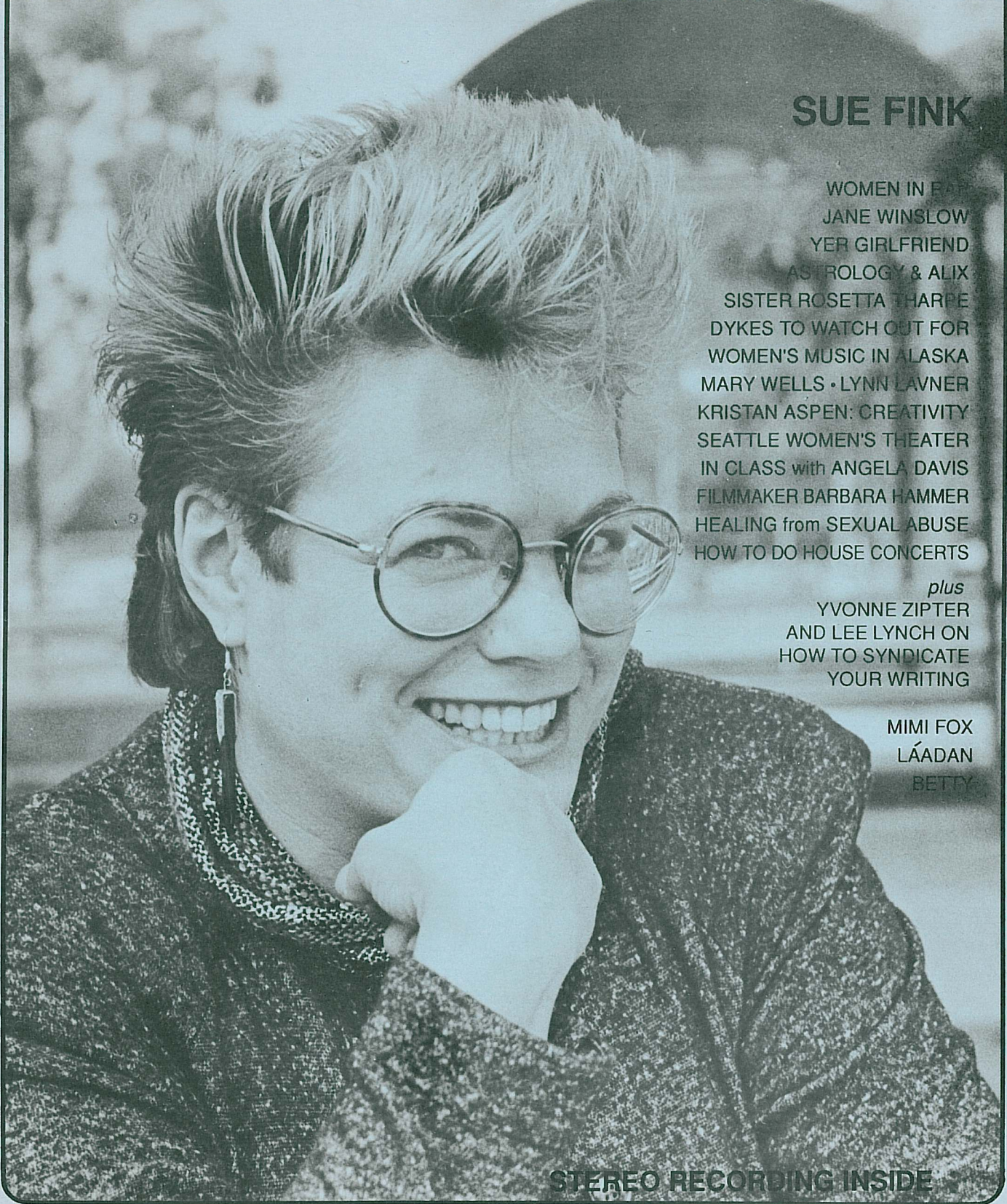


HOT WIRE

THE JOURNAL OF WOMEN'S MUSIC AND CULTURE



SUE FINK

WOMEN IN PAINT
JANE WINSLOW
MY GIRLFRIEND
ASTROLOGY & ALIX
SISTER ROSETTA THARPE
DYKES TO WATCH OUT FOR
WOMEN'S MUSIC IN ALASKA
MARY WELLS • LYNN LAVNER
KRISTAN ASPEN: CREATIVITY
SEATTLE WOMEN'S THEATER
IN CLASS with ANGELA DAVIS
FILMMAKER BARBARA HAMMER
HEALING from SEXUAL ABUSE
HOW TO DO HOUSE CONCERTS

plus

YVONNE ZIPTER
AND LEE LYNCH ON
HOW TO SYNDICATE
YOUR WRITING

MIMI FOX
LÁADAN
BETTY

STEREO RECORDING INSIDE

Sandy Dwyer

VOLUME 7, NUMBER 2

MAY 1991

\$5.00

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

THE 'HOT WIRE' EDITORIAL PHILOSOPHY

HOT WIRE specializes in woman-identified music and culture, primarily the performing arts, literature, and film/video. We strongly believe in the power of the arts to affect social change, and enjoy documenting the combination of "creativity" and "politics/philosophy." We are committed to covering female artists and women's groups who prioritize feminist and/or lesbian content and ideals in their creative products and events. We enjoy helping to both spark and strengthen the international community of those who love the creativity of women. *HOT WIRE* is the only publication devoted to the women's music and culture industry; it is an organizing tool for our community as well as interesting reading material. Each sixty-four page issue includes a two-sided stereo recording, so we can hear the music and poetry as well as read about it.

AND SPEAKING OF SPARKING AND STRENGTHENING...

The business end of *HOT WIRE* has had such steady growth over the past few years that we are now in the position of having to choose between throwing in the towel and finding the money to hire someone to manage the office, the volunteer staff, and some of the financial aspects. We all work full-time jobs away from *HOT WIRE* for pay, and several of us already donate substantial amounts of money in addition to volunteering our time. We are experts at "making do," or we couldn't have survived and thrived for seven years. (We finally got a computer, but we still have to borrow other people's laser printers, modems, fax machines, photocopiers, etc.).

After much soul searching and budget analyzing this past winter (postage went up again, as did other expenses), we decided that our only realistic option would be to give up the idea of doing *HOT WIRE* as a journal—we thought we could maybe convert it to a year-book format or something. Needless to say, there were a lot of grim days and sleepless nights around here.

Although we hadn't yet put out an official press release, the grapevine began to hum and we got a few very supportive calls and letters, most notably from Ronnie Gilbert and Donna Korones, and Lynn Wenzel of *New Directions for Women* (see "Soapbox"). These three women must be publicly acknowledged for turning the tide emotionally for me personally—giving my spirit the kind of encouragement that it desperately needed when I was at my lowest, most hopeless, point. My nature is to hold on and push forward, no matter what, but this winter was really bad for me. The time they took to write those letters—making me feel not alone, convincing me that my work and sacrifices have real value—probably saved *HOT WIRE* from going under.

Thanks to the sparks those letters cre-



Lynn Siniscalchi, new 'HOT WIRE' business manager, pictured here with her creation—"SnowWoman"—which greeted the approximately 200 guests at our annual Capricorn party, held last January 12 at the 'HOT WIRE' building on Wayne.

ated, I began to get in touch again with the drive that has kept *HOT WIRE* going all these years against incredible financial and logistical odds. I began to think of all the Fairy Godmothers who have faith in us. I got excited about the new writers and artists who have just recently joined our staff, including columnist Jewelle Gomez, video reviewer Paula Langguth, writers Terri Jewell and Jamie Anderson, playwright Claudia Allen, graphic artist Laura Irene Wayne, and astrologer Gail Fairfield. A long talk with Donna Allen (Women's Institute for Freedom of the Press) on the crucial importance of making connections between women was especially inspiring, too.

Once again, the emotional commitment was revived, and although it seems extremely risky, we've decided to continue as a three-times-per-year journal. We also intend to resurrect our *Women's Music Plus Directory* as an annual publication. Hardcore business discussions with two of the most busy, patient, experienced women in our network—Barbara Grier (Naiad Press) and Nancy Bereano (Firebrand Press)—cleared the rest of the cobwebs from my thinking, and for that I'll always be grateful.

What you, the reader, need to know about our operation here is that it costs in the neighborhood of \$8,000 to print and mail each issue—not including any other business expenses; we now get between ten and thirty pieces of mail per day, which someone has to open, sort, and deal with; the time required per day just to listen to the phone answering machine can be as long as twenty minutes. We

ON THE COVER

Sue Fink has been involved with women's music and culture since the mid '70s, touring, performing, and emceeing. She founded the Los Angeles Women's Community Chorus, and was the group's conductor for ten years. Her recording credits include two solo albums, *Big Promise* and *True Life Adventure*.

have accounting, advertising, production, clerical functions, packing and shipping, subscription-list maintenance, bookstore accounts, computer maintenance, cleaning, festival sales, financial planning, fundraising, soundsheet soliciting/management, promotion, complaints and snafus of all types to sort out, and volunteer coordination...all of this not even counting research, writing, attending events, typing articles, editing...

At this time we don't have a grantwriter, but this is a major priority for 1991. We already operate in the red, and the rising costs of everything are *very* discouraging. We continue our commitment to keep the magazine affordable to buy and to advertise in, which puts a certain ceiling on prices we can charge. Sacrificing quality or cutting back on pages is simply not an option. Our Fairy Godmothers are terrific, and we couldn't have gotten this far without them. (Please take a moment to read the masthead to see their names, plus the names of all the women who donate their time and creative work.)

During 1990 I took on a partner, Lynn Siniscalchi, and without her twenty to forty hours per week of volunteer labor, the magazine would have folded long ago. At this point Lynn is willing to cut back on her day-job hours and take on the (paid) responsibility of managing the basic business of *HOT WIRE*. This will entail her taking a huge pay cut, but she is totally dedicated to the survival of this magazine and all that it represents.

However, in addition to all the money we need to raise regularly to pay for our expenses, henceforth we will now need at least \$6,000 more per year to pay Lynn. We will be exploring grants, of course, and really need to know about any grant-giving organizations, grantwriters, or individual philanthropists you may know. We'll be grateful for any benefits done on *HOT WIRE*'s behalf. (And if you've been considering becoming a Fairy Godmother but never got around to it, now would be a great time. If you know other women who may be willing to donate money on a regular basis, please ask them. Women with disposable income often say, "If only I'd known! I could have afforded \$10 or \$20 a month!")

So this is our story; we've passed the crisis point and are re-committed to making a go of *HOT WIRE*, at least for the next few years. Thanks to everyone who's given a gift subscription, or taken the time to write a nice note to our staff. It makes a huge difference to us, knowing that you out there also value our incredibly powerful yet so fragile women's culture.

Finally, I'd like to suggest that you think about other women and women's groups who sustain you emotionally, politically, or spiritually—drop them a nice note today, while you're thinking about it. Perhaps in these times *HOT WIRE* is not the only group needing some encouragement and praise.

Toni Armstrong Jr.
Publisher/Managing Editor

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TRUE LIFE ADVENTURES IN WOMEN'S MUSIC

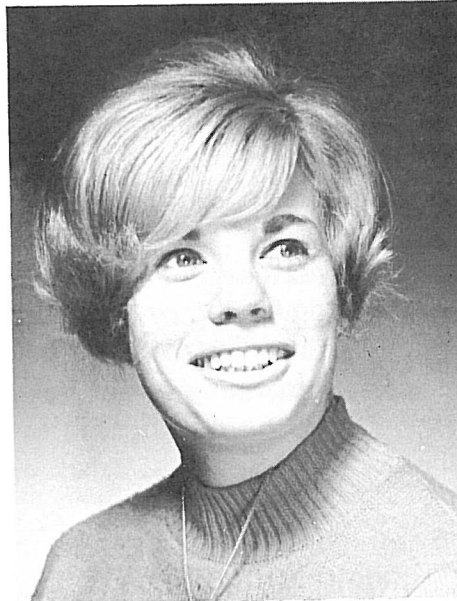
SUE FINK

interviewed by Toni Armstrong Jr.

Sue Fink grew up in Beverly Hills practicing piano four hours daily. She graduated magna cum laude from UCLA's music department and went on to graduate school there. She has sung on TV, albums, and at Nixon's presidential inauguration. Her professional credits prior to becoming involved with women's music include a State Department-sponsored thirteen nation tour of Asia with the California Chamber Singers, and a singing tour of Europe, Israel, Canada, Hawaii, and the continental U.S. with the Roger Wagner Chorale. She has performed and/or emceed at all of the major women's festivals in the U.S., and at the 1986 International Women's Music Festival in Israel. She founded the L.A. Women's Community Chorus and was featured on CBS television's 'Two on the Town' as the group's energetic conductor. The National Association of Independent Record Distributors honored her first solo album—the techno-pop 'Big Promise' (Ladyslipper, 1985)—with an award of excellence. Her latest album, 'True Life Adventure,' is on her own Frostfire label.

HOW DID YOU GET STARTED IN WOMEN'S MUSIC? HOW DID YOU COME TO WRITE "LEAPING"?

My first women's music event was a talent show around 1975. It was at this flea-ridden place on the beach in Venice [near Los Angeles, California]. The floor was covered with little crawling sand animals. Evan Paxton was the producer; she was the first producer I knew of in women's music. I think I was staffing at N.O.W. and I heard about the event through a flyer or something. I remember Margie [Adam] performed, as well as Vicki Randle, and Marcie Dicterow. They all sang by themselves or with a guitar, and there was one little microphone. We were being bitten to death, but who cared! None of us had ever been in a room filled with just women before. Everybody just cheered and yelled. There must have been, I don't know, sixty of us. During that year I went to a few other events that started happening, but they were always in like some tiny



Sue in college, studying music and planning to teach. Little did she know.



Vada Verneé

Sue Fink: "I don't think we have 'women's music'—I think we have a women's music audience. We have a group of people who want to hear music by and about women."

YWCA back room or something. Then Joelyn and I got this idea to put on something involving women in the community, so in 1976 we put on this show called *Bicenten-*

nial Review. We wrote a whole show—it was almost a musical—and we involved about thirty women from the community. We wrote "Leaping (Lesbians)" around that time, for an early local talent show.

HOW DID MEG CHRISTIAN HEAR ABOUT THE SONG?

She was sitting in the audience of the talent show, and the audience just went wild. I got some of the other women to be backup, and I called them the Dykettes. After the show, Meg asked us if she could play it in her performances.

WOMEN THOUGHT IT WAS ONE OF THE FUNNIEST SONGS MEG EVER WROTE.

Unfortunately, Meg neglected to say who wrote the song when she did it on stage, so people assumed she wrote it. It was just a lack of consciousness. It became a sort of controversy, but later on when I went on tour with her in 1984 she really apologized, and made up for it by asking me to perform it in her show.

AND YOU DID YOUR EARLY VERSION ON OLIVIA RECORDS' LESBIAN CONCENTRATE ALBUM. WHEN AND HOW DID YOU START THE L.A. WOMEN'S COMMUNITY CHORUS?

I started the chorus in late '76. We had our first meeting in '77. I'd been doing choral music, and I was teaching music in a junior high school. Then I taught in Beverly Hills. But my life was starting to overlap already—it was getting dangerous to teach. Already I had a few events where former students had come up to me in concerts and recognized me. And after I got the chorus started, a woman who was a parent at the school at which I was teaching found out I was a lesbian and tried to get me fired. I quit teaching in 1978.

HOW DID YOU GET THE IDEA FOR THE CHORUS?

I was a choral conductor. That's what I did for my living. But I was always into community involvement stuff; I wanted to get everybody "doing it." And I thought, wouldn't it be *great* to have a choir that sang this music? So I started looking for people to work with, because I didn't want to do all the organizing myself. I met a woman composer named Lynn Wilson and we gathered more people, until we had a collective of six. We met for about four months, organizing and making arrangements. We advertised, and seventy-five women showed up at the first rehearsal.

WHERE DID YOU FIND MUSIC?

I remember we did women's music—Holly Near songs, Berkeley Women's Music Collective, etc. Lynn did a lot of the arrangements, and I did some. I became the conductor.

YOU WERE INVOLVED FOR TEN YEARS. WHY DID YOU RETIRE?

It was getting to the point where I was missing half the rehearsals because I was on the road so much. It didn't feel fair to the chorus, and I just had to quit.

YOUR FIRST TOUR WAS AROUND 1979, RIGHT?

Right, and actually you had something to do with that.

I DID?

Yeah, just the other day I was looking at the material in the book I'm writing about how all this got going. You wrote me a letter when you were doing an article about women's choruses for *Paid My Dues* [early journal of women's music]. Later on, when you ran the article [Spring 1978 issue], I found out there was *another* chorus—Cathy Roma's [Anna Crusis Women's Choir] in Philadelphia. *Paid My Dues* was so great—it was the first way I knew anything else was really going on. Cathy and I had never heard of each other, and I had no idea there was another women's chorus, but we were even doing some of the same music.

YOU CONTACTED HER?

I did, and we've become fast friends, but if it weren't for *Paid My Dues* I would never have known about her. I loved that magazine; I used to read every word. Anyway, Cathy and I started corresponding. And then *you* said, "Why don't you apply for that National Women's Music Festival?" So I made some horrible little tape—I

mean it was *sooo* bad. But somehow or other, we were invited to perform. It was the fifth year; Antonia Brico was there. That was the year we started touring.

YOU HAD HORRIBLE STAGE FRIGHT BACK THEN.

Horrible stage fright. It was a nightmare. I think it started in the eighth grade when I had to do a speech contest; also, my mother was very critical. Before I did that National Women's Music Festival I decided I would do one other little appearance, just to get over my stage fright and see how it felt. I played at a classical women's music concert. I played a recorder, and I remember being so nervous that my little fingers wouldn't stick on the holes. It was a trio, and the other two people could not believe I was not hitting one note; well, maybe an occasional offkey peep. The audience went wild anyway. The concert had been so boring, but they wanted to hear it again. I'm going, "Oh my God, I'm going through this whole nightmare again." Then I thought, "How am I ever going to get up on the stage in front of a huge festival audience?" Luckily, I met Cherry [Wolf] and Lynn [Keller], who became the drummer and bass player for that first tour.

THEY WEREN'T FROM CALIFORNIA—YOU MET THEM WHERE?

Kristin Lems introduced us at Champaign [Illinois, where the NWMF was held in the 1970s]. Kristin was so great. When women's music lost her, they lost someone really wonderful. Anyway, being in a band made it okay for me, and I lived through the experience. But I was very frightened on stage. It was horrible. It was one of the reasons I quit performing...

...AFTER THE TOUR IN '79.

I remember December of '79 was my last concert. I went back to school and left women's music. But that isn't the only reason I left women's music. I had this fear of performing, but also I tried to get help with my career—tried to get names and addresses of places to play. I remember the one person who was a big help in those days was Margie Adam. Performers were very reluctant to share information. In fact, one of them invited me and a couple of other people over and tried to talk us out of doing women's music. She said the market was too small and competitive, and that I'd never make it, so if I wanted to do consciousness-raising, there were other ways. She suggested that since I directed

the choir, I could do guerrilla theater—like have people in an elevator, and when the elevator opened we could sing them a consciousness-raising song, so that people in an office building would get their consciousness raised. This could be my alternative to performing.

YOU DIDN'T TAKE THAT ADVICE?

I didn't. Determined, I plugged on. As I said, except for Margie—who sat down for three hours straight and just gave me addresses—I didn't get much help.

SO YOU WENT TO SCHOOL WHERE, TO DO WHAT?

I went to the Grove Music Institute for two years to learn how to arrange, compose, and write film scores.

WHAT MADE YOU BRANCH OUT INTO SYNTHESIZER MUSIC?

I was possessed. I wanted an orchestra in my living room. I would have sold my soul for it, and I did. I borrowed all the money. And it was *so* expensive—you can buy this stuff so cheap now. I bought a synthesizer and a drum machine, and it cost \$6,000. I just sold that equipment two months ago for \$150.

WHY DID YOU COME BACK TO WOMEN'S MUSIC, AND WHEN?

Well, I think getting over the fear was the first start. A woman in the chorus stood up and said, "I'll exchange hypnosis for whatever you want." So I told her she needed voice lessons and I wanted to get over my fear of performance. She hypnotized me, and it wasn't so much that she said, "You can perform," but she made me feel that it was okay to be imperfect and to make mistakes; that I could have fun getting on a stage. Then I started trying it and I decided to start a little band. Diane Lindsay and I played keyboards, Carrie Barton played bass, and Marilyn Donadt played drums. But we hardly ever got together because our schedules were so weird. Everybody was doing other things. It didn't last long.

BUT IT WAS A STEPPING STONE TO GETTING BACK IN?

Well, it got me started. So then Diane was going to go on tour as a bass player with Meg, and Meg was looking for a keyboardist...

...IN '84? MEG'S LAST TOUR?

Yes. So Meg called me and asked if I wanted to play keyboards, and she came

down to L.A. and we rehearsed at my house. She gave me a feature spot on her tour. She had big audiences, and this exposure woke up producers to me. When the tour was over, Diane asked if I wanted to be her accompanist on her own solo tour the following year. I said, "I don't know if I want to be an accompanist, but I'd do a show with you. We could share evenings." She said, "But you don't have a product." I told her I'd *get* a product. So I made up a little flyer which I passed out to audiences. And people sent me the money I needed in the mail.

TO DO BIG PROMISE?

Right. Women sent me \$20,000 in the mail. *Big Promise* was released in '85 on Ladyslipper.

SO YOU WENT ON TOUR WITH DIANE, DOING A DOUBLE BILL...

...and at the end I decided I wanted to go out on my own. To make up for that terrible fear, I went the other way and became somewhat grandiose. As Deidre [McCalla] always said, "I think you should call your next album *Larger Than Life*." Over time, I essentially mellowed out, but I did feel driven. I had a purpose for doing it, that I had to be some sort of role model for all our fears. Getting over that fear was so important to me. I realized as I went around the country on Meg's tour, and even as I started my own, women were so depressed. As a group. Between the oppression of the community, and having no money themselves, and having no validation from society and little validation from each other, and alcoholism and drugs being so high at that time, it was very depressing—I felt the need to be some kind of really positive voice. Someone who wasn't promoting or coming from a drug place. Someone who was saying that it's perfectly okay to be you. And that's why I started the "Certified Outrageous" campaign.

WAS YOUR "OUTRAGEOUS" IMAGE A DELIBERATE MARKETING THING?

Yeah, but I wanted a way to market this *idea*, that people would have to do positive affirmations at concerts, meaning that I would take them through this whole hypnosis thing like I went through. But it wasn't real hypnosis, of course, it was a joke. Then I would "certify" them "outrageous"—that it was okay for them to have the lover of their dreams, to leave the one they always hated, to go for the job they always wanted. I'd get them all contorted,

putting one finger on their forehead, putting their arm wherever, on the person next to them. And then they'd say, "I'm wonderful," and it was just great. It was a very funny bit, and it also made people feel good about themselves.

WERE THERE PEOPLE WHO ENDED UP FEELING THAT YOU WERE JUST REALLY EGOTISTICAL?

I think so. I think it was alienating for many people. It was one of those things that people either really loved or really hated. Most got it that I wasn't really egotistical, that I was trying to generate the idea that I'm okay just as I am and so are you. I was just being outrageous about it, because I was so glad to have gotten over the fear myself; and it wasn't just a fear of performance, it was a fear of doing my life. We all had this fear to different degrees in different areas. In some ways, being "outrageous" meant I was not being vulnerable enough, so something was missing from my performance. I finally came to terms with this at a concert that went *very* badly one night. It was at Wim-inFest in '89. And it was the worst night of my life. It was the debut of my then-new album [*True Life Adventure*]. I'd been through a lot of personal changes; it had been a very hard time for me. I'd broken up from my eight-year relationship, and was feeling disillusioned in many ways about what I was doing with my life. I was not feeling great, and certainly not in the mood to go out there and be certified outrageous. I had been to Albuquerque about two years before and done that kind of show, and the audience just ate it up. This time I thought I would bring the band and debut this album—but I hadn't come to terms with my own changes. And it showed in my performance. It was a *horrible* performance. The sound was bad. I had a substitute person in the band. I wasn't centered enough.

AND THE CROWD DIDN'T GO WILD?

Oh no, not at all—for good reasons. It was the first night I'd had that kind of reaction. I'd also taken those six months off before that to do the album, and it was my first night out. I felt very uncentered and uncertain. I had put my whole heart into this new album. It was a completely different musical field—not the techno-pop. The subtitle of *True Life Adventure* was *Risk and Reality*, and that's what it was, with me facing a deeper reality.

AND THEY SIMPLY DIDN'T WANT

THAT? THEY WANTED YOU TO JUMP AROUND AND...

...right, they wanted me to be that *other* person. But there was part of me that still didn't know how to be on stage and be that vulnerable person about who I was writing and being in the album. I hadn't brought it to my live performance yet. So it was incongruous. I went home after that and I wrote about it, thought about it, asked people about it. I had three or four performances within a couple of weeks. Each one got better, but they didn't feel right to me. I took two months off and just got myself together, and I've come out on the other side, where I can come back and still be funny and be positive, and still realize that there are serious personal issues with which we have to deal. I think I've ended up being a much more real, vulnerable live performer.

I THOUGHT YOUR SHOW WAS GREAT AT THE EAST COAST LESBIANS' FESTIVAL LAST YEAR—THE RIGHT BALANCE BETWEEN HAVING A LOT OF FUN AND HAVING SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT.

Hopefully I've got that balance now. I feel a lot better about my performance. It's like I grew up in women's music. A lot of performers don't change, they don't grow. Some audiences are satisfied with that, some are bored by it. In ways, I feel lucky that I've been able to really change.

ADRIENNE TORF TALKS ABOUT FEELING FRUSTRATED THAT WOMEN IN WOMEN'S MUSIC DON'T GET PUSHED TO TAKE LESSONS, TO DEVELOP THEIR MUSIC, TO DEVELOP THEIR WRITING. THEY JUST GET UP THERE, AND SOMEHOW THAT'S ENOUGH; THE AUDIENCES ARE WILLING TO ACCEPT WHATEVER. SHE FEELS LIKE THERE'S NOT NEARLY ENOUGH CHALLENGE TO EXCEL.

I think Adrienne Torf is a genius. Her performance at the Southern Festival last year just blew me away. And it was so refreshing to see an audience *appreciate* her. In many ways I'm disappointed that we don't have a more educated audience to tell the difference between something which is really musically and lyrically art versus something that is just fun entertainment, or...I just feel if you're going to do something, do it with art. And there's so much that *isn't*.

MOST OF YOUR INCOME THESE DAYS DOESN'T COME FROM WOM-

EN'S MUSIC, WHICH PUTS YOU IN A POSITION TO BE SOMEWHAT SELECTIVE ABOUT WHERE YOU WILL AND WON'T PLAY, RIGHT?

Yes. I teach voice, but I couldn't live by teaching alone—my heart is in performing. And I love performing for the women's audience, though I wouldn't turn away the mainstream. But teaching has been very, very good to me. There aren't many jobs where you can sit in your living room and make as much money as I do. Now I'm teaching all these performance-on-stage workshops as well. I do that four days a week and I tour three days a week. I go where I can fly, mostly on weekends. Occasionally I can stay out longer, but I really don't make money on the road—if I'm lucky, I break even, between flying and costs and phone and mail.

WHERE DO YOU LIKE TO GO?

I love to go to the South. That's where it's new and fresh—it's like when we were first starting [in the 1970s]. It's that old feeling of community, of feeling so special, of women being together and discovering each other. There's something fresh and alive about it—untainted. You feel like



Doing Meg's hair at the 1984 National Women's Music Festival.

you're a part of something that's growing instead of something that's struggling and fighting. It feels like the '70s, in the best of all senses. I wish that the rest of the country could learn something from the women of the South. If we can do it differently this time...

"DO IT DIFFERENTLY," MEANING...?

We blew women's music. We blew it in competition and in not being cooperative. We as a community—everybody involved in it. We went about it with a scarcity mentality, that we couldn't share information, that we weren't willing to work together cooperatively. For example, if a record company wants to sell their products and have Tupperware kinds of parties, why not include everybody's music? It gives people more choices. Which brings me to my definition of women's music: I don't think we have "women's music"—I think we have a women's music audience. We have a group of people who want to hear music by and about women. Usually in the rest of the world you have people who like folk music, or reggae, or hip hop; in women's music we have basically an audience of women, each one wanting to be at an event where women somehow are performing and speaking *to her*, and she gets to be in her community and have a night out in the company of other women, without necessarily going to a bar.

THE WOMEN'S MUSIC AUDIENCE HAS CONTINUED TO GROW OUT OF

doesn't tour much without a band, and producers can't afford to bring that many people. Also, when you go into a community—even when a producer tries to bring in some new performer—if the community hasn't heard of the artist, people don't come, except for that core women's music audience. But the producers do try; I find that many of the inexperienced producers, although they make a lot of mistakes, are our greatest asset as a movement.

WITHOUT INEXPERIENCED-BUT-WILLING PRODUCERS WE WOULD NEVER HAVE DEVELOPED AN INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S MUSIC NETWORK OR INDUSTRY.

These production companies that do it but aren't making a monetary profit can get burned out. And that's what we keep forgetting. Most of the women who are producing are doing it out of their *hearts*, to bring our culture to their community. Some performers don't have the good sense to appreciate that, and to be *at least* courteous.

continued on page 50



Sue's first solo tour in 1979: "I was very frightened on stage. It was horrible. It was one of the reasons I quit performing."

THAT NEED OVER THE YEARS.

Yes, and it's still growing. The festivals have certainly gotten bigger, with more people going. But the performers you see at festivals are not necessarily the people you see on the road. Linda Tillery, for example, who is a fabulous performer,

ABOUT THE WRITER: Toni Armstrong Jr. has full-time careers in both special education and women's music & culture. Interests include movies, sign language, vampires, neurophysiology, pinball, 'The Brady Bunch,' and the occasional nap.

Toni Armstrong Jr.

SOAPBOX

This letter is way overdue. I started subscribing about a year ago. I saw *HOT WIRE* advertised in a lesbian journal. Not only is it wonderfully written and broad in its coverage, there are always at least three articles pertaining to my direct, immediate interests.

I attended the Michigan festival for the first time this year and it was such a boost to my flagging, isolated spirits. Women's music is not heard of down here (on the Mexican border south of San Diego). I'm from the Bay Area, so you can imagine the misery! *HOT WIRE*'s coverage of the festival, of Olivia's cruise, Michelle Shocked (my number one favorite, followed closely by Melissa Etheridge), and concrete information for those of us in the music business is so welcome and great.

But your latest issue was the best by far. I had the good fortune to meet Laura Irene Wayne in 1989 at the Southeast Cultural Complex in San Diego when I went to see *Black Nativity* there. Laura's show was riveting. I bought three of her Calafia T-shirts for myself and Christmas presents. Good choice to add her to your staff! Other outstanding articles this time were on Libana and the Reel World String Band. I can't thank you enough for being there. Keep up the good work!

Sandra C. Wara de Baca, Chula Vista, California

Thanks for mentioning us in *HOT WIRE*. However, our address was incorrectly listed as a P.O. Box. We are a rural route and won't receive any mail that is sent to a P.O. Box. This is a common error that happens to us in rural areas. So, to ease the confusion, the Post Office has suggested that we drop the box in front of the number. We enjoy receiving calls and visitors, so when you print our address correction, could you also please print the phone number? Keep up the incredible work!

Ruth Siegel and Andrea Weiner
Rural Wimmin's Productions, 65 S. Morgan Drive
Berkeley Springs, WV 25411. (304) 258-5079

Mail continues to arrive in response to Musica Femina's piece on Black women composers [May 1990], including two specific recommendations from readers. Selma Epstein's Chromattica USA company is devoted to audio and video tapes of the classical piano music of minorities (women and Black composers). They have produced twenty-one tapes and a *Guide to Researching the Music of Women Composers*. [Selma Epstein, Chromattica USA, 2443 Pickwick Rd., Dickeyville, MD 21207. (301) 448-3334. FAX (301) 997-6980.] Also, John Gray's *Blacks in Classical Music: A Bibliographical Guide to Composers, Performers, and Ensembles* (Greenwood Press, 1988), which in-

Letters may be edited for length and/or clarity. Send to SOAPBOX/HOT WIRE, 5210 N. Wayne, Chicago, IL 60640.



Toni Armstrong Jr.

Terri Jewell's rights for lesbian feminists stirred a lot of reader interest.

cludes info on 100+ African American women composers, instrumentalists, and concert/opera singers, with extensive bibliographical information for each. (Black Arts Research Center, 30 Marion St., Nyack, NY 10960.)

I love your magazine and recently became a subscriber. Your soundsheet is a great idea, but you know what I'd really like? The sheet music to some of the great women's songs which have never been published. Ferron is a real case in point. Her music is golden, but I've never seen it published. Perhaps you can contact these people to see if they'd consent. Also folks like Jeanie Fineberg, Woody Simmons, etc. I really feel this would help to make women's music more popular and more accessible. Even just one new (or old) song per issue would be great. I've bought male rock guitar magazines all my life but now I've discovered you, I'm a lot happier.

Catherine Bryant, Santa Rosa, California
If there is sufficient interest from readers, we will pursue this idea. If you would use sheet music, please send us a "wish list" and we'll see what we can do.

Kudos to all the women who participate in the production of *HOT WIRE*. What a superb publication! As a voluntary women's music programmer, I have come to incorporate the news and views from your journal into the planning of my shows. The profile articles and interviews with various artists provide me with the "bread and butter" facts I need to share with listeners. The capsule reports and announcements of upcoming events in "Hotline" keep me up to date on happenings within the national scene. Bonnie Morris's report on "How I (Almost) Met Martina Navratilova" (September 1990) incited a good dose of laughter from me. (What *HOT WIRE* readers want to know

is, will we ever know whether Bonnie really guised herself as a Czech embassy official in her quest to meet Martina?!) With such varied features, I almost wish *HOT WIRE* was published monthly. And the two-sided surprise sample recording in each issue is icing on the cake! Broadcasters who devote their energies to bringing communities noncommercial women's music must recognize the importance of supporting women-owned and operated businesses and organizations, whether they be record distributors, production companies, or publications like *HOT WIRE*.

Josette M. Farah, WRUW/91.1 FM, Cleveland

I'm not often in touch with the grapevine, but a certain grape made it her business to tell me that *HOT WIRE*'s future is uncertain, as you're not sure you want to go on doing it. So I'm checking it out, and in case it's true, I want to put my two cents in.

We subscribe to a whole mess of publications, and of the many women's ones—much as we value them for whatever they manage to put forth—it's *HOT WIRE* that we would cry about if it went under. And this is not just because we are active in "women's art and culture." If there is a publication that deserves Alice Walker's term "womanist" it is surely *HOT WIRE*. Alix [Dobkin] is right, you are putting out a good-looking, well-produced, well-written journal that leaves us feeling hopeful and inspired. ("Happy"....may be going too far, Alix.) That is not nothing in these days. It's not only your readers who need you, it's the rest of women's publishing—*HOT WIRE* points the way.

That experience of a fine idea becoming so successful it takes over your life is a particularly hard one to deal with. Surely one of our questions as women is how do we get a respite from our "babies" without letting them die. It seems to me this is a community issue. What can we do to help?

Ronnie Gilbert & Donna Korones, Berkeley

I just heard through the grapevine that you're thinking of shutting down *HOT WIRE*. Oh no, oh no, oh no! As managing editor here, I depend on you. As music/culture writer/editor, I depend on you. As a reader, I depend on you. We all do! Please, reconsider. Can we out here do anything? We understand the pressures of getting out a magazine, but losing *HOT WIRE* would leave a devastating void. I do wish you the best. Please be in touch if NDFW can help.

Lynn Wenzel, New Directions for Women
For more information on the current status of the future of 'HOT WIRE,' see the editor's notes on the inside front cover of this issue.

Alice Walker's words—in her books and in her interviews—give me the lift I need to see past my daily tribulations and go on. Thank you for

your excellent interview with her [January 1991]. For me, it's more than entertainment.

Sherise, Allentown, Pennsylvania

I realized when I saw that cute picture of those cute Reel World gals [January 1991] that...hey! I've never seen them up close! I've been dancing to their tunes for years. They're great, but I don't read much about them in the women's press. Thanks!

Floris Shannon, Topeka, Kansas

Did anyone else read in the December 21 issue of *Entertainment Weekly* that Tipper Gore, co-founder of the Parents' Music Resource Center and avid supporter of voluntary labeling of records (for reasons of decency), used to be a rock & roll drummer? Am I having an acid flashback of some sort myself?

J.A. Morales, Oakland

You covered LPs, CDs, and cassettes ["Final Vinyl: Say Goodbye" by Dakota, January 1991], and now I want to know more about DAT (digital audio tape). The technology is changing a bit too fast for me, but I'm heroically trying to keep up with it.

Lola Shankner, Galveston, Texas
Watch for more about DAT technology in future "Audio Angle" columns. Meanwhile, see "Here Comes Digital Audio Tape" by Karen Kane and Cris Newport in the July 1988 issue.

Terri Jewell's list of rights for lesbian feminists [January 1991] was one of those "click" pieces for me. I laughed at the witty and audacious writing style, of course, but several of those points really did push on my little guilt buttons. It's helping me re-examine some of the ways I interact with my own community. I'm looking forward to reading her books if this piece is any indication of how her mind works.

Kate Siegbahn, Los Angeles, California

Okay, Terri [Jewell]. I'd like to make it twenty-three rights for lesbian feminist activists. I propose we add #20: you have a right to sincerely believe in trying to change the world for the better, even if you are mocked as being "politically correct"; #21: you have a right to enjoy satire and parody, and to still insist that humor not be at women's expense; #22: you have a right to enjoy the exclusive company of other women, even if your "hip" male and "gay women" friends mock separatists and separatist-type activity; and finally #23: you have a right to post Terri Jewell's shrewd and insightful list in many strategic places, with your favorite rights circled in red!!!!

Sandi U., Trenton, New Jersey

I was frankly surprised at how candid Ferron was [Laura Post interview, January 1991]. It occurred to me that I've rarely read anything so seemingly honest and open. Celebrities either get covered tabloid-style or else it's your basic superficial dog-and-pony show for the media. Her words, so directly spoken, have given me a lot to think about in regards to myself as well as to her and her lovely music.

