

HOT WIRE

THE JOURNAL OF WOMEN'S MUSIC AND CULTURE

KATE CLINTON • LEA DELARIA

I'LL BE A HOMO FOR CHRISTMAS

THE WOMEN'S CHORAL MOVEMENT

IT'S TWENTY YEARS FOR NAIAD'S
BARBARA GRIER & DONNA McBRIDE

COUNTRY LINE DANCING WITH
MAILE & MARINA • NEWMR 1991

ADULT ROLE MODELS ON VIDEO

HETERO WOMEN IN THE
FEMINIST CULTURAL SCENE

THE WIDE WORLD OF
WOMYN AT WOMBSTOCK

KAY'S SEA GNOMES HOME

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MYRNA JOHNSTON &
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AMAZON RADIO

BARB
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LYNN
THOMAS

WELCOME BACK
**MARGIE
ADAM**



Toni Armstrong Jr.

VOLUME 8, NUMBER 1 • JANUARY 1992

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

THE 'HOT WIRE' EDITORIAL PHILOSOPHY

HOT WIRE specializes in woman-identified music and culture, primarily the performing arts, writing/publishing, and film/video. We strongly believe in the power of the arts to affect social change, and we 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 (and future generations) can hear the music and poetry as well as read about it.

WE FINALLY GOT IT!

After years of dragging ourselves across town in the dead of night to borrow a laser printer whenever we wanted to run out so much as a tiny photo credit, we were finally able to purchase a laser printer of our own. For those of you who care about this sort of thing, it is a Newgen TurboPS/400p (400 dpi). This was possible due to a generous donation from Joan Drury, supplemented by money from Faith Nelson, Jeanette Paroly, Donna McBride and Barbara Grier, Sally Neely, Margaret Durbin, Nancy Kelly, Faith Nolan, Grace Austgen, Mary Byrne, Carolyn Vande Weile, Suzanne McHugh, and Tsunami Records. Although we still need to raise money to pay it off, at least we now have it! From the bottom of our infinitely less exhausted hearts, we thank you! Also, special thanks to Rochelle Bernstein for her generous donation of an electronic typewriter, which has made correspondence ever so much easier and more professional.

THE FAX FUND

Next on our "must have" list is a high-quality fax machine. Anyone out there have one you would especially recommend? Features we think we want include a paper cutter and a timer so that we can fax things when we're not here. If you're sending a donation toward this project, please mark "FAX FUND" on the MEMO line on your check.

THE MYSTERIOUS ANONYMOUS TAPES

We all know Anonymous was a woman, but... we have in our possession several master tapes from sometime in the '80s which are complete-

Women's Music Plus Resources in Women's Music and Culture



Production Festivals Coffeehouses Performers
Writers Writers' Resources Distributors Directorles
Dance Theater Film & Video Bookstores Journals
Publishers & Editors Record Labels Newspapers
Newsletters Photography/Photographers & Visual Arts

FROM THE RIPLEY'S BELIEVE IT OR NOT DEPT....After a very long delay, the new 'Women's Music Plus' directory of resources in women's music and culture is finally available. The 1992 edition has more than 3,000 listings, in categories such as producers, festivals, performers, writers, publishers, film/video, theater, publications, bookstores, photographers, ASL interpreters, cultural organizations, and much more. To obtain the 1992 directory—or be listed in the next edition—send a self-addressed stamped envelope to 'Women's Music Plus,' 5210 N. Wayne, Chicago, IL 60640.

ly unmarked. We have no way of knowing whose they are. If you were on a soundsheet a few years ago, please check to see if you have your master tape. If not, it may be here!

DEAR DONNA

Feminist activist Donna Allen has dedicated decades to facilitating communication between women and women's groups. Her most famous projects include the publications *Media Report to Women* and *The Annual Index/Directory to Women's Media*; the organization Women's Institute for Freedom of the Press; and the Historic Originals Program. [See the March 1988 issue for an article about Donna and her three feminist daughters.] When *HOT WIRE* was in hot water last year, Donna generously donated many complete sets of *Paid My Dues*

ON THE COVER

After four albums and eleven years in women's music, the legendary Margie Adam went off the road in 1984 and completely stopped performing. To the delight of fans new and old, she's back, with a new look, new material, and the same old charisma that filled concert halls during the 1970s and early '80s.

for fundraising purposes, as well as consulting with us to give us advice and desperately needed encouragement. At that time, she expressed special fondness for the "Hotline" column, which is an extension of her own life-work—getting women in touch with each other in spite of the dominant culture's attempts to keep us isolated. To honor her work, and make it clear that we are carrying the torch down a path that she helped blaze, the "Hotline" column will henceforth be dedicated to Donna Allen. (Why wait until someone's passed on to pay her tribute?)

NEW STAFF WRITERS

A belated welcome to Dakota (replacing Karen Kane as the writer of "The Audio Angle" technical column, which will appear roughly in every other issue). And welcome to Dr. Bonnie Morris [see page 40 in this issue; also "How I (Almost) Met Martina," September 1990].

HI AGAIN, MARGIE

It is with excitement and fondness that we welcome back Margie Adam after her seven-year hiatus. She went off the road just as *HOT WIRE* was starting, so we've never had an article about her until now. Her early work was especially inspirational to me, as well as to countless other women who looked to the performers to glorify our woman-identified goals and visions. (The rest of the '70s world had dismissed us all as silly bra burners if not simple-minded, fanatical manhaters.) Last year when *HOT WIRE* almost went under, it became painfully evident what can happen if the heart goes out of things. As a community, we too often take for granted the institutions we've created—such as Olivia Records, Naiad Press, Redwood Records, Firebrand Books, Ladyslipper, Goldenrod, *HOT WIRE*, and the festivals that have become annual events. It seems that we forget that these things are run by individual women, or groups of women, who do this work for the love of woman-identified music and culture (and for little, if any, financial compensation). Take the heart out of it, and the institutions simply sink under the waterline. Margie's speciality always was making the audience members feel empowered and inspired; she strove to remind each of us that we're not alone in our dreams and struggles. ("We shall go forth..." not "We might go forth if the conditions are right..." or "Let's have a collective meeting and process what it could mean if we went forth...") It personally gives me great pleasure to know that this next generation of women will also get the opportunity to be touched by Margie and her music, and to know that I can once again draw on her (new) music as a source of inspiration.

Toni Armstrong Jr.
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WELCOME BACK MARGIE ADAM

Interviewed by Toni Armstrong Jr.

In the early 1970s, the feminist and lesbian movements married each other—and their most beautiful and enduring daughter was named "women's music." From coast to coast, woman-identified performers, concert venues, publications, and festivals proliferated. On the West Coast, there emerged a small group of celebrities called "The Big Four"—Meg Christian, Cris Williamson, Holly Near, and Margie Adam. Pleiades Records was formed (with Boo Price) to record the music of Margie Adam. Four albums were produced: 'Songwriter' (1976); the instrumental 'Naked Keys' (1980); 'We Shall Go Forth!' (1982); and the romantic 'Here Is A Love Song' (1983). Two more albums appeared after Margie stopped performing in 1984: 'Take Hands' (1985, Watershed Foundation), and 'The Best of Margie Adam' (1990, Olivia Records).

Born February 7, 1947 in Lompoc, California, Margie began her performing career in 1973 at an open mic at Kate Millet's legendary Sacramento Women's Music Festival. She has won numerous honors, including being given keys to the cities of Houston, Birmingham, Kansas City, and Austin; receiving the Southern California Women for Understanding "Women's Music Pioneer Award"; and having the song "We Shall Go Forth!" placed in the Political History Division of the Smithsonian Institution. She's back.

LET'S TALK ABOUT WHAT ACTUALLY LED TO YOUR DECISION TO STOP IN 1984. AT THE TIME, YOU SAID YOU HAD COME TO A NATURAL CONCLUDING POINT WITH YOUR MUSIC—BUT IT WAS MORE OF A TOTAL WITHDRAWAL. WHAT HAPPENED?

With the release of *Here Is A Love Song* in 1983, I had recorded practically all my existing body of work. That was one part. Also, I was either on the road or in the studio from 1980 through 1984. I remember coming home after the fall tour in 1983 realizing I was done. It wasn't that I felt burned out—I was just *done*. All

the music I had was on vinyl, and I felt complete about it. But *Love Song* needed to have another tour to support it, so I went out in the spring of '84.

It was really a difficult experience for me, and I'm sure it contributed to my staying off the road longer than I had planned. I had never "walked" a performance in my life—I had never given less than 100 percent of everything I had in me. But what I had in me began to feel inadequate for the task. I got to a point during that last tour where I simply began to run out of fuel. It was like being stripped of a kind of psychic protection that had always made it possible for me to walk out on that stage. The mysterious transformative process that had always occurred in the distance of traveling those sixteen or so steps from the side of the stage to the piano—that changed me from "Margie Adam/regular person" to "Margie Adam/Performer"—began to disintegrate in me. It was one of the most terrifying experiences I have ever had.

I didn't understand it at the time, but now I think it had something to do with no longer being able to draw on some infinite source of strength which, for me, had been inextricably connected to the women's community. I was "organized" by the women's community to begin with. I never would have been a performer if not for that audience's intense reactions to me and my music. I always felt that, in a way, my work was a part of something more important than my own career. It had to do with the development of a women's culture that would affirm and empower women. I think it was a vision that many women in women's music shared and that drove us to take amazing risks—suspended in thin air while being supported by the energy of this Family of Women across the country.

As women began to step away from "women's music" as a term and as an artistic and political principle, the possibility for radical change with our music

was proportionately lessened. The power of this woman-loving organizing tool began to dissipate. I don't think it was possible to maintain a powerful force like women's music while denying that the term itself had any meaning.

I just no longer felt that kind of inspiring visionary energy surrounding me as I worked. While reading in the feminist press that women's music was dying, I was reading in the mainstream press that several other artists were trying to distance themselves from the label "women's music." It was very painful for me. I remember a day when I realized I was lonely.

WHAT HAPPENED WHEN YOU CAME OFF THE ROAD?

When I came off the road, I said I'd be off for a year. My friends all laughed and said "Right, Marg. You'll be completely insane in six months." I was actually pretty loosely wrapped for about two years. I spent hours and hours in the garden; I lost whole days. The act of getting on stage and telling my truth—exposing myself at the level that I did every show—was tremendously costly. I had no idea that was so until I stopped long enough to feel it all. I was in love with the vision of community and the possibility of being an active agent in changing the world. The kind of responsibilities I took on, the same effort countless other women made—not just in music, but in women's culture and politics in general—this very deep commitment demanded every bit of my life until I had to stop.

As it turned out, I needed years of unwinding, resting, and healing. During this time I became increasingly involved with women in recovery from alcoholism and drug addiction, to the point that I thought, "Wow, I'm spending all my time doing this, maybe I should go back to school and get some training." So I got a credential in chemical dependency studies and got a nine-to-five job as the Information Center Coordinator with the

National Council on Alcoholism in San Francisco. My job was organizing and managing a large volunteer staff, which I loved. I also worked with hundreds of people in trouble with alcohol/drug addiction and codependency over a year's time. It was truly an amazing experience, working with people in crisis.

I've always wanted to make a difference in my life. Working at NCA through 1989, I came to realize the difference I wanted to make was not on a one-on-one basis. It was a moment's realization: I'm not going to get an MFCC and be a therapist. I simply have to find my way back to my music.

HOW DID THAT FEEL?

That whole part was kind of unnerving. When I came off the road I didn't play the piano, I didn't sing. I didn't even listen to music. When I came back to the piano after a year and a half or so, I knew my material no longer represented me. I think that's part of what was happening to me toward the end of performing—it no longer represented me, and I didn't have enough focused time to write any new material. The impulse from which the music came was no longer there, because I wasn't being fed in the way I had been earlier on, and I didn't have a reservoir.

During these years of silence I would have flashes of desire to go out and shake things up, to do organizing. But not with the old material. For a while I thought I just didn't want to play because I wasn't interested in the material. The experience was like a progression of understanding—I *could play if I wanted to, but I don't want to*. Then it got to be, *I'd like to play, but I don't like this material*. Then I wanted to play, so I'd sit down, spend five minutes at the piano and get up. Then I realized: *I want to play and I can't*. I moved into a place of deep longing, not understanding what it was about.

WHAT DID YOU DO?

Many things. I began to talk to my women friends as I never had before. I went to therapy to try and figure out what the obstacles were, what the resistance was, and where the sadness was coming from. I began to study piano, because I thought maybe I'd move back into my music by focusing attention on someone else's music. I figured I might stir my muse into a frenzy of rage and then action (new music) if I began playing someone else's compositions. So I began to

study Schubert, Mozart, Grieg—and I found that I couldn't practice in between the lessons. Being who I am, I said, "Okay, if I can't practice when I'm taking lessons once a week, I'll take lessons twice a week." My whole life became about not practicing in-between those two lessons. So I quit.

Finally, in 1989, I went back to my piano teacher, Dolores Borgir, again. She's a truly gentle-hearted woman, who took to putting her hand on my shoulder while I played. She sensed that something had happened to my music, and even though she didn't know what it was, she comforted me in that place. She just left her hand on my shoulder, and I would play these stupid-ass scales and struggle through exercises that were so totally alien to what I had been playing all those years in performance.



Irene Young

What happened was, my girlfriend lived in a town an hour away, so I was spending a lot of time commuting from my nine-to-five city job to her house, or commuting from the city to my house. There was no extra time. Quite literally, I was struck by this insane urge to play; it wouldn't let me be. So I began to get up even earlier to drive into the city to this music center. The piano that was made available to me—a nine-foot Steinway grand—happened to be on a stage. So every morning I would drive in before work at NCA and go through all these changes about being on this stage, practicing Gershwin's *Preludes* or Chopin or Bach. Slowly but surely I began to be able to play for periods of time.

Then my teacher said she was going to move to Oregon. She was planning a

recital before she moved, and wanted me to be in it. She'd been asking me for years to be in her recitals, but I always declined, saying, "For me it's like being on stage, and I don't want to do it. It's different for me than it is for your kids."

One of my friends confronted me. "Dolores is moving out of town and she really wants you to do this recital, because she wants to show her students what being in love with music looks like," my friend said. "She knows how much you love music. So I'm just wondering why it is you won't give her that, after all she's given you. So—is it about your ego?" I know I felt this flash of anger and said, "Fuck you!" But she was right, of course. I had this kind of crazy fear about it.

Anyway, I went on stage and I played the Gershwin *Preludes*, and I was totally freaked out by it; it scared the hell out of me. I made all sorts of mistakes. But I got through them all. Then I turned to the audience...and the physical movement of turning to the audience and putting my hand up on the lip of the keyboard cover made something inside me stir. It was like something inside me woke up. I said, "Now I would like to play a piece of my own..." and played the hell out of "Naked Keys." This tremendous energy ricocheted back and forth across my veins, careening through my system like I had stuck all ten fingers in ten light sockets. Yes! That was it!

WHEN WAS THAT?

1990. I think. You know, these seven years have been like three weeks. I really did lose track of time. Anyway, when my piano teacher moved away I was furious with her, but I was playing and I was loving the sound of music in my house. Then I had this major heartbreak in my life, which I could not order with my rational mind. I could not make sense of it. I had to break up with the woman I was in love with, and my person, my self could not grasp what had happened to me. The emotional releases that I had available to me were inadequate. I couldn't talk it out, I couldn't work it out, I couldn't live with it, I couldn't stand it, I couldn't make it go away, I couldn't distract myself from it. Out of nowhere—after a seven-year silence—came a song ["Time and Time Again"]. Part of what was so difficult for me during the seven years was that I gradually lost the ability to imagine how a song could come through me—I could not even imagine how I could ever have written music.

When Greta Garbo died, I was out in my garden; I remember walking in the house and standing halfway between the piano and the typewriter, thinking, "I have to say something about who Garbo was to me." And I sat down at the piano and began to play. I felt an overwhelming sense of being pushed off the piano bench, which was often how I had felt over the seven years. I went over to the typewriter instead, and wrote an article about Garbo, which was later published in *OUT/LOOK*. But the impulse came from a place inside me from which I have always communicated the intensity of my feelings. Writing the article was a step toward writing songs again. I had such an intense need to express myself—I actually did sit down and do it, but not at the piano. When I wrote that first song about a month later, I was totally undone. Here there had been a silence in my life for seven years, and then *wham!*—there was a song!

HOW DID YOU FAN THAT SPARK?

I hadn't written any songs since "Companions For True," way back in '82-'83. So once I had written this first song, I became a kind of maniac about wanting to go somewhere and write more. First I thought I'd get a place in Santa Barbara. That's where I began writing when I was in high school. But it didn't work out. Next I thought I might go to Connecticut, because I have a friend who's a writer there, and I imagined she'd be working on her book, and I'd be inspired...but that didn't work out either. Just when it seemed like I'd have to go to the bridge, one of my friends said, "Why do you have to go so far away, Marg? Why don't you just go to the Russian River? You love it up there."

And so two days later I got in my car and drove up, and rented a place with a piano for a month. Blam! Just like that! I went up for the whole month of October, taking my article on Garbo and "Time and Time Again" inside me. They were my grounding. I went into this beautiful cabin with a fireplace and lots of wood—and sat, just sat. I watched Bill Moyers' *World of Ideas, Crisis in Democracy*. I watched CNN. I watched videos. I walked in the redwoods. I went to meetings of my spiritual program, and I sat. It was so heavy. It was like crawling over glass across the Golden Gate Bridge.

When I began to write seriously in 1972, I moved away from everything I knew. I said, "I'll take a year off. If I'm go-

ing to write music, it will happen. If not, then I'll have this monkey off my back, and I'll go back to teaching school." So in October of 1990, there I was again, sitting with this piano and this all-consuming longing to "speak." I felt like my muse had cleared her throat with "Time and Time Again." You know, often in the seven years of silence, I would be sitting in my living room, looking out my window, and I would think that I saw her waving at me. Hmmm. Perhaps you can tell I have a very intense, personal relationship with my muse; I think she's the goddess within me. With Garbo's death, she gave me the impulse to communicate from a place that's beyond intellect—beyond mindfulness and mental order. I had this accumulation of feelings—seven years of loving, mourning, hoping, learning, and believing...all that. Having my heart broken wide open, everything just spilled out. After eight days of waiting and listening in that cabin, I began writing again.

When I came back from the river I had eight songs, but it wasn't a body of work. I committed to writing two songs a month, and I knew if I did that, I'd have twenty songs by May. Then I would be able to decide whether or not I had a body of work, enough to perform. By January I knew I had set myself an impossible task. I thought, "You're on fire! Go back to that fucking cabin! Go back and submit yourself!" That's exactly what it felt like, *submitting* myself, surrendering to this muse of mine, this wild goddess.

HOW HAVE YOU DEALT WITH SELF-CENSORSHIP URGES?

It was self-censorship that finally shut me up in the '80s. I spent the whole first part of my songwriting life writing whatever I felt like, and then as I began to perform my writing, people started suggesting, "You should write a song about such and such..."—and there was a period where I tried to do that. There's no question that it affected my Art; my muse wasn't interested in taking orders from anyone, including me. I think she finally said, "You can do this other stuff that seems to be more important. You can do your organizing, your fundraising; your workshops, and your performances. And...I'll catch you later." I, of course, didn't know how *much* later she'd catch me, but she did catch me! There's no question she has reeled me right in again.

The second time going up to the

cabin, in February, was even more difficult than the first; I had to deal with my expectations of myself, of what I should be able to do. I was able to write seven more songs, which gave me the body of work I'd been seeking. I came home, and immediately was diagnosed with a fibroid tumor, and had to have surgery. The operation was totally successful, but it did distract me from this amazing thing that had happened to me at the river. I mean, I had written eighteen new songs in six months! It was like giving birth to...

...A BIG LITTER?

No kidding! I gave birth to a litter of songs. They are like that; each one has her own life, each one has her own demands. Some came out totally complete; others have gone through shifts as a result of working with my voice teacher, Faith Winthrop, and also my friends [bassist] Diane Lindsay and [drummer] Barbara Borden. Meanwhile, it is like carrying around these extraordinary gifts—it's all so unexpected, so familiar but totally new.

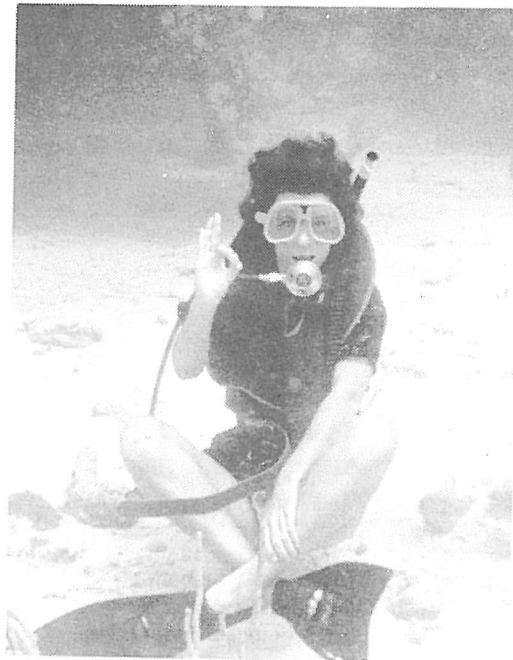
WHAT ABOUT STARTING TO PERFORM AGAIN?

From the time I began to write in October of 1990, I began to think about how it would be if I did perform. At the same time, I began to run into women I had worked with in the past. We had some very interesting conversations. Invariably, I would ask them, "Are you feeling like there is something going on?" and, "Are you starting to feel like you want to get something going at a community level again?" These are all women who were activists, deeply committed during the '70s and early '80s, who have since gone off into individual pursuits—have taken care of themselves, taken care of their careers and love lives, have become personally successful, and are still committed feminists. All of them seemed to feel as I do, interested again in the idea that we can get something going.

I am feeling like I'm being *reeled in*, like I was many, many years ago. Except now I know what the feeling feels like—I didn't know I was being reeled in last time. I'm forty-four, not twenty-five. I don't listen to women who say, "I don't like to say my age"—those of us who've been around have resources to share. I believe I was organized not just by the women's community at the beginning in '73, but by some force really greater than I understood. And I believe that's what's happening again. The '90s version. I feel

like I'm being reeled in by some resurgent energy, and that it's not only happening to me—it's happening to women all over. It's showing up in films like *Thelma and Louise*, in many organizations and institutions that are being developed, in women's organized resistance to violence and to the latest legal assault on women's right to choose, and on and on.

I've had so many conversations with women who have said, one way or another, "I hope what you're saying is right; I want to believe what you're saying." What I'm saying is: I am sensing a renewed yearning for the nurturance of a women's community and a context it can give us for woman-centered political action. There it is.



A fifty-city tour to promote 'Songwriter' culminated at the historic National Women's Conference in Houston in 1977, where Margie performed "We Shall Go Forth!" with 10,000 women singing three-part harmony. The song is now in the archives of the Political History Division of the Smithsonian. She came off the road in 1984 for a "radical's sabbatical." In the intervening years, she has studied the piano, worked full-time in the recovery field, and has begun to write commentary as well as music.

There was a point in the '70s where a critical number of feminist musicians came together at the First National Women's Music Festival [1974]. That gathering couldn't have had the impact it did without several other events that preceded it. Some occurred in Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, New York, New Haven, San Francisco, St. Louis, Chicago. These apparently isolated events created the momentum that surfaced at Champaign-Urbana [site of the first NWMF] and knocked our socks off.

I am hearing a similar rumbling now, and it's coming from a kind of col-

A PROBLEM IN THE '80s WAS THAT "COALITION BUILDING" CAME TO MEAN GIVING UP ANYTHING LESBIAN OR FEMINIST AND DOING WORK FOR EVERYBODY ELSE'S CAUSES. IT WAS CALLED "COALITION BUILDING," BUT OUR AGENDA WAS SELDOM INCORPORATED.

On one hand, I never did believe we had to walk away from the feminist movement in order to incorporate the issues of other movements. It was a tremendous motivation for me, believing that if the music could just get out there, all people committed to social change

lective longing. I think that we're beginning to identify what we are missing. We're beginning to long for something that we've already had—whereas in the '70s we had never had it. There was a point then where there came to be a critical mass of belief that made it possible for us to take the outrageous and audacious actions that we took. I think that in this next period of time, it's about generating that critical mass of belief again. When women say that they want to believe what I'm saying is true, I say to them, "You can believe it into being true." I do think that's what we did before, and I think we can do it again. It's not a passive thing; we have to act behind our beliefs.

would be able to draw on women's music as a strengthening and empowering force. On the other hand, at that time I think the need of women to be together was more compelling than the desire to be inclusive.

Here we are in the '90s, and never did we need women's point of view more! Never have woman-loving values been more desperately needed in our world. Those of us who believe that, and are simply comfortable with woman-loving values, are now in a much more personally responsible place to work together. So, of course, I'm interested in doing what I can to call up the troops... call out "The Girls."

I ASSUME YOU'RE LOOKING AT RELATIVELY SMALL, INTIMATE VENUES FOR YOUR FIRST TIMES OUT?

continued on page 54

ABOUT THE WRITER: Toni Armstrong Jr. has full-time careers in both special education and women's music & culture. Interests include movies, sign language, female vampires, neurophysiology, pinball, 'The Brady Bunch,' and the occasional nap. In the 1970s, Margie and her music were pivotal in the development of the relationship between Toni Jr. and her mother, Toni Sr.

SOAPBOX

I'm glad to have read the interview with Karen Williams [September 1991]. I only heard her once, but at the time she sounded pretty hateful to me—I couldn't imagine going to see her again. After reading more, though, I think I'll try it again, and probably feel differently about her humor. She's very articulate.

Cassie MacPherand, Bloomington, Indiana

...

Right on, sister Karen [Williams]! "Telling it like it is" never sounded so good.

Shirley A. Wilson, Detroit

...

I thoroughly enjoyed Jewelle Gomez's article on "Words" [May 1991]. We should all take more care in choosing our words, since some of them may carry unintended connotations. In discussing the dilemma of how to refer to herself (label herself, if you will), Jewelle says she prefers the word "lesbian" because "...lesbian is specifically female, implies sexual activity, and always elicits a slight tremor in even the most liberal straight people."

I find it ironic that she chose to use the word "straight" in that particular sentence to refer to heterosexuals! I think Jewelle broke her own rule by not being careful about how she chose her words. "Straight" is a word derived by "straights" to describe themselves. According to my thesaurus, "straight" is synonymous with: direct, even, right, true, undeviating, undistorted, upright, honest, truthful....By using the word "straight" in making the distinction between homosexuals and heterosexuals, Jewelle could be implying that lesbians are not "direct, even, right, true," etc. although I truly don't believe that is what she meant to say. (Do you?)

Brenda Kay Smith, Indianapolis

Jewelle responds: *My use of the term "straight" is derived less from a thesaurus than from the vernacular of jazz, which I take as a more interesting authority. "Straight" meaning square, unhip, not "in the life." And "in the life" meaning music, in the "business" (as in prostitution), or being homosexual. I've never much equated the word "straight" with truth or directness.*

...

I was at Michigan '91 and picked up a copy of *HOT WIRE*, the one with Karen Williams on the front [September 1991]. By the way, the article was great. The only question that I have is about the article on the East Coast Lesbians Festival. When you talked about what happened there this year you did not include a very important happening. The workshop

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



Marcy J. Hochberg

The biting humor of Karen Williams (with Baby Pookie) charmed the Michigan 1991 Day Stage audience.

"Unlearning Racism Cha, Cha, Cha" was extremely important in the wimmin's festival setting. [Festival producers] Lin and Myriam asked me about doing this workshop while we were at the National Lesbian Conference in Atlanta. They saw the kind of work that we were doing—a few wimmin of color took the lead for facilitation of the Lesbians of Color caucus, the other conference during NLC—and talked with me about doing anti-racism work at ECLF.

I believe that Lin and Myriam have a strong commitment to this kind of work; they asked that we do this workshop for the festival workers as well as the festival-goers. We were also on call the entire festival. And I have to say, I had little voice left by Sunday.

Peggy McGuire (Irish American) and I (African Native American) led the workshops, using popular education and a little R.C. (re-evaluation co-counseling). We chose that title because we wanted to add some fun so that wimmin will continue to do this work. The response was very good. Of course parts were hard. The number of wimmin who attended ranged from about forty to 120. Peggy and I were stopped and talked with during the entire festival, and we felt that our work added a value to ECLF that was important. There were many seeds that were placed, and I think that Lin and Myriam should be thanked for being

brave enough to offer this service.

Carol V. Moore, Bridgeton, New Jersey

...

I went to a couple of festivals last summer as well as a Musica Femina concert this fall. Then, going through your September issue—which includes everything from the acerbic wit of Karen Williams, to a very candid talk with the Indigo Girls, to coverage of new artists, to Cris at Carnegie, to a review of protest songs during the suffrage era, to the rock of June Millington and Sherry Shute (and on and on). I was struck again by something I heard Alix Dobkin say a long time ago: no matter what they say, it's not "limiting" to concentrate on women's music and culture. In the span a few months, I broadened my musical horizons in mind-boggling proportions. If I didn't have this central idea ("women's music and culture") lurking me to events and to *HOT WIRE*, I'd probably still be listening to Top 10 radio and reading *Rolling Stone*—and not even considering that I might like some other genres. (Me? Go to a flute and guitar recital? And like it??? But I was willing to try with Musica Femina, and gee, it was great.) So let's not allow the straight world, our gay brethren, or gay women who think women's music is "boring folk music" to make us feel like we're "limiting" ourselves when we concentrate on this culture of ours. If they knew the truth of our culture, even *they* couldn't keep thinking it's "limiting."

Patty, Madison

...

First I wanted to move to the Bay Area...then I wanted to move to Ohio. Our nation's capital beckoned to me, then I thought I should pack my futon and move to Alaska. Now I've given up all those thoughts, because your latest article has made me think I should move to Atlanta [September 1991]. Thanks for the coverage you do of various locations and the women's communities there. I'm hoping you'll continue to do those kinds of articles. For small-town feminists like me, it's both amazing and inspiring to read about the amazing things (and so many!) that go on out there. I hope you women who live in cities with active women's culture don't get too complacent. For most of us, our towns will never be on any musician's "tour route." We'll never have a bookstore other than Kroch's or Crown, and we might have to drive far even for that. We're lucky to even *hear* about festivals (and sadly, most women never do). Those of you living within driving range of concerts, bookstores, and film festivals should be sure to support what you have so it doesn't die on the vine. Believe me, I know how it is to live without. Sign me, "Still

in the Closet in Small-town U.S.A."

Name and city withheld by request

...

The diagrams that went along with my DAT article were missing [September 1991, page 48]. No doubt you will have heard about this *ad nauseum* by the time you receive this letter. Anyway, just wanted to let you know.

Dakota, Tucson

We apologize for the glaring omission, and the diagrams will appear in the next "The Audio Angle" column (in the May 1992 issue).

...

I'm trying to find a reliable (preferably feminist) outlet for ethnic drums. I want to buy a Tabla drum, like the one Edwina Lee Tyler played this year at Michigan, but the men in the local music stores act like I have no business asking for such a thing. Just thought you might know of an instrument store I could try.

Becky Ryker, 4344 S. Jamestown, Tulsa, OK 74135.

...

Usually when you read those poll things in music magazines, it's obvious that the majority of people who responded were a certain type of fan—maybe Guns 'n' Roses fans, or Michael Jackson fans (or Whitney Houston fans, if

they're kinder and gentler). But the extreme diversity represented by your *HOT WIRE* Readers' Choice Survey [September 1991] shows that no one fan club made it their business to write in. Somehow I doubt that fans of Two Nice Girls, for example, spend their off hours listening to Kay Gardner and Adrienne Torf (though they may be reading JoAnn Loulan's book *Lesbian Sex*.) Actually, I guess that slot for Group/Band is most representative: Two Nice Girls, Sweet Honey in the Rock, BETTY, Alive!, and Indigo Girls. Anyway, I found it real interesting this time around. Quite a variety of tastes we have, girls. But really, Readers' Choice is a good service, too, because it gives me a chance to know who's being buzzed about in the rest of lesbian nation.

Nina Iturbide, San Antonio, Texas

...

It caught my eye that the mailing address and telephone number for information regarding booking of Kay Gardner are the same address and telephone number as that of Sea Gnomes Home, the women's guesthouse in Maine. Why so? Also, are there any prospects/plans/hopes for reviving Sisterfire in the D.C. area?

Kathy J. Reynolds, Oberlin, Ohio

We passed your letter on to Kay Gardner, and she answered it in the form of this issue's "Freestyle" column (see page 50). And yes, there are plans and hopes regarding future Sisterfire festivals. For information, contact Sisterfire/Roadwork, 1475 Harvard NW, Washington, D.C. 20009.

...

Kelly Shankner may want to sit home and watch horror films over there in Gary ["Soapbox," September 1991], but unless I can sit on the couch and comfort her in her moment of terror, no way for me. But since we're sending in wish lists for Paula Langguth ["Fade In • Fade Out" video column], how about women in sports?

Christina Dubinski, Milwaukee

For those of you more interested in films and less interested in flirting via the letters column, suggestions and recommendations can be addressed directly to Paula Langguth c/o 'HOT WIRE.' The 'Fade In • Fade Out' column is designed to give info about films that are now out in rentable video format, for those of us who are couch potatoes and/or on a tight entertainment budget. Did you rent something lately that you think 'HOT WIRE' readers would enjoy seeing? Let Paula know.

COMING OUT THIS CHRISTMAS TIME

I'LL BE A HOMO FOR CHRISTMAS

By Lisa Diedrich

With Christmas just around the corner, soon holiday carols will be the ever-present soundtrack to our every activity. Can't relate to "Silent Night" *ad nauseum*? Well... 'tis the season to be gay, and the Seattle-based quartet Venus Envy has released an alternative to Perry Como and friends—a queer collection of carols appropriately entitled *I'll Be A Homo For Christmas*.

Together since May 1990, the four wild and wacky women who make up Venus Envy like to put a lesbian/feminist twist to some favorite tunes. *I'll Be A Homo For Christmas* features new versions of old standards like "The 12 Gays of Christmas" ("five golden rings" becomes "five dental dams"); "Rhonda the Lesbo Reindeer" (a thrash S/M version of the red-nosed fable, where Rhonda, not Rudolph, "likes the whip and reins"); "Oh Little Town in Michigan" (a yuletide tribute to the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival that ends with a saintly chorus of "No Men" (instead of "Amen") and a symphony of rain); and, of course, the title song (complete with schmaltzy back-up chorus).

The band's equally irreverent first release, *Unarmed and Dangerous*, includes the crowd-pleaser "Beaver Cleaver Fever," a legendary remake of the Little Willie John/Peggy Lee torchy classic, in which the singer swoons for Mama June.

The four women in Venus Envy have brought an eclectic array of talent and experience to the band, combining comedy, performance art, politics, and a touch of the absurd in their music. "Humor is a big key to the band's appeal," says guitarist/vocalist Lisa Koch (who penned the ever-popular "Beaver Cleaver Fever"). When not adding her spontaneous comic touches to Venus Envy performances, ex-Dyketone Lisa is one-half of the outrageous Seattle comedy duo Dos Fallopia (with Peggy Platt), pursues a solo acoustic career (she released the CD *Colorblind Blues* earlier this year), and finds time to work as an actor/writer in the Seattle area. "My specialty is singing like a chipmunk, and I'm happy to say that this talent has been exposed and exploited on *I'll Be A Homo*," she says.

Bassist/vocalist Laura Love is the leader of her own band, and has received

critical acclaim for her two popular solo albums, *Z-Therapy* and *Menstrual Hut*. Laura has been voted Official Sex Symbol by the rest of the band. Laura is, according to Lisa, "a major talent—monster bass player, unbelievable vocalist, and a great songwriter."

Linda Schierman, who adds soulful harmonica and vocals to Venus Envy, performed in the 1980s with another popular Seattle feminist fixture, Raw Sugar, and has just released a solo cassette entitled, *Experienced Beginner*. Her songs, Lisa says, are "very politically charged, and brilliantly clever."

Not to be outdone by her band-mate's extra-curricular activities, percussionist/multi-instrumentalist Linda Severt plays in several bands, including The Modern Fabrics and the Laura Love Band. She is an accomplished juggler and skateboarder who runs her own business (JuggleTunes) and threatens to add percussion/juggling to Venus Envy.

All four women bring their own unique "flavor" to the band. Their influences, not surprisingly, are diverse, range-

continued on inside back cover

HOTLINE

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



Sally Neely

Nancy Perrone (left) and Janet Soule shopping at Michigan for WomanWild, their unique woman-identified art/gift gallery located in Chicago next to Women & Children First bookstore.

