

# Pop singer Brooke Hogan to perform at Big E

BY CATHERINE BAUM

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Her birth name is Brooke Ellen Bollea but she has several nicknames including "B," "Brookie" and "Brooktini."

However, this Saturday at 8 p.m. on the Comcast Arena Stage at the Eastern States Exposition in West Springfield, she will perform under the name best known to her fans Brooke Hogan.

The 19-year-old pop singer stars with her family, including younger brother Nick who was recently injured in a car accident, in the semi-reality TV show, "Hogan Knows Best," on VH1. The Hogan in the title refers to Brooke's father, Hulk Hogan, a top professional wrestler of the 1980s and 1990s whose real name is Terrence Gene Bollea.

Hogan's first single "Everything to Me" reached No.1 on the Top Single Sales chart twice in 2004 and the video "About Us" off her album, "Undiscovered," reached No. 1 on the VH1 Countdown in 2006. She is looking to achieve more.

"I haven't sold the millions of records that I want to sell. I haven't reached a big enough fan base. I haven't done the music that I want to do yet," said Hogan.

"Undiscovered" was produced mostly by Scott Storch. Storch has produced for other artists including Justin Timberlake, Christina Aguilera, 50 Cent and Beyonce.

The Tampa-born singer says she is now trying to find direction on her own.

"When I've made it, it's going to be when I can say 'Yes I wrote this hit song and I produced it'," Brooke said. "I want it to actually be my success."

"Hogan Knows Best" has given Brooke popularity. The show, which often deals with Hulk Hogan's efforts to guard what his teenage daughter does, reportedly had the largest viewing audience in VH1 history for its premiere episode.

It has also given her song-writer's block.

"Before the cameras nobody knew who I was," she said. "Doing the show, things just started getting really stressful. I was like, 'I can't even think straight to put words down.'"

Hogan was 16 when the show began and she said filming it has not allowed her to grow up normally.

On a typical day, the Hogan family starts filming at 9 a.m. and finishes at 10 p.m.

"You come home to relax from work and our work was at home," she said. "You see Jessica Simpson and Nick Lachey divorced and all these families who do reality show get torn apart, and I totally see how that can happen because it almost happened with my family."

Hogan says she is back concentrating on her music with a number of performances scheduled, including Saturday's at the Big E.

"A lot of people think that I was a reality show star that wanted to be a singer when actually it was the other way around," she said. "Now that I've been through the storm, I'm starting to see that I'm able to write about the stuff that I've been through."

Hogan began studying piano at age 5 and later pursued cheerleading, dance and singing.

She had some home schooling and at 16, she graduated high school.

The classroom was not a place for Hogan, she said.

"I was the kid who was looking out the window and thinking, 'what else could I be doing?'"

John J. Juliano Jr., special events director at the Big E, booked her performance three months ago.

Juliano, a fan of "Hogan Knows Best" since its premiere, is expecting a diverse crowd.

"Her music attracts a young audience. I think a lot of people will be here that watch the TV show including the baby boomers and some people may be here in case the Hulk shows up," he said.

Hogan said her dad has been an inspiration for her.

She thinks of him as a people-person and enjoys watching the way he interacts with others.

Though she likes to sign her first name with a star at the end, Hogan says she does not fit the Hollywood starlet stereotype.

"I'm not concerned at all about the fashion world. I don't care what people say about me on the Internet. I'm just a real girl and if I met you I'd probably be your friend in two seconds," she said.

*Former UNlisted writer Catherine J. Baum graduated in May from the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University in Syracuse, N.Y.*

