



## deana carter anything but ordinary

Calling from Los Angeles, Deana Carter—in her unabashedly Southern accent—politely asks me to hold on.

“I’m comin’ out of the car wash,” she laughs. “This bird crapped on my car.”

Lately, she’s become an expert at multitasking—this interview being no exception. In the last two years, she found a new man in filmmaker Chris Hickey, had baby Gray Hayes Hickey not long after, and signed with indie label Vanguard. Now she’s releasing her label debut, *The Story of My Life*—a surprising, sincere collection of Southern-fried folk rock sure to cause some double-takes in Nashville. While “twirling so many plates,” especially a seven-month-old, the music must have been affected.

“What music!?” she asks playfully. “I have a life? I have a career? I forgot. The only thing I’m struggling with now is trying to keep it all together. I just didn’t realize how easy I had it when it was just me by myself.”

During that less hectic time, Carter torched the industry, selling five-million copies of her debut, 1995’s *Did I Shave My Legs For This?* Spawning three number-one singles, including coming-of-age stunner “Strawberry Wine,” Carter became a household name in country music. But after a decade of creative differences and label shuffling, she found it difficult to duplicate *Legs*’ success both commercially and artistically. Her search for a new label was out of pure creative necessity.

“Vanguard was like ‘We want you for who you are. We want you to make the record you want to make. We want you to produce it and write the music,’” she says. “I was, like, oh my God, how can I say no to that? It’s my dream.” With what sounds like a sigh of relief, she admits “It was perfect.” Finally, writing or co-writing all of *Life*’s 11 songs, Carter’s made a record that completely mirrors her heart.

“Ordinary,” one of the many standout tracks, explores the struggle to carve a niche in the world. Even as an accomplished singer/songwriter, Carter still feels the pressure. “I am so afraid of being lumped in and not remembered that I just freak out about that,” she says. “Whatever it is, I just want to be memorable. I want to affect people in a good way.”

Pondering her “place,” Carter revels in a few simple words of wisdom. “My grandma used to say ‘You either make dust or you eat dust.’ There’s no in between.” *Cory Albertson* ●