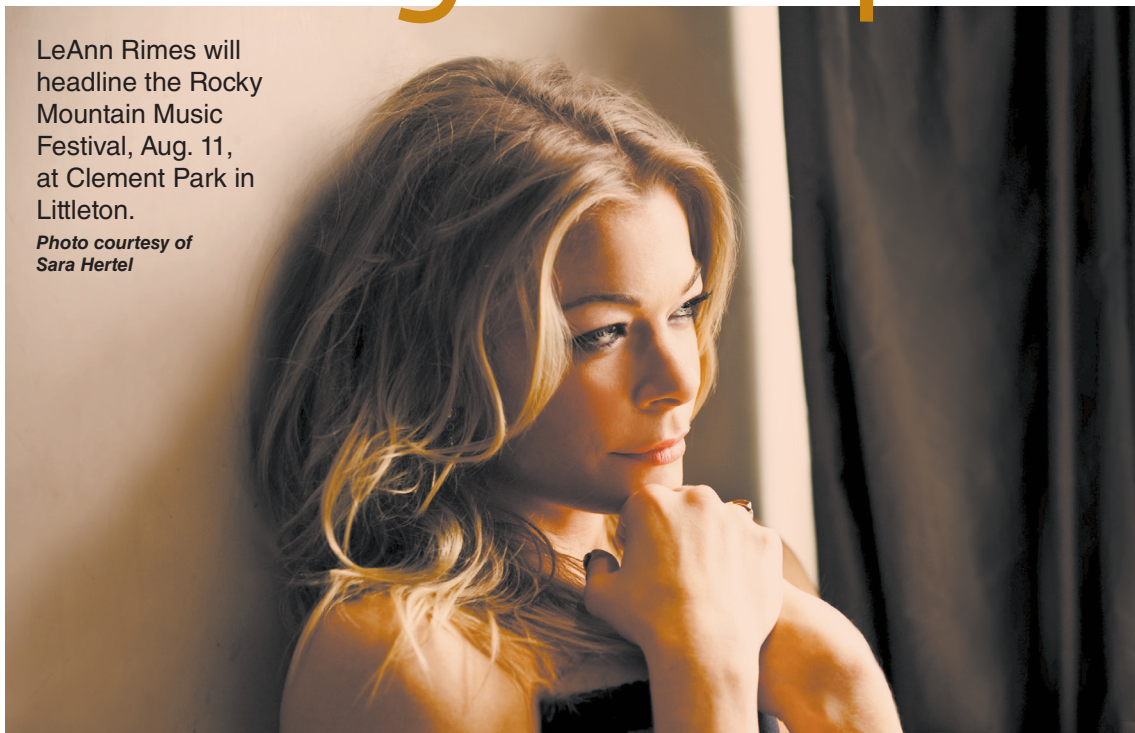


Music grows up for LeAnn Rimes

LeAnn Rimes will headline the Rocky Mountain Music Festival, Aug. 11, at Clement Park in Littleton.

Photo courtesy of Sara Hertel



“Music has always come from my heart and soul when I performed, but I didn’t know I could write a record like this.”

- LeAnn Rimes on her new CD *Spitfire*

first week.

Rimes eventually veered in other musical directions, a move that would broaden her potential audience in the pop world, but strain her conditional relationship with the conservative Nashville establishment.

“That’s one of my pet peeves of the South,” she said. “One of the biggest misconceptions is that I wanted to get away from country music. I wasn’t necessarily pushed out, but when you have a crossover hit, it was kind of taboo – and then when you’re also a kid, people have all these excuses not to play your record. I think this new record is more country than anything that’s played on country radio now.”

That is despite the distinct contribution from rock guitar legend Jeff Beck on the bluesy come-on “Gasoline and Matches.”

As Rimes turns 31 at the end of August, she is clearly reeling from the cathartic liberation she has found on *Spitfire*.

“For me, it’s about my voice and telling a story and just making people feel something,” she said. “That’s what I want to do from here on out.”

Singer headlines Rocky Mountain Music Festival Aug. 11

By **PETER JONES**

At age 30, LeAnn Rimes has had a realization. “I’m going to make mistakes, and the great thing is I can write about them,” she said.

Her new CD, *Spitfire*, for which Rimes co-wrote eight of the 13 tracks, is her first CD of a highly personal nature – and in some ways, it is a new beginning.

“I’ve never really listened to an album of mine until this one,” she said. “I always felt like I was recording things for other people because I was obligated to. I enjoy listening to this album.”

Spitfire marks a sharp departure for Rimes with its commercial ambivalence and stark personal subject matter, or what she describes as an intimate conversation with whoever happens to be listening.

It is the kind of banter best held over a few drinks when Rimes sings bluntly of the publicized in-

fidelity that signaled the end of her first marriage. In “What Have I Done” and “Borrowed,” Rimes essentially tells her side of the story.

“I was able to have a say in my own life, even though people were misjudging and carelessly writing crap,” she said. “It was time for me to finally have a say. There was nothing to hide and I think it was the perfect way to let all these emotions come out. Music has always come from my heart and soul when I performed, but I didn’t know I could write a record like this.”

Rimes had initially planned to structure the conceptual *Spitfire* chronologically, but wound up nixing that idea in favor of a more visceral, less linear approach – or “The Truth in No Particular Order,” as the CD cover promises.

Amidst Rimes’s honest confessionals are songs of anger, love and regret: “Love would be easy if you never had to think about how somebody else would feel,” she sings in “Who We Really Are,” the CD’s closing song.

Although the bluntly honest *Spitfire* is Rimes’s 15th release in 22 years, it may as well have been her

first, to hear the singer-songwriter tell it.

“The whole process changed for me with making this album,” she said. “I’ve never been so transparent in my music and it really has given me a whole new perspective on life and music. I don’t think I’ve ever been as appreciative of my gift until now.”

Rimes will perform music from *Spitfire*, as well as earlier material, on Aug. 11 as the headliner of the Rocky Mountain Music Festival in Clement Park in Littleton.

While 30 may be a typical age to change directions and consider one’s priorities, Rimes has crammed more experience than most into her three decades. She cut her first album at age 11. Influenced by the likes of Barbra Streisand and Judy Garland, her singing would transcend genre. By the time she was a teenager, her rich and searing vocals were garnering comparisons to the late Patsy Cline.

“She was one of the first people I ever listened to,” Rimes said of Cline. “Whatever emotion she was feeling, you felt with her. I was always able to hit the notes, but there

are a lot of people who hit notes, but you don’t feel anything.”

Although born in Mississippi, the Rimes family moved to Garland, Texas, in time for local DJ Bill Mack to take the singer under his wing. After a series of radio shows and personal appearances, Mack handed her the song that would make her a star.

“Blue” had been written by Mack some two decades earlier with Cline in mind, but the song’s melancholic yodel and lyrics of longing were conveniently well suited to Rimes’s emotional and pitch-perfect vocal style.

The singer says she may have been too young and naïve at the time to feel the pressures that one could have felt as the result of such comparisons.

“I’m not one to be intimidated very often,” she said with a laugh. “Even though that was written for Patsy Cline, it kind of fell into my lap, as it should have.”

The breakthrough 1996 single would become a Top 10 hit and make Rimes the youngest singer in the history of the Country Music Association to be nominated as Best Country Singer. Her first major-label album sold a record-breaking 123,000 copies during its

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