

ADELE

The Biography

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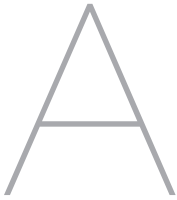
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NO BALLAD, NO CRY



Adele began writing new material for her follow-up record in April 2009.

But not before she agreed to take a flyer as an actress with a guest shot on the hit television sitcom *Ugly Betty*. It seemed like a harmless diversion from all the drama and pressure in her life. She reasoned, how hard could it be to play herself?

In the episode, Betty is dancing with her husband at their wedding when the couple is suddenly interrupted by Adele. There is some harmless banter and the next thing we know Adele is up on stage singing the song “Right As Rain.”

Adele realized that that kind of promotion in America was well worth the effort, but would later acknowledge in *Vogue* that the *Ugly Betty* experience cured her of any future acting aspirations. “I can’t watch it. I was so uncomfortable. I am the worst actress of all time.”

But Adele was thankful for the momentary respite from

her day job as singer-songwriter on the rise. And second albums could be notoriously troublesome.

Label and management, as was often the case with developing artists, were seeking to improve on *19*. They had been a bit taken aback by the description of Adele as being “old soul” even in the most positive reviews and were hinting that some more modern musical elements could not hurt. There was talk of another round of high-profile producers and the input of other songwriters.

The latter suggestion could have been a risky move. Adele had shown with *19* that she was more than a capable songwriter. Creatively, she had seemed comfortable when working with the producers on her debut album, and there had been no reports of ego-driven breakdowns. But management felt this would be a different story. They envisioned outside people taking a bigger hand in crafting these new songs and the album’s overall production, making stronger suggestions in the area of lyrics and instrumentation. The recording of this pivotal album would become a truly collaborative situation.

Adele seemed comfortable, if cautious, with so many other hands in the mix. But she was assured that any creative decisions in the studio would ultimately be made by her.

“Adele was creatively comfortable in her own skin,” her manager Jonathan Dickins told *Billboard*.

The logistics of recording *21* were considerable. Whereas *19* was recorded in a handful of studios in and around London, the recording of *21* would commence in London and then resume literally on the other side of the world in South-

ern California. No less than eleven separate studios would be involved. They were AIR Studios, Angel Studios, Eastcote Studios, Harmony Studios, Metropolis Studios, Myaudio-
tonic Studios, Patriot Studios, Serenity Sound, Shangri-La Studios, Sphere Studios, and Wendyhouse Productions.

For somebody who was very much a homebody, these sessions were shaping up as a true test of Adele's emotional resolve. She would literally and figuratively be on her own, albeit with a lineup of comforting contributors.

The primary producers on board to guide Adele's new music were an interesting mix. Paul Epworth had gained quite the reputation as the performer in Lomax and for production and remix work with the likes of U2, P. Diddy, Bloc Party, and Nine Inch Nails. He was considered a steady hand with solid commercial sensibilities who was well-versed in dealing with emotion and ego. If there was a hit single to be had, Epworth, on paper, seemed the go-to producer.

Adele could tell that he had the appropriate indie credits. But her initial reaction was not good. "I felt 'Well this is not going to work,'" she told *The Independent*. "But I thought I'd go and get drunk and so we went to a pub. Luckily we hit it off."

Rick Rubin had carried the tag of "most important producer" for years and was largely known for his uncanny ability to make magic with such diverse performers as Johnny Cash, The Mars Volta, Rage Against the Machine, and Neil Diamond. Rubin was well known for a pure, Zen-like approach to coaxing spectacular music from his artists and, despite his bearded man-mountain appearance, was a

soft-hearted creative spirit. It went without saying that Epworth and Rubin would bring out the best in Adele.

After the completion of *21*, Adele revealed to *The Vancouver Sun* that her side project with The Raconteurs on “Many Shades Of Black” almost resulted in Jack White climbing into the producer’s chair on the album.