J.J. Knapic, Battle Creek, Michigan ●

Inquiring WimMinds Want to Know

FOR MARGIE ADAM: *What are you doing these days? We saw you in 1976 at the N.O.W. conference in Los Angeles. I enjoy your songs and recordings to this day.*

Lin Remington, Lake Ann, Michigan



Toni Armstrong Jr.

Margie Adam at an early Michigan festival.

After a long break, Margie Adam is writing music again. "I've come up for air for the first time in many years," she says. She spent the month of February in a rented cabin for a concentrated writing stint, and hopes to have twenty new songs written by this summer. "I'm not sure if I'm going 'deep inside' or 'way out there,' but my muse has cleared her throat and has things to say."

I work in a bookstore that sells women's music. Do you know if Dianne Davidson or Lucie Blue Tremblay will be putting out new albums in the near future? We have customers who are fans!

Rita Knight, Tacoma, Washington

Mary Massara of Olivia Records says there are no plans for new Lucie or Dianne albums at this time. However, the company hopes to release *The History of Olivia—Part 1 & 2* this fall, as part of their "Women's Music Classic Series." They also hope to release *The Changer 15th Anniversary Concert* on CD as well as the concert video this spring. January 1991 marked Olivia Records' eighteenth birthday, and the company continues to pride itself on being one of the very few visible lesbian institutions. It is their goal to be a strong voice, creating new opportunities for women, to be a resource for women's music through their albums, for women's crafts through their catalog, and for women's vacations in secure, supportive, and exciting environments through their cruises. To get on the mailing list: Olivia Records, 4400 Market St., Oakland, CA 94608. ●

Do you have a question you'd like us to try to get answered for you? Send it to Inquiring WimMinds/HOT WIRE, 5210 N. Wayne, Chicago, IL 60640.

HOTLINE

Compiled by Joy Rosenblatt, Annie Lee, and Toni Armstrong Jr.

TRIVIA CONTEST

So many fans of the *AVENGERS* women (Catherine Gale, played by Honor Blackman; Emma Peel, played by Diana Rigg; Tara King, played by Linda Thorson)! The first reader to accurately name all three was A. Lands of Kenmore, New York. Contest entries came from as far as London, England (Gail Judd); Vancouver, Canada (Connie Kuhns); and Victoria, Australia (Jill Wake). For this issue's trivia question, consider Whoopi Goldberg, star of ten films including *The Color Purple*. What was her name before she chose "Whoopi Goldberg" (and you must spell it correctly)?

ANNIVERSARIES

Congratulations to WOMYN'S BRAILLE PRESS on its tenth anniversary. The press produces feminist literature on tape and in Braille. It is the only organization in the country devoted to making the voices of women of color, lesbians, and women with disabilities accessible to women who are blind or print disabled. Womyn's Braille Press, P.O. Box 8475, Minneapolis, MN 55408. (612) 872-4352 or (612) 822-0549.

Olivia Records is celebrating the fifteenth anniversary of *THE CHANGER AND THE CHANGED* album with a concert by Cris Williamson at Carnegie Hall on May 18. Olivia Records, 4400 Market, Oakland, CA 94608.

The SEATTLE WOMEN'S ENSEMBLE celebrated its tenth anniversary with a concert last February. Special guests included The Derivative Duo, Pat Wright, Tamu Gray, Lisa Koch, and Marjorie DeMuyck of the Billy Tipton Memorial Quartet. The show also included the premiere of "On Holding On," a collaboration between choreographer Llory Wilson and music director/composer Joan Simcoe.

Happy tenth anniversary to the INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL sponsored by Women in the Director's Chair. This year's festival, held March 7-10 in Chicago, featured panel discussions and guest filmmakers, and screened more than sixty independent films.

GATHERINGS

Program themes of this year's AWMAC CONFERENCE include A Celebration of Diversity; Better Business Practices; Strengthening the Web of Our Network; and Personal is Political: A Reaffirmation. This year's conference is scheduled for May 2-5 in Durham. Association of Women's Music and Culture, 2124 Kittredge St. #104, Berkeley, CA 94704.



Time

"Jodie Foster can be declared current world champion of the working-class woman standing tall in crisis," says 'Time' magazine. Jodie stars as heroine Clarice Starling in the new thriller 'The Silence of the Lambs.'

The seventeenth annual FEMINIST WOMEN'S WRITING WORKSHOPS will be held July 14-26 at Wells College in New York. Speakers include Jewelle Gomez, Grace Paley, and Nancy Bereano. SASE to Rachel Guido deVries, P.O. Box 6583, Ithaca, NY 14851.

A conference on women's issues sponsored by Global Interactions will be held May 5-11 in Phoenix to provide a forum for participants from JAPAN AND THE U.S. to share info, ideas, and research on key issues related to women. Global Interactions, 3332 W. Thomas Rd., Phoenix, AZ 85017. (602) 272-3438.

For info about the 1992 (fourth annual) THIRD WAVE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL, featuring shorts, videos, documentaries, and feature films, SASE to Women's Media Project, P.O. Box 49432, Austin, TX 78765. Jana (512) 323-2386/Claudia 474-4337.

The eighth annual SOUTHERN WOMEN'S MUSIC & COMEDY FESTIVAL will again be back at Camp Coleman, eighty miles north of Atlanta, May 23-27. Due to homophobia on the part of the new camp administrator, the fest was told it could not be back in 1991, according to producer Robin Tyler. However, after months of negotiations with the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, and with the help of Patricia Ireland and Rosemary Dempsey of N.O.W., the camp was once again rented to Robin Tyler Productions. For info: (818) 893-4075.

The NATIONAL WOMEN'S STUDIES ASSOCIATION has canceled its 1991 national confer-

ence, but two mini-conferences are being planned: one for women's studies program administrators and one for Pre-K through 12 teachers. NWSA, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742-1325. (301) 454-3757.

The third annual LAMBDA LITERARY AWARDS BANQUET will be held May 31 in New York to coincide with the American Booksellers Association convention. There the recipients of the 1990 awards will be announced. For info: (202) 462-7924.

Want to sing in this year's MICHIGAN FESTIVAL CHORUS? Contact Cathy Roma, 4260 Langland, Cincinnati, OH 45223. (513) 541-0560.

FEMINIST THEORY & MUSIC: Toward a Common Language, conference June 27-30. Lydia Hameshley, School of Music, 100 Ferguson Hall, Minneapolis, MN 55455.

MUSIC & GENDER conference, July 5-7 at King's College. Contact Sophie Fuller, University of London/Faculty of Music, Strand, London, England WC2R-2LS.

HONORS

DEBORAH J. GLICK, the first openly gay member of the New York State Legislature, was sworn in last January 12. She raised her right hand and placed her left hand on a dog-eared copy of the 1970 feminist anthology *Sisterhood is Powerful*, reports the *New York Times*. Also, civil rights attorney ROBERTA ACHTENBERG and San Francisco Democratic Party Chairwoman CAROLE MIGDEN became the first openly lesbian women to be elected to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors. Plus, *Outlines* reports that GAIL SHIBLEY announced that she is a lesbian moments after being sworn in as a new Oregon state legislator. "I simply thought it was an appropriate thing to do. I wish it were not news. I wish this were an every day kind of thing," she said in an interview.

The January/February issue of *Ms.* listed "LANDMARK ALBUMS OF THE LAST TWENTY YEARS," some of which were: *Revolutionary Tea Party* (Lillian Allen); *Cassellberry-DuPrée*; *Tracy Chapman*; *Melissa Etheridge*; *Shadows on a Dime* (Ferron); *Folksinger* (Phranc); *Sweet Honey in the Rock*; and *The Changer and the Changed* (Cris Williamson).

The Southern California Women for Understanding held their fifteenth annual LESBIAN RIGHTS AWARDS BANQUET last March 16 at the downtown Los Angeles Hyatt Regency. SCWU honored lesbian writers Rita Mae Brown,

May Sarton, Charlotte Bunch, Cherrie Moraga, Adrienne Rich, Katherine V. Forrest, Paula Gunn Allen, and Gloria Anzaldúa.

MARY MORELL of Albuquerque was selected as the winner of Spinsters Book's 1990 Lesbian Fiction Contest. She won \$2,000 for *Final Session*, a tongue-in-cheek murder mystery. For 1991 entry guidelines, write Spinsters, P.O. Box 410687, San Francisco, CA 94141.

DEL MARTIN and **PHYLLIS LYON**, the founders of the Daughters of Bilitis (the first international lesbian organization), received the Earl Warren Civil Liberties Award from the American Civil Liberties Union, according to *Outlines*. D.O.B. was founded in 1955.

Editor **TRACY BAIM** (*Outlines, Nightlines, Out!*) and her editor mother **JOY DARROW** (*New Expression*) were both included in *Today's Chicago Woman's* list of "Power Personalities: 100 Women Making a Difference."

FOND FAREWELLS

Openly lesbian actress **PAT BOND** died last December in Larkspur, California of lung cancer at the age of sixty-five. Pat wrote and performed in four one-woman shows, including *Conversations With Pat Bond*; *Gerty Gerty Stein is Back Back*; *Murder in the WAC*; and *Lorena Hickock and Eleanor Roosevelt: A Love Story*. In the film *Word is Out* she talks about her life in the military. Her friends are raising funds for an annual "Pat Bond Memorial Old Dyke Award" to be presented to a lesbian over sixty whose service to the community has not been sufficiently acknowledged. Donations to: Pat Bond Fund, 545 Douglass St., San Francisco, CA 94114.

HELAINÉ VICTORIA PRESS, the only feminist publisher specializing in women's history postcards, closed last January. During its seventeen years, the press published nearly 200 different postcards documenting women's lives and significant events in history. According to *Feminist Bookstore News*, other publishers and organizations are being approached to publish the existing copyrighted cards as well as to publish the last series of cards "Sisters of the Harlem Renaissance: The Found Generation." Helaine Victoria Press, 911 N. College Ave. #3, Bloomington, IN 47404.

NEWS

Fireman's Insurance Co. of Washington D.C. has become the first insurance company in the U.S. to file a homeowners' policy change that recognizes **DOMESTIC PARTNERS**, reports *Atlanta*. The company defines "domestic partner" as a person you've lived with at least six months and with whom you have "a close personal relationship."

On November 6 in Saudi Arabia, forty-seven **SAUDI WOMEN** took an unprecedented step: they drove their own cars in a "caravan of independence." According to *In These Times*, *Up &*

Coming, and other sources, this violation of Saudi law and custom brought about their arrest and many other unpleasant consequences. Since driving is a crime, they were fired from their jobs, not allowed to leave the country, and harassed personally by friends and family.

Illinois has passed a law requiring public elementary and secondary schools to include units of instruction on the history of both individual women and women's struggle for the vote and other rights. The *Tribune* reports that **CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS** intend to integrate those lessons in all grades and across the curriculum, says Alice Jurica, director of the Bureau of Social Studies at the Chicago Board of Ed. The law is the first of its kind in the U.S.

KRISTIN LEMS, a founder of the National Women's Music Festival, has joined the staff of the Movement Center in Wilmette, Illinois, teaching songs, rhymes, and games to toddlers. She also continues to perform, alone and with Peggy Lipschutz. To receive her newsletter/catalog of recordings (both adult and children's material), SASE to Carolsdatter Productions, 221-C Dodge Ave., Evanston, IL 60202.



Lesbian theater pioneer Pat Bond

Tee A. Corinne

GROUPS

THE COMPANY OF WOMEN, an all-female professional Shakespeare company under the artistic direction of Kristin Linklater, made its debut performance last December in Boston, reports *Sojourner*. The multicultural group plans to continue creating all-female productions of Shakespeare's plays and tour them nationally and internationally to "promote peace and understanding."

Andrea Natalie (*Stonewall Riots*) has founded the **LESBIAN CARTOONISTS NETWORK**. The group has more than forty members. Write

Natalie c/o Venus Press, 7100 Boulevard East #14N, Guttenberg, NJ 07093.

A **JEWISH-PAGAN NETWORK** is forming "to be a home for Jewish Pagans and Pagan Jews." Send networking notices, ideas, drawings, letters, reviews, articles, experiences, midrashim, rituals, festival/holiday/shabat reconstructions to: Jewish-Pagan Network, 840 Hooper Rd. #127, Endwell, NY 13760.

An **ITALIAN-AMERICAN WOMEN WRITERS NETWORK** is being formed. Interested women should send name, address, phone number, type of writing you do, and whether or not you've been published to: E. Nole, 39 Glenorchy Rd., New Rochelle, NY 10804.

THE BOSTON WOMEN'S FUND has launched a new endowment campaign fund. The goal of the endowment fund is to raise \$2 million by the year 2000. The proposed 2000 Club would consist of 2,000 women who commit to pledge \$100 a year for the next ten years to the fund. "This endowment fund is about women of today leaving a legacy for women of tomorrow," says Terry Person, executive director of BWF. Since its founding in 1983, BWF has given more than \$262,000 in grants to more than 150 women's groups working for economic and social justice, says *Sojourner*. Boston Women's Fund, 31 St. James Ave. #902, Boston, MA 02116.

PENPALS

Want to correspond with lesbians in Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Iceland, or Finland? *Reporter*, the largest gay/lesbian monthly in Scandinavia, will run fifty words about you for free, according to *OUT/LOOK*. *Reporter Penpals*, Box 170, S-101 23 Stockholm, Sweden.

MOVIES, TV & THEATER

Naiad Press has sold the movie rights to Elizabeth Nonas's book *A ROOM FULL OF WOMEN* to Ross Levers Productions in Los Angeles. The film company plans to produce a limited-release feature-length film, then distribute it to the video market, says *Feminist Bookstore News*.

Single copies of the lesbian cult classic *THE WAR WIDOW* are now available on a "permanent loan" basis for a fee of \$50; certain restrictions apply. (Thanks to Betsy and *Lesbian Connection* for researching this.) KCET Video, Attn: Beverly Cassidy, 4401 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90027.

The *Chicago Sun Times* reports that **MARGOT KIDDER** will be playing **NANCY DREW** (in her forties) in a series for USA Network.

KATHLEEN TURNER stars as the tough talking, wisecracking V.I. "VIC" **WARSHAWSKI**, the private investigator from mystery writer **SARA PARETSKY's** string of best-selling novels. This is the first in what may be a series

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OPENING NIGHT

SEATTLE'S FRONT ROOM THEATER FLIES AGAIN

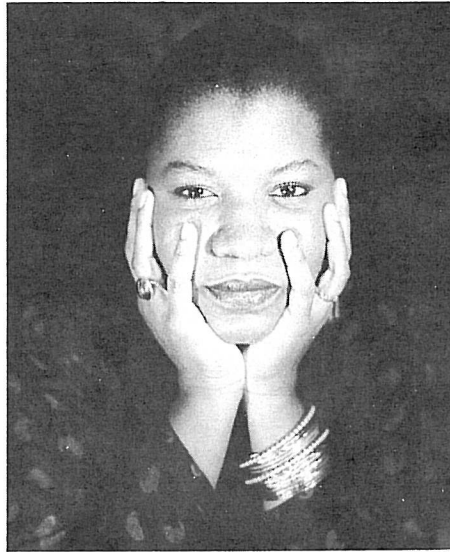
By Helen Weber

Front Room Theater is a sort of lesbian phoenix. The original Front Room Theater Guild flourished here from 1981 to 1987 under the able artistic direction of Patricia Van Kirk, and supported by vast quantities of lesbian love and talent. Running short on energy at last, the theater lay dormant until it was revived by another group of lesbians—some from the original group, and some new women—driven by the desire to take the evolution of lesbian theater into our own hands.

Our first production as a reborn company was *The Grand Fitting*, presented for three weeks in April 1990. *Grand Fitting* is the third musical comedy from the Seattle team of playwright Cappy Kotz and composer Phrin Prickett [See "Lesbian Musical Theater: *In Search of the Hammer* and *The Return of the Hammer*," in the May 1989 issue *HOT WIRE*]. *Grand Fitting* featured a cast of twelve, plus a crackerjack volunteer crew which ran the gamut from seasoned professional actors and techs to first-time performers and novice stagehands getting on-the-job training. The brew came together and worked. Audience response was warm, loud, and enthusiastic, and we played to standing-room-only crowds the last two weeks of the run.

The Grand Fitting is a lesbian musical comedy which takes place in a large lesbian household. Each of the women living there is going through some sort of individual crisis: one of them is a composer who hasn't been able to write, one is looking for a girlfriend, another is breaking up with her girlfriend, and one is trying to figure out what to do with her life. It's a slice-of-life musical about the resolution of each of those individual problems, which I think we could safely call a "romantic comedy."

A nucleus of lesbians involved in *The Grand Fitting* spent the summer of



C.L. Prochazka

Playwright Christine Wheeler

1990 in (far too many) meetings, working out a statement of purpose for the new Front Room Theater.

Our goal is to provide quality theater by and about lesbians, with lesbian casts, crews, and staff. Our purpose is to provide an environment that will support, nurture, and inspire lesbian performers, artists, and technicians, with an emphasis on attracting lesbians from a diversity of backgrounds.

We allow beginning artists a safe place to explore their work, and professional lesbian artists a place to do lesbian-identified work that might not be supported by other sources. And foremost, we aim to provide performances that will celebrate, reflect, question, discover, and reveal lesbian lives to the lesbian community, and to others who are interested in understanding their own experience of being human by watching lesbian artists tell the truth about our lives.

At present, we are a nonprofit theater under the umbrella of Seattle's Gay Community Social Services. We're trying to get our own nonprofit status—

apart from our umbrella organization—because that will give us more possibilities for different types of grant money. Our long-range goal is to become a community-based semi-professional theater—committed to the lesbian community and able to pay women for the work they do.

We offer staged readings, full productions, and a variety of classes for lesbians in acting and technical theater skills. In 1990, our first year of functioning as the new Front Room, we did one staged reading, one full production, and about ten classes. This year, we're expecting two full productions, and probably the same number of classes.

We really need to spend the year getting organized, building our structure. We need to expand our board, and get a finance person, and a lawyer. Most of the people involved now are actually performers, and so we're doing all the technical, production, legal, and publicity—and it's really not what we're best at. We've been going along on just raw enthusiasm so far, but we can foresee burnout in the future if we don't get some administrative-type brains involved with us. Amidst all this organizing and financial planning, we'll be doing another show in the fall, probably a dance piece.

We sponsor both workshops and series' of classes. We had a workshop on theater lighting that had three separate classes. There has been a playwrighting group that meets on an ongoing basis. We've had a fair range—basically of acting, technical, and playwrighting. We're going to be debuting a new class soon on how to get involved in theater if you have utterly no idea how it runs—sort of a volunteers' guide.

KIND OF HEART

Last fall we began production of our first play of the 1990-91 season, Christine Wheeler's *Kind of Heart*. Set in Virginia in the summer of 1950, the script showcases three Black women in a story that is by

OPENING NIGHT: Theater by, for, and about women.

turns warm, moving, sexy, funny, and romantic.

We presented the play first as a staged reading, to allow the playwright an opportunity for audience feedback, and to show actors preparing to audition for the full production the roles for which they would be reading. Audience response was highly positive, and auditions were well attended. A cast was assembled, the script went through a last rewrite, and we were in production.

Playwright and director Christine Wheeler has lived in Seattle for fifteen years. Born in Washington, D.C. and raised in Virginia, she settled here. She first performed at the age of four, when her dance class did the bunny hop on the stage of Harlem's Apollo Theater. From that moment, she says, she was hooked on the roar of the crowd. She played in D.C. community theaters and, upon moving to

Kind of Heart is the first of her plays to be produced. She began writing the play during April 1990, while cast in a role in Front Room's production of *The Grand Fitting*. Coming home after performances too keyed up to sleep, she opened her writer's trunk full of bits of previous work and began to jot down images. Gradually characters began to emerge. By the close of *The Grand Fitting*, she had a stack of notes in longhand on legal pads which evolved into a workable script, and ended up as *Kind of Heart*.

The play begins in the summer of 1950 down in Virginia. Ma Ellem has raised nineteen-year-old April (her ward), and their best friend is Belle, a successful hairdresser in the community (who has a past which Ma Ellem knows about). Belle was in love with a woman named Nettie, who just couldn't make her peace with being a lesbian, and she either jumped or

April without telling her; she feels that her love for her former lesbian lover was possibly lethal, and doesn't want to do that to anyone else.

Belle decides that she should try to take her mind off April by seeing if maybe she should get married to a man and forget the whole thing. She dates the new deacon of the church, and it turns out to be a real disaster. She tells Ma Ellem about her adventures; meanwhile, this deacon has a young daughter about the same age as April, and the two of them meet at church, suddenly have this intense crush on each other, and spend the rest of the summer lying under an apple tree in a deserted orchard making out.

There's major confusion and angst for two scenes, until Ma Ellem talks to Belle and April separately, and they finally manage to talk to each other.

Christine says her work is greatly influenced by her spirituality and by her grandmother, who played a major role in her childhood and her development as a storyteller. Her grandmother encouraged her to make up stories every day about the day's events, and she feels that experience was why *Kind of Heart* came so easily and magically, like a gift from her grandmother.

Presenting *Kind of Heart* is exciting to her not only because of the emotional meaning it has for her, but also as a chance to highlight Black lesbian actors, who have been largely ignored in the national and local theater scenes.

Christine also enjoys using the floor to dispel some cultural myths about Blacks and religion. "*Kind of Heart* is not a political play; it's not militant," she says. "It's a story about kindness, about three Black women—out of millions—who get to tell their story."

Lesbians of color involved in Front Room Theater and *Kind of Heart* have formed the Women of Color Committee, including women from Front Room's board of directors, technical staff, and actors. Its purpose is to participate in Front Room's general goals and process, with the specific aim of advancing work

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ABOUT THE WRITER: Helen Weber is a transplanted Southern Scorpio and a member of Front Room Theater's board of directors, a performer, and the volunteer coordinator for the 1990-91 season. "If I go to another meeting I'll scream," she says.



C.L. Prochazka

***Kind of Heart:* Belle (Pat Jones), Ma Ellem (Sheri Day), and April (Kim Laassiter). Front Room Theater, January 1991.**

L.A. in 1972, performed with the Watts Theater Company, primarily as a dancer.

Then, convalescence from a serious injury and two years in the armed forces intervened. Finally, she was stationed in Seattle, and stayed. She pursued a college degree and began writing prose, poetry, and one-act plays. The plays got tossed into a trunk with other unpublished manuscripts.

fell into the river and died. This happened several years ago, and it broke Belle's heart—so she went north, stayed there for a couple of years, came back, and opened the beauty parlor. She had always been friends with April, but April was a young girl when Belle left—and then when she came back, suddenly April was a woman.

Belle begins to fall in love with

. . . point to a line. . .

WORDS

By Jewelle Gomez

As I sat down to write this first column for *HOT WIRE* I found myself at a loss for words—and anyone who knows me will tell you that's a rare occurrence, sort of like a blue moon. I guess because I suddenly had the space to say the words—any words—I wanted, they became even more precious. And words to me are liquid silver, delicate, powerful, and so precious we rarely notice how important they are. "Sticks and stones will break your bones but words will never hurt you"—the first misstatement we learn as children. Try telling that to a child who is humiliated by teachers using racial epithets, or words like "slow" and "stupid," a not uncommon occurrence in the schools of Boston when I was growing up.

The power of words lies so deeply inside of us we rarely think about it, even when we wield words like swords. "You make me sick," we scream at our lovers without even thinking that the hurt can never be taken back; "I love you," we say to people we hardly even know. But the power of words in this culture is unmistakable. Before the Civil War it was illegal to teach Afro-Americans to read. To read words was to embrace ideas, even the idea of rebellion.

And with each new phase in the struggle for human rights we learned the weight of words. In the '60s we learned how racism was made an intrinsic part of our psyche through the use of black as the universal symbol for bad news: "a black day," "blackmail," "blackheart." In the '70s feminism showed us that words connected to women frequently had negative connotations: hysterectomy/hysteria, the use of "pussy" to mean cowardly. Even our own word "woman" re-

...point to a line... is a collection of memoirs from the travels of Jewelle Gomez; it examines the places where the personal becomes political in our cultural lives.



Ann Chapman

Jewelle Gomez: "New uses, surprising juxtapositions. Words-ideas-rebellion." vealed itself to contain the root of our oppression—"man"—and thus began the endless search for ways to conjugate the word leaving man out: womon, womyn, wimmin, etc.

In the '80s again we tried to understand the dangers of using oppressive words such as "cripple," words that have come to callous acceptance in our society. Even calling myself a "lesbian" or a "Sapphist" is fraught with conflict for me: how do I justify naming myself for Sappho, a woman who held Black slaves? Yet I cling to the word "lesbian" simply for the discomfort it provokes in bigots. Somehow people feel more comfortable with the rather medical sound of "homosexual," and "gay" sounds relatively benign. But "lesbian" is specifically female, implies sexual activity, and always elicits a slight tremor in even the most liberal straight people.

With my obsessive fascination with words (at the age of eight, I started reading everything my great-grandmother

read), it's not peculiar that I would turn out to be a writer, and even less unusual (I think) that I'm also an activist (the "words-ideas-rebellion" concept again). What is interesting is how this obsession with words affects everything in my life. Like when I was shopping for a therapist many years ago, I wasn't so unhappy I didn't know to pick one who laughed at the jokes I made. I know therapists are supposed to be objective; maybe I should have been looking at her politics or class background, but how far could I get with someone who didn't enjoy a good pun?

And then there's love. Any lover with whom I've had a relationship of significant length has always been someone similarly involved with words. I seem to begin my connection on that level of interest or not at all. Even my closest friends are readers—and it's not a snobbish connection to literature, since we enjoy talking about detective novels just as much as anything else. It has something to do with how we feel about words.

And then there's music. When I was in college most of my friends had moved up to Miles Davis or MJQ, and there I was still stuck at the R&B station on the dial. I did love the powerful melodies of a jazz group, but there were no words! At parties while the crowd was humming Coltrane's "A Love Supreme" (those were its only three words!), I relived the stories told by Aretha Franklin and Billie Holiday. I was hungry for the truth they were telling me, and I needed it to come in my heart and head at the same time. Now listening to my favorite singers I realize that along with their voices and the melodies, I'm also deeply involved with their words. Not that all songs have to tell a sugar-coated or star-crossed story, but a song that uses the power of words takes me every time. Like:

*So I've been sad, so I'm confused
Like most people are at times*

But I love you and this love of mine
 Will comfort you if need be
 I am your friend. At times when I'm worried
 I'll shy away from you
 So at times I'm without the love I need in life
 But I love you and this love of mine
 will open many doors to make you see me
 See me in love light
 Come when you need me. I'm needing you.
 We could be the starlight in the morning dew
 Even in my sorrow I'll smile for you
 Makes me free to see you happy.

—"Come When You Need Me"
 from Joan Armatrading's *Back to the Night*

These words of Joan Armatrading's have always moved me. Partly because of the hope they convey, but also because she isn't afraid to portray the complications of love. In listening to her sing, it's clear she understands the poetry of words and knows that it doesn't necessarily lie in a rhyme, but in the rhythm and the texture. In each of her albums, no matter how electric or jazzy, Joan Armatrading always remembers the importance of words.

One of the sad things about early singers who've been heroes to me is that often they didn't write their own songs. Or when they did, as in the case of the fabulous Alberta Hunter, the songs were rarely accurate in their reflection of the writers' experience or perspective. Alberta, who sang with a ladylike impishness from the '20s until her death several years ago at the age of eighty-seven, wrote clever, pun-filled lyrics such as:

He shakes my ashes
 Greases my griddle
 Churns my butter
 Strokes my fiddle
 My man is such a handy man

—"My Man Ain't Handy No More"

It was a number that always brought audiences to their feet, including the guests at a state dinner given at the White House in 1979. It might have had them out the door if they'd understood that Hunter was really a lesbian and the double entendres were really triple entendres!

Today the artist Ferron lives with the desire and the words in a way that was not possible in the past. Her pure joy in the use of words is obvious when you hear fans say, "I'm not sure what it means, but isn't it great!" It's not that Ferron is being deliberately obscure but rather that she loves exploring combinations of words, and many of them are unex-

pected:

I can't call you from this place
 to hear you say that I'm not your kind
 It's a thin road before
 We're the wake left behind
 It's sad and I fail to see what
 it had to do with you and me
 But I guess that's like wondering
 what's a point to a line
 There must be something I wanted
 more than wanted your love
 'cause you stood in my doorway
 and I stood in my glove
 most afraid to follow
 a kingdom in my stride
 It's so telling what won't live
 with hunger and pride.

—"Proud Crowd/Pride Cried"
 from Ferron's *Shadows on a Dime*

These are words to puzzle through and hum. These are words that stick to you no matter what. You can tell there are ideas behind them, and possibly revolutionary thoughts.

For women to put our hopes and desires into words is still a magical and rebellious thing in spite of how common it may seem to be. To have the freedom to push our ideas and words further than they have in the past is a gift many women before us have not been able to savor (and many still cannot). To challenge the traditional meanings and usage is what feminism brought us; and it has engendered a rich culture of women's books and music that can never be hidden or denied.

But the words and ideas of women are always under scrutiny and in danger of attack from many directions. For example, Senator Jesse Helms suggested last year (in a secret memo that was made public) that the work of lesbian poets Chrystos, Minnie Bruce Pratt, and Audre Lorde were seditious and unfit for the delicate eyes of female Congressional staff. He specifically used women and gay artists in his well-publicized attack against the National Endowment for the Arts.

The danger also comes from within, from those of us still afraid of sexually explicit words, or words that are too intellectual, or words that are not intellectual enough. In the '80s, feminists correctly perceived the damage being done to all women by this society's popular use of women as sex objects, both in explicit pornography and in commercial advertising. But the response to this realization was a wholesale attack on other feminists

who wanted to make sexuality a part of the discussion of feminist ideas. It culminated in an insidious attack against lesbian writers, first locally at the 1982 Barnard College annual conference on *The Scholar and the Feminist*, and then nationally when authors deemed to be politically incorrect were harrassed at public readings, or in some cases had their jobs threatened by anonymous phone calls from politically correct feminists afraid of their open discussion of sexuality. Ironically, the attack against sexually explicit images inspired a blossoming of erotic magazines and anthologies created by women for women. Most lesbians, unlike Jesse Helms, know that words are too precious to dismiss or be banished.

In the previous issue of *HOT WIRE*, Renee Hansen observed that wherever lesbians go we're on the lookout for other lesbians, and that it's more than simply "cruising." She said, "The search is for lesbian culture, and we create it by searching for images." [See "Take Me To The Underground," January 1991 *HOT WIRE*.] The way we use words has done so much to create those images, to create the culture that women are seeking; we must guard our right to use them.

In fact words and the images they create are at the heart of the most enduring institutions in the women's community. Women's magazines, newspapers, and publishers have been key to communicating political ideas nationally and internationally, and have provided a forum for the important development of political and social philosophy. Newspapers like *Big Apple Dyke* (edited by Susan Cavin before it closed down about ten years ago), or magazines such as *Common Lives*, *Lesbian Lives*, or newsletters such as *Lesbian Connection* are crucial to the dialogue between women. From the coming out story to book reviews, we are creating an image of who we think we are, or who we would like to be. Words have become so much a part of who we are it's impossible to imagine a women's music festival without a writers' tent or some equivalent space.

When I first started working on my book *The Gilda Stories*, I told a friend it

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ABOUT THE WRITER: Jewelle Gomez, writer and activist, is the author of *Flamingoes and Bears*, a collection of poetry, and a new novel, *The Gilda Stories*.

FADE IN/FADE OUT

Videos Featuring Women Instrumentalists

By Paula E. Langguth

Welcome to *Fade In*Fade Out*, a guide to rentable videos about women. Plot synopses and information about how the videos portray women are provided, as well as discussion of presence and handling of issues such as sexism, racism, ageism, and homophobia. New releases and classics of commercial and independent films by, for, and/or about women appear in *Fade In*Fade Out*. In honor of *HOT WIRE'S* focus on women in music, this premiere of *Fade In*Fade Out* features films about women instrumentalists. So, grab your popcorn, pick up the tempo, and enjoy the movies!

* FADE IN *

MADAME SOUSATZKA

Shirley MacLaine is Madame Sousatzka: a flamboyant, aging piano teacher who lives and teaches from the second floor flat of a crumbling building owned by Lady Emily (Peggy Ashcroft). The residents, including Mr. Cordle (Geoffrey Bayldon), an aged homosexual osteopath, and Jennie (Twiggy), a rock star hopeful, are the only family Madame Sousatzka has, except for her students, who she molds into the sons she never had.

Madame Sousatzka's quest for perfection is spurred by memories of her deceased mother and her own insecurities about public performances. It is this perfectionism that causes her to lose students to other teachers; a loss felt as a betrayal, particularly after her most recent protege rebels from her control and becomes a successful concert pianist.

The second main character in this film, played by Shabana Azmi, is an Indian immigrant and single mother who sells a trousseau of family jewels and caters Indian dishes for a local department store to keep her son Manek in piano lessons.

The two women are thrust together when Manek begins to study with Madame Sousatzka. Finding fault with every aspect of Manek's life, including the



© Rosetta Records

"Queen of the Horn" Tiny Davis

piano his mother scrimped and saved to purchase, Madame Sousatzka drives a wedge into the relationship between Manek and his mother.

This star-studded adaptation of Bernice Ruben's novel is filled with classical music from Beethoven to Schubert, played by the London Symphony Orchestra. The movie's true theme, however, is not the music. It is the struggle for control over one's destiny, and one's self, and it is filled with sexual, sometimes incestuous, overtones.

First, there is the relationship between Manek and his mother. Manek doesn't want his mother's suitors interfering with their life together, and his mother finds it difficult to release her son into the big bad world. Then there is the tension between Manek and Madame Sousatzka—a young man striving to

please his teacher, and a teacher who longs to convert her star pupil into the protege/son/lover she has always lacked. Manek's relationships with Jennie and Mr. Cordle (to whom Madame Sousatzka sends Manek for muscle relaxation therapy) also explore the realms of sexuality and sexual expression. What's never revealed in the film is how aware Manek is of all these situations, particularly his feelings about homosexuality. The homosexuality issue, however, is handled realistically and touchingly when Manek rescues Mr. Cordle, who is being beaten by street youth.

The sexual tension encapsulates the various struggles of old lives versus new, and capitalism versus raw talent. It is Madame Sousatzka who imparts the strength to win these struggles, but emotional baggage from her own mother-daughter relationship prevents her from seeing what is gained; she focuses instead on what is lost.

The movie's underlying theme of regentrification shows that progress cannot be halted. It can only be detained, or ignored, but it will go on regardless. Madame Sousatzka slowly realizes that times change, and with this realization comes the awareness that the past and the future must be put to rest before she can be happy with the present.

Overall, this film is tight and engaging. Although only male students are portrayed as truly talented, this sexism stems from a trait of Madame Sousatzka, not an overall denigration of women. In fact, the film's only disappointment for me is its stereotyping of Indian women. Manek's mother is portrayed as two-faced and greedy, and her landladies are idle bon-bon eaters who fritter away their days watching Indian television shows. The screenplay was written by Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, notable for her work on Merchant-and-Ivory Indian epics such as *Bombay Talkie*, which makes such stereotyping even more unusual.

TINY AND RUBY— HELL DIVIN' WOMEN

This short documentary about trumpeteer Tiny Davis and her partner, pianist/drummer/bass player Ruby Lucas (aka Renei Phelan), intersperses at-home interviews of Tiny and Ruby with historical photos, news clippings, and home movies.

Billed as the Queen of the Horn, Tiny headlined with Louis Armstrong. She toured the country with the racially mixed, all-women big band The International Sweethearts of Rhythm during the '30s and '40s, belting out swing, jazz, and rhythm and blues. Modern-day interest in the International Sweethearts and Tiny Davis was revived by Rosetta Reitz, who did extensive research and released a record of their music as part of Rosetta Records' Women's Heritage Series. [See also "The International Sweethearts of Rhythm" by Rosetta Reitz in the March 1985 issue of *HOT WIRE*.]

This film depicts how Tiny and Ruby met at one of Tiny's famous Kansas City house parties, and explores their life-long relationship, which has its basis in music and love. Directed by Greta Schiller/produced by Andrea Weiss and Greta Schiller, *Tiny and Ruby* provides background on the segregation and sexism of the music industry, as well as the ageism that still exists. Unfortunately, the movie moves on after touching on these subjects, never exploring Tiny and Ruby's feelings when faced with prejudice.

The film does explore the Kansas City black lesbian community in detail, including home movie footage of a gay club in Kansas City, where Tiny and her Hell Divin' Women had a four-year gig. The film examines the women's forty-two year relationship, and talks about women marrying and having their sweethearts on the side, but Tiny and Ruby's flight from Kansas City to St. Louis, which was not of their own choosing, is only briefly mentioned.

While the film misses great opportunities to explore racism, sexism, ageism, and homophobia—sometimes leaving viewers with more questions than answers (such as why Tiny no longer records or plays the horn professionally)—the message of the music and Tiny's larger accomplishments are conveyed beautifully. Tiny's thoughts, feelings, and achievements are powerfully highlighted through the narrative poetry of Cheryl Clarke—which enlightens,

rather than intrudes, on the viewer's sensibilities. Ruby's role as the true backbone of Tiny's eternal strength demonstrates the cooperative spirit that permeates so many lesbian relationships, providing new insight into why some women choose women as partners.

The film also highlights Tiny's daughter, Dorothy Houston, a singer and bass player who played with the Hell Divin' Women for over a decade. The power of Tiny's music is shared during a jam session featuring Tiny, Ruby, and Dorothy. A touching trumpet duet between Tiny and her young great-grandson also carries on the message of the woman and her music.

Tiny, seventy-six years old when captured on film, didn't begin recording until 1953, so much of her work is lost to time. As a female horn player and big band leader who always made her living blowing music, Tiny was before her time. Her story was buried in the music industry, like so many early black and early women musicians. But this film reintroduces the woman and her music, and brings to life an era of music as yet unmatched. [Available through local women's bookstores or Cinema Guild, West Glen Films, 1430 Broadway, New York, NY 10018-3396 (212) 246-5522.]

THE COMPETITION

By far, *The Competition* has the most-wide ranging musical score of these films, featuring long excerpts from five [male] composers. And, although this musical love story accurately portrays the struggle for equality between man and woman, I noticed that the storyline drags (being rescued repeatedly by unexpected humor from supporting cast members).

