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LeAnn Rimes shines at Bass Hall

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1 of 9



LeAnn Rimes was in strong voice Saturday night at Bass Hall in Fort Worth. Photos by Jamie B. Ford/Special to DFW.com



By Preston Jones
dfw.com
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LeAnn Rimes freely admits that she didn't always know what her signature song, *Blue*, was about.

After all, the Garland-raised vocalist was all of 11 when she burst onto the scene with the Bill Mack-penned tune, a lovely, lonely ballad about heartache. Now on the cusp of 30, Rimes explained to a packed Bass Hall on Saturday night that she no longer needs to "act" to make the pain believable.

Emotional agony is part of growing up and, for Rimes, growing into herself. Her perky, soaring voice has deepened and darkened with age, injecting a bewitching huskiness into her catalog.

Rimes was in town to perform for the 20th anniversary celebration of Susan G. Komen for the Cure's Tarrant County chapter. (Rimes first performed the national anthem for the Tarrant County chapter's inaugural Race for the Cure two decades ago.) She spent the evening showcasing much of her back catalog, including last year's conceptual piece *Lady & Gentlemen*, which found Rimes recasting classic country sides from a female perspective.

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Rimes, toting a five-piece backing band, was also joined onstage by the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra. The musicians, led by conductor Miguel Harth-Bedoya, added a lovely sweetness and heft to Rimes' songs -- particularly on *Blue*, which was performed by Rimes backed only by the orchestra. It was completely arresting.

She also debuted a handful of songs from her new album, which she hopes will see release this year. One tune, *Borrowed*, moved her nearly to tears. The lyrics suggest that the source might be her relationship with now-husband Eddie Cibrian. It was tremendously powerful, and the remaining new tracks hint at a compelling record on her hands.

The new songs -- imbued with the kind of deep, intense, personal insight that can come only from years of living with one's self -- are a marked departure from the breezy, carefree early days. Rimes has matured into a woman capable of grappling with her emotions, knowing now exactly how to channel the anguish and happiness into indelible works of art.

Preston Jones is the Star-Telegram pop music critic. 817-390-7713; Twitter @prestonjones

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