“It almost was Jack White,” she said. “We were doing a lot of collaborations after ‘Many Shades Of Black.’ We were going to get together in Detroit after the 2009 Grammys and finish some tracks and then it never happened. It’ll happen at some point. I definitely want to follow it up.”

Adele was on board with the creative suggestions being offered for her second album. She was growing weary of being cast as a tragic figure who could only write songs about her failed relationships. Adele would have no problem creating songs that were more upbeat and contemporary.

Her own emotions were a whole other matter. As her relationship with her boyfriend was in decline, Adele wrote the song “Take It All” and presented it to him. In its earliest form, “Take It All” was simple and heartfelt. Her lover did not care for it at all.

As Adele recalled it, he made some comments that led to an argument and, for all intents and purposes, ended the relationship.

It was not an auspicious beginning to the creation of the album *21*, which began production in May 2009.

Epworth, along with *19* alum Jim Abbiss (who would turn the song “Take It All” into what many would consider the centerpiece of the album) and songwriter/producer Fraser Smith, would conduct the London portion of the recording.

On the surface, Smith appeared to be the wild card on 21's production list. Smith was as mild mannered and unprepossessing as they come. But one need only look at his long list of both hip and mainstream credits to sense that he would mesh with Adele. At least, that's what manager Jonathan Dickins thought when he suggested to Adele that they meet.

Dickins said in a *Music Week* profile of Smith that "he was ambitious, had a great work ethic, and a great pop sensibility." Adele took Dickins' suggestion and met with Smith at his studio. They instantly hit it off and Smith was on board.

But all the star producers in the world were not going to help Adele out of her personal and emotional issues.

It was Epworth who was the first one to see Adele when she walked in that morning after she had had that final blow-up with her ex. He had sensed that there was trouble brewing the day before, when Adele and he had attempted an informal first session. What he saw was a young woman who was in quite fragile condition.

"We'd had a fuming argument the night before," Adele told *The London Sunday Times* of the previous night's row with her soon-to-be ex. "I'd been drinking. Then I went to the studio and screamed."

"Rolling In The Deep" was angry in tone, and with good reason. Prior to its creation, the mystery lover who had recently broken her heart had admonished Adele for being weak and that, without him, she would be boring, lonely, and rubbish. For Adele, "Rolling In The Deep" was her "fuck you" to her ex.

Adele recalled in a *Calgary Sun* interview that, in the

wake of the breakup, she was insisting on writing a ballad. “And he (Epworth) was like ‘Absolutely not! I want to write a fierce tune.’ I kept saying, ‘Feel my heartbeat, Paul.’ And my heartbeat became the beat of the song.”

Epworth took the creative bull by the horns. In a *New York Times* interview, he would recall the creative tug-of-war that resulted in the song “Rolling In The Deep.”

“I had all these chords that I thought would be perfect for her. I tried all these out for her for about two hours. She literally sat there with a pen in her hand and she just went ‘I’m not feeling anything.’ And then she went ‘I’ve got this riff, this idea’ and I went ‘Go on then, what is it?’”

The musical evolution of what would become *21*’s signature song went through several stages during its development. The producer remembered that the piano bridges were very much a reflection of the song “Brooklyn Zoo” by ODB. But when it came to the vocals, Adele was spot-on in referencing both Cee-Lo Green and Nina Simone.

Epworth recalled that the core of the song, verses, and basic structure were hashed out in fifteen minutes. Two hours later, a very raw but presentable “Rolling In The Deep” was completed.

With this promising start, some preliminary sessions were attempted. But when inspiration seemed in short supply, the sessions for *21* were canceled and Adele went into seclusion. Where, for a time, she wrote, often with a drink or more in her, and contemplated the end of the relationship and that, despite not wanting to repeat with an album of “bad relationship” songs, her focus was on the man she had

loved and lost and it was inevitably finding its way into the lyrics of songs she began writing.

Adele chronicled the dark days in a conversation with America's *People* when she explained, "I was really angry, then I was really bitter, then I was really lonely, then I was devastated."