TRIVIA CONTESTS

We finally have a winner in the "what-was-her-name-before-she-changed-it-to-Whoopi-Goldberg?" contest. Several knew the name but not the proper spelling...But Annmarie Caviolo brings pride to her Yonkers, New York neighborhood by being the first to correctly answer **CARYN JOHNSON**. We're still waiting for someone to correctly identify the women who did the voices for (1) E.T., (2) Bart Simpson, and (3) the voice of the possessed little Linda Blair in *The Exorcist*. As always, the first reader with all three correct answer(s) wins a year's subscription.

IS YOUR NAME FIONA?

The first three women named Fiona who write to us will get a surprise. Details in the next issue, when we've found our Fionas.

HOTLINE presents capsule reports of past happenings, announces upcoming events, and passes on various tidbits of information. This column is hereby dedicated now and forevermore to Donna Allen, who has dedicated a great deal of her life to facilitating and promoting the type of connections between women that "Hotline" is all about.

NEWS

Marketwimmin meet Godzilla: On September 9—while they were still on the festival circuit—**BLANCHE JACKSON** and **AMOJA THREE RIVERS'** rented home burned to the ground, destroying everything that was not with them in the truck. This has not only wiped out their belongings and ten-year collection of ancient African herstory research books (many of which were old and out of print), but has also seriously derailed their life projects—the proposed Sakti-Root Ecology Conference and Retreat Center, and the Accessible African Herstory Project. Blanche and Amoja need your assistance in getting their lives, their business, and their projects back on track. Contributions are sought for the purchase of books, office supplies, an Apple computer, a used trailer for office space, and ultimately land to house all of the above. Donations, advice, leads, and encouragement will be greatly appreciated. Marketwimmin, P.O. Box 28, Indian Valléy, VA 24105. (703) 992-0248.

At a planning meeting at Chicago's Alleilton Hotel last August, lesbian and gay leaders from twenty-six states and more than fifty organizations unanimously approved another

MARCH ON WASHINGTON for Lesbian and Gay Rights. This one will take place April 25, 1993—so mark your calendar now. For more info: 1-800-832-2889.

After seventeen years in the business, the country's oldest women's music distribution company has moved to a new, larger location. With the help of their friends, **GOLDEN-ROD**—owned by Terry Grant—moved approximately 1,000 boxes of stock, plus all the office furniture and files, in an eight-hour marathon. The warehouse was up and running within another day. They are now located in the zip code area made famous by Alix Dobkin's "Lesbian Code" song ("...in Lansing, 48912..."). Goldenrod/Horizon Distribution, 1712 E. Michigan Ave., Lansing, MI 48912. (517) 484-1712, fax (517) 484-1771.

The New Zealand (Aotearoa) Immigration Department has announced that citizens' foreign lesbian/gay lovers are now welcome to apply for residency in that country, reports *Lesbian Connection* and the *Philadelphia Gay News*. New Zealand joins Australia, Denmark, Holland, and Norway in allowing **SAME SEX PARTNER IMMIGRATION**.

Plans are underway to open the United States **HOLOCAUST MUSEUM** in Washington, D.C. The museum director plans to include exhibits about lesbians and gay men. The museum would also like to conduct oral histories with survivors. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2000 L St. NW #717, Washington, DC 20036.

Erin Rice and Kay Parkhurst have stepped forward to take on **TRIVIA**. Former editors Lise Weil and Linda Nelson will be staying on *Trivia's* board as advisors. The magazine needs to raise at least \$7,500 towards the purchase of desktop publishing equipment. *Trivia*, P.O. Box 606, North Amherst, MA 01059.

Hallmark Cards' new "Personalize It" program, which enables customers to print their own messages on cards using an in-store computer, **REFUSES TO ACCEPT MESSAGES WITH THE WORD "LESBIAN."** According to the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, Hallmark says the program blocks the use of a number of "bad words," and claims the policy prevents people from using the L word as an insult. Letters of protest to President/CEO Irvine O. Hockaday, Jr., Hallmark Cards, Inc., 2501 McGee, Kansas City, MO 64108.

In *Forbes'* latest listing of **HIGHEST PAID CELEBRITIES**, there were four women in the

top thirty-five: Oprah Winfrey (\$80 million), Madonna (\$63 million), Janet Jackson (\$43 million), and Paula Abdul (\$24 million).

News from Mecca (the Bay Area). **OAKLAND AND BERKELEY** now have a new area code—(510). San Francisco retains the (415) area code.

A national "**LET SHARON KOWALSKI COME HOME**" HOTLINE was established by a coalition of organizations to pressure Minnesota Governor Arne Carlson to intervene on behalf of Sharon. Each call generates a letter to Gov. Carlson to protest the decision to deny Karen Thompson guardianship. Call 1-900-325-6000, ID #9860. The charge for the call is \$6.25, some of which goes to the legal defense fund.

The sale of a painting by Mexican artist **FRIDA KAHLO** brought \$1.65 million at auction to the University of Iowa for the establishment of the Iowa Women's Archives. According to *Feminist Teacher*, the painting—"Self-Portrait With Loose Hair"—was completed in 1947 and was donated by Louise Noun from Des Moines, an eighty-three-year-old feminist collector of paintings by women artists.

THELMA & LOUISE WATCH

To charges that the film *Thelma and Louise* is "male bashing," **GEENA DAVIS** responded in the *Chicago Tribune*: "I don't think it's male bashing. But even if it was, it couldn't bash them enough to make up for the hundreds of thousands of movies that are all about women being abused, mutilated, or depicted as cardboard characters."...**BUTTON SEEN:** *Graduate of the Thelma and Louise Finishing School...* **SHIRT RECEIVED:** *Thelma and Louise Live Forever...* Catalysis Consulting, a Seattle research firm, is seeking moviegoers for a **SURVEY ON ATTITUDES ABOUT THELMA AND LOUISE**. For a questionnaire, write P.O. Box 19536, Seattle, WA 98109...San Diego Zoo spokeswoman Georgeanne Irvine says she came up with a name for the zoo's unusual **TWO-HEADED, NONPOISONOUS CORN SNAKE** while showering. "I thought, what a perfect name for a female snake," she said in the *Chicago Tribune*. The three-and-a-half-foot reddish brown reptile is named...what else? *Thelma and Louise*.

WOMEN

LINDA BLOODWORTH-THOMASON, creator and executive producer of CBS's *Designing Women* and *Evening Shade*, formed the Claudia Co. in Poplar Bluff, Missouri to give something back to the town where she was born. Today, she is footing the bills for the college educations of eighteen women from the Ozarks, and to send more than twenty girls (aged thirteen to seventeen) through enrichment programs (such as language camps) at home and abroad. She is also helping battered women by raising funds to build a training center for litigators, therapists, and other experts involved in domestic violence.

LEAH ZICARI performed at Western Maryland College last October as part of the campus activities during National Coming Out Week. The proceeds of the show went to benefit the Food Pantry for people with HIV and AIDS. National Coming Out Day, which commemorates the 1987 March on Washington for lesbian and gay rights as well as the inaugural visit of the Names Project (AIDS Quilt) to the nation's capitol, is celebrated every year on October 11.

ROSEANNE (BARR) ARNOLD continues to be an enthusiastic advocate for lesbian and gay rights, condemning gay-bashing on the comedy circuit and expanding gay-related themes on her top-rated ABC sitcom. Letters of praise to Roseanne and/or Executive Producer Marcy Carsey at Carsey-Werner Co., 4024 Redford Ave., Los Angeles, CA 91604.

MADONNA has also repeatedly gone on record (MTV, *Advocate*, and elsewhere) as a supporter of lesbian/gay rights. The Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) encourages letters of appreciation to Madonna c/o Liz Rosenberg, Warner Bros., 75 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, NY 10019.

Congratulations to **JANNA MacAUSLAN** and **KRISTAN ASPEN** (Musica Femina) on their eleventh anniversary, which they celebrated last September while on tour.

LILY TOMLIN—in phone operator Ernestine drag—took tickets at the premiere of her new film *The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe* last fall.

Motown pioneer **MARY WELLS** [see May 1991 issue of *HOT WIRE*] participated last summer and fall in a nationwide clinical trial of Edatrexate, an experimental chemotherapy drug not yet commercially available. A spokesperson says doctors link Mary's battle with inoperable lung and larynx cancer to her former two-packs-a-day cigarette habit, plus the effects of secondary smoke she inhaled at clubs while performing. Financial assistance is still being sought. Donations to: Mary Wells Fund, Rhythm and Blues Foundation #4603, 14th and Constitution Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20560.

QUOTABLE QUOTES

BONNIE RAITT, in the video *Changer: A Record of the Times*: "I was in my twenties when I heard the legend of Cris Williamson...Cris was the first person to recognize my musicianship. I'd sung on many people's projects, but to be included in hers was like a beacon."

KATHLEEN TURNER as V.I. Warshawski, in the movie version of Sara Paretsky's detective: "Never underestimate a man's ability to underestimate a woman."

LINDA HAMILTON on attaining her *Terminator 2* look...The actress spent eighteen hours a day with an Israeli commando named Uzi

Gal and a personal trainer to get in shape for the film. "Six days a week, three hours a day, I lifted free weights. I did aerobics, Lifecycles, jogging, running stairs, and trampolines. Would you like to feel my muscles?"

HONORS

Last summer, the Astraea National Lesbian Action Foundation granted the Sappho Award of Distinction to internationally acclaimed feminist-lesbian poet, writer, activist **AUDRE LORDE**. The \$5,000 award was given in recognition of her body of work "which is a model and inspiration for lesbians and women worldwide."

The Astraea Lesbian Writers' Fund also awarded its first five grants to emerging lesbian writers. \$11,000 each went to poets **YASMIN TAMBIAH** and **MELINDA GOODMAN**, and fiction writers **MARIANA ROMO-CARMONA**, **ANA MARIA SIMO**, and **MAGDALENA ZSCHOKKE**.

The Alumni Association and the Friends of Women's Studies recognized **CATHERINE ROMA** [director of MUSE: Cincinnati's Women's Choir; see page 36 in this issue] and four other women graduates as Distinguished Alumni of the University of Cincinnati. At their annual luncheon, each was presented with a silver bowl and a certificate—and the five shared a twenty-four hour period (as proclaimed by the mayor) as their day.

MINNIE BRUCE PRATT, **AUDRE LORDE**, and **CHRISTOS** will split a \$10,000 grant from the estates of Lillian Hellman and Dashiell Hammett. The money was given by the Fund for Free Expression, which awards grants to international writers who have been victims of political persecution. (The three lesbian writers were harassed after receiving National Endowment for the Arts grants.)

HOT WIRE staff artist **LAURA IRENE WAYNE** won the 1991 Pat Parker Memorial Poetry Competition with her poem "A Sister Gone." The \$250 award is given annually to an African-American feminist poet. The competition is sponsored by the woman-owned, black-owned *Woman in the Moon Publications*, and commemorates black lesbian feminist poet Pat Parker who died in June of 1989. (Submissions for the 1992 competition are accepted March 1 through May 31. Send to WIM, Box 137, 2215-R Market St., San Francisco, CA 94114.)

BERNICE JOHNSON REAGON (Sweet Honey in the Rock) was among the recipients of a Candace Award last June from the National Coalition of 100 Black Women. The awards pay tribute to leadership among African-American women. Bernice was cited for her work as curator of the Division of Community Life of the Smithsonian Institution.

LADYSLIPPER'S TOP TWENTY SELLERS for the past year included: Libana's *Fire Within*

(also songbook) and *A Circle is Cast*; Alix Dobkin's *Yahoo Australia*; Rhiannon's *Toward Home*; Ferron's *Phantom Center and Testimony*; Kay Gardner's *A Rainbow Path, Sounding the Inner Landscape, and Garden of Ecstasy*; Kate Clinton's *Babes in Joyland*; Holly Near's *Singer in the Storm*; Cris Williamson's *Changer and the Changed* and *Best of Cris Williamson*; Lisa Thiel's *Songs of the Spirit*; *Best of Meg Christian*; *The Flirtations*; *Sweet Honey in the Rock Live at Carnegie Hall*; *Girls in the Nose*; and Heather Bishop's *A Duck in New York City*. To receive a copy of the eighty-seven page catalog of recordings by women, write Ladyslipper, P.O. Box 3124, Durham, NC 27715.

The Montreal World Film Festival awarded its top prize to *SALMONBERRIES*, directed by Percy Adlon (*Bagdad Cafe*). The drama, set in Alaska, features k.d. lang in what advance publicity called "an exquisite love story of unfulfilled lesbian desire."

Lesbian photographer JOAN E. BIREN (JEB) received a grant from the Chicago Resource Center last fall to work on her video about internalized homophobia, according to *Nightlines*.

FOND FAREWELLS

GALE WILHELM, author of six novels, including the lesbian classics *We Too Are Drifting* and *Torchlight to Valhalla*, died last July 11 at the age of eighty-three. According to her lover of forty-three years, the cause of death was cancer. Her works are available through Naiad Press.

MUSE: Cincinnati's Women's Chorus bid a fond farewell to CHRIS REED when she stepped down last year as treasurer. After four years—an all-time record for anyone to stay in the position—"Chris dreams of a less hassled life among her friends in the alto II section, unencumbered by big bucks, countless memos, and IOUs stuffed into side pockets," according to *MUSE News*. She will continue in the position of treasurer of the Sister Singers Network.

ANNE WARNER (1906-1991) died last April at age eighty-five. Her book *Traditional American Folksongs* (Syracuse Press, 1984) contains 200 songs with detailed notes and music, as well as photos. Anne began the book when she was seventy.

Almost a year later, fans still miss NANCY KULP (the independent spinster Miss Hathaway of *Beverly Hillbillies* fame). The actress, who made an unsuccessful run for Congress in 1984, died from cancer last February at the age of sixty-four.

GROUPS

The INSTITUTE FOR THE MUSICAL ARTS moved into a beautiful building last year "complete with a Japanese-style garden, large studio/performance place, and three office/resource/bedrooms." They can now offer on-

going programs and accommodate overnight guests. Fall workshops included "Demystifying the Recording Process" (June Millington); "Live Dream: the Art of the Possible" (Cris Williamson); "Drumming" (Barbara Borden); and "Music and Healing" (Kay Gardner). To be on the mailing list, get more info about the organization and its events, and/or get a copy of their survey, SASE to IMA, P.O. Box 253, Bodega, CA 94922. (Or call Executive Director Ann Hackler, (707) 876-3004.)

WOMYN'S BRAILLE PRESS is expanding their braille collection via computer. They are trying to get copies of books on disks, reports *Womyn's Words*. It is possible that once books are available on disk, the braille copies can be printed out as subscribers request them. Publishers and authors who have books on disk in any stage of proofing may want to contact WBP about offering these resources. WBP's greatest need right now is for more sighted proofreaders who can work on IBM, Apple, or Mac computers. Contact Lynn Zelvin, Womyn's Braille Press, Box 8475, Minneapolis, MN 55408.

The SUSAN B. ANTHONY MEMORIAL UNREST HOME welcomes activist women and women's groups for camping, hiking, and swimming. Located on 150-acres near Athens in southeast Ohio: (614) 448-6424.

The lesbian-feminist group PATLATONALLI started its work five years ago in Guadalajara, Mexico. "We work against invisibility, repression, and autorepression. We now have rented a local lesbian space for workshops, meetings, a telephone line, gatherings, library, and information-documentation center. With your help we can make the world a friendlier place for wimmin; with your money and our energy and work, we can all do it." Ana Isabel Lopez G., Apdo. Postal 1-623, C.P. 44100, Guadalajara, Jal., Mexico. Phone: 145755.

SISTER HOMELANDS ON EARTH is a new group formed to help more women live on land. SHE Land Trust is set up as a non-profit corporation "to hold land for the use of wimmin always." Women with all levels of interest and experience encouraged to write. SASE to SHE Land Trust, P.O. Box 5285, Tucson, AZ 85703. (602) 883-9085.

The LESBIAN CARTOONISTS NETWORK was formed in 1990 by Andrea Natalie. A quarterly newsletter is published. Andrea Natalie, 7100 Blvd. East #14N, Guttenberg, NJ 07093.

A new network designed for WOMEN VETERANS is being formed with the hopes of providing a supportive network in which women can discuss issues, thoughts, and ideas with others who share the common bond of military experience. The group's publication will feature resource information, articles of interest to veteran women, and creative works. The network is seeking comments and suggestions and will publish a special discreet supplement

for lesbian vets. Pallas Athena Network, P.O. Box 1171, New Market, VA 22844.

The MADONNA FAN CLUB can be reached at 849 Sunset Blvd. #485, West Hollywood, CA 90069. (213) 937-7589.

The LESBIAN HERSTORY ARCHIVES has continued to raise funds for their new \$300,000 building. After seventeen years, the collection is the oldest and largest lesbian archive in the world—and has outgrown Joan Nestle's apartment. Houseparties (to raise money) done by individual women and women's groups in various towns have proven successful. If you think you might like to try doing one to help the archives find a permanent home, contact LHA, P.O. Box 1258, New York, NY 10016. (212) 874-7232.

FEMINIST TEACHERS are invited to become part of the network of feminist educators through the pages of *Feminist Teacher* magazine. Send your name, address, and areas of special interest to Feminist Teacher Network, 442 Ballantine Hall, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN 47405.

The ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN IN SCIENCE now has more than 3,500 members. The focus of the group is on improving the educational and employment opportunities for women in all science fields. For info on membership, publications, career pamphlets, films, posters, etc.: Association of Women in Science, 1522 K St. NW #820, Washington, D.C. 20005.

GATHERINGS

For information on the 1992 ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN'S MUSIC AND CULTURE (AWMAC) CONFERENCE, which focuses on all aspects of the women's music industry—and which may be held this year in conjunction with the National Women's Music Festival—contact Suzanne McQue/Anna Mae Schuler, P.O. Box 85, Kerhonkson, NY 12445. (914) 626-7925.

To receive information about the sixth annual WOMEN'S MOTORCYCLE FESTIVAL, write WMF, 7 Lent Ave., LeRoy, NY 14482. (Special thanks to the organizers for being so supportive when *HOT WIRE* was going through its worst period last year. They were among the first to write offering grantwriter information, and it really cheered us up.)

Writer/performer/artist JORJET HARPER and playwright/performer PAULA BERG celebrated their birthdays—and that of QUEEN HATSHEPSUT, the only woman pharaoh of Egypt—last September at the Cairo club in Chicago. The bash, which drew many of Chicagoland's lesbian feminist literati and glitterati, included Jorjet's comedic readings from her novel-in-progress, and a performance of excerpts from Paula's new lesbian musical comedy *Connections of the Heart*.

WISCON 16, the science fiction convention with a feminist/academic emphasis, will again take place in Madison the weekend of March 6-8. The first annual James Tiptree Jr. Award (the first SF award to be named after a woman writer—in this case, Alice Sheldon, who used the Tiptree pseudonym) will be presented. Artist/writer/publisher Trina Robbins will be the Guest of Honor. (This event is open to women, men, and children.) WISCON 16, P.O. Box 1624, Madison, WI 53701-1624.

FILM-VIDEO-THEATER-TV

When the playwright died of a brain tumor in 1983, she left a legacy that includes the award-winning *Last Summer at Bluefish Cove*. Several unproduced/unpolished plays by JANE CHAMBERS were discovered in her Long Island home after her death. Chicago's Footsteps Theatre Co. and Vita Dennis did revisions on the first of these plays, and *Eye of the Gull* had its world premiere in Chicago last fall. Footsteps Theatre, 6968 N Clark St., Chicago, IL 60626. (312) 465-8323.

WHOOPI GOLDBERG plans to produce and star in her own late night talk show next fall. *The Whoopi Goldberg Show* will regularly feature one guest per thirty-minute installment. "I'm thrilled to have this opportunity to pursue yet another lifelong dream, which is to talk to the most important and interesting people in the world today," she said in a Chicago *Tribune* article. This season she can be seen on *Star Trek: The Next Generation* in her role as Guinan, the Enterprise's wise resident bartender.

The eighth annual **INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY VIDEO FESTIVAL** will be cablecast for five hours in the Boston area on March 8. The festival, which explores the theme "Women and Discovery," will be distributed to Public Access TV channels throughout the U.S. P.O. Box 390438, Cambridge, MA 02239.

Two new films dealing with **WOMEN'S SPIRITUALITY** were released last fall, both produced by Margaret Pettigrew and directed by Donna Read. *Goddess Remembered* is a documentary that explores 35,000 years of pre-patriarchal history of female power and deity, of civilizations lost and found, of worship, healing, and community, according to *New Directions for Women*. *The Burning Times* is a detailed historical telling of the Women's Holocaust, the 300 years when up to eight million women were burned, tortured, and killed. Cinema Ltd. Library, P.O. Box 315, Franklin Lakes, NJ 07417, or 22 Hollywood Ave., Hoboken, NJ 07423.

THE AMAZON ALL-STARS, written by award-winning lesbian feminist playwright Carolyn Gage, is a musical comedy about a lesbian softball team. Carolyn, now living in Oregon, is well known for her one-woman show *The Second Coming of Joan of Arc*. The play has been produced in Atlanta, Santa Cruz, and Oregon.

SAPPHIRE THEATER COMPANY has ongoing acting workshops for beginners and those with experience. (415) 653-4945.

House O'Chicks is collecting donations to continue production and distribution of a video about **SAFE SEX FOR WOMEN**. It will be distributed worldwide to educational and health organizations as a nonprofit project. Checks to House O'Chicks, 2215-R Market #813, San Francisco, CA 94114.

To get on the mailing list for the annual **WOMEN IN THE DIRECTOR'S CHAIR** film-video festivals: WIDC, 3435 N. Sheffield #202, Chicago, IL 60657. (312) 281-4988.

WRY CRIPS DISABLED WOMEN'S THEATRE ARTS PROJECT is alive and well, featuring readers' theater, skits, songs, etc. Disabled women who would like to perform, call (415) 601-5819.

PUBLICATIONS

Publisher Catherine Hillenbrand announces that backlist titles from **REAL COMET PRESS**—including Lynda Barry's *Girls & Boys*; *Big Ideas, Naked Ladies*; and *The Good Times Are Killing Me*—are now available through Inland



Dr. Ruth Simkin, with the The Award of Distinction she received last June. The honor is awarded "to an individual of the Calgary gay and lesbian community for extraordinary lifework, within or outside the community, previous to June 1990."

Book Co. (140 Commerce St., East Haven, CT 06512). Real Comet has been up for sale for two years, but has not met a buyer they find suitable. Rights to many titles in their catalog are available. Real Comet, 1463 E. Republican St. #126, Seattle, WA 98112. (206) 328-1801.

LESBIAN HERSTORY ARCHIVES PAMPHLETS are now available in Spanish, French, and Dutch. SASE to LHA, P.O. Box 1258, New York, NY 10116. (212) 874-7232.

BARRIER FREE: SERVING YOUNG WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES is a resource book/curriculum manual recently released by the Women's Educational Equity Act and Publishing Center. The step-by-step manual includes career exploration, independent living, and sexuality. Educational Development Center, 55 Chapel St., Newton, MA 02160.

Look for **WOMEN IN MUSIC** (edited by Karin Pendle, Indiana University Press). The first college textbook in the field offers a set of tapes and accompanying anthology of musical scores. Catherine Roma wrote the chapter "British Women Composers Since 1918."

American Scholar, the journal of the Phi Beta Kappa Society, has an explicit policy of always USING "FEMALE HOMOSEXUAL" INSTEAD OF "LESBIAN" (except in quotations, formal names of organizations, or when the authors strenuously protest and insist on the use of the word), reports the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation. The male editor, writing recently in the conservative *Hudson Review*, likened feminists to pit bulls, and found the mere allusion to the group Dykes on Bikes hilarious. Gay academics are encouraging that letters be sent urging an immediate change in the offensive policy. Write to Secretary Douglas Foard, Phi Beta Kappa Society, 1811 Q Street NW, Washington, DC 20009.

Hikané: The Capable Woman is back again after a delay. The forty-four-page fall issue includes news, commentary, networking, letters, and other things of interest to **WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES** and their allies. The publication is available in print, tape, and now braille format. New address: P.O. Box 841, Great Barrington, MA 01230.

Karen Beth is arranging her songs and organizing them into a **BOOK FOR WOMEN'S CHORUSES**. For further info, SASE to Karen Beth, Box 371, Bearsville, NY 12409. (914) 679-8049.

Looking for a dynamic keynote speaker or workshop presenter? The **SPEAK OUT!** catalog lists more than 100 progressive, distinguished speakers—about a third of them women, including Angela Bowen, Rosalyn Baxandall, Margaret Cerullo, Barbara Ehrenreich, Aurora Levins Morales, Margaret Ran-

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ABOUT THE WRITERS: When not perusing women's periodicals, Annie Lee Leveritt works for a commercial printer in Chicago, does production work on 'HOT WIRE' and 'Outlines,' and enjoys 'Thelma and Louise' double features. Joy Rosenblatt is a long-time activist in women's music and culture; credits include concert production and coordinating the soundsheets feature of 'HOT WIRE.' Toni Jr.'s affair with women's music and culture began more than fifteen years ago. She would like to hear from other feminists who share her interest in the female vampire genre.

BEHIND THE SCENES

WOMEN IN LIVE SOUND

MYRNA JOHNSTON & SHELLEY JENNINGS

By Toni Armstrong Jr.

Myrna Johnston Audio—MJA—is a live sound company based in Boston. Myrna Johnston and Shelley Jennings operate the business, with Myrna engineering and handling production arrangements, and Shelley managing the shop and equipment (and Myrna).

MYRNA JOHNSTON

Myrna E. Johnston was born in Everett, Massachusetts on January 15, 1953. She is the middle child (three sisters, two brothers), born to her elementary school teacher mother and metal worker father. Prior to becoming one of the most famous sound engineers in women's music, she attended the University of Maine at Orono and the University of Massachusetts in Boston, from which she earned her BA in Psychology in 1976. Except for five years in Maine—where she worked in a paper mill—Myrna has spent most of her life living in Boston.

For seventeen years, Myrna has enjoyed a variety of live audio work situations, providing sound equipment and engineering services for all kinds of musical and political events. About half of her annual work now involves women's music concerts and festivals.

"In 1975, I helped a friend do sound for Jade and Sarsaparilla [Janet Hood and Linda Langford] in Boston," she recalls. "I found it totally exciting, and soon became their clueless sound engineer—seat of the pants school of sound. I worked on the first Boston Women's Music Festival in 1975, then freelanced for five years before working for Hanley Audio, a company I was with for six years."

Through Hanley's, Myrna worked the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Fes-



Shelley Jennings (left) and Myrna Johnston. "Working within women's culture all these years has been inspiring, hilarious, frustrating, and rewarding," says Myrna.

tival, Philadelphia Folk Festival, Vermont Jazz Festival, and No Nukes in New York City, as well as "countless" Boston shows. She spent several years as the monitor engineer at Berklee Performance Center, working with great musicians, including Smokey Robinson, The Temptations, Chaka Kahn, Gladys Knight, Flora Purim, Luther Vandross, and other mainstream touring artists.

Polly Laurelchild and Allegra Productions brought most of the women's music artists to Boston in the '80s, according to Myrna. "Polly's shows provided the opportunity for our women technical crews to develop. In 1981, we trucked to Connecticut for the first New England Women's Musical Retreat (NEWMR) Festival, and that experience led to being invited to what has become a decade of Augusts in Michigan," she says. Myrna's festival work has included NEWMR (1981-1991); The Michigan Womyn's Mu-

sic Festival (1982-1991); The Redwood Festival (1986); Sisterfire (1987-88); The National Women's Music Festival (1984, 1986-91); The East Coast Lesbians Festival (1989-90); and The Southern Women's Music & Comedy Festival (1991).

She has worked in a wide variety of venues, including Lincoln Center (Holly Near, Ronnie Gilbert, and George Winston); Carnegie Hall (Holly Near, Ferron, Cleo Laine, the Olivia Records Fifteenth Anniversary Concert, Cris Williamson's *Changer* show, and the 1991 South American Festival); the New York No Nukes event; and many large Boston Gay Prides. Boden (WomanSound) Sandstrom has occasionally involved Myrna in her large Washington, D.C. events—most notably, the 1987 Gay and Lesbian March on Washington and the three Sisterfire festivals. Myrna has worked with artists as diverse as Bob Marley and Patti LaBelle, in addition to most of the biggest names

BEHIND THE SCENES profiles the "unsung" women who keep the women's music network running: producers, bookers, technicians, back-up musicians, organizers, distributors, and dedicated workers of all kinds.

in the feminist cultural circuit.

"Sound work has enabled me to travel and associate with many fine artists and producers," says Myrna. "[Producer] Virginia Giordano has brought me to Lincoln Center and Carnegie Hall; Redwood Records took me on the road in 1985 with Holly Near and Inti Illimani. I joined the Olivia Records Fifteenth Anniversary Tour, and currently have a blast cruising with them. Locally, the Revolutionary Acts! production company has brought many wonderful artists to Boston, including Mercedes Sosa, who performed at the Symphony Hall. Last year, I traveled with Ferron on the *Phantom Center* tour, which was so gratifying musically and spiritually. I also joined Ferron, Connie Kaldor, Stephen Fearing, and the James Keelaghan Trio on the Canadian Festival Tour. We had a swell tour bus where cards and food made the miles fly by," recalls Myrna.

"After Cris Williamson's *Changer and the Changed* Fifteenth Anniversary Concert at Carnegie Hall, I brought my PA to the Southern Women's Music and Comedy Festival with my pal sound engineer Moira Shea," says Myrna. "It was my first time down to Southern, which is a very relaxed and friendly event. From Atlanta we drove to Bloomington for the Seventeenth National Women's Music Festival. At National we eat cafeteria food, but we work with beautiful set design, and excellent lighting—and the crew is very professional."

Myrna considers Michigan to be the classic of women's festivals. Throughout the year, Myrna and her partner Shelley upgrade, rebuild, and purchase equipment with Michigan in mind. "We truck out all the sound equipment for the four stages. It takes three days to drive out, and we stay for ten days," says Myrna. "We've made so many friends at this festival that a big part of the appeal is getting together with our pals. Beth Berkeley, engineer extraordinaire of Seattle, joins us mixing monitors. The high skill level of our technical crew has been critical to pulling it all off—the Michigan experience is long hours, lemon water, and many laughs with our mates."

SHELLEY JENNINGS

The other half of MJA is Shelley M. Jennings, born November 1, 1954 in Washington, D.C. The younger of two sisters born to their federal government of-

fice worker mother and photographer/cartoonist father, Shelley has lived in D.C., Maryland, Virginia, and Chicago in addition to Boston.

"I dropped out of high school in tenth grade and was sent to a school for misfits in Virginia," she recalls. "I managed one year at Bard College in New York, then left to go on the road with Sally Piano in 1975. I moved to Chicago that same year with Sally after our first national tour, because the women's community there was quite exciting at the time—and the restaurants were fabulous."

In addition to being a musician and sound engineer, Shelley also has experience as a janitor (Art Institute of Chicago); a record store clerk/buyer (Sounds Good Records and Rose Records in Chicago, Strawberries Records in Boston); an electronics technician (at a computer company and sound company); and a freelance DJ (1980-present). She has worked as an electrician for the last five years.

Shelley's role as Myrna's MJA partner is largely behind the scenes—and she likes it that way these days. She does most of the fabrication—soldering connector panels, making cables, building AC power distribution, and testing and repairing equipment. She designs the packaging of the equipment, handles the technical paperwork, and obsesses over pre-production details and walk-in tapes.

"I began an interest in music inspired by the Beatles, and took up electric guitar at age ten," Shelley says. "I was a childhood friend of Sirani Sally Avedikian Avedis Piano. [Editor's note: Shelley's former musical partner performed at various times under various combinations of these names; she was best known as Sally Piano or Sirani Avedis.] We formed a band in 1974, as women's music was revving up. Olivia records was in D.C. then, and asked me to play on Meg Christian's first album, *I Know You Know*. Sally and I hit the road and toured across the country, ending up in Chicago. She made one album—*Tattoos*—and we performed at some of the first women's music festivals [Michigan and National]."

Their band, called Ethel Mertz, was primarily Sally and Shelley. Initially, it included Sally's brother Rick on bass ("until such a thing was frowned upon," Shelley says). "A Chicago area drummer, Julie Kiner, played with us for a while, and we had a percussionist, Toni Hayes. For Sally's album and a few shows, we

worked with Nydia Mata, Jean Fineberg, Barbara Cobb, and a few more of New York's finest." Shelley and Sally played together on and off from 1974 to 1981.

Along with playing, Shelley was always drawn to the technical end of production, both live sound and recording. Finally, in 1982, Shelley moved to Boston and went to electronics school with Myrna. "We began working together as her business was taking shape," Shelley says. "In the past eight years I've worked on many festivals and concerts, as well as learning the electrical trade and becoming a licensed electrician. Currently, I divide up my time between electrical work, the sound business, and playing 'casual guitar.' I most enjoy the festivals—seeing women I've known for fifteen years. What a long, strange trip it's been!"

...

In the past seven years, Myrna and Shelley have evolved from renting most of the equipment they use to owning several sound systems. "Our equipment at this point consists of numerous sound systems that can be used in various combinations to suit specific events," says Myrna. "The largest system features Adamson, the top of the line Canadian speaker system. Recently we purchased an Electro-Voice Delta Max mid-sized system. Our smaller venues are covered by speakers on stands. For power amplifiers we use Crest and Carver; mixing consoles are mainly Soundcraft; and processing equipment includes Klark Teknik, Lexicon, Drawmer, DBX, and Yamaha. We built our own stage monitors with McCauley components, and they get rave reviews!"

Myrna and Shelley have both watched the women's music scene evolve from its earliest days. "Locally, women's music has changed a great deal since the days of large concerts and gatherings," says Myrna. "Many artists seen at festivals don't tour here during the year—or if they do, they play smaller venues and clubs. There seem to be more regional festivals, and less support for individual concerts. It's tough to watch the classic struggle of artists trying to make a living. Particularly within our culture we see

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ABOUT THE WRITER: Toni Armstrong Jr. has been involved in behind the scenes work in women's music for more than fifteen years, as an organizer, editor, photographer—all done in typical Type A Capricorn style.

FADE IN • FADE OUT

ROLE MODELS FOR KIDS

By Paula E. Langguth

In videos, as in real life, the hidden talents and strengths of women are rarely revealed except under duress. This edition of "Fade In • Fade Out" features films where a woman is the leading lady—and her supporting cast is underage. The power women wield to mold young minds, as shown in these videos, is comical, heartening, and empowering. So, put on your favorite feminist T-shirt, round up the neighborhood women and children, and rev up the VCR.

•FADE IN•

TROOP BEVERLY HILLS

The most star-studded film in this group, *Troop Beverly Hills* is also the most outrageous. Shelley Long is Phyllis Neffler, a woman who has spent the past decade creating a Beverly Hills-wife persona to complement her husband Fred (Craig Nelson) who has become Neffler the Muffler Man, owner of a chain of muffler repair shops. Newly separated from her husband, a bored and unfulfilled Phyllis embraces the challenge of leading her daughter's Wilderness Girls of America troop.

She soon discovers, however, that the eight-girl troop has become disenchanted with grown-ups and the organization's inflexible requirements for earning badges. After Phyllis's mainstream attempts at scouting fail miserably, she has her girls earn their patches Beverly Hills style, in the funniest film segment I've seen in years.

District leader Velda Plender—played by Betty Thomas of *Hill Street Blues* fame—is not amused by these

FADE IN•FADE OUT: In these tight economic times, more women than ever are turning to videos to stretch their entertainment dollars. **FADE IN•FADE OUT** is a handy guide, from a woman-identified perspective, to rentable titles.



Phyllis Neffler (Shelley Long) calls her Wilderness Girls to a halt in 'Troop Beverly Hills,' as she tries to help them earn their badges the conventional way. (Left to right: Tasha Scott as Jasmine; Jenny Lewis as Hannah.)

antics, however. Velda is a stereotypical ballbusting ex-army nurse for whom winning is everything. To thwart Troop Beverly Hills, Velda plants Annie Herman (Mary Gross) as a spy within the troop, hoping to have Troop Beverly Hills thrown out of the Wilderness Girls.

Phyllis, in becoming a role model and friend, takes a group of over-indulged, self-absorbed, and alienated adolescents—including young women of color from upper-class families—and turns them into self-assured community-minded young women. Without being preachy or heavy-handed, this 1989 Touchstone film nicely demonstrates that winning (and money) are not everything.

Stephanie Beacham, Audra Lindley, Edd "Cookie" Byrnes, Frankie & Annette, Dr. Joyce Brothers, Robin Leach, Pee Wee Herman, Pia Zadora, and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar all show up in this production,

which is based on a story by Ava Ostern Fries (who also produced the film).

