

A Teen-ager With A Grown-Up Voice

There's a lot of singing in store for newcomer Amie Comeaux — specifically, department store singing.

Fortunately, she has experience.

At age 7 she debuted as a singer in the Baton Rouge, La., branch of J.C. Penney, where her aunt worked in the jewelry department.

"They were having their Million-Dollar Jewelry Sale," the bubbly 17-year-old singer told COUNTRY WEEKLY. "I happened to be visiting for the week and she put me on top of the counter and I just started singing. I can't remember the song, but it did attract a lot of people into the place."

Ten years later Amie again attracted a lot of people into the place when she returned to the same store to sign a record deal with Polydor Nashville. Her first country album, *Moving Out*, comes out next month, and her association with the department store continues with a slate of in-store performances.

Penney is like a second home to this talented teen. The store sponsored her in a couple of beauty pageants when she was 8. By the time she turned 13, Amie was singing at the store's teen fashion shows. At 16, she joined the "teen board."

"That's where teenagers work on the staff of young fashions. I worked on the catalog and in gift wrapping," Amie says. "I used to try to get everything perfect, so it just tickled me when the store manager at Baton Rouge would come down and specifically ask for me to wrap the presents he got for his wife and kids."

Gift wrapping was not Amie's only talent. Singing has been part of



Amie Comeaux is no stranger to performing at J.C. Penney.

her life for as far back as she can remember. "My mother doesn't sing. My father doesn't sing. I don't know where my voice came from. The mystery remains unknown," she jokes.

This much is known: She loves to use that impressive voice. Whitney Houston and Patsy Cline are two of her role models, and from a very young age Amie knew she would make a living one day from singing. "My career was always a big deal to me," she says. "It's every artist's dream to make it big someday."

Amie's chance came when Nashville producer Harold Shedd got a telephone tip about a remarkable girl in a local production of the play *Annie*. Amie was 11. Shedd came down to investigate.

Knowing a major voice when he heard one, Shedd nudged her along, fine-tuning her young voice until she was ready for the big time. Once Shedd became president of the Polydor record label, he asked Amie to sign a contract.

J.C. Penney became part of the deal. Amie will wear Penney clothes on her album cover and during in-store appearances. Extras for her second video will be chosen from the audiences of her Penney performances. And of course, she officially signed her record contract at her former place of employment, the Baton Rouge branch.

"It worked out perfectly," Amie says of her homecoming/contract signing at Penney. "I was working with the teen board and they were setting up my stage. After the show I signed autographs and they were teasing me, saying, 'See, you're sitting there signing autographs and we're pulling down your stage.' I made a lot of good friends off the teen board."

It's all pretty heady stuff for this driven young lady as she leaves home for her first tour. Coming to Nashville was a real treat for her. "That's where I wanted to get my career started," she says. "The studio is great and the people are great and I've never seen so many restaurants in my life! The only problem I have now is gaining weight!"

— Nancy Sweid

