

You probably already know that music is a great way to learn and practice English. Choosing who to listen to can be difficult, though, as there are so many great artists and music genres available. Choosing who to listen to can be almost as difficult as learning English.

In these handouts, we're going to look at some of the more popular western artists. We'll talk a little bit about their personal lives and also learn the lyrics (words) from some of their more popular songs. Questions about the artists and their music can be sent to me at teacher@englishforlife.ca.

Hailing from Edmonton and Concord, Alta, kd lang is not so much a **renowned** music artist as a force of nature, a level 4 hurricane that will sweep you off your feet, **twirl** you around the dance floor and then move on, leaving you exactly where you started.

Influenced by American poet ee cummings, lang uses all lower case letters in her name, but she was **originally** Katherine Dawn Lang, the youngest of a family of six (two older sisters, an older brother and her parents). Her early life **hinted** at several paths, such as being an Olympic volleyball athlete, but it was during a college stint in Red Deer, Alta, that lang became **mesmerized** by the late Patsy Cline and knew that her future was in music.

And, like any good hurricane, lang's **presence** in the Canadian (and later international) music scene shook up the landscape like no else could have hoped to. The artist left Red Deer and moved back to Edmonton with her band, the Reclines (named, as you've probably guessed, after Patsy Cline). There's an **urban myth** that lang, earlier in her career, caused a **ruccus** in Nashville by claiming to be the reincarnation of Patsy Cline (many Grand Ole Opry regulars were not impressed).

Her music, however, was nothing like Patsy Cline's and it earned her the **singular** title "Country Punk". She has always noted that this had more to do with her clothing than her music (**poverty** inspired her mother to fashion clothing from old drapes and anything else they could **recycle**). She described her music as being more country pop, and her first album "A Truly Western Experience" (1984) and the album song "**Hanky-Panky**" completely fit her description.

The reclines would **follow** this with a second and third album, "Angel With a Lariat" (1987) and "Absolute Torch and Twang" (1989), but it was lang's 1988 album "Shadowland" and the **similarly titled single** that introduced her as a solo act and moved her away from country music into pop. These years weren't without **controversy**, though.

The artist has always been a vocal **champion** of important causes and an advertisement discouraging the consumption of beef led to her **estrangement** from her hometown, Concord. When she later came out publicly as being gay, the Nashville music scene rejected her out of hand. Nothing can stop a hurricane, though, and lang continued to **blaze** her way through the music scene with grammy and other nominations falling before her like dominoes.

More recent years have seen lang pair up with industry **icons** such as Roy Orbison and Elton John, venture into acting (appearances on the tv show "Ellen" and in movies) and earn the admiration of her **peers**. Her cover of a Leonard Cohen song, "**Hallelujah**", is considered a classic and her performance of the song at the **2005 Juno Awards** in Canada resulted in a **standing ovation** (from country and pop stars, and the entire audience). She now considers herself retired but hasn't ruled out a future return to the spotlight, if and when her "muse" should reappear.

Hanky-Panky lyrics

When I wink at you with one of my eyes
Mean to meet behind the barn in 5
I'll be waiting with a sweet surprise

Oooh...

Folks might wonder where we've wandered to
Might be doing things we ain't supposed to do
I just wanna spend some time alone with you

Oooh...

Hanky Panky
Hanky Panky
Hanky Panky Maybe tomorrow we can go for a ride
In the country sitting side by side
I've got some things that I'd like to confide

Hanky Panky
Hanky Panky
Hanky Panky

Shadowland lyrics

I'm a shadow since you're gone
Just a shadow in the dawn
That breaks in the sand
A shadow lost in shadowland

My poor heart just flew away
When it realized one day
The dreams that we planned
Would only end in shadowland

I always wondered
Why you had to go
Whatever blunder I made
I don't know
I guess that something
Turned out wrong
Didn't quite belong
In this lover's song

I'm a shadow, but you know
I'm the one who loves you so
So please, take my hand
And lead me out of shadowland
And lead me out of shadowland

Hallelujah lyrics

I've heard there was a secret chord
That David played, and it pleased the Lord
You don't really care for music, do you?
Well it goes like this
The fourth, the fifth
The minor fall, the major lift
The baffled king composing Hallelujah

Hallelujah
Hallelujah
Hallelujah
Hallelujah

Well your faith was strong but you needed proof
You saw her bathing on the roof
Her beauty and the moonlight overthrew you
Well she tied you to her kitchen chair
She broke your throne, and she cut your hair
And from your lips she drew Hallelujah

Hallelujah, Hallelujah
Hallelujah, Hallelujah

Baby I've been here before
I've seen this room and I've walked the floor
Used to live alone before I knew ya
But I've seen your flag on the marble arch
Our love is not a victory march
It's a cold and it's a broken Hallelujah

Hallelujah, Hallelujah
Hallelujah, Hallelujah

Maybe there's a God above
But all I have ever learned from love
Was how to shoot somebody who outdrew ya
It's not a cry that you hear at night
It's not someone who's seen the light
It's a cold and broken Hallelujah

Hallelujah, Hallelujah
Hallelujah, Hallelujah

Hallelujah, Hallelujah
Hallelujah, Hallelujah
Hallelujah, Hallelujah
Hallelujah

Vocabulary

hailing from: to come from somewhere; to start from somewhere

renowned: known by many people; famous

twirl: to spin someone or something in a circle

originally: at the start; in the beginning

hinted: to suggest indirectly

mesmerized: having one's complete attention; focused on something to the point of being unaware of other things

presence: the state of being somewhere (a place, event, industry, etc)

urban myth: a popular story, unsupported by facts, which may or may not be true

rucous: a situation that involves conflict (social, verbal or physical)

singular: to be the only one

poverty: the situation or state of being poor or having no money

recycle: to reuse something that might otherwise go in the garbage

follow: to walk behind someone or something, OR **to come later, after something has happened** (example: lunch follows breakfast)

controversy: a situation, idea or other thing where the number of people who agree and disagree is the same

champion: a person who defends someone or something OR **the act of defending someone or something**

estrangement: a situation where people aren't as emotionally close as they were before

blaze: to do something in a way that attracts a large amount of attention from other people

icons: people who are thought to represent or symbolize something (an actor who is widely known)

peers: people who have the same job or do the same thing that you do

standing ovation: when everyone in an audience is clapping after a performance (while standing)

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