The only drawback to the film that I found was the Hollywood-style ending, which may set an unrealistic example for children of divorced parents.

What this film does give young girls, though, is solid evidence of leadership, friendship, and solidarity, combined with the moral that fair competition is good. By revealing the advantages of upper-class living, director Jeff Kanew pokes fun at classism and shows that given half a chance, even overprivileged kids can have their consciousness raised—and can learn new values to boot. Educational entertainment at its best.

SPACE CAMP

In this 1986 story of teamwork and feminist frustrations/fulfillment in the

national space program (by Patric Bailey and Larry B. Williams, directed by Henry Weiner), Kate Capshaw plays Andy Beckstein, a pioneer female astronaut who is continually sidelined in her attempts to get into space. Her husband Zach (Tom Skerritt), himself a space veteran, is supportive and understanding—so much so that he joins Andy as an instructor at Space Camp, a high-tech summer experience for aspiring astronauts.

Among Andy's recruits are Kathryn (Lea Thompson), a young barnstormer whose goal is to become the first female shuttle commander; Tish (Kelly Preston), a flighty-looking blonde who breaks all the stereotypes once her character is fully revealed; Rudy (Larry B. Scott), a young black man who wants to own the first space franchise but is afraid of his ambitions; Max (Leaf Phoenix), a Junior Space Camp graduate who fantasizes he's Luke Skywalker of *Star Wars*; and Kevin (Tate Donovan), a rich, spoiled kid whose philosophy is not to take anything too seriously. One uncredited character is Jinx, a literal-minded tripod robot. It befriends young Max, who feels out of place among the older campers.

Andy is a perfectionist—a hard-driving instructor who asks more from the aspiring astronaut Kathryn than from any other student. The bond between them develops with a slow, strengthening movement as Kathryn must grapple with the reality that she must be better, smarter, and psychologically stronger than her male counterparts. For Kathryn, as for most women, learning to put teamwork over ambition is not a new concept. But knowing when to step in as a leader—and acknowledging that this leadership is her right—is a new and powerful lesson for Kathryn.

The pace of the movie quickens when Jinx overhears Max wishing he was in outer space. The robot takes matters into its own hands, arranging for a malfunction when Andy and her squad are inside the space shuttle observing an engine thrust test. Jinx's meddling causes the test to go awry, sending the young crew into space and giving Andy and her crew a chance to use their training.

Overcoming their personal agendas, the campers put their teamwork to use but soon discover that one element is out of their control. Since the shuttle wasn't flight-ready, the oxygen supply is critically low and the crew members must find a way to sustain themselves until the

next window of opportunity opens up for them to land. Forced to make split-second life or death decisions, the young astronauts break past their self-imposed limitations and into a new sense of self-awareness.

At the film's climax, Kathryn and the other campers learn that power and leadership are interchangeable, and that we all have our individual strengths and weaknesses. As a leadership model, this film is tops. It shows that learning shouldn't be done by rote, but rather should be incorporated into an individual's actions. In finding their leadership potential—thanks to Andy's fine teaching—these youngsters exhibit an astounding level of growth and maturity.

HOUSEKEEPING

Housekeeping, made in 1987, is a moving tale of conformity and individuality, focusing on the effect these traits have on a relationship between two sisters—a relationship that has been the very lifeblood of their existence. The story, as told in a flashback narrative by Ruth (Sara Walker), is a gripping and farcical comedy with both deeply tragic and deeply uplifting undertones.

Ruth and her younger sister Lucille (Andrea Burchill) are abandoned by their mother at their grandmother's house in Fingerbone, Minnesota. Raised by a household of octogenarians, the sisters become completely dependent on one another. After their grandmother dies, two petrified great aunts come to care for them, but the harsh Minnesota winter taxes their nerves and they summon the girls' wandering Aunt Sylvie to come home and be their guardian.

Christine Lahti stars as the disheveled Aunt Sylvie, a free spirit who is as inquisitive as she is unconcerned about popular sentiment. Throughout the movie, it is constantly unclear who is parenting whom. The prim and proper girls slowly learn to be young again, while getting caught up in Sylvie's disarray. With Sylvie in the house, both Ruth and Lucille develop their own independent personalities, but their relationship and their reliance on each other is changed in the process.

This eccentric tale—Scottish director Bill Forsyth's first American movie, based on Marilyn Robinson's novel—is very poignant, particularly when Sylvie must decide whether feigning a sense of respectability to keep the family together is

more important than being true to herself.

Depending on your own upbringing, you will find Aunt Sylvie to be charmingly endearing or exasperatingly chaotic. A wonderful tale that answers the question: at what price, freedom?

FORTRESS

A year after starring opposite Jeff Bridges in *Against All Odds*, Rachel Ward went back to her native Australia to film *Fortress*. In this made-for-cable movie now out on video, she is Miss Sally Jones, the soft-spoken, fiercely pacifist teacher of a one-room schoolhouse in the Australian outback.

Her passivity is a drawback, making it a grueling task to keep her nine charges in line on a daily basis. Suddenly, a normal, sunshine-filled school day becomes the ultimate classroom lesson in logic when Miss Jones and her students are kidnapped by hoodlums disguised as children's television characters Father Christmas, Dobby Duck, Pussy Cat, and Mac the Mouse.

When the children's wide-eyed innocence foils an escape attempt, nearly getting one student killed, the kidnappers stash the group inside an elaborate underground cavern. Under Miss Jones's calm leadership, the group members begin using their talents to their best advantage.

With the help of Sid (Sean Garlick), Miss Jones finds a way out—an event that puts the students on the run. Once out of the cavern, the group must rely on their wits and their burgeoning cooperative spirit as each develops a new-found sense of community and responsibility.

As the story unwinds, so too does the bonding between Miss Jones and Norelle (Rebecca Riggs), the oldest female student. Norelle is self-conscious of the changes occurring in her maturing body, and this conflict is foreshadowed through the movie. When discomfort is transformed into sexual intimidation by the

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ABOUT THE WRITER: Paula E. Langguth is the former arts editor of 'Visibilities.' She is currently a contributing editor at 'The Baltimore Alternative,' and writes frequently on topics of interest to women, youth, and children. She also writes nationally syndicated reviews of films and books of interest to the lesbian and gay communities.

...point to a line...

DISCOVERING WOMEN HEROINES

By Jewelle Gomez

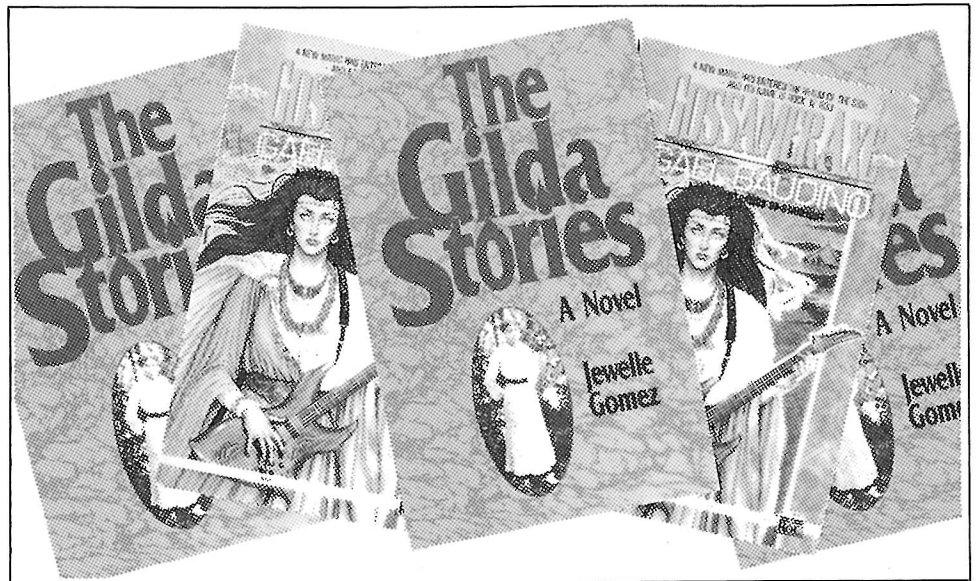
I know I've always loved words, but did I ever suspect I'd write a novel? Never! I wanted to write, that was clear—but a novel was somehow magical. I've read them since I could read, yet they were always something that somebody else created. And even after writing short stories and poetry, I never suspected there was a novel in there.

The influences that led from my mystical appreciation of the novel to my giving birth to one were as varied and serendipitous as they were paradoxically unified and direct. From the assassination of Martin Luther King in 1968 to my accidental discovery of Kate Millett's first novel on a friend's bookshelf in 1976, from listening to the stories told around my kitchen table in 1959 to the Broadway production of *Dracula* with Frank Langella in 1976, I can pinpoint an unlikely collection of circumstances which helped lift my aspirations out of the mire of disappointment that threatens most of us who were raised in the poverty of inner cities. And novels were always at the top of the list.

My novel reflects the belief I've always had in the power of words. In *The Gilda Stories*, I've created a character who is larger than life, a vampire—yet it is a character who still reflects the human concerns we think about and the values in which feminists believe. [See also "Writing Vampire Fiction: Recasting the Mythology" by Jewelle Gomez in the November 1987 issue of *HOT WIRE*.] After escaping from slavery in Mississippi as a young girl, Gilda is taken in by two women who teach her the ways of the world and give her the opportunity for eternal life.

Gilda learns through the succeeding

...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.



decades the power of her unique position, as well as its liabilities. To be close to other mortals yet never be one with them; to learn to share their blood, leaving the appropriate gift in return; to love without needing to take everyone she loves into her life; and to learn truly what family means—these are some of the new ways of being to which she must adapt. They are ways that easily parallel the paths mortals must learn to follow.

Having learned so much about the world through the magnificently heroic (and tragically narrow-minded) tales of mostly white male writers made me seek heroic figures in writing by women and to create a mythic figure myself. I struggled assiduously to redefine vampire mythology so that it reflected lesbian feminist principles rather than exploitation and victimization—and still be exciting enough so readers don't fall asleep!

My vampires don't dream of ravaging mortal victims, but rather seek the balance that will make their lives truly worth living. Having this as her goal puts Gilda in conflict with others, both vampire and mortal, who live simply for ex-

plotting others.

While trying to work through all of the ideas and principles that would make Gilda truly heroic, I felt I deepened the need in myself to find that larger-than-life quality in work written by others. Because I was traveling around the country doing readings from my book at stores and on college campuses, I had plenty of time to search out heroic women characters. Having celebrated the birth of my character Gilda makes me want to share some of them. There are quite a few—women living ordinary and extraordinary lives, including....

CHRISTA, 'THE THRESHING FLOOR' WOMEN, AND ELLEN LORRAINE

Christa Cruitaire is the undaunted heart of Gael Baudino's new novel *Gossamer Axe* (Penguin Books, 1990; winner of the 1991 Lambda Book Award for Best Fantasy). Having escaped the imprisonment of a sorcerer in an ancient,

spellbound world, Christa is adrift in modern-day Denver. Alone, except for her magic harp and her own skills, Christa plots her return to "that realm of twilight and shadow," and to rescue her lover Judith. She must develop the precise musical spell, woven with the music of her harp to break through to the land where Judith is held and to defeat the callous harpist who holds her.

In her quest, Christa learns that the music of her ancient harp still holds its power, especially when revamped by a luthier and amplified to arena decibels. She also learns the power of her loyalty to both her lover and the friends she makes in Denver. She reaches out to a group of women, each of whom has been burned out in one way or another by the rock music business. They form the ultimate rock band—Gossamer Axe—whose power can reach into the past and make them all free.

Gael Baudino writes about music, both classical and rock, with an urgency that almost makes you hear the riffs. She writes with the knowledge of women's marginalization or narrowly proscribed role in the rock music business, yet with a love for the music itself. From the first tentative gig at a local club to the grand finale, Gossamer Axe is smoking.

The women in Barbara Burford's collection of stories *The Threshing Floor* (Firebrand Books, 1987) generally live less apocalyptic lives—but certainly no less heroic ones. Their heroism lies in their resistance to the narrow restrictions or ill-formed expectations forced on them. A black British writer, Barbara Burford explores these restrictions from a slightly different perspective than a U.S. writer; that and her lyrical style make this book incredibly engaging.

The first story, for example, is about a young woman who suffers through the bigotry of her teachers, who continually berate her size and grace. (Gym class is especially tortuous.) But she roots out the seed of shame they've begun to plant inside her—when she discovers she has the ability to fly! Both her adolescent anxieties and miraculous capability are described in such a naturalistic way that it seems as if we too might fly and overcome our own attackers. In each story, a woman faces a world full of the mundane threats that can make our lives a nightmare, and more often than not she is able to grasp the change she must make in order to find her own place.

The title piece—more a novella than short story—is about Hannah, a black woman surviving the death of her lover, a well-known white writer. Living in the village that had been Jenny's home and then became theirs, Hannah must face all the subtle expectations local people have of her because she's a lesbian, because she's black, because she's an artist. But most importantly, Hannah must face the limiting expectations she's placed on herself. When Hannah learns to fly—that is, she's able to return to the magnificent glasswork that is her form—Barbara Burford's writing soars. The fire of both Hannah's passion and the ovens made me sweat.

Blanche McCrary Boyd's main character in her comic novel *The Revolution of Little Girls* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1991) is Ellen Lorraine, and she lives on the edge of Gothic mayhem. From her wise observations as an eight-year-old Tarzan fan, ("The real world was suspicious of girls who did not want to play Jane") to her commitment to sobriety in later life, Ellen is acutely aware of the pitfalls that await a white Southern woman trying to construct a true definition of herself.

The writer is able to look at the reality of what Southern life is without being either condescending or chauvinistic, and her take on how women really fit into this complex and disjointed picture is refreshing. At a time when much of the U.S. literary world has been eagerly awaiting the sequel to *Gone With the Wind*, Blanche McCrary Boyd's novel is a brave antidote.

Distressed by Hollywood's bland—in spite of Kathleen Turner's solid presence—interpretation of V.I. Warshawski, I eagerly returned to the detective series written by Sara Paretsky on which the movie was based. Starting at the first book (*Killing Orders*) and going through to the most recent (*Burn Marks*), it's exciting to see how another woman author turns a genre around. Sara Paretsky clearly has a feminist spirit and is able to create a detective that reflects her vision without sacrificing excitement.

One of the most distinctive things about the books is that the writer has created an American ethnic character. V.I. Warshawski is Polish-American—her ethnicity is part of her womanhood, her detective work, her community. Sara Paretsky is able to use that ethnicity in a positive and constructive way, a way that too often U.S. literature mavens insist is irrelevant.

REAL LIVE HEROINES

One of the great treats of my endless airport waiting was *Dream On* (Press Gang Publishers, 1991), the new book of poetry from Chrystos. Chrystos has a rhythmic, ballad style that draws the reader in seductively and cries out to be set to music: "We feed each other the blood of words, gestures in the night of our differences, each step a cook fire, our joy like a razor."

Her imagery is drawn both from her Native American heritage and the urban and reservation poverty that threatens Native nations. The poems push and tug at you, rarely suggesting comfort, more often demanding attention and action. The poems of passion are as fiery as a glassworks oven: "My tongue climbs into you, shaking our legs, sweat sliding, Your fingers in me are ruby-throated humming birds, Your eyes iridescent wings, Deep I open...."

Chrystos looks at the full spectrum of life women must face: feeding one's family, escaping violence from a lover, losing friends, fighting against genocide, opening oneself to desire. Her writing makes it clear just how heroic a woman must be to live out the life she defines for herself.

When Val Wilmer took my photograph for my second collection of poetry, *Flamingoes and Bears*, I'd no idea I was in the hands of a major musical historian. Her autobiography—*Mama Said There'd Be Days Like This* (The Women's Press, London, 1990)—is an intimate look at the life of a renowned jazz photographer. The book explores what it was like for her as a white Englishwoman to gain the confidence of most of the jazz greats of the 1960s. She writes in a breezy and humorous way that makes the musical innovations and social iconoclasm of that period feel immediate.

And as a lesbian, Val Wilmer has an even more precise perception of that male-dominated world. She recalls another side of the swinging London scene made popular by the Beatles. In her world, she recalls there was "nowhere to meet, no forum for discussion, nowhere to relax or dance apart from the Gates

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ABOUT THE WRITER: *Writer and activist Jewelle Gomez is the author of two collections of poetry as well as the black lesbian vampire novel 'The Gilda Stories.'*

MULLING IT OVER

PRIDE AND EDUCATION: EVERYONE'S JOB

By Lynn Thomas

I'm really thrilled to have my song "Dykes" on this issue's soundsheet. This song is a favorite of mine. I remember taking lots of flak during and after performances for using the term at all. Sometimes it was in the form of straight audience members getting up and leaving; other times it was from lesbians who felt that "dyke" was a negative word that only meant masculine lesbians and was therefore not a term with which we should be identifying. I guess there are still some folks who are afraid of the D word, but I figure that if we claim the word and use it in a positive way, it can't be used effectively against us.

My biggest issue—and I know if I'm a real live lesbian I've got to have an issue—is education. We all have a lot to learn from each other, but we have a lot to teach as well. I don't want to be represented solely by whomever Oprah's producers come up with; I don't want to be represented by any small minority of lesbians who get a lot of publicity. We all share responsibility for teaching the world about lesbians from our own widely diverse perspectives.

Many straight people already know some lesbians, but just don't realize it; each of us is responsible for a little consciousness-raising. I believe the best way to eradicate the fear that turns into hatred is to show the world who we really are. Show our diversity. Show our numbers. Show our pride. My album is not called *Courage* because it is ambiguous; it has that title because it is blatantly lesbian.

I've played piano bars/cabarets in the New York-New Jersey-Pennsylvania area for the last fifteen years, in both gay and straight venues. Over the years I've noticed that when I would come out to a straight audience ("Dykes," which I wrote ten years ago, always gave me away),



Composer/cabaret performer Lynn Thomas: "My biggest issue—and I know if I'm a real live lesbian I've got to have an issue—is education."

some people would leave. Others would argue with me afterwards. But some people would realize they knew and liked a lesbian woman.

Little by little, change takes place. After a concert recently in Mobile, Alabama, a straight woman—who had come with her husband and child—came up to me and told me that they had had a great time and that she was trying to raise her daughter to be non-judgemental. Then she thanked me for my music. My dream is that someday this type of occurrence will be unremarkable.

Another message I want my music to deliver is one of self-pride. I got tired of feeling grateful that people liked me "even though" I was a lesbian. I like to feel that being gay is one of the better things about me. I can't think of any way I'd rather be, and I try to get that across in my music.

It's not just fear of the straight community that keeps us in line, though.

We do a bang-up job of that ourselves. Many of us seem so worried about keeping everyone in the closet, about being sure that out lesbians don't seem too radical, don't say anything that might offend someone.

Internalized homophobia is a nasty, nasty beast. It keeps us from enjoying the wonderful things we have—like freedom from roles, or expressions of love that the straight world can only fantasize about—and it erodes the fertile ground we have for solidarity against all oppression, which is our own first-hand knowledge of unwarranted bigotry.

Although I've been out of the closet since 1979, my own struggles with internalized homophobia have centered around coming out to the public at large. What would the neighbors think? I have more than a dozen piano students ranging from four to fifteen years old; sometimes I wonder what their parents would do if they "knew." (Some are aware, by the way.) When I think about it, I don't feel it's my duty to inform each and every one of them—but I make no effort to hide anything either. Still, the possible ramifications cross my mind...and I think, is this internalized homophobia—or is it just being realistic about the dangers we face every day? And again I'm made aware of the need we have for songs that will not hide who we are, but rather celebrate our greatness.

My first exposure to this type of song was when I heard Meg Christian and Cris Williamson—and Sue Fink's "Leaping (Lesbians)." Suddenly I realized there was a whole genre of such music, and I started writing songs myself, starting with "Lavender Love" in 1980.

In addition to music, other celebrities have an impact. I've been inspired by the humor of Kate Clinton, and I like what Martina [Navratilova]'s done these past few years, by being so open and honest, by not apologizing for anything.

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MULLING IT OVER is a forum for the discussion of the connections between art and politics.

SELDOM SCENES

Photos and text © Susan Wilson



THE ULTIMATE SONG OF THE SOUL

It may be a long way from "Leaping Lesbians," but it's not far at all from the warmth and spiritual camaraderie we used to feel in Meg Christian concerts. One of the beloved grandmothers of women's music—pictured here in one of her last tours before retiring from the circuit eight years ago—has not changed her path as much as some folks may think. After becoming a devotee of Gurumayi Swami Chidvalasanda, Meg became the internationally acclaimed guru's Head of Music Programs. Those lucky enough to attend these *satsangs* will often see a blissful Meg leading an enthusiastic audience of thousands through a joyful chorus of Cris Williamson's "Song of the Soul." *Plus ça change...*

FIRST TANGO FOR LARKIN

In this 1990 shot, backstage at Sanders Theatre in Cambridge, Massachusetts, manager Betty Warner helps re-edit a set list with Patty Larkin, long-time favorite of the women's and folk/acoustic music scenes. Backstage business-as-usual? Not really. During this particular concert, Patty was recording her *Live in the Square* LP, which won her three Boston Music Awards in 1991. Meanwhile, the multi-talented singer, songwriter, instrumentalist, and rib-tickling humorist has been signed to the High Street/Windham Hill label. Her hot new *Tango* LP, released September 10, is superior stuff—bound to keep the accolades and audience coming. To cop a title from one of Patty Larkin's fabulous farces, "Not Bad for a Broad."



RE:INKING

Happy Twentieth Anniversary to Naiad Press Founders DONNA McBRIDE & BARBARA GRIER

By Julie Nelson

Long before they met each other, Donna McBride was following Barbara Grier around the library.

"I was not following her around because I had a crush on her or anything," says Donna today, recalling the days back in 1970 when she worked as an assistant reference librarian in the Popular Library Department of the Kansas City (Missouri) Public Library. "I was following her around to find out what she was reading. It was years later before I ever really looked at Barbara from a romantic point of view."

"Of course I haunted the library, as I always had done. I was pointed out to Donna by her co-workers—none of whom at that time knew Donna was a lesbian—as *that* woman who collects *those* books," says Barbara. "In other words, I wasn't famous—I was notorious. And, unbeknownst to me, Donna had had access to my bibliography *The Lesbian in Literature*. She haunted me in the library when I was there, although I found this out much later. She would follow me around, and any book I fell upon, any book I requested, she would automatically read."

It should come as no surprise, really, that Donna McBride and Barbara Grier first crossed paths in a library. After all, they have since built their lives around books—books they publish together at Naiad Press, the oldest, largest, and best known lesbian publishing house in the world.

Their love story is unique and refreshing in that they have been able to successfully manage both a publishing business and a relationship at the same time. They are celebrating their twentieth anniversary this January 1992, counting from when they first moved in together.

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



Barbara Grier (left) and Donna McBride in 1976: still working full-time jobs and keeping Naiad Press afloat on volunteered time.



Twenty successful years together: the founders of Naiad Press today.

DONNA LURES BARBARA

They may never have become romantically involved at all if it weren't for a phone call and a fight and a cat named Fagin.

"Barbara called the library at least once a week, and would give great long lists of books that she wanted the library to buy. And if they bought them, she wanted to get hold of them first," Donna says. "One morning I was there quite early, and the phone rang. This voice said, 'You're new, aren't you?'—because Barbara knew everybody—and when I said yes, she told me, 'Get a piece of paper and a pencil and write these down.' She gave me a great long list of books that she wanted to request; she had already determined they were lesbian, or had lesbian content. They weren't published yet, but she had read reviews of them. That was the first time I talked to her—and if you know Barbara, you know that she talks like that all the time."

Donna McBride was not exactly swept off her feet at this point, although it would not be fair to say she felt annoyed either. She simply observed Barbara. Ironically, it wasn't until Donna's then-partner mentioned Barbara Grier's name during an argument that McBride began to notice Grier in a new way.

"I had been involved with a woman who was very, very self-hating and homophobic," recalls Donna. "At one point—when we were arguing about this behavior of hers—she said, 'Well, I can't be like Barbara Grier.' And, as Barbara said, I had been watching her [Barbara] by this time for years. I looked at this woman and realized what a miserable person she was, and realized what a happy, upbeat, outgoing person Barbara was—and I thought, 'Which do I want to be like?'"

Donna went to then-editor Barbara and volunteered to work on *The Ladder*. She set to work collecting reviews—as she set to work winning Barbara's heart.

This is where Fagin, the Siamese cat, comes in. He had been abused so badly that his back hips and legs had been crushed. It happened that Fagin was brought to a vet's office, where a mutual friend of Barbara's and Donna's worked. Penni Yeargin called Barbara and asked her to name the cat, sight unseen, after Penni convinced the vet the cat should be saved. Barbara named him Fagin. Then, when Penni left town to attend to family

business, she gave Fagin to Donna to keep.

"Donna had never had a cat before," says Barbara, "and she knew I loved cats dearly—so she used Fagin as her lure to get me to come live with her." Donna's plan worked, and, two months after Fagin moved in, Barbara came to live there, too.

One year later—in January 1973—Naiad Press was born, following directly on the heels of the demise of *The Ladder* (published 1956-1972 by The Daughters of Bilitis), the first national lesbian periodical in the United States. What started out as a newsletter eventually became a slick magazine; Barbara Grier had been with the publication from the beginning. She joined the staff when she was only twenty-three, and in 1968 she became its chief editor and publisher, often writing entire issues of *The Ladder* herself.

The magazine was just folding when the soon-to-be Naiad founders fell in love, and a chapter of Barbara's life came to a close. It was a surprise to her when, in October 1972, Anyda Marchand and Muriel Crawford—two of the magazine's biggest fans—approached Barbara and Donna and asked them if they would be willing to run a lesbian publishing house. The answer was yes, and Naiad Press was off and running with the \$2,000 initial investment provided by Anyda and Muriel. Barbara Grier provided a mailing list of 3,000 which had been used for *The Ladder*, and the rest is history. [See "Naiad Press: The World's Oldest and Largest Lesbian-Feminist Publishing House" by Sue Gambill, in the March 1987 *HOT WIRE*.]

But Naiad Press looked quite different in 1973 than it does today, and, naturally, so did the lives of Barbara and Donna. They began Naiad in their home in the greater Kansas City area. (Today the business is located in Tallahassee.) In the beginning they each had to work full-time jobs in addition to running Naiad, because they were unable to take a salary from the press. It wasn't until 1982 that either of them actually worked full-time for Naiad.

"We were getting up at five o'clock in the morning," Barbara says. "Donna was packing books until about seven o'clock, then she'd come in and shower, eat breakfast, and go to work. Then she'd come home at night and we'd eat dinner, and from six o'clock in the evening until midnight we'd work on Naiad, working

fourteen-hour days on Saturday and Sunday. We did that constantly."

It might surprise some people who know anything at all about Barbara Grier that deciding to make Naiad their full-time work was Donna's idea. Barbara enjoys the high-profile as Naiad's Chief Executive Officer, speaking to media as though born with a microphone in her hand. Donna, on the other hand, shies away from the opportunity to be interviewed, letting "the Barbara" be the spokeswoman for Naiad. But after nine years of running a press in addition to holding various jobs—from computer program saleswoman to librarian—Donna had had enough. She decided the time had come for at least one of them to earn a salary from their press.

TAKING THE NAIAD PLUNGE

In January 1982, Barbara earned her first paycheck from Naiad. Donna followed suit in June, and from that time on Naiad has supported them.

"The happy part of this story," remembers Barbara, "is that it was a very incredible decision—I was hysterical with fear. I mean I really was. I have a persona of being a fierce person, but I actually cried for a week because I was scared we were going to starve to death after Donna quit her job."

By this point, they had moved to Florida to live closer to Anyda Marchand and Muriel Crawford, and to escape the harsh Midwestern winters. The move was complete by 1980, when Donna took an assistant director position at the Leon County Public Library in Tallahassee.

The loving relationship between Barbara Grier and Donna McBride may seem forever and always tied to Naiad, from an outsider's perspective. It would seem that their lives revolve around Naiad Press. But don't be fooled; it is because Barbara and Donna keep their priorities straight that they are able to succeed where others have failed.

"Donna and I try to convince people—but nobody ever believes us, because there are so many horror stories of people not being able to get along and run a business and their relationship,"

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ABOUT THE WRITER: Julie Nelson is a freelance writer living in Vermont. She writes book reviews and articles for the *Washington Blade*, and is currently at work on a novel.

SEX...SEX...SEX...SEXUALITY... WHAT'S IT GOT TO DO WITH IT?

IS SHE OR ISN'T SHE...AN OUTRAGEOUS FEMINIST?

By Judith Sloan

HOT WIRE editor Toni Armstrong Jr. and I were talking. "Judith, since the women's music and culture scene is primarily lesbians, what's in it for a heterosexual feminist woman?" she asked. In subsequent correspondence and conversations, several other questions have been raised, including, "What's it like for you, being in such a minority?" and "Why don't more heterosexual feminists participate in the feminist cultural network—and if they did, what would be the positives and negatives for the whole network as we know it?"

I can't answer all of that in one short article (if ever), but I can address the questions and reflect on my life. I hope this will be the beginning of an ongoing discussion. I am writing this for *HOT WIRE* with the assumption that I am talking primarily to lesbians, their allies and friends, or to feminists who are aware of issues involving sexuality.

A LITTLE HISTORY...

First of all, I became a feminist in high school! I was lucky—I went to an alternative city public school, where some of my teachers were involved in the women's movement. They fought for safe and legal abortions. I had a class about black women writers, taught by a black woman teacher, and I was introduced to the work of Toni Morrison. *Our Bodies, Ourselves* was one of my text books.

At the time, Nixon was getting impeached; the Black Panther trials were taking place in New Haven (where I grew up); and the FBI was snooping around (and years later was harassing feminists and lesbians). I was sure the next fifteen years of my life would only see more progressive and exciting changes for women, poor people, and ethnic minorities. I had no idea the twisted values of the Reagan-Bush era would permeate the media and the American population.

In my wildest nightmare, I couldn't have come close to imagining the conspiratorial spin the Republicans would



"There are lots of straight mainstream performers who have a gay following, but not many who are willing to support the gay community openly," says Judith Sloan. "I am figuring out my relationship to lesbians as I speak."

throw onto Anita Hill's allegations of sexual harassment against Clarence Thomas. Orrin Hatch called her the "alligator"—it makes you wonder what pornography videos he watches! If you believe Thomas was a witness with credibility, I have a bridge in Utah I'll be happy to sell you (with the help of Alan Simpson, the Senator from Wyoming).

My teenage years were filled with an education in progressive and strong feminist politics, which was a part of the foundation for my adult life. I knew I wanted to be in theater, and knew I'd have to make a living, so I decided to go to trade school, and I became a licensed beautician. (The perfect profession for a radical feminist.)

I started performing my own characters and stand-up comedy in the women's cultural scene at the Michigan

Womyn's Music Festival in 1980 or '81, and at the NEWMR festival in '82, after years of being in a theater group. I had ended a relationship with a man I loved a lot and gotten into a relationship with a woman I loved a lot. For the next four or five years, I was performing both a solo act and with other groups, with men and women; was performing and teaching in schools and universities; was getting grants, working in the mainstream world, and taking oral histories from older European Jews...I was very, very busy.

I love people, and I love working in different communities. I've never been happy in only an homogeneous group. Performing for lesbians was new, exciting, tormenting, exhausting, and challenging.

I was also doing Jewish-identified material at Michigan, and that was an education for the audience and the producers. I remember at first that Lisa Vogel was nervous about my Jewish grandmother character Sophie, but I give her credit for the cultural risks she took then—and continues to take—as a producer. Performing material about the Holocaust was not typical at a women's festival in 1982, but Sophie's story about her unconditional love for her lesbian granddaughter seemed to endear Sophie and me to the audience. I got a lot of support from other performers, and from sign language interpreters.

After performing at the Michigan festival for four or five years, encouraging the establishment of an Acoustic Stage to accommodate theater, dance, and "other than music" artists—and after splitting up with the woman I had been with—I dropped out of the festival scene for a while. I did continue to perform for feminist organizations, the National Women's Studies Association, at rallies, and for progressive groups throughout the country, as well as in clubs and small theaters.

To make a very long story short, after a few years of having relationships

with men and women, I fell in love with Warren Lehrer, and moved in!

WHAT'S IT LIKE BEING IN SUCH A MINORITY?

Nerve wracking. I'm not going to talk about the anger from lesbians that's directed toward women who sleep with men; I'm not going to talk about my anger towards them. (I've gotten much more support from lesbians than not.) I'm not going to talk about the other women in my position (they speak for themselves), or about the fact that there are other women and performers at the festivals who are heterosexual, bisexual, married—or who write material with men, or who do material by men—and are afraid to be open about that with the lesbian audience. I'm not going to talk about the fact that I know who some of the other heterosexual women are. (You know how it is—it takes one to know one... "You're kidding, *her*? I never would have guessed it!") I'm not going to talk about the times I felt intimidated by lesbians because of my sexuality, recently or over ten years ago. And I'm not going to talk about the fact that there are many other concerns on my mind—like the incredible backlash against African-Americans, gays and lesbians, Jews, women, Hispanics, and everyone else who has made small gains in civil rights over the last thirty years.

I am going to talk about my current relationship to the lesbian community. The more comfortable I am with myself, the more comfortable it becomes, like anything else. I'm surprised by how much support I've gotten from lesbians, because it's a community that can be very judgmental. Yes, there are women who won't talk to me because I am with a man, but there are also women who never talked to me before who do talk to me now. My friends are great.

As I said, I get (and have gotten) a lot of support from other performers and from interpreters. I asked Alix Dobkin to introduce me at Michigan this year as an "ally of the lesbian community." Some women assumed Alix (with her reputation) would be outraged...so much for assumptions. She's always been supportive of my work. And I must say that a few other performer-friends have made great jokes—like Sue Fink, who also made the statement at the AWMAC conference last year in Durham that she missed her "straight" sisters. I know that's

not true for all lesbians, but I address myself to anyone who is open to me.

I continue to perform for lesbians (at certain festivals, events, and in double bills) because I have developed a relationship with the lesbian and gay community over the years. My work has been important to many lesbians, and their work has been important to me. I have a deep commitment to women, and love women. But, I am heterosexual. (I choose not to call myself "straight"—it just doesn't suit me.) I went back to Michigan because I was invited, and many wonderful things have happened—and continue to happen—for me there, like meeting Helene Aylon, the woman who collected pillow cases for peace from all over the world. Or talking with Kate Millett. Or starting to collaborate with Nydia "Liberty" Mata.

I get to be with other performers who care about cultural diversity, and get to perform for an audience that understands and appreciates my anti-government humor, and who "get it" when I play a tape of phone calls that I made to president Bush calling him a racist and a bigot. And I loved performing with Marga Gomez and Karen Williams on the Day Stage at Michigan this past summer—that's the third time we've been on a triple bill like that, and it's a great ethnic and artistic mix!

HOW AM I DIFFERENT AND HOW DO I FIT IN?

I am now married to a brilliant, warm, generous man; we got married a year ago. I feel lucky to have a soulmate. I'm happy in my life and, like any relationship, it takes work and care. My lesbian friends are still my friends. (Like what, we should stop talkin' to each other?) They are getting to know Warren; some of them already knew him, and now I know them! I am getting to know his friends, and my straight friends and bisexual friends and confused friends are still my friends...and it's very confusing! At the end of my set in Michigan, I credited Warren Lehrer with having co-written the "emergency press conference" on the Persian Gulf War and U.S. foreign policy. My audience loves his writing and appreciates our collaborative efforts. (Unless, of course, someone sneaks in who is a neo-Nazi, is in the KKK, or is a member of any other blatant racist hate group, like the guys in the White House.)

Given that there are other women who are in my position—heterosexual

women who do support the lesbian community—and given that lesbians have a very strong and visible voice now (as opposed to the early years of the feminist movement), I think it's a good time to start building coalitions again. I think it's a good time for the other women who are with men and who are close to lesbians to address this openly, and for all of us to figure out how to support each other.

Women don't get much support in the mainstream, especially feminists—we all know that. Heterosexual privilege only goes so far, and I am more than aware of that privilege in the world—but I am not an enemy of the lesbian community. I'm happy to perform for lesbians in situations where I am welcome and respected, but I don't want women to assume I am a lesbian.

You don't get "credit" for supporting the gay community in the straight world. Here's a quote from an agent: "Why do you have to tell the story about Sophie's gay granddaughter? Joan Rivers started out with a gay following, and Bette Midler started out with a gay following, but they didn't mention it on stage! Just leave it out." There are lots of straight mainstream performers who have a gay following, but not many who are willing to support the gay community openly. I am figuring out my relationship to lesbians as I speak. Like a lot of other things, it's a process.