Amy Irving is Heidi, a sixth generation lineal descendent of pianists trained by Beethoven, who is at the starting point of a budding concert career. Richard Dreyfuss is Paul, an older pianist whose last hope for a concert career is riding on a prestigious gold medal from an international piano competition.

Having met briefly at a music camp one summer, Heidi and Paul find themselves meeting again—as competitors for the same prize. The one week preparation time allows for no outside interference. But, when a defection occurs in the Russian pianist's camp, the competition is postponed, and Heidi and Paul find themselves enmeshed in a relationship of piano adultery.

Although the stars of the show give convincing performances, they both pale in comparison to veteran actress Lee Remick, who is perfect in the role of Heidi's teacher Greta, stealing scenes by merely raising an eyebrow. (A particular highlight of the film is Greta's commitment speech, where she tries to give Heidi sage advice gleaned from her own forays into the male-female competition.)

Homophobia does crop up in one character, whose derogatory reference to a gay man encouraging him to play the piano is unnecessary. The comment is put in the context of a street punk who becomes an accomplished pianist, and is somewhat offset by Heidi's everyday handling of her summer crush on a pianist who she discovers is gay. There was no obvious reason for the "fag" comment to be included, and the film wouldn't have suffered if it had wound up on the cutting room floor.

Although the plot moves slowly, this film raises and explores many struggles women face in life. There is the question of how a woman keeps from putting herself and her talents down. When do a woman's needs and desires for promotion and success outweigh her desires for male companionship and the protection of a relationship? Why does the burden fall on a woman's shoulders, and why do women place their emotional stability in the hands of others, particularly men? This movie is sometimes more thought-provoking than entertaining, but surprises abound, making it worth viewing.

Any woman who has even thought about stepping aside for a male colleague should see this film.

DUET FOR ONE

Panned by mainstream reviewers, this film is my personal pick out of the four videos discussed in this article. The film opens as world-renowned concert

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ABOUT THE WRITER: Paula E. Langguth is the former arts editor for *Visibilities Magazine*, where she wrote extensively on lesbian filmmakers and reviewed new releases by lesbian artists. She is currently a contributing editor at *The Baltimore Alternative* and writes frequently on topics of interest to women, youth and children. She writes nationally syndicated reviews of films and books of interest to the lesbian and gay communities.

SISTER ROSETTA

By Rosetta Reitz

Sister Rosetta Tharpe was a passionate, flamboyant pioneer; a natural performer and ultra-talented. She is the spiritual mother of Tina Turner, Patti LaBelle, and Aretha Franklin, and was the first nationally known gospel singer. She is a key figure in the history of American music because Rosetta went public with gospel in 1938, before anyone else did; she made it popular by putting it on the secular stage, and put it there with all the fire and fervor of the Holiness church.

Mahalia Jackson, her contemporary, refused to sing at the Apollo Theater in Harlem. Sister Rosetta did, in 1941, and her performance was accompanied by plenty of applause and also plenty of scandal. Many sisters of the church, and brothers too—especially the elders—were outraged and felt she had committed a sacrilege.

But not Sister Rosetta. She felt the Lord is ready to listen whenever and wherever. Her importance lies in the way she teaches us how similar gospel, blues, soul, and jazz are. She illustrates the use of the same chords and tonal colors while singing and playing in these various styles. It becomes easy to understand where America's indigenous music came from: the black church.

You will notice that when Sammy Price accompanies her on piano he uses the same barrelhouse, boogie chords for "How Far From God" that he uses when he plays the blues.

"What's the difference between gospel and blues?" I asked Sippie Wallace in 1979 when I interviewed her for the Smithsonian's Oral History Archive. She was the last living Classic Queen of the Blues shouter variety from the 1920s, and was the choir director of the Leland Missionary Baptist Church in Detroit.

"Honey, there ain't no difference," she replied. "In the church we say *Jesus*, and in the blues we say *baby*."

As we try to correct some of the historic mythology that has been taken as fact—that blues and jazz are primarily



© Rosetta Records

Sister Rosetta Tharpe: the spiritual mother of Tina Turner, Patti LaBelle, and Aretha Franklin.

male domains—we learn from this album how deeply rooted they are in the black church. And church was peopled largely of women and children. It was the women swinging the congregations from the keyboards, the soloists, the choirs, and the worshippers hallelujahing, that are the base—the underneath it all—of America's music.

LITTLE SISTER ROSETTA

Sister Rosetta began her career in church as soon as she was big enough to walk and talk. A precocious child, she stood at her mother's side in church before she was one. Katie Bell Nubin was the lead singer in the choir in the little Holiness Church in the tiny town of Cotton Plant, Arkansas.

Rosetta Nubin was born there on March 20, 1915, and moved to Chicago with her mother when she was six years old. Little Sister had already learned to play the guitar well and had been traveling with her mother, a missionary, to

churches and conventions, singing and playing. Sometimes her mother joined her in singing and played the mandolin, too. There is a story that Little Sister, at the age of six, performed in a Chicago church before a congregation of 1,000 people and "tore up the place."

A charming, attractive sight, this vivacious mother and daughter team addressed their God with the joy and love of a family member. How appealing that aspect of the Holiness is; God like a next-door friend, contrary to the harsh God of the Catholic and Jewish religions, who is a stern, demanding, and rigid taskmaster.

The Nubins were warmly welcomed wherever they went on the church circuit. Little Sister heard all the grown-ups, but one especially impressed her, a blind ragtime pianist, Sister Arizona Dranes, who shouted, rocked, and pounded the piano to her own syncopated beat. This small woman articulated carefully while projecting a special rhythmic power in her worship, which Rosetta would later adopt. [For a taste of Sister Dranes' sound, check her out on *Piano Singer's Blues*. (Rosetta Records).]

In Chicago, Little Sister and her mother worshipped at the 40th Street Church of God in Christ, near State Street. Bishop Roberts, the pastor, would stand Rosetta up on a table so she could better be seen while performing. Chicago was their base while traveling with the evangelist P.W. McGhee on the tent-meeting circuit.

For thirteen years, Sister's reputation kept growing in the Pentecostal church world as she and her mother continued to travel. It was clear that there was something special about this child. To say she had verve or was vivacious would be an understatement, especially in a world of uninhibited Sanctified singers. She had something more, which outshone the others; her originality; her magnetic personality, her pizzazz and presence.

Pastor Thorpe, an elder in the Holi-

ness Church in Pittsburgh, recognized that specialness, and took her for his wife when she was nineteen years old, in 1934. When she left him, she kept his name but changed the spelling to Tharpe. Rosetta joined her mother in Florida and sometimes participated with her in street corner revivals in Miami, according to the *Philadelphia Tribune*.

In 1938 she burst out of the church and into the Cotton Club Revue on Broadway (it had moved down to 48th Street in 1936) singing with the Cab Calloway band. How she got there, I don't know. I haven't been able to find out. My guess is that some enterprising agent had a good hunch which paid off, because never before had there been gospel in a night club. "Rock Me," "The Preacher," and "Hallelujah Brown" were refreshingly new to this sophisticated crowd. Her bluesy guitar delighted the audience, as did her jazzy religious singing. She was phrasing the material in a new way, stylizing it sometimes to the point of abstraction.

Right away, Decca signed her to a recording contract. She did upbeat gospel tunes, accompanying herself on guitar, ad-libbing tasty little fills. Her records sold well. She was hot. Gospel was news. Cafe Society Downtown booked her and liked her so much that the same owners booked her into the Blue Angel when that club opened ten years later.

Although Sister Rosetta sang in the historic *Spirituals To Swing* concert at Carnegie Hall on December 23, 1938, her name is not to be found on the album commemorating it. I checked the *New York Times* for the following day and found Howard Taubman's review. "Then there was Sister Tharpe, who came from Florida to the Cotton Club. She sang holy roller hymns that had the rhythm and beat of less sacred subjects," he wrote.

The Cotton Club kept her on for the next show, which opened on March 24, 1939, and starred Bill Robinson. Hot is singing "Sunday Morning In Harlem" with a choir, which received such laudatory reviews that the show was revised to give Sister more exposure: a number with Robinson was added. Hot is having *Life* magazine do a story on her bringing gospel to the big world of entertainment.

Because the Cotton Club had such a big draw in Rosetta, they stayed open for the (pre-air conditioning) summer and created a new show. Now Andy Kirk's band with MaryLou Williams at the piano was backing Sister. Sammy Cahn and

Saul Chaplin wrote her hit song, "Religion On A Mule" (difficult *not* to comment on that title), and Rosetta sang it sitting on a live mule.

Imagine this young woman, twenty-three years old, hitting the big time in the biggest city. She was used to performing for poor church folks who sometimes hardly had the change to make a love offering. Now she was making the same "joyful noise unto the Lord" and getting paid well for it.

Carnegie Hall was as grand as one could get. Cafe Society was *tres chic*. For a poor young woman this must have been mind-boggling. People were paying high prices to see her. She seemed to groove on it, for it affirmed and confirmed that what she was doing must be right. Everyone is reinforced by success and that probably made it a little easier to take the barbs from some of the church people.



The marquee in Harlem for the week of May 6-12, 1955. When Rosetta played the Howard in Washington, D.C. she was also the headliner.

Her contemporary, Willie Mae Ford Smith—the star of the documentary film, *Say Amen, Somebody*—appeared exactly the way she was *supposed* to, as a singing sister of the church, wearing appropriate clothes, as a mother of children, with sensible shoes—not looking like a vaudeville performer as Sister Rosetta did. Willie Mae was unadulterated, so to speak, the typical evangelist, and she remained poor.

In 1941, Rosetta played the Apollo Theater with the Cab Calloway band and then with Lucky Millinder's. Her Savoy Ballroom appearances were always with Millinder, who was a favorite of the jitterbug dancers. It was at this time that she was criticized by some Harlem ministers "for putting too much motion as well as emotion into her singing," according to the *New York Times*.

What the ministers failed to realize was Sister Rosetta was expanding the

church doctrine. She was creating a church without walls, preaching the gospel church to thousands who would otherwise not hear it.

During World War II her preaching brought great comfort to American servicemen. The Jubilee Radio Broadcasts and her V-discs (radio transcriptions for the armed services) were highly valued and increased her popularity.

The '40s were her decade. She cut a lot of records in spite of the shellac shortage and was on the race charts many times. Her three hits in 1942 made the race charts and made the gospel sound familiar to the country: "Rock Me;" "Shout Sister, Shout;" and "Trouble in Mind." In 1944, "Strange Things Happening Every Day" was on. She traveled a lot too, on a grander scale than when she was singing in churches. Her second marriage was to a New York agent who booked spiritual music, Forrest Allen. When she teamed up with Marie Knight in 1946, their duets caused excitement and they made the charts.

Billboard changed the name of the race record charts to rhythm and blues on June 25, 1949. In that year Rosetta was on with two duets with Marie and a Christmas hymn, "Silent Night." Early in the '40s she made three soundies (three-minute films) with the Millinder band and, many years later, sang a couple of songs in a French film called *L'Aventure du Jazz* (1969).

The third time she was married was a huge event. 20,000 people witnessed it, mostly women. Rosetta outrageous? Flamboyant? This wedding was. But who could better call upon the Lord for blessings than Sister Rosetta and her friends in front of an audience? She had to have a great sense of humor to go along with the marriage in Griffith Stadium in the nation's capital. The good-looking groom, Russell Morrison, was her manager (formerly the manager for the Ink Spots) and seven years younger. The bride wore an \$800 wedding gown with a \$350 veil (as reported in *Ebony* magazine, October 1951).

The festivities included a concert in addition to the wedding ceremony (seats were 90¢ to \$2.50). Her mother, Katie Bell Nubin, sang and so did her Maid of Honor, Madame Marie Knight. Although Lucky Millinder was the best man, his band wasn't with him, but music was made by the Rosettes, Vivian Cooper, the Harmonizing Four, and the Sunset Harmonizers. Sister Rosetta's guitar was

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there too and if it couldn't easily be seen while she was strumming it, the \$5,000 worth of fireworks included a twenty-foot reproduction of Sister holding it. The ballpark vendors did well, selling souvenirs for a quarter. The "lucky midget bibles" and "lucky key chains" reportedly sold the best. This extravaganza was financed and staged by a Washington chain of retail record shops and recorded by Decca.

A big problem in the life of Rosetta Tharpe was the way she was treated by many people in the Holiness Church after 1938 when she began performing outside the church. They felt she had given up her sincere search for greater Holiness and couldn't be trusted. They also felt that singing in nightclubs was wasting her glorious voice, for it was serving the devil rather than serving God. Her life was never the same, and it was a deep and painful sorrow to her.

Thomas A. Dorsey, blues pianist, composer, and accompanist to the Classic Blues Queen Ma Rainey, was accepted into the church with open arms when he decided to give up playing in clubs and go full time with God. The song hits he wrote for Ma Rainey were not much different musically from the ones he wrote for the church. His gospel songs were deeply informed by the blues, favoring the sixteen-bar pattern for them. Rosetta was partial to his songs, like "Rock Me" and "Precious Lord, Take My Hand," and she sang them during her entire career.

Though the Holiness Church was easy on Thomas (Georgia Tom) Dorsey and rough on Rosetta, it was brutal to others, including Sam Cooke. Church members would attend concerts and not applaud; they stopped buying gospel records and turned their backs on those who performed outside the church. [The book *The Gospel Sound* by Tony Heilbut discusses the problem.] How lucky for Aretha that after Sister Rosetta, Ray Charles paved the way further by using his testifying shout in secular places. Though Dinah Washington was also brought up on gospel and at the age of sixteen toured for a year as pianist for the Sallie Martin Gospel Singers with Gertrude and Clara Ward, she had no church problem. Dinah adapted the gospel cry and fire to everything she sang.

Sister Rosetta Tharpe either couldn't or wouldn't conform to the rigid demands of some of the Holiness folk. She never felt she did wrong and, having a

mind of her own, she was not a woman to be coerced; not as a young woman or a middle-aged one. After years of struggle, she joined the Baptists. When she was past fifty years old she performed in her red-orange wig, wearing blue jeans, high heels, and an elaborate ostrich feather boa. When Rosetta worked she sang mostly gospel songs. She sang them all over the world, in clubs and concerts, theaters, music halls, jazz and folk festivals, and on radio. The gospel groups she sang and traveled with included: the Caravans, James Cleveland Singers, the Golden Gate Quartet, the Dixie Hummingbirds, the Dependable Boys, the Rosettes, the White Gospel Four, Les Sally Jenkins, and others.



© Rosetta Records

Sister Rosetta, dressed up in silk taffeta for her first professional photograph (1938).

They loved her in Europe. The song most requested there was "This Train." [You can hear her sing it on *Women's Railroad Blues*, Rosetta Records.] She got big write-ups in France in 1958 and was a hit at the Antibes Festival in 1960 and again at the Paris Jazz Festival in 1968. Her concerts were recorded in Switzerland and France.

When she toured with Muddy Waters, he allegedly let her know he didn't care for her singing "Trouble In Mind" because he was the blues singer.

She continued to travel until she suffered a stroke in 1970 that necessitated the amputation of a leg. When she recovered, she came out to sing from time to time and performed sitting down. On October 9, 1973—at the age of fifty-seven—Sister Rosetta Tharpe died in Temple University Hospital in Philadel-

phia, where she had been living for many years. The funeral service was held in Bright Hope Baptist church, where she had long been a member.

The record *Sincerely, Sister Rosetta Tharpe; Sacred & Secular Gospel-Blues-Jazz* is designed to illustrate various facets of Sister Rosetta Tharpe's musical achievement. It will also serve another function, showing concretely how interrelated the many styles of American music are. For example, when she sings "Down By The Riverside" or "Rock Me" with Lucky Millinder's big band, how does that change the music from gospel to jazz?

As I reviewed her over-thirty-year recorded output, I found that her favorite songs were repeated with different backgrounds; sometimes soloing with her own biting guitar, sometimes backed by a big brassy jazz band, sometimes intimate with a boogie piano, and sometimes flying with a church choral group. The same song? Yes! Define it? No!

Her song "Trouble In Mind" is one of the '20s classic blues from the Golden Era when women reigned on the blues scene (seventy-six percent of the blues records were recorded by women as the stars from 1920 to 1927). Bertha Chippie Hill introduced this eight-bar blues song in 1926 and recorded it with the writer on piano and Louis Armstrong on cornet. When a singer revives such a song, she is paying tribute to the Big Mama shouters before her as well as picking up the challenge herself.

Aretha Franklin sings this too and probably heard it while she was growing up.

"Shout Sister, Shout" closes the album with good advice. This song was written by Lucky Millinder and the band's piano player, Bill Doggett. It sounds as if a woman wrote it. Whatever the gender, listen to Sister Rosetta preach and you too will want to shout, shout, shout. Yes! Yes! Yes! ●

ABOUT THE WRITER: *Rosetta Reitz is a jazz historian who retrieves lost women's music on her own label. For more information on the Women's Heritage Series, send SASE to Rosetta Records, 115 W. 16th St., New York, NY 10011.*

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INNER RHYTHMS/OUTER SIGNS

The Astrological Chart of Alix Dobkin

By Gail Fairfield

This article is designed to be an introduction to basic astrology using the Chart of a well-known woman—in this case, Alix Dobkin—as an example and teaching tool. Alix has been performing as a folk singer since the late 1950s. She has been writing and singing music specifically for women since the early '70s, when she and Kay Gardner produced 'Lavender Jane Loves Women.' She is one of the mothers of our network and one of the unshakable carriers of the flame for lesbian culture. [Specific astrological references as well as the Natal Chart are included for those who are interested. For further readings, see "The Woman's Aspectarian" series by Paula Walowitz in previous issues of 'HOT WIRE.']

A discussion of any astrological Chart revolves around certain key elements, the most important of which are the HOUSES, SIGNS, PLANETS, POINTS, and ASPECTS. Each House of an astrological Chart represents certain areas of life, a group of interests, concerns, issues, and activities. The Houses aren't active in and of themselves, they just symbolize departments of life, like rooms in a home. The kitchen doesn't *do* anything on its own, but it does exist in most homes. Similarly, the Fifth House symbolizing creativity and children doesn't *do* anything; it designates a part of life about which an individual has feelings and within which she acts.

The Sign that falls at the beginning of a House shows quite a bit about the attitudes and feelings that a person has toward this area of life. The Sign also symbolizes needs which must be met when facing the issues, concerns, and activities related to that House. In a home, the Signs would indicate the lighting, decorations, and mood of individual rooms.

The Planets and other significant Points (the Part of Fortune and the Nodes of the Moon) within a House show the active forces at work in this department of life. Each Planet acts to fulfill its function according to the needs, feelings, and atti-

tudes of its Sign, within the context of its House. In a home, the Planets and Points would represent the people who actually live and move within the rooms. The Planets also serve as the RULERS of their Natural Signs. (Each Planet is naturally associated with a particular Sign.) By locating the planetary Ruler of the Sign on a House Cusp, further information can be gleaned about the ways in which the person meets her needs.

The Aspects, or angular relationships between Planets and Points, indicate how these actors interact with one another. Through calculating the distance between any pair of them, their interplay can be seen.

OVERVIEW OF ALIX'S CHART

With this simplified understanding of astrology as a foundation, Alix's Chart can be analyzed, House by House. An analysis of the pattern that the Planets form within the Chart gives an overall focus to an astrological interpretation. Additionally, the placements of the Sun, Moon, and Rising Sun give a quick yet meaningful impression of a person's core identity (Sun), emotional patterns (Moon), and personality (Rising Sign).

CHART PATTERN

In Alix's Chart, most of the Planets are grouped together on the right, with a single Planet (the Moon) off by itself on the left. This Bucket pattern with the Moon handle indicates that in order for Alix to get a "handle" on her life, she'll need to resolve issues related to the Moon: her own mother, herself as a mother, nurturance, comfort, caretaking, intuition. Since her Moon is in Aquarius, she'll face these concerns in a nontraditional and innovative manner, with great flashes of inspiration. Because the Moon is in the Second House, her resolution of these concerns will have a direct impact on her self-esteem and on her financial security.

THE SUN: CORE SELF

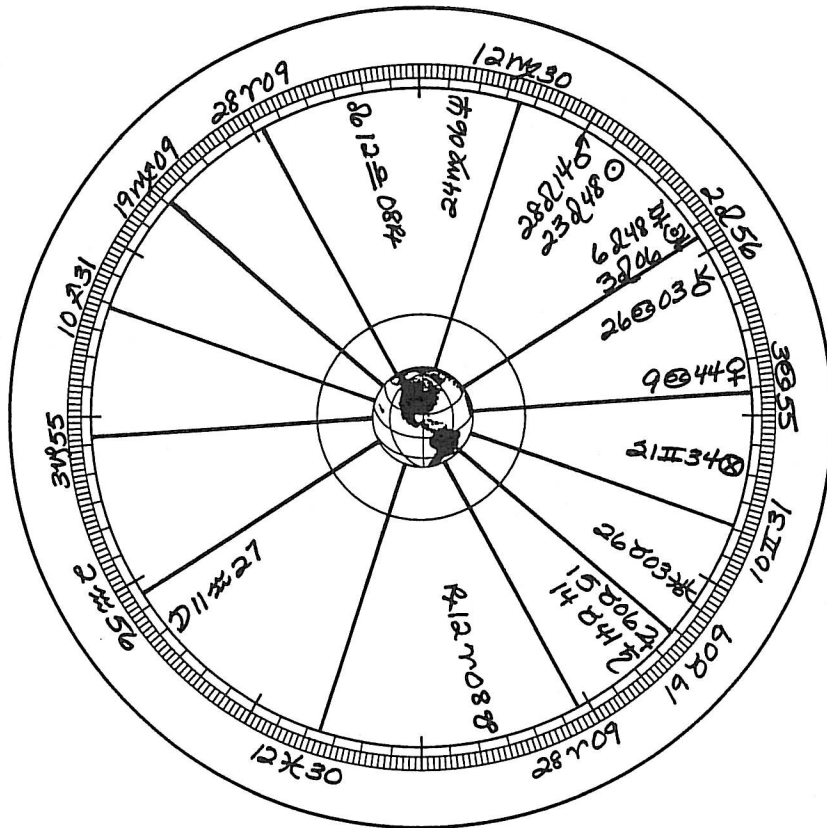
With the Sun, Mars, Mercury, and Pluto all in Leo in the Eighth House, Alix is a born performer and show person who deals with meaningful and power-related issues. Specifically, since the Sun is the Planet of personal identity, Mars is the assertive pursuer, Mercury is the communicator, and Pluto is the deep transformer, their location in the same part of the Chart makes for a strong and expressive personality. Because these Planets are in the Sign of Leo, their combined mode of expression is flamboyant, dramatic, energized, illuminating, and "on-stage." The depth and passion within Alix's performance material comes from the presence of Pluto in this group as well as the Eighth House location. (Eighth House symbolizes deeply transformative experiences.) Another way to describe this configuration would be to say that Alix discovers and expresses herself (Sun) by communicating (Mercury) directly from her soul (Sun), out to others (Leo on Eighth House Cusp). She is willing to stand up and be an example—to act out or dramatize her own feelings and attitudes so that others can identify with them (Leo). This certainly puts her on stage and brings applause, and it also brings her a kind of intimate connection to the world (Pluto in Eighth). It might be hard for Alix to come down and relax (Mars is always active) because her presence is charismatic (Leo) in every environment; she is rarely ignored (Pluto).

"Performing is essential to my well-being, and I get itchy after an absence from the stage of more than a month," says Alix. "I need to perform in order to earn my living, and even if I didn't I'd be up there in front of y'all. It is difficult to unwind sometimes, but over the course of the years, I've developed ways to do so."

THE MOON: EMOTIONAL PATTERNS

The Moon in Aquarius in the Second House describes Alix's emotional patterns. The Moon's function is to create

NAME: Alix Dobkin **BORN:** August 16, 1940 **TIME:** 5:00 p.m.
TIME ZONE: EDT **PLACE:** New York, New York
LATITUDE: 40 N **LONGITUDE:** 73 W 57
HOUSE SYSTEM: Koch



♈ ARIES	♎ LIBRA	☾ MOON	♄ SATURN
♉ TAURUS	♏ SCORPIO	☿ MERCURY	♅ CHIRON
♊ GEMINI	♐ SAGITTARIUS	♀ VENUS	♁ URANUS
♋ CANCER	♑ CAPRICORN	☼ SUN	♃ MOON'S NORTH NODE
♌ LEO	♒ AQUARIUS	♂ MARS	♆ MOON'S SOUTH NODE
♍ VIRGO	♓ PISCES	♃ JUPITER	♇ PART OF FORTUNE

emotional security as it comforts and nurtures the self and others. With Alix's Moon in Aquarius, she nurtures herself and others by participating in nonconforming activities and expressing her rebelliousness. She creates emotional security by remaining somewhat detached from others and may even seem to be observing them from an aloof or distant position. Since her Aquarian Moon is in the Second House, Alix's nontraditional (Aquarius) emotional preferences (Moon) and her nonconformity in general give her a sense of self-worth (Second). Additionally, she derives personal satisfaction (Moon) from considering what's best for the group as a whole (Aquarius). She's aware not only of the highest good in the

present, but she is also aware of the impact of present decisions on the future (Aquarius). She contributes to building communities—locally, regionally, and internationally (Aquarius)—in which she can belong (Moon). In fact, she is willing to shatter existing structures and cross over many dividing lines in order to create a future that is closer to what she considers to be utopia (Aquarius). She's politically active (Aquarius) and is emotionally attached (Moon) to the process of societal change (Aquarius). She values herself (Second) for her ability to consider the big picture (Aquarius) and would sometimes like to detach from others and simply reflect on the world (Aquarius). However, she can't stay away for too long; her need

to be personally involved brings her back (Sun in Leo).

"Emotionally attached to the process of societal change—true, true! Lately I've found myself falling in love with my work, my community, and those individuals with compatible visions of work and community," she says, "not to mention having a good time."

THE RISING SIGN: OUTER PERSONALITY

Capricorn is Alix's Rising Sign because it is the Sign on her Ascendent (First House Cusp). The Rising Sign describes a person's outer personality and her impact on others when they first meet her. With Capricorn Rising, Alix comes across as an authority figure, a parental force, a responsible grown-up. She can, indeed, take responsibility for anything within her domain—in her case, this can mean the whole world! She may not know when to quit, when to rest. And, with Capricorn's ruler (Saturn) in Taurus, she feels compelled to follow through on all her commitments. So it's a challenge for Alix to set boundaries, to take pressure off herself (Capricorn). She feels especially strongly about honoring her commitments to her family—either family of origin or chosen family (Saturn in Fourth)—and she has an ethical belief that it's critical to value one's cultural roots (Saturn Conjunct Jupiter).

"It's this outer personality which ultimately has spelled the dissolution of each of my (three) long-term relationships with lesbians whose perceptions of me as an 'authority figure' were setups for failure," Alix says. "It's sad and sobering because my inner personality prefers a peer relationship I've yet to achieve in the romantic department."

EXPANDED INTERPRETATION OF ALIX'S CHART

Bearing the overview in mind, it's possible to proceed to a step-by-step analysis of Alix's Chart. Since the First House was already discussed in the overview, this expanded interpretation begins with the Second.

SECOND HOUSE: RESOURCES, SELF-ESTEEM, AND MONEY

The transforming zeal of Aquarius on the Second House Cusp demonstrates that Alix gains money from her unconventional creativity. In fact, her primary

resource is her nonconformity. Specifically, she can earn income from the tangible results of her art (Aquarius' ruler, Uranus, in Taurus in the Fifth). So even though she may enjoy performing, she also needs to sell a product (Taurus). Her income is erratic—some months up, some down (Aquarius)—and this can sometimes affect her emotional equilibrium (Moon in Second). However, she spends her money on any cause that she finds worthwhile (Aquarius on Second House Cusp).

"And here I thought that I got my money anxieties from Mom! [Gail's note: actually Moon in Second House *does* indicate that mother's attitudes have to be confronted or resolved in order to feel financially secure.] Considering how erratic it is, my income has remained consistent," comments Alix. "I feel like for the past two years, I have been working to support my dentists."

THIRD HOUSE: COMMUNITY

With the unifying faith of Pisces on the Third House Cusp, Alix feels intuitively merged with her community, however she defines it. In fact, she may be part of a number of overlapping communities which extend out around the world (Pisces' ruler, Neptune, in Ninth). While she feels sure that she wants to contribute her skills and resources to the support of her community (Neptune in Virgo), she may also find herself drained by her generosity (South Node in Third). Sometimes it might seem that all her work is a charity act, and she wonders when it will come back around (South Node). She's had many lifetimes in which she's been a part of a pioneering group and still finds it tempting to escape from it all into an independent community (South Node in Aries in Third). However, her urge to contribute to the process of unifying people across cultural boundaries (North Node in Libra in Ninth) keeps her from becoming isolated (Aries).

Alix agrees: "My deepest urge, clearly, is to help form or find a diverse, independent, pioneering community, which is one reason I'm a lesbian today."

FOURTH HOUSE: HOME/ROOTS

The pioneering assertiveness of Aries on the Fourth House Cusp indicates that Alix has an attitude of independence about home—she craves space of her own that literally reflects her identity. All the objects and art around her should have

some personal story to tell. (Aries ruler [Mars] is in Leo.) However, Mars in Eighth indicates she'll want to have significant others around her, as well. So, her goal at home is to have complete autonomy (Aries) combined with deep intimacy (Mars in Eighth). Additionally, she needs a solid place of belonging, a place to root—she may literally want to plant gardens and tend a section of earth (Saturn in Taurus in Fourth). And finally, she'll want to leave home and travel quite a bit—she'll have a sense that the whole Earth is her home (Jupiter in Fourth).

"Complete autonomy combined with deep intimacy,' or as I put it on my liner notes for *These Women: Never Been Better*, how to maintain a deep, passionate, steady love with one partner and a single life, too, or put another way, how to exercise conscious autonomy within the comforting confines of a 'couple.' At this point, it's more of an ideal than a reality in my own life, but whether or not I manage to pull it off, it's always an ideal worth working for," says Alix. She adds, "Nothing's changed since I wrote that in 1985. And as Virginia Woolf wrote in 'Three Guineas' (1938), '...in fact as a woman I have no country, as a woman I want no country, as a woman my country is the whole world.'"

FIFTH HOUSE: CREATIVITY AND CHILDREN

Since the practicality and persistence of Taurus is on the Fifth House Cusp, Alix has a pragmatic approach to her creativity, which results in products—especially products that are nurturing to women (Taurus' ruler, Venus, which is associated with women, in Cancer in Seventh). Some of her most powerful pieces will be those which help people get along with each other—across racial, ethnic, economic, class, or other lines (Venus in Cancer in the Seventh House of relationships). And her art will be nonconforming, full of "foreign" influences, and intended to raise a ruckus (Uranus in Fifth). In terms of her daughter, Alix is inclined to approach her with complete loyalty and commitment, and to raise her in a reliable (Taurus) manner. However, her own erratic nature (Uranus) may sometimes define what is practical and secure (Taurus) in an unusual way.

Regarding her creativity, "I couldn't have put it better myself," says Alix. "For thanks, I've sent you a T-shirt and orange dayglow *Yahoo Australia* sunglasses."

SIXTH HOUSE: HEALTH AND DAILY ROUTINE

The lively versatility of Gemini on Alix's Sixth House Cusp indicates that she has a strong need for diversity, flexibility, and change within her daily routine. She doesn't want to be bored and she doesn't want to be constantly stimulated. With the Part of Fortune in Gemini in the Sixth, Alix actually feels most integrated when a variety of activities are simultaneously occurring. Her tendency to do a hundred things at once (Gemini) in any given day may seem to lead to scattered energies (Gemini) but it also keeps her in the public eye. (Gemini's ruler [Mercury] is in Leo.) Her attitude toward health is that it's a curious phenomenon about which she can periodically become fascinated. Since Mercury is Conjunct (right next to) Pluto, it would take a major life-transforming crisis (Pluto, Mercury and Pluto in Eighth) to really have an impact on the busyness (Gemini) of her lifestyle (Sixth House). She would need to take special care of her lungs and bronchial area (Gemini) and of her heart (Sixth House Ruler in Leo).

SEVENTH HOUSE: PARTNERSHIPS

The sensitivity of Cancer on the Seventh House Cusp with womanly Venus in that House shows that Alix truly loves and appreciates interacting with all kinds of women. And, she approaches love and business partnerships (Seventh) with an attitude of sensitivity (Cancer). She does have a tendency to take care of others while staying somewhat detached herself (Cancer on Seventh with Cancer's ruler, the Moon, in Aquarius in Second). So, she's had to learn how to acknowledge her own needs and feelings and allow herself to get the nurturance she craves (Cancer). In fact, with problem-solving Chiron in the Seventh, Alix may be trying to heal relationship patterns that have existed for generations within her family system. She wants to feel valued by those she loves (Moon in Second) and is willing to show admiration of them (Leo on Eighth) in return. She may surprise herself—and them—by the degree to which she's romantic (Venus in Seventh). By being a lesbian, she acts on her nontraditional urges regarding relationships (Moon in Aquarius) and, even within the women's community, she may break the rules (Moon in Aquarius) as she urges women to move toward ideal relationships

(Chiron in Seventh).

Alix agrees that she's a "romantic to the extreme" and proud of it.

EIGHTH HOUSE: INTIMACY AND SEX

With Leo's enthusiasm and spontaneous energy on her Eighth House Cusp, Alix's flair for drama, passion, and excitement can really bloom in her intimate relationships. Since she has Mars, the pursuer, Conjoining (combined closely with) her Sun, the source of identity, she eagerly plunges into new relationships. She may be somewhat cautious about becoming truly vulnerable to others since she can become so deeply involved (Pluto in Eighth). She likes a lot of stimulation and variety (Mercury in Eighth) in her emotional and physical contact with women, so she either needs an equally active partner or a series of lovers. Additionally, with the Sun in the Eighth House, Alix derives part (or much!) of her identity from her sexual preference.

"In other words, I'm a professional lesbian-identified lesbian. My flair is, I hope, for High Drama, if you know what I mean. [Editor's Note: Low Drama is more like soap opera style melodrama, with constant crises, etc.] That, along with my caution (and how!) have kept my romantic life exceedingly dull for more than four years. The Really Good Stuff is hard to come by," she says.

NINTH HOUSE: TRAVEL AND INTERNATIONAL INTERESTS

With methodical Virgo on the Ninth House Cusp, Alix could be pretty detail-oriented in her travel plans, and also conscious of her role in providing a service (Virgo) to the international (Ninth) community (Third House Ruler, Neptune in Ninth). With the North Node in Libra in the Ninth, Alix enjoys traveling, especially with one or more companions. When in foreign locations, she prefers to stay in homes or homey environments—she wants to get to know people at a personal

"For sure! I believe that traveling comes naturally to me through my minstrel blood. I actually especially like traveling alone," reports Alix.

TENTH HOUSE: CAREER AND REPUTATION

The cooperative energy of Libra on her Midheaven (Tenth House Cusp) says that Alix is suited to a career in the arts, the law, or in mediation. Within the hectic world of touring and performing, she'll consistently come across to her sponsors and peers as a calm presence, unharried, willing to take time to sort out the problems (Libra). She cares as much about the process of creating her professional success as the results. She wants everyone (herself, producers, audience) to gain



Toni Armstrong Jr.

With the Sun, Moon, Mercury, and Pluto all in Leo in the Eighth House, Alix is a born show person who deals with meaningful and power-related issues.

from each recording and each performance (Libra's ruler, Venus, in Cancer in Seventh). In fact, she may be so anxious to be fair to others that she ends up short-changing herself (Libra). She is able to form a career out of activities that others would pursue as hobbies (Venus also rules Fifth).

Alix: "The Law????!!!" [Gail's note: Well, righting wrongs and supporting true justice, anyway!]

supports dialogue between various groups (Pluto Conjoint Mercury, the networker and communicator). The visioning and manifesting of that future is tied into her sense of self and core identity at a very deep level (Sun in Leo: both Pluto and Sun in Eighth). She's aware that she can't do it all single-handedly, and is tireless in her attempts to draw others into resource and action networks (Mercury Conjoint Pluto in Eighth).

"Since I'd like to believe this about myself," she says, "it's appealing to have verification from heaven."

TWELFTH HOUSE: SPIRITUALITY AND ADDICTIONS

With the expansiveness of Sagittarius on the Twelfth House Cusp, Alix is open to exploring many philosophical and spiritual points of view. However, since its Ruler (Jupiter) is in Taurus in the Fourth, she can best discover and express her spirituality by returning to her roots and recovering what was meaningful in her family or cultural traditions. She'll want to understand the meaning of spiritual activities and rituals and will revise them, if necessary, to align them with her own ethics (Sagittarius). At a personal level, she can best tune into her intuitive, deeper self by physical activities such as bread baking, gardening, yoga, or hiking (Taurus). She can also find a sense of serenity by being a part of nature and communing with the earth, trees, and animals (Sagittarius and Taurus). If she has any addictions, they could be learning (Sagittarius), exercise (Jupiter), and responsible overwork (Saturn).

"Nature Girl, that's me," Alix concurs. "When I'm home I walk nearly three miles a day. Guitar practice [Gail's note: also Taurus] is a form of daily meditation for me—except when I'm tranced out on TV." [Gail's note: Maybe TV is a form of gathering Sagittarian information about the world at large!]

UPCOMING TRENDS

them. The impact of a transit will be symbolized by the function of the Transiting Planet and the nature of the Aspect. While the exact details of future dilemmas and opportunities are not predictable, the themes and issues that will arise can be described. By knowing how and when a particular Planet's energy might be utilized, a person can make creative choices about how to maximize her use of the available potential.

