

The Strong One

Despite the heartache, Kelita delivers an uplifting disc



JAMES MURETICH

Herald writer

Hers has not been an easy life.

Her mother died of cancer, her father committed suicide, her brother died of a heroin overdose and her first marriage ended in divorce.

If ever there was a country

artist who has earned the right to sing hurtin' songs, it's **Kelita**.

Yet rather than wallow in heartache and self-pity, the Canadian singer-songwriter has delivered a creative, uplifting disc in **Lucky Ones**, her first album in a decade.

Her first single, **The Strong One**, which is reminiscent of **Rosanne Cash** in its style and delivery, is poised to crack the top 40 of Canadian country radio only two weeks after its release.

"The heartache I have," Kelita said during a recent phone interview.

"I've been through so much. And you know what? It continues. You just don't all of a sudden get your life together and then everything's rosy from there on.

"I guess it all comes down to what you do with the heartache. That's what the whole album is about. I'm not writing it for sympathy. Like I say in one song, it's just one woman's story. Everybody has one. I'm just sharing mine."

In many respects, **Lucky Ones** is Kelita's musical rite of passage. In the early '80s she won the Canadian Country Music Association's Rising Star Award. But only now do we hear her rise from being an entertainer to an artist.

"Entertaining, performing, had always been something I could hide behind. To me, it was a way of getting attention, of covering up the loss and sense of rejection that comes with losing your parents," says Kelita.

"But over the last seven, eight years, I've emerged into an artist as I started figuring out who I was and what my feelings were. Rather than trying to please everybody else, I discovered that there were things inside of me that I was able to write about.

"And my music has been a real source of healing."

KEEP ON A TRUCKIN': Almost as long as there's been country music, there's been songs about truckin'. And some of country's finest get together for a little pickin', grinnin' and a whole lotta truckin' on **Big Rock Deluxe: A Musical Salute To The American Truck Driver** on Upstart Records.



While it's rooted in a longstanding country tradition and features such veterans as **Buck Owens** as well as older outlaws like **Billy Joe Shaver**, this tribute to truckin' definitely tears up the highway with its rockin' heart and honky tonk soul.

Everybody from **Red Simpson & Junior Brown** and **Marty Stuart** to **Kelly Willis**, **Steve Earle** and **Son Volt** is involved and all are guilty — of turning out a classic, contemporary celebration of country truckin' tunes.

CANADA'S TOP COUNTRY SELLERS: While country music may be enjoying more sales and mainstream success, only six of our nation's top 75 selling albums (according to the Top Retail Albums chart in this week's **The Record**) are by country artists.

The highest charting artist is **Shania Twain** whose **T Woman In Me** is holding strong at number 26 after 84 weeks on the chart. She's followed closely by the **Rankin Family** whose greatest hits package, **Collection**, is at number 29 after only two weeks on the chart.

The other country acts on **The Record's** top 75 selling albums are **Leann Rimes** at number 45 with **Blue**, Calgary's **Paul Brandt** at number 61 with **Calm Before The Storm**, **Clint Black** at 63 with his **Greatest Hits** and **Mindy McCready** at number 72 with **Ten Thousand Angels**.