The amount of money I made on the women's/lesbian circuit was pathetic, so I don't want to get into the money issue—i.e., "she's just here to make money off of lesbians." For years I heard, "There are women making a lot of money on this circuit," but I never saw any of it. Most of the performers I know don't make much money. They barely make a living, especially now.

Performing in the women's cultural scene allows me to do non-racist, non-homophobic, non-sexist, and anti-fascist material. I am more radical with each passing day.

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ABOUT THE WRITER: *Judith Sloan is an outraged comedienne, actress, writer, and news junkie who lives in New York. She tours whenever possible, and has both video and audio tapes for sale. Her current show is 'The Whole K'Cufin World...and a few more things.'* Contact her at P.O. Box 4580, Sunnyside, NY 11104. (718) 729-3668.

COUNTRY LINE DANCING WITH MAILE & MARINA

By Toni Lou and Terri Lynn

Watching Maile Klein and Marina Hodgini turn a big roomful—or festival fieldful—of nervous, shy women into sassy, two-stepping swingers within fifteen minutes, you know they have magic. The long, lean cowpuncher and the petite, graceful cowgal work every square inch of all who are there to learn Country Western line dancing.

And what is line dancing? Well, take a bunch of women wanting to dance. Have them all face you in nice, neat lines like I Ching hexagrams. Make sure everyone has room to move. Play some k.d. lang or Ranch Romance, stand back, and let folks do their high-kicking and hip-slinging in unison. It's choreography, y'all, with heat and stomping!

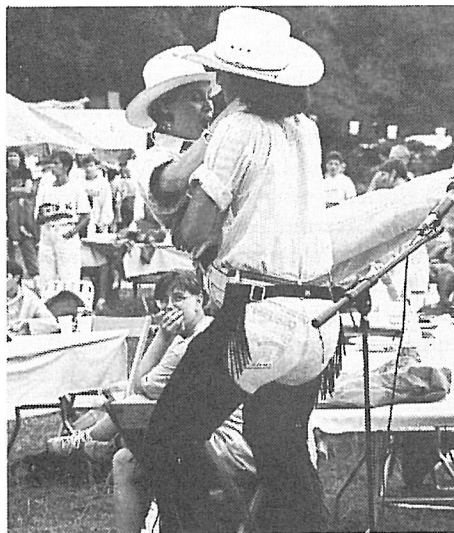
The Country Western line dancing and two-stepping which is quickly becoming an institution at women's festivals has evolved over several years. Beginning in the early 1980s, Hawaiian-born Maile (pronounced MY-lee) Klein taught dance classes for women at the now-defunct Box Office bar in San Diego, where she worked and attended college as a photography major. Out of the bar classes came The Lavender Fillies, billed as "the world's only lesbian country line dance troupe," a group that has been performing since 1982 in the Gay Rodeo Circuit.

"We first performed at the West Coast Music & Comedy Festival," recalls Maile, who took ballet as a child and has spent time in Nashville doing musical theater. "A woman named Donna E. and I conducted workshops there. At first [festival producer] Robin Tyler didn't sponsor us—flyers just went up, and we ended up with a gazebo full of women wanting to dance. And that's when I first started to see that Country Western line dancing was making a comeback. There wasn't even a space at the festival that first time. We danced on the rutted grass in 100° heat with just a little box run by batteries—but we had a great time." They began to be officially sponsored by the

West Coast Festival in 1985, and then at the Southern Women's Music & Comedy Festival in 1986.

It was at Southern in 1988 that Maile met Marina in one of the workshops. Although Marina had never taught CW dance, she was familiar with it. She was a veteran dancer and performer whose dance career began at the age of four. (Her credits include dancing as a teen with a troupe that toured Europe, performing with the St. Louis Municipal Opera Company, and dancing, acting, and singing in summer stock performances of well-known musicals. She also had experience teaching a full array of dances at her parents' Midwest dance studios, including ballroom, ballet, jazz, tap, hula, and acrobatics.) So by the time she went to Maile's workshop, Marina was able to pick up the steps immediately with a distinctive flair. She soon began modeling steps and offering pointers for other workshop participants.

Maile and Marina at once became personally close, and in May of 1989, Maile began integrating Marina into the format—at first informally. Maile was the featured performer, doing the group instruction, calling out the steps, and keeping the beat and rhythm. Marina was



Toni Armstrong Jr.

called upon to mingle and offer personalized instruction to novices, or more elaborate, advanced frills to women who knew the basics. By April of 1990, Marina was onstage, demonstrating with Maile how some of the dances could be performed in a couple. By their first Michigan Womyn's Music Festival gig in August of that same year, Marina had become a full partner, and the act now is billed as "Country Line Dancing with Maile and Marina."

"The team approach is a comprehensive format to reach all types of women and their learning styles," says Marina. "The challenge of teaching groups to dance is to make it fun for women at all levels and aptitudes." Their collaboration thus far has been an increasingly successful one. Besides their main focus of women's festivals, they have taught in San Diego at two women's clubs, The Flame and Club Bombay. They have also privately instructed for various women's groups and occasions, such as parties, fundraisers, and holiday events.

In addition to their festival dancing, Marina has choreographed the Lavender Fillies as well as working with Maile to create *Country Attitude*, the first of several planned instructional videos, which features Maile teaching viewers the Tush Push and several other Country Western line dance standards. ("Attitude" is the charismatic confidence that is seen in the touch of cowboy hat brim, a look in the eye, the posture and stance that CW line dancing brings out in a woman," says Maile. "The video caters to the women's community—women dance with other women in it.") Maile and Marina have also teamed together with writer Keetz Keneagy to publish *Steps in Country Line Dancing*, and have produced women's music events together, including concerts by Alix Dobkin, Teresa Trull, Hunter Davis, Debbie Fier, and Cris Williamson.

Maile's Lavender Fillies also do seminars, benefits, and fundraisers of various types. "One time we did a Coun-

try Western hoe-down for Connexus [women's center] in Los Angeles at Robin Tyler's house," recalls Maile. "We went in as a package—taught the dances from noon to four p.m., then had a Country Western chowdown—a vegetarian chuck-wagon from four to six p.m. Then we performed with a band, after which we had a dance, and the women were able to do the dances we taught them earlier in the day." These kinds of activities have helped to fund the Fillies.

As with most women who work in the feminist women's music and culture circuit, "day jobs" provide both Maile and Marina with their primary financial sustenance.

Marina owns a thriving restaurant and corporate-oriented catering business in the downtown heart of New Orleans, which she has been able to manage from a distance.

Maile is a paramedic-firefighter in the busiest section of San Diego. She follows in the long tradition of her grandfather, whose ever-present love she says she feels with her while subduing fires or doing dangerous rescue operations. As firefighters' work schedules offer nine days off per month to compensate for the demands of twenty-four-hour work shifts, Maile is able to perform at festivals with little more disruption than switching work schedules with other firefighters. She is hoping to become an engineer.

Maile and Marina have recently purchased a new home together, each having sold their previous individual houses in the San Diego and New Orleans areas. They say they love their Lakeside, California residence, which is surrounded by eucalyptus trees, rolling hills, and distant mountain ranges, and requires a great deal of time for the extensive renovation plans they have started to do. (They have already built a large pen and redwood deck for their two wolf hybrids.) Marina is planning a permanent move to Lakeside, known for its horses, cowboys, farms, rodeo grounds, Country Western singer circuit, and line dancing at the clubs.

"The time we devote to dancing is never as much as we would like to with our busy schedule," says Maile. "We have fun dancing line routines at the local bars, and go to Bee Jay's once or twice a month on Wednesdays (women's nights) or Saturdays (mixed nights), as our schedule permits. We gear up for festivals by dancing privately four or five times per week, three or four hours per day, to determine

the women's music to accompany the new dances we wish to teach to keep our workshops lively and entertaining."

Maile and Marina both say what they like best about teaching is to see women smile at their accomplishments, and the looks of pride and success on the dancers' beaming faces. "It's a different mindset, and part of the fun is to set the mood and tone, and to create a space for women to experience the country cowgirl in themselves—from vogue urban cow-



Toni Armstrong Jr.

Country attitude extraordinaire: Petite cowgal Marina Hodgini (left) and long, lean Maile Klein.

girl to cowhand. We love being able to share something that we know, and helping to spread an aspect of women's music and dance culture. We *love* to see the laughs, smiles, and joy that women get from the dances we get to share with them. Line dancing is great to get women moving and having fun, feeling camaraderie, and touching in a safe way. They don't have to ask someone to dance—it doesn't have to be a dating situation. There is always someone dancing better, worse, women making mistakes—so it cuts down on women feeling self-conscious," says Maile.

"Line dancing is group fun, good exercise, and a beautiful thing to watch," adds Marina. "It's such a good time," Maile concurs. "And it's okay to flirt! You can live out those fantasies, you know? You feel good about yourself and have a lot of fun."

"One of the delights of teaching CW

line dance for both of us is the ability to pick up regional routines and take them to women all across the country as we teach at women's music festivals," says Marina. "Our video *Country Attitude* has been sold to women from every state, as well as from Canada, Germany, England, Japan, and Australia. We so much enjoy our opportunity to share a part of women's culture through dance."

Maile and Marina's thousands of students have been delighted to share in the experience as well, as is repeatedly demonstrated in surprising ways. "One time the music at a festival was extremely late," they recall. "We were originally scheduled for 11 p.m., but it was 3 a.m. when we finally went on. We were delighted and surprised that all of the women who had been at the workshop that day were waiting and ready to dance, shouting *Yee-haa!* Another time, when we were doing a workshop outdoors in Michigan, it started to rain. We were ready to continue, but assumed that the women would want to leave. They scattered and scurried. We were shocked—they returned immediately with ponchos, and continued to dance in the mud during the rain. I just put down the microphone because of the [electrical] risk, and shouted the calls at the top of my lungs, and it was a great time for everybody," says Maile. "One of our continual kicks is to see women doing line dance practice during the disco dances, or Tush Pushing in food lines for lunch and dinner."

MICHIGAN and the TWO RUTHS

Their first experience teaching at Michigan is an especially dear memory. "Neither rain, nor dust, nor heat of day could dampen Michigan's first experience with Country Western dance," says Maile.

"Having taught it since 1980, we were delighted when we had the chance

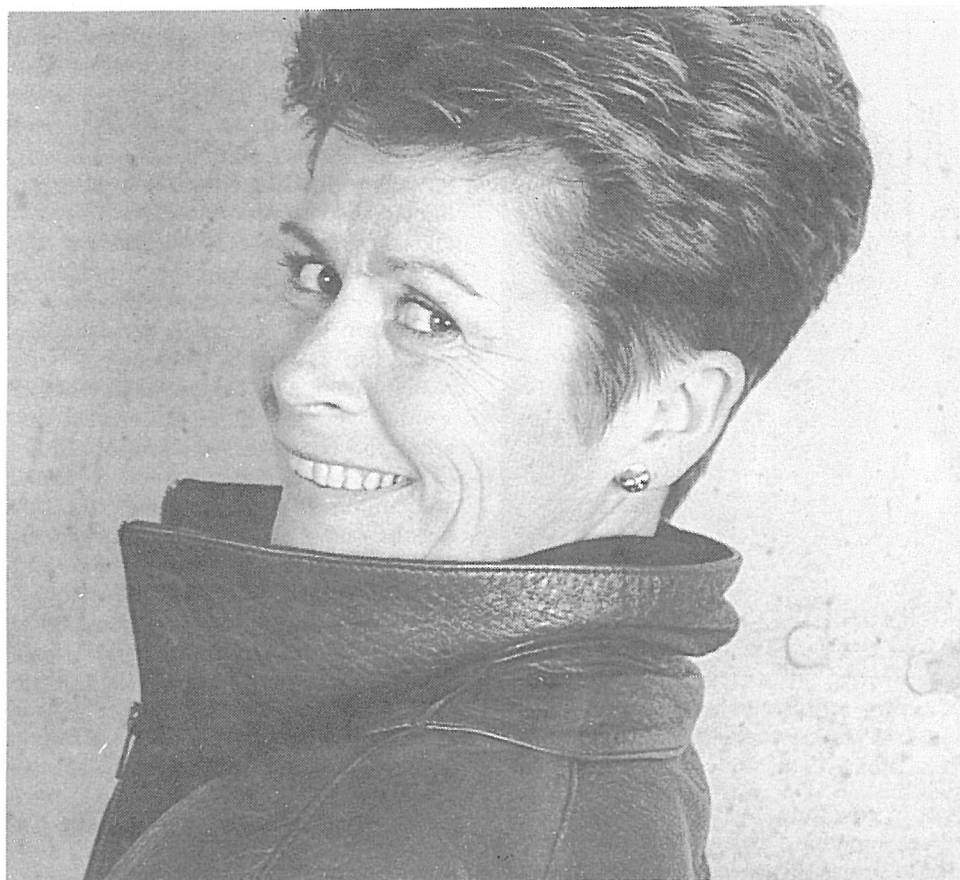
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ABOUT THE WRITERS: Toni Armstrong Jr. plays bass and learned to play frailing-style banjo from Ginni Clemmens in the '70s. Her first name, Toni Lou, is used with affection only by those closest to her. Terri Lynn Jewell is a black lesbian writer who is closeted only in her love of Country Western music. She blames her home state of Kentucky, and presently lives in Lansing, Michigan. Special thanks to Gloria Waslyn for editorial assistance.

moving into her second decade of lesbian feminist comedy

KATE CLINTON

By Laura Post



Susan Wilson

Kate Clinton, "I used to say that women are oppressed and that oppression must end, but now I say that women are powerful and that power must be unleashed."

These pieces on Kate Clinton and Lea DeLaria (page 28) are the first in a series of articles about feminist humorists.

Kate Clinton, the best-known stand-up comic in the feminist cultural network, got her start playing to a captive audience of high school students while teaching in her home state of New York. After coming out as a lesbian and a feminist, she became aware that the women's movement, though with a rich sense of humor, was ignored by the men's movement—i.e., the world.

"The worst thing you can say about someone is that they have no sense of humor," says Kate. "At the peak of the wom-

en's movement, we were accused of having no sense of humor. It was an insult used to keep us in our place, and an inverse indication of our real strength."

Kate began performing her political comedy in 1981, the same year as Ronald Reagan; her popularity has been based on a fast-paced, satirical style which focuses on topical world concerns and an affirmative lesbian-feminist agenda while drawing on her "recovering Catholic" roots.

With four self-produced albums on her own WhysCrack label—*Making Light* (1982), *Making Waves* (1983), *Live at the Great American Music Hall* (1985), and the current *Babes in Joyland* (1991)—Kate has built a wide following. Most significantly,

for many years now she has performed at large venues, which inevitably sell out. In the current era of recession, such consistent popularity is a remarkable feat. What does Kate Clinton bring that might account for her audiences' enthusiasm?

When we go to hear Kate Clinton, audiences have come to expect a flow-of-conversation narrative emphasizing sexual politics and unabashed lesbian realities ("she wouldn't say 'lesbian' if her mouth was full of one") without women being the object of her humor. We delight in her gleeful, assured probing of public ridiculousness and in having our consciousness tweaked by her sharp, intellectual wit. Audiences seek her studied and right-on commentary, and savor the contagious joy in her optimistic insights. On issues as diverse as outing, the Persian Gulf, codependency ("country western tune: 'If you leave, can I go too?"), lesbian possibilities at Wimbledon, dental dams ("vaginal tarps") and other variants of safer sex, current movies, lesbian characters on television (demonstrating her hot fantasy of the missing episode following the "kiss episode" from *L.A. Law*), and gay pride, Kate satisfies with her clever and pointed word play. Ultimately we cherish the community that she builds and celebrates.

Being funny is nothing new for Kate. "Making people laugh during my childhood was a survival skill," she recalls. "I am a middle child: two older brothers and one younger brother, and my sister came ten years after my last brother. There was a lot of pain in just being a kid, a girl, growing up Catholic. I was a good student, liked studying and learning. I also discovered that I could be funny. In school, I was the one who made everybody laugh. It was a defense mechanism, but it was also a joy."

She says she wanted to be a writer when she grew up, but the only choices that seemed available to her were nursing and teaching. "And so I taught. I taught English, and I taught writing. After I came

out as a lesbian, I couldn't teach any more: I was busy at night and didn't want to spend the time correcting papers and preparing lessons. I had always had jobs and worked, and finally I was having some fun," she says.

So she took a leave of absence. "The only way I could get a leave of absence was to say that I was going to school. A friend of mine ran the Women Writers Center in Cazenovia, New York. She said that I could go there and that she would vouch for me," Kate recalls. "I did go, though I had absolutely no intention of studying—but it was a wonderful year."

Kate remembers it as a year of filling out her education and finding out where all those women writers, thinkers, philosophers were. "I started to read; unfortunately, I went to college and grad school before women's studies, so I was stuck trying to understand the quintessential male experience of *Moby Dick*. At the Writers Center, besides reading, I started to write—short stories and poetry. I was a lesbian, but I still looked very straight, and the radical separatists there must have thought I was a spy or something: they terrified me, and I terrified them. The first week, Rita Mae Brown arrived as visiting faculty. I had no idea who she was, and I had never heard of *Rubyfruit Jungle*, but studying with her was a rewarding experience. Through the year, I learned from many gifted, creative women, including Susan Sherman, Rachel Devries, Olga Broumas, and Marge Piercy.

"The one who influenced me the most was Adrienne Rich, the final mentor of the year. Throughout the year, I had kept asking, 'what about feminist humor?' and would get different answers. When I pointed out to Adrienne that very little had been written on feminist humor, she said, 'you write it.' It felt like an order. So I wrote a very serious paper on the uses of humor in the women's movement and showed it to a friend of mine. Her response was, 'where are the jokes?'"

Kate's paper was eventually published, as "Making Light," in the first issue of *Trivia*, and in March 1981, she turned the paper into a feminist routine, with jokes. She was in Syracuse then, and called "180 of my closest friends" and performed a thirty-three minute routine. "It was my first live performance in front of an audience, if you don't count teaching high school," she says. (Kate did a lot of physical schtick to keep students interested: "I can remember taking attendance

once and noticing that the entire class was looking at my legs because my pantyhose had fallen into elephant ankles. I stepped into the waste paper basket and hopped along for the rest of the class.")

"The day after that first show [in March 1981], I was emotionally wiped out. My manager, Trudy Wood, said to me, 'I don't know how to say this to you, but you've got to do it more than once.' It had never occurred to me to continue with the comedy, or that I would have to go on more than once; I had only wanted to try it out. Trudy has always pushed me."

Kate's friend Susie Gaines, who had already been in women's music for ten years (as a musician and booker), offered to book Kate for the summer, and ended up booking her for five years. "I played a lot of women's coffee houses, and a lot of material came from those experiences," Kate recalls. "When I first started performing, I was very interested in coming out, and being a feminist, and I developed very lesbian material. My passion still is being a lesbian, but my focus has expanded: now I am a lesbian who looks at the world.

"These days, probably one quarter of my audiences are non-lesbian. More men are coming, which I like, and which reflects my philosophy that feminism is an inclusive concept. When I initially expressed my wish to be a mainstream feminist humorist, the response to me was 'sophisticated death wish, babe'—no one believed that there would be acceptance or a market. But my audiences have grown, and, funniest thing, there is no one else in commercial comedy saying that they are lesbian."

Kate thinks that gay and lesbian people in a very heterosexual world are forced to make imaginative leaps all the time. "I want that back—I want accorded to me the stretch that a straight audience might have to make to really understand what I am talking about," she says. "My responsibility as a comedian is to establish where we can meet. Where we can meet is about family, about bodies, relationships. I think that my job is to entertain—but I have a very serious radical intent, which is, quite frankly, changing the world. To the but-what-about-your-career? question, I say, 'What about it? What about our movement?'"

Kate says that feminism isn't either/or: one can be serious or one can be funny. One can be both. And, being funny and serious together works as a bridge. "When people leave a show, if they have

laughed and have a one-liner that they can use at work, that's a good show. Or, they can be at work and see something that they can't look at again because I have destroyed it for them: I like that. I offer a different perspective."

Kate's fans have expressed surprise that she hasn't become famous in the mainstream as the popularity of stand-up comedy has exploded in the last few years. "I moved to Los Angeles to work in the comedy clubs—you know, the first step to Carson," she says. "I am interested in doing my work from strength, and I found that I didn't want my life goal to be simply making straight people laugh. They are welcome to come hear me—but it is extremely radical to see a woman make a thousand women laugh for ninety minutes and enjoy ourselves. I am not interested in doing doggie jokes or in catering to straight culture; that is what I learned in L. A.

"I needed to see how we, lesbians and gay men, have made our decisions all along based on our integrity, based on what we want to do. The world has changed, and the lesbian and gay message is getting out to the public. It is getting more on television, and that's the strength I want to tap into," she says.

"Our movement is twenty years old. There are groups like GLAAD [Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation] which are doing courageous media work. The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force is an activist advocacy and lobbying group making a difference. There is going to be a march on Hollywood—Hollywood's time of homophobia is ending.

•••

Kate now lives in Provincetown, "a community of artists, of gay people and straight people among us." She spends four or five hours each day writing, and reads as much as she can. She recently counted up her subscriptions, and she gets thirty-three magazines. ("One of my friends reads as much as I do," Kate says. "She has her magazines delivered to her friends' houses so that she can see her friends occasionally and still do her reading. People who are the weekly people

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ABOUT THE WRITER: As of July 1991, Laura Post assumed the position of staff psychiatrist/medical consultant at *Operation Concern*, a lesbian/gay mental health and services agency in San Francisco. Her writings have appeared in numerous journals, books, anthologies, and women's periodicals.

Lesbo-A-Go-Go in the raw

LEA DELARIA

By Laura Post

These pieces on Lea DeLaria and Kate Clinton (page 26) are the first in a series of articles about feminist humorists.

Lea DeLaria has been a professional lesbian for almost ten years, earning a living with her comedy and singing routines. She helped to create San Francisco's *Gay Comedy Nights* and New York's *People Who Are Funny That Way*, and has uproariously emceed open mics, festival stages, and Gay Pride rallies across the nation, including the 1987 March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights, to a crowd estimated at more than half a million.

The multi-talented Lea has won awards in three cities and in several different categories: a 1984 [San Francisco] Cable Car Award for Outstanding Cabaret and, in 1985, another Cable Car Award for Outstanding Comedy Entertainment; a Provincetown 1986 Golden Gull Award; and, in 1987, the honor of being named as one of New York's Ten Funniest Women by *Nightlife Magazine*. You may have seen her in *Dos Lesbos*, the musical comedy sketch about perverts which toured the country for three years (1987-89), or in *Girl Friday*—a comedy conceived, written, directed by, and starring Lea, which won the 1989 Golden Gull for Best Comedy Group in Provincetown, where she currently lives.

Lea's Muse is lesbian life, gay life, all life. She has been called the Original Bull Dyke in a China Shop; she calls herself the Lesbian of the Universe. She careens unabashedly around the stage, into the audience. Nothing is sacred, yet all, somehow, is respected. The targets of her energetic blitz: a gynecology appointment from Hell, Bette Davis being born, gay/lesbian relations, lesbian dating and sex in all their absurdity, straight women tourists in Provincetown, and the occasional gullible patron at her shows. She has been known to wind up on the laps of female audience members; even in a large room, Lea's performances are intimate. And, would you believe her big-voiced

presentation of scat/blues and soul?

She is bad, she is raunchy, she is funny: she is Lea DeLaria.

"Growing up in a dysfunctional Catholic family" is one of the sources she cites for her humor. "You had to be funny—it was either laugh or kill someone," she says. "Actually, I used to want to do both, but I have calmed down. I no longer scream bloody murder at the craziness that happens. My dad was a cornball, with his 'burp-fart-sneeze' brand of humor. My mother was always quieter, with a dry wit. I like to think I am a combination of both, but most people probably think of me as the 'burp-fart-sneeze' type.

"I grew up in a Catholic system before there were families suing schools for hitting pupils," she continues. "Since I was always in trouble, I learned early to either make that nun laugh, or she was going to come after me with her studded ruler. I was the class clown, and I spent my life in the principal's office for the little stunts that I did."

Stunts such as...? "There was this one nun who was so old that I used to like to say about her that she had been a topless waitress at The Last Supper," Lea recalls. "I discovered one day that you could hit this Sister with a spitball and she wouldn't notice. The whole class started doing it, and pretty soon she looked like a leper. I got in trouble for that one. Another one was that there was a Sister who wore a hearing aid. Now this wasn't nice, but we did it anyway. We figured out that if we all made buzzing noises and dropped some words when we were speaking to her, that she would think her hearing aid was broken. Her hearing aid was under her habit, and she would reach inside her blouse and fiddle with it during class. It was our way of fighting back."

Lea describes herself as a hell-raiser all through school. "I made jokes, I said when I was bored, I talked out loud. It was all funny, and it came from within

me. In fact, when people now tell me what an 'artist' I am, it makes me want to fart, because that is not how I think of myself," she says. "I think of myself as simply funny...Is that low self-esteem? I am and have always been spontaneous and in the moment."

The humorist wanted to be an actor and director when she was a child. She grew up in the small Midwestern town of Belleville, Illinois. ("I like to say about Belleville, which is near St. Louis, that it is the land that time forgot, that it has been surrounded by an information-proof shield since 1978, and that they wear bell-bottoms and polyester and dance to the BeeGees.")

She headed for San Francisco because it seemed like the place to go for theater. She quit college to be a professional actor. "I said that I was following my muse, but I was really young and stupid," she says now. "Actually, I was very lucky, and I count my fucking blessings every day. In my life, I do what I want to do, and I am a complete and open lesbian; it might not have turned out this way.

"So, I was in San Francisco, and I did work in theater, but I was quickly drawn into comedy, which was something I knew I liked and was good at. I have always believed in the Robin Williams school of improv, which is very spontaneous, without a safety net," she says. "I went around to all the open mics, where they wouldn't let me on the stage—not only because I was a lesbian, but because I was a woman. Stand-up comedy is one of the last bastions of the straight white male. If it wasn't bad enough that I was a woman, I also wore a tie: it was the 1980's, that was what we wore, instead of the lipstick we wear now. I found that I was good live, and good with hecklers—having grown up with nuns, responding quickly to insults and anger wasn't new."

Lea's friend Carol Roberts was working at the old Valencia Rose in San Francisco. "She was the funniest act on

the stage, and I said to myself that I was funnier than that," says Lea. "I did several gigs and waited. After a few months, she left, and I was hired to take her place. It was the break that I had been looking for. For six months, I co-hosted a gay open mic on Monday nights with Tom Ammi-ano. Then we got the idea to try a gay comedy night on Saturdays, which Tom and I alternately emceed for two and a half years [between 1982 and 1984], though the show actually lasted until the Rose closed in 1986. The gay comedy night was such a hit that, although I had essentially just started out in April of 1982, by November of 1982, I was entirely supporting myself by my performance earnings."

During the same period of time, Lea wrote two plays. The first, *FANTASY IN FLESH! pay a DOLLAR to talk to a NUDE GIRL!!!* went through several San Francisco productions and became a minor cult success; *The New Involvement of Max* was more of an exercise. She also composed two one-woman shows and teamed up with Jeannine Stroebel, who played guitar, in a music duo.

"The music had come about because I realized that I have a brash persona: at times I can be like a big kid, at other times wildly funny, and, at still other times, abrasive—depending on my mood. It can be hard for an audience, including lesbians, to accept a woman on stage screaming, yelling 'fuck,' and sweating. Though I deliberately wanted to challenge the audiences' conceptions of what a woman was or could be, I also knew that expanding the performances would increase how much I might be accepted. In other words, if I sang sweet little jazz tunes—and I am a good singer—the audiences would be more inclined to hear what I have to say about life," she says. "Since preaching to lesbians about lesbian life doesn't change much, I aim at straight people and gay men, who comprise twenty and thirty percent of my current audiences, respectively, so how palatable I am becomes very important. I started nearly ten years ago, and I'm lucky to be living such a lovely life, with no problems living on what I can earn doing stand-up."

Lea left the Bay Area after she and Jeannine split up ("she got the West Coast in the divorce"). "I first moved to New York, a major comedy capital, but I found New York dirty and too intense," Lea recalls. "Since I had worked the summer seasons in Provincetown, I knew that I liked it and eventually decided to move

there. I currently live in Provincetown during the season and tour for the rest of the year."

The new Delaria show *Lesbo-A-Go-Go* is hard to describe. "It is full, it contains everything," says Lea. "First of all, I solicit questions about dating, which are written out every show on three-by-five cards by the audience. I put on my pink taffeta gown from Hell and answer the questions impromptu. It's a lesbian show, so I also feel obliged to do a folk sing-along. The song I do is called 'Whack A Butt Plug,' and it has one line, which is 'whack a butt plug.' Two people are selected from the audience to come on stage and try to flip the prop butt plug from a teeter-totter, which they whack, into a bucket. Simultaneously, the audience



Marcy J. Hochberg

Lea DeLaria (pictured at Rhythm Fest 1991): "I went around to all the open mics, where they wouldn't let me on the stage—not only because I was a lesbian, but because I was a woman. Stand-up comedy is one of the last bastions of the straight white male."

sings 'Whack A Butt Plug,' with their hands all raised and swaying. It gets to be like the Super Bowl; it is tremendously funny, and people relax at the absurdity of sex. I also sing some serious songs." Lea's repertoire includes the campy "I Enjoy Being A Girl," done in a military outfit with a skirt and boots.

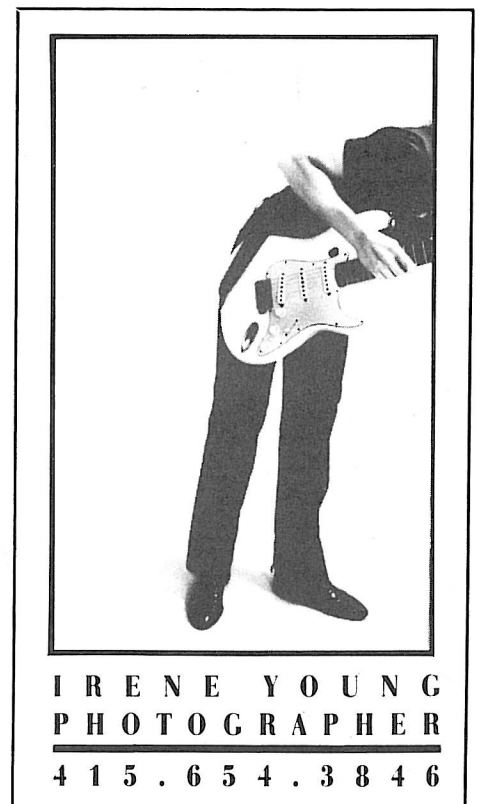
She says it's very important for her to be out in every show. "As a feminist, I struggle to challenge the societal norms of women's image. As a feminist lesbian, I

want to be always visible as a lesbian. It is political to say the word 'lesbian,' and also to talk about lesbian issues as much as I do," she says.

About fifty percent of her material is scripted these days. Even that which is written in advance and rehearsed never plays exactly the same way any two times, though. "I always know where I am going, and, in my mind, I have the set-up and the punch line. When I'm in the middle of the piece, I like to let my mind go, because I know I can always get back to the scripted part. With experience, I've gotten much more comfortable on the stage, and I rehearse less than I used to.

"When I am more improv, I like to run into the audience and play with people. Sometimes I will grab an object from an audience member and comment on it, try it on, toy with their possessiveness. I also like to toy with the comments that people make to me, but I'm not brutal. I know that in our lesbian community many women have been sexually abused and incested; nonetheless, I like to touch women in the audience. Partly because it represents the breaking of our taboos on not touching, partly because I try to convey that we are all in it together," says Lea. "Women are understandably mistrustful of being touched by aggressive men with an ulterior motive, but my

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**I R E N E Y O U N G
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NEWMR 1991

MUSIC IN THE KEY OF SHE

By Jill R. Oppenheim and Sylvia B. Stallings

After a few missed years and a name change—from the New England Women's Musical Retreat to the North East Women's Musical Retreat—NEWMR returned last September to the hills and forests of New England for her eleventh year festival celebration. It was a quiet, intimate party, with about 800 women camping for the entire Labor Day weekend just outside of Hardwick, Massachusetts.

The collectively planned and produced NEWMR is staged on a not-for-profit basis. A group of nine women from four states—Nancy Bareis, Deedy Breed, Terry Gazaukas, Jennis Handy, Seja Joyce, Kim Kimber, Jeanne Larrimee, Debra Rzeszewica, and Claudia Scully—met monthly (sometimes weekly) throughout the year preceding the festival, and assumed responsibility for thirty different areas of festival duties. Decisions were made by reaching consensus, which can be frustrating, but the planners think this process helps to keep NEWMR open to the diversity of the women's community.

Looking around the festival grounds, evidence of the diversity abounded. In addition to the usual chem-free, chem-tolerated, party-hearty, and moms-and-kids signs, you could also find signs for camping for the "differently pleased." The festival map clearly marked this S/M camping area, and women attending the festival appeared to take little notice of its existence (and even less offense). "It hasn't been an issue here," said Joyce Seja. "The planning committee concentrates on finding ways to bridge our diversities rather than accenting what divides us." Nancy Bareis echoed these sentiments. In planning for "Circle City," her responsibilities included combining the activities of the Political Tent, the Womyn of Color Tent, Trinity Grounding Space, and the workshop areas to focus on building the bridges necessary to enhance our power as women.

Even with the rugged terrain and newly cut trails and paths, differently abled women were very much a part of NEWMR's celebration. Claudia Scully brought her efforts to bear on accessibility issues. Though difficult access (combined with a weather-related algae explosion) put the camp's lake off limits, almost every other facet of the festival experience was open to participation. As one of the festival workers, Mary Frances Platt, noted, "All space is disabled space for use. Other festivals provide services, but there is no involvement or mixing. Here, women with disabilities can be workers or planners." As festival-goers have come to expect, all performances were interpreted in American Sign Language, and programs were available on tape, in braille, and in large print. A lift-equipped van was available on call from 8 a.m. until midnight daily, as well as running continuous service from meals to stages.

Scratch the surface of a NEWMR planner deep enough on any issue and you will find a lot of thought behind what they do, as well as how and why they do it. More than forty women have served on the planning committee over the last eleven years. Since the festival has never had a permanent site, almost every question about how to stage the festival has had to be asked and answered differently each year. This year's answer as to how to ensure enough women signed up for work shifts included a deposit that was collected at festival registration and refunded when the workshift was completed. (Women who had chosen a sliding scale ticket were not required to place the deposit if they hadn't realized it would be collected.)

Even as Yanayah Pathfinder Pearson opened the festival with a spiritual outpouring of joy and healing, the radio crackled with the call of workers requiring a planner's attention. After the intense emotion of the moment had passed, four different planners shifted gears quickly to

move on to the next detail.

The Friday night stage brought the incredible vocal acrobatics of Suede. Moving quickly between musical styles and instruments, she primed the crowd for Alix Dobkin, who served as emcee as well as headliner for the evening stage. In long raps between songs, Alix predicted the beginning of the end of the patriarchy as she announced her intention to stay home and tour less. You could almost believe her when the heat of the day met the moist cool of the evening and bathed the camp in an eerie low-lying fog.

She was back on Saturday to introduce the afternoon stage. The explosion of color and sounds of Libana; the playful and teasingly sensual costuming and poetry of Candace and Afia; and the entrancing rhythms, striking choreography, and haunting spirit chants of Homegirl-Suhir presented a multi-cultural sensory feast. And just as Libana was finishing their second encore, women were rushing to a special staging of *Pigeons on a Couch*.

The two-act comedy featured the decidedly frantic and poignantly funny comings and goings of four African-American lesbians set in the New York City of the '90s. It was originally staged at the Lesbian and Gay Community Center in New York City last April. Playwright Melanie Nelson couldn't have hoped for a sharper cast. (Watch for the stellar Dee Dee Henderson, who played the character of Sonya, in her film debut *Run of the House* due out later this year.)

As evening and the temperatures fell, Karen Williams dialed up the heat with her in-your-face comedy, while Jean and June Millington cranked up the decibels with raucous rock & roll. Jamie Anderson and Sue Fink had to be crowded into the schedule before the local noise ordinance brought down the sound—all amplified outdoor sound had to cease by 11:30 p.m. on Friday and Saturday, and by 10:30 on Sunday, so the sets had to stay on schedule, and encore opportunities were

limited.

Marga Gomez was clearly the hit of the festival on Sunday's afternoon stage. Those who have heard her version of Anais Nin's lost diary account of erotic encounters with Minnie Mouse, et al., will never think of Disneyland the same way again. The delighted crowd made her emcee duties difficult as they clamored for more of her own bits between sets by Marla BB and Alizon and Presents of Mind.