"I told everybody I knew not to call me for six months," she told *BlackBook* magazine. "But in a few days it was like 'What am I meant to be doing?' I actually forgot about the last album. Nobody was putting pressure on me because they knew if they did, I wouldn't deliver."

Reports began to surface during Adele's self-imposed isolation that she was quietly dating again. But if she was, these attempts at seeing other people were so fleeting that the press chose not to pursue them. Adele would neither confirm or deny the reports.

By early 2010, Adele had indeed delivered a series of completed songs, fragments of lyrics, and a lot of ideas for the songs that would appear on the album.

Adele's world was reduced to going to the studio in the morning and going home, walking her dog, and writing at night. But, as she recalled in an interview with MSN Music, she made a concerted effort to "just swim in music."

"I literally just sat in my house and just listened to loads of music. Loads of hip-hop, loads of country, loads of pop; stuff I liked already and stuff I did not like. I was just trying to understand what it was about a song that moved me."

Once her creative instincts kicked in, *21* was out of the blocks and moving steadily forward.

As the songwriting and subsequent recording progressed, Adele brought a new element into creative play. She recalled that while on tour in support of *19*, she got an introduction to country music.

“We were on the bus doing the American tour,” she recalled in a Country Music Television interview. “I used to smoke at the front of the bus and the driver would be up there driving and listening to this incredible music that I’d never heard. He could see the look on my face, I was like a child. I would say ‘Who’s this?’ and he would say ‘Garth Brooks’ and I would say ‘Who’s Garth Brooks?’ and he would bust out laughing.”

The bus driver was happy to educate the young singer. He began making country music compilation tapes for Adele and, under the informal guidance of the bus driver, Adele learned to listen to and appreciate classic country crooners like Johnny Cash, Dolly Parton, Loretta Lynn, and The Carter Family. Word soon got around that Adele had gone country, and her tour manager and others were offering up their own tapes, which included some of the more modern practitioners like Alison Krauss, Rascal Flatts, Lady Antebellum, and, yes, Garth Brooks. What the singer quickly latched on to was the simplicity of the music and the stories they told.

“It’s not fussy,” she told CMT. “It’s not trying to be trendy or clever. It’s just stories and that, to me, is what music is about.”

It seemed like the perfect adjunct to her soul and blues vocals, and more than a few hints of country would eventually make their way onto the album.

The song “Set Fire To The Rain” was typical of the spon-

taneous, truly magical moments that would populate *21*. Long a fan of Fraser T. Smith's work, in particular his credits with James Morrison and Cee-Lo Green, Adele had jumped at the chance to work with him. And Smith's triple-threat instincts—producer, songwriter, and engineer—were very much in play the day Adele walked into the session.

“When she walked into the session, I already had a rolling drumbeat going and some chords in my head,” he told *M*. “She delivered a great vocal and we bashed it out in a couple of hours.”

Originally the final version of “Set Fire To The Rain” was supposed to be produced by Rick Rubin. But when everybody heard how great Adele's vocals were on the demo, the only additions that were made were a drum track and string arrangements.

Sporadic dustups between Adele and her ex would continue during the recording of *21* and would lead to a musical marriage between Adele and musician/producer Ryan Tedder (OneRepublic) that would result in the song “Turning Tables.” Adele had met Tedder during the 2009 Grammys. They hit it off during a laughable elevator ride in which they attempted a conversation through a handful of balloons Adele was holding. Tedder expressed an interest in collaborating with the singer on upcoming songs. Tedder had a reputation for being meticulous in the studio while also being an outside-the-box thinker. Adele readily agreed to the offer, and when the sessions for *21* began, she rang him up.

Tedder was thrilled but, admittedly, somewhat in the dark regarding Adele's musical vibe. And so after a crash course with *19*, he arrived at the studio on the appointed day four

hours early in an attempt to work out chord and voice shadings that would be appropriate for the singer. After three hours, Tedder gave up in frustration and, as he told *M*, “I said ‘to hell with this,’ I’m going to write something that I want to hear. So I came up with an opening piano sequence and a couple of lyrics. Then Adele walked in.”

