

"I WANT TO BE
IMPERFECT—
AND I WANT
TO WRITE
ABOUT THAT."

—LeAnn Rimes



LeAnn Rimes performs at the C2C: Country to Country concert at London's O2 Arena on March 17.

acknowledge the guilt and shame she felt about the dissolution of her eight-year union with Dean Sheremet, and the circumstances under which her current marriage with actor Eddie Cibrian began. But these only hint at the emotional depths Rimes plumbs on the album. As she works through desire, anger and ultimately acceptance and wisdom, she sings honestly but never defensively. She may be the principal character in this drama, but she doesn't see herself as its hero.

"I'm not perfect," she says. "And I don't want to be. At all. Any more. I want to be imperfect — and I want to write about that."

"God Takes Care of Your Kind," which Rimes and Brown wrote with her then-husband Sheremet, is almost a harbinger of her ambition to honor her imperfections. "We always wrote together," she remembered. "We had a great relationship that way. It probably was the first song we wrote for this record that ended up here. That's life, isn't it? It kind of works out like that."

As Rimes' personal life began to implode, she, Brown and their co-producer Vince Gill ended up recording *Lady and Gentlemen*, which features Rimes' versions of classics written by John Anderson, Gill, Merle Haggard, Kris Kristofferson and other Country giants.

By the time Rimes returned to the studio, she was deep into the process of setting her life to song. "I didn't set out to make a record that was true to my life," she said. "At the same time, I didn't know how to stop that train, because it was coming out of me, just so naturally. I didn't want to record songs just to record songs anymore. I wanted everything to mean something to me. Even if I didn't write it, I wanted it to be part of the story."

A good example would be "Where I Stood," which Australia's Missy Higgins wrote and released as a single in 2007. Brown adjusted the song's structure to accommodate Rimes' broad vocal range, at one point modulating the chorus up a fourth for more dramatic impact. Its lyrics "She will love you more than I could/She who dares to stand where I stood" became Rimes' message to Sheremet and his new wife, photographer Sarah Silver.

"It was important for her to say what she wanted to say with Dean, to apologize to him, but also to let him know that Sarah was going to love him more," Brown noted.

Brown recruited top-notch songwriters Baerwald, Wilson and Nathan Chapman to write with Rimes. To bring out what he heard as "the blues and the soul" in her voice, as well as its Appalachian and Texas influences, he hired the R&B-based rhythm section of bassist Willie Weeks and drummer Steve Jordan. Then he fleshed out the band with Dean Parks, Dan Tyminski and Waddy Wachtel on acoustic instruments and Paul Franklin on pedal steel.

On all but a couple tracks, there's no electric guitar. "I didn't want any other frequency to interfere with that lower part of LeAnn's voice, which is her natural voice," Brown said. Instead, he instructed Franklin to play lines on steel that he thought an electric guitar player would add to the tracks.

Rimes also employed some unorthodox methods while recording her vocals. A hand-held

continued on page 26...