Between the afternoon and evening stages each day there was ample time to attend one of the auctions held to help NEWMR raise money. There was also time to actually enjoy the festival meals. Evening menus included cheese or tofu lasagna with garlic bread, vegetable Indian curry (especially yummy), and cheese or tofu enchiladas. Desserts included homemade cookies, sweet potato pie, and chocolate fudge brownies. Even more enchanting were the breakfast menus, which featured whole-wheat blueberry pancakes on Saturday and potato pancakes with apple sauce on Monday. All food was clearly labeled as to content, and women with special food needs not met by the menus were dealt with individually. (One woman unable to tolerate the ubiquitous tomatoes in Satur-

day nights fare, for example, was taken to the kitchen for fresh fruit, cheeses, and other vegetable choices.) A barbecue supplied hot dogs, burgers, and chicken at a nominal cost for the carnivorous vegetable-phobes.

Just the mention of potato pancakes for Monday breakfast set Marga Gomez off on a tear as she introduced the Ensemble of Womyn Drummers Sunday evening. As the sun set, the ensemble—consisting of Sango Adesoji, Phyllis Bethel, Cary Thompson, Debra McGee, Olga Iris Encarnacion, and Olabaumi—ignited the laid back crowd, bringing them back to business. After a rowdy presentation of the festival planners, Leah Zicari amazed the women with tales of her 650cc motorcycle, and finished with a new anthem for lesbians and gays, sung to the tune of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." Robin Flower and Libby McLaren capped off the evening with what could be their last appearance as a duo; Olivia recording artist Nancy Vogl will be joining them in a band they'll call Wild Hearts.

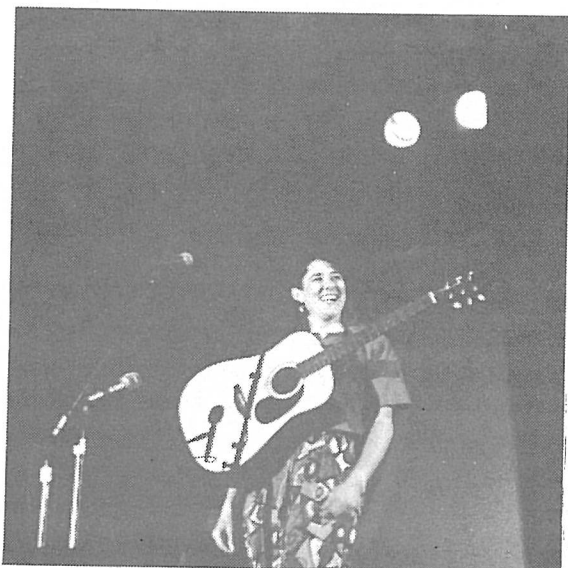
Robin and Libby complimented the excellent sound crew for being able to come up to speed for their set without benefit of a sound check. The musicians had arrived only minutes before from the

airport as a result of missing a flight after their gig at Rhythmfest. Some enterprising lesbian with a private plane could have done well this weekend with a Rhythmfest/NEWMR Shuttle. Sue Fink, Karen Williams, and Marga Gomez also had dates at Rhythmfest in addition to NEWMR. The performers may have been hedging their bets, since the issue of not having a permanent site has resulted in NEWMR being cancelled in 1986 and 1989.

As nice as the festival was overall, there were a few problems. In addition to the lake being off limits, a few of the other advertised features were lacking. The video selections were shown in a small, cramped, stuffy cabin during daytime hours. The showers were limited in number, and functioned at the mercy of capricious water pressure while forming serious mud puddles ankle-deep. The Open Mic was located far away from other festival activities, and had no microphone or organized seating. One day attendees had to return to their vehicles parked off the land via walking a short distance on a public road.

Nonetheless, there may be an end in sight to the site problems. The women of the Northeast all share in the legacy of

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Sylvia B. Stallings



Sylvia B. Stallings

NEWMR is back and may settle into into a permanent home at a beautiful site in Vermont. For more information, contact NEWMR, P.O. Box 217, New Haven, CT 06513. (203) 523-1268. Among the entertainers at the eleventh NEWMR, last Labor Day weekend, were Leah Zicari (who amazed the women with tales of her 650cc motorcycle, and finished with an anthem for lesbians/gay men sung to the tune of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic") and the Ensemble of Womyn Drummers (Sango Adesoji, Phyllis Bethel, Cary Thompson, Debra McGee, Olga Iris Encarnacion, and Olabaumi), who ignited the laid back crowd.

ABOUT THE WRITERS: Jill R. Oppenheim is an avid festi-goer in between saving the world and working on her masters degree. Sylvia B. Stallings comes south of the Canadian border for the festivals and manages health care for the highest bidder. They live together separately in Chicago and Toronto respectively.



Marcy J. Hochberg

Women's music = boring old folk music? Not Bitsy Ziff style! The trio BETTY premiered their new album during this festival season.



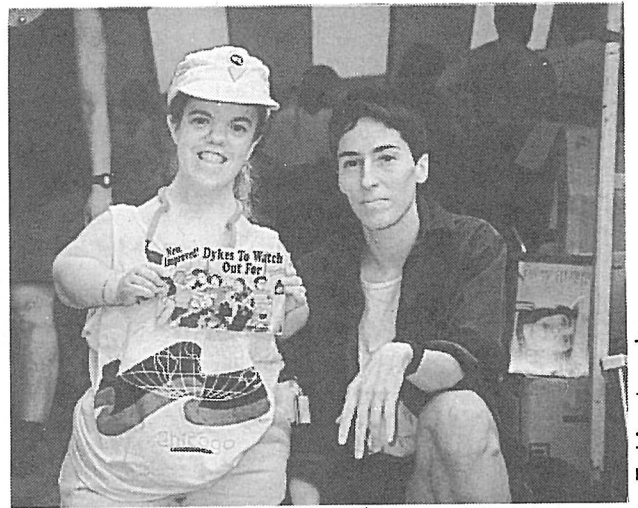
Toni Armstrong Jr.

Leaping lesbians: Jamie Anderson, Seraiah Carol, and Marilyn Van Veersen perform with Sue Fink.



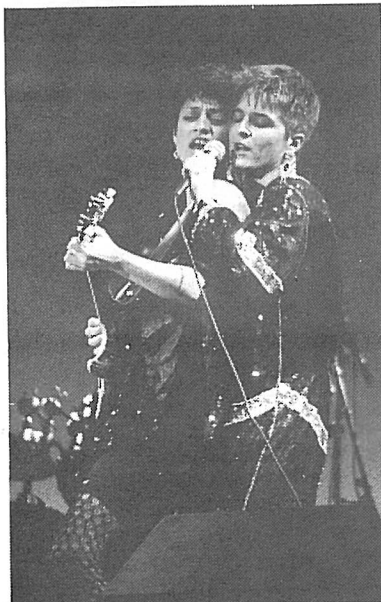
Toni Armstrong Jr.

Debbie Fier, Alix Dobkin, and Vicki Randle blend talents.



Toni Armstrong Jr.

Musician Laurie Benz and cartoonist Alison Bechdel.



Toni Armstrong Jr.

Two Nice Girls: Kathy Korniloff and Gretchen Phillips.



Toni Armstrong Jr.

Sisterly camaraderie among the goddess babes knows no geographic boundaries: big city Sue Fink (L.A.) shares the stage with rural Mimi Baczewska (Ava, Missouri).



Jean Fineberg & Ellen Seeling are DEUCE.

Toni Armstrong Jr.



The traditional Opening Ceremony at Michigan: Ramona Galindez welcomes the crowd in American Sign Language.

Toni Armstrong Jr.

1991 FESTIVAL PHOTOS



Laura "Swing Low Sweet Chariot" Love.

Toni Armstrong Jr.



Robin Flower (pictured at Rhythm Fest) and Libby McLaren will soon be in a band called Wild Hearts with Nancy Vogl.

Marcy J. Hochberg



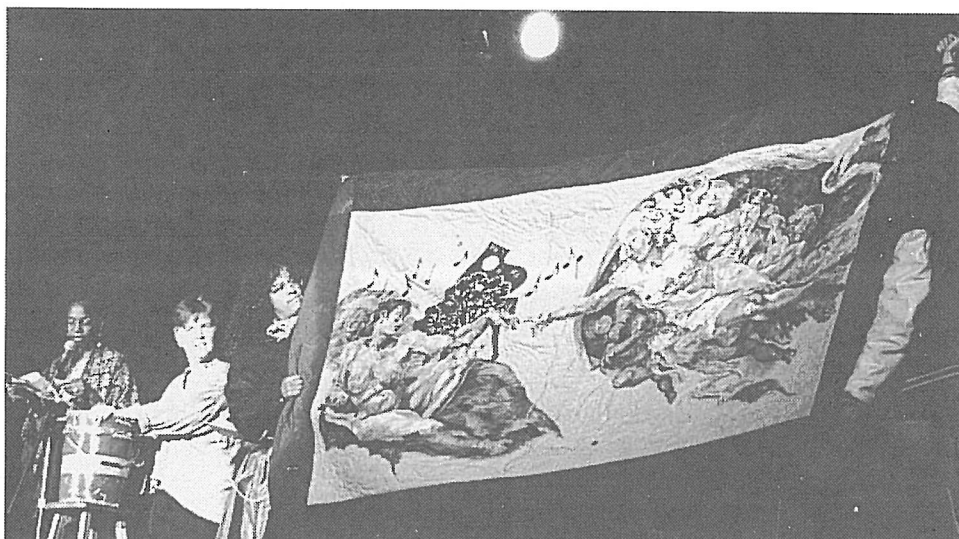
Linda Tillery fronts her own Motown revue band, Skin Tight.

Toni Armstrong Jr.

Michigan Womyn's Music Festival 1991

A WORLD OF WOMEN AT WOMBSTOCK

By Toni Armstrong Jr.



Toni Armstrong Jr.

The annual quilting bee produces a quilt made by women from several continents.

As most of us know, Woodstock was the largest and most famous music festival of the '60s-era rock scene. Even now, more than twenty years later, it still beckons to the imagination of young people, just as it appeals to the nostalgic sensibilities of their Baby-Boomer parents. Just reading the list of performers is a stroll through the musical Who's Who of the peace-and-love generation. The film documentary of the event shows half a million festival goers and performers living out a freedom only *imagined* by most people in their daily lives. Women fans of The Grateful Dead—the one band that lives on, relatively intact, from the flower power era—have noted many similarities between attending large-scale Dead shows and women's music festivals.

It's not surprising that The Michigan Womyn's Music Festival—now in its sixteenth year—has been dubbed "Wombstock." The parallels are undeniable, with a couple of notable exceptions: Michigan has managed to happen sixteen times (not just once); the '80s and '90s are seeing a massive move away from the "Just Say Yes" drug culture of the Woodstock days, so Michigan is a generally more clean and sober place to be than any of the '60s festivals were; and of course there are no men since it's a celebration of lesbian-

feminist (rather than hippie) culture.

But the freedom, the mass scale of the event (with attendance generally in the 6,000 to 9,000 range), the more than 100 craftswomen selling woman-identified artistic products, the emphasis on accessibility for every woman, and the feeling of being swept away by a culture running swiftly counter to one's daily life...all of these elements make Michigan the largest and most culturally significant women's festival of our times.

Michigan festival-goers and performers hail from all over the international feminist world. In the violent war-torn year 1991, the theme of the festival was "A World of Womyn for Peace." An international, multi-cultural sensibility is a pervasive characteristic of the annual event. In addition to the traditional Opening Ceremony—featuring "welcomes" in dozens of languages—each year the festival hosts a quilting bee, where a large quilt is lovingly made by women from several continents. The quilt is given as the grand prize in the festival raffle.

This year, the festival expanded to six days; had two full days of intensive workshops (Tuesday and Wednesday); and added several things, including an asphalt path in the DART area, sweat lodges at the Womyn of Color tent and

Community Center, a new shuttle buggy, an expanded Nature Nook, a dance floor at the Community Center, more night movies, and Jewish women's programming.

A WORLD OF WOMYN ON STAGE

A criticism that has dogged women's music is that it's nothing but endless, boring versions of the acoustic singer-songwriter genre. One trip to Michigan would silence such critics forever. In addition to the hundreds of films and workshops, there are four performance stages: Day Stage, Acoustic Stage, Night Stage, and the August Night Cafe, featuring more than 100 performers. What follows is a brief trip through a few of the 1991 performances.

- **MARGA GOMEZ'S MEMORY TRICKS.** The stand-up comic genius took a serious turn in this critically acclaimed solo performance about her relationship with her parents, particularly her mother. Set in the Latin community of the '60s, *Memory Tricks* mixes comedy and drama in an exploration of sex roles, cultural identity, and female bonding. Marga brought her one-woman show to the festival after a five-week sold-out run in San Francisco.
- **COUNTRY LINE DANCING DAILY WITH MAILE & MARINA.** With a two-step here and a tush push there, dancing to country music by women has already become a Michigan Festival tradition. [See article on page 24.]
- **FRANK CHICKENS.** One of the most unusual acts at the festival, Kazuko Hohki and Atsuko Kamura are the performance art duo called Frank Chickens. The show involved biting social commentary, frequent costume changes, and audience participation. "They say we are a national embarrassment, but that's not true," say the Chickens. "We are an *international* embarrassment."
- **EDWINA LEE TYLER.** Her powerful presence and muscular build reveal the strength she's gained from more than forty years of drumming and more than twenty years of African dancing. Alone or with her Piece of the World ensemble, she and her djimbé drum keep the audience entranced.
- **TRELINGS.** Part dance, part theater, part fantasy. Choreographer Terry Sendgraff is the creator of *Motivity*, a low-flying trapeze dance

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Edwina Lee Tyler: composer, choreographer, percussionist supreme, vocalist, and dancer.

Marcy J. Hochberg

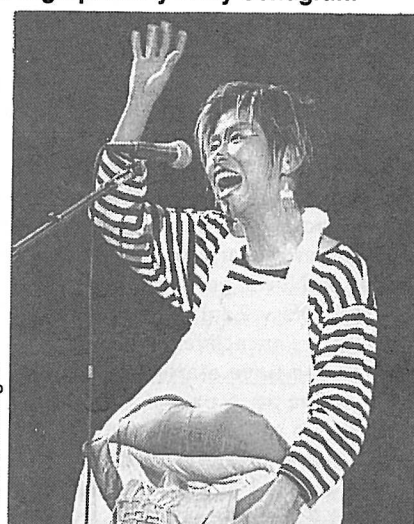


The other-wordly Treelings, choreographed by Terry Sendgraff.

Marcy J. Hochberg



Toni Armstrong Jr.



Toni Armstrong Jr.

The eccentric and satirical Japanese singing duo Frank Chickens has performed and toured worldwide since its creation in London in 1982.



Toni Armstrong Jr.

Marga Gomez did two performances of 'Memory Tricks,' the one-woman show about her parents.



Toni Armstrong Jr.

Sawagi Taiko is composed of six female members from Katari Taiko, the Asian-Canadian drumming group. *Sawagi* means excitement-commotion.

WOMEN'S CHORAL COMMUNITIES: SINGING FOR OUR LIVES

By Catherine Roma

This article has been adapted from a paper presented at two conferences in 1991—at 'Feminist Theory and Music: Toward a Common Language' at the University of Minnesota, and 'Music and Gender' at King's College—London.

In the mid '70s, on each coast and in the heartland of the nation, grassroots women's choruses began to form, influenced both by the second wave of feminism and by the women's music movement. Motivated by a strong desire to sing—coupled with an urgency to create community and become politically active on the local level—these choruses attracted both lesbian and heterosexual women. Today, in North America, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand, more than fifty such choirs are active.

Some have started and dissolved; many more are a part of a loosely organized group called the Sister Singers Network. Some of these choruses are also a part of the GALA (Gay and Lesbian Association) Choruses network, an organization of men's, women's, and mixed choruses in North America which formed in the early '80s.

This brief historical overview draws on discussions with choral directors and singers from comparable groups in the U.S. as well as on my own experience [as founder and early director of Anna Crusic Women's Choir in Philadelphia, now in its seventeenth season; continuing work with MUSE, the Cincinnati's Women's Choir she founded in 1984 and currently directs; and her work as director of the Michigan Festival chorus, which she founded in 1989].

There are all kinds of choirs in the women's choral movement, and the impulse that sustains them varies from place to place. Geographical location is an influential factor; how a chorus actually starts is another. Some begin when a group of women gather to sing, others are founded by a single woman director, or by a group of planners; in still other cases, a men's chorus in the area proves

anxious to have a partner chorus. Women's choruses vary in structure: some use a clear democratic majority rule, while others operate by consensus. Some choruses choose to stay a certain size, while others put no limit on how many may join. Some hold auditions; others are open to any woman who wants to sing. Some sing a popular-style repertoire, while others sing a wide variety of music. Some have no trouble deciding what to wear for concert garb; others have their most heated debates over dress.

Some choirs make a deliberate decision to sing only for women's audiences or to stay close to their home communities; others perform for diverse local audiences and occasionally travel across the country. Though some choirs are made up primarily of lesbian and bisexual women, and have "lesbian" in their titles, others include lesbian, bisexual, and heterosexual women. Some groups seek audience participation and conscientiously work to break down the customary barrier between artists and audience, while others prefer the traditional concert setting. I shall describe a handful of these choruses, what they do, what they sing, what their guiding principles are, and what is significant about them.

The choruses Anna Crusic, MUSE, Sistrum, Calliope, and the Seattle Women's Ensemble are all products—and producers—of feminism. The women in these choral groups do not consider them separate from other things they do in their lives. Chorus members sing together, make music together, create new cultural connections together, and work together for change.

THE EARLY DAYS

In the mid '70s, when many of these choirs began, their members were involved in reproductive health issues, abortion rights, equal pay and workplace issues, the ERA, the post-Stonewall movement for gay/lesbian civil rights, and/or the international peace move-

ment. Thus the choirs became the musical arm of the political activism of the singers, as symbolized in the Holly Near song "Singing For Our Lives." Their multifaceted mission statements speak of musical excellence and social change as complementary goals and objectives.

The women's choral movement arose hand in hand with what we now know as women's music. Alix Dobkin/Kay Gardner's *Lavender Jane Loves Women* and Meg Christian's *I Know You Know* both came out in 1974, the same year two women's choirs were formed. Roberta Kosse started the Women Like Me choral ensemble in New York City, which sang works by her exclusively, and I started Anna Crusic (West) in Madison, Wisconsin in the fall of 1974. Sweet Honey in the Rock, the a cappella ensemble of African-American women, began in 1973 and continues to have an indelible impact on the repertoire of many women's choruses.

By 1975 and the first Women on Wheels tour (Holly Near, Meg Christian, Margie Adam, and Cris Williamson), women's choruses had begun in Philadelphia and Los Angeles. The aims of professional women performers were very similar to the visions and aims of the first women's choirs.

Anna Crusic (Philadelphia) debuted at Bryn Mawr College for the 1976 Berkshire Conference, and formulated its mission: "Choirs work together around pieces of music in preparation for performance. If Anna Crusic were to fly, she needed music that made her necessary. We had dreamed of a women's choir as a sound and as a unit of women building cultural alternatives. The first choir members learned songs of American women, and their performances attracted new singers who in turn learned the songs. The songs give voice to women's laughter, piety, sorrow, and determination through selections from three centuries of American songs. As a program, the collection taps only the surface of a musical tradition and of women's historical experience. The many moods captured in

the songs, however, identify women as artists who made music of their lives. Anna Crusis honors their art and carries on, making music for its beauty, its strength, and its magnetism among friends. She also goes beyond this specific form for tying in to women's heritage, and now she attracts music to her because of her work."

Calliope (Minneapolis) and Ursa Minor (Portland, Oregon) were founded in 1976, the same year as The Los Angeles Community Women's Chorus. The L.A. organizing collective—which included Sue Fink—wrote: "We wish to engender in ourselves and in the community a consciousness of all kinds of women-oriented music—music by women, for women, about women. We want our music to tell the many stories women have to tell about ourselves. We wish to bring to light our political, economic, social, and cultural struggles and victories. We wish to expose ourselves and the community to women's music of all genres: historical and contemporary, classical, folk, popular, and ethnic. We wish to provide in our chorus a nurturing, supportive space for women of all lifestyles, of all economic and ethnic backgrounds, of all sexual preferences. We wish to provide a forum for women composers, conductors, arrangers, and musicians. We wish to establish and help build a library of feminist choral music." (As of this writing, the Los Angeles Women's Community Chorus has folded. Some of the women in the area, unhappy with the repertoire and process of the recently collapsed chorus, have started a new chorus—Phoenix Rising.)

Consciousness of women's choirs was growing; word was getting out. The National Women's Music Festival—which began in Champaign-Urbana, Illinois in 1974—perceived the interest in empowering women as performers, and organized pick-up choirs, particularly in the early years of the festival. Individuals from around the country gathered to share information about their choruses and to have the experience of being able to perform. Today, the Michigan Festival Chorus is rapidly establishing itself as a tradition.

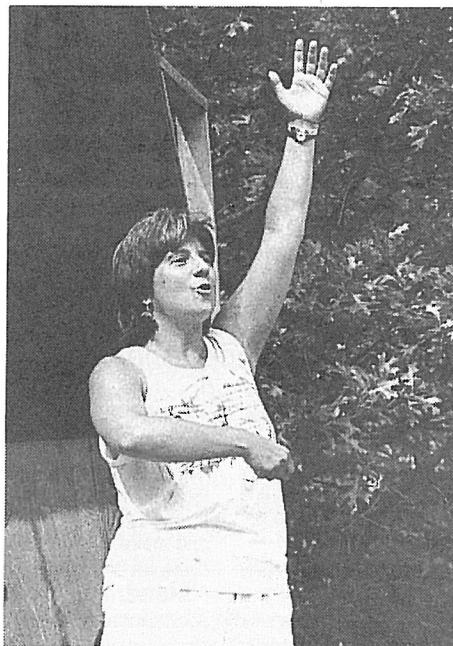
During the late '70s, choruses started in St. Louis, Kansas City, Chicago, Washington, D.C., and Madison. [The women's choir in Madison lasted six months after Catherine Roma left, taking the name Anna Crusis with her to Philadelphia. Soon a new choir (Womonsong)

formed in Madison.]

Some of the choruses sang together informally in 1981 at the Midwest Wimmen's Festival (in the Ozarks), and the Sister Singers Network was formed as a result of this concert. Linda Small (St. Louis) and Linda Echo Ray (Kansas City) were the impetus and energy behind the creation of the Sister Singers Network.

Since that time, the National Women's Choral Music Festivals have become the vehicle for women's choruses to gather and perform for and with one another. These festivals have been hosted by the Kansas City Women's Chorus, Womonsong (Madison), Artemis Singers (Chicago), Calliope (Minneapolis), Kansas City, and Heart Song (Houston). The concert format includes choruses performing short sets and the mass chorus singing several pieces together.

Choruses in the same geographic area have begun to perform jointly: Los Angeles with San Francisco, Philadelphia with Washington D.C., St. Louis with Kansas City, Chicago with Cincinnati,



Catherine Roma: "In our choral communities, we strive to image America, to find and use our own voices, and to honor and understand the voices of varied musical cultures."

and most recently in Oregon, the Portland Lesbian Choir with Soromundi, the lesbian choir of Eugene.

Many of the choirs make decisions through consensus, have a "question authority" attitude, or have taken on creative names: Soromundi, Sistrum, Anna

Crusis, MUSE, Artemis Singers, Calliope, Womonsong, Common Woman. But the element unique to all is their commitment to new connections and to a wide variety of music which speaks to the lives of women in the chorus, appeals to diverse audiences, and reflects the goals of community, consensus, multi-culturalism, and progressive feminist politics.

Women's choirs perform within their local communities, to educate and entertain at events that advance both musical and social causes. Some women's choirs regularly schedule benefits or perform for such groups as battered women's shelters, NOW Conferences, women's prisons, reproductive rights supporters, AIDS research, anti-rape organizations, supporters of peace and justice movements in Central and South America, gay and lesbian organizations, anti-nuclear and anti-war groups, city councils, workers with the homeless, and political rallies.

Of the five choirs mentioned, Anna Crusis and MUSE include equal numbers of lesbian, heterosexual, and bisexual women, while the others have only a handful of heterosexual women. Few women's choirs use the term "lesbian" in their titles—The Portland Lesbian Chorus; Soromundi: the Lesbian Chorus of Eugene; and VOICES: Bay Area Lesbian Choral Ensemble are the exceptions. Yet even those choirs which call themselves "lesbian" invite women who are sympathetic to the goals and rights of lesbians to join. Certainly lesbian and heterosexual women together have enhanced each other's understanding of music repertoire choices.

THE MUSIC

Though some women's choirs perform works by men, others have chosen to focus exclusively on music written by women, and many women's choirs do not perform religious works (especially from the Judeo-Christian tradition). Selections from the classical repertoire may include Renaissance madrigals, movements from larger works—for example, Mendelssohn's *Elijah*—or numbers written specifically for women's voices (such as Purcell, Porpora, Vivaldi, Brahms, Verdi, Poulenc, Debussy, and Durufle).

Choirs are always looking for compositions by women of the past, but unfortunately there is not much choral music for women's voices by women composers. Several works by Hildegard von

Toni Armstrong Jr.

Bingen have highlighted programs because of the availability of transcriptions, and the Broude Bros. series *Nine Centuries of Choral Music By Women Composers* includes music for women's voices by Francesca Caccini and Louise Reichardt.

In the late '40s and early '50s, Sophie Drinker initiated new editions, arrangements, and an awareness of the necessity to provide good music for women's choirs. (In Merion, Pennsylvania, a suburb of Philadelphia, Sophie even started an informal women's chorus, which met Wednesday nights at her home.) The Drinker Collection, now housed in the Free Library of Philadelphia, consists of music she generated for women's voices, works by Palestrina, Bach, and Brahms either transposed into appropriate keys or with texts translated into English. She noted in her book *Brahms and His Women's Choruses* the comment made by Clara Schumann to Brahms regarding the necessity to set significant texts for mature women to sing.

Frequently, when one finds works by women composers—no matter what the era—their texts prove to be inappropriate. Either they reflect Judeo-Christian values or are meant for "unchanged voices" (boys), or for children. There is a dearth of dramatic, moving, and, of course, feminist texts set to music for the mature women's chorus. Suitable works

by twentieth century composers Dame Ethel Smyth, Thea Musgrave, Grace Williams, Vivian Fine, Pauline Oliveros, Janice Giteck, Vally Weigl, Patsy Rogers, Anna Rubin, Jennifer Stasack, Kay Gardner, and Mary Watkins have been performed by women's choruses; some have even been commissioned.

The new wave of women's choruses has shown its commitment to the music of varied traditions. Music from the African-American tradition, from southern Africa, or from Central and South America or Eastern Europe speaks to women from our consumer culture of music-making, giving them the strong, full-voice sound of singing that is an integral part of women's existence and centers on the concerns of women's lives.

Bernice Johnson Reagon and Ysaye Barnwell—both of Sweet Honey in the Rock—offer workshops to teach techniques, style, and performance practices of spirituals, gospel, and some South and West African music. Both women have published choral arrangements of their music, and their works frequently appear on programs by MUSE, Anna Crusis, Sistrum, Seattle Women's Ensemble, and Calliope. Women's choruses have also offered workshops to their singers in African drumming and percussion techniques, to enable members to add accompaniment to primarily a cappella works in an appropriate style.

Another tradition, music from the *nuevo cancion* movement in Central and South America, combines traditional poetry and folk music rich in complex Latin rhythms. The music often carries a double meaning, much like the code language in what is traditionally known as the Negro Spiritual (music sung by slaves), and is accompanied by such idiomatic instruments as guitars, cuatros, various kinds of flutes, and a rich array of percussion instruments. SABIA, a group of women who brought music out of Latin-American refugee camps, has presented workshops that blend research, writing, and performance of songs about the lives of women in Central America. Much music from the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa has appeared on women's chorus programs, as have songs from the Eastern European women's choral tradition and the women's music movement in the United States. In the hands of gifted musicians, high quality arrangements of pieces from these traditions have been generated, and comprise a large body of repertoire which circulates in the network of women's choirs.

By far the most striking feature of women's choir programs is the way stylistically disparate pieces are juxtaposed with one another. Sometimes concerts have themes which weave vastly different pieces into a coherent whole and provide clues to the meanings of the

MISSION STATEMENTS

Mission statements give voice to the wide-ranging commitment of the choirs.

• **SISTRUM** (Lansing): We are women who have taken charge of our own lives, and in doing so, we assume responsibility for telling our own story as well. Where the story differs from the one we've all been taught to assume that everybody shares, know that we sing this deliberately chosen vision with calm and delight and defiance and a twinkle of invitation in our eye for anyone who recognizes it as her own as well. Join us if you enjoy our company.

• **CALLIOPE** (Minneapolis)...celebrates the voices, power, strength, and diversity of women. We cherish our roots and experiences in the lesbian community, and welcome women to join us in singing with pride and excellence. Our songs are sent forth as a source of healing and joy to soothe hearts and stir spirits. We offer our music in support of change towards freedom, justice, and equality. Resolution to Act: We are committed to working on eliminating racism in our individual lives and in chorus policy and practice. It is our goal to make Calliope accessible to all women, regardless of race, culture, religion, age, affectional/sexual orientation, class, or disability.

• **MUSE** (Cincinnati)...is a women's choir dedicated to musical excellence and social change. In keeping with our belief that diversity is strength, we are feminist women of varying musical abilities, political interests, and life experiences. We commission and seek out concert music composed by women, pieces written to enhance the sound of women's voices, and songs that honor the common struggles and enduring spirit of all peoples. In performing, we strive for a concert experience that entertains, inspires, motivates, heals, and creates a feeling of community with our audience.

• **ANNA CRUSIS** (Philadelphia)...is a progressive group of women singers and we make music with the goal of creating—with our audiences—an environment in which we can all empower ourselves. We believe that in order to reach this goal in performance, we must strive to create a supportive community for ourselves, one in which we listen with respect and respond with honesty, celebrate our diversity, and make use of the unique gifts each of us brings. In so doing, we enrich ourselves and make it possible to perform music which challenges and inspires.

• **THE SEATTLE WOMEN'S ENSEMBLE**...sings music to celebrate the human spirit. Since 1980 we have presented culturally diverse music that comments on fundamental human needs for dignity, respect, love, and freedom from oppression. Through our performances we support other organizations who share our goals. The ensemble is committed to the development of the musical and organizational skills of its members. We also seek to promote audience knowledge and appreciation of women in the arts by presenting the music of women composers and by inviting other women artists to perform with us.

• **ARTEMIS SINGERS** (Chicago)...is a lesbian feminist chorus comprised of women with diverse backgrounds who are dedicated to performing music written or arranged by women. The chorus works to affect positive changes in cultural attitudes towards women and women artists, as well as to increase the visibility of lesbian feminists. Our goal in selecting and performing music is to provide an emotionally moving, spiritually and aesthetically uplifting, and politically motivating experience for our audience. We want to entertain, amuse, and educate; to highlight historical, political, and personal events and experiences common to women; and most of all to share a sense of community with the audience.

pieces programmed. Groups of pieces may be introduced by individual choir members. In Los Angeles, the women introduce everything in Spanish and English because they have many Latina women in attendance. Texts can be read aloud, material related to the work at hand may be offered, or program notes can be read by the audience. Concerts may be interpreted in sign language for the benefit of deaf and hearing impaired audience members.

Though women's choirs often have seasonal schedules (fall/winter and spring concerts), many steer away from holiday programs and pops concerts. Instead, current events or women's life experiences may provide a program's

theme, as they did when Anna Crusis organized the 1991 concert around the topic of peace. It is no coincidence that the Portland Lesbian Choir and Soromundi (*Peace Together: Weaving Our Lives*), Calliope (*Harvest Peace*), and the Denver Women's Chorus (*Songs of Struggle, Hope, and Peace*) also organized their recent concerts around the topic of peace. "Peace is not just the opposite of war," read the Anna Crusis program notes, "it is also the opposite of domestic and sexual abuse, harassment, lack of safety, homophobia, discrimination...with the selection of the following songs we begin to address the many facets of peace needed in our lives. Here lies the foundation for building peace...if we overlook these building

blocks, then situations like the Gulf War are considered aberrations, isolated incidents. Once it is over, we go back to our everyday lives, doing violence to each other through racism, sexism, domestic abuse..."

Unique juxtapositions and unusual pairing of pieces produce further opportunities for programming. MUSE placed "Ave Maria" by Poulenc next to the *nuevo cancion* "Campesina," and used the opportunity to speak of the devotion of Catholic Central and South American women to the Virgin Mary. Anna Crusis programmed "Voices from the Mountains" by Ruthie Gorton, about mining in the Ap-

continued on page 52

ABOUT THE WRITER: In addition to choral conducting with several groups in many venues, Catherine Roma is a teacher at Antioch College in Yellow Springs and has been a 'HOT WIRE' staff writer since 1987.

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filling up the jam jars with festival preserves

THE IMPORTANCE OF DOCUMENTING WOMEN'S MUSIC FESTIVALS

By Bonnie Morris

In August of 1981 I attended my first women's music festival. I had just received a beautiful Minolta camera for my twentieth birthday, but I deliberately left it at home. I was concerned about bringing such a valuable item to a large festival, and wanted to sleep out under the stars carefree.

Soon after I arrived in Hesperia, Michigan, however, I found myself in a festival culture so responsible and caring that I mentally kicked myself for thinking I or my camera might not be safe.

Lacking the means to make a photographic record of my first impressions, I wrote frenzied journal entries, describing everything I saw and heard—the land, the musicians, women dancing sensuously beneath chilled summer trees. I had been keeping a journal since the age of twelve, and writing was more pleasure than work for me—yet without a camera, how could I bring other women into the images I wished to describe?

On the last night of that festival, I crawled into a group tent and joined a sing-along of women from around the world. We taught one another new songs, and harmonized to beloved folk ballads long into the night. I pulled my journal from my knapsack, passed it around, and asked any woman who was interested to write in my notebook. Then, on the long bus trip home, I read with increasing delight the "festival impressions" that others had entrusted to me. It was my first attempt at starting a festival yearbook.

Now, ten years later, I have collected a considerable amount of festival herstory through my herstorian's tools—journal, camera, tape recorder, eye, ear, and other senses. These personal archives capture the images and voices of women from all corners of the globe, women who, like me, return over and over to the various festivals where an alternative culture is

created and sustained through our own efforts. In the long winter season between festivals, I rest beneath my electric blanket listening to tape recordings of crackling camp fires, rain on a pup tent, political announcements from the Night Stage, the squeals of raffle winners, and the sounds of 8,000 women laughing together in a field.

More significant than my own personal rejuvenation, however, is the existence of a record of festival energy. Every festival is different. Conflicts, scandals, hilarity, weather, and worker personalities determine the character of each event; but these separate festivals, added together, are a subculture well worth remembering as the years tumble toward a new century. What was it like to attend a festival on the "old land" at Michigan? Who sang what at the first East Coast Lesbians Festival? Do you remember the year of the X controversy or the Y incident? Often these details are lovingly (or excruciatingly) discussed in the periodicals and newsletters of our women's culture—but for the most part, we festie-goers, producers, performers, and technicians must serve as our own biographers, declaring our stories and memories to be important and revolutionary, even when mainstream society refuses to acknowledge our gatherings, our music, our ideas.

GOING THE WOMEN'S STUDIES ROUTE

The task of collecting women's herstory—and, by extension, festival herstory—is made difficult by the sexism and homophobia of our present society. While women's studies programs flourished at American universities throughout the 1970s and '80s, the study of half the globe's population still lacks support by most colleges. Women's studies has

been judged either "controversial" (too politically loaded to be part of a Real and Objective university education) or "a luxury" (there's no room in the university budget to add on new courses about women; women's studies is not a real discipline like football). A handful of universities offer graduate work in women's history—but try to find a lesbian voice in those curricula. The academic accreditation of the women's history field hinges upon applying traditional and very male scholarly methods to the study of women's lives. Regrettably, to find employment as a professor of women's history, one must write about topics which will not alarm the men (and straight women) who hire historians and fund or publish their research.

I spent six years in graduate school to earn my Ph.D. in women's history. During those years I lived two lives. I sat in university classes where a lesbian perspective never appeared in our scholarly readings; I learned, through my training as a future university professor, that the history of my own women's community did not count as real history, and was unthinkable as a serious research project. Nevertheless, when I was not on campus I was at festivals, at women-identified concerts and performances, at lesbian conferences and campouts and celebrations—my journal and camera and tape recorder purring back to me, *yes, this is real. This is herstory in the making.* And I realized that I, as participant, could both create and record the phenomena of this movement, even if the history texts of higher education forever deny our events, growth, and change.