Tedder explained the idea behind the bare bones of “Turning Tables.” He had not known about Adele’s latest fight with her ex, and so he was amazed when the singer said that the sentiment of what he had presented was exactly what was going on with her. Adele and Tedder began the process of firing ideas and lyrics at each other. Given Adele’s emotional state at the moment, the rest of the song’s lyrics came thick and fast. The demo for “Turning Tables” would be finished in a few hours over two days. Veteran Adele producer Abiss would ultimately head up production on the final version of “Turning Tables.”

With a good half of *21* now in the can, it was time for Adele to relocate to Malibu, California, where Rick Rubin would produce another half-dozen cuts. Adele was not what you would call a summer-at-the-beach kind of girl. Consequently, her days at Malibu were marked by heat rash, sunburn, and blisters. But the physical discomfort was more than made up for by the opportunity to record with Rubin.

Adele had been a fan of Rubin and his work for years. When the Rubin-produced *Californication* by the Red Hot Chili Peppers came out, fifteen-year-old Adele was mesmerized. Their paths crossed briefly during her *Saturday Night Live* appearance, in which Rubin was also a guest. But it

remained for the Hollywood Bowl appearance that ended her *19* tour to cement their creative relationship.

“He came up and said ‘You’re so different live. You’ve got to get your live show across on record,’” she related in an interview with the *Calgary Sun*. “I felt like going ‘Do you want to do it Rick?’ But I was like ‘I can’t say that to Rick Rubin.’ He’d be like ‘Do you know who I am?’” But I tried to mentally plant the seed.”

It was a seed that would take root after Adele captured Best New Artist honors at the 2009 Grammys.

Prior to the Grammy Awards, Adele attended the posh charity party, MusiCares. As part of the party’s festivities, some of the biggest names in the business were invited to sing. Although considered by many to be the new kid on the block, Adele readily accepted the invitation. Adele told *Clash* magazine what happened next.

“I sang there and I was actually the worst of the night,” she remembered. “I followed Jennifer Hudson and I just know I was shit. Rick came up to me afterwards and tried to boost my confidence by saying ‘It was brilliant, it was great.’ Later that night, after I had won Best New Artist, Rick e-mailed me and said, ‘Shall we do a record together?’”

Adele penciled in April 2010 for a five-week stint at Rubin’s Malibu studio. That much was set in stone. But *21* had quickly evolved into a naturalistic and quite emotional project. Adele’s emotional state, rather than a stumbling block, had become quite the catalyst for outside collaborations and spontaneous creation during the London phase of the recording. There was no reason to believe that process would not continue in the States.

At the suggestion of Columbia Records Group president Ashley Newton, Adele agreed to meet with songwriter Greg Wells to work out something that was not on Adele's song list for Rubin. As a producer/songwriter/player, Wells had worked with a lot of people Adele had admired, such as Mika, Katy Perry, and Pink. As she walked into Wells' Culver City, California, studio, she felt possibilities.

Wells was clearly starstruck by Adele, as he explained in an *American Songwriter* interview. "To have her singing her ideas sounding the way she sounds, it's kind of spoiled me forever."

In a video interview on her Web site, Adele looked back on the idea that the song "One And Only" would run contrary to the tone of much of the album. "The song is not about the same guy that the record is about. It's about somebody I've known for years. We've always liked each other but we've never really been together. It's more a song of intention."

The songwriting process was fairly simple. Wells started out playing a slow piano progression. Across the room, Adele was pacing, her ever-present pad and pen at hand. Wells told *American Songwriter* what happened next.

"Finally she said, 'I'm not sure if this is good, but what do you think of this?' And then in full voice she sang the finished chorus of 'One And Only' and I almost fell over."

The collaboration lasted three days and, after a slight tweak by songwriter Dan Wilson, "One And Only" was added to an ever-growing list of potential cuts for *21*.

