

Luba live

Live concert versus video. For Luba, one of Canada's favorite female vocalists, the persona created by electronic media may be more exciting than the corporeal star herself.

Luba's concert at Montreal's renovated theatre-cum-disco Metropolis in January was very disappointing. Feedback and poor acoustics overwhelmed her - usually strong - vocals. The organizers were not unduly upset; the concert itself was just a visual backdrop for the upcoming music special on Luba produced by Cambium Film and Video Productions.

A separate mix of the concert was taken, and there may be some studio recordings dubbed in, said Bruce Clawson, co-founder and producer at Cambium.

Those in audience pushing up next to the stage seemed oblivious to the bad mix. As Luba broke into her hit "Even in the Darkest Moments," the crowd, in choreographed unison, lifted their arms in a synchronous wave. A cameraman (one of eight filming the performance), panned the front row of eager participants. Not exactly teenaged frenzy, but convincing enough.

Luba: *Between the Earth & Sky* is the second in a music genre series produced for television by Cambium Productions. The first in the series, *Jane Siberry, One More Colour*, combined documentary and rock video - actually more of the latter. "We aren't *60 Minutes*," says Clawson. "The emphasis is on concert and performance; it's what they do best."

"This is not creative interpretation," says director Don Allan. "It is more like a commercial. We are creating an image for them."

Creating a dynamic image for voracious pop fans involves multicamera direction, accelerated cuts, and rough camera work. "By rough I mean a handheld, constantly moving



PHOTO: RAJ RAMA

Luba: a rock-star uplifted by the adoration of her fans.

camera, innovative angles and precarious framing," says Allan. "You have to alter your shooting style according to the strengths and weaknesses of the artist."

Allan's direction experience lies principally

in rock video and commercials including *I am a Hotel*, a television special starring poet/musician Leonard Cohen; *Tears are not Enough*, on the making of the Canadian song for African Famine Relief; and *Stereovision*, which

combined more than 80 live concerts for 26 half-hour music specials.

There was a big difference between shooting Jane (Siberry) and Luba," says Clawson. "Jane is more of a performance artist... more intellectual. Luba's music comes from the soul. She's more down-to-earth."

Petite, blonde and zaffig, Luba (Kowalchuk) is not your typical rock personality. "Luba is very shy off-stage. She doesn't make direct eye contact," says Clawson.

Allan and Peter Godder (researcher and writer for the film), spent a lot of time getting to know Luba so that she would be more comfortable in front of the camera. "The first couple of interviews didn't work very well," says Allan. Of course there are a few tricks of the trade to remedy that. During many of the interview segments Allan directed Luba to stand so she was eye-line to the camera to help overcome her tendency to avoid the lens. Scripted interviews have also been taped.

"Jane was more involved in the structure of her production," said Clawson. "But we were able to show Luba cuts of her interviews so she could see what worked and what didn't."

Cambium is a relative youngster in the industry. Founders Bruce Clawson and Arnie Zipursky first ventured into the field in 1982 with *Sharon Lois & Bram's Elephant Show*. With the production of the Jane Siberry concert last year (shot both in film and video), Cambium switched gears adding faster, slicker programming to their repertoire. "Music is the primary focus of our company. Siberry and Luba are part of a pilot project featuring the top female vocalists in Canada. We would like to add k. d. Lang to that list," said Clawson. "But we are now getting into drama." *Einstein Tonight*, a one-hour made-for-television drama directed by Zipursky, is now in post-production and will have its world premiere on June 21 at the Centennial Theatre in Winnipeg.

Luba: *Between the Earth & Sky* will be aired in the fall.

Karen Mazurkewich •



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