Because the mainstream media and academic institutions do not place women's culture or women's festivals on the continuum of Important Stuff That Happened in the Late Twentieth Century, the recordings I have now made at over

twenty-five festivals are all the more precious to me. Slowly I have learned to define my festival work as real work, despite the deprecation of professional colleagues who view my summer adventures and published lesbian writings as radical recreation.

This past summer, I had an experience which proved to me just how crucially important it is to continue filling up jam jars with festival preserves.

AUGUST 1991

Michigan again—ten years have passed since my first festival (when I was twenty and afraid to bring my camera). I have now photographed a decade of festivals, and I have become a worker, a performer, a back-up singer, a coordinator of Jewish women's programs, and a very out professor of women's herstory.

On the last night of the festival, I

"Oh! Did you see that shooting star?" This is the real world, my world. I have worked at five festivals in one summer, and I am so brimful of stories and images that my notebook bulges.

At Michigan on this last evening I have finally filled up a thick leather-bound blank book that I've been taking to festivals since 1986. Women from a dozen festivals have written in this book, recording their favorite moments, their visions, their ideas for a future of women's communities. What a pleasure to see the book stuffed with voices from around the world!

I lean against a tree and flip through the years of inky statements:

- **From Arizona:** "After a first festival, my heart is smiling, my shirt feels weird, and my mind is blown."

- **From Wisconsin:** "Because I am good and belong like every other woman

- **From Ohio:** "I spent Thursday playing the congas all over in the grass, like fruits all over in the tall grass...My best memories were difference and respect. And one can't forget children."

- **From a child:** "My memory was day care and skipping rope and sitting by a campfire."

- **From Texas:** "Damn good cold showers; baby, see you there!"

- **From Australia:** "A women's city, wet feet, wet kisses..."

- **From Mississippi:** "I, too, am here because I love women. I am here because I need grounding. I am here because I need energy to fight burn-out. We are great and powerful!"

I left Michigan the next morning, and arrived back in Boston still cradled in that feeling of safety, of women's voices. I walked the two blocks from the subway staggering under the load of my festival baggage. Someone noticed me. Someone followed me. Someone grabbed my canvas knapsack and ran off into the night.

In that one minute I lost everything of value to me. The stolen knapsack contained not only my wallet, my glasses, and my address book, but also: my journal, with one hundred pages of descriptions from that entire summer of festivals; another notebook of women's comments and suggestions from the Jewish women's table at Michigan; a manuscript I had been writing for the past year. Sketches, stories, papers, and notes from the workshops I had given at various festivals; and, of course, the beloved old camera, which contained this year's film from Michigan.

But the ultimate loss was that leather-bound book of women's writings, which I had carried to twelve different festivals, had just completed, and had been planning to donate to some archive.

Except for the cash and the Minolta, none of the items taken would be of any value to the thief. I envisioned notebooks and papers tossed casually into a dumpster or, worse, read aloud by a pathological homophobe who could then "out" everyone in my address book. I realized that some *guy* was strolling around with enormous quantities of important information about festival culture as well as all my friends' phone numbers; a dedicated sicko could readily put two and two together and make all our lives hell—or simply return to my house and rape me.

Stupefied, I raced up and down the street screaming "Bring it back!"—and



Toni Armstrong Jr.

Bonnie Morris: "Because the mainstream media and academic institutions do not place women's culture on the continuum of Important Stuff That Happened in the Late Twentieth Century, the recordings I have made at over twenty-five festivals are all the more precious to me." (Pictured at Michigan 1991, doing the Hebrew welcome as part of the Opening Ceremony.)

walk around the land naked and fearless, knowing that I and my possessions are perfectly safe. I make a final tape recording of woods-noises: cicadas blaring, drums in the distance, moaning from a nearby tent, and a woman's exclamation:

at the center of things, I will no longer deny my living, my loving, my relationships or my abilities."

- **From Ottawa:** "...et j'y suis la fierte et le bonheur de croite avec mes soeurs lesbiennes me marque a jamais."

then settled into the grim reality of calling the police.

How to describe what had been stolen? How to calculate the value? What is the value of one woman's story; of ten? How many women's voices and stories and ideas were now rotting in a trash dumpster? I ran through the night with a flashlight, examining the bushes and garbage cans; but my desperate rummaging yielded nothing. I told myself that I could replace the items in my wallet, the camera, the glasses, and perhaps try to rewrite my impressions from this summer. But the collection of other women's writings—that was irreplaceable.

How I longed to be back at Michigan! No other incident could better illustrate the contrast between the safety one enjoys at a festival versus the threats to our lives in "real" society. No other incident could better illustrate the devaluing of women's work, of women's culture, by a violent and predatory world.

I tried calling my friends in Boston to articulate my sense of loss, of frustration—but few of them understood what it meant for all of us to lose the work I had collected over time. Numb, I sat on my bed looking at my hands, wondering where I could find the energy to buy a new notebook and start another journal.

Days passed.

Just when I had reconciled myself to never seeing my festival collections again, the telephone rang. It was a young wom-

an who had seen signs I'd posted about the stolen knapsack. She informed me that the knapsack was, at that very minute, on her porch! I rushed to her house—pausing only to buy her wine and flowers. And then...yes! There was my beloved, battered old bag, full of writings. The thief had hastily removed my wallet, camera, and money before throwing the bag under this neighbor's porch.

I clutched with disbelieving delight the warm reality of my journal, my address book, my Michigan papers, my manuscript, and oh, the leather-bound book of women's writings from twelve festivals.

But wait! Curiously, the thief had also elected to take my set of mint condition back issues of the herstoric women's music magazine *Paid My Dues* (published in the '70s). Hmmm. The plot sickened. Was this thief some frustrated women's music buff? (Doubtful, as he had kindly elected to leave behind my Therese Edell album—now impossibly warped from resting under a wet porch for a week.)

So, I remained out of cash, I.D. cards, camera, film, magazines. After such a theft, one always feel violated, tender, enraged. But what a miracle that the festival herstory came back to me. What are the odds of this happening? A man took it away; a woman brought it back. Blissful with gratitude, I slept that night with all the recovered notebooks under the covers with me.

The moral of the story is that all of us must serve as our own biographers. Disregard for women's experience is so profound in historical literature that only *we* acknowledge, value, and record the lives we lead; and, sadly, the physical threats to our lives which accompany psychological woman-hating can imperil the alternative herstory we collect and save—as I discovered.

Not every woman feels safe at a festival. Our differences create mistrust and misunderstanding. But the matriarchy we attempt to build on festival land, in woman-only space, sure beats the fear I now feel when I walk home from the subway. Recording even our conflicts, as well as our favorite memories, ensures an honest herstory of what festival work was like in these times.

I hope that in years to come, my tapes or journal entries or collected stories from different festivals will serve as a living testimony and resource, proving that for many women of my time, what we said to one another around the campfire mattered like hell. •

ABOUT THE WRITER: In addition to her women's studies teaching and book writing, Dr. Bonnie Morris is editor of the 'Goddess Babes Gazette,' a newsletter that chronicles the adventures and misadventures of a small but devoted group of women from all parts of the U.S. who only see each other during festival season.



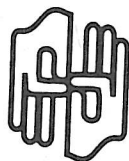
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KATE CLINTON *from page 27*

are quite honored, and the monthly people are not pleased.")

In addition to her extensive reading, she also researches what's happening in the cities where she'll be playing. "I find that I am watching less television, which really pleases me," she says.

"I take notes, write everything into my computer, and run things by friends. Two weeks before I go on tour, I start getting material into shape, typing away, consolidating and editing. In the transition from written to spoken word, sixty pages compresses to forty, while other bits expand just by adding audience laughter. What also happens is that an audience will respond to things that I hadn't considered, and those things will expand. For example, I was doing a section on stun guns; my idea was to brand ex-lovers to be able to tell where they were. The audience's take was to knock out the ex-lover to be able to talk with the ex-lover's current lover. That concept has grown—in performance, not on the computer."

Kate Clinton has always been issue-oriented, and today's routines stay with that style. "A friend asked me what I was writing about recently, and my answer was creeping fascism, the abortion decision—funny things. Truthfully, it is the entire patriarchy. I used to say that women are oppressed and that oppression must end, but now I say that women are powerful and that power must be unleashed. Part of unleashing our power is showing what has kept it down; having been raised Catholic, I always have lots of material about what has kept us down."

She has also been talking more about sports. "Personally, I have always been interested in sports, but I have been realizing lately that women athletes need to be celebrated, and that there is such an extraordinary amount of homophobia in women's sports—you know, like the coach at Penn State who would not allow lesbians on her team. It's like the sports inquisition for women."

After ten years of doing comedy, Kate is finally beginning to reap rewards ("where I previously couldn't earn a living, now I can even buy things"), and she's been approached about doing a book of ten years of her material. "When I first started with comedy, I thought of myself as a writer. I am beginning to think of myself as a performer, which frees me from being only a private person. What I pay attention to can be bigger than I am individually."

"I tour for about seven months every year, and I have one and a half months to solidly write. Trudy and I travel together; we are good at being home for each other. Additionally, we have friends everywhere—in ten years, we have been building up our network," she says. "I want to continue performing and working on other projects as well. I like what I do; I think that it is a blessing. It's such a wonderful life." •

SUPPORT WOMEN IN COMEDY

MICHIGAN FESTIVAL *from page 34*

form. Treelings included Gwen Jones, Kathy Katz, Kayla Kirsch, and Amy Christian.

• **SAWAGI TAIKO.** This taiko drumming corps is composed of women from the larger Vancouver-based Katari Taiko Asian-Canadian group. The six women of Sawagi Taiko create new material for women-only audiences. "Sawagi" means excitement and commotion. This year's performance included music and poetry as well as the thrilling drumming routines which incorporate dance and martial arts.

• **SKIN TIGHT.** Linda Tillery's Motown revue band was back by popular demand. Most of the musicians are from the Bay Area and have their own bands, including Julie Homi, Maria Martinez, Jean Fineberg & Ellen Seeling, Nydia Mata, Nancy Wenstrom, Joy Julks, Angela Wellman, and others. Highlights included Vicki Randle in her crowd-pleasing skin-tight leopard spandex-type dress, and the band—plus festival producer Boo Price—taking turns walking the ramp and "voguing" for the screaming thousands.

• **THE MICHIGAN FESTIVAL BAND** (founded and directed by Sharon Still), **FESTIVAL CHORUS** (founded and directed by Catherine Roma), **GOSPEL CHOIR** (directed this year by Linda Tillery), and **CHILDREN'S CHOIR** (led this year by Judy Fjell with Crystal Reeves). These are great opportunities for festival attendees with all sorts of talents and interests to participate in making music with other women. How else would the average woman have a chance to "play Michigan," after all?

• **URBAN BUSH WOMEN.** Established in 1984 by Jawole Willa Jo Zollar, Urban Bush Women use movement, music, and a cappella vocalizations based on field hollers and chants. They explore and celebrate the creative vision enriched by the folklore and religious traditions of Africans throughout the diaspora.

• **ROUND ROBINS.** This women's music festival tradition—promoted vigorously in the '70s and early '80s by Ginni Clemmens and others—has become a most-popular Day Stage attraction at Michigan. Round Robins feature unusual combinations of performers taking turns singing songs, sometimes together. Thursday, for example, included: Alix Dobkin, Debbie Fier, Sue Fink, Melanie DeMore, Lucie Blue Tremblay, and Vicki Randle, emceed by Karen Williams, and interpreted by Jennifer Jacobs and Marilyn Van Veersen.

• **TERESA TRULL & BARBARA HIGBIE.** One of the most beloved performing duos in the history of women's music, Teresa and Barbara broke many hearts when they broke up their personal and musical relationship in the mid '80s. This year, they surprised the Michigan audience with a reunion, filling the Friday night spot left open when Talila cancelled.

• **ALTAZOR.** The ground-breaking Latin American music ensemble is composed of Chilean Lichi Fuentes, Venezuelan Jacqueline Rago, Cuban Dulce Argüelles, and Asian-American Vanessa Whang. They combine intricate vocal harmonies and the socially conscious lyrics of New Song and traditional folklore.

• **RAINDREAMING.** Gwen Jones and Kayla Kirsch combined talents to play original music written for traditional instruments from around the world, such as the Japanese koto. They have been featured in the PBS documentary *Can You See Me Flying?* and Judy Grahn's play *Queen of Swords*.

• **REEL WORLD STRING BAND.** Now in its fourteenth year of playing traditional and contemporary "feminist hillbilly" music, the band performs these days as a trio. Guitarist Bev Futrell, fiddle player/wisecracker Karen Jones, and banjo-picker Sue Masek were joined by their old pal and former bandmate Sharon Ruble on bass and clog dancing. Hundreds of women kicked up the dust clouds that always happen at a Reel World Michigan show, with their impromptu square dancing, two-stepping, country line dancing, and general kicking up of the heels.

• **THE SUNDAY COMEDY DAY STAGE** featured the social satire and commentary of Karen Williams, Judith Sloan, and Marga Gomez, women from three vastly different backgrounds; emceed by Alix Dobkin.

• **PLUS MANY FAMOUS STARS,** including: the four-woman political pop band Two Nice Girls; the French Canadian songbird with the famous whistle, Lucie Blue Tremblay; New Waver Mary Gemini with Melanie Monsur and Remy Arnone; the Debbie Fier Trio, with Carolyn Brandy and Jean Fineberg; Rhiannon, leaving barely a dry eye on the land as she performed selections from her show *Toward Home*; the Latin jazz fusion sound of DEUCE, with bassist Joy Julks, drummer Maria Martinez, keyboardist Susan Muscarella, percussionist Nydia "Liberty" Mata, led by horn virtuosas Jean Fineberg and Ellen Seeling; hot newcomer Laura Love, with Linda Severt; the mellower-but-still-outrageous Sue Fink; the flying fingers of jazz guitarist Mimi Fox; piano genius Mary Watkins; and Ferron, doing old hits as well as the new material from *Phantom Center*.

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This pocket-sized look at Michigan only skims the surface of the 1991 festival; there were dozens more musicians and activities not listed here (due to space limitations). It's clear, though, that the world of women's music and culture extends far and wide. The 1991 gathering may not have had the fireworks (real ones as well as political ones) that were present at last year's fifteenth anniversary festival, but it was a superb example of what woman-identified values and visions can create. See you in August? •

DON'T ADJUST THAT DIAL...IT'S...

AMAZON RADIO

By Pamela Smith

After working on the North East Women's Musical Retreat as a planner for five years, I suffered burnout from political debates and site searches. Starting out as a NEWMR go-fer in 1980, over the years I gradually became more involved, joining the planning committee in 1985. By 1990, I decided it was time to move on.

I wanted to remain in touch with the women's music industry, but didn't want to work with a group. WPKN, one of my favorite stations, lost university funding and was appealing to listeners for financial support and volunteer workers. WPKN—89.5 on the FM dial—is a 10,000 watt station reaching most of Connecticut, Long Island, parts of south central Massachusetts, and upstate New York. The University of Bridgeport holds the license for WPKN, although it is a 100 percent listener-supported community station.

I decided to volunteer during my favorite programmer's shift, and started doing my telephone helper shifts in January, 1990. WPKN's station manager, Harry Minot, had the phone-answering volunteers sit in the production studio at the program board. From this spot, I could look through a large plate glass window and see the on-air programmer sitting in a similar position.

One day I asked Harry what all the buttons in front of me did, and we talked about my interest in doing a women's music program. He told me to come in the following Saturday and he'd teach me to become a programmer.

After about an hour with Harry in the little-used AM studio, he told me that practice would be the best teacher. Once a week I'd go into the studio and pretend to do a show, taping the practice session so I could listen to it afterward and improve my technique. After a couple of months, Harry encouraged me to submit a tape to our program director, Chris Teskey, for his critique of my efforts.

The idea of having a professional listen to my tape terrified me, but I soon realized there was no point if I didn't let



Elaine K. Osowski

WPKN's "Amazon Radio!" programmer Pam Smith: a four-hour weekly dose of women's music.

others hear me. Chris was kind in his comments, giving me helpful feedback. He noted, for example, that I continually used the same phrases, and suggested that I make a tape of my voice to help me identify repetitive phrases. At home, I edited my practice tape to remove the music, and I could hear what he was talking about. Chris believes that programmers should do this every so often to check themselves out. I learned that if you submit audition tapes to any station, you should do at least part of it minus your music.

The technical aspect of cueing up records of CDs—and even cassettes to some extent—is a manual dexterity skill that comes from doing. "Cueing up" is the process of preparing your CD, LP, or cassette so that you will hear the beginning of your cut instantly when you turn it on, thus avoiding dead air. Large commercial

radio stations provide engineers who do this, but smaller stations usually require programmers do their own engineering.

After listening to three or four more demo tapes, Chris finally cleared me for air. I was surprised to learn that getting a license was so easy. Unlike the old days when you studied and took the FCC test, today you merely send in \$35 with your application, and the application stub serves as your temporary license. You are then able to "do radio" in the United States. The FCC stopped requiring tests for licenses in the early '80s, probably as part of the deregulation policies in effect at that time, and because transmitter technology has become more reliable over time. Today anyone can get a Restricted Radio Telephone Permit, which allows you to become a broadcaster. [Contact the FCC, P.O. Box 1050, Gettysburg, PA 17325, (202) 632-7000 and ask for the FCC 753 form. You'll receive a three-part form, which is the actual license. Complete the form, return it with \$35, and within six weeks you'll receive the form back with the FCC stamp added. You are now licensed. This is the procedure for the entire country. Amazing, isn't it?]

It is your responsibility to know the laws, treaties, rules, and regulations which currently govern any station you operate. Finding a station willing to teach you this may be the hardest part of the process. The FCC assumes that you have been trained to read the meters, determine correct power, change power levels, and perform an Emergency Broadcast Service test. Since the FCC inspector may arrive at the station at any time to test the "operator on duty," you must learn these technical operations before going on air.

ON THE AIR AT LAST

Ruth Eddy gave me my first on air opportunity in September of 1990. She let me do my first program during her slot, and stayed with me in case I needed help. Word went out to other programmers that I was available for fill-ins.

While I waited for opportunities to do radio, I did my personal inventory of the station's 36,000-plus record library. WPKN's library consists of demos sent to the station, and since we'd had a women's show in the '70s, we had a lot of the old stuff but only an occasional new release. Realizing that I couldn't afford to buy even the entire women's music/feminist section of Ladyslipper's catalog, I wrote to about eighty artists and/or record producers soliciting demo copies of their releases—or a discount on the price—and I began haunting my local used record store. The response rate was about fifty-six percent, and only two artists asked for money. Alix Dobkin, for example, sent her entire catalog. (And since WPKN's library shelves everything numerically in the order received, Alix may be found next to Guns 'n' Roses.)

I would like to have demos of artists' entire catalogues. WPKN does not purchase music, and while I'm constantly out buying, I do have limited resources. I make a point of listening to everything I get, until I feel familiar enough with the material to be able to recall selections later on.

All CDs and LPs are donated to the station's library. We don't currently have a place in our station's library for cassettes, so I add them to my library, but this is something our new librarian hopes to correct in the near future. Using the library works out well for all concerned, since I don't have to carry the material up the two flights of stairs and the music is available to other programmers.

Station IDs done by artists are always very much appreciated ("Hi, this is Suede, and you are listening to WPKN..."). A legal station ID, required by law at the top of each hour, must include the uninterrupted phrase "WPKN, Bridgeport." The best and most frequently played IDs give a sense of the artist's personality, humor, and/or music. Performers who are interested in doing station IDs for my show can contact me directly to discuss technical specifications.

Meanwhile, back to my saga of getting on the air. I continued doing fill-ins until a slot opened up. "Amazon Radio!" went on the air once a month, and I was still averaging about two fill-ins a month. I began waiting for a weekly slot to become available—which finally happened last September. "Amazon Radio!" is now scheduled every Thursday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

I spend hours preparing for my

four-hour show. I spend about an hour listening to cassettes and cueing them up. The rest of the preparation time is spent listening to music. I want to go into the studio with a list of up to twenty-five songs (about two thirds of the show). I usually use this list as a guideline. On the air, I generally play songs as the mood strikes me, and I also take listener requests.

The two-sided stereo soundsheets in each issue of *HOT WIRE* have been helpful to me. Each recording features four to six different songs; soundsheets have been an excellent way for me to meet new artists, and in turn to introduce my audience to those artists.

At WPKN the on-air programmer reigns, and we can play anything we want. Our only limitations are the FCC regulations, which generally concern foul language (the eight deadly words: fuck, piss, shit, cunt, cocksucker, motherfucker, tits, and prick—when used as a noun—plus some variations of same). Music that contains these words must be edited before going on air. I make a clean tape of the song, bleeping out the word. Or, more daringly, play the song and turn down the volume at the appropriate moment. I prefer the first method, because the on-air editing is very anxiety ridden for me.

I have found talking to be the hardest aspect of being a programmer. You are in a soundproof room talking into a microphone and getting almost no feedback on anything you say. After I run down the play list of what the audience just heard, I wonder where to go from there. Sometimes it's right into another set, sometimes it's comments on the artist or the music, and sometimes it's just my thoughts. After a year as a programmer, turning on my mic is still one of the hardest aspects of being a programmer, though it's become easier—and I've become more confident—with time.

Once I got my "Amazon Radio!" show established, I included interviews as well as music. I've done interviews with representatives from the Connecticut Lesbian and Gay Coalition For Civil Rights, Dignity, and the National Lesbian Conference, among others. I usually talk to guests beforehand to give them a general idea about what we'll talk about on air.

I define "Amazon Radio!" as a women's music program from a lesbian-feminist perspective. Although I do include some music by gay men, I choose not to call her a "lesbian and gay" show. There's really not enough men's music at this

time, and although I had originally considered getting a gay male partner, it didn't end up that way—so when it came time to write the bio for the program guide, I didn't feel comfortable with the "lesbian and gay" description. But since "Amazon Radio!" is the only radio program in our area playing lesbian/gay-identified music, I decided that I would include men's music in my programming as well. This has been a challenge, since their music network is limited in comparison to the women's music industry.

I'm amazed at how relatively easy it is to do radio. Independent and college non-commercial radio stations offer the easiest access to newcomers. College stations are always looking for people who will just show up on a regular basis. Students may be enthusiastic at the beginning of the school year but have a change of focus by second semester—and school-year breaks can be desperate times. Often by just taking one course you can qualify for student access to the station and training.

Independent stations interested in offering the community unique types of programs can be another venue. Often the programmers on these stations are unpaid, and the stations are frequently looking for more volunteers. I suggest contacting station managers to find out their procedures for getting programming space and what training they might offer. Unfortunately, independent stations are a vanishing breed; what's traditionally called "public radio" is not necessarily accessible to community programmers, as the fine line between public and commercial becomes smaller and smaller.

You might look for somewhere you can be an apprentice to the programmer. Don't be put off if you can't see getting a program at that station in the immediate future. What you want right now is training, since after you have the skills you can do the work anywhere. Perhaps the station is not interested in a "women's music" program—but they may be interested in a folk or pop format which can include women's music.

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ABOUT THE WRITER: Pamela Smith is a big black lesbian feminist who lives with her loves—Susan Marie and Chandra, their Sheltie. She has been involved with women's music since 1970, when some of her best friends were members of the New Haven Women's Liberation Rock Band.

Tracy Riordan and Gwen Rector are WIMMIN ON THE EDGE

By Nano Riley



Samantha Dunscomb

Women's music Florida-style: Gwen Rector (foreground) and Tracy Riordan are Wimmin on the Edge.

*Where will we go to see our sisters in flight?
Where will we go to learn that women
have might?
Where do we go to find our Herstory books?
Well, that's just why I'm here.*

"Herstory" by Tracy Riordan

The catchy chorus of the title song "Herstory" sets the tone of the first album by the group Wimmin on the Edge. The verses tell the stories of Wilma Rudolph, Mary McCloud Bethune, and other women who have made a difference. And that's what this duo from Florida is all about; they want to make a difference.

Tracy Riordan and Gwen Rector got together and formed Wimmin on the Edge two years ago when they discovered their mutual love of folk music and the shared desire to take their message of women's empowerment to other women.

Though they weren't strangers to music, performing professionally was something each had wanted to do for a

long time. Their get-together was seemingly cosmically engineered. When Gwen injured her collar bone, she went to the clinic where Tracy was a physical therapist. During the visits she and Tracy began discussing music and soon found out that they both loved folk.

The two became friends, and when Gwen no longer needed to come to the clinic, they met outside the office to play music. They've been partners ever since.

Though they have yet to do much traveling, Tracy and Gwen have impressed listeners in the Tampa Bay area since Wimmin on the Edge's first concert in May 1990 at a women's coffeehouse sponsored by the YWCA in Clearwater, Florida.

But where do these two women come from, and how did they decide on folk music as the genre special to them?

"Gwen (39) was surprised that I liked folk music, because most people my age (29) don't give a shit about it," says Tracy, who grew up in the '70s rock era,

and who discovered her innate appreciation of the folk genre just a few years ago while listening to a twenty-year-old Judy Collins song.

"I used to love rock & roll," says Tracy. "Kansas was my favorite group, and I also like Neil Young and Jefferson Starship. But I've started to like the prettier stuff these days, like Ferron, Alix Dobkin, and Meg Christian."

Gwen Rector was born in South Bend, Indiana on July 20, 1952. It seems her life began with a love of music and a need for that expression. Gwen began singing and playing the guitar in her early teens, and before she knew it, was writing her own songs. Back then her idols were the women folk singers of the '60s: Joan Baez, Judy Collins, and Joni Mitchell.

"I always knew I wanted to perform," she says. "I have a lot of imagination and have always related to music." Her first change came when she was asked to sing at an Indiana Moose Lodge banquet. She was only fifteen, and it was an experience she'll never forget.

"I had severe stage fright, and forgot all the chords and all the words," Gwen recalls. "It was terrifying, but from that basic experience I learned to recover on stage. I got so scared my voice was shaking. I tried to be like Janis Ian—because she was also fifteen—but I ended up sounding like Buffy St. Marie." With that shaky beginning behind her, Gwen continued writing and performing in local Indiana folk festivals throughout the '60s.

In the past ten years, Gwen's musical involvement waned, but she continued writing songs and always wanted to get back to performing. The growth of the women's music industry was also an incentive to get her back on the stage. "I always knew I'd return to music," she says. "I felt a calling and saw the impact music has on the community."

Her style is not strictly folk these days, and though she says she is still drawn to Holly Near and other tradition-

al singers, she is also influenced by Bonnie Raitt, Rickie Lee Jones, and blues singers such as Alberta Hunter.

Her instrumental style has changed since those early days of the '60s folk festivals, too. Now she plays a Gibson Les Paul electric guitar (circa '67), but individualizes her music by using traditional finger picks.

Meanwhile, as Gwen was writing and playing, Tracy was growing up in Virginia Beach. Born October 18, 1961, Tracy has been "on stage" since childhood.

"I was always a ham," she recalls. "I used to say I wanted to be a 'doo wah' singer, singing those funny made-up sounds in the background, and I was always pretending to have a microphone in my hand." Ever the class clown, Tracy says she was known for her Elvis impersonations in the 6th grade.

She continued doing theater, singing in the school chorus, and at summer music camps. While she was in college, she learned guitar from her roommate, and she says she developed her ear for intricate harmonies while singing alto in a church choir a few years ago. From there it was just a step to accompanying herself and a friend as they performed the only song she'd written for the church congregation. That first performance gave Tracy a taste for the stage, and she continued to entertain at church events and healing workshops. But it wasn't until 1988 that she performed professionally.

The first performance of Wimmin on the Edge at the YWCA Women's Coffeehouse, which introduced them to the Tampa Bay area, was set up by Dorothy Abbott, who coordinates "The Women's Show" (WMNF-FM) and maintains the Women's Energy Bank (WEB) library in her home. Dorothy and Tracy met when Tracy had visited the library about a year before. "Dorothy had never heard us play, but she remembered that I'd said I wanted to perform," says Tracy.

The coffeehouse turned out to be an excellent venue for the duo. "The League of Women Voters was there, and there were many other women with booths—like Brigit Books—and there were handmade quilts hanging from the ceiling," Tracy recalls.

Both Gwen and Tracy agree that the most exciting gig they've had so far was at the Loft Theater, an alternative theater in Tampa's artsy Ybor City, where they were the solo act at a weekly series fea-

turing local artists. "We like to play for audiences who listen," says Gwen. "We're not really into the bar scene. It seems kind of sacrificial to go out night after night to play for people who don't listen."

Tracy and Gwen also feel it's important to get other women involved in playing with them. "When we were in California last summer, for example, we played at Mama Bear's [women's bookstore in Oakland], and we had Karen Ande accompany us on the viola de gamba, a medieval stringed instrument resembling the cello," says Tracy.

"Our performance sound is constantly changing according to who is playing with us," adds Gwen. "It's very meaningful to us to have women from the community join in with their instruments." Some of the women who play with Wimmin on the Edge in Florida include Patty Sanphy (electric lead and slide guitars), Judy Katz (cello), and Sheila Kelly (congas and recorder).

In their performances, they play songs by many artists they consider to be "the great women singers," from Carole King and Kate Wolf to '70s rocker Stevie Nicks, as well as tunes by Alix Dobkin, Karen Beth, Holly Near, and others. All the tunes on their album *Herstory*, however, are originals.

The poignant "It's My Body" came from Gwen's personal experiences, and it gets lots of attention from both women and men. "It's about incest, and it's a hard song to sing," she says, "but it's an issue I want to talk about. When I ended an eleven-year relationship a few years ago, I got into recovery. After being sober for awhile, I began having memories—remembering things from my childhood that I had long ago blocked out," Gwen recalls.

Most of the album cuts by Gwen were written in the last year-and-a-half. Though some of them may be heavy, they are intended to evoke haunting images of real situations many women have endured. And they always get thoughtful comments.

"We played the Southern Women's Music and Comedy Festival in Georgia," she says, "and even though we had the last spot of the show—and a small crowd—we still had at least four or five women come up to us with comments."

But then the easy rockin' "Big Strong Woman" shows the bluesy side of Gwen, with its slide guitar and Tracy's high, wailing harmony.

Tracy's "Rainbow," on the other hand, is a wonderful lyrical tune singing the glories of nature and the rainbow of the races—a really joyful tune. It's about coming out as a lesbian, and she says it celebrates the diversity of the world. [Hear "Rainbow" on the soundsheet in this issue.]

Regarding the name Wimmin on the Edge, Tracy says, "We decided we needed a group name, because we were performing under our own names. I think the name has a positive image. I had had an experience that made me realize how precious my creative energies are. It's a fine line between living a balanced life and doing too much. It seems it takes such a persistent effort to live a balanced life. Gwen and I haven't discovered what we're capable of creating; I've always sung, but now I'm on the edge of tuning in to the talents I've always taken for granted."

What are their future plans for Wimmin on the Edge? Almost in unison they respond that they want to become more involved with recording. And they want to perform more, though they both work forty hours a week, which interferes with their music.

"I'll continue to write," says Gwen. "For me, writing is a means of self-expression. The songs are becoming a little lighter now. On the average I write about a dozen songs a year, but they're not all keepers. I go through stages, but I don't push myself."

That's not surprising for a moon-ruled Cancerian. And Tracy's even-tempered, light-hearted humor? An airy, Venus-ruled Libra. No wonder the two get along so famously.

"I also want to write more," says Tracy, who has started studying piano again. "I always have pieces of melodies popping into my head."

So for now, Tracy and Gwen seem content to continue working on their music, and sharing their house in Oldsmar with their three cats, Jessie, Ethel, and Lucy. But not far in the future they hope to make performing their full-time career.

"I'd like to quit the cabinet-making business," says Gwen.

"And we'd like to sell the rest of these 500 tapes we made this spring, and pay off the credit card," adds Tracy. •

ABOUT THE WRITER: *Nano Riley is a writer in St. Petersburg, Florida who often reviews feminist books and music.*

HEALTH INSURANCE UPDATE

By Laura Post

If you are among the souls in a job with reasonable, defined hours, a supportive and enlightened boss, and the possibilities of creative output, then you might be judged very fortunate, indeed! If your situation only offers some of the above, but includes health insurance and other benefits, then you are still lucky.

Those of us fortunate enough to have health insurance still read in the papers, hear on the news, or personally know about the hordes who do not have access to medical insurance, and who are forced to utilize overcrowded and depersonalized public facilities when the need arises. Those of us who work in the feminist cultural network probably each know women who fall into this category.

Feminists are generally aware that lack of health insurance in our society disproportionately affects women, children, lesbians, and people of color. The impact on many of the women by whose efforts the feminist cultural network exists and thrives is significant.

Anyone who is self-employed—i.e., whose income derives from direct reimbursements rather than from paychecks—does not receive the benefits accorded to salaried employees working at least half-time. Though some of us have other incomes/careers and offer our services and expertise essentially *pro bono* to the industry, many performers, bookers/managers, producers, technicians, interpreters, teachers, and distributors are full-time, self-employed professionals. For them, state and federal taxes will not be automatically deducted and will have to be paid out-of-pocket—often at a higher rate due to imposed self-employment taxes (which vary year by year and which may exceed fifteen percent of net self-employment income). Social Security monies are also not deducted, jeopardizing retirement safety.

Most significantly, perhaps, health insurance can only be obtained on an individual basis, at rates far exceeding

group rates. Comprehensive health insurance, including maternal, homeopathic, naturopathic, and chiropractic practitioner charges—in addition to traditional Western medical care—may cost upward of \$200/month; comprehensive medical care alone may cost as much as fifty percent less. It is frequently the fate of the self-employed to face the unpleasant choice of having no health insurance or accepting part-time employment solely for the purpose of access to health insurance. (And remember that spousal extensions of health insurance coverage do not customarily apply to lesbian partners.)

GROUP HEALTH INSURANCE THROUGH AWMAC?

As a service to existing members, and as an incentive to entice new members, a proposal was made to offer AWMAC-underwritten group health insurance. Since early 1990, the AWMAC newsletter and other mailings have polled membership interest in participating in such group health insurance, with a twelve percent response rate (twenty-four people). Many AWMAC members have reported confusion over the repeated solicitations and have posed questions about the outcome of the inquiry.

AWMAC Treasurer Deb Cirksena has researched the options provided by both traditional and non-traditional health insurance providers, and her conclusion is that AWMAC does not qualify for group rates at this time. There exist two principal mechanisms by which an organization can qualify as a provider of health insurance at group rates, and so far AWMAC qualifies for neither.

The first—the "small group" basis—mandates an employer-employee relationship between the provider and the

members. Since AWMAC and its members are not in such a relationship, AWMAC cannot obtain group rates by that avenue. The other mechanism by which an organization can qualify as a provider of health insurance at group rates entails being an "association." An association is defined actuarially as having at least 400 members. As of September 1991, the AWMAC membership numbered approximately 200; clearly, AWMAC does not currently meet criteria as an association. But since it is conceivable that the membership could expand, it might still be feasible, at some point in the future, for AWMAC to be able to offer health insurance at group rates to members.

Following the April 1991 AWMAC conference in Durham [see the September 1991 issue of *HOT WIRE*], several clear AWMAC goals remain: to increase coalitioning between experienced and newer industry workers within and across areas of interest; to increase attendance at future AWMAC conferences by holding them in conjunction with established music gatherings; and to carry out more anti-oppression work and to do more proactive outreach to enhance diversity. Toward these ends, a committee has been formed to plan the 1992 AWMAC conference, which may be held at the National Women's Music Festival in Bloomington.

Additionally, the AWMAC dues scale has been restructured: the standard membership fee is now \$25, with \$10 low-income, \$50 supporting, and \$75 benefactor categories also available. It is hoped that the financial access will fire enroll-

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ABOUT THE WRITER: 'HOT WIRE' staff writer Laura Post is on the AWMAC Board of Directors, representing the Feminist Press/Broadcasters Caucus. Thanks to Deb Cirksena and the Summer 1991 AWMAC newsletter for information used in preparation of this piece.

BARB BARTON: ALL ROADS LEAD BACK TO MUSIC

By Liz Carnegie

Barb Barton has always been fascinated by a challenge. Whatever form they come in, tasks at hand are usually actively and vigorously sought out.

One such job was literally in Barb's hands at the early age of seven, when she sat in front of the TV at home, plucking away at her guitar. She could not wait to watch the home music school show, a public television broadcast that taught her how to play finger picking patterns. Already bored with just strumming chords, Barb credits this program with being the most notable event in her formative guitar playing years. Up until then, Barb had been playing in school recitals as a rhythm guitarist. The TV show proved to be a revelation, showing her that a lot more could be done with the instrument.