The song "Rumor Has It" played fast and loose with the

album's overall theme of love lost and betrayal. And it was the first time that Adele directly addressed the alleged rumors close friends had spread as a contributing factor to the breakup.

During her L.A. stay, Adele also reconnected with Ryan Tedder and turned his notion of a bluesy-*cum*-Radiohead vibe into the basis for the song "Rumor Has It." Adele's collaborator continued to be bowled over by the ease and speed in which the singer plied her craft. Typically a four- or five-hour job to record vocals, Adele did a pitch-perfect run-through of "Rumor Has It" in ten minutes.

"Rumor Has It" was a particularly thorny issue for Adele. The song was in response to the fact that she discovered close friends had been gossiping about her and that these bits of rumor and gossip always seemed to be making their way into the tabloid papers and Internet blogs. To test her theory, Adele went so far as to make up stories, feed them to certain friends, and watch as these falsehoods made the rounds in order to determine who had spread the rumors.

"It's about my own friends believing the stuff they hear about me," she explained to Digital Spy. "It's all pretty mortifying."

After completing sessions in Los Angeles, it was up to Malibu, where Adele was about to experience a different kind of recording process.

Rick Rubin had always been a contrary sort when it came to producing: quick to fly in the face of prevailing attitudes and, in the case of Adele, insisting on a very live recording situation. To that extent, he said, no music samples

or electronic instruments would be used. He brought in a live band of musicians, who would add to the spontaneous nature of the sessions.

Rubin had a near-encyclopedic knowledge of musicians and instinctively knew which ones would easily adjust to the recording process he had in mind. The band would be made up of the seasoned professionals Chris Dave (drums), Matt Sweeney (guitar), James Poyser (piano), and Pino Palladino (bass).

Adele admitted to being unsure about this progressive approach.

“I didn’t think we would fit in together at all,” she told *Clash*. “That’s why I was so intrigued to do it. I think it was a challenge for both of us and I think that’s why we wanted to do it.”

Rubin had the reputation as being an easygoing yet notorious control freak. Adele was initially unsure about how sessions with essentially no structure and lots of improvisation would sit with her. But she admitted in a widely circulated YouTube video interview that she “was coming from a braver place” after the spontaneity of the London sessions and so was more than willing to test the waters of Rubin’s brave new world.

Rubin’s live band approach to recording had presented Adele’s recording environment in almost surreal terms. Adele would offer in several post-recording interviews that recording under those conditions presented an insulated, timeless quality to the process.

“It was all about the songs, all about the music,” she told MSN Music. “We just vibed until it felt right.”

But she would admit to *Q* that there were those first-day jitters. She was feeling homesick and missing her mother. She was alone in the States and not totally secure in the working situation—all of which combined to make her first day in Malibu a rough one.

“The first day I had a breakdown. I lost it and started crying and had to go for a walk on the beach to sort myself out. After that I was fine, though I still had the odd moment.”

Rubin was understanding and patient. It was not the first time a singer had a moment of doubt on his watch, which is why he knew Adele would come out of it.

Adele held it together enough to get into the flow of how this new phase of recording would work. While there would be endless takes, more often than not Adele’s first or second vocal run-through would be the one selected for the song. Her diligence and focus were drawing praise from the producers and musicians as well as the equally impressed behind-the-scenes people.

Sound mixer Tom Elmhirst had been down the recording road with Adele on her first album and, as he explained to *Sound on Sound*, he returned because of her musical character. “I had already mixed some of the material on Adele’s first album and knew what she was all about. She’s someone who breaks the mold.”

During the sessions, Adele would find the time to truly exercise her new country influence with the song “Don’t You Remember,” which she would write during the Malibu recording sessions.

“What gave me the courage to try and do that (‘Don’t You Remember’) was the country song ‘Need To Know,’”

she told CMT. “It was everywhere. I couldn’t change the channel on the radio without hearing that song. You couldn’t escape it but, luckily I loved it. The feeling that song gave me, I was trying to channel that into my own song.”