Alix has emerged from a period of soul searching and introspection which might sometimes have felt like depression (T Saturn moving through Twelfth). Now she's moving outward into a time when she can assume a position of responsibility and leadership with a new sense of groundedness and personal power (T Saturn in First). With Transiting Uranus Squaring (intensely motivating) Natal Venus in the Seventh, love or business partnerships may have been fairly erratic or uncertain (Uranus) and full of tension or creative friction (Square). However, she should be able to reach some satisfactory

conclusions by Fall of 1991 (T Uranus leaves Square to N Venus). In fact, a great deal of fine tuning (Semi-sextile) and healing of relationships could be occurring over the next few years (T Neptune and T Uranus Semi-sextile or gently adjusting the N Moon which rules the Seventh). Any family issues that need to be resolved in order to have the kinds of relationships she wants can be smoothly (Trine) tackled now (T Neptune and T Uranus Trining or finding internal resources with N Saturn and Jupiter in Taurus in the Fourth). 1989-1992 marks a time when she's generally acting on a new set of goals for herself (T Saturn, T Neptune, and T Uranus Squaring, or dynamically activating, both N Nodes). She's accomplished many of her old dreams; now it's time for new ones. These may involve different sources of income (T Uranus Semi-sextile, or fine-tuning, N Moon in Second) and a new focus in terms of her creativity (T Uranus Squaring, or intensely motivating, N Venus, ruler of Fifth). She would benefit from extending her horizons even further

in international and intercultural directions (T Jupiter Sextiling, or finding external support for, the N North Node in Ninth). She may even relocate her home, or remodel it (T Jupiter Conjoining, or directly impacting, N Mars, Ruler of Fourth). Professionally, she'll be coming out of an era of expansion and experimentation in late 1991 (T Uranus Squaring, or forcefully activating, N Venus, ruler of Tenth). This doesn't mean she'll stop expanding or trying new things but that her growth will settle into a more steady rhythm.

Alix says she likes this outlook. "I look forward to participating in our ever expanding Lesbian Universe. Actually, I'm thrilled!" ●

ABOUT THE WRITER: *Gail Fairfield has been a full-time professional astrologer and Tarot reader since 1980. Her books 'Choice Centered Astrology: The Basics' and 'Choice Centered Tarot' are sold internationally. She maintains her private practice in Bloomington, Indiana while she travels to teach and lecture.*

JEWELLE GOMEZ *from 13*

was a Black lesbian vampire novel. She was horrified; afraid it would portray Black women and lesbians negatively. I tried to assure her that recreating the traditional mythology was part of the excitement of doing such a project; that using words to make them mean what we wanted them to mean was inherent in the power of words. [See "Writing Vampire Fiction: Recasting the Mythology," November 1987 *HOT WIRE*.] Just as black had been made to mean bad it could be made to mean good. New uses, surprising juxtapositions. Words-ideas-rebellion.

Whenever I worry that there won't be room for our words in the revolution (or that the revolution is over and I didn't notice and there still isn't room for words), I remember with how much care

words have been treated thus far. At the heart of almost any revolutionary movement we find poets—from Nikki Giovanni to Irina Ratushinskaia to Pat Parker. And the women's movement in the U.S. birthed an incredibly strong small press and alternative magazine movement. The number of books and periodicals featuring the words of women is already phenomenal and continues to grow in spite of financial impediments and political opposition. It's as if our lives burst with words that no one can suppress; we'd print them on bars of soap or whisper them to each other on our lunch breaks.

Whenever I travel to do readings or teach I usually head directly to the women's bookstore and pick up the local feminist/lesbian newspaper. I'm searching for the sound of their words. And almost always I find something, even if it's simply a single page with a listing of events. When I go to St. Petersburg with my lover to visit her family, we immediately stop in the local gay bar and pick up all the papers. We pore over sections about women's activities and local issues, not concerned whether we're planning to attend anything but simply making the connection, acknowledging our commonality with women everywhere. Each town has its own texture and rhythm, and women's words feed me whether on newsprint or mimeographed sheets.

It's interesting that one of the

denigrating criticisms U.S. culture has constructed for women is that we talk too much, we gossip, we prattle on. But it is in words that we find each other, define ourselves, learn not to be afraid of others. It is in that irrepressible capacity women have for words I find undeniable hope. I mean, after all... "if it's snowing in Brooklyn, I'd say snow's what we've got." ●

SEATTLE THEATER *from 11*

by lesbians of color and ensuring that projects in progress include women of color at all levels—as actors, technical staff, volunteers, and administrators.

In November of 1990, the Women of Color Committee received a \$1,500 loan from Gay Community Social Services, a nonprofit foundation offering support to gay and lesbian projects. The money came from funds designated by G.C.S.S. for people of color projects, and will help to pay up-front production costs for *Kind of Heart*.

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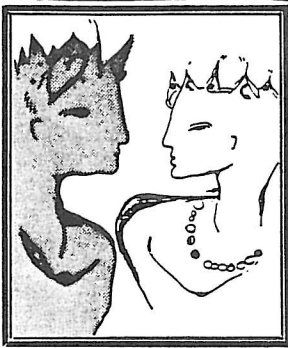
Front Room Theater is actively seeking more scripts by and about lesbians. Send scripts to: Front Room Theater, 1202 E. Pike St., Seattle, WA 98122-3918. ●

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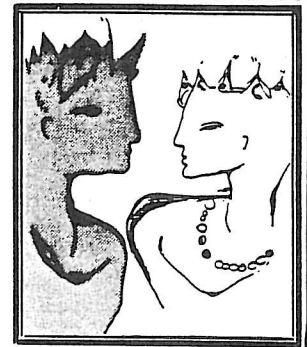
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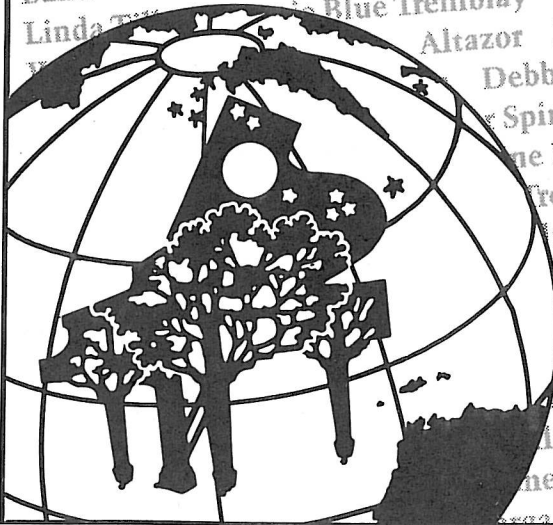
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HERE'S TO MARY WELLS

By Jorjet Harper

It was thirty years ago, but I remember it: a slice of time between the summer Chubby Checker showed everyone how to do the Twist and the day the Beatles arrived in America and sang on *The Ed Sullivan Show*. It was that age—I'm not sure whether it was our ages or the time itself—when nothing seemed more important than the music.

I remember clearly my best friend Lori in her mother's living room on a sunny Saturday afternoon, both of us dancing to the latest batch of 45 rpm records. There were two we both wanted to play over and over: a major new get your feet moving song, "Shop Around," by Smokey Robinson and the Miracles, and a groovy one called "Bye Bye Baby," sung by a female singer we'd never heard before, Mary Wells. In fact, these two songs heralded the beginning of a musical era: the Detroit sound—Motown. We didn't know that at the time, of course—we just caught our ears on a sound and a feeling we liked. It was all rock & roll to us.

Mary Wells's next release was "The One Who Really Loves You," and we liked that one even more. She was demure, hip, sophisticated—but not so grownup that she turned off the teenagers who craved energetic rock & roll and who disliked any sound that was at home in the territory of the cocktail lounge. She had an inviting voice, smooth but slightly breathy. Like the other "girl" singers of the early '60s, she had the look of the times: close-fitting sequined dresses, bouffant hair, a sway in her shoulders when she sang. But in the era of "girl groups" with names like the Crystals, the Cookies, the Chiffons, and the Dixie Cups, Mary Wells had her own name—she made it as a solo star.

The lyrics of her songs were a touch more sophisticated than most, too; you had to listen just a little bit harder to get beyond the obvious. "You Beat Me to the Punch" had a twist: at each stage in her relationship with her boyfriend, he always took the initiative. By the third

HELP FOR MOTOWN SINGER MARY WELLS

In the '60s, Motown singer Mary Wells won fame with such pop hits as "My Guy" and "You Beat Me to the Punch." She was one of the first women to sing with the legendary Motown group The Supremes. After leaving The Supremes, she worked with many other well-known musical figures (such as Marvin Gaye) during the stellar peak of her career. By 1990, however, her fortunes had changed dramatically. She was virtually penniless, without health insurance, and fighting serious throat cancer. In September, while undergoing a series of radiation treatments, she was evicted from her Los Angeles apartment.

Fortunately, the nonprofit Rhythm and Blues Foundation heard about her situation, and worked with other organizations to find a home for Mary Wells and her children. They also covered many thousands of dollars in medical expenses, and have set up the Mary Wells Care and Treatment Fund in the hopes of providing for her continuing medical expenses.

HOT WIRE readers are well aware that musicians, especially those on the cultural cutting edge, may get little financial reward and even less security. The problem was even worse in the '40s, '50s, and '60s. Suzan Jenkins, the executive director of the Rhythm and Blues Foundation, points out that even well-known musicians of that period often "did not have a good investment in their own career." For a variety of reasons—unfavorable contracts, self-management, difficulty in collecting royalties—even commercially successful musicians might end up with little continuing income. As they got older and less able to perform, many found themselves in financial trouble.

The Rhythm and Blues Foundation was set up specifically to provide financial assistance and public recognition to the rhythm and blues greats of the '40s, '50s, and '60s. "We want to recognize the pioneers of rhythm and blues, those who really paved the way for pop music as we know it," Jenkins says. Founded in 1988, the Foundation has already provided medical funds for a number of individuals, as well as \$15,000 professional achievement awards, and, in some cases, funeral expenses. "That's disturbing," Jenkins says. "Not that I mind paying for funerals, but I'd like to be postponing some funerals by paying medical assistance."

In addition to direct assistance, the Foundation is working with the Smithsonian Institute to gain recognition of R&B's place in cultural history, as a ground-breaking form that has affected most of the music that we hear today. They have been given office space at the Smithsonian, and are establishing a national rhythm and blues archive.

After a tracheotomy and radiation treatment, Mary Wells is currently "doing well," according to Jenkins, though she continues to need medical care. The Foundation is soliciting contributions for her, as well as for their general funds. Though they have received some corporate support, particularly from Atlantic Records and Time-Warner, they depend heavily on private funds. Contributions can be sent to the Rhythm and Blues Foundation, the Mary Wells Care and Treatment Fund, or the Mary Wells Housing Fund, c/o the Rhythm and Blues Foundation, Museum of American History, Room 4603, 14th Street and Constitution Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20560.

ABOUT THE WRITER: Long-time 'HOT WIRE' writer Rena Yount writes poetry and short stories as well as articles, when she's not hard at work at the Smithsonian.

verse, though, she'd "found out beyond a doubt" that he was untrue, and this time she was going to take the initiative—and break up with him.

"Two Lovers," her next hit, had the same bouncy beat, and lyrically was the most clever of all. Written by her Detroit Hitsville colleague Smokey Robinson, it was as teasingly controversial as an *Enquirer* headline: "I've got two lovers, and I

ain't ashamed, two lovers and I love them both the same..." she sang. The punch line: the nice lover and the hurtful lover turn out to be two sides of the same personality: "Both of them are you."

We teenaged girls loved any kind of lyrics with an interesting twist, and this split-personality angle—as well as the overall sound of the song—made "Two Lovers" another of our favorites. But that

particular song caused some consternation on our block. My friend Barbara's father almost forbid her to listen to the rock & roll radio stations anymore. In his opinion, using the word "lover" was bad enough in a song teenagers listened to—but to have two of them!—and not be ashamed! It confirmed his fears that rock & roll was a "Negro Communist conspiracy." I can still recall Barbara, with tears streaming down her face, shouting, "But Pa, just *listen* to it, will you? They're the *same guy!* Can't you see it's a joke?!?"

Motown was hit hard by the wave of British music that swept over America beginning in 1963. Almost all male, all white, and predominantly groups, this new pop phenomenon took a big bite out of the Black music industry. In that year, only two records by Black artists hit *Cashbox's* list of the top ten singles. Mary Wells's "My Guy" was one of them. (The other wasn't Motown, but Broadway inspired: Louis Armstrong's lively version of "Hello Dolly.") In fact, in May 1963,

"My Guy" actually knocked the Beatles out of the singles chart. But it was to be her last triumph in the face of the British onslaught.

Just the other day I listened to the Texas-based lesbian rock group Girls in the Nose sing their whimsical version of Mary Wells's old hit "Two Lovers." In this version, updated for the Gay '90s, the singer has not only two lovers (female, naturally) but two altars where she worships her goddess. Who would have dreamed in those ancient dimestore and ice cream parlor days of the early '60s that such things could be said out loud, much less sung about?

Well, come to think of it, we haven't come all that far, now, have we? We aren't hearing Girls in the Nose on the radio yet. Barbara's father—and his modern paternalistic counterpart—would undoubtedly forbid his daughter to listen to it.

But having made at least some tangible progress in social freedoms since the '60s, who would have thought we'd still

be nowhere in real economic reforms and social justice? Certainly none of us teen-aged girls would have imagined, back in those days, that such a glittering, gifted young Black songstress could ever be left to battle cancer without health insurance or be kicked out of her home destitute. It was unthinkable.

But then again, we were young, and we didn't know much about history, either.

Here's to Mary Wells. May she recover her health, get back on her feet financially, and regain the recognition she deserves. In her struggle, at least those of us whom she touched with her music can thank her in a tangible way by contributing to the Mary Wells Care and Treatment Fund of the Rhythm and Blues Foundation.

ABOUT THE WRITER: *Jorjet Harper is a writer of fiction and nonfiction, a musician, photographer, and artist. She is currently at work on a comic novel about the nuclear family.*

HOTLINE from page 9

of Warshawski films, according to *Scene at the Movies*, which also reports that there has been talk of country cowpunk singer K.D. LANG starring in her first movie, *Salmonberries*, which is to be shot in Alaska.

The National Women's History Project has released the fifth video in their multicultural series, *WOMEN IN AMERICAN LIFE 1955-1977: New Attitudes Force Dramatic Changes*. For details about the entire series or individual videos: National Women's History Project, 7738 Bell Rd., Windsor, CA 95492. (707) 838-6000.

RADIO

"ALLERGIC TO THE MAINSTREAM" is a weekly two-hour radio show featuring an eclectic array of women's music on WRUW/91.1 FM in Cleveland. Promo tapes, records, and requests for info to Josette Farah c/o WRUW, 11220 Bellflower Rd., Cleveland, OH 44106. (216) 368-2208.

"AMAZON RADIO" (89.5 FM/Bridgeport, Connecticut) is seeking promo materials from women's music artists for airplay. Currently the station has no budget for women's music, so the programmers have to buy music out of their own pockets. Send to Pam Smith, WPKN, P.O. Box 217, New Haven, CT 06513.

QUOTABLE QUOTES

When the script of NBC-TV's *Blossom* called for MAYIM (Beaches) BIALIK's character to make jokes about being flat-chested, the fifteen-year-old star refused to say the lines. "I gave him a piece of my feminist mind," she said of her conversation with the show's executive producer in

an *Entertainment Weekly* interview. "Flat-chested jokes are lame-o. It's important for young women to have positive role models. Blossom is someone who is smart and interested in things other than shopping and boys. She represents how girls are and how they should be."



Maria Cohen

Kristin Lems, now performing for kids as well as adults.

BROOKE SMITH, the twenty-three-year-old who plays the non-passive prisoner of a serial killer in Jodie Foster's new hit thriller *The Silence of the Lambs*, says she never knew if she would get acting jobs, "looking the way I do" [at 5'10"]. "But after seeing *The Grifters*, I bought

these huge black pumps, because Anjelica [Huston] is a goddess and I'm learning to be big and to be proud like Anjelica."

And speaking of JODIE FOSTER... "Women's roles are rarely written as human beings," she said in a recent interview in *Time*. "Instead, they are written as plot adjuncts: sister of, daughter of. The hero has to save someone, so they wrap that someone in cord and put her on a railroad track." About Jodie, *Time* says, "After *The Accused*, which won her an Academy Award as the good-time girl who confronts her rapists, Foster can be declared current world champion of the working-class woman standing tall in crisis." (Try to catch the MTV mini-documentary on Jodie Foster's career; it features excellent interview clips with her discussing her work and the role model she would like to be for women, as well as her recent directorial efforts.)

PUBLICATIONS

The winter 1991 issue of the *AWMAC NEWSLETTER* includes the names and addresses of thirteen women's festivals and nine folk festivals; booking info on thirty-five acts; and tour info on twenty-two acts. For newsletter info and/or to join the organization: Association of Women's Music & Culture, 2124 Kittredge St. #104, Berkeley, CA 94704.

The February issue of *On Target* (monthly newsletter "for womyn over forty and their friends") featured KAY WEAVER as "Woman of the Month" in addition to a profile of vocalist RHIANNON.

continued on page 39

FEMINIST MUSIC IN THE LARGEST STATE

ALASKA

By Lauren Bruce

Although Alaska has an image of being a cold, isolated (and sexist!) place, it is in fact a veritable hotbed of feminist music and culture. The visiting artists who have graced Alaskan stages over the past few years can testify to the warmth and receptivity of arctic audiences for women's music and comedy. And the range and diversity of feminist musical activities in the largest state in the union are far out of proportion to its population (currently hovering around half a million). Here are a few of the most noteworthy.

ANCHORAGE

Anchorage, Alaska's largest city, located in the south central part of the state, has played host to numerous feminist performers in recent years, courtesy of Breakeven Productions (owned and operated by Linda Steiner). Breakeven Productions was founded in 1987; its first concert featured Cris Williamson and Tret Fure, and proved such a good experience that Linda decided to become a full-fledged producer. The company offers Anchorage concert-goers three shows a year, and draws audiences ranging from 250 (for relatively unknown artists) to 500 (for better known and/or local performers) to halls at the University of Alaska. In addition to producing Lucie Blue Tremblay, the Washington Sisters, Dianne Davidson, Deidre McCalla, Hunter Davis, Cris Williamson, and Tret Fure, Breakeven Productions has treated Anchorage audiences to the crystalline comedy of Kate Clinton and the educational antics of JoAnn Loulan.

Breakeven is happy to talk with less well-known artists about the possibility of coming to Alaska, and always works with at least one other location (Juneau, Fairbanks, or Dillingham) to make an Alaskan "tour" financially viable. Alix Dobkin, Holly Near, Margie Adam, Ferron, and others have also appeared in Anchorage in past years under the auspices of other producers or organizations.



Valerie Vinzant

Elaine Giles, owner of Sound Connection, runs the board at the 1990 Alaska Women's Music Festival.



Valerie Vinzant

Martha from Fairbanks at the 1990 Alaska Women's Music Festival.

Linda has had great support from the local Anchorage newspapers; last year, the Anchorage *Daily News* even cited Breakeven Productions and Hunter Davis for giving one of the best country/pop concerts in Anchorage for the year. Linda will be bringing Cris Williamson up for another concert this coming June.

The steady stream of professional

performers is complemented by a strong effort to promote the development of local women musicians and performers at all levels. Since 1980, when discouraged feminists banded together in an effort to revive flagging spirits in the face of political setbacks, a monthly feminist sing-along has been held in the home of Lucy Frey. Open to all, these monthly musical gatherings range from a handful of stalwart singers to a standing room only crowd; there may be one guitar or seven; there may be babies banging on percussion instruments, special guests (Alix, Sonia Johnson, and Sophie Freud have all attended), or specially rewritten holiday tunes (in appropriate seasons). Anyone and everyone is encouraged to sing or play anything they know, and the relaxed, appreciative atmosphere has served both to draw closet singers out into the open—often singing in public for the first time—and to permit seasoned performers to try out new material.

Thick songbooks with computer-printed lyrics of favorite songs (some original, most not) now constitute one of the best collections of feminist songs around. The songbooks are a community collection of songs that women have collected from diverse sources over the years. (They are not for sale—just for the use of the singalong.) Songs were first compiled by Lucy Frey in 1982; the books have gone through several major revisions, the latest by Deb DeProspero who computerized all the lyrics.

Lucy Frey has also sponsored house concerts for a number of lesser-known feminist musicians. The concerts are open to the female public and draw between forty and ninety listeners. The shows are always open to any women in Anchorage (or visiting from elsewhere) who want to attend. Generally, the tickets are \$8-10, and all money beyond expenses goes to the artist.

In addition, Lucy has been the driving (and funding) force behind an annual contest which offers awards and recogni-

tion to women who write songs that honor women's lives and history. Lucy was one of three women inducted into the Alaska Women's Commission Hall of Fame this past March. The award recognized her for founding and/or funding a range of women's organizations, teaching workshops on women's history and sex equity, sponsoring musical, political, social, and discussion groups in her home, and consistently advocating for lesbian rights. [*HOT WIRE* readers may have heard Alix Dobkin sing a tribute to Lucy entitled "Put Your Money Where Your Mouth Is" by Alaskan songwriter Libby Roderick.]

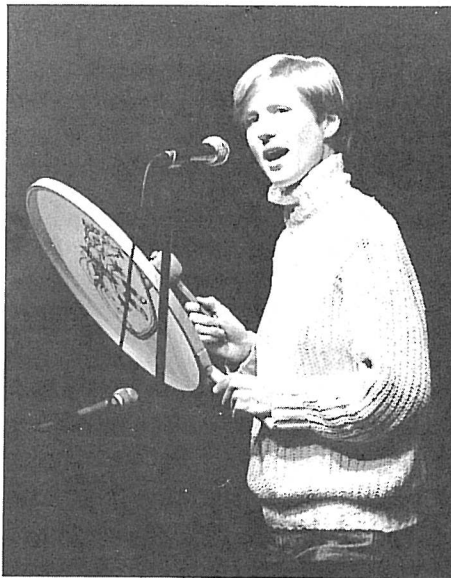
The desire to promote local musical talent also underlies the annual production of a women's arts festival called Celebration of Change, founded in 1984. Now in its eighth year, the festival—traditionally held in March or April—regularly draws audiences in the hundreds to the Alaska Center for the Performing Arts, Anchorage's premiere concert hall. The diverse acts and arts range from dancers to singers to comics to poets to visual artists; first-time performers are especially encouraged to participate. In memoriam of the Valdez oil spill that ravaged Alaska's Prince William Sound, the 1990 Celebration was dedicated to women's commitment to protect and cherish our Mother Earth.

The festival, the brainchild of Carol Annie Lovejoy and Nancy Williams, is produced by a lesbian and feminist arts association called the 15%, which exists to "provide Alaskan women with opportunities to express and share their creativity, talents, and skills in production, as well as in the performing and visual arts. The 15% also sponsors women's performances, art shows, dances, and social gatherings, and provides a training ground for women to become skilled in the technical aspects of concert production. At least one business has emerged from this training: Elaine Giles now offers professional sound services to Anchorage musicians through her company, Sound Connection.

Funded by ticket sales and approximately 125 paying members, the 15% is a nonprofit corporation run by a nine-woman Board of Directors which doubles as a production team for the two or three events it sponsors each year.

In September 1990, another organization sprang to life which fosters the development of feminist music and musicians in the city of 200,000. Under the

direction of Joyce Laine, the Anchorage Women's Community Chorus performs music by, for, and/or about women. Performances by the group, which currently numbers around twenty-five, began in December 1990 with a concert for women in the local prison. The group sang seven songs, then applauded an inmate as she performed a piece on the piano. The chorus also sang two songs at an annual New Year's Eve event in Anchorage sponsored by Alaskans Gathering in Peace, a coalition of local peace and justice groups. It includes music, dancing, drumming, theater, and poetry from a wide variety of ethnic and social change groups. The chorus asks a donation from each of its members of \$4 per rehearsal, which goes to pay for the director, child care, and other expenses.



Lauren Bruce

Libby Roderick, best-known performer in Alaska's thriving women's music and culture scene.

The primary source of recorded music by, for, and about women in Alaska is Anchorage's Alaska Women's Bookstore, run by Mariah Redwood and Joann Contini. In addition to shelves packed with books on every subject of interest to feminists, the bookstore also boasts one of the most complete inventories of music by women to be found anywhere. Once a month, the bookstore provides space for a well-attended coffeehouse featuring local singers, artists, poets, or speakers. The coffeehouses are sponsored by the nonprofit Alaska Women's Cultural Center, which also puts on women's dances, film festivals, discussion groups, and newsletters.

By far the bookstore's biggest seller

in the music department—outselling even Tracy Chapman and Holly Near—is a new release by Alaska's own singer/songwriter Libby Roderick. Her cassette/CD *If You See a Dream*, released in May 1990, has sold well over 3,000 copies. "Roderick has brought all of us in the Lower Forty-Eight a powerful musical statement of optimism and celebration... Both musically and poetically there isn't a weak link...every song on her wonderful new album is a testament to her belief in the power of the human spirit to prevail," said a review of Libby's debut album in *New Directions for Women*. [Hear the song "When I Hear Music" from *If You See a Dream* on the soundsheet in this issue of *HOT WIRE*.]

Born and raised in Anchorage, Libby began performing in 1983 with a four-woman acoustic and a cappella band called Voices, then moved on to become a solo act, performing to sell-out concerts in Anchorage as well as for conferences, festivals, and benefits around the state. Libby has begun moving into national touring, often lecturing and conducting workshops on women's leadership, "No Limits for Women," ecofeminism, reclaiming our thinking as women, and creativity.

FAIRBANKS & JUNEAU

Though Anchorage tends to dominate in terms of population and resources, other areas of this far-flung state (586,000 square miles for its 550,000 some residents) have strong feminist spirits and musical communities as well. In 1989, fans of women's music in Fairbanks—a city of 30,000 in the heart of interior Alaska—created the Alaska Women's Music Festival. Occurring on the birch-filled homesite of Barbara Brooks and Laura Milner, fifteen miles north of Fairbanks on the Chatanika River, the one-day July festival has burgeoned in its short existence from a two-performer event into a musical extravaganza featuring dozens of performers from Alaska and the Northwest. 300 or so women come to enjoy the music, crafts, food, softball, swimming (Fairbanks can hit eighty or ninety degrees in July) and outdoor

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ABOUT THE WRITER: *Lauren Bruce is a writer and professor of Interpersonal Communications and Speech at the University of Alaska, Anchorage. Thanks to Deb DeProspero and Libby Roderick for their help in preparing this article.*

HEALING FROM SEXUAL ABUSE

By Susan Herrick



B. Proud

Susan Herrick: "I recycle the garbage of my life into an expression of beauty and strength."

I am a survivor of sexual abuse.

My journey is one of healing deep wounds, reclaiming my woman's voice that was silenced as a child, and discerning truth from lie. I consider this process sacred, and I consider it to be a revolutionary act.

Besides the insidious abuse I have experienced since conception—that of generational and cultural dysfunction—I have specific memories of sexual boundary-crossing events as a child: by my father, my oldest brother, a gang of neighborhood boys, three older lesbians, and in later years a former therapist.

The memories of those times are still with me. They come back as graphic pictures—dad, brother, neighbor; they come back as physical dis-ease—headaches, chest pains, back pain; they come back as distinct and intense feelings—terror, self-hatred, and shame.

The lies I believed as a child for my own survival have continued to haunt

me. They have repeated themselves word for word in my mind as threats to forget what happened, to keep silent, and to expect grave danger if I don't. They have kept the abuser in power and have wrought fear and distrust of my own thinking.

MY SEARCH

An intuitive knowing that these were lies has fueled a lifelong search for the truths of who I am and what I can accomplish. This journey began with the realization that the most revolutionary act was to love myself with commitment and totality. I decided that was the greatest gift I could give to myself, others, and the world. I have since considered my direct action to be that of seeking profound and lasting transformation within my personal life. At the 1986 National Women's Music Festival, Sonia Johnson resonated with what I had been working toward, and gave me courage to perform my song "Loving Me" with abandon on the Day Stage. To my surprise, I was affirmed with a standing ovation!

In the act of taking on my own vision, embracing its goodness and mine, making it visible, and taking the leap of faith, I must act with courage, self-love, and commitment. I must transform the lies and say to myself, "I trust you."

Alice Walker has said we have a duty to our soul to manifest our vision. I have learned that I can't move in that powerful direction without stirring up and spiraling through the limiting memories from the past. My therapist explained to me that the past is often very present-tense. I understand that I repeat the patterns of self-limiting, shame-based feelings/behavior as a form of memory. The healing work that never got done is presenting itself now. I can choose to deny it or take it on as an opportunity for change.

The memory is often so masked and subtle that it takes me days or weeks to identify what is wreaking havoc. Once I

identify the source of my pain, I then wonder whether I am crazy or overly dramatic, or if I can trust the memory of being placed in horrible situations as a child. Then I grieve the loss—of my childhood, my boundaries, my trust, my intuition, my ability to *say* no and *mean* no, my ability to identify and ask for what I need. I even grieve losing the comfort of denial. I cry and scream and write and sing and eventually move forward by nourishing those broken parts within me.

As a result of this healing work, I find a strong and healthy internal parent emerging, I find that I am closer to my source of power and creativity, and I find moments of delight with myself. This doesn't come from fixing the past; that's impossible. Rather, I am learning how to give and receive love and nurturance now...my *own* love and nurturance.

As I go into the world and sing these found truths, I make an offering which is sacred to me. I speak up out of the silence that has for so long immobilized me. I recycle the garbage of my life into an expression of beauty and strength. In remembering my goodness and pain, I call others to witness our individual and collective remembering. The stand I take validates my existence and experience as it nudges me to let go of the false comfort and safety in hiding. As I make my voice heard, the voice that was squelched and threatened as a child, I participate in the daring act of loving myself.

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ABOUT THE WRITER: Susan Herrick, a singer-songwriter and Registered Music Therapist from the Philadelphia area, derives her inspiration from the woods and ponds surrounding the log cabin she shares with her partner Jessie. She has currently released her second recording 'Truth and the Lie,' the first being 'Loving Me' (1986). The song "Heart of that Child" from her newest release is featured on the soundsheet in this issue of 'HOT WIRE.'

It was a hot summer night in August 1989 when some 200 women from Kentucky and Southern Indiana gathered on a private piece of land for their very own homemade music festival. The occasion: a benefit to raise money for our band to record its first album. For most of those who attended, this was their first festival—their first time to witness what happens, and how it feels, when women put their resources, talents, skills, and marvelous energy into an idea and make it come alive. For others, this festival not only reaffirmed what they knew about woman-energy, but gave them a sense of community spirit they hadn't felt before.

For our band, that magical night of song and starlight is a symbol of the generous community support that has carried us and our music from one city to another—even to the airwaves of Radio Moscow. And it was among the first of

not only fun but also meaningful and, we hope, inspiring. We were playing women's music because we loved it, and we wanted others to be aware of it.

Believe it or not, many women's bars have nothing women-oriented on their jukeboxes or in their entertainment schedules. That was certainly the case in the male-owned lesbian bar in our hometown, which featured Wet T-shirt contests and female drag shows. ("Cris who????")

We figured it was time for some radical consciousness-raising! So into the nightclub we went, and came out to our pool-playing sisters by singing Maxine Feldman's "Amazon" and Lucie Blue's "So Lucky." We made sure to say the word "lesbian" at least fifty times a night, until the audiences got used to hearing it.

There was some resistance, of course; political music can sometimes make people kind of uncomfortable, es-

pecially if they're in the mood for Tammy Wynette or Tone-Loc. But acceptance far outweighed any resistance. Soon we were playing every time to a sell-out audience, so we knew we must be doing something right. Whenever an audience member would approach us after a gig to ask where to find music by Deidre McCalla or Ferron, we got the best feeling knowing we had turned her on to women's

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ABOUT THE WRITERS: *Laura Shine is lead singer for Yer Girlfriend and is also the band's historian and co-founder. Patty Veranda plays keyboards and flute (not simultaneously), and is writing a book on etymology, 'A Garden of Words,' to be published next spring by Times Books/Random House. Hear the band's song "She's Not Somebody's Wife" on the soundsheet in the September 1990 issue of 'HOT WIRE.'*

DOWN HOME WITH

YER GIRLFRIEND

By Laura Shine and Patty O. Veranda

many experiences that continue to convince us that women's communities are hungry for music that is not only entertaining, but also *political*.

That summertime festival/benefit, which was held near our hometown of Louisville, came about when a couple of women who were regulars at our performances offered to produce an event to help finance our first album. The deal was that Yer Girlfriend would perform as the featured guest, and provide sound equipment for other local musicians performing on their behalf. The organizers would take care of the rest.

We had been performing every other Saturday night for a year and a half at The Carriage House, the local women's bar in Louisville, playing our hearts out to the most enthusiastic and supportive crowds imaginable. We limited the cover charge to \$2, so we could be considered affordable fun. Whenever we played there, it wasn't just another weekend night at the bar. All along, our premise has been to provide entertainment that's



Debra Clem

Yer Girlfriend at "The Cabin." From left: Laura Shine (vocals), Carol Kraemer (guitar, vocals), Kathy Weisbach (bass, banjo), Phyllis Free (drums), and Patty O. Veranda (keyboards, flute).

SIXTH ANNUAL 'HOT WIRE' READERS' CHOICE AWARDS

Starting in 1986, *HOT WIRE* has presented awards to women who have made outstanding contributions to women's music & culture. In the January issue, readers were asked to submit nominations specifying the contributions of their nominees. The point is not competition but appreciation for those who have contributed to our network in an especially outstanding way. Below are the nominations we received. Please note: *HOT WIRE* readers do the nominating, not the magazine staff.

Please vote for one individual and one organization.

The survey of favorites is included for fun and to give us at *HOT WIRE* a closer look at the tastes of our readers (so we know better who and what to cover in the next year's issues). Please make your survey selections completely on the basis of your personal favorites; this is in no way intended to be a list of "bests." Last year's Readers' Choice selections can be found in the September 1990 issue.

Readers' Choice votes and surveys for this year can be written on a separate piece of paper or photocopied from this page. (Don't feel compelled to rip up your magazine.)

We must receive them no later than June 15, 1991.

SEND TO: 'HOT WIRE' READERS' CHOICE, 5210 N. WAYNE, CHICAGO, IL 60640

INDIVIDUALS

- BETTY BAXTER**, Olympian, top-notch volleyball player, co-director of The 1990 Gay Games, for her pride in her lesbianism and her feminist sensibilities during the Gay Games.
- ALISON BECHDEL** for her *Dykes to Watch Out For* cartoon series, calendars, and books.
- HEATHER BISHOP** for her cultural bridge-building with children and her fearlessness in the face of society's attitudes towards gay people and children.
- MELISSA ETHERIDGE** for her strong womanly presence in the mainstream, her refusal to do explicitly hetero love songs, and for not turning her back on women's music [performed at Rhythmfest].
- K.D. LANG** for her provocative, woman-identified music videos.
- ANDREA NATALIE** for her syndicated *Stonewall Riots* cartoons and the thought-provoking laughs they elicit.
- HOLLY NEAR** for unflinching positivity and ongoing commitment to women and our movements, organizations, and culture, and for her new book.
- ALICE WALKER** for the inspiration, role modeling, fantastic writing, and spiritual guidance she provides for women of all races and persuasions.

ORGANIZATIONS

- CELEBRATION '90: THE GAY GAMES**—the women involved built bridges and left an indelible mark on society with their feminist perspective, proud lesbian lives, athletic prowess, and vibrant culture.
- EAST COAST LESBIANS' FESTIVAL** for being the most openly lesbian-identified of all women's music festivals.
- KITCHEN TABLE WOMEN OF COLOR PRESS** for continuing to produce important books by and about women of color.
- LADYSLIPPER** for maintaining the world's most comprehensive catalog of music, videos, and other resources by women.
- NAIAD PRESS** for years of lesbian fiction and for introducing lesbian writers to the public.

FAVORITES

- | | |
|---|---|
| Vocalist _____
Group/band _____
Songwriter _____
Bass player _____
Percussionist _____
Drummer _____
Electric guitarist _____
Acoustic guitarist _____
Keyboard player _____
Instrumentalist _____
Wind instrument player _____
Comic/comedienne _____
Emcee _____
New performer _____
All-time favorite performer _____
Current song (last 2 years) _____
All-time favorite song _____
Current album (last 2 years) _____ | All-time favorite album _____
Album producer _____
Live sound engineer _____
Recording engineer _____
Album cover _____
Fiction book _____
Non fiction book _____
Periodical _____
Author _____
Poet _____
Cartoonist _____
Photographer _____
Movie/film _____
TV star _____
Film star _____
Film director _____
Mainstream performer _____
Other _____ |
|---|---|

HELLO, BETTY!

Alyson Palmer, Amy Ziff, and Bitsi Ziff
recall the origins of their hot new trio

BETTY, comprised of Amy and Bitsi Ziff and Alyson Palmer, are a musical triumverate who reside in New York City. BETTY has played many music festivals, been on TV (including HBO's 'Encyclopedia' series), and has been receiving much mainstream media coverage. Hear their song "Shrinkback" on the soundsheet in this issue of 'HOT WIRE.' They recently took a break from the hectic promotional tour in support of their debut album 'Hello, BETTY!' to answer a question from 'HOT WIRE' about BETTY's beginnings.

The following is transcribed from tape.

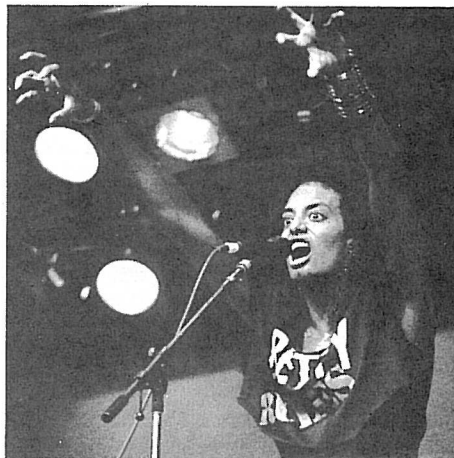
AMY: Hi, Toni and *HOT WIRE!* We're sitting in a little French restaurant in Manhattan speaking into a Walkperson, tickled pink that you've asked us to tell the story of the birth of *BETTY* for your fabulous magazine. We have, however, run into a teensy snag.

BITZI: Ha! We had a huge fight.

ALYSON: We can't seem to agree about how we met. Anyway, here are our versions to the best of our recollection. Somewhere within lies the true story.

AMY: By the way, you were really late for the show tonight, Alyson. I know, I know, you were probably saving the entire civilization of the planet Zollar, but frankly sometimes it's a real drag being in a singing group with a superhero.

BITZI: Look, we've got to take the good with the bad. After all, she *was* instrumental in bringing the three of us together.



Alyson Palmer



Sisters Amy (left) and Bitsi Ziff

Toni Armstrong Jr.

