

'American Idol's' Miles puts voice on display in Naples

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America never got to hear the real Paige Miles.

Sure, Miles sang "Smile" and "Against All Odds" last year on "American Idol."

But the "Idol" finalist's voice was a shadow of itself, says her Naples mentor and former teacher, Mark Danni.

Blame it on laryngitis.

"I don't think you got the full power and the full passion," Danni says. "You may have gotten glimpses of it, but that's all.

"Her voice is just powerful and soulful. She's got one of the most powerful voices I've ever heard."

Audiences can hear for themselves next week, when the Naples native performs in TheatreZone's "Beehive."

Danni directs the '60s-themed R&B musical. Miles belts out songs by Tina Turner and Aretha Franklin - songs she likely would have picked for "Idol" if her vocal chords weren't acting up.

Miles says it was frustrating to get a national spotlight and not be able to shine. She was eliminated from the show in March 2010.

"I was just trying to figure out what I could and couldn't do," says Miles, 25, who moved to Los Angeles last year. "I felt like a fish out of water, because I couldn't sing what I wanted to sing.

"I was bummed. I'm not even going to say I wasn't."

Miles contracted laryngitis early in the show.

"My vocal chords were the size of my pinkie," she says. "I was getting cortisone injections before the show, just so the swelling in my throat would go down."

"For me, it was torture. It completely changed the way I sounded."

Her voice is all better now. In fact, she just finished recording her first EP, "Stardust": Six songs that mix R&B with some rock 'n' roll attitude.

"They're mixing the CD," she says, "so they don't need me right now."

Miles says she's excited to work with Danni again. He taught her at The Community School of Naples and directed her in the school production of "Starmites" and The Naples Players' "The 1940s Radio Hour." Miles graduated from the school in 2004 and moved to Houston.

Miles hasn't worked with Danni since she was 18 years old - although the two have stayed in touch. During "Idol," for example, she constantly called him and asked for advice about her song choices.

It'll be fun to be back on the theater stage, she says. She hasn't performed in a musical since "Idol."

It helps that she loves the music so much.

"This show is an incredible show," she says. "It's got all my favorite singers. Aretha and Tina - those are my idols."

It's a wonder Miles has time for the show's two-week run. She's stayed busy since last March, performing in concerts, making guest appearances and co-writing and recording songs for "Stardust," which comes out this summer.

Laryngitis or no laryngitis, "American Idol" changed her life forever.

"Since 'Idol,' life has been crazy," she says. "It's nothing like what it was before I did the show."

"'Idol' opened up a whole lot of doors for me."

If You Go

* What: "Beehive," featuring "American Idol" finalist Paige Miles

* When: Opens Thursday and continues through May 15. Show times are 8 p.m. Thursday through Saturday, 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. Sunday

* Where: The G&L Theatre, 13275 Livingston Road, Naples, on the campus of The Community School of Naples

* Tickets: \$43-48

* Info: Call 888-966-3352 or visit TheatreZone-Florida.com