"It opened up a whole new style of playing for me. I learned a lot of Beatles and Monkees stuff," said Barb, who quickly soaked up the techniques. While other kids were watching *Dark Shadows*, Barb was picking strings in anticipation of the next lesson.

Then came a sold-out appearance in the Barton family basement. Neighborhood moppets eagerly paid twenty-five cents each to hear Barb perform her new-found style. They screamed and clapped and told her that she sounded just like John Lennon.

"I really did feed off of people enjoying my playing. It was like a hypnotizing effect," she recalls. "I had them captivated when I played."

As Barb became a young adult, she added electric and twelve-string guitars to her expanding minstrel sphere. In high school, she excelled at sports as well as music. By her senior year, Barb had accumulated twelve varsity letters from nearly every sport offered.

In the midst of all of her outward success was an increasing discontent. Growing up lesbian in a small southwest Michigan farming town made Barb feel isolated and alone. Rock bands and bar

gigs began to take their toll, eroding her enthusiasm for music.

"I was playing other people's music, and I never liked it because I felt I was just imitating someone else," she says now. "I started writing then. My songs were always reflecting my life, what it was like at the time—either very lonely material or love songs. I tried writing some real rock & roll stuff, then I got more into ballads. But I was still writing what I thought other people wanted to hear. I wanted to fit in, instead of writing from the heart."

Barb's frustrations grew in her personal and musical life. She put her guitar away, hurt and discouraged.

"I felt like I had failed with my music. I tried to make it do what I was doing, and I didn't. I ended up running into bad manager types. I gave up. I couldn't touch my guitar, I felt I had failed so bad. That was my dream, to make it in the music industry. When it didn't happen, I felt sickened by it, so I just let it go," she says.

Deciding she needed a complete change, Barb moved to Lansing—Michigan's state capital—to attend school in 1982. She studied, and got a degree in wildlife biology. She is currently employed as a botanist for the Michigan Department of Transportation, working with endangered species of plants.

As they say, many roads lead to Rome, and it was during her school years that Barb began to fit the pieces of her life together. "It was great, because I felt I could be myself in Lansing—much more than I did in a teeny, small town. I went through a lot of personal changes, and I started not feeling lonely anymore, because I found myself."

Barb shed her small-town shell and reinvented herself. She found other women active in the lesbian community whose ideals and politics suited her own. Some of these women were involved and active in alternative types of music.

Even though she had barely

touched a guitar for four years, music never stopped being the core of Barb's dream. She started to attend folk concerts and listen to ground breaking guitarists.

But by then she was returning home to an empty guitar stand—having had to sell off her instruments for essentials like tuition and electricity. "When I sold my twelve-string, I cried. I'd had that thing for ten years and it was part of me," she remembers. "The minute I could get some money—whether it was beg, borrow, or steal to get the guitar of my dreams—I decided that was something I owed myself."

She scraped together some money and bought a \$50 used "Beach-guitar." What the guitar lacked in sound, she feels it more than made up for in creative inspiration.

Barb eventually purchased a Taylor K-20 model six-string guitar, and began the process of once again asserting her artistic essence. During that period, she played anywhere, anytime for anyone who wanted to listen. Before long, Barb's audience was seeking her out and encouraging her to perform professionally once again.

"I was singing songs I wrote, songs I wanted people to think about. I was scared about what these people were going to think when I started singing songs about lesbians—or what they were going to think when I start singing about women wearing make-up and high heels and what I think *that* means!" she says. "But they went crazy—I mean they were just loving it—and I thought, 'I can do this. There are people out there who want to hear what I have to say.'"

The heartfelt "Song for Rebecca" [on the soundsheet in the September 1991 issue] is the first piece Barb wrote in the initial rush of her artistic reawakening. It tells the story of Rebecca Wight and her lover Claudia Brenner; while camping on the Appalachian Trail on May 17, 1988, Rebecca and Claudia were shot by a man

continued on page 57

FREESTYLE

MAKING A HOUSE SEA GNOMES HOME

By Kay Gardner

In the summer of '71 I came out to Eleanor (not her real name), my best friend and the woman I was in love with. We were both mothers and wives, and had gone away for a weekend of sensory awareness work with Charlotte Selver in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. We were both so changed when we returned home to Virginia (both by the workshop and by having made woman-love for the first time) that our husbands were convinced that we should all go to Selver's August workshop on Monhegan Island off the coast of Maine. (We did *not* tell "the boys" *why* we were so radiant on our return home from Bucks County.)

It was that summer that I fell in love with Maine. We spent three weeks walking the Cathedral Forest, swimming short bursts in the frigid Atlantic waters, picking blueberries on the hill near the lighthouse, and watching spectacular sunsets where sky and water, unseparated, became one vivid color. I was so enamored of Monhegan that I carried a pile of her smooth, round, fist-sized beach rocks home with me.

I took the guest room, painted it sky blue, hung Winslow Homer sea prints, covered the floor with tatami mats, and made an altar of my Monhegan rocks, incense, and candles on a long, low table. This became my own room, a haven for meditation and solitude, a room that neither Peter (my husband) nor Eleanor would invade. The Monhegan room, my connection with Maine.

Five Augusts later—after I left Virginia for New York; after making *Lavender Jane Loves Women* with Alix Dobkin; after co-founding Wise Women Enterprises and making my first album, *Mooncircles*—I was on the coast of Maine again.

FREESTYLE: The musings and experiences of Kay Gardner, who has been deeply involved in women's music and culture since 1973.



The staff of Sea Gnomes Home: Robin Fre (left) as concierge/quiltmaker and Kay Gardner (center) as chambermaid/handywoman. (Pictured summer 1981.)

This time it was Deer Isle, just an hour or so across the Penobscot Bay from Monhegan. Marilyn Ries and I were co-producing Casse Culver's album *Three Gypsies*, which was being financed entirely by Joan Gibson and Shirley Watt, two Maine lesbians who had also loaned me money to produce *Mooncircles*. [See "Early East Coast Women's Music and The Squirrel" by Kay Gardner in the March 1986 issue of *HOT WIRE*.]

Returning home, I talked with B.E., my lover, and my daughter Jeni about moving to Maine. Within months we were driving a U-Haul to Stonington, the town on the southern tip of Deér Isle, having found a Victorian house to rent for \$300 per month with an option to buy. We moved in on December 1, 1976. (You *know* folks are serious about living in Maine when they move there in the wintertime.)

The house was a sieve with six bedrooms, a five-pot leak in the roof, rotten porches, falling-down chimneys, and one of the most spectacular harbor views in Stonington. Winter was cold—sometimes reaching thirty degrees below zero—but the voracious furnace rumbled on and kept us warm enough to survive. In June, when two white lilac bushes in the backyard bloomed, exquisitely scenting the back porch, I decided to find a way to buy the house. I'd dreamed for years of renovating a Victorian house. This was my chance.

Grandpa Gardner was eighty-eight years old with fourteen grandchildren. I knew each one of us was to get a small inheritance, so, as the oldest grandchild, I wrote to him asking for mine in advance. It was a very businesslike letter, convincing him that the house would be an investment, that with its view and several

Toni Armstrong Jr.

bedrooms, I could rent summer rooms and have an income other than what I could make as a musician.

It worked. With Grandpa's money and a loan from my parents, I had the down payment. Shirley co-signed my mortgage loan, and for under \$30,000, I bought a charming wreck of a house.

For a year (1976-77), the house served as offices for Wise Women Enterprises as well as B.E.'s, Jen's, and my home. When B.E. and I broke up and Jen moved to her dad's—a whole other

By the summer of '80, N.E.W.S. had failed. The wing-and-a-prayer venture had fallen prey to a gay-straight split and to major mismanagement. Fre convinced me that now was the time to put my summer room rental vision into action. We decided we'd rent only to women, we wouldn't accept boy children over three years old, and we'd not allow pets. We smoked some marijuana and came up with the name Sea Gnomes Home. I designed a brochure, and Fre placed ads in the classified columns of feminist news-

pieces by women which now decorate Sea Gnomes Home. Many sculptures by Gina Halpern are found throughout the house, and small reproductions of ancient goddess artifacts are tucked into nooks and crannies everywhere. Fre (a quilter with a great eye for decorating) and I have had great fun making Sea Gnomes into a unique, woman-identified home.

As guests knock on the front door, they see a wonderful stained glass Isis, which I got at the West Coast Women's Music and Comedy Festival. The front hall leads them to the parlor (actually the living room/kitchen area), which is painted "precious peach," a warm, womb-like color, and is hung with original paintings and colorful women's spirituality posters. The furniture is funky but comfortable. In July and August we make the kitchen available to guests, even though the town has several moderately priced seafood restaurants. This makes a vacation with us convenient for vegetarians.



Toni Armstrong Jr.

Spectacular views of the harbor from the windows are a feature of the woman-identified Sea Gnomes Home guesthouse in Stonington, Maine.

story—the offices moved to Joan's and Shirley's house.

My house, the monstrosity, was very expensive to heat, so I had the water drained from the pipes, closed the house, and went to Boston to try to find work. (What I found instead, with three others—Gail Perry, Leslie Judd, and Nancy Barrett-Thomas—was the New England Women's Symphony.)

But I returned to Stonington for the summer, and in July '78 fell in love with Robin Fre.

The next year I rented out the house while I, financed by a bank loan I'd taken out for home repairs, lived in Cambridge, Massachusetts conducting N.E.W.S. and touring with my own music. (Fre joined me there in January '79.) The next summer, Fre and I worked in Stonington as housepainters, and I knew I couldn't return to the city to live. I'd commute the five hours to Boston for N.E.W.S.

papers. We were in business.

At the time, we were Maine's only safe haven for women. (In the years since then, several women's inns and B&B's have opened throughout the state.) Though some women ask if Sea Gnomes Home is "Kay Gardner's house," we haven't advertised it that way. I value my privacy and don't like the idea of being ogled in my own home—so basically, unless guests treat me as just another woman, I hide.

Fre and I have divided the labor. She handles reservations, places ads, and deals with meeting and greeting guests. I am the chambermaid and handywoman, stealthily doing my work when guests are out exploring. This is also when I usually practice my music, not a pursuit I wish to share with an audience.

Over the many years of travel throughout the country and others around the world, I've picked up art

Each of the four bedrooms we rent is painted a different color, and each has a Robin Fre quilt on the bed. The yellow room, a nice corner room, looks out on the harbor and features an old pine bedroom suite with hand-painted pastoral scenes and a rocking chair next to a bookshelf brimming with feminist books. A print showing a lavish celebration in honor of the goddess Ceres is the focal piece of art, though one of Fre's spider-web macramés also hangs on a wall.

The blue room, also overlooking the harbor, is presided over by a print of the Green Tara, the Tibetan "tomboy" goddess of compassion, as well as a lovely Georgia O'Keeffe print and another of Fre's spider webs.

Climbing to the third floor, guests are greeted in the hall by "Rosie's Backside," an original Kate Millet print. The harborside room is lavender and features the best view in the town of Stonington. Masks from New Orleans' Mardi Gras and a print of a woman emerging as a butterfly are the artworks in this, our most popular, room.

The pink room, though its only sea view is through a skylight, is charming. We spent extra time on this room because it doesn't look out over the harbor. It's the only room with a desk, and therefore is a favorite for writers.

Three of the rooms have extensive libraries, as does the parlor, so most guests entertain themselves by reading,

either inside or on the newly renovated back porch. This porch, with its wicker furniture, hammock, and Kwan Yin banner, gets a great breeze from the sea and is a comfortable place to have meals and coffee klatches with other guests.

Our season runs from Memorial Day through Labor Day, and sometimes to Columbus Day weekend, the height of the leaf-turning. (Whether we stay open in October depends entirely upon how burned out we are by season's end.) Guests who don't want to explore the Nature Conservancy trails, coves, and shops on Deer Isle usually take day trips to Bar Harbor and the major part of Acadia National Park (a ninety minute drive). The more rugged women take a ferry from Stonington to Isle au Haut, where a smaller, more primordial part of Acadia may be hiked.

Fre and I love being able to share our home with women from all over this country and sometimes from other countries. Many of the performers and businesswomen in the feminist cultural network have come to Sea Gnomes for R&R over the years, including June Millington, Rhiannon, Sue Fink, Maxine Feldman, Laurie Fuchs (Ladyslipper), Barbara Borden, Molly Scott, Susan Savell, Alix Dobkin, Terry Grant (Goldenrod), Maida Tilchen (*Gay Community News*), Toni Armstrong Jr. (*HOT WIRE*), and many others.

Our first season we charged only \$20 per room. Now we charge \$30 in June and September, and \$40 in July and

August, when kitchen privileges are extended. Over the years we've been able to channel our Sea Gnomes' income into some major repairs. The porches are fixed, the roof no longer leaks, the chimneys are sturdy, and the antediluvian furnace has been replaced.

Stonington accepts us as good neighbors and our guests as regular tourists, though teenage boys occasionally hassle our more overt guests (but this happens in P'town and everywhere else, too). We've had a lot of consciousness-raising work to do in Stonington over the years. In the early days, cars full of adolescent boys felt it was a rite-of-passage to roar by our house shouting, "Lezzies, lezzies." I made it a point to go out on the front porch and yell back, "That's *lesbian* to you, and proud of it, too!" Treating these as "boys will be boys" incidents rather than frightening attacks, we've noticed that such harassment has disappeared because we won't be intimidated. We've become an accepted—if eccentric—part of the town.

In Sea Gnomes' twelve years, we've only had a few guests leave in snits. They are usually those who would rather have Holiday Inn accommodations or vacations in a town totally made up of lesbian separatists. Sea Gnomes Home is just that, our *home*. Our only problems have been with the sloppier guests who think we're here to clean up after them (after all, they're on vacation). Because our only bathroom is on the first floor, we make

chamber pots available to guests, especially those on the third floor. Musician Marcia Diehl wrote a little poem about these "thunder jugs" (as my Aunt Louise calls them):

Chamber pots are really sumpin'

But in the morning, there's the dumpin'

(Our least favorite guests are those who forget to do their own "dumpin'.")

Some of the women who find themselves sharing vacations at Sea Gnomes Home become like family with each other, taking kayak trips together, riding the ferry out to Isle au Haut to walk the Acadia trails, or just hanging out on the back porch watching the action in the harbor.

Twenty years ago I fell in love with the coast of Maine. I've lived here fifteen years now, and though old-timers will always consider that I'm "from away," I feel like a real "Mainiac." Ayuh!

For more information about Sea Gnomes Home, write P.O. Box 33, Stonington, Maine 04681. •

ABOUT THE WRITER: *Kay Gardner—composer, teacher, transformance artist—is the author of 'Sounding the Inner Landscape: Music as Medicine' (Caduceus Publications). Touring internationally with her concerts, workshops, and recording projects, she has presented her work on four continents and has plans to visit the other three as soon as she can find sponsors. (Does anyone know a producer in Antarctica?)*

CHORAL from page 39

palachians, alongside "Mountain Voices" by Zoltan Kodaly, and several Bulgarian village songs in full-voice style. Seattle Women's Ensemble grouped together four politically oriented songs: "As a Woman," with text by Virginia Woolf ("as a woman I have no country, as a woman I want no country, as a woman, my country is the whole world"); "On the Turning Away," a song by Pink Floyd which addresses social injustice; "Borderlines" by activists Valerie DePriest and Gal Gingrich; and Tracy Chapman's "Revolution." MUSE has made sets of numbers drawn from the anti-apartheid freedom movement in South Africa or from three centuries of music for women's voices by Porpora, Schumann, Brahms, Poulenc, and Persichetti.

In our choral communities, Anna Crusis, Calliope, MUSE, Seattle Women's Ensemble, and Sistrum strive to image America, to find and use our own voices,

and to honor and understand the voices of varied musical cultures. These goals have been summarized in the insightful book *Women's Ways of Knowing* (by Mary Field Belenky, Blythe McVicker Clinchy, Nancy Rule Goldberger, and Jill Mattuck Tarule, 1986, Basic Books): "We found that women repeatedly used the metaphor of voice to depict their intellectual and ethical development; that the development of a sense of voice, mind, and self were intricately intertwined...Indeed, it is only now that there is widespread recognition among scientists and philosophers of the importance of 'putting the knower back into the known' as they come to understand how intentional blindness limits what one can 'see' with the mind's eye."

And, as Bernice Johnson Reagon observed in *Reimagining America—The Arts of Social Change*, "Re-imagining America is to embrace the reality of the human community, and life on the planet, and try to

understand partnering with responsibility and love for all that makes up our universe as we understand it, as well as that which is still beyond our knowing."

America's women's choruses share this vision.

The Sister Singers Network may be contacted by individuals or groups at P.O. Box 7065, Minneapolis, MN 55407. •

ATTENTION MOBILE WOMEN

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HOTLINE from page 11

dall, and Kate Rushin. *Speak Out!* c/o Jean Caianni, 2215-R Market St. #520, San Francisco, CA 94114. (415) 864-4561.

CLAUDIA'S CARAVAN specializes in multi-lingual materials for children. The catalog includes activity books, cultural stories, games, records, dolls, and musical instruments. P.O. Box 1582, Alameda, CA 94501.

KUUMBA is a new quarterly poetry journal for black lesbians and gay men. It is published quarterly by BLK, which also produces *BLACK LACE*, a sex magazine "celebrating black lesbians, sexuality, and politics." P.O. Box 83912, Los Angeles, CA 90083.

HAG RAG is now available on cassette directly through the publishers (not available through Womyn's Braille Press). According to *Womyn's Words*, tapes are available by the issue or by subscription; there is a suggested price, but it is negotiable, as the staffers are determined that all lesbians who want *Hag Rag* will have access to it. Contact Theo at *Hag Rag*, P.O. Box 1171, Madison, WI 53701. (608) 241-9765.

Enjoy shopping by mail? **OLIVIA RECORDS'** 1992 **CATALOG** includes recordings, clothes, cards, wallets, jewelry, glassware, and goddess-related items. Olivia Catalog, 4000 Market, Oakland, CA 94608-3424.

THE BEST OF THESMO: a collection of the first thirteen years of *Thesmophoria: Voice of the New Women's Religion*. "For anyone who missed the early years of the Movement and the Susan B. Anthony Coven #1, this is what you need to get a real feel for what went on." SASE to P.O. Box 11363, Oakland, CA 94611.

FANS OF PAM & MAGGIE will be interested in their newsletter *The Mew's News*. It gives news tidbits and gig info. SASE to 72 Chestnut St., Escondido, CA 92025. (619) 738-7523.

Up & Coming is now called the **OZARK FEMINIST REVIEW**. The monthly newsletter includes reviews as well as local topics, and welcomes would-be reviewers. P.O. Box 1662, Fayetteville, AR 72702.

Out of the closet and into the newsroom...The Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation has published an eighty-page comprehensive **MEDIA GUIDE TO THE LESBIAN AND GAY COMMUNITY**. It includes history as well as resources and contact information for organizations and publications. SASE to GLAAD, 80 Varick St. #3E, New York, NY 10013.

SUBMISSIONS SOUGHT

Composer **KAY GARDNER HAS BEEN COMMISSIONED** to write an orchestral/choral work about the cycle of women's lives, to be premiered at the twentieth National Women's Music Festival (June 1994). She is looking for short, dramatic narrative texts and traditional or

original pagan chants describing: Winter Solstice/Birth; Candlemas/Childhood; Spring Equinox/Puberty (onset of menstruation); Beltane/Sexuality; Summer Solstice/Motherhood; Lammas/Maturity (menopause); Autumn Equinox/Cronehood; Samhain-Halloween/Death. Kay Gardner, P.O. Box 33, Stonington, ME 04681. (207) 367-5552.

Terrie A. Couch is continuing her research on the experience of **LESBIANS IN EUROPE DURING THE NAZI HOLOCAUST YEARS**. Concentration camp survivors especially sought for interviews. She is looking for tips on writing biography as well as financial support. Terrie Couch, Hattsteinerstr. 14, 600 Frankfurt 90, Germany.

GIRLJOCK: THE MAGAZINE FOR THE ATHLETIC LESBIAN WITH A POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS is a cartoon and satire magazine "not entirely about girljocks and not entirely about sports." Editrix Roxie welcomes letters, cartoons, articles, photos, true confessionals, and sports or romance stories. Rox-a-Tronic Publishing, 2060 Third St., Berkeley, CA 94710.

Marion Zimmer Bradley's **FANTASY** magazine publishes original all-new short fiction with fantasy elements. SASE for writers' guidelines; do not submit material without reading guidelines. *Fantasy*, Marion Zimmer Bradley Ltd., P.O. Box 249, Berkeley, CA 94701.

Canaries in the Mine will be an anthology of stories and experiences of **WOMEN WITH IMMUNE/OTHER SYSTEMIC DISORDERS**. Submissions to Toni L. Fitzpatrick, 75 Hartford St., San Francisco, CA 94114.

Submissions sought for two anthologies: one on **WOMEN IN EXTREME SITUATIONS** in the outdoors; the second on **LESBIANS IN SPORTS** or the experience of being a lesbian athlete. History, theory, personal stories with SASE to Susan Rogers, P.O. Box 23, Bard College, Amandale-on-Hudson, NY 12504.

The new **SHORT FICTION BY WOMEN** magazine, scheduled to publish three times per year, is seeking short stories, novellas, and novel excerpts. SASE to Rachel Whalen, P.O. Box 1276, Stuyvesant Station, New York, NY 10009.

Lesbian Contradiction seeks work for their fourth special **CARTOON ISSUE**. Original work in black ink, not pencil. *LesCon*, 584 Castro St. #263, San Francisco, CA 94114.

Sinister Wisdom seeks submissions for an issue on **LESBIANS OF COLOR**. SASE to P.O. Box 3252, Berkeley, CA 94703.

Two lesbian writers researching article are looking for women who have been **FORCED TO HAVE SEX** by other women to share their stories and answer a brief questionnaire. All replies treated confidentially. Paula Martinac, 298 Leonard St. #2, Brooklyn, NY 11211.

Any form of writing sought about women's experiences of **BEING ABUSED AS INPATIENTS** or as a result of being labelled mentally ill. Anonymous okay. SASE to Jinie Lind, Box 6337, Fall River, MA 02724.

According to *Sojourner*, two clinical psychologists are seeking to interview lesbians currently involved, or who have been involved in, "**BOSTON MARRIAGES**" (romantic but asexual relationships). Kathleen Brehony, Greenwich Psychological Associates, 5555 Greenwich Rd. #506, Virginia Beach, VA 23462.

The editor of the 1991 *War Resisters League Peace Calendar* seeks contact with long-haul **SOCIAL CHANGE WORKERS** for information on political experiences and personal equilibrium for a work in progress on sustained peace and justice activism. Pat Farren, 2161 Mass Ave., Cambridge, MA 02140.

Info about **LESBIAN COMMUNITY CENTERS** sought. Places lesbians meet (met) and/or hold (held) events on a consistent basis, including actual centers, bars, cafes, churches, etc. Compiler is doing a herstory of them, and wants to include those that still exist and those that no longer do. Maxine Wolfe, 222-A 14 St., Brooklyn, NY 11215.

The Laughter in Our Lives: A Collection of Women's Humor seeks true life stories illustrating **HOW WOMEN USE HUMOR** in our everyday lives. Typed or taped narratives to Liz Lowe, P.O. Box 4078, Star City, WV 26504.

Venus Press is seeking single-panel cartoons, strips, and cartoon stories for *New Dyke*, a book **ANTHOLOGY OF CARTOONS** by, for, and about lesbians. Cartoons can be fantasy, soap opera, humor, science fiction, feminist satire/politics, explicit sex, stories about growing up, coming out, romance, aging, etc. Submissions and SASE to Venus Press, 7100 Blvd East, Guttenberg, NJ 07093.

At The Crossroads: A Journal for WOMEN ARTISTS OF AFRICAN DESCENT is a new visual, performing, and literary arts journal. Submissions of written and visual arts wanted—especially from women in the Canadian Maritimes region and as yet unpublished writers from Canada and abroad. Don't send originals. *At The Crossroads* c/o Karen Augustine, P.O. Box 317, Station P, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5S 2S8.

Seeking essays, interviews, and stories that explore the relationship between feminist women/organizations and **THE MONEY WE NEED**. Looking for stories from women who make their livings in the women's community (concert producers, restaurants, etc.); invest in women-owned businesses; and about the pros and cons of capitalism, volunteerism, and land ownership. SASE to Loraine Edwalds, Third Side Press, 2250 W. Farragut, Chicago, IL 60625. •

MARGIE ADAM from page 5

Yes. I need to get used to it. I remember when I first began to perform—it would take me the whole month to recover from one show. But then again, it may be like muscle memory—like when you get up on a bicycle after a while, you don't have to learn how to ride all over again. Back in 1973, I began alone and had no idea what I was doing. Now, I know *exactly* what I'm doing, and I don't have to do it alone.

People have asked why I don't record an album before I go on tour. It's that I'm still learning about the songs. Once I take these new songs out, the audience will let me know by their responses which ones are meaningful to them, and which are most useful. Then I'll know what to record.

IN THE BRIEF HISTORY OF WOMEN'S MUSIC, YOU ARE THE ONLY PERFORMER WHO HAS REALLY TRIED TO MAKE A COMEBACK. EVEN MORE INTERESTING, NEWER PERFORMERS HAVE HAD TO LIVE UP TO THE LEGENDARY TALENT OF THE WOMEN'S MUSIC PIONEERS—LIKE YOU. YOU HAVE YOUR OWN REPUTATION TO LIVE UP TO. NERVOUS?

Of course—it's the risk of my life—but it's also the most interesting thing I can think of doing, given I'm not going to jump out of a speeding car. It's interesting to look back. While I was performing, I suffered terribly from comparing myself to other women musicians. I understand that's not unusual, but I have my own grief at not being able to enjoy who I was when I was being one of "The Big Four." I was getting enormous approval for who I was, but I was going, "Yeah, but I want to have a voice like...Yeah, but...yeah, but..." In the early days, I couldn't claim my power as a singer. I believed in my songwriting, but I was a product of the women's community, not show business. I didn't even claim the term "performer" for years, because it seemed to me that it was something other than what I wanted to do. As it turned out, other women artists and I were redefining what that

could be.

REDEFINING IN WHAT WAY?

Keep in mind that, back then, the conventional definition of a female performer was one in a long gown with a pretty voice. My inspiration for the possibility of singing was Carole King; she did not have a "girl voice," she did not have a Streisand ballad voice. She was the most striking example of a group of women songwriters whose unconventional voices would have kept them from recording their own music. She was able to record *Tapestry* because the industry created a place for singer-songwriters, and she fit the bill.

Most of the time I was performing I hated my voice. Only towards the end of performing did I begin to take voice lessons from Faith Winthrop—and then only because one of my favorite singers, Meg Christian, was taking them. I remember thinking, "Why would *she* take voice lessons? I love her voice; she has a beautiful voice." Meg told me it was because she wanted to have more control. Well, my thing was way beyond wanting to have control. At that time I couldn't have defined what I would have wanted—except to have someone else's voice. I wanted to be Cris. A number of my songs were higher in key than I could comfortably sing. But I had been performing these songs for years, and the idea of changing keys, or of changing my breathing, seemed impossible. I never *wasn't* afraid when I performed.

When I began to write music in October of 1990, I called Faith immediately and said, "I'm writing music again, and I want to come to you and give myself the best opportunity of loving these songs and loving my voice—and learning how to sing these songs correctly." She's so beautiful with me—she's always had a kind of respect as well as a relentless insistence that I expand what I'm doing with my voice. She's just exactly the same now, except we're working with all this new material. This time I don't have any investment in being in the key of A flat; I don't have any investment in the arrangements of the songs. She has been willing to step into this music with me.

Now, about my voice: I've found it, I claim it, and I love it. It actually pleases me to sing. I am more myself than I ever could have wished to be. I feel now I have chosen who I am—and who I am not—and I honor particularly the individual women and groups of women who inspired me in the past, especially Meg, Cris, Boo Price, Kay Gardner, and Sweet Honey in the Rock. They gave me my sense of context and work family at different times.

I am nervous about coming back...but I just think that I can't lose for going all the way. That's why we were able to do what we did before, because there were women all around who were willing to go all the way. My feeling is that what is happening right now is connected with some sort of collective impulse to reaffirm what it is that women do when they come together with a common purpose. In [Marion Zimmer Bradley's] *The Mists of Avalon*, the reason that Avalon receded into the mist was literally because people stopped believing that it existed. And that's the simplest way to describe my experience of what I observed happening in the early '80s. There was a receding of the power impact of women's music as I knew it, because women began to step away from the woman-centered identification of the music.

We have our history, and it can be a source of strength and inspiration for each of us who is making decisions about going all the way. I know what the downside is, I know what the risk is, but I notice that I am less afraid when I am plugged into other women who are also making risky decisions in their lives—to get involved, to do something, to make a joyful noise.

Margie Adam made her official comeback on the night of October 19, 1991 in East Lansing, Michigan, at a sold-out show (250 would-be ticket buyers were turned away) produced by Terry Grant and the women of Goldenrod. The concert was preceded by a fundraiser dinner for Sistrum, the women's chorus in Lansing. The show began at eight o'clock, and the moment emcee Terri Jewell said Margie's name, 225 shrieking women leapt to their feet in an ovation that lasted several minutes. Welcome home, Margie. •

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McBRIDE/GRIER from 21

Barbara says. "It's very hard with the kind of public image that I have for people to understand that from my point of view—and this is important to me—Donna really is the center of my universe. People think that Naiad Press is the center of my universe, and a lot of people think I'm a computer—a monstrous computer at that. But as a matter of real fact, I know exactly where my priorities are. Donna and I know what we want, and we know exactly where we want to go, where we want to be when we actually reach retirement age."

The two also do a great deal that is unrelated to their public selves. "In other words," says Barbara, "I love my work. I love Naiad Press; I love publishing books. But I also love cats, and I love to collect shells. Donna does everything under the sun. She makes jewelry, she does leather work, she does everything. Or 'did,' she says. Not as much as she used to, because of Naiad—but we're never not busy. We work all the time, but we also do other things all the time. There are never enough hours."

ADVICE FOR COUPLES IN BUSINESS TOGETHER

Most of the time when a business fails, according to Barbara, it fails either because its conception is wrong ("you do not put a Kentucky Fried Chicken franchise in the middle of a desert where there are no people") or, once it's started, nothing is done to mind the store. "I answer my phone sometimes fifteen hours or sixteen hours a day. Donna and I probably average out in the sixty-five hours per week range working," says Barbara. "On the other hand, when we're walking down the beach, we often say to each other, 'Do you remember when we used to work? We did so-and-so...' The implication being, what we're doing now isn't work. I think some of that has to do with the way in which we look at what we're doing. Or, on a cornier level, it's not just a business, it's a movement. It's part of a larger picture."

Barbara considers that all women-owned businesses are a part of this movement, and often what gets lost in the shuffle is that women need to do the old-fashioned things that make a business work. "It's the mom-and-pop work ethic that make us a success," she emphasizes. "You must live up over the store, and you work in the store from morning to night."

And Barbara Grier and Donna McBride do just that: they live on the same grounds as Naiad Press. Originally, they ran the press out of their garage, but now they have built a pebbly path from the back door of the Naiad Press building to the front door of their home. They put a swimming pool on their grounds, as well as a tennis court. They have carefully landscaped the property, and as the press grows, they expand the buildings and buy additional acreage. In went winding, walking paths where their current staff of six are able to stroll. There is even a fish pond.

All of this is very important to understanding the success of Barbara Grier and

Donna McBride, and of Naiad Press.

"We've never had any kind of harassment from anyone here through the years," Barbara says. "There are certain reasons for that, which also go back to this middle class, mom-and-pop stuff. I pay my bills on time. I am a responsible citizen. We take part in our community. Our area is beautiful. The grounds of the places I've described to you are lovely. They're kept that way—we don't have a weedy front lawn. We don't have trash out in the road," she explains.

"Yeah, I'm as houseproud as the next middle class, Middlewestern human being. We've had people come and interview us from newspapers in Florida who saw it as an opportunity to put something shocking and fascinating in the Sunday supplement of the paper. Usually after interviewing us, they go and interview TJ, our postmaster, in Havana (Florida)—Havana is a very small town. TJ has been interviewed a number of times about us; he's very happy to have us, thank you. We probably put enough money through that post office each year to pay two of his rural carriers—at least \$60,000 a year. My point is, we are an economic part of our community."

A lot of times, Barbara Grier claims, lesbians fail to see the importance of this fact and make choices that isolate them from the world at large rather than becoming part of it. "I have noticed through the years that often when groups of lesbians choose to go off and isolate themselves and be hostile toward the communities around them, they get it back in kind, in like behavior. If you walk around with a chip on your shoulder, you can find somebody to knock it off. If you walk around and expect everybody to treat you just as radiantly and sunnily as you treat them, you're going to get that back, too. Now that sounds incredibly corny, but it's true."

Donna McBride and Barbara Grier answer every letter they receive with a personal note. Sometimes the note will only be two or three sentences; sometimes it is handwritten, sometimes typed. But every woman who writes or calls gets taken seriously.

Another reason that Barbara and Donna remain together and successful after all these years has to do with a basic attitude toward people and toward life. "Life is really an exciting, wonderful, fun thing," says Barbara, whose personal stationery says *And Now a Note From the Queen of the Universe*. "I'd like to live to 150 and be running up the walls all the time in the last few months of my life. I just feel like I can do that, and that there's no reason to believe that my life won't be like that. It always has been. It always will."

To send anniversary cards to Donna and Barbara—and/or request a complete catalog of Naiad Press titles, including the works of Katherine V. Forrest, Jane Rule, Ann Bannon, Lee Lynch, and many others—write Naiad Press, P.O. Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. •

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MAILE & MARINA from 25

to teach at the fifteenth annual Michigan Woman's Music Festival. With our boots and cowgirl hats in hand, and a wide array of dance songs by the most popular Country Western female vocalists, we arrived in Michigan on Tuesday. After a short night's rest and an early morning breakfast, our Wednesday workshop intensive was about to begin.

"In a field by the August Nite Cafe, a four-by-eight piece of plywood held up by four milk crates created our stage. With a sound system and a sound tech, we were ready! Soon thumbs were in the women's belt loops, and with a sashay here and a step-hop there, line dancing and two steppin' at Michigan were suddenly established. Although some women were skeptical at first, the energy being generated by the dancers was too contagious to keep many sitting for long," Marina recalls.

"As each day passed, the crowds grew, and so did the dust clouds—so much so that on the second day carpets were brought in as an attempt to cover the dirt. Next, cowgirl boots started appearing at workshops here and there. They must have been waiting to be pulled out of the tents. Even the workers joined in, led by Ruth ("Dr. Ruth") Simkin, who choreographed the first Country Western line dance at a women's festival." The dance—appropriately called The Michigan—was not surprisingly quite popular at last summer's Michigan festival.

"Every woman has the capability to become a good CW line dancer," says Marina. "Dr. Ruth, for example, picked up the steps and routines very quickly when she was first exposed at one of our festival dance workshops. She pur-

chased the *Country Attitude* video, practiced, and was instrumental in getting groups of women informed and involved. As a welcoming treat for our arrival at Michigan 15, Dr. Ruth and Alix Dobkin—together with the festival workers—surprised us with a well-rehearsed line dance. It was fabulous fun," Marina says.

"The response we had at Michigan that first year was more than we could have imagined, as women could be seen practicing the Tush Push and other dances all over the land," says Maile. "Craftswomen and late-nighters repeatedly requested that we do more workshops. Our dogs [feet] were tired after the eight hours of workshops, but looking out into the audience and once again calling up some lively Country Western music, who could think of anything but grab your partners and get some country attitude? Ruth Ellis—a beautiful ninety-one year old woman well-known to Michigan festival goers—took the stage and put Marina through swirls and a two-step shuffle just like the pros—she had been at many a barn raising. The crowd's applause was gentle at first and then resounding; we were so excited. Goose bumps? You betcha! As we walked back to our tent that night, reflecting on the day, we felt like we had lassoed the moon. Though our boots were put away dog-tired every night, we were overjoyed with the feeling that Country Western dance had found yet another home—in Michigan."

During this past summer's Michigan festival they held two all-day intensive workshops and had two-hour workshops every morning at 9:30, during which hundreds of women turned out to dance, and hundreds more gathered to

watch and applaud the "attitude" as well as the dancing.

Maile and Marina plan to continue to focus on festivals and doing workshop intensives in different cities. They have begun performing and teaching as an act following musicians, such as the show they did in New York City with Alix Dobkin the evening before the NYC Gay Pride March. They may do some joint sets ("which will be lots of fun") with the singing/songwriting team Pam & Maggie [hear their "Crazy For You" on the soundsheet in the May 1991 issue].