Marcy J. Hochberg

AMY: True enough. I remember it as if it were yesterday...I was a mere child, precocious but lovely. It was to be my debut at Carnegie Hall. I was starring in an opera in four languages I had written myself. With my sweet but annoying twin [Bitsi], I set out for the theater. I was nearing the high C at the end of act three when suddenly, the stage gave way!

BITZI: Shake off the fairy dust, Tinkerbell, that's not how it happened at all. It was *my* gig we went to, remember? I was a mere tyke, but already concerned and committed. I was giving my first speech at the Pro Choice/No Nukes/Save the Whales/Free Soviet Jewry/Anti Apartheid/Break the Chains/Unleash the Fury of Women as a Mighty Force for Revolution Rally. As we were singing a song in sisterly solidarity, the scaffolding crumpled!

ALYSON: Anybody want that last snail?

AMY: As the scenery crumpled...

BITZI: ...I saw a streak of red from out of the sky!

AMY: And I was saved by a little brown girl in a red cape...

BITZI: ...and fabulous earrings...

ALYSON: Funny, I could have sworn I answered your "musician wanted" ad on the radio.

AMY: It was harmony at first sight.

BITZI: *BETTY* was born.

ALYSON (to the server): Could we see the dessert cart, *s'il vous plait?*

We hope that answers your question. Thanks for asking. Bye!

CREATIVITY

Tapping My Creative Self

by Kristan Aspen

Against the Grain

by Mimi Fox

For Sister George Ann, Wherever She Is

by Lynn Lavner



Toni Armstrong Jr.

MIMI FOX

Mimi Fox has been playing and teaching jazz for more than fifteen years. She has recorded and/or performed with dozens of jazz and pop artists, including Terry Garthwaite, Alive!, Rhiannon, Barbara Higbie, Linda Tillery, June Millington, Silvia Kohan, and Robin Flower. She has toured nationally and performed at several women's music festivals and jazz festivals. She was selected in 1987 as an Outstanding Jewish Musician in Jazz by the San Francisco Jewish Museum, and 'Against the Grain' received a Bay Area Music Award nomination for Outstanding Jazz Album in 1988.

Against the Grain was my debut album. I had played on the albums of many other people, but this was my first opportunity to step out front and do my

own music. I tried to pull together every musical influence I had into a seamless and cohesive whole.

"Textures of Loving" is the most requested piece from the album. Some reviewers have referred to the composition as a "symphony for the guitar." There is evidence of my Russian Jewish heritage, with minor arpeggios that are woven into the piece and executed in a brusque and emphatic manner. (I was trying to imagine the little *shtetl* where my grandmother grew up...before it was destroyed by the Cossacks.) You can also hear my reverence for classical guitar, with reference to Villa Lobos in the opening phrases of the first section.

In my interpretation of Billie Holiday's "God Bless the Child," you can hear the sweat, blood, and grit of the blues. I

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LYNN LAVNER

Lynn Lavner tours with a very political, explicitly gay solo cabaret act, and emcees events from leather competitions to women's music festivals, from the 1987 Gay & Lesbian March on Washington to the ground-breaking Pride March in Columbia, South Carolina. She has played hundreds of shows at festivals, colleges, and conferences in communities throughout most of the United States and in several other countries, and played solo on Robin Tyler's first women's cruise. Albums on her Bent Records label include 'Something Different' (1983) and 'You Are What You Wear' (1986). The song "Breaking Silence" appears on her album 'I'd Rather Be Cute' (1986).

The Jew at a Passover table is required each year by ritual to hear the same four questions. Songwriters—though far more numerous than Jews—fall three questions short: "Which comes first, the music or the words?"

For composers and lyricists who work with a collaborator, there may be a reliable reply. But for those of us who write both the music *and* the words, this is no easy question. (Here I flatter myself to join the ranks of such talents as Cole Porter, Noel Coward, and Irving Berlin. But it is easy to tell us apart: Irving Berlin was straight.) Most often, a bit of annoying mental jetsam—known euphemistically as an "inspiration"—floats into consciousness whole. Sort of like Topsy, or Athena springing from the head of Zeus—two politically incorrect examples if I ever saw them.

So this is the story of the only song I've ever written where I was certain of which came first. The music was written in less than a minute, and the words took four months of struggle. (There are those who will tell you *all* of my songs sound like a minute or a four-month struggle. These characters probably fall asleep at the Passover table, and are to be ignored.)

Like everyone else who has read it, I was very much moved by the book *Lesbian Nuns: Breaking Silence* [edited by Rosemary Curb and Nancy Manahan, Naiad Press, 1985]. Unlike everyone else, I felt compelled to condense its 400 pages, numerous biographies, and richly textured emotional fabric into a three verse song. (Writers who use phrases like "richly textured emotional fabric" are usually reckless and will try anything.)

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KRISTAN ASPEN

Kristan Aspen has been involved with women's music since its earliest days, including being in the Izquierda Ensemble and a brief stint as a Fabulous Dyketone. She is currently the flute-playing half of Musica Femina. Since 1984, the duo has toured nationally, presenting concert/informances of classical and contemporary music by women composers. Their 1989 release, 'Returning the Muse to Music,' was nominated for a 1990 N.A.I.R.D. award in the Women's Music category. She writes, along with partner Janna MacAuslan, the 'Noteworthy Women' column for 'HOT WIRE.'

At 43 I am still

Searching for my creativity

Still wondering who I will be when I grow up.

This familiar longing

has led me down patterned pathways

to the same brick walls

more times than I care to remember.

But now I am aware of a shift in the wind

Stirring up my fire in a new way.

Watching my creative process unfold

I feel like a caterpillar shedding its cocoon

Suddenly in awe of the possibility

And necessity of flight.

Before I worked with Naomi Littlebear in the Izquierda Ensemble and the Ursa Minor Choir, before Aspen and Littlebear—around 1972—I used to sit at the piano with my hands suspended over the keys trying to feel some energy to show me how to play by ear. To play even one note without music in front of me was the most terrifying thing I could ask myself to do; I was totally immobilized with fear.

Now I understand that the fear was based on my self-doubt and very low self-esteem around music. At the time I was in the middle of an eight year hiatus from playing music. This long interruption in my musical life began about 1967, when I was in college at Oberlin—a competitive, private school with a very fine music conservatory—and it continued until I began performing with Naomi Littlebear in 1974.

Looking back, I now think that my frustration at not being able to improvise was high, but my motivation to do anything about it was not strong enough—until I met Naomi. My desire to play music, to write music, to make it up out of my heart, was immobilized by the fear I

had of making a mistake, or sounding trite or stupid or just plain wrong. I was not willing to risk failing by really trying. So my dreams and sense of the importance of my self-expression were suppressed, put on the back burner.

When I began working with Naomi, my sense of myself as a musician was so underdeveloped that I could only take on a supporting role. I had no thought of owning the music we played, or of it expressing me personally. I was convinced that she was the creative one, the composer, singer, the one who was driven to perform. Oh, I took on her dream as my own, and we went far with it, from our kitchen to a Portland women's choir, to the Izquierda Ensemble, touring nation-



Tee A. Corinne

ally, playing at the major festivals, and finally recording an album. We accomplished a lot and I am glad we did. *Quiet Thunder* still brings tears to my eyes when I remember how innocent and open we were, and how unskilled at sustaining our Selves through the pain.

Throughout this magnificent era (1977-1980) when "sisterhood was powerful," when "women's music" was finding its place, when we touched the hearts of thousands of women around the world, I was always in the distant background. My Self was only present in its most caretaking, supportive, and ultimately controlling, fearful way. I organized the tours, kept the tour van running, took charge of the budget, interacted with our hosts, the producers, the women who came to hear us, made sure we got places

on time, arranged for food and comfortable places to stay, took care of the details like directions to the hall, to dinner, to the next town. Is it any wonder I had little energy left to focus on my self-expression? I didn't even know where or how to look for me, let alone speak of my feelings to others.

Eventually I realized I was very unhappy and confused, and that I did have some feelings. I managed to write a short song about them. It is on the *Quiet Thunder* album and is called "Contradictions."

*Sometimes it seems like there is nothing I
can do to change my life
Of recycled patterns,
to break away from you.
Sometimes it's too hard to know
how to love myself,
To make myself feel better without you.
Contradictions, contradictions
I need myself alone. I want to be with you.*

One time we performed this piece in a concert and a woman came backstage afterwards to ask me if I had written it about being in a battering relationship. The piece had spoken to her. Her comments to me gave me more clarity about myself than writing the song had. I will never forget that moment, and I still struggle to understand the implications of my confusion at the time.

Thirteen years later, in 1991, I am again feeling the contradictions of my life. And now I see that part of the solution for me is in unlocking my creative Self, letting her out to play, validating her and nurturing her growth. To be a musician is the path I have always felt least able to walk in my life. But I have not been able to drop it either. So here I am confronted again with both my fear and my desire.

A few months ago I decided to very consciously try once again to tap into my creative Self, not really understanding when or where she had gone, or how to find her. I just told myself that I wanted to be in touch with my creative side and began affirming that she existed. I began writing down my thoughts and planning time, usually early in the morning, to write. At some point I just knew this path would lead me to important changes in my life, but I had no idea what that meant.

For several years now I have been aware that when the moon is in the astrological sign of Gemini I feel more

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WOMEN IN RAP

By Dominique DiPrima

*Women of hip hop need not take this bullshit
Backward movement,
It's not credible, inevitable
Don't push me 'cause I'm close to the positive
That's how I gotta live
Don't care to hear that rhetoric
You may not like this, it's gettin' feminist...*
—M.C. Lady "D"

Don't believe the hype.

So let's get this outta the way straight out of the box: *rap music is sexist, right?* The mass media tells us so, and if that's the only exposure you have to rap you could actually think that's all there is to it. If you read, say, *Newsweek*, or watch Ted Koppel, you have been exposed to the most negative side of the music. You may be starting to believe claims that rap is nothing but macho, sexist, street bragadocio. You've heard the lyrics of the 2 Live Crew, Slick Rick, and N.W.A. But have you checked out Boogie Down Productions, the Jungle Brothers, or Paris?

Don't get me wrong, there is definitely sexism in rap—you've seen the evidence, and I'm not in denial. I think it is important to realize, however, that this problem is not found in all male rap lyrics, and that sexism itself—as well as violence against women—is a major problem in almost all North American pop culture, not just confined to the young black man or the rap world. To assume so is just plain racist.

What most people don't realize is that the positive side of rap music far outweighs the negative. It is a forum for many largely unheard voices, and has a fierce political consciousness unparalleled in any other pop form today. Rap lyrics deal with racism, violence, apartheid, nationalism—a huge range of issues. People are thinking and being made to think.

And there is a burgeoning of women in rap. That's what we're here to talk about, the sisters—not just in relation to the men, but in their own right, in full effect, covering issues from black pride to safe sex, from feminism to racism.



Dominique DiPrima: "Women rappers provide sorely needed role models."

I am a female rapper myself. I also host a hip hop television show in San Francisco called *Home Turf*, which features interviews with nationally known musical acts (mostly rap), as well as local talent: dancers, rappers, community organizers. Before doing the show, I rapped independently for about five years and was a featured rapper with the San Francisco Ballet's breakdancers. All of this is to say I've been involved with hip hop since the first wave, and I'm hangin' with the new school.

I got into the scene when I was fourteen and spent time at the Nuyorican Poet's Cafe on the Lower East Side. The Cafe was a dark little bar frequented by a strange assortment of thugs, poets, junkies, gorgeous young Ricans doing the Latin Hustle, horny teenagers doing the Freak, and elegant older Salseros. The DJ mixed salsa and disco with occasional poetry interludes. The poetry was mostly open mike, but it was do-or-die and you played a tough crowd.

Rap was sweeping the New York underground right then, and the Cafe was a perfect venue. I heard about the Cafe because both my parents are poets. My mother, Diane DiPrima, had befriended some of the Rican poets at a Naropa Institute tour. My father, poet/playwright Amiri Baraka, already knew the Cafe crowd and had read his poetry there a few times. The Cafe was the beginning of my involvement with hip hop; I became M.C. Lady "D" there.

From poet to rapper, generation to generation, a lyrical inheritance has been passed on in the family tree of the African oral tradition, which we can trace all the way back through the blues and gospel to the African Griots. I didn't make the connection then, but in hindsight I'm sure that I got my lyrical aptitude for rap, and my ear for text, from my parents.

At that time rap was almost exclusively male. Guys with big muscles and fat gold chains stood motionless in front of microphones and rapped about how

fresh they were over a disco-funk groove. Most were connected with large crews: DJs, other rappers, backup, managers, etc. Groups like the Grand Master Flash and the Furious Four (later the Furious Five), and Afrika Bambaataa and the Zulu Nation, became popular, and organized by throwing massive block parties long before they hit the market on wax. It was a hard scene emerging from the serious underground.

I started rapping because I could. Rhythmic rhyming came naturally to me. Plus I didn't try to start a female crew, so I didn't have to worry about getting my equipment ripped off, coming up with the cash to get it in the first place, or hauling it around on the subway to gigs—problems that probably kept a lot of other women out of rap in the early days. I cut my teeth on a serious crowd of B-boys in Alphabet City, working with the house DJ. I put simple rhymes ("Well, you may not like the color of my skin/but in the '80s this blood is in/and you may not like my nappy hair/but I am proud to be black and I don't care") over "Good Times," "The Breaks," and other now-classic instrumental jams. Since most of the females on the scene were relegated to standing by the stage, dancing and cheering on the guys, there was initial resistance to my performance. Guys and girls cut their eyes at me or heckled to see if I would wimp out. But the scene was ruthless in its fairness, and once I proved myself by rocking the house, they requested me and took some pride in what I did.

The few females who were rapping back then weren't at the same level of recognition as the men. They didn't hit the mainstream of hip hop—they were the underground of the underground. Some of the early crews had female members, and there were all-female crews associated with some hip hop organizations (you had to have backup). Groups like the Mercedes Ladies and the numerous Zulu Queens (affiliated with Bambaataa's Zulu Nation) were on the scene but never made it on wax.

Sha-Rock of the Funky Four Plus One More (she was the one more) and Dimples D were among the first to make records. To her credit, Dimples D had messages in her lyrics even then:

*A daddy is a boy that brags about his kid
A father is a man who supports and gives
A roof, a home where she shall live
Dimples D ain't poppin' no bullshit...
—"Sucker DJ's (I Will Survive)," Dimples D*

She was one of the first, and when I heard her it confirmed my instincts about the great potential of rap for communication.

*I love my black man
I love my hip hop scene
But we must have respect
To have a love supreme
Can't ignore it, we must prioritize
Gotta cure it, our people must survive...
—M.C. Lady "D"*

1985 was the year that women broke through commercially in hip hop. The Real Roxanne and Roxanne Shanté had huge hits—I personally wore out Shanté's "Roxanne's Revenge"—and spawned a round of female acts with minor hits. It was the first time I was able to put my own rhymes over the instrumental of a female's record. I was jazzed. But they were all answer records, songs that responded to hits by male rap artists, and their existence depended on the male rapper (and the male producer). These women couldn't sustain their careers beyond the gimmick.

Salt-N-Pepa were the next female posse to make a serious splash, and I see their career as a microcosm of the development of women in rap. Although they didn't work the answer rap angle, their early records were all written and produced by men. Not surprisingly, they didn't champion a feminist voice. Songs like "I'll Take Your Man" ("Don't make me prove to you that I can/Either give him up or get slammed/I'll take your man") promoted catty competition between women.

I was on the road singing and rapping with a band when Salt-N-Pepa really started hittin'. I was proud that this female crew had made it in the mix, but pissed that they were so fresh and their message was so divisive. The songs really expressed the way men believe (or wish) women think.

What was definite progress was the quality of the rap. Salt-N-Pepa were setting new standards for women in hip hop—they were on a par with their male peers technically, and their voices and delivery were all their own. They weren't "good for girls"—they were straight-up fresh. They weren't playing cutesy, and they dared to be hard. Their huge 1987 hit "Push It" made unprecedented inroads to radio and opened doors for many future female artists. And then there was "Tramp":

*What would you do if a stranger said hi
Would you dis' him or would you reply?
If you answer there is a chance
That you'll become a victim of circumstance
Am I right fellas, tell the truth
Or else I'm gonna have to show and prove
You are what you are, I am what I am
It just so happens that most men are tramps.
—"Tramp," Salt-N-Pepa*

"Tramp" was a relief; it was funny and it defended women without being defensive. For months after we heard it, my sister Tara and I would see a certain type of guy, give each other a look, and whisper, "Tramp!" It wasn't an answer record. It was much more the kind of lyric that would be answered.

I interviewed Salt-N-Pepa for *Home Turf* at the time "Tramp" was out and was really surprised at how little control they had artistically. They had been brought onto the scene by Hurby Luv Bug, their producer, and they were just enjoying the glow of success. They didn't seem to be striving for more. They were dressed in the deffest, the latest—big gold earrings, skintight jeans, and big old top-of-the-line sneakers. They told me they had just gone from Sears clerks to rap stars. No wonder they weren't trying to take over the business.

*Imagine a dimension of sight and sound
Where people see in only shades of brown
And reality is the same as a fantasy
Is that the way you want your world to be?
Not me, I want variety in my society
Where I can change if I don't like what I see...
—"Blacks' Magic," Salt-N-Pepa*

Salt-N-Pepa's latest album, *Blacks' Magic*, is leading the way toward a true women's voice in hip hop. Proper thanks are given on the album to men, producers who taught them the skills, and most of the cuts are still produced by Hurby Luv Bug and Play (of Kid 'N Play). But Salt-N-Pepa are writing their own lyrics, and they are beginning to produce their music ("It's the '90s, the year for change/can you prove it?/I made this beat, I'm an invincible, and I produced it!"). Almost every cut has a message, and their sassy, independent attitude has finally matured

ABOUT THE WRITER: Dominique DiPrima (a.k.a. M.C. Lady "D") began her seventh season as the host of "Home Turf" last October. The original version of this article appeared in 'Mother Jones' and is reprinted with permission.

into a confident pro-woman style.

*It's my rap that rocks this party
I'm gonna hijack and jack your body
This is not an erotic interlude
Keep in mind I move multitudes
The Asiatic Black Woman
Hard core beat drummin'
It's hard to keep a good woman down
So I keep comin'...*

—"Come Into My House," Queen Latifah

Salt-N-Pepa are the most visible, but they are not the only women rising to the challenge in rap. Queen Latifah hasn't had quite the commercial success of Salt-N-Pepa, but she is regal, warm, and can hang with any male on the scene. "Ladies First," her duet with British rapper Monie Love, touches female pride without preaching. Her whole style is a feminist statement—she is the Queen, never the victim.

And MC Lyte, one of the top female rap artists around, is known for being "all the way hard":

*I used to be in love, but not wit' a dealer
You make love, while he makes deals*

—"Not Wit' a Dealer," MC Lyte

There has been an explosion of others: Oaktown's 3.5.7, Oakland's rap-dance sensation; Monie Love, a hot British import; L.A.'s J.J. Fad; the surprisingly political Anquette, out of Miami; the ever-underrated Roxanne Shanté, with her comeback record, *Independent Woman*; platinum-blonde wonder Tairrie B; one of rap's most outspoken female lyricists, Ice Cream Tee; Oakland's up-and-coming p.c. posse Petite and Elite; and the jammin' reggae dance hall-hop rhymes of Shelly Thunder, to name a very few.

So why don't more of these sisters directly challenge the sexism in the music? First I have to say that some do, but there are serious obstacles to dealing with the problem. The rap music business, like most other businesses, is controlled by men, making it risky to really speak out. In addition to the business end, many female groups rely on the artistic support of men to write, produce, and advise them. And that support is strong. Popular male rappers make guest appearances on women's records, feature women on theirs, and plug them on stage and on vinyl. Most of the critics are men, too. This is a small scene in a small world, and working relationships could be jeopardized. It's a little easier for me, since my

main gig is TV and I don't depend on the scene as much.

Also—and perhaps most important—is the fact that we, as black women and men, are tired of being polarized by everybody's issues and opinions. At this point rap music is under attack from the media, the police, and the courts. Pressure from the outside makes it much harder to criticize from within. I believe even a clearly sexist group like the 2 Live Crew should have its right to speak defended. We prefer to deal with some issues in-house and to protect our precious unity.

R-E-S-P-E-C-T

*I do it for you so do it for me
So basic that old time bottom line
Once again defending my sex with a rhyme
Like an Uzi takin' out that bullshit
Sexism sucks and I won't live with it...*

—M.C. Lady "D"

I recently emceed a rap contest put on by the American Heart Association in San Francisco's Hunter's Point—a rough 'hood. It was held in a typical dimly lit community center, complete with horrendous sound system. The Heart Association did a smart thing, though—it offered good prize money and put some value on the work. Lots of crews showed up, all dressed in their performance stuff: matching sweats or T-shirts with the name of the rapper and the group, colors, jewelry, hair just so. Everybody had to do rhymes about what makes a healthy heart.

What did my heart good was the fact that three groups out of the top five were female. They had tight dance routines and lyrics, and they sounded good. They were all early- or preteens from the neighborhood. Now that there are female rap stars, girls can see themselves doing it. It comes into the realm of possibility for them. Not every girl who picks up a mike will become a Salt or Pepa—or even earn a buck—but the positive effect on young black women is real.

On my visits to the schools I hear young ladies busting rhymes or organizing their dance routines. They are working with words and positive self-images. It is crucial for a young black woman (or any young woman) to see options for herself, ways out. At least young men have sports. Women see fewer options, and rap has added at least one. Verbal skills and confidence, learned from even a brief stint as a rapper, can be the keys to other doors opening for them.

Women like Latifah provide sorely needed role models—models of women in control, speaking their minds and getting their own, without being an accessory to some guy. These role models aren't just important to young girls but to young men as well, who are getting accustomed to the independent woman as a peer. Everywhere I go I hear the guys listening to Latifah or Lyte—not as *female rappers* but simply as *def lyricists*.

At the end of every season on my show we meet with management and the same question always comes up: will rap still be popular next year or should we move away from it? But rap music has had wave after wave of commercial success, each one larger than the last. Even though critics and "experts" constantly predict its demise, rap is as tough and enduring as the streets it comes from.

Rap is constantly evolving and changing. The rhymes are no longer simple but incredibly varied. The beats are no longer just disco but every stripe of funk. Motionless posing has been replaced by elaborate stage shows with dancers and costumes. Constant evolution ensures the survival of the form, and my show has survived by changing with the form rather than abandoning it.

Of course, every genre has its sell-outs, bubble gum, and negatives. Some women rappers reinforce the stereotypes. Not all female rap is "good," just like not all male rap is "bad"; it's much more complex than that. Instead of believing the hype, why don't you listen for yourself?


*Women are rising
We've finally hit our stride
It's not surprising we're rollin' in like tide
We're talkin' peace, we're talkin' unified
All to the beat of a new black pride
We're talkin' loud,
cause we've found our voices
We're walkin' proud, makin' positive choices
We're hittin' hard, oppression is no joke
'Cause in the words
that Sojourner Truth spoke
Ain't I woman too even if I'm strong
In the '90s I shouldn't haveta sing this song.*

—M.C. Lady "D" ●

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HOTLINE from page 27

BRIDGING THE GAP: A NATIONAL DIRECTORY OF SERVICES FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES includes 300 listings of agencies and organizations that provide a wide variety of services in the U.S. and Canada. It includes info on support groups for women who have had mastectomies, mainstreamed Girl Scout troops, wheelchair sports programs, women's health care for Deaf women, and more. Published in print and Braille by the National Clearinghouse on Women and Girls with Disabilities, 114 E. 32nd St., New York NY 10016. The Braille edition is also available from The Womyn's Braille Press, P.O. Box 8475, Minneapolis, MN 55408.

The Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation has published the first comprehensive **MEDIA GUIDE TO THE LESBIAN AND GAY COMMUNITY**. GLAAD, 80 Varick St. #3E, New York, NY 10013. (212) 966-1700.

The Positive Woman: A Newsletter By, For, and About the HIV POSITIVE WOMAN is published bimonthly to present up-to-date medical and legal information and to give info on nutrition and alternative forms of healing. According to *Up & Coming*, women can receive the newsletter free but donations are requested. The mailing list is "strictly confidential." Positive Women United, P.O. Box 33061, Washington, DC 20033.

Women interested in feminist and lesbian-feminist events and news in **FLORIDA** may want to check out the monthly twenty-seven page *Womyn's Words* newsletter. P.O. Box 15524, St. Petersburg, FL 33733-5524.

Rights for **THE PRICE OF SALT** by Patricia Highsmith and Claire Morgan have been sold by Naiad Press to Quality Paperback Club, which is considering buying the rights to six other Naiad titles. *Feminist Bookstore News* says QPC has also bought book club rights for Barbara Wilson's **SISTERS OF THE ROAD** (Seal Press).

Free **JEWISH WIMMIN's** communiqué available. SASE or stamps to Leah Astarte, P.O. Box 1006, Huntington, NY 11743.

Women within driving distance of Chicago: **MOUNTAIN MOVING COFFEEHOUSE** has more than forty Saturday night shows per year for women and children. Their descriptive schedule is published bimonthly in English and Spanish. To get on their mailing list, SASE to MMCH, 5008 N. Sheridan Rd., Box 409159, Chicago, IL 60640. Donations toward mailing costs appreciated but not required.

SUBMISSIONS SOUGHT

Nonfiction manuscripts dealing with the experiences of **LESBIANS AND GAYS WITH THEIR LESBIAN/GAY SIBLINGS** sought. Narratives or interviews telling significant, humorous, tragic, or poignant stories. Molly Martin, 1016 E. 7th Ave., Olympia, WA 98501.

Submissions are needed for the **TALES OF THE GODDESSES** collection as well as an anthology of **FANTASY/SCIENCE FICTION ABOUT WOMEN**. Stories of goddesses in fantasy, SF, past, present, future, otherwheres and otherwhens, inspired by cultures known and unknown. Manuscripts of 10,000 words or less to J. Sturgis, Box 39, West Tisbury, MA 02575.

The Conditions Collective is accepting submissions for an anthology on **WOMEN AND CENSORSHIP** to be published by Cleis Press. Photos and other visuals will be considered in addition to poetry, prose, interviews, essays. SASE to Conditions, 247 Liberty Ave., Jersey City, NJ 07307.



WOMEN IN ISRAEL SPEAK: Religion, Action, and Politics will be a book of interviews, photos, and poetry compiled by Batya Weinbaum. *Women of Israel Speak* Project, 111 W. 40th St., New York, NY 10018.

Amethyst Press is seeking manuscripts that deal with the **LESBIAN EXPERIENCE**. Proposals should include cover letter, synopsis, sample stories/chapters. Amethyst Press, 6 W. 32nd St. Penthouse, New York, NY 10001. (212) 629-8140.

New York University is seeking manuscripts for inclusion in **THE CUTTING EDGE: LESBIAN LIFE AND LITERATURE**; seeking lesbian theory, biographies and/or literary studies of lesbian writers, and translations of lesbian classics. Karla Jay, P.O. Box 1235, Church Street Station, New York, NY 10008.

Stories by and about **LESBIANS IN BICULTURAL AND BINATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS**

sought by an American woman and a British woman, both living in Japan. Kate Pickford, 204 European Haitsu, 15 Ban-Kan, Shinade 21, Yawata, Kyoto 614, Japan.

The editors of **CUT-OUTS & CUT-UPS** are compiling a sequel, and they need ideas. Send quizzes, puzzles, wry essays, and observations with SASE to Elizabeth Dean c/o New Victoria Publishers, P.O. Box 27, Norwich, VT 05505.

Voyages Out is a new series from Seal Press designed to celebrate and instigate "NEW VOICES IN LESBIAN FICTION." Seal encourages lesbian writers who have not yet had their stories collected in book form to send their work. *Voyages Out* will be published each fall and will feature up to nine stories by two writers. Six to sixteen stories plus cover letter and your publishing history to Barbara Wilson, Seal Press, 3131 Western Ave. #410, Seattle, WA 98121.

How do body, mind, and emotion interact? Anthology on women exploring the **MIND/BODY RELATIONSHIP** seeks writings based on personal experiences. SASE for guidelines to A. Stevens, 50 Pleasant #9E, Brookline, MA 02146.

A new book entitled **CATS AND THEIR WOMEN** will emphasize the love between felines and their human companions. The editors seek photos of you and your cat(s) with accompanying letter. SASE to Cohen/Taylor, *Cats and Their Women*, 11 Prospect St., Maynard, MA 01754.

The editors of **SAGE: A Scholarly Journal on Black Women** are soliciting essays, personal narratives, and interviews for a special issue on **RELATIONSHIPS**. Other upcoming issues include **SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY, WOMEN IN RURAL AFRICA, and DANCE**. Sage, P.O. Box 41741, Atlanta, GA 30311-0741.


AMUSING LESBIAN RELATIONSHIP STORIES sought for book. Hummer Express, P.O. Box 1278, Nashville, IN 47448.


Manuscripts for anthology on **LESBIAN EDUCATORS**: Sue McConnell-Celi (201) 530-8593. ●

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Montana Blake

ALASKA from page 29

hot tub! According to Festival Coordinator Louise Barnes, the producers intend to keep the festival relaxed and noncommercial over coming years, with a focus on local and regional artists.

Alaska's capital city of Juneau, in the southeastern "panhandle" of the state (reachable only by boat or air), offers Alaska's only existing women's radio show, which airs on Wednesday nights from 9-10 p.m. [Call numbers for KTOO-FM are 104.3 in downtown Juneau and 103.1 in the Mendenhall Valley, a few miles outside the city.] More than a decade old, *Women's Prerogative* is hosted by Christina Wallace and Jill Sandleben, and features interviews and music by feminist musicians.

In addition, Juneau Women's Art Productions—a feminist collective—sponsors concerts, recently producing Hunter Davis, Dianne Davidson, and



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Libby Roderick. Shows are held once or twice a year in local churches or halls, and attract upwards of sixty listeners. (200 turned out for a Holly Near show.)

And although most Native women would not include themselves as part of the feminist music network, Alaskans are fortunate that in remote villages throughout the state, many women keep alive the voices of Alaska's indigenous people through song and dance. Alaska has several major Native groups (Tlingit-Haida; Inupiat; Athabascan; Yupik Eskimo; Aleut), each with their own language, art, music, stories, dances, and traditions. Women play key roles in many of their communities' cultural activities. Women of the younger generations are far more likely to consider themselves feminist and to participate in urban forums, such as Celebration of Change or the Fairbanks Women's Music Festival.

So...in the many months of the year when darkness and snow surround Alaskans (in Barrow, on Alaska's northernmost coast, the sun sets on November 18 and doesn't rise above the horizon again until January 24, for a total of sixty-seven days of darkness!), women of all backgrounds and skill levels brighten their days and lives with music. The feminist music network is thriving in Alaska; if your wanderings bring you north, *HOT WIRE* readers will feel right at home. ●

YER GIRLFRIEND from page 31

music—and had given her something that affirms all of us as women and as lesbians. (The bar has since gone out of business. But more about that in a moment.)

Along with playing women's music by other artists, both popular and obscure, we were also performing our own original work. Carol Kraemer, our guitarist and principal songwriter, has provided some of our most powerful songs. The title cut from our album *We Won't Be Silent*, for example, served as the slogan for Louisville's recent Gay Pride march. Another of Carol's songs, "Peace and Harmony," has become something of an anthem for our local community. We end each performance with this song, and it seems no matter where we're playing, our listeners are moved to stand and join hands.

This also happened last year when "Peace and Harmony" was played for the U.S.-Soviet Citizen's Summit in Moscow. Thanks in part to a grant from The Kentucky Foundation for Women, established by feminist author Sallie Bingham, we were able to re-record the song with Russian lyrics in the chorus. A delegate to the summit played our tape for the entire assembly—and again, the audience spontaneously rose to its feet, joined hands, and sang along. A Radio Moscow report-

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FADE IN /FADE OUT from 15

violinist Stephanie Anderson (Julie Andrews) begins psychoanalysis to deal with the emerging depression that is accompanying her physical decline due to Multiple Sclerosis.

While her family and friends play down Stephanie's degeneration (it has become impossible for her to play a full-length concert because her hands no longer obey her mind), it is her prized pupil who finally forces them to acknowledge the anguish faced by a musician who is losing her talent—the music which is her lifeblood.

Her seemingly passionate marriage to David, an infidel composer and conductor, lacks the support Stephanie needs. His dependent relationship with his younger secretary plays on Stephanie's fears, bitterness, and insecurities over losing control over her self, her body, and her relationships. Taking up a martyr's stoic front, Stephanie sends her husband off on a world tour with his secretary and sets about putting her house in order.

YER GIRLFRIEND from page 40

er was so taken with the song that she featured it in several broadcasts.

We remain very much a part of our local community, which is why we are still going strong emotionally, physically, and creatively as a band—and also holding our own financially. The benefit/festival held for the band raised \$2,000, and by December the *We Won't Be Silent* cassette was complete, shrink-wrapped, and for sale. It is now available from the band's own label, Esther Records.

And there's more good news: after the old bar in town closed, it was replaced by The Blue Moon, a friendly, lesbian owned establishment where we play regularly.

We believe it's vital to play women's music wherever and whenever we can. We also believe it's important to be out as lesbians and sing songs with pronouns that reflect our lives as we live them. (This way, if we become famous, nobody can "out" us at a later date.) We want to carry on the great tradition of women's music: songs that are accessible, danceable, fun, provocative, and affirming. We also hope that in the future, other listeners—like those in our own community—will take our message and our music to heart and gladly proclaim, like our T-shirt says: "I'm With Yer Girlfriend." ●

This film explores how life and love are intertwined, and presses the boundaries of what is and is not accepted behavior. Stephanie embarks on an affair with a member of an "underclass"; explores a lesbian relationship with her domestic help; rises to new heights while always keeping up her emotional guard; and sinks to unfathomed depths, melodramatically plotting her own suicide.

Duet for One also explores the boundaries of therapy by proposing that true breakthroughs come with true emotional openness from both parties, and that once that breakthrough occurs, it is no longer a patient-therapist relationship, but a relationship of friends.

I think the film realistically portrays loneliness and depicts a woman who is willing to go beyond society's boundaries to seek the support she needs. Avoiding the "they all lived happily ever after" theme, *Duet for One* shows the inner strength of a woman who brings closure to the relationships in her life and in doing so finds peace of mind.

* FADE OUT * ●

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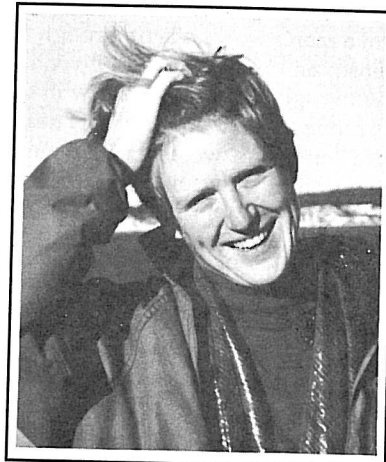
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BARBARA HAMMER

By Ellen Meyers and Toni Armstrong Jr.

Barbara Hammer's impact on experimental film in this country has been significant. An internationally recognized artist, she has screened and lectured about her work all over the world. "I have been working for twenty years, and one of my ideas was to document a lesbian life. That was my own because that was the one I know the most," says Barbara.

Barbara started making films in 1967 or 1968 when she was given a Super 8 camera. "On my way to my first film class, I stopped my Lambretta motor-scooter in the Northern California town of Bodega and began shooting *Schizy*. My first film captured the schizophrenia I felt as a heterosexual—at that time—woman living in a man's world. I shot through bifocal lenses an optometrist had given me to show the split level reality I saw in the world around me. This was before I heard the word 'feminism,' which enabled me to see the world, not myself, as crazy," she recalls. "*Schizy* won an Honorable Mention in the Sonoma Super 8 Film Festival. This recognition, plus the fact that the screen was larger than any canvas I had yet used (I began to paint in 1965), and the fact that the audience was compelled in the dark to watch the film changed my life. I became a filmmaker."

Barbara's first 16mm film was made in school many years later, following many Super 8 films shot while coming out and exploring her first lesbian relationship (*Barbara Ward Will Never Die; Marie and Me; Travelling; Yellow Hammer; others*). "I left my husband, came out with a woman, traveled to Africa on a motorcycle, and taught a year in Germany before returning to the U.S. and making the decision to study 16mm film production at San Francisco State University," she recalls. "There I made my first 16mm film, *I Was/I Am*, in which I enacted a transformation from a gowned and crowned 'lady' to a motorcycle dyke. I went on to make thirteen films in the two and a half years I was at State because I was motivated, the equipment was free, and the

low tuition fees left me income for film stock. Most of these films—such as *Dyketactics*—were not made for any classes, but just for myself and the women's community."

Barbara sees her body of work encompassing several phases. The first phase she calls "a period of celebration and identity naming," which includes the groundbreaking *Dyketactics*. Only four minutes long, the film has 110 different cuts in it, so it moves very quickly. It reflects her since-developed aesthetic about lesbians and their sense of touch. In 1974 when the film came out, there were very few explicitly lesbian films with lesbian images. After she made it, she was told that it was the first lesbian lovemaking film made by a lesbian.

Before filmmaking Barbara earned a B.A. in Psychology from UCLA and an M.A. in English Literature from San Francisco State. "I worked as a counselor in Marin County Juvenile Hall and later at an experimental open setting for 'emotionally disturbed adolescents' where I was a teacher in a self-contained classroom," she says. "I found this work challenging for a while, but I wasn't expressing a large part of myself. At first, I thought I would have to have a baby to justify the fact that I wanted to stay home and paint. When I didn't conceive and my husband was found to be sterile, I was relieved. I realized then that I really just wanted to 'work on my own thing'—as we used to say in the '60s—and that I hadn't wanted to be a mother at all."

In 1975, Barbara earned a second M.A.—this one in film—and was offered a job teaching Super 8 filmmaking at San Jose State. "At that time, I didn't know how important teaching would become to me later, and I turned it down because I had a burning desire to make film after film. There was so much I had to say, so many films to create," she recalls. "Whenever one was completed, another would come to mind and I'd begin again. I knew I was starting late, but I had

stored up extra energy for this expression. I wanted to be recognized first as an artist and then, perhaps later, as a teacher. To do that I had to do the work."

