

Fan turns backup singer for Grammy-winning Michael Bublé

AVON LAKE

By Lori E. Switaj

Kearsten Kopf is quick to categorize the evening of April 16.

"It was the best night of my life," she said the following day.

That night, as well as April 19, found Kopf singing backup for critically acclaimed Grammy-winning, multiple Juno Award-winning Canadian crooner and big band singer, Michael Bublé.

Bublé, on tour throughout the United States, performed at Nationwide Arena in Columbus last Wednesday and at The Wolstein Center in Cleveland this past Saturday. And Kopf had the opportunity to perform backup for Bublé on both occasions.

"Sometimes when artists come into town they ask around for backup singers," Kopf said.

Kopf is not only the director of marketing for her father Bucky Kopf's building business. She's also an accomplished singer and the lead singer for her own band, Ovation, which performs regionally for private parties and special occasions. It was through her music connections she learned Bublé was looking for three female singers to perform with him for at least one of the songs scheduled for the performance.

"I had to audition," Kopf said the day after her Columbus performance. "We

sang Sinatra's 'That's Life.'"

The song is one in a typical Bublé set that includes a lot of "old favorites" including songs by Frank Sinatra and Harry Connick Jr. The performance marked a night to remember for Kopf who stood on stage in the arena that the Columbus Blue Jackets call home.

"It was packed," Kopf said of the concert, which included Bublé, who is backed by an all-male swingtime band. "But I wasn't nervous. I knew I could sing it.

"I was excited for the opportunity. They make you feel so comfortable. It's so well organized and well run."

Kopf sang in front of a sell-out show in Cleveland, but this time played a bigger part. Onstage, Bublé began joking with the audience that he had a scratchy throat, turned to Kopf and handed her the microphone saying, "you girls will have to finish the show."

Kopf said "sure" and took the mic from the joking Bublé, who then laughingly took it back as the antics played out on the big screen above the stage.

Kopf learned a few things about how big shows operate. She and the other two women were required to be there at 4:30 p.m. for an 8 p.m. performance. And the backup singers did not join Bublé until 10 p.m. Kopf still had a ringside seat to the balance of Bublé's performance as well as the opening band, Naturally 7.

"They (Naturally 7) don't play in-

struments, they 'sing' them," Kopf said. "You can't tell there's not a real guitar. I sat mesmerized listening to them."

She also learned a few things about Bublé and the downtime associated with performing on a national tour.

"(Band members) brought along a treadmill and a ping pong table," Kopf said. "There are 15 guys in the band and a lot of down time. Before the show they played ping pong."

She also learned that Bublé, a 29-year-old Canadian, loves hockey.

"Michael's a huge hockey fan, and he plays," Kopf said. "Earlier he went out and (practiced) with the Blue Jackets. I understand he's a very good player."

The shows marked the first time Kopf played in front of such a large audience as well.

"I've played in front of a few thousand before but nothing like this," she said.

She is hoping the performances will lead to future singing opportunities in big venues.

"I hope so," she said. "I'd like to think they remember you."



Kearsten Kopf with recording artist Michael Bublé.