

At 16, **Danielle Bradbery** became the youngest person to win *The Voice* and was described by her mentor, Blake Shelton, as "the most important artist to ever walk across *The Voice* stage," but prior to auditioning for the competition few people had ever heard her voice.

"I was really terrified to sing in front of people because I was so insecure about how I sounded and how I looked while I was singing," Danielle says. "My dad sings but he doesn't sing in front of anybody, which is where I think I got my shyness from."

The Texas native, who was born in League City and later moved to Cypress, discovered that she loved to sing by the age of three. "I didn't realize that young that I had a 'voice,' it was just something I loved to do," she says. "My dad got me this little karaoke machine and I hid in my room and belted it out as loud as I could. I'd sing Britney Spears or *try* to sing Christina Aguilera. As I got older, all I would sing was whatever Carrie Underwood radio on Pandora played or Miranda Lambert."

Even into her early teens, Danielle refused to sing publicly, but after some coaxing from her mother, she agreed to audition for *The Voice*. That decision led to her joining Team Blake, the best remedy for bashfulness. "Blake knew I was shy," she says. "He knew it was a goal for me to break out of my shell and he helped me. I have trouble looking at people when I sing because I don't want to see their faces. Blake told me to focus on the people in the crowd so they can focus on what I'm singing and how I'm feeling. He said, 'if you can't find anybody, focus on me, tell me your story.' I actually did that a lot, he'd either be singing along or have a huge smile on his face. He believes in me."

Another vote of confidence came when she met one of her musical idols. "Meeting Miranda Lambert was a shocker because we didn't know she was at *The Voice* site," Danielle recalls. "The first time I met her she was like, 'I've been watching you; you're amazing.' My jaw dropped."

Since taking *The Voice's* top honor, Danielle has surprised fans at Blake's shows and built a relationship with the couple she grew up admiring. "It's just weird seeing Blake Shelton pop up on my phone. I'm still shocked every time," she says.

Since winning *The Voice* -- or as Danielle calls it, "the biggest thing that's happened in my life" -- the high school junior has been juggling typical teenage life with recording her self-titled debut album for Big Machine Records and performing at major country concerts. However, that hasn't stopped her from spending time on her other hobbies as well.

"My earliest memory was riding my first horse," Danielle prefaces. "I was about four, and my family was at a dude ranch. I got on one that was really big and was terrified at first because I was really small. I started going and thought, 'I love riding horses!' Every chance I get I hop on a horse. I've ridden my cousin's horse, Legend, so much since I was little that I feel like he's mine."

As for high school, Danielle began working with a tutor on *The Voice* and is continuing down that route in order to manage a touring schedule, which includes an opening spot on Brad Paisley's BEAT THIS SUMMER TOUR. "I recently attended my homecoming dance and football game," Danielle says. "It was a little bit different. At the dance, people came up for pictures. I got to dress up like everybody and I got to be a Cypress Mustang for two days."

She's even made time to babysit her three-year-old brother Drew, while her 10-year-old brother Drake has already taken on the position of security guard. "When he comes from school, he's like, 'Well, these kids in my class were asking me if they could have your number and I said no,'" she recalls with a laugh.

A stark contrast from her trips to Nashville, where she recorded her debut album and first single, "The Heart of Dixie." The 15-song project includes "Never Like This" -- which she was given during her time on *The Voice* -- as well as four tunes that elevated her to the top spot on the show and the iTunes Country Chart: "Who I Am" (Jessica Andrews), "Born to Fly" (Sara Evans), "Jesus, Take the Wheel" (Carrie Underwood) and "Maybe It Was Memphis" (Pam Tillis).

"Those tracks really surprised me, because they aren't the whole band, like when I recorded them: they're acoustic. They did their studio magic and used my voice from *The Voice* and just changed the music behind me. I was really impressed with the fresh sound."

The rest of the album is the result of tireless work by the teen, who listened to hundreds of songs before whittling it down to the remaining eight. "Being in a studio was so much different than singing on stage," Danielle admits. "But, for me, it was familiar because I'd spent all those years singing alone in my room. The studio made me feel like I was back there, and I think that's what people are going to love about the album."

Despite everything that's happened since her 16th birthday, Danielle is still dreaming big with one particular goal heavy on her mind. "The Houston Rodeo is really huge where I'm from, and I go to every concert and sit in the stands with everyone else," Danielle says. "I love going to the rodeo. I've always imagined being down there on the rotating stage in this big arena with screaming fans. That is No. 1 on my bucket list. I hope one day my career will lead to performing there."