

MUSIC

WITH
SALLY
BROWNE



PLAYLIST



INDIE

INSOMNIA

Washington



With great praise comes great pressure, but Brisbane's Megan Washington manages to rise to the challenge on *Insomnia*, a companion piece to her acclaimed debut. On this eight-track record, she's ignored all that and followed her heart, which, in this case, seems to be a broken one. *Insomnia* is a beautiful, rich and engaging album, although it should probably be served with a good cup of tea, or perhaps a stiff gin, to ward off a sniffle or two that might result from inspection of the lyrics. The

album opens with a bold jazzy drum roll as Washington announces her entrance like a sexy femme fatale on *Holy Moses*. Here, her smoky, sexy voice really comes into its own in a song that's ripe for a James Bond soundtrack (film producers, take note). *Plastic Bag* keeps things musically upbeat. But from *Skeleton Key* onwards, she takes us down some dark paths. The lyrics, however, are pure poetry. Washington proves she's no one-album wonder.

Sally Browne



ROCK

MYLO XYLOTO

Coldplay



So here's the bad news. Coldplay, a band that in the past has justifiably been accused of a certain amount of self-indulgence, earnestness and bombast, has made what has traditionally borne the hallmarks of those very things - a concept album. But here's the good news - it's none of the above. In fact, it is bloody fantastic. While the official explanation from the band is that it's a "love story with a happy ending" and benefits from being

played start to finish, the album is by no means a slave to the format. Brian Eno's fingerprints are all over *Mylo Xyloto*, not only with synth flourishes on the musical interludes, but also in the broadening of the Coldplay palette to revel in new elements of dance, R&B and hip-hop. R&B superstar Rihanna acquits herself well in the duet with Martin on *Princess of China*, but she is the guest star in the show starring Coldplay.

James Wigney



POP

STRONGER

Kelly Clarkson



It has been almost a decade since Kelly Clarkson was crowned the first *American Idol* in 2002 and the girl has certainly been busy - she's up to album No.5 already. On her latest album, Clarkson finds middle ground between formulaic cookie-cutter pop and introspective, darker music as heard on her third album, *My December* - which received mixed responses - prompting her last album, the shiny *All I Ever Wanted*. More mature tracks, like *Honestly* and *The War Is Over*, are balanced by

sing-at-the-top-of-your-lungs pop rock anthems such as *I Forgive You* and *You Love Me*. Clarkson creeps into another former *American Idol* star Carrie Underwood's territory - country - on the closing number, *Breaking Your Own Heart*, which has surprising depth. However, there are too many average, malleable-into-the-same-mould tracks. The bottom line is that Clarkson is not any stronger or weaker on this album - by playing it safe, she's simply getting by.

Karen Tye



CELEBRATE WITH A BANG

The perpetual kd lang reflects on decades of discovery as she returns to continue a love affair with Australia, this time bringing with her a brand new band, writes **Sally Browne**

On November 2, kd lang celebrates a milestone birthday. The beloved Canadian singer will be turning the big 5-0. She isn't quite sure yet what she'll be doing to celebrate. But the landmark day comes just days before she is due to hop on a plane to perform for Australian audiences, after the release of her newest album *Sing it Loud*.

It's one of those birthdays that provides a chance to reflect on life. And lang has a stellar career to reflect on, from millions of albums sold, to Grammys won, and paths crossed with stars from Roy Orbison to Tony Bennett and Cindy Crawford, whom she famously posed with on that classic racy cover of *Vanity Fair*.

She's happy with where she is in life and says

things have unfolded pretty much as "expected". She can recall with clarity her other major milestone birthdays.

"I remember my 40th," she says. "I was in India for the first time and I was as sick as a dog and travelling to the Bodhi tree, where Buddha attained enlightenment, so that was a pretty special birthday."

"Thirty, I was in Paris for the first time in a hotel by myself and I made myself a little picnic and I grabbed a bottle of wine and sat along the river and fed the pigeons."

Further back, things get a little hazier. "I don't remember 20 to be quite honest," she laughs.

"I think at 30 I was really excited in terms of my art. I was making (film) *Salmonberries* at the time, (hit album) *Ingenue* was about to come out, so I