



TALKING TO

LeAnn Rimes

The youngest-ever Grammy winner pens the soundtrack for a childhood on the road

Country prodigy LeAnn Rimes is the first to admit that her mom missed out on raising a teenage daughter. At 13, Rimes released her first album, and she's been slogging it out on America's highways ever since. Now 25, she trots out a slew of down-to-earth, line-dancing-destined tunes on her latest release, which looks back on her teen years, and what life might have been like if she'd just stayed home. **BRYAN BORZYKOWSKI**

Why did you title your album *Family*? I've grown up with the whole world and the whole world has grown up with me. I feel the world has become my family in a way.

Is "Pretty Things" about your mother? It's about how [mothers] always feel that they didn't do enough. My mom's proud of me, but she wonders what else she could have done. I was a kid to her up until 13, but she missed some major years in my life while I was on the road.

The single "Nothin' Better to Do" sounds like it's about a bored girl growing up in a small town. Might this have been you if you didn't tour? [Before age six] I lived in a town called Pelahatchie, Mississippi. Across the street was a shop that sold bait, beer and ammunition. This was my alter ego going, What would I have done if I didn't get out of a small town where there's nothing better to do?

What's your songwriting routine? Wake up, roll out of bed and grab a guitar? I'm a big fan of going over to my friends' houses in my sweats and sitting on their couches with a blanket and my computer. I don't have any responsibilities when I'm there, just to write a song.

PLAYLIST of the month

IF YOU LIKE Ashlee Simpson



CHECK OUT

Kelly Clarkson's
My December (RCA)

Fifteen minutes of fame? For Kelly Clarkson, it's been five years and counting. Clarkson's made the most of her 2002 *American Idol* win, and her popularity shows no signs of abating. Her

third effort sees the once-sappy singer take a second stab at rock 'n' roll. Now angry and infectious, her voice is as powerful as ever. Clarkson's latest is perfect for blaring on the drive home after a long, angst-ridden day.

IF YOU LIKE Clay Aiken



CHECK OUT

Kalan Porter's
Wake Up Living
(Sony BMG)

A bad boy's thunder is impressive at the start, but the guy next door has better odds of survival — especially on *Canadian Idol*. The edgier Ryan Malcolm was

the first to wear the crown, but it's season-two winner Kalan Porter who's etched out a career. His new album's bevy of mid-tempo, soft-rock tunes will give you and your teenage daughter something to agree on.

IF YOU LIKE Lenny Kravitz



CHECK OUT

Ben Harper's *Lifeline*
(Virgin)

Just because you're running around back-to-school shopping doesn't mean that summer's officially over. Ben Harper's latest is loaded with laid-back acoustic grooves, ideal for one last

drive to cottage country. And once you get to your rural sanctuary? Throw on the rollicking love song "Having Wings." There's nothing like a little late-night dancing to warm up a cool cabin. **B.B.**



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