LOS ANGELES

It's all over now. Reality, or what passes for it, is spreading from TV to the rest of the entertainment world. Tomorrow the first reality movie, "The Real Cancún," arrives in theaters, and screenwriters everywhere are hoping that it doesn't do as well at the box office as has been projected. In the meantime this week's pop charts, released yesterday by Soundscan, a company in White Plains that monitors CD sales, confirm that the trend is officially the music industry's current big thing.

Though experts expected "The New Breed," a combination CD and DVD from the leading rapper 50 Cent, to enter the charts at No. 1, it was beaten by "Thankful," the first album from the "American Idol" winner Kelly Clarkson. (RCA had agreed to release the winner's album in advance, sound unheard.) Her CD sold 297,000 copies last week, topping 50 Cent by 51,000 copies. (Fleetwood Mac's studio reunion, "Say You Will," entered the charts at No. 3.)

In the meantime sitting in the No. 1 slot on the singles chart are 10 "American Idol" finalists belting a version of Lee Greenwood's "God Bless the U.S.A." The single was taken from the album "American Idol Season 2: All-Time Classic American Love Songs," due from RCA on April 29. This album of cover songs is just one of several CD's related to the television show that RCA is planning. The label has also signed two of the show's runners-up, Tammya Grav and Justin Guarini. And the "American Idol" movie "From
Oklahoma and Justin Guarini. And the "American Idol" movie, "From Justin to Kelly: A Tale of Two American Idols," starring Mr. Guarini and Ms. Clarkson, is to be released by 20th Century Fox on June 13. Then there's the video game due in the fall. Just about the only thing "American Idol" is still missing is a club franchise.

The significance of Ms. Clarkson's debut at No. 1 is that she has not had an extensive marketing campaign. Her singles from the CD have had some radio play, and she has been interviewed on other television programs, but most of her promotion was on the "American Idol" show itself.

The competition on the charts should get even more interesting next week when the new album from Madonna, which was reported by CD retailers on Tuesday to have had a strong first sales day despite poor reviews, will be competing with Ms. Clarkson for the No. 1 slot.

Looking for Barbs in Lyrics

To promote the American debut of a CD by the Sounds, a popular Swedish new-wave rock band, its American label, New Line Records, released one of the group's catchiest singles, "Living in America," as a promotion. When it was originally released in Sweden late last year, the song reached No. 3 on that country's singles charts and helped earn the band an award for Newcomer of the Year at the Swedish equivalent of the Grammys. Along the way it earned high-profile fans like Dave Grohl of the Foo Fighters, Pharrell Williams of the Neptunes and James Iha, formerly of Smashing Pumpkins.

It would sound like the perfect coming-to-America success story if it weren't for the song itself. Its upbeat, singalong chorus (with a melody reminiscent of the Kim Wilde hit "Kids in America") has left many who have heard it with an uneasy feeling, especially at this point in American history.

"We're not living in America," Maja Ivarsson sings, "but we're not sorry./We don't care about the world today./We're not sorry for you."

The song, which is on a two-song sampler being distributed free outside rock concerts across the country, is being interpreted by some as a callous response to current events. "Living in America" is also the title of the band's American album, due out May 6 on New Line, which is owned by AOL Time Warner.

But Jason Linn, the executive in charge of New Line Records, said the song was written a year or two before 9/11. "This is not a band trying to make a political statement about anything," he said.

Mr. Linn said that when New Line first heard the song, the idea that
it could be interpreted as a political statement never occurred to anyone. Questions only came up as the label played it for executives and others outside the company.

"It didn't strike us as something that's offensive or in any way thumbing its nose at America," Mr. Linn said. "It seemed in a way like the opposite, about how kids in Scandinavia look to America for certain cultural trends. If we had thought that the track was going to offend anyone, we would have re-recorded the song for the record or not put it on samplers."