

From competing on American Idol to recently releasing her debut album, pop singer and Taylor High School grad Kimberly Caldwell has taken the music scene by storm

Photo by Ari Michaels

Pop Star KIMBERLY CALDWELL

Katy singer takes center stage with her debut album *Without Regret*. A look at what this Taylor grad turned pop star is up to these days.

Written by Noreen Stavinoha

*From a young age, pop star Kimberly Caldwell loved the spotlight, finding the perfect stage for success in her hometown of Katy. Her dreams of someday becoming a performer were further fueled when she won first runner-up in the Little Miss Katy pageant at the age of 4 and the title of Little Miss Texas at only 6 years old. The season two American Idol finalist has come a long way since, serving as a host on the Fox Sports Network's extreme sports show 54321 and later on the TV Guide Network. Recently, she celebrated releasing her debut album *Without Regret*. "The response from the fans has been so positive, and they are really connecting to the songs on a personal level, which means I did my job," Caldwell shares. Katy Magazine catches up with Caldwell to talk about her Katy roots, rising star power, and love of music.*

EARLY SUCCESS ON STAGE

Throughout her career, Caldwell has always looked to Katy for support, and her hometown never disappoints. Shortly after she made it into the top 10 on *American Idol*, she received a welcome surprise and boost of confidence at home. "I'm really proud to say that Aug. 20, 2003 was named 'Kimberly Caldwell Day' in Katy, Texas, when I came to Houston during the *Idol* tour," she says.

Growing up, she earned an early vote of confidence at many local pageants after showing an aptitude for both performing and music. Her mother decided to put her talents to good use and began entering her pretty and precocious daughter in pageants. For four years, they traveled the pageant circuit, and Caldwell enjoyed everything about those performances. Her mother showed her own considerable talents in providing the glitzy costumes, hairstyles, and make-up her daughter needed to wow the judges.

When the pageant phase ended, Caldwell then turned to other talent contests, and set her sights on competing on the TV show *Star Search*. When she finally got on the show, Caldwell was the only junior vocalist to win five times. Following that success, she had the distinct honor of playing at the Grand Ole Opry for former President George H.W. and Barbara Bush's 50th wedding anniversary. Their warm and appreciative reaction to her performance makes that a favorite memory of those early years.

Word of her talent got around, and she was contacted by the producers of a show called *Country Tonite* in Branson, MO. She joined the show as a featured performer, and the Caldwell family picked up and moved to Missouri to support her as she pursued her dream. The stint ended up lasting for three years, because Caldwell kept renewing her contract with the show. She truly loved what she was doing. Performing two shows a day with only one day off a week proved to be a two-edged sword, though. Caldwell improved her skill as a performer, but finally realized she needed a break.

FINDING SUPPORT AT TAYLOR HIGH

The family moved back to Katy, where Caldwell attended Taylor High School and focused on just being a "normal" teen. She didn't exactly get her wish, though. Her parents parted ways about this time, and life got more difficult, both emotionally and financially. As a reaction, Caldwell began to act out. "I definitely got being a troublemaker out of my system," she recalls.

Her rebellious stage may explain why she never secured a role in any of the musicals the school produced. It might have been easy for Caldwell to become discouraged through it all, but support from some of her teachers and counselors kept that from happening. "There was a counselor and a couple of teachers in high school who always encouraged me when I was trying to find myself, and I will always have a special place [in my heart] for them," Caldwell shares.

She adds, "Also, I got the Phoenix Award as a senior, which recognized me for being the most improved. It really gave me an extra boost to continue being focused in my life." Taking a break from performing to finish high school provided Caldwell with the chance to mature. She found herself better able to clearly set her goals for the future.

PURSuing HER PASSION FOR MUSIC

With a renewed sense of self, she boldly decided to audition for *American Idol* when it came to Texas. Caldwell not only made the cut, she succeeded in being one of the top 10 performers that season. That group of 10 embarked on a national tour billed as *Idols Live!*, with Houston planned as one of the cities on the tour.

Even given the time away from Katy, she knows she can always count on familiar faces to welcome her home again. "Mrs. Pavlicek from second grade was my favorite teacher, and she always comes out to see me if I'm performing anywhere close [to Katy]," says Caldwell.

When the *Idols Live!* tour ended, her resume was given a new boost when Fox Sports Network hired her as a correspondent for the extreme sports program *54321*. Her foray into TV continued with a position as an entertainment correspondent and host on the TV Guide Network a short while later. Both positions allowed her to grow professionally, giving her a firsthand glimpse of a completely different side of the entertainment industry.

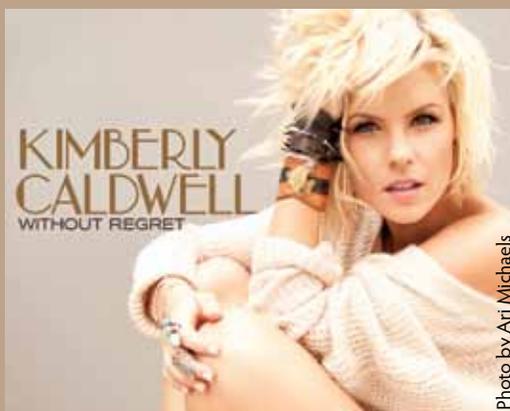
IN HARMONY WITH HER GOALS

While Caldwell says she enjoyed hosting the shows, she never wavered from her desire for a career in music. She never gave up on her love of singing and performing, and always had a goal of someday recording an album.

She placed songwriting high on her list of priorities, too, co-writing several songs with other lyricists. She made her most important connection, though, with hit-maker and mentor Diane Warren. Warren worked with her until 2008, when Caldwell wrote several songs that met her own high expectations for connecting with listeners in the way she had always dreamed of doing.

Those songs, sung in her own powerful voice, led to the production of her first album *Without Regret*. With the album's completion, Caldwell has finally reached one of her major life goals. "I love writing and it's such a great release," she shares. "It's like therapy, so I'll never stop writing and being creative. It's a part of who I am." With no sign of this down-to-earth diva slowing down, fans can be sure to look forward to more of Caldwell's ballads and up-beat pop songs as her star continues to rise. **KM**

NOREEN STAVINOHA lives in Katy with her husband and miniature schnauzer and loves to tell the stories of interesting people.



On her debut album, *Without Regret*, artist Kimberly Caldwell performs a variety of pop-inspired tunes backed by her signature strong vocals. Released by Vanguard/Capitol Records, the album includes the single "Desperate Girls and Stupid Boys," along with several emotionally inspiring songs Caldwell co-wrote herself. Visit kimberly-caldwell.com.