She says that she feels college teachers "can be and are" artists, but sometimes a teacher has to sacrifice energy and commitment for her students. "When you are just beginning and the world is in front of you, and you are lucky enough to have the monetary resources available, it is a great luxury and honor to be able to work full-time on your art," she says. "Mostly one needs to do what one is compelled to do at the time there is the drive. Ten years later I had to struggle to get my first full-time teaching position in a college, but I had made the films I had needed to make. I wouldn't do it differently today. I now enjoy teaching as well."

She made *Superdyke* and *Superdyke Meets Madame X*, kinds of films that "an institution would suffocate." A small inheritance supported her through graduate school, and she had some left over when she graduated. She started teaching women in her studio using her own equipment. These small groups of women formed classes that helped her pay the rent and she further supplemented her income with screenings of her work.

Barbara came out when she was thirty years old. Her first lovemaking experience with a woman changed her life and became an inspiration for future films. She refers to *Dyketactics* as "a commercial so that other women might realize that there was an experience that they might have when they make love with another woman."

For Hammer, "being a lesbian and being an artist is always creating and always defining. It never reaches a static point." She sees each new film as a challenge and not a repetition of something she's seen in the outside world. She also says, "For some reason, being a lesbian is so difficult in the world that the security we get in our home lives sometimes leads

to more conservative visual preferences, so that we like a realistic picture or a realistic film. That is not my vision of what being a lesbian or being an artist is. So I don't always conform to the lesbian community needs.

"Some women in the lesbian community have supported my experimental work, while others have wanted a more documentary or narrative cinema. I had an idealistic view that a lesbian took chances, challenged tradition and form, and that connected with my idea of what an artist did. I never wanted to make 'straight' films that fit a pre-established order. Sometimes I've wondered if it is so difficult for lesbians to be accepted in society that we choose to blend in and assimilate rather than stand for differ-

work was all woman-identified in nature. While Hammer agrees with that basic assessment, she decided to go to an urban environment where people might be more committed to work rather than lifestyle.

"Many of my films of the '70s were set in the natural surroundings of the East Bay hills and parklands near my home," she recalls. "Critics had assumed I equated women with nature by placing them in idyllic natural environments. To equate women with nature was to say woman was biologically determined and not socially constructed. In fact, I believe we are constructed in terms of gender; indeed, I believe there is a 'lesbian construction,' and that is the topic of my next film. We are not one or the other. We are

work and *Optic Nerve* do not deal with lesbian issues, they are among the most exhibited works she has produced.

Snow Job: The Media Hysteria of AIDS is presented with a film projector as well as several video monitors. The audio comes through the video. People look at the screen, which is much larger, but there is more media on the monitors. Hammer says, "it's all about the hysteria of media, so it works well in that it also adds to the snow job accumulation of the hysteria."

In 1985, she accepted her first full-time teaching position, for one year at Columbia College in Chicago. As a teacher, it enabled her to have free access to equipment. When she was hired, she was the first full-time female faculty in the history of the department. "*Optic Nerve* was the first film I made with my own optical printer," she says. "I began it in New York and moved it with me to Chicago when I was hired by Columbia. I put the optical printer on my kitchen table and worked on the film every day. This work in progress helped me to make the transition."

She next moved to Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington because of the learning/teaching philosophy unique to that institution. "Students could plan their own classes, I could plan mine," she says. "I didn't have to use the letter grading system, but instead provided a written evaluation of the student's progress and process with regard to her/his growth. Seminars were required where texts—and films, books, music scores, etc.—were debated and enlarged upon by student participation and faculty leadership. Faculty members who were team teaching met once a week to go over the text assignments." Although she found Evergreen State to be a "very stimulating educational context," eventually Washington was too isolating and she returned to New York.

She decided to stop teaching so she could have flexibility to be in New York more. "In New York, the arts are supported much more than in Washington or California. The density of population and the milieu of the city make for artistic ferment," she says. "There are many venues in which to see experimental film, and many places to screen work. I was able to get grants for my current film/video project there." While in New York, and as she gained more recognition for her work, she was offered three visiting artist



Paula Levine

Experimental filmmaker Barbara Hammer: "Controversy is healthy, especially if it is open. We need to critique one another's work, but before we can do that we must state our aesthetic."

ence. I wonder if the desire some lesbian women express for film that tells a story with lesbian characters in the Hollywood tradition comes out of this need to fit in," she says.

The second phase of Hammer's work took place in the 1980s and has to do with landscape, underwater as well as above water. She feels it was an outward identity naming, claiming a lesbian- and woman-identified place on the planet. It was during this time that she moved from Oakland to New York to challenge her work. She felt critics were saying that her

the results of biology *and* culture, and these are not necessarily contradictory ways of seeing and naming."

It was during this period that she made *Endangered* and *Optic Nerve*, which are categorized as some of her most formal work in terms of style. *Optic Nerve* was in the 1987 Whitney Biennial, an exhibition that showcases cutting-edge avant-garde painting, sculpture, installation, video, and film. *Endangered* was selected for the 1989 Whitney Biennial. *Snow Job: The Media Hysteria of AIDS* was made during this time, and because this

jobs in the Bay Area at places she had been trying to teach for years. Of this she says, "Sometimes you are not recognized in your own hometown until you move away and do well. Then you come back and are a hot item...or at least they consider you a valuable person."

Barbara Hammer does not know how to define the period of work she is currently in. "I think it's a period of no fear and abandonment, a use of the intellect I never used," she says. She is making the comedy *Hot Flash* about menopause that attempts to take what is considered a serious issue and turn it into a comedic one.

Several recently completed works include *The History of the World According to a Lesbian* (1988), which goes from the platonic cave to the post punk scene with the Seattle based music group Sluts From Hell, who sing 1950s songs with a lesbian twist. *Still Point* (1989) uses four multi-image filled screens to evoke beauty, pain, home, and homelessness, and the sense of being caught in all worlds at once. *Still Point* received the Women in Film Award at the 1990 Atlanta Film/Video Festival.

Barbara turns fifty-two this May 15th, and has received several large grants which will allow her to stop visiting teaching jobs and be able to do her creative work full time. She works either in film or video and is currently trying to merge the two. A current work in progress [*Sanctus*] uses archival x-ray footage from the 1950s that she is optically printing and transferring onto

video. "I have just finished *Sanctus*, a 16mm film using moving x-ray footage originally shot by Dr. James Sibley Watson and his colleagues and now archived in The George Eastman House in Rochester, New York. Dr. Watson made one of the first experimental films in the United States, *Fall of the House of Usher* (1929)," she says. "I was thrilled to be able to view the nitrate 35mm x-ray film and select what I wanted to rephotograph. *Sanctus* explores the fragility and mystery of the human body as the viewer enters through skeletal frameworks to organ systems in imagery usually reserved for medical practitioners. The sound composition by Niel B. Rolnick is digitized and sampled, using the "Sanctus" section of the Mass from Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, Byrd and Mechant. I am completing *Dr. Watson's X-Rays*, a video documentary of people who worked with Watson on the x-rays, or who knew him. This complements the film and will be shown in conjunction with it.

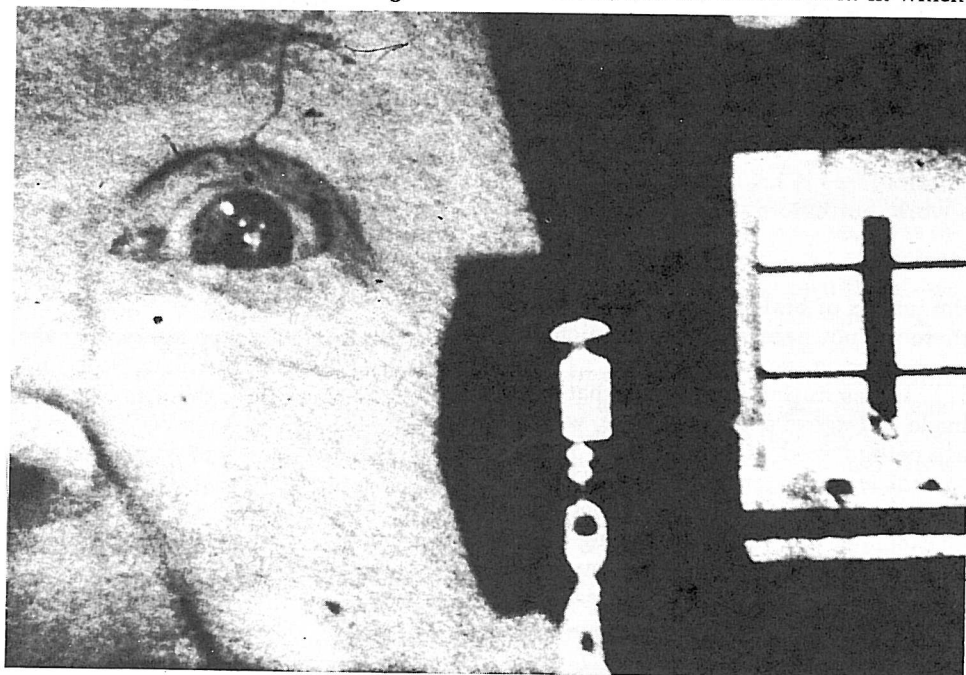
"My ultimate career goals are to continue working just as I am—to take up a project that interests me when the one I've been working on is finished. I wish to get my films to the largest audience possible without compromising my aesthetics. If I had a megabudget I think I would set up a film school for women of difference: lesbian women, women of color, physically challenged women, old women, children. I would provide the equipment and film, the encouragement and criticism, and the environment in which

they could begin personal work using the moving image.

"Controversy is healthy, especially if it is open. We need to critique one another's work, but before we can do that we must state our aesthetic. The criticism needs to be built on a philosophical structure. Criticism that comes from 'I-know-what-I-like-and-this-is-or-isn't-it' doesn't open a dialogue but rests upon a secret unspoken aesthetic. It is terrific to say this is what I like because I think...and we need this kind of film because...It is not helpful to critique silently to oneself, or to another, avoiding speaking directly to the person who made the work. We need to be strong in accepting difference, different voices, different work. We need to feel so strong in our sense of self that there is room for others. As there is no feminism but feminism, so there is no lesbian cinema but lesbian cinemas," she says. "Light the projectors. I'm waiting."

For more information about Barbara Hammer's work, contact Women Make Movies, 225 Lafayette Street, Suite 211, New York, NY 10012, or Barbara Hammer, P.O. Box 1643, Canal Street Station, New York, NY 10014. ●

ABOUT THE WRITERS: Ellen A. Meyers is an independent media artist and the Director of Special Projects for the Center for New Television in Chicago. She has a Masters degree in Film and Video and is in post-production on a documentary about AIDS. Toni Armstrong Jr. is a writer, editor, musician, photographer, fan of the film/video genre, and long-time promoter of woman-identified music and culture.



Optic Nerve (1985)



THE SEXUALITY
LIBRARY - GOOD
VIBRATIONS

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Angela Davis (pictured with Julie Shayne, left).

women's music and social consciousness

IN SCHOOL WITH ANGELA DAVIS

By Julie Shayne

When I entered San Francisco State University one year ago I knew who Angela Davis was, but I didn't *know* her. Since then I have taken two classes taught by her, the most recent one being Women's Music and Social Consciousness.

Who exactly is Angela Davis? All I knew about her until I met her was that I supported her politics. Angela describes herself as "an author, a political activist, and an educator." But there is far more to her past and present than those four words.

Angela grew up in the South where she was very directly confronted with the racist actions of the Ku Klux Klan. Through her recognition of racism and repression, in 1968 she found it necessary to join the Communist Party, U.S.A. and is currently a member of the Central Committee. Political activities in Southern California led to a frame-up attempt on her life. In 1970 she was placed on the Ten Most Wanted List and was the subject of an intense FBI hunt. She was later put to trial and subsequently acquitted. Her trial sparked massive national and international protest, and she was the subject of

a lot of mainstream media coverage at the time.

Angela is not just an educator, a speaker, and an activist but also a writer of her political theories. She has written many essays as well as books, including *If They Come in the Morning* (1971), *Angela Davis: An Autobiography* (1974), *Women Race and Class* (1982), and *Women, Culture, and Politics* (1989). When Ronald Reagan was governor of California, he said that Angela Davis would "never" teach in the California University system, and needless to say, as usual he was wrong!

Angela started her class Women's Music and Social Consciousness about five years ago. At that time she was beginning to write a book which explored the way Black women blues singers shaped the social awareness of African-American women. (This book, about Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday, is now in the publishing stage.)

I took the class for two main reasons. The first was that I had already taken one class with Angela and was very impressed with how articulate and competent she is as a professor. Secondly, I have always been one of those people

who is "addicted" to music, and I was very curious to hear Angela's analysis on this topic I felt very close to but I hadn't ever given much thought to. And as I expected, I was more than satisfied with the course.

Women's Music and Social Consciousness is one of the many empowering classes in the women's studies department of San Francisco State. The class is taught from both the historical and political angles. We learned about not simply what role women have played within the music field, but also how it affected listeners, specifically women.

"My interest in music is not in the technical aspect," says Angela. "My fields are philosophy and women's studies. Historically music has not been viewed as an academic inquiry, and therefore it holds a lot of potential in revealing dimensions in women's social lives and in women's history that haven't yet been fully explored.

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ABOUT THE WRITER: Julie Shayne continues to attend San Francisco State University, majoring in women's studies, a field in which she hopes to teach someday.

CONFABULATION

WHO HAS IT WORSE?

a friendly debate between Jane Winslow and Garbo

This friendly debate resulted from the musings of a struggling lesbian short story writer and a struggling lesbian songwriter. (Three notable words in common are "struggling," "lesbian," and "writer.") Garbo and Jane worked together as members of Source: Women Writers, a feminist writers group in Bloomington, Indiana. They now live in Columbus and Cincinnati respectively.

GARBO: Actually, Jane, I've thought of a way that you have it worse than me. What would you do if 1001 Strings wanted to record your work? When you write a lesbian-feminist spiritual chant, I know you don't have in mind an elevator or the P.A. system of a dentist's office. But on the other hand, if you couldn't get anybody else interested in a piece, and 1001 Strings wanted it, I could see how you would be willing to go with that. Fortunately, there isn't really a disco version or a Muzak version of a short story. I guess the closest thing would be if *True Confessions* bought something I did, but that's not likely.

JANE: *I wouldn't rule out 'True Confessions,' Garbo, since people assume that writers are working with autobiographical material.*

G: You songwriters have less of a problem with that because it's not really that practical to write long, detailed biographical songs about other people. You're less likely to be accused of saying mean things about people. Like, I'm in a quandary now because I'm in the middle of a piece based on a lesbian gathering I went to a few months ago. On the one hand, I want to portray it the way it really was. But I don't want to portray it *too much* the way it was. I don't want people coming up and saying, "That's not what hap-

CONFABULATION gives 'HOT WIRE' readers the opportunity to eavesdrop while prominent women chat about topics of mutual interest.



Sidney Sander

Jane Winslow: "Writers know that the chance of stardom is slim to none. But even though a singer-songwriter has the same odds, she's given hope by the occasional star story, and therefore develops the 'Rich Discovered-Artist Syndrome'..."

pened." I have to walk a very thin line...
J: ...between reality and libel, basically.

G: Yep. And because I write, people have the opportunity to study my remarks at leisure, because they're printed on a page. During a song, Jane, if you get in a few snide remarks about somebody, you can always deny you said it. In a concert hall, it can just whip by them. But if I write down something on a page, they've got the hard evidence.

J: *But people don't assume that they know you intimately just because they've read a story of yours once. But when they hear a songwriter at a coffeehouse, they assume an immediate intimacy, like you're their best friend, therapist, and lover, all in one. They call me up and say, "Hi, it's Sarah. Don't ask me how my lover and I are doing!" And I think to myself, "Who's Sarah?"*

G: And your girlfriend is asking you who it was?

J: *And I'm saying, "I'm not really sure," even though I was on the phone with this person for the last half-hour hearing how her relationship's going. In this department you surely have it easier.*

G: Well, maybe you get into these little snags with your sweetie, but overall, songwriters have a better romantic life. Writers have a reputation for being romantic, but that's poetry. I don't write poetry. Poets can say, "Here girlfriend, I wrote you a poem," and give them this beautiful calligraphy thing, or send it in a perfumed letter with a few rose petals enclosed. Short story characterizations, even though I see them as very sweet, don't have the same romantic appeal. I can hand them a short story and say, "The character of Beverly is modeled mostly on you, with just a little of Jane Winslow thrown in. I want you to notice how I filled her character out here, I made her this sympathetic person, and here on page seventeen I put in something you said to me as part of the dialogue..."

J: *You're right, it doesn't have the same flavor as "How shall I compare thee to a summer's day." Now, we songwriters are required to be romantic. If I'm singing live, I'm required to introduce my song, so I can announce who it was written for, how many years we've been together, and I can look out into the audience to where I think she's sitting and sing the love song directly to her.*

G: Yeah, you've really got the edge. If you want to impress somebody you're courting, you go over there with a guitar. You don't show up with a manuscript in your hand, saying "Here's a little something I've written about you. How would you like to hear an excerpt from page seventeen?"

J: *Whether they're in a romantic situation or not, people find it easier to listen to music than to read, which makes it easier for me. People don't read as well as they used to. I've never been a fast reader, but I think we are all*

getting worse. And there are more times when you can listen to music, like cruising around the house with the vacuum cleaner. And with my songs on tape, I am more likely to go on auto trips with women, or sing to them while they're making out. But, cheer up, Garbo. You're more likely to go alone to the beach with a woman and she'll have her hands wrapped sweetly around you the whole time. Well, at least your book. And with the oil shortage and the energy problem, writers might be better off. If there's less electricity to run tape players...

G: Jane, in the performance world you have it made, but we writers have it rough. At a coffeehouse, if the emcee comes up to the mike and says, "Coming up next, we've got a reading," you can hear the scrape of aluminum folding chairs across the tile floor. People make for the bathroom, or outside to smoke. That's directly due to a lot of really terrible poetry written and performed in the 1970s. There was absolutely no limit on the number of terrible poems that people could have inflicted on them at a single sitting. So now all you have to do is say the word "reading," and ...

J: ...people think they're going to have to listen to hours and hours of morose, incomprehensible poetry.

G: So I get up there with a sheaf of papers in my hand, and the audience just runs. With music, the notes coming out of the guitar are pleasing, whether the song is very good or not.

J: Yes, people are less likely to bolt out the door if they see me walking up to the stage with a guitar.

G: But I might be a little luckier than you, Jane, because I don't think I'm going to be walking along a dirt path at a women's festival, and hear somebody repeating the lines from a story I've done at a reading, and doing a really bad job at repeating the lines. Turning the lines around, or mixing in the lines from another story. But if you've been leading people in a round robin, or your soundsheet in *HOT WIRE* has come out and your song has swept the lesbian nation, you're going to hear some tuneless soul trying to warble out a few notes of what you've written. They might try a mixture of your song, some country-western, and a little bit of the "Star-Spangled Banner" all glommed together in this mess. I can see how you'd want to trot along beside her, saying, "No, that's not how it goes!"

J: True. And you just do your own material, but I have a problem when I do another person's song, and it's the audience's favorite. That is hard on the ego. I do appreciate that they like it, and that they're glad I chose it, but when it's their favorite and one of mine isn't, it's a little tough. Another way I have it harder is that people don't read your stories by accident. But some people have heard my songs by mistake, without warning about the content. For example, some fundamentalists who had been having a revival meeting upstairs happened to walk by the open door of a hall just as I was performing "How Can I Love a Woman?"

G: Usually people don't get a surprise when they read one of my stories. I mean, if it's in *Lesbian Bedtime Stories*, fundamentalists don't buy it in the first place.

J: But I'll bet at least one fundamentalist has gotten hold of some magazine, and was happily tripping along in your story till boom, she bumped right up against the word "lesbian," or a scene of two women kissing. You wouldn't necessarily have to deal with this person while they process this new information. But I, on the other hand, would be there to receive the full brunt of their processing.

G: At least when someone is talking to you about your work, you can remember composing the piece. With me, it took months for it to be published, then it has to fall into someone's hands. Only three people have actually bought any copies of my books or magazine pieces. There's one copy of the short-story anthology floating around Columbus, Ohio, being passed slowly from hand to hand. It takes years before somebody actually comes up and says, "I saw your story." By then I've forgotten I ever wrote the damn thing. With songs, it's not so long between writing it and performing it.

J: But if I put a song on tape, I have the same problem. Somebody can walk up and say, "That's a great new song," about something I wrote and recorded in 1988. And writers have it better because if people don't respond positively to your story, it's four years old and you can pretend it was one of your early works.

G: And if they like it, I can say, "Yes, that was the start of my brilliant period."

J: And not having the audience right there as you work means you don't have to cope with hearing people talk during your heartfelt number. As a writer, you wouldn't know if someone has put down your book to watch a rerun of 'Magnum P.I.' But with song-

writers, the volume of the audience conversation starts increasing, and then the singer's volume starts increasing. It's like the battle of the bands.

G: Ah, but you have amplification.

J: There's a little-known physics rule that says: "Unamplified conversation can outdo a singer every time." Even the people who were listening to me eventually become annoyed by the disruption and move their concentration to the noisy group in the back. This is an actual "Law of Gigs."

G: From the sound of it, writers are ahead of songwriters in the areas of handling rejection. I've had to learn to thrive on rejection.

J: Now that's true. There is no one like a writer for getting rejected like clockwork.

G: Before I got so hardened to rejection, Deb and I had this little ritual where I'd come home and say, "Hi, dear, is there any mail?" and she'd say, "Ye-e-es," in a sad, vague voice. What was not supposed to be in the dish was a large brown manila envelope. That meant I got back the manuscript I mailed out.

J: So would Deb, like, try to bury it, under some gardening catalogs?

G: How did you know? But under this mound of mail was a square brown envelope with the postmark across it, and I'd recognize my own handwriting. And there was just a little slip of paper, very small, in there.

J: At least they conserve paper; they don't waste a whole lot of paper while they're squashing your feelings.

G: The little slip of paper always has a phrase on it, something like, "This is not quite right for us"—and I know they don't mean that it's not quite right for them. They mean it's not at all right, it never could be right. They mean, why did you send this to us? That's what they mean.

J: At least your rejections are discreet. And you can be discreet when you practice.

G: Yeah, other people are not always aware if I'm working my way through a little knotty problem. If a music composer is making a rapid four-chord change, everybody knows it's because she's playing it over and over again, trying to move from the fourth difficult chord back to the first chord again. If I'm writing, other people don't know I'm messing with a pronoun problem.

J: *And not only do I have to make noise to write songs, I have space needs. Whenever I move, I have to make sure that I can have a piano. Of course, that leads to remarks like, "Sure, if you can get it through the window. It won't go up the stairs, we've tried it." I am envious of the quiet and simplicity you have as a writer.*

G: Yeah, it's great. I can write anywhere. You can't take a piano on a Greyhound bus.

J: *And you'll have to admit writing is cheaper—there isn't a great expense associated with writing. Even if you have a computer, you have the original outlay and from there it's printer paper and ribbons. Or you can make do with a typewriter. If finances are real bad, there's always paper and pencil. But as a songwriter, not only do I have all this equipment that I have to cart around, but I have to have a vehicle big enough to cart it to places not remotely close to where I live. It's harder to get to a gig in your own city than it is to get to one five or six hours away. Actually, this is the Second Law of Gigs. Therefore you not only have to have the equipment and the vehicle, but also gas money, because you don't make enough to cover the gas, let alone food. And paying other musicians—they get paid even when you don't. But at least I have the choice to work with other people. Writers must get lonely.*

G: Yes, I think it's our image. And these killer biographies about sensitive artistic writers, telling how this person was a total alcoholic drug addict, wife abuser, or person who was abused by her husband. That is the stuff literary biographies are made of, so you sit around wondering when this stuff is going to happen to you.

J: *But that makes it easier for you, because writers are supposed to be crazy and hard to deal with. We singers have to hide it. We are required to be pleasant, warm, open, and fun no matter what is going on in our lives. Cramps, my synthesizer just got dropped, I had an argument with my lover long-distance about the obligatory crisis at home while I'm on the road...*

G: Gig Law Number Three?

J: *Right. Also, you have it easier image-wise because writers are thought of as people of incredible insights and wisdom. But stop someone on the street and ask, "Tell me what words you associate with singer-songwriters?" They'll say things like, "Cute, vain, sexy, hot, pretty voice, catchy lyrics." Writers are worldly and wise, and the song-*

writers are the energetic, unsophisticated, cute young pups.

G: Well, we might be wise, but singers have things like Grammys. I realize that your average feminist songwriter doesn't usually get up there, but look at Tracy Chapman. It can happen. And you do get to do awards shows and things—you get to dress up and have glitter on you. Even if I had the desire to get a gold lamé outfit, that would be considered very unwriterlike.

J: *Yes, you would lose credibility if you branched out to gold lamé. There certainly is a lack of stunning outfits in your biz. You also miss out on the excitement of shopping for the most unusual, hottest ensemble with your lover, and then going home to see if it drives her as wild in the bedroom as it did in the dressing room. Although this is great fun, it's expensive. Unusual clothes are more costly than usual clothes, and they take more time to find. Imagine my torment when, at a gig, I discovered that Nancy Vogl and I had on the same stunning, calf-length, jacket-like thing.*

G: And you both thought you had been so clever in your outfit selections.

J: *Tragic but true. We singers are required to wear unusual clothes, and you writers are required to wear usual clothes in an eccentric manner. Like an ordinary turtleneck, which normally is worn with the collar folded perhaps once so it rests quietly on your neck—but a writer wears it with the collar rolled down to your clavicle, like a fabric tube around your neck. And I'm sure these fashion statements are required at the most exclusive book signings.*

G: I wouldn't know.

J: *Well, about the Grammys, Garbo. There is a definite hazard to award shows. Writers know that the chance of stardom is slim to none. But even though a singer-songwriter has the same odds, she's given hope by the occasional star story, and therefore develops the "Rich Discovered-Artist Syndrome"...*

G: ...the same syndrome that makes me think I'm going to win the lottery?

J: *Except a singer's chances aren't that good. It takes years of therapy to rid yourself of this syndrome. And in order to have any hope of the fame we're straining for, we have to have all these diverse talents. A singer-songwriter has to write, sing, act, play as many instruments as possible... and it helps if you can be a stand-up comedian and a political commentator as well. Songwriters have to introduce*

a song, something like "I wrote this song while I was sleeping with a group of women in an olive orchard."

G: With all the stuff you have to do, I'm surprised that anybody sticks it out. But it seems like there are a lot of you.

J: *That's where you definitely have the edge. Not everyone claims to be a fiction writer. A poet maybe, but not someone who writes the longer forms. This is probably a time issue. A song can be mapped out pretty well in one sitting. Certainly not the final draft, unless the muse is really on your tail, but the gist can be captured. But a short story takes large amounts of time to write, then edit, then writing/editing, writing/editing...the novelist has it even worse, since she has to remember where the characters were, emotionally and otherwise, when she last sat down to write.*

G: But writers have the advantage in that we can have sequels, prequels, trilogies, continuations. To some extent, if you have a popular writing style, you can write the same book several times. You just make the characters older or younger, move the action to another planet, your basic Marion Zimmer Bradley ploy. I like Marion Zimmer Bradley, but I have to admit that I'm buying the same book over and over. But a songwriter can only do the same material for a couple of albums. I've never heard a prequel to a song.

J: *Garbo, what about those country-western answer songs? For instance, the guy that sang "Thank God for Honky Talk Angels," and then Kitty Wells wrote, "It Wasn't God Who Made Honky Talk Angels."*

G: Yeah, but even there you've got the hit and the follow-up hit, and that's it.

J: *Neither of us is really interested in repeating ourselves, though. Some things I think we have in common are our basic reasons for being in the communicative arts. We want to touch people's hearts, feel our power as women, and all the other things we talk about on grant applications.*

G: And we basically like the sound of our own voices.

J: *That motivates other professions, too. My father was a professor, and he told me that the best part of his job was hearing his own thoughts spoken aloud to a captive audience.*

continued on page 56

ABOUT THE WRITER: Hear Jane Winslow's song "Pine Trees" on the sound-sheet in this issue of 'HOT WIRE.'

ON STAGE AND OFF

LOOK MA! THERE'S A CONCERT IN MY LIVING ROOM

By Jamie Anderson

Hunched over a hot desk, sweat streaming from her brow, the artist/booking agent realizes she needs a booking in Hogsbreath, Idaho. What kind of performance options are there in that fair town? Not many. The local country bar probably doesn't take to feminist performers.

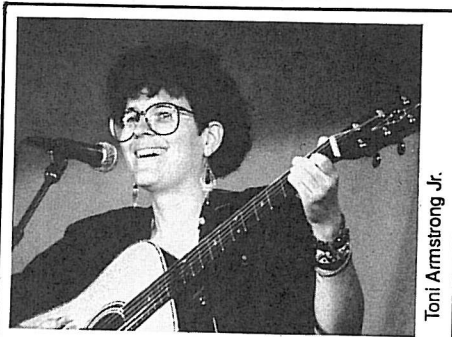
Suddenly, the artist leaps to her feet—upsetting the sleeping cat in her lap—and yells, "house concert!"

A house concert is just what it says: an informal performance in a small space—often someone's home. It offers the audience an opportunity to hear wonderful entertainment and to connect with an artist in a way that doesn't happen in a more formal atmosphere. It offers the artist a relaxed place to perform, a great opportunity to meet her audience, and possibly a chance to try out new material.

Many touring artists need house concerts to "fill in the holes" in their touring schedule. In large cities, we sometimes can't get other kinds of bookings because we don't have a weekend available. (Most coffeehouses and music production companies don't book on week nights because of low attendance.) That leaves Patty Performer stuck for several days between bookings with no work, and expensive—or questionable—housing.

Of course, some towns aren't even big enough to support a coffeehouse or production company. But because house concerts don't require a large audience, they're perfect for a small community. You can do house concerts with minimal space, energy, and money. You don't need a sound system, an emcee, expensive lighting—or large egos.

ON STAGE AND OFF addresses issues of interest to and about musicians and performers.



Toni Armstrong Jr.

Jamie Anderson: "Because house concerts don't require a large audience, they're perfect for small communities."

ADDITIONAL INFO ON HOUSE CONCERTS

- **NOTE BY NOTE: A Guide To Concert Production** by Joanie Shoemaker, Redwood Cultural Work, P.O. Box 10408, Oakland, CA 94608. This 288-page, step-by-step book is geared toward larger concert productions, but it is valuable for the house concert organizer, too.
- **JAMIE ANDERSON**, Tsunami Records, P.O. Box 42282, Tucson, AZ 85733. I will send you "Tips for Producers" if you send me a 29 cent stamp. I'm always happy to answer questions.
- **YOUR LOCAL FOLK MUSIC SOCIETY.** Since house concerts are a folk music tradition, these people may be able to offer you information.
- **"TRAVELS: MEXICO AND LIVING ROOM CONCERTS"** by Kay Gardner in the July 1987 issue of *HOT WIRE*. Details of Kay's (positive) experiences using little house concerts to supplement income while on tour.
- **LUCY FREY**, who has been sponsoring monthly feminist singalongs in her home since the early 1980s, sometimes with visiting guest artists. [See article about Alaska on page 28.] Lucy Frey, 1741 Westview Circle, Anchorage, AK 99504. (907) 337-3543.
- The **AWMAC NEWSLETTER** has booking info and other resources. Association for Women's Music & Culture, 2124 Kitteredgeway #104, Berkeley, CA 94704.

HERE'S HOW TO DO IT

1. *Find a performer.* There are many places to connect with them. Look in the "Performers and Speakers" section in the *HOT WIRE* classified ads. Talk to performers at festivals and other events. Make it known that you're interested in doing house concerts, so people can use you as a referral when they're contacted by artists. (When I am looking for a booking in a particular area, I often call the women's bookstore or gay/lesbian center.)

It's not wise to automatically assume that every performer will be interested in house concerts—or to automatically assume that the artist you're interested in will refuse. *Take the chance and ask.*

Obviously, you can't have a large, electrified band in your living room. Single performers generally work best in small spaces, though acoustic duos and even ensembles may not be out of the question. Consider the loudness of the noise from the perspective of your neighbors.

Your offer may or may not fit in with her schedule. We touring performers usually don't have the financial leeway to go out of our way for one small concert; we might really want to, but just not be able to afford it. *But*, if we already have bookings in nearby cities, it could be beneficial to do a house concert. Just keep in mind that regardless of logistics, some performers don't like to do living room concerts at all. Not everyone enjoys a

continued on page 58

ABOUT THE WRITER: *Jamie Anderson loves to do house concerts. She's done a lot of touring, though she's never played in Hogsbreath, Idaho. She used to be a mainstream record distributor salesperson, but she likes being a lesbian performer better—the hours stink but the audience is more attractive.*

SUE FINK from page 5

WHAT'S IT LIKE BEING AN INDEPENDENT WITHIN AN ALTERNATIVE, INDEPENDENT MUSIC BUSINESS?

It's meant that I've had to build it from the bottom up myself, mostly without the help of double bills or being allowed to be the opening act for more well-known performers. I see this same thing happening to a lot of new performers. If I go to a city for the first time, it's real different than if, say, Lucie Blue [Tremblay] went there for the first time. Lucie could maybe open for another Olivia act the first time she goes somewhere. In the years I've been touring, I think I've done three double bills and one opening act. My dream, of course, is to do this all very differently—if we could get rid of this *scarcity mentality*. I believe that it's in the record companies' interest to help people who aren't on their label, because it helps build the audience for everyone. That way people don't get sick of the same performers. When women don't have much money anyway, it's difficult to risk on someone new. But a scarcity of money doesn't mean we have to always act like there's a scarcity.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN? HOW WOULD IT BE IF PEOPLE WEREN'T ACTING LIKE THAT?

Competition breeds scarcity; cooperation breeds abundance. A record company would bring in their headliner artists to do a show, and would say, "Hey, it would be nice for the world to hear someone like Jamie Anderson, so let's have her open." So Jamie gets to sing for 300-500 people that night, or maybe up to 900 people, instead of the thirty she might get if she went into that town for the first time by herself. And that many people have now gotten to see another artist. The next time, they might bring someone else who wasn't planning to go because she doesn't want to hear the same old artist—but her friends say, "But this *new* person is really fresh, you should come just to hear *her*."

RIGHT, AND MEG LETTING YOU DO YOUR SONG ON HER TOUR MADE A LOT OF DIFFERENCE FOR YOUR CAREER. MAXINE FELDMAN AND GINNI CLEMMENS USED TO DO THAT ALL THE TIME. MAXINE HOWARD LET THE THEN-UNKNOWN TRACY CHAPMAN SING A SONG ["STORMY MONDAY"] ON HER SET AT MICHIGAN; IF TRACY HADN'T GONE ON TO MAINSTREAM SUC-

CESS, SHE'D HAVE TO BE COMPETING WITH EVERYONE ELSE IN WOMEN'S MUSIC NOW FOR OUR FEW FESTIVAL GIGS—SO IT WAS NICE OF MAXINE TO GIVE HER SOME EXPOSURE. THE IDEA OF AN ESTABLISHED ACT GIVING SOME STAGE TIME TO SOMEBODY NEW—IT CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

It *does*. In addition to sharing actual stage time, I think we should establish a computer databank where everybody pools their information, and there's a phone number you call and say, "I want to do a concert in Baltimore. I want to know about clubs, colleges, and other venues, and who's producing there; papers in which I can run an ad or announcement; who I can hire for eight dollars an hour to flyer the town if I end up in a club." Another idea: how about a regional flyer, like "In the South This Month," or "In Florida This Month." Each producer could put whoever they want on it. It's not going to detract from anybody if we have something that everybody can be on. It wouldn't hurt anybody, and it might help us get our calendars a little more together. I really think we should have a national calendar.

COORDINATED BY...?

Maybe AWMAC [the Association of Women's Music and Culture] could hire one person to coordinate it. She'd get paid a reasonable salary and everybody would chip in for that. Everything would be on computer, and there would be two ways you can use it. Anybody could call in and see what's on the national calendar or get leads. We can make it a 900 number—two dollars for the first three minutes! When you think of the mailing list that someone like Olivia Records has, if that were available for a national calendar, with a regional flyer, or those kinds of things...if the producers of Austin, Houston, San Antonio, and Dallas set up a circuit, it would make planning the travel for performers easier and cheaper. The problem with setting up this kind of circuit is, how do we choose who gets to go on it? Many would be left out, and possibly it would end up that only a handful of well-known performers would be able to play those cities on the circuit. I've always liked the idea of having a traveling festival, though. Get a bunch of independent performers together, and have a movable fest, where everything moves—the crafts, the art, the music, and we do tent shows in different

cities and in different halls. And you could include a lot of performers.

WHO COULD AFFORD TO PRODUCE SOMETHING LIKE THAT, IF THEY CAN'T EVEN AFFORD TO BRING BANDS TO THEIR TOWNS?

It would be something that each city would be responsible for when it got to their town. And it would be an exposure tour verses a big money-maker, but that's what festivals are. Nobody gets paid much. I'd also like to see us clean up our ethics.

MEANING?

I think some of the job of an organization like AWMAC could be to provide mediators for problems. Someplace where we can take grievances, where we act with consciousness with each other. Sometimes the festival producers fight and compete with each other; sometimes people don't get paid royalties or other promised monies; sometimes producers want to have someone get to be the opening act but a label turns it down.

I AGREE THAT THE PRODUCERS KNOW THEIR TOWNS, AND THEY KNOW WHAT THEY WANT TO PRESENT. AT THE SAME TIME, HOW WOULD YOU FEEL, AS AN ARTIST, IF YOU DIDN'T HAVE CONTROL OVER THE OPENING ACT, AND IT WAS SOMEBODY YOU REALLY DIDN'T WANT AS PART OF YOUR SHOW?

You know, I don't think I've ever run into that.

YOU HAVEN'T RUN INTO ANYONE YOU WOULDN'T WANT AS PART OF YOUR SHOW?

I've had a million people that I don't think are very good opening for me, but I think opening acts are still a good idea. I know it helps bring in audience. I think it's good for the community, especially when it's somebody from the local community who performs.

OTHER IDEAS FOR STRENGTHENING UP COOPERATION?

I think a lot of it is just in attitude. It's the feeling that it's not going to hurt anyone if I *share* this information. It's only going to make me stronger by making you stronger. It's a spirit of giving. Jamie Anderson has printed up for sale her list of radio and print contacts. We should all do that.

