

**Even Cowgirls Get the Blues
Music From the Motion Picture
Soundtrack**

**k.d. lang
(Warner)**

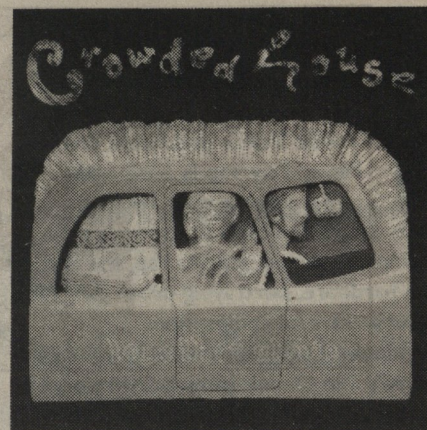
k.d. lang's latest project, the soundtrack to *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues* (based on Tom Robbins' book about the girl with the big thumbs), is a musical sketchbook covering a myriad of styles ranging from polka to waltz (all of which sound more than a little surreal in lang's hands). lang also delivers some Ingenue-styled balladry with songs like "Hush Sweet Lover" and displays a new strength with the funky "Just Keep Me Moving," a catchy single. The mad sweep of the thing also shows that lang hasn't lost her sense of humour. It's got loads of filler--I only count seven actual songs (and I use the term loosely); even the album's

best cut, "Just Keep Me Moving," doesn't particularly go anywhere. Nonetheless, *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues* (3) broadens the range of one of pop's most interesting talents.



**Together Alone
Crowded House
(EMI)**

There's something in the genetics of Beatle-derived pure pop bands that limits their life-span--eventually they go cold (see Squeeze, XTC, McCartney himself and now Crowded House). Crowded House have never displayed much substance, but they've always provided fine ear-candy. On *Together Alone* (2) they seem especially hollow, no thanks to a spacious mix that takes a lot of emotional conviction to fill up. *Together Alone* is clearly their attempt at a *Sgt. Pepper*, and like all failed masterpieces, listening to it will make you squirm. Crowded House simply lack the emotional weight to get this done, and the world beats, distorted guitars and all sound ridiculous. *Together Alone* is an ambitious failure that misses about as badly as Depeche Mode's *Songs of Faith and Devotion*.



**Swing Batta Swing
K7
(BMG)**

"Come baby come baby baby come come"--with a line like that, what would you expect this album to be like? The album's song titles (Let's Bang, Body

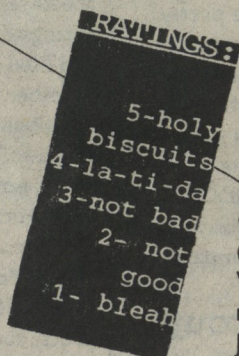
Rock, Come Baby Come, and Move it Like This) would suggest heavy sexuality in the lyrics but the album doesn't come off overly strong. "Come Baby Come" is by far the best song, but the remainder of the album is just a bit better than average. (3)
--S.M.

**Five Days in July
Blue Rodeo
(Warner)**

Blue Rodeo have always been a fine singles act, but their albums generally consist of a lot of indistinct country-rock. The band upped the aggression for their last album, *Lost Together*, with typically bland results. With *Five Days in July* (2) they go in the opposite direction, a minor improvement. Rootsy and mellow, the album works best at its most haunting ("Five Days in May," "What is This Love"); otherwise, they twang along like a hundred other country-rock bands. Blue Rodeo remains a highly derivative and anonymous band, good intentions aside. *Five Days in July* bores me.

**Winter Light
Linda Rondstadt
(Warner)**

Always a strong but characterless singer, Linda Rondstadt was the Mariah Carey of her day, a dazzling, empty display of technique. In recent years she's gone from bombast to pretty listenable adult contemporary. Rondstadt's latest, *Winter Light* (3.5), is--more surprisingly to me than anyone--a rock-solid set of songs, nicely crafted and powerfully sung. The MOR syrup gets poured on pretty thick at times, but that voice keeps things afloat. If the mere thought of this stuff makes you queasy, you're probably smarter than I am.



**Pale Sun Crescent Moon
Cowboy Junkies
(BMG)**

While it once seemed like Margo Timmins was whispering in your ear, I now just wish she'd speak up. Timmins' hushed vocals no longer suit the Junkies' increasingly eloquent, epic and sometimes harrowing music; her voice is an inexpressive vacuum at the centre of their sound. *Pale Sun Crescent Moon* (2) is sparer than its predecessor, the strong *Black Eyed Man*, though more complex and melodically elusive. But Timmins' voice doesn't galvanize the band's sound--thus, it simply misses the mark. Remarkably uninvolved and forgettable.

**Faithful
Hi-Five
(BMG)**

The third album from the boys from Waco, Texas is, like most later releases from groups, not up to the level obtained in the original. Their songs consist mainly of dreary teenage love stories, "I miss you, I love you, I want you girrrll" and after a while it becomes tiring. Songs like "Miss U Girl", "Ready 4 U 2 Love", and "What Can I Say to You (To Justify My Love)" make the listener glad that puberty is over. (2.5)
--S.M.

**Try Anything Once
Alan Parsons
(Arista)**

Try Anything Once, by Alan Parsons, is a sorry attempt at recreating the success of years past. Alan Parsons over the years has had great success producing, engineering and performing releases for various artists, but unfortunately, this album seems outdated and uninspired. Several years ago this album may have had one or two successful releases but today, this album cannot hold its own. 'Oh Life (There Must Be More)' is the only single from this album which may be capable of even meager success.

Sure, *Try Anything Once* features the Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Andrew Powell, but even this addition did little to add to the substance of this album's material.

For those of you who still enjoy the synthesized sound of early 80's popular music, enjoy. For myself, this rates a 1.5 and only because the lifeless material on *Try Anything Once* managed to bore me to sleep on many a night.

--Dana Dennis