

k.d. lang



watershed

"If you have any interest in seriously beautiful songs," writes *The Times* of London, "[this is] a masterpiece that holds its place next to, maybe even slightly above, her 1992 hit *Ingenue*."

For "Watershed," k.d. lang has, for the first time, taken on the role of producer - as well as writer, singer and multi-instrumentalist - for this album of new original songs. The result is perhaps lang's most confident and revealing work, with gorgeous arrangements featuring strings and guitars, and lyrics that evoke intimate reverie and reflection.

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THE MAIL

THE PRIMARY BATTLE

George Packer, in writing on the candidacies of Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton, spends a great deal of time on the latter and very little on the former ("The Choice," January 28th). That Packer, in describing Clinton's career (and errors), has so much on which to draw is illustrative. I am uplifted by Obama's rhetoric, but it is Clinton's experience, especially in foreign policy and in effecting actual change, that has persuaded me to support her candidacy. Elsewhere, Packer writes that "within minutes" of hearing Obama speak he "couldn't recall a single thing that [Obama] had said, and the speech dissolved into pure feeling." If this is supposed to be a testament to political acumen, it doesn't sway me. Words are just words until action is behind them.

*Sands Hall
Nevada City, Calif.*

Packer's article demonstrates that there is no real basis of comparison between the two candidates. May I suggest that the reason for the essay's lack of substance regarding Barack Obama's ideas is that his campaign feels more like a pleasant horoscope than like a run for the Presidency? (The kind that anyone can read and think, Yes! I want change, too! It's amazing how well he knows me.) Is there anything wrong with a candidate who has had her eye on the Presidency for more than a few years, and who values her private life? I'll choose an ambitious woman of substance over a fortune cookie any day.

*Ursula Oberg
Aptos, Calif.*

Packer notes Clinton's invocation of Lyndon Johnson in an effort to emphasize her political experience over Obama's. But the Johnson comparison actually emphasizes her flaws. President Johnson's support for the Civil Rights Act of 1964 set a standard for courage, political skill, and integrity (in a man of questionable integrity). Clinton, on the other hand, has hedged and pandered on the primary moral questions that confront America today: the war in Iraq and a just peace

between Israel and the Palestinians. And her current strategy to divide Democrats along racial and gender lines is not what one would call "political skill." Senator Clinton, you are no Lyndon Johnson.

*H. Reed Cosper
Providence, R.I.*

TRIAL WITHOUT ERROR

Carl Elliott raises genuine issues about what happens to the integrity of medical research when a small number of participants make a "career" of enrolling in clinical trials ("Guinea Pigging," January 7th). Clinical-research organizations make every effort to protect the welfare of research participants and to insure the integrity of clinical-trial data. Though Elliott accurately states that financial incentives may in part motivate research sponsors and researchers to adhere to regulations and safety standards, he worries that for-profit companies might cut corners. In fact, a study by the Tufts Center for the Study of Drug Development suggests that research projects in which study sponsors had a high level of clinical-research-organization involvement completed trials faster, without any diminishment of patient safety or data quality. From tuberculosis to H.I.V./AIDS, carefully conducted clinical trials are the best method to develop effective new medicines. Clinical-study participants are the unsung heroes who help to bring such critical treatments to the patients who need them the most. We hope that the atypical experiences of a small group of self-proclaimed "guinea pigs" will not dissuade people from taking part in the essential clinical trials that underlie medical progress today.

*Douglas Peddicord
Executive Director, Association of
Clinical Research Organizations
Washington, D.C.*

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