

Music

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at sporting events. Soon she was something of a regular attraction at Texas Rangers games - belting out the National Anthem as easy as if it were the ABCs.

Enter manager Marty Rendleman. "Someone called Marty and said, 'You have to listen to this girl who sings at the Rangers games,'" Mikaila says. "But she used to manage LeAnn Rimes - and she'd sworn off children. She was like 'Call me when she gets her drivers license!'" Ultimately, Rendleman was persuaded to hear Mikaila perform - and she promptly lifted her ban on kids.

Next, Mikaila was appearing on national television and at other events, including her Carnegie hall debut as the sole featured vocalist with the U.S. Army Concert Band and the 53rd Presidential Inaugural. Not surprisingly, she was courted by many a record company. "We came to New York and in one day had meetings with all the top record labels," Mikaila recalls. She was signed to Island Records by Senior VP Jeff Fenster, who'd come to the label from Jive Records, where he'd brought in Backstreet Boys and Britney Spears.

Mikaila's reality right now is to get out there and strut her stuff live (she'll tour with Britney Spears this summer). "Being on stage, knowing that people came to see you - that's the best feeling in the world," she says. As to her effect on her audience, Mikaila adds: "I want young people, especially girls, to be able to relate to me. I want them to know you can do anything if you work hard."

New as Mikaila may be to the pop scene, she'll be working hard for a long time.

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