And the fate of those fine Fillies? "The Lavender Fillies are currently in a rest state after a heavy schedule of performances last year that included twelve benefits and rodeos," says Maile. "If necessary, the Fillies could easily be reconvened for rehearsal, whether the group is comprised of all former Fillies or adds new members. Rehearsal requires practice two or three times per week. The nature of the group has shifted somewhat, since our focus recently has been more on festivals—it's part of a natural evolution. The members, however, are closeknit, and we see one another at Country Western dances for informal, unstructured fun and to learn new dances. As an entity, the Lavender Fillies are very much ongoing."

The line dancing and two-stepping future looks bright for Maile and Marina. "It will be more videos, the instructional dance book, and more teaching and dancing for us!"

For information about ordering the 'Country Attitude' instructional videos and books or for booking information, contact them at WomanLife Productions, P.O. Box 103, Lakeside CA 92040. (619) 390-9830. •

LYNN THOMAS from page 18

It does bother me when performers cross over into the mainstream and then hide their identity, although I understand they feel the need to keep quiet in order to further their careers.

Another song from my album is "Conditions," and it's about unconditional love. The basic premise is that each character determines under what conditions they could really love another character more (i.e., "if you'd only lose some weight, if you'd change your hair, if you'd act more grown up," etc.). I think we do that to each other all the time. We have never learned to take ourselves "as is" and love ourselves for who we are. Consequently, we've never learned to support each other in non-judgmental ways. We've learned to be afraid of each other instead of trusting. We've learned to hoard our resources instead of sharing. It's a difficult task to let down your guard when you've grown up in a "competition is everything" society. But I think we will get much further together.

Another important part of my act is comedy. I've always believed it's much easier to get a controversial message across with humor. I think it's important to be serious, but it's equally important not to take myself too seriously. I have a song ("Politically Correct") which pokes

fun at the "rules" I had to learn before I could come out. The chorus goes:

*Don't spell women with an m-e-n
Dress somewhere between
butch and femme
Make sure your committee has
a chairperson
Be politically correct.*

When we can look at our own foibles, we can learn to accept things in others. I think for a long time too many of us have been trying very hard to show only our "perfect" side to the world at large. Despite the activism and "outness" of the women's music and culture movement that's been in full swing for more than fifteen years, too many of us have still wanted to appear as if we didn't suffer from human frailties. And I don't fault us for it; we take enough crap from outside—we don't need to give them any more ammo. However, in the process, many women have managed to sweep their own problems with racism, sexism, battering, and substance abuse under the proverbial rug. I think this does us a disservice. It's good when we get to work on these issues. These are our problems within our communities. I hope my music will help in the healing as well as the celebration. •

FORTRESS from page 15

kidnappers, Miss Jones makes the extreme sacrifice, offering herself as bait to lure the kidnappers away from their pursuit of Norelle. In the process, Miss Jones demonstrates to Norelle and the other students that personal empowerment can be achieved—even in the most dire circumstances. This transition to empowerment also evolves with Sid's crush on Miss Jones, and the two youths' coming of age foreshadows the underlying story of the entire group's transformation.

Walking the fine line between civilization and savagery, the students are repeatedly forced to defend themselves against the brutality of their kidnappers. At what point does the gentility finally give way to savagery? Producer Raymond Menmuir does an outstanding job translating the moral dilemma that Gabrielle Lord presented in her novel, upon which the movie is based. This is a thought-provoking movie, for pacifists and activists alike. And if from this description you wonder whether feminists would like it—trust me on this one!

•FADE OUT•

Subscribe to 'HOT WIRE'

MYRNA/SHELLEY from 13

enormously talented women with little national exposure—and even less financial success. Comparing them to some of the extremely untalented (and should be unknown) national acts, it's clear that fairness is still not the rule in the music business. It seems one of the challenges facing our community is not to succumb to the standard of mediocrity in the mainstream. Expecting serious talent and musicianship from the artists—and demanding this from producers—only dignifies and elevates our culture," she says. "Working within women's culture all these years has been inspiring, hilarious, frustrating, rewarding...We've become close friends with many talented women across the country. We all owe a great deal to the artists, whose work provides a focal point from which we can come together as a community. It is that sense of community that makes work in women's culture unique and special. We have all grown together. Technically, too, we've come a long way. We set high standards for our productions—the audience and the artists deserve the best. Our 'production family' encompasses many folks who don't always get the recognition they deserve.

"Of course, one essential way to value professional skills is through financial compensation. Many of us began our careers by volunteering, and we sometimes still choose to donate our services to events we believe in. At the same time, it's difficult, if not impossible, to pursue a career and advance in it without being paid for it. But," she says, "we love our work, and we'd love to see more women doing it."

Myrna Johnston, Shelley Jennings, and their MJA sound company can be reached at 8 Spring Park Ave., Jamaica Plains, MA (617) 522-8442. •

HEROIC WOMEN from 17

with its overpriced drinks...." From outside of the jazz world Val makes a life and a career for herself. Loving the music and looking directly at the people who made it, Val does not cloak them or herself in romanticism. She uses her words to recall a mythical musical time and to explore the hard realities a woman at work faced.

.....
These are a few of the books I've read over the past few months. They kept me from being lonely. They opened up new worlds for me. (They discouraged men from approaching me as I traveled alone!) They reminded me why I need to sit down and record my own words. I feel extremely proud that my novel gets to sit on the same shelves as these. •

AMAZON RADIO from 45

If you're seriously interested in pursuing this further, I suggest you go to your library reference section, and get the *Library Broadcasting Yearbook*. Look up stations in your area, especially college, non-commercial, and smaller commercial stations. Unfortunately, most stations have a more limited format than WPKN's, and your first on air experiences may

AWMAC INSURANCE from 48

ment; pertinently, if 200 more women join, then the possibility of AWMAC-sponsored health insurance at group rates may become a reality.

In the interim, creative solutions have been submitted: one performer proposed the idea of "lesbian health insurance," which would cover members (presumably on an "association" basis) by self-identification of sexual orientation/preference. Since there are indisputably more than 400 lesbians in the U.S., this seems a viable alternative. In this day and age, lesbians are excellent health risks, because HIV infection/disease occurs with low frequency in our population, so this might be a fiscally competitive plan as well.

For the more immediately-minded who need health insurance now, Deb Cirksena counsels looking at other groups/associations you may belong to to see if they offer any reduced rate plans. The other option is to buy/maintain an individual policy. "In any event, a word of caution here," she says. "You should look at companies that carry no less than an A rating—an A+ would be preferable—or you may have difficulty in the areas of service, claims processing and payment."

Inquiries about health insurance plans, the organization, and/or membership should be directed to: AWMAC, 2124 Kittredge St. #104, Berkeley, CA 94704. (You don't need to be a member of AWMAC to write to them and inquire.) •

NEWMR from 31

much-beloved former planner Betsy Gooch. She left a bequest earmarked to be used to purchase land for the festival to have a permanent site. In order to accept the bequest, NEWMR, Inc. was formed in December 1988 as a non-profit, tax-exempt organization. A parcel of land in the state of Vermont has been located, and festival planners are trying to secure permits to hold the festival there next year. A continuous slideshow of the land and its two acoustic glens, meadows, water falls, ponds, and streams ran all weekend in the dining hall. Site visits for the fall are open to all women, and a book beside the slideshow was filled with comments and suggestions.

With a permanent site to build on and learn from, NEWMR may well grow from a sometimes theoretical festival into a permanent celebration of Music in the Key of She. •

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not be like mine—but you will be learning no matter what music you play, and that experience will allow you to make choices later on.

"Amazon Radio!" has met most of my goals. I feel that I'm making a contribution to our community, I'm very much involved in women's music—and there's no group process!

Recordings, press kits, and questions should be sent directly to Pam Smith, "Amazon Radio!," P.O. Box 217, New Haven, CT 06513. •

BARB BARTON from 49

who had stalked their every move. Claudia survived the attack, but Rebecca did not. The slayer's only reason for the killing was simply the fact that these two women were lesbians.

"It was a double shot for me," says Barb, who had done some five hundred miles of back-packing herself. "There was not one trip that I went on that I did not fear that kind of assault," she says. "And they were lesbians. I just broke down and cried. I knew it would only be in the paper for a couple of days, since they were just lesbian women. I was not going to let that happen."

Roused and justified in her rage at the injustice that had befallen Rebecca Wight, Barb wrote the song in a matter of hours, wanting the song to sound "angry, dissident, and powerful."

Today that song is still one of the most popular in her performances. The chords are still strummed with their original fervor, the lyrics still sung with passion. Barb remains true to her original inspiration when she sings, "Rebecca, I will sing your song/A way to keep the wimmin strong forever."

Barb's work is brimming with emotion. "When I write a song, I write about the connectedness between myself and whatever it is I'm writing about. Not just as an observer—I try to bring the feeling I have inside to the listener, so that they are not just hearing words." •

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IF MORE HETEROSEXUAL WOMEN CAME TO FESTIVALS...WHAT?

There are festivals and events that are just for lesbians. I respect that. I have no reason to be there. Then there are the festivals and events that are for "all women," and that's where I want to be.

The biggest fears lesbians seem to have regarding hetero-identified women performing at the festivals is that things may become male-identified. The audience doesn't want to hear about men's ideas, men's creativity, men's love, etc.—generally don't want things to be focused on men, which non-lesbian women are assumed to want to do.

Speaking for myself, I don't go to a women-only event to focus on men, and I assume that other heterosexual women who are not feminists—or are not allies of the lesbian community—wouldn't even be interested in participating.

Women who have been bisexual—or have gone from being lesbians to being with men—have been feared by lesbians, and may now fear lesbians because of the remarks, insults, jeers, etc. I don't think it's that different from other bigoted remarks, except for the feeling that the gay community has "lost" one of its own, or has been betrayed. Like anything else, the trust is built over time and from person to person.

The other fear expressed to me was that women will insist on having male musicians on stage. Do lesbians who work with male musicians off the festival circuit insist on having those men on stage? [Editor's note: sometimes, but not often.] No. I can't imagine hetero women insisting on having male musicians on stage either. The whole point of being at a women-only event is to be with women, to rely on each other, challenge each other, and rejoice in being a woman.

The other women I've talked with, straight and bi, come to the festivals for similar reasons that I do—because we love being with women, and because we get strength for being a woman. I talked to one woman who played at Michigan this year simply because it was a "gig." Before she went, she felt like it was kind of a ridiculous idea, "a women-only festival." When she came back, she was high from the experience, and in fact I think she went overboard. She was "blind" to any problems. I told her I love it also and I think it's great, I just don't want to have 20-800 vision when I'm looking at it.

I also talked with another friend of mine who is a performer, who is now involved with a man and is very well-entrenched in the lesbian community. She is dealing with her friends and her position, and many of the same things I've been dealing with have come up for her. Someday she'll be open about it publicly as she goes through "coming out" to her friends on her own time (a process lesbians understand very well.)

Would it dilute or strengthen the network to have more hetero women at the festivals that are "open to all women" (but everyone knows are mostly lesbian)? Only time can answer that, but I believe we are strong enough in our

identities to experiment and see what happens. Many women, gay and straight, are just coming to feminism, and many others have been feminists for a long time. Some have witnessed the incredible regression of the '80s, and now the repression of the '90s. There are strong heterosexual and bisexual feminist performers, musicians, visual artists, writers, and thinkers who have a lot to offer the women's music and cultural network. If the work is affirming to women it can only help.

WHAT IS AN ALLY?

In our exchange of letters on this topic, Toni—who started thinking about alliances when she attended a multi-racial junior high school, and hasn't stopped since—wrote to me, "Being an ally means, to me, (1) I'm not of the other group, but I make it my business to learn about it; explore the unique forms of oppression that that community faces; learn about their culture, music, literature, history, geography, heroes and heroines, and religion if appropriate. (2) I do what I can to become strong enough so that I can be depended on to stick up for that community—whether that means interrupting 'jokes,' educating people who are ignorant about the group, or doing something more politically radical. I can be depended on to be respectful of that group. (3) As an ally, I'm informed, I'm committed, and I act! I don't romanticize or stereotype the members of the group...I don't feel guilty for not being of that group...I know that some members of this particular oppressed group are probably oppressors of other groups. (4) The issue of 'we' is at the core of an alliance—on what basis are we a 'we' when a primary identification is different (man/woman, black/Asian, middle class/working poor, het/gay, Jew/non-Jew, whatever). To me, the 'we' in women's music is keeping the focus on women."

That's a good list. I'd add that for me, being an ally is about seeing and listening to "the other," and expecting that willingness in return. When I am of the dominant group, I am trying as much as possible to be aware of my privilege. Being an ally also means I'm able to seek out a conversation with "the other." And when I'm not in a dominant group—for example, when I'm a Jew among gentiles, or a radical among conservatives—I have to watch my anger; sometimes it's appropriate and sometimes it's not.

WHAT I WISH FOR THE FUTURE

A place where feminists, heterosexual, bisexual, and lesbian women could meet to celebrate and perform—and furthermore, my personal wish is to inject more political awareness into the performances. These are pre-fascist times we live in, and unless the entire supreme court drops dead of a heart attack (and Bush is no longer in control of nominees), the country will just move more and more to the right. I applaud the work women are doing to get feminists and lesbians into political campaigns and elected positions.

I love performing at the festivals, and love having lesbians in my audience at mainstream gigs. The audience that usually comes to see my

work in the mainstream world is a mix of gay and straight, old and young, and it's sometimes an education for the audience to sit with each other.

When I first performed at Michigan (I was lovers with a woman at the time) and other festivals and gay clubs, etc., I felt that there was only so much "celebrating" I could get into. Maybe a lot of women want to go to festivals to forget the outside world; maybe some women don't care about anything else; or maybe, just like a lot of Americans, they just don't have enough information. In 1985 I performed at the Michigan Festival. It was the "feel good/don't worry, be happy" '80s. I remember thinking, it doesn't matter how many T-shirts I sell, or tapes I buy or sell, if my civil liberties are taken away. That may seem very cynical, but I can't help seeing the danger signs of the propaganda machine of the right wing, from the Operation Rescue demonstrations to the Thomas confirmation, to the twisted "victory" of the Gulf war. •

LEA DELARIA from 29

touching is loving. We all need to learn to trust that which is truly safe and to allow ourselves to be loved."

Though Lea DeLaria's act is usually popular and successful, she acknowledges that it doesn't always go over. "That happens to everybody," she says. "In fact, I have been working on a piece about relationships and sex which isn't working. Maybe the time isn't right to be poking fun at the only stable things that we can count on; maybe the subject is too close to home for me, and I need to put it away for a while and work on it again in the future.

"When I was just starting out—I even remember the month, it was July 1983—everything that came out of my mouth fell flat. It was just bomb after bomb until I was terrified to go out on stage. But, I kept going, despite the questions about whether I was bad, or the material was bad, or the audiences were bad. Finally, in August, things turned around. I spent a lot of time that month kneeling in the ashes and beating myself because the comedy wasn't right. I realize now that some nights I am inspired, great, or fun, and some performances, I just plain suck. Every time I go out is a new time, and I think of it that way," she says.

Future plans are many. This year, Lea is planning to be in a video by Kathy Wolfe (*Inside Lea DeLaria: Harder, Faster, Deeper*). It will feature live footage interspersed with interviews and comments by the humorist. Another project is an album of music, mostly classic jazz, which will be recorded live in Atlanta and then distributed by Ladyslipper. She'll also be touring the West Coast and the South with the *New, Improved Lesbo-A-Go-Go*. •

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CONFESSIONS OF A FEMINIST. Marian Lydbrooke, Final Notice Productions, #503-29 McCaul St., Toronto, Ont. M5T 1V7. 20 cartoon postcards.

DYKES TO WATCH OUT FOR CALENDARS by Alison Bechdel. 1992 calendar available from Firebrand Books, 141 The Commons, Ithica, NY 14850. (602) 272-0000. Features the cartoon adventures of Mo, Harriet, and their lesbian friends. Available at bookstores.

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.

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.

WOMYN WORK. Laura Irene Wayne, PO Box 128184, San Diego, CA 92112. Womyn-identified images, T-shirts, prints, paintings. Also custom orders. Catalog \$1.50.

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BLUEBERRY RIDGE WOMEN'S GUEST HOUSE. RD1, Box 67, Scotrun, PA 18355. (717) 629-5036. Women's guest house in the Pocono Mountains of Pennsylvania.

CHARLENE'S. 940 Elysian Fields Ave., New Orleans, LA 70117. (604) 946-9328. New Orleans' oldest gay women's bar. Occasionally bands, DJ.

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17th ANNUAL MICHIGAN WOMYN'S MUSIC FESTIVAL. WWTMC, PO Box 22, Walhalla, MI 49458. (616) 757-4766. Festival will be held August 11-16, 1992. A 6-day all womyn's camping event on 650 acres near Hart, MI—a full week of activities including 40 performances, 300 workshops, and 125 craftswomyn. Attendance up to 8,000 womyn from US, Canada, and 20+ countries worldwide.

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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.

SEATTLE WOMEN'S ENSEMBLE. PO Box 31462, Seattle WA 98103-1462 Attn: Jo Ann Hartline. Seeks Music Director, beginning Fall 1992. Send resume, cover letter and names of three vocalists who have performed under the candidate's direction. Deadline: January 31, 1992. SWE is a member of Gay and Lesbian Association of Choruses (GALA) and Sister Singers Network.

VIDEOS

HOUSE O'CHICKS. 2215-R Market St. #813, San Francisco, CA 94114. (800) 367-0786. "How To Have A Sex Party," lesbian libidos explode in 30 min. of hot, safe sex video. **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.

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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.

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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.

SISTERSPIRIT WOMEN'S BOOKSTORE/COFFEEHOUSE. 175 Stockton Ave., San Jose, CA 95126. (408) 293-9372. Women's Books and Music, emphasizing lesbian fiction. Our coffeehouses feature the best and newest artists in women's music. We do mail order. Free catalogue.

WOMEN & CHILDREN FIRST. 5233 N. Clark St., Chicago, IL 60640. (312) 769-9299. Since 1979. Feminist/lesbian books, records, tapes, posters, jewelry. Weekly programming.

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MARLA BB c/o Ascending Productions, 4 Edgewater Ave., Massapequa, NY 11758. Artist rep. (516) 799-4455. *Hot, sassy mama, lesbian blues singer! Plays the women's, folk and blues circuits.*

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Kris Kovick

KAY WEAVER. Booking agent: Martha Wheelock, Circe Records, 256 S. Robertson Blvd. Beverly Hills, CA 90211. *Singer/songwriter; performs nationwide with her famous films and two record albums.*

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PERIODICALS

ACHÉ: Journal for Black Lesbians. PO Box 6071, Albany, CA 94706. (415) 824-0703. *Bi-monthly publication by Black lesbians for the benefit of all women of African descent. 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/yr; \$12/yr, \$4/sample.*

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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/yr; \$17/yr, \$7/sample (includes postage). Canada: \$19 US/yr. Overseas: write or see masthead on page 1 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/yr.*

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/yr, \$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/yr.*

MAMARROOTS. Asungi Productions, 3661 N. Campbell #108, Tucson, AZ 85719-1524. (602) 327-0987. *Dedicated to Afracentric Spirituality and Cultural Awareness. [See also AFRAGODDESS 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/yr, \$12/yr, \$20/institutions, \$18/Canada & Mexico.*

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

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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/yr by mail. Lesbian/gay news-monthly; extensive women's music & culture coverage. Midwest and national focus.

RECORDINGS

BABES IN JOYLAND, Kate Clinton. Ladyslipper Records, PO Box 3124, Durham, NC 27715. The newest hilariousness from our most beloved lesbian comedienne.

BLUES IN PARADISE, Beth Scalet. PO Box 5891, Kansas City, MO 64111. Original and traditional blues songs, including "Moped" and "Hollywood Movies."

THE CHORUS OF LIFE, Gaia's Voice. 2140 Shattuck Ave. #2093, Berkeley, CA 94704. Songs celebrating Earth, and her need for protection and renewal.

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. Tounginchi Records, PO Box 19501, Seattle CA 98109. This singer/comedian provides tips for the "apparel impaired."

COURAGE, Lynn Thomas. 9 original songs including "Dykes," "Politically Correct," and "Lavender Love."

CRAZED WOMEN, Blazing Redheads. Reference Recordings, Box 77225X, San Francisco, CA 94107. Jazzy, danceable instrumentals that fuse Latin, R&B, and Afro-Cuban styles.

FOR THERESE, Various Women Artists. Sea Friends Recordings, 1641 Rockford Place, Cincinnati OH 45223-1632. Betsy Lippitt, Kay Gardner, Sue Fink, Deidre McCalla, Nydia Mata, MUSE: Cincinnati's Women's Choir and Atlanta Feminist Women's Chorus—perform the highest quality recording of women's voices singing women's music in today's feminist choral movement. Fifteen years of Therese Edell's choral, solo vocal, and instrumental compositions. Very good, very fun—a must. Sixty minutes on CD (\$16) and cassette (\$12).

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I FEEL FINE, M.J. Torrance. c/o Grace, 2914 A Rio Grande, Austin, TX 78705. Witty, lyrical new voice. Raspy, sharp vocals with colorful guitar.

IT'S A MIRACLE, Alice Di Micele. Box 281, Williams, OR 97544. Heartfelt songs about today's politics and environment.

LOOSE MARBLES, Two. Sandy Stubbert and Mary-Ellen Anderson. SoundWright, Box 654, Smiths Falls, Ont. K7A 4T4. Thoughtful songs including: "Worlds Apart" and "White Line Visions."

MERMAIDS IN THE BASEMENT. 9 songs including "Open Your Heart," and "Sister Lonely."

RETURNING THE MUSE TO MUSIC, Musica Femina. PO Box 15121, Portland, OR 97215. Flute/guitar duo. \$10 cassette/\$15 CD, plus \$1 postage.

SAVING GRACE, Cecily Jane. PO Box 2776, Gainesville, FL 32602-2776. 8 songs including "Once In A Very Blue Moon."

STRETCH, BREATH & RELAX, Diana M. Grove, LMT. Dancing Mountain Productions, PO Box 76222 St. Petersburg, FL 33734. Movement designed to improve physical and mental well being through practice of flexibility exercises and basic yoga postures.

WOULDN'T THAT BE FUN? Leah Zicari. Gender Bender Music, PO Box 164, Buffalo, NY, 14207. (716) 875-6154. First recording by this versatile guitarist/songwriter. Includes "What Kind of Self-Respecting Lezzie Am I," "Martina," and her hit anthem "Glory, Glory (I'm a Lesbian)."

YAHOO AUSTRALIA, Alix Dobkin. PO Box 727, Woodstock, NY 12498. (914) 679-6168. Recorded live during Alix's 1990 tour of the world's oldest continent.

YOUR EYES MOVE ME, EDGE ON THE WORLD, Seraiiah Carol. For booking and ordering info: McPiber Music Publishing, 6565 Sunset Blvd. #318, Los Angeles, CA 90028-7206. A sexy love ballad, and an inspirational song.

BOOKS

AVALON by Mary J. Jones. Naiad Press, Inc. PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. A vivid tale of a time when women reigned supreme.

CATS (AND THEIR DYKES) by Irene Reti and Shoney Sien. HerBooks, PO Box 7467, Santa Cruz, CA 95061. Explorations of the connection between lesbians and cats.

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THE DAUGHTERS OF ARTEMIS by Lauren Wright Douglas. Naiad Press, Inc. PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. The Lambda Literary Award winning author's newest detective novel.

DRAWING THE LINE by Kiss & Tell. Press Gang Publishers, 603 Powell St., Vancouver, B.C., Canada V6A 1H2. 40 Postcards. A photo

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DREAMING THE PAST, DREAMING THE FUTURE A Herstory of the Earth by Diane Stein. The Crossing Press, Freedom, CA 95019. *Women seers listening to voices and spirits, telling what was and what will be.*

GAYELLOW PAGES. Renaissance House, Box 292 Village Station, NY, NY 10014. (212) 674-0120. *Businesses, health care, organizations, and more for gay women and men.*

THE HALLELUJAH MURDERS by Dorothy Tell. Naiad Press, Inc. PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. *When an environmental activist is murdered, Poppy Dillworth steps in.*

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MEDIA GUIDES. Tsunami, PO Box 42282, Tucson, AZ 85733. *Feminist/Gay & Lesbian Periodicals/\$6. Women's/Gay and Lesbian Folk Radio/\$4.*

MURDER IS GERMANE by Karen Saum. Naiad Press, Inc. PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. *Lesbian ex-nun investigates murder.*

SECOND CHANCE by Jackie Calhoun. Naiad Press, Inc. PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. *Realistic, absorbing story of lesbian*

lives, by the author of Lifestyles.

THE SHIP THAT SAILED INTO THE LIVING ROOM by Sonia Johnson. Wildfire Books, Star Route 1, Box 55, Estancia, New Mexico 87016. *A personal account of her odyssey through the world of sexual relationships.*

STRANDED by Camarin Grae. Naiad Press, Inc. PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. *Inhabitants of Allo reside in the minds of Earth people.*

TO LOVE AGAIN by Evelyn Kennedy. Naiad Press, Inc. PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. *Friendship between a lesbian and a married woman becomes passionate.*

ZETA BASE by Judith Alguire. Naiad Press, Inc. PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. *A fierce love triangle far in the Earth's future.*

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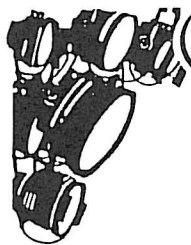
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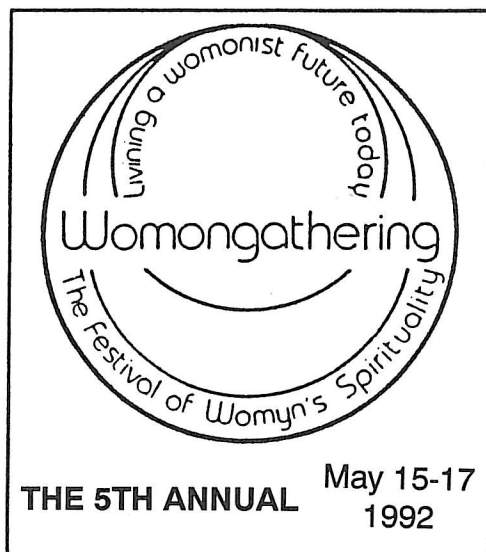
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LYNN THOMAS

PRAYER FLAGS

WRITTEN BY: Karen Pernick
PERFORMED BY: Karen Pernick (guitar, vocals), David Stearns (acoustic bass)
FROM: *Penny and a Wish*

Karen Pernick c/o Finders Keepers Productions
 317 S. Division #159, Ann Arbor, MI 48104
 (313) 995-0792

Karen Pernick recently set out, leaving her Midwestern home behind, for new adventures out West. Her new release, *Penny and a Wish*, follows a parallel journey, with full melodic voice,

gutsy and upbeat guitar work, and songs that move from layered mystery to seemingly simple country sentiments. "Prayer Flags," for a long time an untitled "poem/waltz," finally borrowed its name from the Tibetan practice of writing wishes and prayers on colorful cloths and hanging them out in the wind.



KAREN PERNICK



ELLEN ROSNER



MONICA GRANT



VENUS ENVY



WIMMIN ON THE EDGE

HALF A GLANCE

WRITTEN BY: Ellen B. Rosner
PERFORMED BY: Ellen Rosner (vocals, guitar), Diana Laffey (Background vocals, keyboard), Tricia Alexander (harmonica), Camille Rocha (soprano saxophone)
FROM: *Ellen Rosner*

Ellen Rosner c/o Nan Sauer
 3712 N. Broadway, Chicago, IL 60613
 (312) 528-4759

Ellen Rosner is a Chicago-based singer/songwriter/guitarist. "Half A Glance" is one of the more tender ballads on her new debut release. The song draws a link between the memory of a

continued on inside back cover

Lon Fithian

Erik Lieber

Irene Young

Samantha Dunscomb

CHRISTMAS HOMO from page 7

ing from '50s and '60s classics, to Broadway show tunes, to the Beatles and Laura Nyro.

If Phranc were a fourth Roche sister, they might sound something like Venus Envy. Their quirky doo-woppy sound is saturated with stinging satire, as on the song "It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas," where the band sings sweetly, "A pair of military boots and an Uzi that shoots/ Are the wish of Jason and Tex/ Barbie with big tits and pubescent hips/ Is the hope of young anorexics/ And take a peek between her legs/ Our Barbie can't have sex!"

Several numbers on *I'll Be a Homo for Christmas* deal with the difficulty gays and lesbians have spending the holidays with their families when their families choose not to accept or acknowledge their homosexuality. "What's It To Ya" (an a cappella version of the "Hallelujah Chorus") contains the thoughts, "I'm staying home this year with my girlfriend/ What's it to ya?/ I'll have a lot more cheer with my girlfriend/ What's it to ya?/ You called me up to sneer at my girlfriend/ What's it to ya?...." A deft rewrite of the classic "Jeanette Isabella" paints a familiar picture: "Mom is trying to ease the tension/ Dad is trying to not blow his top/ She asks, 'Will you two share a bedroom?'/ Dad's yelling 'No!' while Mom considers...."

Venus Envy is obviously out of the closet (though not all of the members are lesbians), and their music is packed with political integrity. They're supportive of and have been supported by the gay and lesbian communities, and have appeared at Gay Pride rallies in Seattle, the Gay Games in Vancouver, the Pacific Northwest Jamboree, the West Coast Women's Music and Comedy Festival, and Wimifest in Albuquerque.

Lisa says they're not likely to get a major record deal (their two releases are on their own independent deMilo label), mostly because being out and open is often the "kiss of death to a career in mainstream music...but you never know." Over the past year, their audience has broadened considerably, even though their performances are sure to be uncensored. This past September, they played at Seattle's Bumbershoot Arts Festival to a sold-out, mixed ("straight, queer, and everything in between") and very appreciative crowd. "We threw in 'I'll Be a Homo for Christmas' as an encore, and this diverse, largely mainstream audience *loved* it!" recalls Lisa.

The women of Venus Envy have a lot going for them, but at the moment they are without a full-time booker/manager. With their multiple callings, it has been difficult for the members to actively promote the band. Still, they've gone a reasonable distance in one year without much concentrated effort on their part. But they appear to be on the verge of going much further, and are now looking for an experienced manager to take care of business.

Expect other blasphemous endeavors from Venus Envy in the future. But for now, pick up a copy of *I'll Be a Homo for Christmas*. It's the perfect gift for that special someone in your life, and sure to liven up even the dullest Christmas party. Who could resist carolling along with: "Lesbians we have heard on high/ Echoing their sad refrain/ Mom and Dad will surely die/ When they hear their daughter's gay/ Coming out, coming out this Christmas!"

'*I'll Be a Homo for Christmas*'—the title cut of which can be heard on the soundsheet in this issue—is available through women's music distributors (*Lady-slipper, Paradigm, Zango, Goldenrod, Horizon*), or write directly to Venus Envy, P.O. Box 19501, Seattle, WA 98109. •

SOUNDSHEETS

Material is recorded on both sides in stereo. Do not crease the soundsheet. Place it on turntable at 33-1/3 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.

past relationship and the fantasy and anticipation of a new one, or as Ellen puts it, "it's about trace elements." Don't be deceived by this gentle song; Ellen is not always this calm. The tape contains some songs that you just can't help but move to. To order copies of the tape, give comments, or to generally just say hello, you can contact Ellen c/o NBS Productions. Operators are standing by...

THE CODEPENDENCY POLKA

WRITTEN BY: Monica Grant
PERFORMED BY: Monica Grant (vocals), Libby McLaren (accordion), Jan Martinelli (bass), Janet "Jake" Lampert (drums), "Stockholm Stompers": Monica Grant, Teresa Chandler, Tracy Stark, Gary Mankin
FROM: *The Heart of It*

Monica Grant c/o Gans Productions
P.O. Box 10962, Oakland, CA 94610
(510) 268-1144

This dance number for the '90s is from Monica's newest CD and cassette that once again captures and blends her wonderful music and comedy. This "excellently produced album" (*East Bay Express, Berkeley*) touches on many subjects and

emotions, from a woman's elusive search for that special orgasm ("The Zenith of Love"—tap dancing included!) to Monica's own personal experience of dealing with her father's heart attack and stroke. Monica's material hits home on many levels.

RAINBOW

WRITTEN BY: Tracy Riordan
PERFORMED BY: Wimmin on the Edge: Tracy Riordan (lead vocal), Gwen Rector (guitar, background vocals), Greg Lasalle (keyboards and percussion)
FROM: *Herstory*

Wimmin on the Edge Productions
106 Lakeview Way, Oldsmar, FL 34677
(813) 789-6302

Tracy wrote "Rainbow" in the spring of 1991. The song is a celebration of the diversity of the world, and was inspired by her coming out as a lesbian. Some people want the world to be monochromatic, with no diversity. They want the same clothes, same lifestyles—all the same boring things. So in this song Tracy writes about the contrast that makes the world so alive and gives it vitality.

I'LL BE A HOMO FOR CHRISTMAS

WRITTEN BY: Kim Gannon/Walter Kent
ADDITIONAL LYRICS BY: Lisa Koch
PERFORMED BY: Venus Envy: Lisa Koch (guitar, vocals); Laura Love (vocal); Linda Severt (drums, vocal); Linda Schierman (vocal)
FROM: *I'll Be A Homo For Christmas*

Venus Envy c/o deMilo Music
P.O. Box 19501, Seattle, WA 98109
(206) 325-1920

"I'll Be A Homo For Christmas" is Venus Envy's irreverent look at the holiday season, as the fun-loving feminist foursome proclaim, "I'll be a homo for Christmas/ and every other day!" Venus Envy's outrageous songs and powerful vocal harmonies have delighted alternative and mainstream audiences all over the country. *I'll Be A Homo For Christmas* follows Venus Envy's first release, *Unarmed and Dangerous* (1990), and Lisa, Laura, Linda, and Linda (in order to join the band, each name must begin with L and end with A) are currently hard at work developing their new line of Venus Envy action dolls.



Marcy J. Hochberg



Marcy J. Hochberg



Toni Armstrong Jr.

• TO HOLD YOU THROUGH THE WINTER UNTIL THE FESTIVAL SEASON STARTS AGAIN •
Melissa Etheridge (top) performed again this year at Rhythmfest; Teresa Trull and Barbara Higbie reunited (musically) at the Michigan festival, surprising the crowd; Alyson Palmer and the trio BETTY premiered their long-awaited debut album this past festival season.



'HOT WIRE' SPONSORSHIP

FAIRY GODMOTHER PROGRAM

'HOT WIRE' is the only publication devoted to woman-identified music and culture. It comes out three times per year, in January, May, and September. Each 64-page issue includes a two-sided stereo recording of women's music.

'HOT WIRE' is done as a labor of love by more than forty women based in the Chicago area. Put together in someone's basement, the work hours required to keep the operation running are all donated by dedicated volunteers—from running the office to handling the packaging and shipping, from the editorial work to the actual paste-up of the magazine.

Many women who want to be involved prefer to contribute financially as Fairy Godmothers rather than do the physical work. (Some of the reasons given by Fairy Godmothers include: too busy with other responsibilities; too much in the closet; live in a geographical area without a women's cultural community; have a good paying job or inherited money and want to "share the wealth.") These women still want a way to be involved with 'HOT WIRE' and to consider it "theirs."

In order to keep 'HOT WIRE' at its present high level of quality—and to avoid having to cut back on size or frequency of publication—the magazine requires an infusion of several thousands of dollars per year *in addition to* subscription money, ad revenues, sales of shirts and mugs, fundraiser

events, and income from bookstores and festival sales. We are not eligible for most grants because we are not considered a "literary" publication, nor do we focus on the more general (i.e., male or heterosexual-oriented) "causes" funded by most alternative grant sources. We know all too well that projects by, for, and about woman-identified women are a low priority to everyone—unless we make it *our* business to care.

The extra thousands of dollars per year are donated by staff members and by our "Fairy Godmother" sponsors. All women who donate money to 'HOT WIRE' do so as an investment—in woman-identified creativity; in documentation of the historic strides we are making; in simply making sure we continue to have a publication that is truly by, for and about *us*.

Our most-preferred method of handling on-going "tithing" is to have you decide on an amount per issue you would like to donate, and we send you a "reminder bill" once every four months. (This means you will be sending us three checks per year.) \$5 per month would be the minimum amount that is practical for us to handle with this reminder/billing system—but small one-time donations are *always* appreciated.

If you wish to invest in 'HOT WIRE,' just fill out the simple checklist on the other side of this page, and we'll take care of it from there.

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5210 N. Wayne, Chicago, IL 60640

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