THROUGHOUT THE YEARS, MANY OF THE PROBLEMS HAVE STAYED THE SAME: WOMEN NOT HAVING ENOUGH MONEY, THE SCARCITY MENTALITY, PERSONALITY CONFLICTS IN A VERY SMALL COMMUNITY, LOVERS BREAKING UP—PLUS JUST GETTING GROUND DOWN ALL THE TIME FROM LIVING IN THIS WORLD. WHY DO YOU THINK WOMEN'S MUSIC DIDN'T JUST STOP SOMEWHERE ALONG THE LINE?

Because we still need our community. Women's music came out of the feminist movement, and the feminist movement died in some ways...

THE MEDIA CERTAINLY HAS TRIED TO MAKE US BELIEVE THAT.

You're right—I think we're still going, but it certainly doesn't get the media attention. The word "feminism"...if you say you're a feminist out there, it's somehow like saying you have poison ivy—even though the ideas are still there, and people like Sinéad O'Connor would never have a chance without what we've done. Women's music has continued in spite of the fact that the egg it came out of has somehow rotted.

AND WHY IS THAT?

I think it's because the thing we most forget is that we *want* that community. The music brings us together. We need that place where women get together and hear about our lives, because we don't hear it on TV or radio. Now I think we're more linked to the gay movement. In music, women are in the mainstream, this is the year of the singer/songwriter: Sinéad O'Connor, Tracy Chapman, Melissa Etheridge, Michelle Shocked, people that come from many of the beliefs we have, but are out there in the mainstream. And that's who the young women are all going to go hear. But they don't get to feel the community we experience at women's concerts and festivals. And what they're *not* hearing is anything about being lesbians.

OR HEARING THE PERFORMERS SAY TOO MUCH ABOUT WOMEN. THEY TALK ABOUT "PEOPLE" AND "PEOPLE'S RIGHTS"—VERY PRONOUN UNSPECIFIC.

Right. There's still that hole that's not being filled. More than that, it's simply not our community. It's still a world where we're ignored and not respected enough. There's still a need for our community, and I think those young women still need it

too, but we don't reach them. And while women's music keeps going, we're getting older, and our audience is an over-thirty audience. I'm thinking, how do we meet these younger women? I'm dreaming of ways to get them. One way is to go into the bars and get them. Perform there. I've had this little fantasy of doing a "We Are The World"-type record, but for women's music. We get all the performers together and do a video and song, and it plays in all the bars—make it kind of hip, make it kind of wow, but make it have some meaning—something that points to who we are in the community and what our music is...Don't you think that would be a great idea?



"Heather Bishop is such a perfect example—she does children's shows and she does women's/lesbian shows, and she never compromises who she is." (Sue and Heather share a meaningful backstage moment.)

YEAH, I DO. SO WHAT ARE THE ODDS OF IT EVER COMING TO BE?

Well, I don't know. It would take a lot of energy on somebody's part. But I think it could be done. It could be an AWMAC project. I think we also need to go into the universities and colleges. We've got a great resource: all of us who grew up and became women's studies teachers in these colleges. Work with these women, and get them to bring in artists to perform. Take that risk. You know they're so afraid to say *they're* lesbians, but at least they can bring in these artists to perform, and expose these college women to what we're doing. I think coalition work has been good, but one of the things we could try to do is some more roots work *within* our community. We've done so much coalition work across issues, which has in some ways dissipated who *we* are. I think it is very im-

portant, very valid work, but I also think sometimes we need to reach in and grab our own community.

I'VE SEEN OVER AND OVER AGAIN THAT "COALITION WORK" MEANS LESBIANS, AND FEMINIST WOMEN AND FEMINIST MEN, END UP WORKING FOR ANOTHER CAUSE. IT'S NOT A COALITION WHERE FEMINISM OR GAY RIGHTS IS REPRESENTED IN ANY WAY. IT'S REALLY NOT A COALITION; IT'S US HELPING THEM, WITHOUT US REALLY MAKING THEM STOP BEING SEXIST OR HOMOPHOBIC. WITHOUT INSISTING ON OUR ISSUES AND IDENTITY BEING A STRONG PRESENCE.

That's absolutely true. It brings up the issue of one of the other things that has kept women's music from growing, which is our own homophobia. Personally, I've gone through all the changes about it. When I first came out I was fine about it. Then I went through my own homophobic period where I thought, "Well, I'll never make it in the mainstream if I don't, you know, somehow cool it in some areas," and then realizing that I didn't want to do that anymore. Coming full circle around it. I think someone like Heather Bishop is such a good example of how it's perfectly okay: she does children's shows and she does women's/lesbian shows. And she never compromises who she is. She's not worried about losing her children's audience, or getting knocked out of the business, or any of those things, because she's perfectly okay with who she is. If we all were a little bit more like that...you know I noticed *HOT WIRE* printed an article on Michelle Shocked, who's obviously come out. Well! That's not hurting her career!

AND MARTINA...

...and Martina [Navratilova]. I think that we're at a time now where it's not so scary any more in that way. Maybe I'm wrong. I think there is a lot of homophobia in the straight world. But I think the less afraid we are of being ourselves, the more likely we are to be successful. Again, it's getting past our own fears. And it's something I still struggle with, all the time.

HOW DO YOU PERSONALLY STRUGGLE WITH IT?

Coming out is a continual process. I'm here working with these bands, these studios in Los Angeles. This week I'm producing some demos for CBS, with young

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LÁADAN

By Suzette Haden Elgin

JULIA PENELOPE'S SPEAKING FREELY

Julia Penelope's book *Speaking Freely: Unlearning the Lies of the Fathers' Tongues* (Pergamon Press, 1990) begins with an introduction that states its basic premises. That words *do* hurt us. That English not only hurts women, it sets boundaries on their lives. That so-called "Standard English" is used as a systematic means for keeping women and minorities down, and that patriarchal discourse is used to oppress women in particular. That "those responsible for our linguistic training have made us feel incompetent and powerless, forcing us to learn their false version of English and abandon our own social, ethnic and regional dialects, using the promise of upward mobility to herd us into linguistic conformity." That most of what has been written about a separate "women's English" is true not of *women* but of subordinates. That change in language means change in the world as well. That what is not named is almost impossible to talk about. That women can—if they will—change language, give names to what has been kept nameless, and make it possible to talk with ease about things that matter to women but which are now made inconvenient and cumbersome to talk about. And that men resist women's efforts to change language because at one level or another they know all these things. I agree with every word she says, and I admire the skill with which she says it.

Chapter One carefully presents the *history* of English in the context of these

Láadan: "The language of those who perceive," a language constructed to express the perceptions of women. It appears in the *Native Tongue* science fiction novel series by Suzette Haden Elgin. Teaching materials—grammar, dictionary, tapes, videos, etc.—are available through SF3, P.O. Box 1624, Madison, WI 53701-1624. To join the Láadan network or subscribe to 'The Lonesome Node,' write directly to Suzette Haden Elgin, P.O. Box 1137, Huntsville, AR 72740.

*Bíi wil thib bithim nedanewan weth.
Bíi wil yul wan nethaha hadiha.
Bíi wil dóhith rosh owanal ona nethaha,
wil meháda lali lemanal abedun nethoha nol,
i nemebithim lezh hathobéeya—
wil widom Lahila* neth óoyaha oma
Bathaha nil.*

May the road rise to meet you.
May the wind be always at your back.
May the sun shine warm upon your face,
the rains fall soft upon your fields,
and until we meet again—
may God* hold you in the palm
of His* hand.

—Old Irish blessing—

*NOTE: The word for the deity in Láadan—"Lahila"—is not masculine; it's unmarked for gender.

LINGUIST'S TRANSLATION

1. Bíi wil thib bithim nedanewan weth.
DECLARATIVE MAY RISE MEET YOU+WITH+PLEASURE+PURPOSE ROAD
2. Bíi wil ø yul wan nethaha hadiha.
(be) WIND BACK YOU+POSSESSIVE+PLACE ALWAYS
3. Bíi wil dóhith rosh owanal ona nethaha
SHINE SUN WARM+MANNER FACE
4. wil meháda lali lemanal abedun
PLURAL-FALL RAINS GENTLE+MANNER FIELD

nethoha nol
YOU+POSSESSIVE +PLACE ON
5. i nemebithim lezh hathobéeya
AND REPEAT+PLURAL+MEET WE (SEVERAL) UNTIL
6. wil widom Lahila neth óoyaha oma
HOLD HOLY-ONE YOU+OBJECT "PALM"+PLACE HAND

Bathaha
HOLY+POSSESSIVE+PLACE

premises. Chapters Six and Seven cover more of the historical ground, discussing in detail the English vocabulary as it pertains to women. Chapter Two discusses the book's premises in the context of metaphor, and includes a spectacularly good presentation of the myth that meaning can be moved from person to person in little packages the way goods are moved from producer to consumer by UPS; Chapter Three—"The Patriarchal Universe of Discourse"—expands on this. Chapters Eight, Nine, and Ten show the reader how the syntax/semantics of English is used and how English rhetoric is used, to maintain the status quo. Chapter Eleven takes up and discusses thoroughly

the various ways Julia feels women might bring about linguistic change. Finally, there is excellent "back matter"—end-notes, glossary, and bibliography. I cannot tell you about Chapters Four and Five, because they are missing from the copy

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ABOUT THE WRITER: *Suzette Haden Elgin, a Doctor of Linguistics, has taught at the University of California, specializing in Native American languages. She has written numerous linguistic texts in addition to 'The Gentle Art of Self-Defense' series, eleven science fiction/fantasy novels, and publishes a newsletter entitled 'The Lonesome Node.'*

Cartoons by Alison Bechdel

DYKES TO WATCH OUT FOR

TOXIC SHOCK 704

©1991 BY ALISON BECHDEL

Union Maids 705

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RE:INKING

SO YOU WANT TO NATIONALLY SYNDICATE YOUR COLUMN?

By Laura Post

Have you perused your community's gay/lesbian newsjournal and thought to yourself, as you read an article that did not touch you, that you could do a better job? And upon reading a particularly relevant and moving article, have you wished that you had a forum in which to express your ideas? Are you an artist whose talent expands readily to print? Are you a writer whose income from books and sporadic pieces does not support you?

Read on.

It has long been the fate of primarily creative souls that financial support either comes from a windfall (inheritance, fairy godmother) or from unsatisfying labors beyond the realm of genuine interest. This is especially true for artists in the unequally paid/downwardly mobile feminist cultural network; and it is especially true for artists whose work does not catapult them into center stage—i.e., instrumental musicians, photographers, production/editorial/technical craftswomen, and literary folks.

WRITING A COLUMN... FOR MONEY

One solution is to write a regular column for money. It can keep writing skills honed; it might develop prose expression. Writing a syndicated column might open up new audiences, a new career.

Yet syndication is not for everyone. There are frequent deadlines, powerful editors, and delayed/disorganized reimbursements to contend with—not to mention the difficulties of communication at a distance.

If you are seriously interested in pursuing syndication of your best advice,

RE:INKING articles deal with women's writing, including individual women writers, book projects, and related issues.

GETTING STARTED

To further assist you lesbian writers enthused about following in her footsteps, Yvonne Zipter has provided a listing of the papers that currently print her work as a starting point for your initial queries.

The Weekly News. Jay Vail, 901 Northeast 79th St., Miami FL 33138.

The Washington Blade. Lisa Keen, 724 9th St. NW, 8th floor, Washington, DC 20001.

Philadelphia Gay News. Gary Day, 254 S. 11th St., Philadelphia, PA 19107.

In Step. Ronald R. Geiman, 225 S. 2nd St., Milwaukee, WI 53204.

The Baltimore Gaypaper. Mike Getty, 241 W. Chase St., Baltimore, MD 21201.

Outlines. Tracy Baim, 3059 N. Southport, Chicago, IL 60657.

Phoenix Resource. Robert Pela, P.O. Box 5948, Phoenix, AZ 85010.

The Bridge. Becky Moorman, P.O. Box 526418, Salt Lake City, UT 84152-6418.

Equal Time. Cynthia Scott, 711 W. Lake St. #505, Minneapolis, MN 55408.

Bay Windows. Jeff Epperly, 1523 Washington St., Boston, MA 02118.

observations, or musings—or if you are simply interested in the process of syndication in the lesbian/gay press—then this article is for you.

Yvonne Zipter is the author of *Diamonds Are A Dyke's Best Friend* (about lesbian softball) and *The Patience of Metal* (poetry). [Editor's note: Yvonne is also a founding mother of *HOT WIRE*, and this "Re:Inking" column title was thought up by her. She was also a founding mother, along with Toni Armstrong Jr., of the now-annual National Women's Music Festival Writers' Conference.] Her "Inside Out" column, which appears in several publications around the country, became syndicated through the writing that she was already doing for *Outlines*, the Chicago-based gay/lesbian monthly. In 1987, following guidelines from her editor Tracy Baim, Yvonne sent letters to other alternative newsjournals throughout the United States.

Based on her current work, she proposed a pay scale and rate of work. In response to ten letters sent out, Yvonne received three requests to run her column, though none were able to match her suggested financial reimbursement criteria. Nonetheless, she began contributing regular articles to them.

Eventually, Yvonne initiated a second campaign, this time to approximately a dozen papers in the Midwest, East Coast, and Florida. "In San Francisco and New York City," Yvonne says, "they have regular staff writers, and it is hard to break in." She heard back from four.

Yvonne comments that the advice given to her by her editor and friends at *Outlines* has proven invaluable in helping her to decide which quality papers were most appropriate for her work. There are so many publications on the market, it helps to get advice from people who know which are likely to have readers who will be interested in a particular type of column. For example, many primarily "gay" papers are full of male phone sex

ads and scantily clad men—not likely to attract lesbian feminist readers.

Many gay/lesbian papers exchange with each other, and sometimes reprint the work of writers, photographers, and cartoonists without obtaining permission from the creators. Not only does this deprive the creative person of income, but it takes away control; she may simply not want her work to appear in certain types of publications.

Yvonne currently writes about "lesbian everyday life, sometimes humorous but sometimes serious," mostly for weeklies. To some of the weeklies, she sends one new and one old column every month, and they print her work every couple of weeks, as a function of space. Other weeklies run her latest columns once a month or less—again as space allows. The final pieces wind up being three to four double-spaced typed pages, with the stipulation that she come up with a new idea every month. The editors generally leave content untouched,

when pieces are published.

Yvonne says she almost always has to trust that her work is being published and she's being paid. Since she lives in Chicago, she is able to pick up *Outlines* every month, but otherwise only the *Philadelphia Gay News* and Miami's *The Weekly News* reliably send copies.

Lee Lynch is the author of several lesbian novels (*Toothpick House*, *The Swashbuckler*, *Dusty's Queen of Hearts Diner*, *Sue Slate*, *Private Eye*, and, newly released in February 1991, *That Old Studebaker*). Her column "The Amazon Trail" has been syndicated since 1984.

As someone who uses words exactly, Lee points out that according to the dictionary definition, syndication is "to see [an article, feature, etc.] through a syndicate for publication in many newspapers or periodicals." In other words, syndication requires an outside agency to commission and pay for work that is to be distributed through a pre-established network. In the case of the gay/lesbian

of us, there is not a living to be made from the sale of books in the women's community," she says—Lee began writing for *Just Out*. For her, the next step was writing for other papers—and the first of those, in 1984, was *The Lesbian News*, which paid her \$5 per month.

Subsequently, Lee's approach has been to send a self-addressed/stamped postcard, along with a copy of a current and two past columns, to each paper where she sought self-syndication, both in the United States and in Canada. *Au Courant* was the next to syndicate Lee's work. In 1988, Lee then approached *The Washington Blade*, *The Dallas Voice*, and Chicago's *Outlines*, all of which now carry her work.

"Be patient and be persistent," Lee advises new journalists. "Go to Gay and Lesbian Press Association conferences. Be present at literary gatherings (such as OUT/WRITE in San Francisco during the spring of 1990). Network. Meet editors, publishers, and other writers face to



Yvonne Zipter: writing about everyday lesbian life in "Inside Out" for the weeklies.

though there might be modification of the title. If copy is to be altered, then Yvonne expects to be notified.

The pay scale for syndicated columns in the gay/lesbian press is \$10-15 per 10,000 copies printed of the paper containing her article.

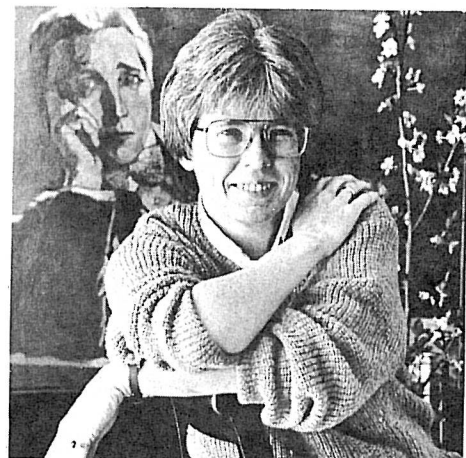
One of the major difficulties in penning a syndicated column for reimbursement is, in fact, the reimbursement. Ideally, the papers should forward copies of the printed articles along with payment to their writers not-in-residence. In reality, however, procrastination and chaos often prevent smooth flow of feedback, and the columnist is left having to trust that payment will be forthcoming

press, however, the process is rather a "self-syndication."

Unlike Yvonne Zipter, Lee did not set out to self-syndicate. Encouraged by her then-lover and by a workshop on journalism at a women's studies conference, Lee set out simply to write a column.

In 1985, however, after talking with Susan Cavin (then editor of *Big Apple Dyke News*) and Eve Sicular (from *Just Out* in Portland, Oregon), Lee decided that the publicity would be helpful, and decided to pursue syndication.

Aware that the income from her books was less than she required to live a reasonable existence—"thus far, for most



Lee "The Amazon Trail" Lynch: "Writing syndicated columns for the love of it is great."

face." All of this advice may be needed in the face of her discouraging feedback where, she estimates, ninety-eight percent of her queries received no reply, despite her thoroughness and her willingness to negotiate price.

Moreover, Lee emphasizes, though follow-up on her part has played a role in the responses that she did receive, "even

continued on page 58

ABOUT THE WRITER: Laura Post is a staff writer at 'HOT WIRE' and a lesbian psychiatrist who is currently attempting to self-syndicate her question-and-answer column on lesbian-relevant psychiatric treatment and medications.

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250 pp., Index, Illustrations, November 1990

Book and companion cassette tape available from the following distributors: New Leaf, Inland, Music Design, Bookpeople, and Ladyslipper.

SUE FINK from page 51

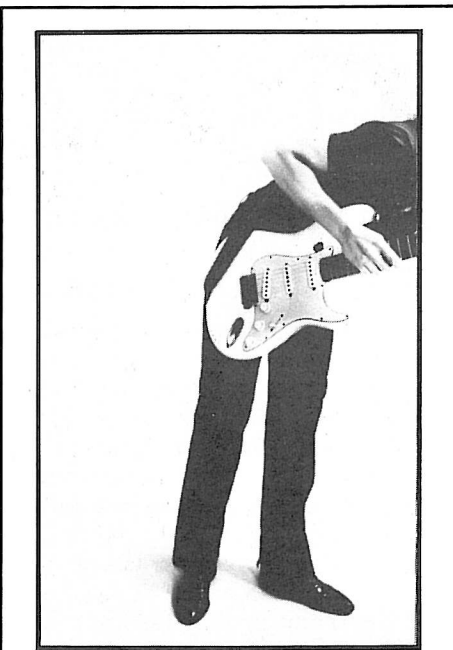
male heavy metal bands. (I can't get over the incongruity.) And you know, how open am I? It's always a struggle for me.

WILL ALL OF THIS BE IN THE BOOK YOU'RE WRITING?

Well, while my music has gotten more and more serious, I still have this part of me that likes to have a very good time. Life can be very funny, I think, and so this book is just stories from the road—what's happened to me in women's music, before, after, and during. Holly [Near] has done her autobiography, but my book is a collection of short stories. They're all true, but it's very entertaining reading because it's not like, "Then I met this person, then I met that person"...it's more the story approach of "What is it really like to be in this situation? What is the humor and fun about it? What is it really like?" It's just a very funny book. It's called *There is No Karma*. And I'm having the best time writing it. I intend to send it to a publisher this year and get it out. If not, it's a hell of a journal!

WHAT ARE YOUR OTHER PLANS?

I have a new approach to life, where I let it flow instead of planning it so much. It's like all those years of therapy have finally made me a little less goal-oriented. I dream about doing a new album, but I doubt if I'll produce it myself. Either somebody else is going to do it or it isn't going to happen, because I'm not that business-oriented. It's going to be a much more acoustic album, with a percussion feel versus drum feel, and although there'll be some synthesizer stuff in it, it'll be more natural sounds. This album is



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4 1 5 . 6 5 4 . 3 8 4 6

going to be story songs that deal with very personal characters, mostly me. Stories that reflect a larger idea—songs where I just tell the story but leave the larger questions that are raised from specific incidents. I may call it *Confession*. So I'm thinking a lot about doing this album and then tying it all together, in more of a performance piece—versus just get up there, here's this song, here's that song—tying it together in terms of a one-woman theater kind of a thing. You know, sometimes I feel really bad I'm not famous like Bette Midler. But then one night I was sitting at the Pagoda—it's like this women's separate little community [in Florida], they live there and it just seems so exciting. It was in the morning, and this woman walked in, perfectly naked—she was just walking through, relaxing. I hadn't seen her in years, and asked her what she was doing these days. She said, "Oh, I'm building this ark, and I'm going to sail it down the Amazon. I got a grant to do it." I'm thinking, "Wow, this is really weird. This woman is really weird." And then, "Oh my God, am I any less weird? I go from city to city singing for lesbians, about our lives," you know? So, Madonna might be more famous, she's pretty outrageous—and Bette Midler, they have all this...but I don't think they have any more adventures than I've had. That's kind of what the book is about. What is success? It's doing what you really really love and not being afraid of it. ●

JANE & GARBO from page 48

G: That's where the professors have us both beat—mandatory attendance. That would make my life so much more enjoyable.

J: But our work boils down to the same enjoyment—hearing one's own feelings, ideas, inspirations aired publicly. Most non-artists have this experience limited to rare events, like weddings.

G: Well, Jane, my phone bill is about to equal my paycheck this week. Who won this argument?

J: Want to call it a tie?

G: Sure, I'd say we suffer equally.

J: Yes, and consensus is a fine way to end in a politically-correct, feminist fashion.

Having reached this feminist compromise, Garbo and Jane sit back on their separate sofas. And in their fatigued states, they imagine their foremothers exploring this same question. Did women in herstory carry on the writer vs. singer debate? Up in feminist heaven, is Sappho arguing with Hildegard von Bingen? Are Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas presiding over a celestial salon, where the Imagist poets are complaining as the opera divas answer, "Yes, but...?"

And what does the future hold? After more hours of therapy, more miles of computer paper, and more reels of tape, the big question may be settled. But, Garbo and Jane hope that instead of debating whether struggling writers have it worse than struggling singers, they'll eventually be asking each other a new, more exciting question: Who has it better, bestselling authors or world-famous singers? ●

ANGELA'S CLASS *from page 45*

My field in philosophy is aesthetics, and that is the angle I look from. It is the social dimensions of music, the way in which aesthetics form our lives."

This course—as are all of Angela's classes—was very demanding. We met only once a week for three hours, which meant if a student missed one class, she (or occasionally he) was really missing a whole week. In addition to her interesting lectures and presentations, we also listened to music and even had musicians (including Faith Nolan) come to class and perform.

She lectured on such topics as: "Music, Society, and History"; "The Historical Roots of the Blues"; "Women and Jazz: Social Protest and Challenges to Male Supremacy"; "Women and the Folk Tradition"; "Women and Caribbean Music Traditions: Social Themes"; "Women's Liberation and Women's Music: The Contemporary Era"; "The Continuum of Women's Music"; and "Women and the Social Implications of Contemporary Popular Music."

The requirements for the class were extensive. We had to write two short papers, do a take-home midterm exam in response to questions Angela gave us, write a final paper on a topic we chose, and do a group presentation on a topic related to the class. Topics I focused on during the semester included the historic contribution of the blues women of the '20s; the historical and political roles women played in the blues and spirituals; the women's music movement; and racism within the women's music movement.

We also read several books (including *Bessie* by Chris Albertson; *Black Pearls: Blues Queens of the 1920s* by Daphne Duvall Harrison; *Lady Sings the Blues* by Billie Holiday; and *Mother of the Blues: A Study of Ma Rainey* by Sandra Lieb) in addition to more than twenty articles (several of which came from *HOT WIRE*).

The class was fantastic. I know I am not speaking for just myself when I say that Angela, by the nature of who she is, has a tendency to put extra pressure on her students. She makes herself very accessible and approachable, but even as a student who is very dedicated to school I felt I had to work twice as hard since I knew such a politically and academically educated woman was going to be reading and grading my work. That extra pressure played a positive rather than a negative role, the proof of which came when I received my report card.

Angela agrees that the students work extra hard in the class. "It's been an extremely exciting course," she says. "I have discovered that the students are extremely enthusiastic about subjects that are much closer to their every day lives than ones they normally study. This course gives students the opportunity to reflect on the way music affects their lives, and in general the work done in the course is really excellent." ●

LYNN LAVNER *from page 34*

Now, I come from the old school that still clings to the theory that the melody of a song should have *something* to do with its lyrical content. (Here I dare to throw myself in with Schubert. And he wasn't straight.) Almost at once a lilting Irish tune came into existence, one that is deceptively simple but can turn on itself, changing into something wild or even frightening with the crafty flick of a piano. Ah, but the words.

I grew up in a part of Brooklyn where people go to church only three times in their lives, and the third time they don't come back. Lacking a good Catholic upbringing, yet wanting the lyric to be authentic in jargon and feeling, I found myself at a loss. Where to go for... uh, guidance?

Then something very weird happened. Bing Crosby would have loved it.



I was doing my cabaret act, rattling on about something or other, when I parenthetically mentioned that I was reading the book. After the show, a woman came up to the piano and confided that she was one of the ex-nuns whose story it tells. Indeed, I had closed the book just after reading *her* chapter that afternoon! She was a wealth of information.

Whether or not I've struck the mark is for you, dear listener, to decide. I can only tell you that weeks were spent over an adjective, that a thousand approaches were tried and cast out (even now the language becomes liturgical), that so many verses were discarded I began to refer to the song as "Gone with the Nuns." Rosemary Curb has been very generous in her praise. Several other contributors have thanked me for the sensitive way the subject is handled. I'm told that tears were shed when the song was played at a "reunion" that was held. If all this is so, I breathe easier.

But why, I wonder, have I always found it so easy to be quick, prolific, even flippant where my own experiences, feelings, and background are concerned? Perhaps, if we really are all sisters, it is always a simpler task to break one's own silence. ●

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HOUSE CONCERTS from 49

small, informal atmosphere when it's time for them to give a performance.

Obviously, you can't have a large, electrified band in your living room. Single performers generally work best in small spaces, though acoustic duos and even ensembles may not be out of the question. Consider the loudness of the noise from the perspective of your neighbors.

2. *Negotiate time, place, payment, and other details.* The artist will let you know when she is available. You'll probably be booking the show on a week night. Most artists have to reserve weekends for big concerts, because that's where the earning potential is.

Talk to the artist in detail about payment. Usually, a cover charge is collected at the door. The artist might get that, less your expenses, or you might agree in advance on a guaranteed minimum fee. The cover charge should be affordable for the audience but enough so that the artist can make some money. (A good gauge is to look at the price of movies or other entertainment in town.) "Passing the hat" can be done in lieu of a cover charge, but—not surprisingly—most performers don't like doing that. Unfortunately, most people simply empty their pockets of change when the "hat" comes around, leaving the artist with very little compensation. However you decide to handle the issue of money, it needs to be agreed upon openly, in advance—and in writing.

There are many places you could have the performance. Living rooms are an obvious choice, since they are usually the largest room in the house. You want a space that can comfortably seat twenty or more. (You may need to move a couple of pieces of furniture to accomplish this, and have folks bring pillows or chairs.) Other places to have the concert might include a roomy backyard or a fixed-up basement. I once did a performance on a patio (that's a "porch" to you Easterners) for an audience seated in the yard. It was a beautiful starry summer night.

Other details need to be discussed. Who does the promotion, and how much will be done? Is a piano or anything else needed for the performance? How long will the performance be? (One or two hours is the standard.) Is the artist allergic to pets in the household? How long will the performer be staying, and where? Will she get meals as part of the deal? How about transportation to/from the airport?

3. *Advertise.* If you don't have enough friends to fill the place, write up a flyer and distribute it anywhere your potential audience might gather—bars, coffeehouses, parties, sporting events, bookstores. Some artists will help you with advertising by sharing mailing list information and/or sending a flyer that you can duplicate. (I personally send postcards to everyone on my mailing list, listing the places I'll be performing.)

A great place to start your promotional campaign is to call your friends, and have them call their friends. Also, send notices to newspapers. You could buy advertising if you

have a large seating capacity. Many publications offer free calendar listings, but don't wait until the last minute to get the information to them. And finally...

4. *Enjoy the performance.* That's the real benefit of doing a house concert! ●

LÁADAN from page 52

sent to me—I have Chapter Six twice instead. I very much hope that this is just a glitch in a handful of copies, and am confident that the missing chapters, like the ones I've read, are excellent.

One of the most remarkable things about this book from my personal point of view is that Julia Penelope says so much in it about my work, and so much of that is *positive*. She is due a great deal of credit on this point, and it is evidence of her scholarship and her ethics, because her perception of my position on many feminist matters is that I am both wrong and wrong-headed. It is offensive to use a review of someone else's book as a kind of platform for your own opinions, and I'm not going to do it here. But I will try briefly to clarify four items that might lead to confusion.

Of the constructed language—Láadan—to which she generously gives a great deal of space, she says on page 247 that "the fact that it was created by an anglo, heterosexual, xtian woman" severely limits its accuracy "for some time to come." I will say simply that she has never met me and does not know me, as I of course do not know her. But I believe that what she means by "anglo, heterosexual, xtian woman" ("xtian" being her choice for "Christian") describes me badly. If I were that sort of woman I would be vice president of a good university today (or perhaps the wife of one), and I most assuredly would not have spent any of my time constructing Láadan [or writing for *HOT WIRE* since 1986].

On page 224, she says Láadan's "most significant structural assumption" is that "inner sensory information becomes as important as outwardly obvious phenomena if we have the words to describe it." That is an assumption of Láadan, but I'd put it a bit differently. I would say instead that body language (which carries at least ninety percent of all emotional information for English) can be conveniently and efficiently lexicalized [made into words or meaningful parts of words], thus saving women enormous amounts of conversational *work*. She says in several places and several ways that Láadan is patriarchal because it lacks certain words and includes others; I will say only that I was meticulously careful to provide the mechanisms for adding words—any words; and that I have said in public and in print many times that anyone is free to add any words they like, at any time. The morphology is as transparent as my skill could make it, and I have asserted no property rights. Finally, she says I give language too much power. I find this charming, because if ever a book proved that I do not, it is *Speaking Freely*. As she says, control of language is the oppressors' "first and most important method for internalizing oppression in the minds of those they oppress." I

agree.

I think that for the most part Dr. Penelope and I are in agreement. I have in fact only one complaint about her book (the missing chapters in my copy are not her fault!) and it is this: *I detest the f-word, and she keeps using it.* It is a word I associate with the most crude and brutal of men in our society; it is a word such men use freely and publicly; it is a word so emotionally charged that it slams minds shut against ideas they might learn from and agree with had that word not been there; it is a word that never does any work that could not be done by some other less hateful word; it is a word that hurts me. Using it reminds me of the stupid exercise of the freedom to burn American flags. I wish women would not use it in their writing except when it absolutely cannot be avoided—for example, when they are quoting and leaving it out would destroy the quotation. I do not mind being called a prude, which is what usually happens when I bring this up. I am the world's *worst* prude about violence, and proud of it—and that cursed word is nothing but violence.

Please buy this book, with all its chapters included, and read it carefully. I recommend everything else about it. ●

SYNDICATION from page 55

follow-up will not help unless your work is reaching a market need. Some papers are seeking lesbian pieces, some want more articles on AIDS than on lesbians, still others can use gay or local news and not opinion pieces with a national perspective."

The money generated for articles in "gay" papers derives primarily from advertisements by/for/about gay men, which may be an impediment for some separatist/anti-pornographic lesbian writers. Solvent, purely lesbian papers are few and far between. For example, take the "lesbian capital" of the Bay Area—in the past few years since *Bay Area Women's News* folded, and (lesbian) *Plexus* merged with (predominantly gay male) *Coming Up!* (retitled *Bay Times*), the sole remaining voice of the women's press has been *Mama Bears News and Notes*, which is largely assembled by the staff of Mama Bear's coffeehouse and into which it can be problematic to gain entry.

Despite the difficulties, however, Lee is clear that "writing syndicated columns for the love of it is great." For more lucrative ventures, she suggests writing feature articles for the gay/lesbian press, and/or writing reviews of books with gay/lesbian relevance. In both categories, though, often there remains the obstacle of relative lack of regular, paid staff at many gay/lesbian periodicals.

Lee currently offers two options, a 500-word column or a 1200-word column for papers without space restrictions, and "The Amazon Trail" currently appears in the following publications: *Au Courant*; *Outlines*; *The Dallas Voice*; *Etc. Magazine*; *Just Out*; *The Lesbian News*; *Phoenix Resource*; *The Washington Blade*; *Our Paper*; and *Front Page*. ●

MIMI FOX from page 34

paid those dues growing up in a working class neighborhood in New York... walkin', talkin', and shakin' to the rhythms of the street. My parents were both active addicts. Instability and constant violence was the atmosphere that prevailed in my "home" as a kid. I tried to "sing" Billie's lyrics right through my guitar. There is a sense of surviving against incredible odds—the blues as survival, the blues as retribution, the blues as a tremendous triumph.

The stress of "surviving" took its toll on me as a teenager, and I spent several years locked up. I had a lot of time to listen to jazz and begin to absorb its fascinating rhythms and complex harmonies. The title cut of the album was a culmination of years of study. The bass vamp is in 5/4 time with a contrasting melody in 4/4. (This is the musical equivalent of patting your head and rubbing your stomach simultaneously...not the kind of song you can hum in the shower!)

I listened to all of the great songwriters of the day, and Joni Mitchell was certainly one of my favorites. However, as a young lesbian I found her endless tales about her boyfriends somewhat annoying! But, no problem. I arranged her pieces as instrumentals. That's how the "Joni Mitchell Medley" came about.

By the time I had my first relationship

with a woman at age eighteen, I almost squeezed my girlfriend to death—I was so hungry for love. The ballad "If There Ever Was a Rainbow" was the result of our inevitable breakup. Years later I wrote the last verse to this song, which offers a more hopeful and self-loving resolution than I could've imagined at nineteen (... "Now I know that the world is full of rainbows/if only I'd take the time/to embrace the love in me I had forsaken/and forsake the dream in you I couldn't find"). I was happy to have my long-time musical buddy Rhiannon sing this song with such power and range.

The jazz standard "Sugar" is about nothing more than pure lust! I tried to moan like a saxophone and burn like a locomotive.

The guitar is my medium to express all that I hold inside. Sometimes that is precious and tender, other times fierce and smoldering. Even though I recorded *Against the Grain* more than five years ago, I am still pleased with how it turned out. As a jazz musician I am constantly growing, learning, and absorbing as much as I can. Every day I am amazed with what the guitar can teach me. With each new album that I record, I hope to synthesize all of my growing, learning, and living into a fresh, honest statement. ●

KRISTAN ASPEN from page 35

creative than I do at other times. Usually I am aware of feeling like I am literally walking above the ground, floating instead of actually touching the earth. Often I have tried not to feel this sensation because I am afraid of having a car accident or generally spacing out and making some dangerous mistake. But this time, as I was already on a path to find my creativity, I decided to really open up to the Moon's energy, to feel what it was that Gemini could give me. Aside from the fact that it felt good to accept and embrace the moon this way, to allow my spirit and body to feel, I was gifted with a poem about the experience. This poem now serves as a reminder to me of the creative energy that is there in the Universe, that is mine for the taking, if I can just open my Self up to it, see it, welcome it, reach for it, and love my Self for wanting it.

Here is the poem, which may one day become a choral piece, or the inspiration for something instrumental:

Gemini Moon

attended by two bright sisters
a planet and a star.

Your energy lifts me off this earth
to a place that knows air as the
grounding force

a place so foreign yet familiar.

Flying through the atmosphere of my mind
I explore a space

where creativity reaches for form
plugging me in to the Universe and You.

My heart sings with gratitude

for the ebb and flow of my tides captive in
your magnetic field;

*the pleasure you bring me is true.
Blessed Be the cycles of Life.*

Now I know beyond the shadow of a doubt that I am creative. Each of us can tap our Source if we listen to our feelings and allow ourselves to express emotions without becoming stuck in them. It takes patience, space (remember *A Room of One's Own* by Virginia Woolf), and self-love. If we are really lucky and really persistent, a Muse may appear to inspire us. When this happens, it is a blessing and a sacred gift which helps us reach toward our deepest Self. May you honor your Self enough to listen and speak your own truth. May the creative energy of the Universe flow through you always. Blessed Be. ●

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SUSAN HERRICK from page 30

My newly released recording *Truth and the Lie* contains glimpses of this journey. It has songs of remembering, embracing, and healing. I sing of confronting the lies, of calling on the Spirit to nourish me, of being loved so well as to find the greatest joy, and of affirming our innate goodness as human beings.

One of the most challenging aspects of the recording is that my parents will hear the songs about my abuse. I have not yet confronted them with these memories, but the time has come. It is part of my truth. It might seem easier to shrink back into denial, but my denial is no longer useful. Further, it is not my duty to protect them. It is possibly even dangerous to do so. They are responsible for their lives, and I for mine. I love them intensely and am grateful for the gifts they provided, but I feel called to boldly sing into the unacceptable silence.

