



## A Truly Western Experience

By RICK JANSON

**K.D.** Lang has had critics across the country raving about the new phenomena called "cow punk." Her closely cropped hair coupled with her energetic performance has awakened hard core pop fans to the possibilities of country music.

Lang premiere album—*A Truly Western Experience*—captures much of her wild spirit on vinyl.

The opening track, "Bopalena," roars out of the speakers with enough enthusiasm to make Eddie Van Halen look like a crooner. The tunes "Pine and Stew" and the oddball "Hooked on Junk" play with the country and western format, leaving you wondering just how much is satire and how much

is for real.

Lang's voice is consistently interesting as she plays with the lyrical content, hanging on certain words and throwing away nothing.

Although the singer claims to be the reincarnation of the spirit of Patsy Cline in her, she only performs one Cline tune on the LP—"Stop, Look and Listen."

The Patsy Cline connection has also resulted in the back-up band being called the Re-Clines. The musicians backing her up on the LP prove themselves to be not only competent but give a sense of spontaneity to complement Lang's eccentric style.

This album has been selling-out throughout the west, and after her recent national tour, will undoubtedly do well here too. □

## K.D. Lang— a bizarre experience

By ELIZABETH DONOVAN

Her movements are spastic, she's a mad, spontaneous performer who runs about the stage, on top of tables, into washrooms and out of doorways as she sings.

K.D. Lang is her name and she's dubbed as country's punk queen and Alberta's oddball gift to music.

The first thing that strikes you when you've seen Lang perform is her bizarre appearance. A punk-cut with silver 'cat-eyed' glasses, short cowboy boots, work socks, and a silk cowgirl shirt with long tassels and flowered skirt.

Her other claim to fame—she believes she is a reincarnation of country singer Patsy Cline.

Wierd. But that's what makes this vibrant singer so unique. You actually want to believe her.

Lang's appearance, unpredictable gyrations evoke amusing reactions from her audiences. Unsure how far K.D. Lang will go, beer drinking buddies swayed by the country-blues are taken aback when she erupts into rockability songs.

Lang's music, a combination of two cultures, punk and country, attracts their respective followers creating a bizarre setting.

The Re-Clines, (as in Patsy Cline), is a four-man band that surprisingly keeps up with her varying pace. The transition between fast-beat pop and down-home blues is remarkable.

Lang's rapport with the audience makes her approachable.

"Hello out there you Betties and Bob's" she says with an impish grin.

Her melodramatic personality, dramatic presence captivates her audience, by building tension.

While singing 'Amazing Grace' Lang suddenly stops short, closes her eyes, and waits for total silence. Gradually there is no sound but the clinking of beer glasses. Smiling she opens her eyes and breaks into 'Sing for Jesus!'

An individual of extremes.

*K.D. Lang performed in Halifax from Nov. 8 - 11 at the Middle Deck Lounge.*

## Young & Donato— A suave duo

By NAIRNE HOLTZ

In CBC's solemnly-lit radio room, a programme comprised of Bill Stevenson & the Ocean Limited Band with special guests Karen Young and Michel Donato was taped Nov. 3. Public audiences are always welcomed at these sporadically taped eclectic shows which promise to feature local musicians playing folk, acoustic, jazz, pop and rock.

Bill Stevenson & the Ocean Limited Band featured Bill Stevenson as vocalist, piano player, a sort of master of ceremonies and teller

of jokes whose subject matter ranged from the *National Enquirer* to hemorrhoids. The other band members are Greg O'Mereault on guitar, Bruce Jacobs on bass and Donny Chapman on drums. These highly skilled, competent musicians created a sound of pure, relaxing jazz which caused enthusiastic audience members to close their eyes and revel. The songs were sentimental pieces about human life and love as exemplified by one of their originals written by the drummer called "Lorraine" (when it rains/I do not miss the sun/'cause it's in my baby's eyes).

Michel Donato and Karen Young suavely worked together as a duo performance consisting of bass and voice which they described as "the floor and the ceiling" or "the melody and the tonic." Donato is an adroit bass player who also displays vocal talents in harmonizing and has the uncanny ability to whistle different notes at the same time. Young's pellucid, girlish voice sang with equal ease in French and English and ranged in tone and emotion from line to line; from gentle to despairing to jubilant, shouting enthusiasm. Their jazz songs are either waltzes or have a quick, light beat. Many of their songs are scat (jazz singing with nonsense syllables) or partially scat. One piece of note was a Bulgarian/Romanian tap tune which Young accompanied with finger cymbals and sinuous dance. For those of you interested in listening to Donato and Young you can pick up their soon-to-be-released debut album in local record stores. □

## A soldier's story: a thought-provoking film

By SIOBHAN McRAE

**A** *Soldier's Story* is an important and all too unique film. Not only does it offer an interesting suspense story but it gives the average viewer something to think about.

The plot centres around the murder of a black sergeant near a Louisiana army base in 1944. Howard E. Rollings (Ragtime) plays Captain Davenport, sent from Washington to solve the case. Since Davenport is black and whites are implicated in the crime there is plenty of tension until the murderer is discovered.

Davenport runs into difficulties not only with the white officers but also with the black soldiers. They are so thrilled by their first encounter with a black officer that they can't refrain from treating him as one of the guys.

But Davenport keeps a distance between himself and all the other characters. Rollings plays him as a cool and slightly arrogant man who only occasionally shows a flash of humour, friendliness or sympathy.

The implications of what Davenport discovers take on an ever-widening significance as he learns more and more details. The film is not concerned so much with black/white relations as it is with inter-black relations. This is what makes the film so unusual and thought-provoking.

The movie explores the way various blacks react to the social changes they feel are inevitably under way. Some try to act like whites, some become militant in their black pride, some remain in a subservient attitude.

None of these approaches really

seems to work. It is the character of Davenport, with his integrity and objectivity, who seems to silently point out the path to take.

Although much of the film is taken up with flashbacks and there's not a lot of action, it rarely drags or becomes boring. There's only about one scene I would have cut. A certain amount of humour keeps the tension from becoming unbearable.

While care was taken to achieve an authentic 1940's look to the film

there seems to have been a bit of a slip-up in the music area. Herbie Hancock's soundtrack frequently adds to the atmosphere but when he uses synthesizers we are jolted back to the present. Also, the music performed by the actors (including Patti Labelle) seems far too polished-sounding.

But such minor quibbles don't affect the overall quality of the film. It should be seen.

*A Soldier's Story* is currently playing at the Oxford theatre. □

