

A Charmed Path: Regan, March 11 at the Redstone Room

Written by Jeff Ignatius

Thursday, 04 March 2010 08:13

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On the song "Superstar," Regan sings that "I'll pay the price for fame / I'll even change my name" and "I've worked really hard and I've paid my dues."

Regan performs using her middle name, so that's already done. But the senior at Bettendorf's Pleasant Valley High School is (and sounds) 18 years old, which is too young to have paid many dues in the music industry.

Yet the biggest irony is that Regan -- who will perform at the Redstone Room on March 11 -- has had a charmed path in her burgeoning music career. She was selected -- based on songs on her MySpace page -- for the *Crash Course to Stardom* program in which she spent a week in Los Angeles learning the ropes of the music business; that's the kind of experience and advice that most singers would kill for at the start of their careers. Her debut EP was shaped by established producers and has songs with the hooks and attention to musical detail that would sound right at home on mainstream country or pop radio.

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None of that means that Regan will be a superstar or have even a minor hit. But she is well positioned with her vocal talent and strong contacts, and she appears to have a healthy attitude. She said in an interview last month that she would love to get signed to a label, but "I would also be fine with just singing with my band" -- which currently includes her guitar teacher and three classmates from Pleasant Valley. She plans to attend Belmont University in Nashville "to further my education in music and music business. ... It's a pretty musical school."

And she's aware of how quickly the industry can discard talent, and of the pitfalls of even minor fame. "I am not afraid at all," she said. "I am very confident in who I am. I know exactly who I am."

Crash Course to Stardom is "kind of a mix of between *Made* and I guess you could say *American Idol*,

" Regan said. "You really get to work with people a lot and grow completely as a person." Her training included "singing, dancing, acting, fashion," and more. (Regan's episode of *Crash Course to Stardom*

isn't yet available, and it might end up on television or only on the Web.) "The main thing that has changed ... would be my confidence level, and also I've learned more about my voice," she said.

She emphasized that her *Crash Course* mentors were not trying to shape her into something she isn't. "I think it brought out more me," she said. "When you see the episode, you can definitely see a transformation from this shy Iowa girl to this bubbly Iowa girl. I guess I'm still an Iowa girl both ways. But I definitely opened up and became more confident."

After finishing the show last year, she said, she was not under any sort of contract with *Crash Course to Stardom*

. "I got to come out of that show free to do whatever I wanted," she said. "But I ended up loving everyone that I worked with and still work with them today."

Employing producers such as Rob Hoffman (who has worked with everyone from Christina Aguilera to Michael Jackson), Dave Audé (Pussycat Dolls and Faith No More, among others), and Eddie Gallan (*High School Musical*), Regan made the EP *My Kinda Beautiful*, which is full of polished pop songs. Regan co-wrote "Live for Today," but the other five songs were written by other people. They're mostly inspirational, vague, and sterile ("It's your time to show what you're made of / Don't be afraid of the unknown"), but that's to be expected from a singer so

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young in the hands of experienced producers. (And in fairness to Regan, I'm at least double the target age for this music with the wrong anatomy.)

Critically, the songs show promise. Regan's vocals are professional, appealing, and not overly processed, and she's comfortable in many different shades of pop. Her handlers offer the touchstones of Taylor Swift and Kelly Clarkson, and those seem like appropriate models.

But I was most impressed with her poise. She has obviously been coached on being interviewed, but she was thoughtful and humble.

And she's mature enough to differentiate between her skill and "success," with more emphasis on the former. Regan talks quite a bit about being a positive force, and she said one key element of her artist-development classes was "clearing out everything negative." In our interview, when asked about her long-term goals, she initially phrased one as a hope then corrected herself: "I am going to be a singer."

Regan will perform an all-ages show on Thursday, March 11, at the Redstone Room (129 Main Street in Davenport). The show starts at 7:30 p.m., and admission is \$5.

For more information on Regan, visit ReganPlanet.com or MySpace.com/reganplanet. For more information on Crash Course to Stardom, visit CrashCourseToStardom.com