Adele also managed to exercise her newfound love for the bluegrass band The Steeldrivers when she recorded their song “If It Hadn’t Been For Love.” The banjo-flavored song would not ultimately make the final cut of the album but would appear as a bonus track on a later edition of *21* and would be a crowd-pleaser in many of her live performances.

Throughout the sessions that produced the songs “Don’t You Remember,” “He Won’t Go” (a radical thematic departure dedicated to a friend who was addicted to heroin), the final pass on “One And Only,” “I Found A Boy,” and the cover of INXS’ “Never Tear Us Apart,” Rubin was gentle but firm, encouraging his charges to take every element of every song that extra step. Rubin would later acknowledge that the emphasis on more spontaneity and less restraint would produce pleasant surprises on a daily basis.

One such surprise came on the day that Rubin and Adele decided to scrap “Never Tear Us Apart” in favor of a spur-of-the-moment live workout on a song that hit very close to home for Adele, The Cure’s “Lovesong,” a song that Rubin had long coveted as something Barbra Streisand might be interested in.

For Adele, the decision to record “Lovesong” could not have come at a better time. As the sessions were winding down, Adele was finding herself increasingly homesick for her mother and friends, and the song was a nostalgic nod to

the first concert she had attended with her mother and how The Cure had been a major influence in her life over the years.

“Her singing was strong and powerful in the studio,” the producer told *M* of the “Lovesong” session. “It was clear something very special was happening. The musicians were inspired, as they rarely get to play with the artist present. This was truly a magic moment. None of the musicians knew exactly what they were going to play and were listening so deeply to Adele to see where they fit in.”

Rubin would later assess the “Lovesong” session when he said everybody in the studio was reduced to tears. And those would not be the last tears shed during the *21* sessions.

Recording an album with such a constant and very high emotional tone can be rough. For Adele, there were continuous takes that stretched her vocal powers to the limits. For the band, there was the constant challenge of playing and improvising on command. It was safe to say that, emotionally, everybody involved in the sessions was walking a tight-rope.

After the demo for “Set Fire To The Rain” was completed, Smith was under the impression that Rubin would do the final production and that his work on *21* was done.

“I didn’t hear from Adele because she was in Malibu recording,” he told *Music Life*. “But when she got back to London, she asked me to come to her flat and she played me the version that Rick had done. It was great and it was completely different from what we had done on the demo. But I think we both felt that the demo was the nucleus of what the song should be.”

Smith's solution was to record live drum tracks, add a string arrangement and, after two days of attempting to rerecord the vocals, Adele and Smith agreed that the original vocal track on the demo was what ultimately set the proper tone.

Adele had nothing but praise for the Rubin sessions and the nurturing vibe he had created in the studio. But she was candid in an interview that appeared in *Pressparty* and numerous outlets that she had been uncomfortable with the lifestyle of the rich and famous that made up the Malibu colony.

"I'm a London girl through and through," she said. "I felt very uncomfortable in Malibu. It's not my kind of area. Everybody is rich and they live behind these gates. Everybody drives. I thought I would walk to a cute little waterfront café and hang out. But you can't walk anywhere."

As the sessions for *21* were winding down, Adele heard from a mutual friend that her ex-lover had recently announced his engagement to another woman. Adele told *New York Post.com* that she was "devastated" at the news. But she made the decision that she did not want to grow old with all the anger and disappointment from the relationship that had fueled the fire of *21*.

"I thought this guy needs to be shown in a good light. He was the love of my life and now it was over."

Adele went with the moment, sat down, and in ten minutes had written the bulk of the lyrics that would become "Someone Like You."

The suggestion that yet another song be thrown into the mix that was essentially full to overflowing did not faze anybody.

In fact producer Rubin and others connected to the label encouraged Adele to get together with singer-songwriter Dan Wilson to see what they could come up with.