Vicki Nobles speaks of the wounded healer, that our own wounds are likely to be the source of our healing power in the world. I have long attempted to make changes in the world while denying my own need for healing. I am beginning to see how the transformation of society's lies into truths begins with transformation of self. I am beginning to grasp how the abyss of my life can become an opening, how the anger can become healthy self-protection, and how the shame can ultimately become love. ●

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PEACE CALENDARS. 1992 calendar info. from Syracuse Cultural Workers, PO Box 6367, Syracuse, NY 13217. (315) 474-1132. *1991 20th anniversary edition still available, \$10.*

WANTED

PHOTOGRAPHERS experienced shooting live performances. 'HOT WIRE' is in perpetual need of good quality photos from women's festivals and other events. Looking for photos from early '70s to present. Contact editor if interested.

PROFESSIONAL COMPOSER for lesbian musicals. Carolyn Gage, PO Box 718 Ashland, OR 97520. (503) 535-5267. *Resume and demo tape.*

SERVICES

GAIL FAIRFIELD, author of Choice Centered Astrology: The Basics and Choice Centered Tarot. PO Box 8 Smithville, IN 47458. (812) 331-0501. *Individual or business consultations by phone or in person—using Astrology and/or Tarot.*

GRAPHIC SERVICES FROM A TO Z. Lambda Publications (publishers of Outlines lesbian/ gay newsmagazine), 3059 N. Southport, Chicago, IL 60657. (312) 871-7610. *Using advanced desktop publishing, we can meet your artistic and graphic needs, including posters, menus, flyers, brochures, letterheads, newsletters, ads, resumes, and more.*

LESBIAN CPA: serving wimmin nationwide. Deb Murphy CPA, 1830 N. Sherman Ave. #205, Evanston, IL 60201 (708) 864-5217 or 2250 W. Farragut, Chicago, IL 60625 (312) 728-4706 FAX (708) 864-5393. *Personalized accounting, tax services, financial consulting, and business planning for small businesses and individuals.*

VIDEOS

COUNTRY ATTITUDE. PO Box 103, Lakeside, CA 92040 (619) 390-9830. *Country Western dance instruction featuring Tush Push, CC Shuffle, Slap Leather, Ramblin. \$24.95.*

FOR LOVE AND FOR LIFE: The 1987 March on Washington for Lesbian & Gay Rights. Naiad Press, PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. *Places the march's events in history*

OFFICIAL GAY GAMES III Opening and Closing Ceremonies Videos. Wolfe Video, PO Box 64, Dept HC, New Almaden, CA 95042. (408) 268-6782. *\$49.95 ea. or \$89.95 set.*

TOUCH OF TOUCH. Ladyslipper, PO Box 3124, Durham, NC 27705. *Music video: Mary Gemini sings of a woman who travels to the moon, finding new frameworks for love, life, and liberty.*

BOOKSTORES

BRIGIT BOOKS. 3434-4th St. N., St. Petersburg, FL 33704. (813) 522-5775. *New and used books, lesbian/feminist/women's, music, jewelry, etc. Open every day.*

CATEGORY SIX BOOKS. 1029 E. 11th Ave., Denver, CO 80218. (303) 832-6263. *Gay/les-*

bian/feminist. Complete selection of women's music.

CRAZY LADIES BOOKSTORE. 4112 Hamilton Ave., Cincinnati, OH 45223. (513) 541-4198. Women's books, music, gifts. Feminist/lesbian/gay.

CRONES' HARVEST c/o Shockro, PO Box 322, Cambridge MA 02140. An invitation to undistributed musicians performing political, lesbian-identified music. Submit tapes for possible retail distribution and concert at Crones' Harvest, a new women's bookstore in Boston. Distributed musicians invited to submit materials for possible concert booking.

EVE'S GARDEN. 119 W. 57th St. 14th floor, New York, NY 10019. (212) 757-8651. Women's sexuality boutique. A comfortable environment where women can buy tools of pleasure. Open noon to 7pm. Catalog \$1.

INKLINGS--an alternative bookshop. 1846 Richmond Ave., Houston, TX 77098. (713) 521-3369. Full-service women's bookstore, with large selection of women's fiction & women's music.

LAMBDA PASSAGES BOOKSTORE. 7545 Biscayne Blvd., Miami, FL 33138. (305) 754-6900. 20% off all gay & lesbian book titles, no matter where you find them listed or catalogued, when you order by mail. \$2 S/H first book, 50 cents each additional. Catalog \$2.

LUNARIA. 90 King St., Northampton, MA 01060. (413) 586-7851 voice or TTY/TDD. Lesbian/feminist new, used, and rare and out-of-print books, periodicals, music.

NEW WORDS BOOKSTORE. 186 Hampshire St., Cambridge, MA 02139. (617) 876-5310. Boston's women's bookstore features extensive selection of women's, lesbian, and multicultural music, books, and journals. Wheelchair accessible.

OSCAR WILDE MEMORIAL BOOKSHOP. 15 Christopher St., New York, NY 10014. (212) 255-8097. The world's first gay/lesbian storefront—since 1967.

WOMANKIND BOOKS. Dept. HT, 5 Kivy St., Huntington Station, New York, NY 11746. (516) 427-1289. Free lesbian mail order catalog describing 500 books, videos, and music. Send two 25 cent stamps. A lesbian owned and operated company. Books in stock shipped in 48 hours. Visa/MasterCard orders call toll free 1-800-648-5333.

WOMEN & CHILDREN FIRST. 5233 N. Clark St., Chicago, IL 60640. (312) 769-9299. Since 1979. Feminist/lesbian books, records, tapes, posters, jewelry. Weekly programming.

WOMEN PERFORMERS and SPEAKERS

JAMIE ANDERSON. PO Box 42282, Tucson, AZ 85733-2282 (602) 325-7828. Lesbian feminist singer/songwriter; contemporary folk, blues, country, and comedy.

HEATHER BISHOP. Mother of Pearl Records, Woodmore, Manitoba, Canada R0A 2M0. Bookings: Joan Miller. Contemporary, feminist-lesbian, folk, blues, children's.

KATE CLINTON. 1450 6th St., Berkeley, CA 94610. Booking: (415) 527-7545; Management: (508) 487-0301. Lesbian, feminist, humorist. Concert touring, lecturing, workshops. Fun!

ALICE DI MICELE. PO Box 281, Williams, OR 97544. (503) 846-6837. Earth-loving, womyn-loving folksinger. National tours, two recordings: 'Make a Change' and 'It's a Miracle.' Call/write for promo and booking information.

EXIT 154 (Jai Conroy/Drew Dooley). PO Box 3512, Albuquerque, NM 87190-3512. (505) 831-9310/344-7123. Contemporary women's folk music with pizzazz. Book now without regrets later.

CAROLYN GAGE. PO Box 718, Ashland, OR 97520. (503) 535-5267. One-Woman show, 'The Second Coming of Joan of Arc.' Lesbian Theatre workshops.

KAY GARDNER. PO Box 33, Stonington, ME 04681. (207) 367-5076. Concerts; workshops: Music and Healing; Women, Music and Power Ritual. Also Sunwomyn Ensemble.

RONNIE GILBERT. PO Box 7765, Berkeley, CA 94707. (415) 527-9610. "Grande Dame of Political Folk Song." Booking, Fleming Tamulevich (313) 995-9066.

GAYLE MARIE. 2838 Atwell Ave., Oakland, CA 94601. (415) 534-8205. Feminist singer who loves songs and occasional arias.

SONIA JOHNSON. Wildfire Books, PO Box 10286, Albuquerque, NM 87184. (505) 344-4790. Books, audio & video tapes, live speeches and workshops.

LYNN LAVNER. 480 E. 17th St., Brooklyn, NY 11226. Manager Ardis Sperber (718) 284-4473. Lynn, at the piano, regales with lavender songs and comedy. Gay/lesbian cabaret.

MUSICA FEMINA. PO Box 15121, Portland, OR 97215. (503) 233-1206. Flute/guitar duo. National tours and recordings of classical women composers & "new classical" originals.

HOLLY NEAR. c/o Jo-Lynne Worley. PO Box 10408 Oakland, CA 94610(415) 835-1445. Concerts, Workshops, lectures.

PAM & MAGGIE. 729 Chestnut St., Escondido, CA 92025-5259. (619) 738-7523. Heartfelt originals; also play country, folk and soft rock. Available upon request.

LIBBY RODERICK. Turtle Island Records. PO Box 203294, Anchorage, AK 99520 or Ladyslipper Catalog. (907) 278-6817. Feminist folk, gospel, Native American, more! Recording 'If You See a Dream.'

JUDITH SLOAN & SOPHIE. PO Box 1867, New Haven, CT 06508. (203) 782-2587. Sloan transforms herself, performing compassionate riveting characters and zany comedy theater.

TWO NICE GIRLS. PO Box 4600 Austin, TX 78765. Products for sale: T-shirts, stickers, bookmarks, posters, watches and more. For info. send SASE. Thank You.

KAY WEAVER. Booking Agent: Martha Wheelock, Circe Records. 256 S. Robertson Blvd. Beverly Hills, CA 90211. Singer/songwriter; performs nation-wide with her famous films and two record albums.

JANE WINSLOW. 3416 Brookline Ave. #2, Cincinnati, OH 45220. (513) 281-2944. Singer/songwriter; folk/pop; lesbian love songs; women's spirituality chants. 'Sweet, Healing

Sexy, Fun.' Tapes available through Ladyslipper, workshops in ritual making, singing, and writing—available for touring.

PERIODICALS

ACHE: Journal for Black Lesbians. PO Box 6071, Albany, CA 94706. (415) 824-0703. Bi-monthly publication by black lesbians for the benefit of all black women. 6x/yr; \$10-\$25 sliding scale subscription.

BITCH: The Women's Rock Mag With Bite. c/o San Jose Face #164, 478 W. Hamilton, Campbell, CA 95008. Opposing, clashing viewpoints aired, from heavy metal head-bangers to New Age Wiccans. \$15/12 issues.

BROADSHEET. 476 Mt. Eden Rd. Box 56-147, Auckland 3, New Zealand. Phone 608-535. New Zealand's feminist magazine. Ten 40-48 page issues per year—regular music section.

BROOMSTICK. 3543 18th St. #3, San Francisco, CA 94110. National feminist political journal by, for, about women over forty. 4x/yr. U.S. \$15, Canada \$20 (US funds), Overseas/Institutions \$25, sample/\$5. Free to incarcerated women over forty.

FEMINIST BOOKSTORE NEWS. PO Box 882554, San Francisco, CA 94188. (415) 626-1556. Trade publication for women's bookstores. FBN's 'Writing Wanted' column is sheer inspiration for writers. Easily worth the price of the magazine. \$50/6 issues; \$5/sample.

FEMINIST TEACHER. Ballantine Hall 447, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN 47405. Multi-disciplinary magazine committed to combatting sexism, racism, other forms of oppression in the classroom. 3x/year; \$12/year, \$4/sample.

GOLDEN THREADS. PO Box 2416, Quincy, MA 02169. A contact quarterly for lesbians over 50. Nationwide, confidential, reliable. Quarterly; \$5/sample.

HOT WIRE: The Journal of Women's Music & Culture. 5210 N. Wayne, Chicago, IL 60640. (312) 769-9009. Only publication devoted to national woman-identified music & culture scene. Music, writing, film, dance, comedy. Many photos. Each 64-page issue includes two-sided stereo recording. 3x/year; \$15/year, \$6/sample (includes postage). Canada: \$18US/year. Overseas: write for rates.

HURRICANE ALICE. 207 Lind Hall/207 Church St. SE, Minneapolis, MN 55455. Feminist review of literature/arts/culture featuring essay/reviews/art/ fiction. Quarterly; \$9/year.

LADYSLIPPER CATALOG. PO Box 3124, Durham, NC 27705. World's most comprehensive catalog of records/tapes/CDs/videos by women; free but stamps appreciated. Annual.

LESBIAN CONTRADICTION: A Journal of Irreverent Feminism. 584 Castro St. #263, San Francisco, CA 94114. Commentary, analysis, humor, reviews, cartoons by women who agree to disagree. Quarterly; \$6/year, \$1.50/sample.

THE LESBIAN NEWS c/o Pat Sampson, 1025 Coronado, Long Beach, CA 90804. A digest of information from Southern California and beyond. Monthly; \$12/year.

MAMARROOTS. Asungi Productions, 3661 N. Campbell #108, Tucson, AZ 85719-1524 (602) 327-0987. *Dedicated to Afracentric Spirituality and Cultural Awareness.* [See also **AFFRAGOD-DESS SPIRITUAL & CULTURAL SISTAHOOD NETWORK** in **GROUPS** section.]

NEW DIRECTIONS FOR WOMEN. 108 W. Palisade Ave., Englewood, NJ 07631 (201) 568-0226. *Women's health, family issues, racism, ageism, culture and sports from a feminist perspective.* 6x/y4. \$12/yr. \$20/institutions. \$18/Canada & Mexico.

OF A LIKE MIND. PO Box 6021, Madison, WI 53716. *A leading international network and newspaper of women's spirituality.* Quarterly; \$13-33 (sliding scale)/year, \$3/sample.

ON TARGET. PO Box 386, Uncasville, CT 06382. (203) 848-3887. *Newsletter for women over 40 and their friends.*

OUTLINES. Editor Tracy Baim, 3059 N. Southport, Chicago, IL 60657. (312) 871-7610. *Free in Chicago; \$25/year by mail. Lesbian/gay newsmonthly; extensive women's music & cul-*

RECORDINGS

AVALON: Solo Flute Meditations, Kay Gardner. Ladyslipper, PO Box 3124, Durham, NC 27705. *7 pieces, each channeled at a different holy site in what once was Avalon.*

BACK AND FORTH, Ann Reed. Turtlecub Productions, 3857 Harriet Ave. So., Minneapolis, MN 55409. *The best of Ann Reed's first two albums plus three new songs.*

BRENDA BAKER, 1206-125 5th Ave. North, Saskatoon, Sask. S7K 6A5. *An eclectic collection of sensitive and topical songs in this debut album.*

BRACE YOURSELF, Marij Plant. Jargot Records, PO Box 41023, Nashville, TN 37204. *Conversational country lyrics about classical everyday themes.*

CLOSER TO HOME, Jamie Anderson. Tsunami Records, PO Box 42282, Tucson, AZ 85733. *Women's music with strength & humor. Includes "Wedding Song," "Straight Girl Blues," and "Nothing."*

COLORBLIND BLUES, Lisa Koch. Tounginich Records, PO Box 19501, Seattle CA 98109. *This singer/comedian provides tips for the "apparel impaired."*

DOROTHY ROMPS, Dorothy Donegan. Rosetta Records Inc., 115 W 16th St. #267, NY, NY 10011. *A piano retrospective of classic, Boogie and Blues.*

A DUCK IN NEW YORK CITY, Heather Bishop. Mother of Pearl Records. Woodmore, Manitoba, Canada ROA 2M0. *Ten fun songs for kids. Lyrics included.*

DRUM DRAMA, Edwina Lee Tyler. Percussion Piquant, Inc., 2 Ellen St., Ringwood NJ 07456. *Intensely dramatic, meditative; African drums and percussion.*

GARDEN OF ECSTASY, Kay Gardner. Ladyslipper Records, PO Box 3124, Durham, NC 27715. *"These compositions describe the colors, fragrances, and sounds which have greeted me since I composed 'A Rainbow*

Path.' Rather than re-explore a meditative path, my muse this time took me on a different, more active journey." (All women musicians/techs.)

GIRLS IN THE NOSE, debut cassette. PO Box 49828, Austin, TX 78765. *The freshest in viva la vulva Lezzie rock. 11 songs include "Bite Me," "Honorary Heterosexual Lesbian," "Menstrual Hut," "Where Girls Go," "Prisoners of Pantyhose." Features Gretchen and Pam of 2 Nice Girls, plus four other freaky gals.*

HARD HEARTS, Linda Smith. Underground Records, (319) 557-9700. *10 original songs including "Hard Bodies," and "Lay Naked."*

HEARTBREAKER BLUES, Elaine Townsend. Hands in Flight Music, 3871 Piedmont Ave., Oakland, CA 94611. *Original songs in styles from samba to bluegrass—reggae to rock.*

IF YOU SEE A DREAM, Libby Roderick. Turtle Island Records, PO Box 203294, Anchorage, AK 99520 or Ladyslipper Catalog. *Includes: "How Could Anyone," "Rosa," "Don't Give Up." Cassette /\$10, CD/\$15. Add \$2 postage.*

IN SEARCH OF THE HAMMER/RETURN OF THE HAMMER by Cappy Kotz, lyrics by Phrin Prickett. Friends of the Hammer, 5445 26th Ave SW, Seattle, WA 98106. *Two lesbian musicals performed by lesbian-feminist theater group Front Room Theater Guild.*

IT'S A MIRACLE, Alice Di Micele. Box 281, Williams, OR 97544. *Heartfelt songs about today's politics and environment.*

JUMP FOR JOY, Koko Taylor. Alligator Records, PO Box 60234, Chicago, IL 60660. *Modern-day blues queen Koko Taylor's latest.*

LADY OF THE SERPENT SKIRT, Barbara Borden and Sheila Glover. Cloud 9 Music, 21 Manzanita Ave., San Rafael, CA 94901. *Electronic music and world-beat drum stylings blend in this evocative instrumental tape.*

LIVE AT THE SALOON, Nancy Wenstrom. Forbidden Fruit Records. *"Cry On," "Still Rockin'," "Bad Case of Love," and more.*

LIVIN' ON DREAMS, Judy Fjell. Honey Pie Music, PO Box 1065, Davis, CA 95617-1065. *New release; songs with violin and piano accompaniment.*

OVERCOMING STAGE FRIGHT, Karen Beth. Stardance Recordings, Box 371, Bearsville, NY 12409. *Help for performers through guided imagery and affirmations.*

RAINBOWS IN MY MIND, Carole and Bren. RR1 Box 1420, Vergennes, VT 05491. *Songs of love, spirituality, and activism blend into a joyful affirmation of life.*

RETURNING THE MUSE TO MUSIC. Musica Femina, PO Box 15121, Portland, OR 97215. *Flute/guitar duo; \$10 cassette/\$15 CD, plus \$1 postage. Available summer '89.*

RUNNING SACRED, Exene Cervenka. Rhino Records, Inc., 2225 Colorado Ave., Santa Monica, CA 90404-3555. *A rock album of serious ideas and gut feelings.*

SINGER IN THE STORM, Holly Near. Chameleon Records, 3355 W. El Segundo Blvd., Hawthorne, CA 90250. (213) 973-8282. *Strong songs of peace and social change, some in Spanish. Mercedes Sosa, Melissa Etheridge.*

SOJOURNS, Libana. PO Box 530, Cambridge, MA 02140. *From Bulgaria to Bolivia, Libana intertwines the sounds and rhythms of the*

world's women.

SONGS YOU CAN SEE. Peggy Lipschulz & Becky Armstrong, 1122 Seward, Evanston, IL 60202. (312) 475-7269. *Contemporary songs plus full-color live drawing.*

THE SPIRIT WHO SINGS, Andrea Lyman. PO Box 135, Sagle, ID 83860. *Songs of Spirit, honoring the sacredness of all life.*

TO EACH ONE OF US. Karen Beth, Stardance Recordings, PO Box 371, Bearsville, NY 12409. *Songs of the heart & spirit, blending folk and New Age.*

WOULDN'T THAT BE FUN?, Leah Zicari. Gender Bender Music, PO Box 164, Buffalo, NY 14207. *Debut recording of versatile guitarist turned lesbian songwriter. Humorous and serious, but always passionate.*

VERSE-ABILITY. Helen Hooke, Montana Blake, PO Box 888, Hoboken, NJ 07030-0888. *Helen Hooke, of Deadly Nightshade fame, on lead vocals, guitar, and violin.*

THE WAY YOU MOVE, Melanie Morrison. CB Productions, 2514 W. Carter Dr., Tempe, AZ 85282. *A funk/rock bluesy album with some jazz mixed in.*

YAHOO AUSTRALIA, Alix Dobkin. PO Box 727, Woodstock, NY 12498. (914) 679-6168. *Recorded live during Alix's 1990 "Down Under" tour.*

YOUR EYES MOVE ME, Seraiah Carol. Seraiah Carol Productions, 6565 Sunset Blvd. #318, Los Angeles, CA 90028-7206. *Two original songs with guitar accompaniment.*

PUBLICATIONS

CHRIS by Randy Salem. Naiad Press, PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. *A classic early novel when love between women was a shadowy forbidden adventure.*

CLUB TWELVE by Amanda Kyle Williams. Naiad Press, PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. *Fast-paced international espionage thriller.*

CONFESSING CONSCIENCE: Churched Women on Abortion. Abingdon Press, 201 8th Ave. So., Nashville, TN 37202. *Christian women share different perspectives on the abortion debate.*

DEATH DOWN UNDER by Claire McNab. Naiad Press, PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. *Murder and movie-making in the third mystery featuring detective Carol Ashton.*

DOC AND FLUFF by Pat Califia. Alyson Publications, 40 Plympton St., Boston, MA 02118. (617) 542-5679. *"The dystopian tale of a girl and her biker"—a futuristic S/M lesbian novel.*

'DYKES TO WATCH OUT' FOR 1991 CALENDER by Alison Bechdel. Firebrand Books, 141 The Commons, Ithaca, NY 14850. *A year of fun with Mo and friends by favorite lesbian cartoonist Alison Bechdel, recipient of the 1990 'HOT WIRE' Readers' Choice Award.*

ENTER PASSWORD: RECOVERY by Eilly Bulkin. Turtle Books, PO Box 9141, Albany, NY 12209-0141. (518) 463-4811. *Transforming the self thru language; memory as catalyst; dyke origins; sexual abuse; feminist politics; radical Jews.*

FINDING THE LESBIANS edited by Julia Penelope and Sarah Valentine. Crossing Press, PO Box 1048, Freedom, CA 95019. *Personal accounts from around the world.*

I LEFT MY HEART by Jaye Maiman. Naiad Press, Inc., PO Box 10543 Tallahassee, FL 32302. *A novelist must solve the puzzle of her ex-lovers' death in this debut mystery novel.*

IN HER OWN RITE: Constructing Feminist Liturgical Tradition by Marjorie Procter-Smith. Abingdon Press, 201 8th Ave. So., Nashville, TN 37202. *Addresses the benefits of dialogue between the feminist and liturgical movements.*

JUST SAY YES by Judith Daniel. Firebrand Books, 141 The Commons, Ithaca, NY 14850. *A fast-paced sizzler from the author of "Metamorphosis," "Reflections on Recovery," and Sanctuary, A Journey."*

LESBIAN LISTS by Dell Richards. Alyson Publications, 40 Plympton St., Boston, MA 02118. *A look at lesbian culture, history, and personalities. 129 lists in five categories, including 'HOT WIRE' editor's favorite lesbian songs.*

LESBIAN PHILOSOPHIES & CULTURES edited by Jeffner Allen. State University of New York Press, Albany, NY 12246. *Essay, fiction, autobiography on lesbian culture.*

THE LESBIAN SURVIVAL MANUAL by Rhonda Dickson. Naiad Press, PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. *Laughs, lust, and the lesbian police!*

LESBIANS IN GERMANY: 1820s-1920s by Lillian Faderman & Brigitte Erickson. Naiad Press, PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. *Translations of turn-of-the-century lesbian documents available for the first time.*

LETTERS FROM A WAR ZONE by Andrea Dworkin. Sacher & Warburg Ltd., Michelin House, 81 Fulham Rd., London SW3-6RB. *Collection of writings spanning 1976-1987.*

LIFTING BELLY by Gertrude Stein. Naiad Press, PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. *Erotic poetry by the acclaimed experimental lesbian writer.*

LIFESTYLES by Jackie Calhoun. Naiad Press, PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. *Kate Sweeney; Pat Thompson; Kate's brother, ill with AIDS; a lakeside cabin.*

LOVE, POLITICS & RESCUE by Diana Rabenold. Her Books, PO Box 7467, Santa Cruz, CA 95061. *Booklet on co-dependency in lesbian relationships; offers tools for identifying and resolving problems on our own.*

MEDIA GUIDES. Tsunami, PO Box 42282, Tucson, AZ 85733. *Feminist/Gay & Lesbian Periodicals/\$6. Women's Gay and Lesbian Folk Radio/\$4.*

MEMORIES & VISIONS: Women's Fantasy & Science Fiction edited by Susanna J. Sturgis. Crossing Press, 22D Roache Rd., PO Box 1048, Freedom, CA 95019. *Stories about women who travel, fight, and celebrate together across times and cultures.*

MONTANA FEATHERS by Penny Hayes. Naiad Press, PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 10543. *Young and pampered Elizabeth Reynolds discovers Montana and Vivian Blake on her aunt's ranch.*

MOVEMENT IN BLACK by Pat Parker. Firebrand Books, 141 The Commons, Ithaca, NY

14850. *Pat Parker—Black lesbian poet, feminist medical administrator, mother of two daughters, lover of women, softball devotee, and general progressive troublemaker—died of breast cancer on June 17, 1989 at the age of 45. Long before "coalition" became a political watchword, Pat's life and work embodied its principles. Back in print again is her signature collection.*

MURDER AT RED ROCK RANCH by Dorothy Tell. Naiad Press, PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. *Sixty-five-year-old investigator Poppy Dillworth returns in this murder mystery.*

MURDER BY THE BOOK by Pat Welch. Naiad Press, PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. *Meet Helen Black; accompany her on her first homicide case in the debut of this new mystery series.*

MURDER IS RELATIVE by Karen Saum. Naiad Press, PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. *Dramatic murder investigation reveals shocking family secrets.*

NINTH LIFE by Lauren Wright Douglas. Naiad Press, PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. *An animal rights activist is murdered in the second Caitlin Reese mystery.*

NOTE BY NOTE: A GUIDE TO CONCERT PRODUCTION by Joanie Shoemaker. Redwood Cultural Work, PO Box 10408, Oakland, CA 94608. (415) 428-9191. *288-page step-by-step guide.*

PASSIONS LEGACY by Lori A. Paige. Naiad Press, PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. *Can Lady Augusta Pym save Sarah from the dreaded fate of an arranged marriage?*

PAPERBACK THRILLER by Lynn Meyer. Crossing Press, 22D Roache Rd., Box 1048, Freedom, CA 95019. *Psychoanalyst Sarah Chayse is drawn into a bizarre case involving medical ethics and murder.*

PLAYERS by Robbie Sommers. Naiad Press, PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. *A novel of romantic complications by the author of 'Pleasures.'*

PRIORITIES by Lynda Lyons. Naiad Press, PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. *Adventure tale of the future. First in the Controllers series.*

THE PROVIDENCE FILE. by Amanda Kyle Williams. Naiad Press, PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302.

RAPTURE AND THE SECOND COMING by Wendy Bergstrom. Alyson Publications. *Collection of lesbian erotica; follows nurse Gwen as she acts out her sexual fantasies.*

A ROOMFUL OF WOMEN by Elizabeth Nonas. Naiad Press, PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. *A novel of contemporary lesbian life by the author of 'For Keeps.'*

ROSE PENSKI by Roz Perry. Naiad Press, PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. *Warm story about a long-time lesbian couple dealing with breast cancer.*

SCUTTLEBUT by Jana Williams. Firebrand Books, 141 The Commons, Ithaca, NY 14850. *Enter the world of Navy bootcamp in this novel about female recruits.*

SIDE BY SIDE by Isabell Miller. Naiad Press, PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. *The author of 'Patience and Sarah' give us Patricia and Sharon, a charming story that doesn't stop at the happy ending.*

SILVERLEAF'S CHOICE: ANTHOLOGY OF LESBIAN HUMOR. Silverleaf Press, PO Box 70189, Seattle, WA 98107. *Laughter: a gift for yourself or a friend. Writing, drawings, fun.*

SLICK by Camarin Grae. Naiad Press, PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. *A priceless statue has been stolen and a group of lesbians must recover it.*

SOUTHBOUND by Sheila Ortiz Taylor. Naiad Press, PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. *Arden makes an outlandish journey in spite of her ex-husband's threats, in this quirky sequel to 'Faultline.'*

STAYING POWER—Long Term Lesbian Couples by Susan E. Johnson. Naiad Press, PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. *A study of committed lesbian couples who have been together for up to 52 years.*

TAKE ME TO THE UNDERGROUND by Renee Hansen. Crossing Press, 22D Roache Rd., Box 1048, Freedom, CA 95019. *Novel of obsessive love between two women.*

THERE'S SOMETHING I'VE BEEN MEANING TO TELL YOU. Naiad Press, PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. *Collection of true stories about honesty between lesbians/gay men and our families.*

TRESPASSING AND OTHER STORIES by Valerie Minor. Crossing Press, 22D Roache Rd., PO Box 1048, Freedom, CA 95019. *Short stories which examine the quiet shifts in relationships and an individual's sense of self.*

WHO WEARS THE TUX?—The Original Great American Dyke Quiz by Julia Willis. Banned Books, PO Box 32380, Austin, TX 78764. *Trashy and hilarious lesbian humor in Q & A format.*

THE WOMEN WHO HATE ME by Dorothy Allison. Firebrand Books, 141 The Commons, Ithaca, NY 14850. *Poetry by the author of the award-winning 'Trash.'*

THE WOMANSLEUTH ANTHOLOGY: Contemporary Mystery Stories By Women, edited by Irene Zahara. Crossing Press, 22D Roache Rd., Box 1048, Freedom, CA 95019.

GROUPS

AFRAGODDESS SPIRITUAL & CULTURAL SISTAHOOD NETWORK. Asungi Productions, 3661 N. Campbell #108, Tucson, AZ 85719-1524 (602) 327-0987. *Membership includes subscription to Mamaroots quarterly, dedicated to Afracentric Spirituality and Cultural Awareness. Seeking \$\$ contributions and submissions: articles, reviews, short stories, rituals, events, correspondence, resources. Membership/subscription: \$18-\$25/year.*

THE NEW DAWN. PO Box 1849, Alexandria, VA 22313. *Large, reputable correspondence club for gay women; hundreds of members; memberships for individuals & couples. Since 1980. Confidentiality maintained. Directory (30+ pages) mailed 4x/yr in discreet envelope. SASE for membership information. ●*

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8200 Fenton Rd., Philadelphia, PA 19118
(215) 233-2217

Marla BB has been a performing artist/educator for the past ten years. With a degree in theater (1981) and already twelve years of voice study, Marla began singing professionally at the age of twenty-three. Last year, Marla lived and worked intensely with the Hudson River Sloop Clearwater on the Hudson River and Sound Waters on Long Island Sound. She acted as musician and environmental educator. As a DJ on Boston's WMFO "Something About The Women" radio show said, "Marla BB does a great 'green' blues!" Her latest cassette is *Marla BB-Blues*.



Sidney Sander

JANE WINSLOW



Susan Wilson

MARLA BB

PINE TREES

WRITTEN/PERFORMED BY: Jane Winslow

FROM: *Slip A Little Deeper*

Jane Winslow c/o Fire Dancer & Co.
P.O. Box 1942
Studio City, CA 91614
(513) 281-2944

"Pine Trees" speaks of the journey to oneself and one's spiritual home, and was written while visiting Jane's home town, Los Angeles. Along with her chants, Jane also writes love songs and songs concerned with feminist, lesbian, and peace/ecological issues. She has been a part of women's music and culture for many years, performing as a singer-songwriter, writing fiction and poetry, and presenting workshops. She teamed with Nan Brooks in concert and in their play *Women of the Gateway*. Her tape *Slip a Little Deeper* is now available, and look for her new all-chant tape.



Rob Stapleton

LIBBY RODERICK



SUSAN HERRICK



Dave Allen

PAM & MAGGIE CRAZY FOR YOU

WRITTEN BY: Maggie Beck

PERFORMED BY: Pam Briggs (harmony vocals, rhythm guitar, synthesizer), Maggie Beck (lead vocals, lead/rhythm/bass guitars)

FROM: *Crazy For You*

Pam & Maggie c/o Six Toes Music
729 Chestnut Street
Escondido, CA 92025-5259
(619) 738-7523

Pam & Maggie, having spent most of their adult lives as "hopelessly het," have now "seen the light, and can't turn back" (a selection from their tape—exact title: "I've Seen The Light"). *Crazy For You* is a collection of eight original songs about different aspects of women's lives. As Dian Schaffhauser wrote in her July/August 1990 *Folk Notes* review, "...*Crazy For You* moves back and forth between pleasantly soothing and fast moving toe-tapping melodies that leave you humming long after you've turned off the tape deck." Several songs from their tape have been used on Maile Klein's *Country Attitude* instructional video for country western line dancing. Pam & Maggie make their first East Coast appearance on the Saturday Night Stage at Campfest 1991.

continued on inside back cover



BETTY

A woman died and went to heaven. When she met St. Peter he said, "I have just one question: how many times did you cheat on your lover?" She answered, "Well, I guess I can't lie to you. Only once." Handing her a set of car keys, he said, "That's not so bad. You get to drive the station wagon in heaven. Come on in."

Another woman arrived at the pearly gates, and she was so relieved to be there that she tried to sprint into heaven. St. Peter said, "Whoa! Before you come in, I have to ask you just one question: how many times did you cheat on your lover?" She thought about it and said, "Do I have to count the one-nighters?" St. Peter answered, "Of course." She thought some more and said, "How about the ones who meant nothing to me?" St. Peter sighed. "Yes, yes, you have to count them all. How many times did you cheat on your lover?" She admitted to fifteen indiscretions—twenty at the most. "Well," said St. Pete. "That's not so great. You have to drive the old Chevy Vega in heaven."

One day these women happened to pull up side by side at a red light, and on the shoulder of the road they saw a woman crying hysterically in a beautiful shiny new Rolls Royce. Concerned, they rolled down their windows and asked the woman what was wrong.

"I just saw my lover go by," she sobbed. "And she was on a skateboard!"

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"Maybe neon could be neon without Las Vegas, but Las Vegas could never be Las Vegas without neon," wrote Jenny Wrenn in a 'Lesbianline' story about last summer's ABA convention. Same principal can be applied, we think, to lesbian-feminists and the women's music and culture network.

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**STONEWALL
RIOTS**



Miriam wondered if she had lost her special place in Sally's heart.

Andrea Natalie

SOUNDSHEETS

Material is recorded on both sides in stereo. Do not crease the soundsheet. Place it on turntable at 33-1/2 rpm. A coin placed on the label where indicated prevents slipping. If your turntable has a ridged mat, placing the soundsheet on top of an LP may be advisable. Questions and comments about the soundsheets? Recording specifications and other details will be sent upon request.

HEART OF THAT CHILD

WRITTEN/SUNG BY: Susan Herrick

FROM: *Truth and the Lie*

Susan Herrick c/o Watchfire Records
P.O. Box 463
Chadds Ford, PA 19317
(215) 793-2028

Susan Herrick is a singer-songwriter, guitarist, and pianist. Her music reflects a journey to transform self as preparation for transforming society. "I was in Maine, listening to my noisy emotions by a noisier sea," she says. "I was angry that I couldn't shake the inner noise and I didn't even know what it was...until I started asking a much younger part of me. And somehow I reached in through the fog of my own denial to remember that as a child I screamed a lot. Why did I scream? Because I was sexually abused and no one would have believed me. Well, finally I'm listening to that child. And I'm telling her story."

SHRINKBACK

LYRICS BY: Amy Ziff

MUSIC BY: Alyson Palmer and Amy Ziff

PERFORMED BY: Alyson Palmer (vocals, electric bass, drum machine), Amy Ziff (vocals, cello), Bitzi Ziff (vocals, keyboards)

FROM: *Hello, BETTY!*

BETTY c/o The Man From B.E.T.T.Y., inc.
Box 339/Cooper Station
New York, NY 10276

After years of steadfastly refusing to be part of the sordid recording industry, BETTY, the ex-D.C. Divarock trio, has condescended to release an album. It's an astounding aural experience, perfect to make love to, and is available in CD and cassette formats on their own label, The Man from B.E.T.T.Y. "Shrinkback" is the single that is incinerating dance floors across the country. Their plan for world domination unfolds. Stay tuned...

WHEN I HEAR MUSIC

PERFORMED/WRITTEN BY: Libby Roderick

FROM: *If You See a Dream*

Turtle Island Records
P.O. Box 203294
Anchorage, Alaska 99520
(907) 278-6817

Libby is Alaska's best-known and loved singer/songwriter, and, as Ladyslipper says, "the voice of this Alaskan feminist is not to be missed." Her new release, *If You See a Dream*, contains twelve original songs, which range from folk to country to reggae to jazz. "When I Hear Music" celebrates both the range of women's creativity and the power of music to carry us through our struggles. According to *Victory Music Review*, "her music penetrates through numbness to reveal, affirm, and inspire our lives." *If You See a Dream* is available on cassette and CD, and contains "Rosa," "America America," "Body is the Temple," "How Could Anyone," and others. [See article on page 28.]

SELDOM SCENES

Photos & text © Susan Wilson



GAY MAY DAY, GAY MAY DAY

If any of these faces [left] look familiar, they should: Julia Willis, Jennifer Justice, and Libba Ingram were the ever-so-hilarious members of the Boston-based Ends and Means Committee, which gleefully showered political and social satire on women's audiences from 1979 to 1982. Two years ago, on May Day, the trio held a reunion performance, played to standing-room-only audiences in Cambridge, Mass.; this irreverent little portrait was taken at their after-performance bash. Julia Willis, incidentally, is now a writer, comic, and author of the hot-selling new lesbian quiz book *Who Wears the Tux?* (Banned Books). Libba Ingram is a videographer for Boston cable, and a familiar face from the *Two in Twenty* lesbian soap opera. Jennifer Justice is a nationally known storyteller and educator, notorious in the women's community for her annual erotica extravaganza called "Lavender Hearts."

NEWPORT NEWS

The prestigious old Newport Folk Festival was always a fantastic place to hear folk, acoustic, and roots music. Still, until this past year the producers had not yet figured out how to draw in a sizable women's audience, though some other major North American festivals—most notably Vancouver—have been doing it for years. Newport '90 clicked magnificently, however, by offering a performing lineup that was fifty percent female and which appealed to discerning women fans of all ages and orientations. This backstage shot [below] gives a sampler of the luminaries who shone at Newport for two days in August: the mutual admiration society of Sweet Honey's Evelyn Maria Harris, the legendary Joan Baez, and Emily Saliers of the Indigo Girls. The connections here go farther than even meets the eye, by the way. Baez went on to tour with the Indigos this past fall. And Sweet Honey's founder Bernice Johnson Reagon played on the old Newport Folk Festival stage along with Baez some seventeen years ago, when Reagon was an original member of the famed Freedom Singers.

