two-step. The bands were great, everybody danced, we saw everyone from Jerry Jeff Walker to The Mavericks."

It's those memories, that steady foundation, that give Hilary her clarity and strength — along with the family she looks to for management and guidance.

"I'm so busy, I don't really have time to sit down and actually take a breath," she admits with a laugh. "But when I do think about it, when I'm lying in bed at night, it does seem a little surreal at times."

Something she never dreamed of was the incredible demand among her teen and preteen fans for all-things-Hilary. With all her other projects, Hilary has, by popular demand, developed a merchandising arm. She teamed with trendy Target to launch her Duff Stuff line of girls' clothing and gear, with Hilary playing an integral part in the design process. She also has developed a line of pet accessories called Little Dog Duff Stuff. Fans can also buy their choice of three different Hilary Duff, fully accessorized fashion dolls in full Hilary TV Star, Hilary Rock Star, and Hilary Movie Star modes. "It's a little unnerving," she says, "seeing yourself as a doll, but lots of fun."

Another result of Hilary's success has been the opportunity to help others, something her parents instilled in her early on. "I've been super lucky," says Hilary, "giving is something that is easy to do." In 1999, she became one of the founding members of Kids with a Cause, a charity formed by young performers to help create programs that improve the quality of life for disadvantaged children. Hilary



**ABOVE:** Hilary in performance at MuchMusic Studios in Toronto, where several hundred fans heard her sing songs from her first solo album, *Metamorphosis*. **OPPOSITE:** Ranch Romance screen T-shirt from Roper; embroidered vintage jeans from Rhinestone Cowgirls; black and tan boots from Ariat; turquoise earrings from Happy Trails de Santa Fe.

plays an active part in the group, doing everything from participating in fundraising events to visiting children's hospitals. She also earmarks proceeds from each of her concert tickets specifically for the charity. All of the proceeds of sales from her Little Dog Duff Stuff line will be donated to help horse and dog-rescue centers and spay and neuter programs.

With all her current success and philanthropic generosity, Hilary is still focused on being a 16-year-old girl, holding on to having a childhood and adolescence and all that those times of growing up bring. America loves a successful start-up, watching something — someone — grow and mature. But with that public presence can come a kind of darkness, a side of celebrity that can engulf and over-

shadow hard work and honest success. Call it achievement ego or sheltering from reality, whatever one calls it, too many young performers have their lives ruined by seemingly adoring fans wanting more and more access — and dirt. It's the pitfalls of success that Hilary and her family are working hard at avoiding. "The second I give my mom attitude, I'm in trouble. If my room's not clean or I haven't done something that she's asked me to do, I'm grounded," she says straight-faced.

"In life, you have to turn out to be a good citizen," says Susan Duff, summing up her and Bob's approach to raising Haylie and Hilary. "The success doesn't matter. Who knows how long it's going to last? The real thing is how you're going to get through life and contribute." ★

MATT DAMON'S GROOMING: RICHARD MARIN FOR CLOUTIER/HELENE CURTIS; BILLY BOB THORNTON'S GROOMING: LYVINE EAGAN STYLING; GEORGE BLOODWELL FOR CLOUTIER





Hilary (right) and big sister singer-songwriter Haylie at the 46th annual Grammy Awards in Los Angeles. "We're best friends and we always have been."



At the *Cowboys & Indians* photo shoot, Hilary and her parents, Bob and Susan, enjoyed the scenery and hospitality of Avalon Ranch, Jim and Teresa Wilson's spread in the Santa Monica Mountains outside of Malibu.

### Avalon Ranch

That beautiful California terrain and cool ranch-house backdrop for the *C&I* Hilary Duff photo shoot is Avalon Ranch, the Santa Monica Mountains home of producer-director Jim Wilson and his family. Besides being Kevin Costner's partner in Tig Productions — their first project was *Dances with Wolves* — Wilson is dad to two daughters who are big Hilary fans: Lauren, 16, and Maeve, 11. "The girls follow her career — the music and *Lizzie McGuire*," Wilson says. "They really wanted to meet her when she came for the shoot. It was a blast for everybody."

At an elevation of 1,200 feet, Avalon today is a Pacific paradise, but in 1996 when the Wilsons bought the place, "it was a valley full of refuse from development of the city." About eight miles from Malibu and just a half-hour drive from the L.A. studios where Wilson works, the 115 acres were once part of the Warner (as in Warner Bros.) ranch. For two years, they planned, cleaned up, pruned and planted — Wilson's wife, Theresa, is a landscape architect — restoring the land to its native state, complete with drought-tolerant plants, a hundred or so citrus trees, and orchards full of pear, peach, and plum trees. Theresa designed two houses — a main house and a one-bedroom guest house with loft (called the Crow's Nest for its perch of a location)— with architect Larry Clark.

It's the Wilsons' own sequestered little valley, where they live in California contentment with horses, goats, chickens, rabbits, ducks, five dogs, five cats, fish, and a cow named Daisy — "about 40 animals all told." Then there's Casper, the friendly horse. Posing for the cover with Hilary was old hat for the movie veteran. The last screen time for the 23-year-old flea-bitten-gray registered quarter horse was in *The Postman* with Kevin Costner (Costner's daughter Annie rode him). "We ride him all the time out here," says Wilson. "He's in great shape for 23."

For the guy who did *The Bodyguard*, *Wyatt Earp*, and *Message in a Bottle* (to name a few), Avalon's a lot like the original place of legend, an island paradise in the west where King Arthur and other heroes were taken after death. With one foot in the studio world and one in independent film, Wilson can relate to the idea of doing battle and coming back to the ranch to recuperate. "I have all these battles in this business," he says. "At the end of a long day or week or month or whatever you've been through, you come to this place, where it's so quiet. At night, it's completely dark. It's a great place, and it's definitely home. I can't imagine leaving."

