

Places & Faces

If you're a music fan and like to watch television, chances are you've seen *The Voice* on NBC and are aware that Southwest Louisiana native Gyth Rigdon is one of this season's strongest contenders. Gyth opened the season on February 25 with a rousing rendition of Dobie Gray's "Drift Away" and wowed all four judges. It was a tough decision between Blake Shelton and Kelly Clarkson, but Gyth chose Blake as his performance coach. This 25-year-old singer from Singer, La. grew up on a 40-acre horse farm. In addition to hours of daily chores, Gyth participated

in school athletics. Raised by his father, Paul Rigdon, Gyth learned the value of hard work from an early age. His dad also instilled in Gyth a love of music. Singing and playing guitar from the time he was a young boy, Gyth released his first album last September. Now a rising star on *The Voice*, life is changing quickly for Gyth. Thrive recently caught up with this unassuming musician, and he reflected on his relationships with his father, his family, and his fans.



first person

Gyth Rigdon

by Angie Kay Dillmore



Tell me about your relationship with your father.

My dad is my hero. He's the person I've looked up to my entire life. I wrote a song for him that sums up everything called "Stronger Than You Let Me See" and it couldn't be more true. There were times he put on a brave face. We didn't always have what we wanted, but we always had what we needed. Dad made that sacrifice throughout my childhood.

You first auditioned for *The Voice* in 2014 but didn't make it. How did that affect your career?

Looking back, I was glad they told me no that first time. When I hear recordings or watch videos of myself from back then, I realize I was definitely not ready at that time. When I was told no, it was rather devastating, but I've always been the kind of person who uses a no as fuel to work harder and push through. Five years later, [*The Voice*] called me back to audition. All my hard work paid off.

How has Blake helped you become a better performer?

Blake is incredible, just an awesome guy and such an icon in the country music world. When I work with Blake, I give 150% and his compliments and constructive criticism help me move forward.

What has been your greatest challenge as a contestant on the show?

Battling Rod [Stokes] and coming out with a victory. Rod is incredible, as a singer, as a believer in Christ, just an all-around great guy. He was the artist that nobody wanted to battle. I freaked out a little bit when I found out I'd be battling him, but once we started working together, I realized there were so many things I could learn from him and he from me. He has so much soul in his vocals, and I learned from that. And after cutting my teeth in the barrooms, I'm very comfortable onstage performing and interacting with the crowd. Rod picked up on that. Rod and I spent many hours in hotel rooms rehearsing stage performances with shampoo bottles for microphones. So it was never a battle between me and Rod. We just wanted to perform a great song together and give America something they could talk about.

What are your long-term goals?

I want to continue touring to larger crowds and build my name to be a legacy. I want to support my family and my dad.

What has been the high point in your experience on *The Voice* so far?

Working with Brooks and Dunn was extremely cool. Preparing for a duet and working with a legendary duo was definitely a high point.

As a contestant on *The Voice*, what has surprised you the most?

Three years ago, I put a band together in Louisiana. It took a lot of time to build chemistry between me and my bandmates. Now, when we perform, if someone stumbles, the rest of us swoop in and catch him. We know each other so well. But it took a lot of time and effort to get to that point. Going into *The Voice* and rehearsing with their band, I was nervous. How would there be that same chemistry? But these guys are so incredible. In rehearsals, I made some bumps and stumbles, and the band was right there every time. It was mind-blowing.

Do you have a personal favorite song you like to sing

Oh... that kinda bounces around. One of my favorite songs to perform live with my band is the Phil Collins song, "In the Air Tonight." But my all-time favorite song lyrically and melodically is a classic country song by Shenandoah called "I Want to be Loved Like That."

What do you do in your free time?

In the winter, I'm an avid hunter; in the summer, I'll be out on a lake in a boat or hanging out with friends, playing washers, mud riding. I love the outdoors.

Describe your home life.

My wife Bayleigh and I are newlyweds; we married last September. She's an incredible person, been by my side since the beginning, when I played for the bartender at nightclubs. She's been with me as we've watched the crowds grow and my career take off.

What is next for Gyth Rigdon?

We've got some local shows scheduled in Southwest Louisiana. And I'll be starting work on my next album soon.

What would you like to tell your fans in SWLA?

I want to say thank you so much to all of Southwest Louisiana and Louisiana in general. The support I've received has been overwhelming and humbling. That's what keeps me going. And I never get tired of taking photos, signing autographs, and interacting with my fans.