



Wayne Lavallee's *Green Dress* Defines First Nations Contemporary Music

It was standing room only at the Media Club in Vancouver. Wayne Lavallee began to sing. I was immediately struck by the unusual quality of his voice, *raspy*—an earthy mix of contemporary sounds and traditional chanting. Listening to the lyrics and moving with the rhythms, I felt as if I was *remembering*. His music touched a place within me of emotion, of heart, of spirit...something mystic.

Hearing the title song, I found it easy to love that "Indian girl with the green dress on," back in a time of innocence that adults yearn for but only children understand. *Heartland*, in Cree, reminded me that language is the heart of culture and perhaps the truest

meaning of home. And then there was *Savanna*. If you have ever smelled sweetgrass on a warm summer day, you will know what I mean. The richness of this song made it almost tangible; I closed my eyes and danced across the prairies, flamenco style. But my favourite song had to be *Powwow Honey*. Here Wayne seemed to touch on the juxtaposition of old and new "NDN" ways-of-being, using humour to bring some levity to what otherwise could be considered serious issues. Or maybe it was the part about getting "your Bannock butt into the car" that I found so appealing.

It was an honour being at the Media Club to witness the CD release of Wayne