

by Kirby Ferguson

Ingénue
k.d. lang
(Warner)

Walking in London
Concrete Blonde
(I.R.S.)

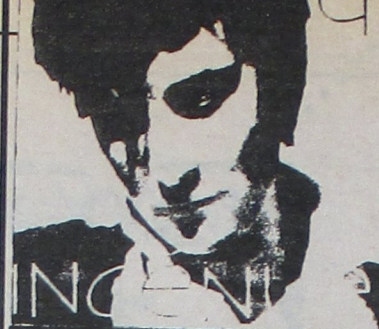
Break Like the Wind
Spinal Tap
(MCA)

"Human Touch"
Bruce Springsteen
(Sony)

I have a pretty interesting slew of stuff this week. The pick of the crop is undoubtedly k.d. lang's *Ingénue*. A melting pot of styles, *Ingénue* is k.d.'s most experimental work yet and furthers a unique musical vision.

k.d.'s old wacky ways have been set aside on this sombre set of ten originals. Actually, country in general has been cast aside. Free of c&w's banalities, k.d. has proven herself to be one of music's most promising talents; she's certainly one of popular music's finest vocalists. Her singing here is her most subtle yet and features previously unheard nuances. However, her unwillingness to let out even the odd soaring vocal can be somewhat tedious.

Ingénue has transition piece written all over it, but it contains many luminescent moments: "Season of Hollow Soul," "Outside Myself," the only number here even remotely resembling torch or twang, and the first single, "Constant Craving" among them. *Ingénue* will probably be dismissed as bizarre or depressing by many, but if you skip this one you'll be missing out on the



development of a true original. Despite it's downbeat tone, the potential *Ingénue* suggests is enough to brighten anyone's day.

Speaking of great vocalists, Concrete Blonde's big-lunged frontlady Johnette Napolitano definitely qualifies; her husky, powerful howling assures things will stay above average. Single-handedly Napolitano carries what could be pretty forgettable material in other's hands. The band hit a high point with "Joey," a song that gave Napolitano a good tune to sink her teeth into. Though nothing on *Walking in London* is as magnetic as that song, it rocks alright. Pop songs like "Someday" and "...Long Time Ago" add some variety to the proceedings, and the cover of James Brown's "It's a Man's World" is interesting.

But *Walking in London* is basically a roaring guitars 'n' wailing fest. The guitars tend to be either shimmering echoes or grungy wah-wah and never the twains shall meet; the whole album suffers from a monotony in sound. The album hits an all-time low with the surprisingly rank first single, "Ghost of a Texas Ladies' Man," a very dumb joke. But through it all Napolitano comes on like a cross between Chrissie Hynde and Aretha Franklin and saves it all from being totally disposable. Like far too many alternative acts, Concrete Blonde are a one-trick pony, but as far as tricks go, it's not a bad one.

Comic relief arrives with Spinal Tap's first recorded output since the soundtrack to their 1984 film, *This is Spinal Tap*. But these guys earn most of their yuks

with their poker-faced interviews, where they get to shoot out beauties like, "Well, I have a grasp of it, I just don't understand it." I'll admit it's impossible not to like *Break Like the Wind*, but I can't help but think it all could have been a lot funnier--and a lot dumber. If you want laughs, pass *Wind* and check *This* out.

As for the Boss's brand spankin' new single, it's simply the work of a rock 'n' roll genius. Truly excellent, I love it. Watch out for the new album(s).

In conclusion, it's late and I'm done.