Wilson, the former lead singer of the group Semisonic, had gone on to become the “first call” writer to the stars, collaborating with the likes of Josh Groban, John Legend, Faith Hill, and Keith Urban. The fact that he was in Semisonic proved the icebreaker when Adele and he met for the first time.

“The first time we met, she told me, ‘My mum wanted to make sure that I told you that she’s a big fan of Semisonic,’” he related to the *StarTribune*. “We had a good laugh about that.”

After they stopped laughing, they got down to business with Adele telling him that the basis of this song-to-be was her recent terrible breakup.

Wilson recalled in *PopMatters* that a new song at that point would be under a deadline situation and that Adele and he would have a matter of days to put something together for a listening session in Malibu. He also remembered that his marching orders from producer Rubin were vague. “I asked Rick Rubin what kind of thing he was looking for. He said, ‘We’re just looking for a great song.’ So I didn’t really have any preconceptions.”

Adele took Rubin’s advice and asked Wilson to help her give form to what, at that point, were the skeletal outlines of the song. The songwriter was not going in blindly. He was a legitimate fan of Adele’s and songs from *19* were regular listens on his iPod.

Wilson recalled what happened next in a conversation

with the *LA Weekly*. “She had at least four lines when we got together. While we worked on it, what became clear was that this was somebody who—years had gone by and she still couldn’t let go of the love she felt.”

To get in the proper mood for fleshing out the song, Wilson and Adele listened to a number of Wanda Jackson tunes to catch the down-and-dirty kind of vibe that the singer was looking for.

But, as chronicled in an interview with the Web site Weeping Elvis, the process by which “Someone Like You” came into being had its tense moments.

“We didn’t have any arguments or tussles,” said Wilson in an *American Songwriter* interview. “There may have been some points where I suggested that a certain line might be better. But on this one, Adele knew exactly what she wanted to say.”

And what Adele wanted to say was nothing if not direct.

“She never told me this directly but I think she felt that she could do something less metaphorical with me,” he said in the Weeping Elvis piece. “Something less about wordplay and more about telling the story and being emotional and strong in a very vulnerable way.”

Two-thirds of the song was completed by the end of the first day. It was far from complete but, when they stopped for the day, they both felt they were on the right track. Little did Wilson know that a surprise would be waiting for him when the pair met up the next day. Unbeknownst to Wilson, Adele had taken the very rough and incomplete tapes and played them for both her mother and her manager. Wilson recalled being a bit perturbed at the news.

“I said, ‘It’s not finished. Why did you do that?’ It scared me. Then I asked her what they thought of it. Adele said her manager loved it and her mother cried. That was with big blank areas, no lyrics in the second verse, and the bridge wasn’t written.”

The pair set about finishing the song. Lyrics were reworked to Adele’s satisfaction and the bridge was written between Adele’s hourly cigarette breaks. They would also end up rerecording portions of the vocal track when it was found that Adele’s second-day vocals had a more appropriate desperate quality to them.

Adele would later jokingly tell friends that Wilson was a slave driver during their sessions, but would then offer that, in the most positive manner, the songwriter had worked her harder than she had ever worked before.

“Dan brought out the sappy side of me,” she told *The Advertiser*. “Before that, I was just writing bitter, angry songs.”

A very basic demo of “Someone Like You” was recorded, Adele’s heart-wrenching vocals over a simple piano backing. At the end of the second day, Adele went up to Malibu to play the demo for Rubin and some label people. Wilson heard nothing for a few months. Then he started getting reports that everybody who had heard the demo had cried. Wilson knew that in the songwriting business, if people cried it was a good sign.

Originally the demo was something that was going to be filed away for future consideration. When it suddenly became a contender for inclusion in *21*, Wilson recalled in *American Songwriter*, “My initial impression was that they

were going to add strings and a choir and turn it into a Chrissie Hynde power ballad.”

But the emotions the song wrought in Adele literally forced her to essentially make a slightly tweaked version of the demo of “Someone Like You” the very last song on *21*. The album was now officially done

And Adele was now truly free.