

HOT WIRE

THE JOURNAL OF WOMEN'S MUSIC AND CULTURE

Z BUDAPEST

DONNA ALLEN
ASL SILENT PRE-
FEST INTENSIVE
POLITICS IN THE
DEEP SOUTH
TAM'S JAM '92
MARY WATKINS
MELANIE DeMORE
JORJET HARPER'S
LESBOMANIA
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ALL-AMERICAN
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Hilary Cadwell

VOLUME 9, NUMBER 1 • JANUARY 1993

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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.

WELCOME ABOARD

Join me in welcoming our most illustrious new Board of Advisors: Alison Bechdel, Therese Edell, Laurie Fuchs, Ronnie Gilbert, Jewelle Gomez, Terry Grant, Barbara Grier, Blanche Jackson, Terri Jewell, Kris Kovick, Phyllis Lyon, Del Martin, Donna McBride, Jean Millington, June Millington, Holly Near, Michelle Parkerson, Rosetta Reitz, Rhiannon, Amoja Three Rivers, Susan Sarandon, and Laura Irene Wayne. This list represents some of the finest thinkers, most tenacious businesswomen, and most respected creative talent in the feminist cultural world. *HOT WIRE* intends to be around a long time, and our advisors help us by giving emotional encouragement as well as lending their perspectives and sharing their considerable expertise. Feminists cooperate rather than compete; we appreciate the generosity of spirit shown by our advisors.

NINE'S THE CHARM

With this issue, we begin our ninth year of continuous publication. We're *very proud* of surviving so long in this economic recession which forced so many other small businesses—especially publications—to sink below the financial water line. The secrets of our success include...

PENNY PINCHING

We recycle everything we can, for economic as well as environmental reasons, and we cut corners whenever we can. For example, we hand stamp our return address on envelopes rather than having them printed; believe me, there are no "corporate luxuries" at our office! (I'm one corporate CEO who's not milking the workers—at least not financially.) Please look at the masthead next to the table of contents—the women listed *donate* their time, labor, and talent to keep *HOT WIRE* going. That's a lot of volunteered woman-hours.



Tracy Baim

Feminist icon Gloria Steinem and disabled rights activist Marca Bristo joined hundreds of Chicagoans at a fundraiser last October with the theme Women's Health issues—one of many held by women to support Carol Moseley Braun (right) in her quest to become the first Black woman in the U.S. Senate. Patty Murray (Washington) plus Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer (California) will be joining Ms. Braun in Washington. These wins bring to six the number of women in the Senate. Carrie Meeks won a House seat to become the first Black woman from Florida in Congress. Virtually all the female gains last November were made by pro-choice Democrats. "This isn't going to be the year of the woman," said Eleanor Smeal, president of the Fund for the Feminist Majority. "It's going to be the decade of the woman."

FAIRY GODMOTHER SUPPORT

Our Fairy Godmothers have been most generous this year—and *special* kudos to Kris Johnson, who's taken over as the Goddess Clericala of the Fairy Godmothers. Thanks to her, the program is running efficiently now, and those who want to contribute financially to *HOT WIRE* are able to do so with a minimum of fuss. The Reaganomics "trickle down" theory turned out to be "trickle up" economics, of course—the rich got richer, and the rest of us are worse off. In light of this, we consider it especially generous of the people who donate their hard earned dollars to help keep *HOT WIRE* afloat. As of November 1, Fairy Godmothers donated \$10,660. This money comes in many forms: some donors add a few bucks onto their subscription orders and tell us to keep the change; others "tithe" a specific amount per month, and are sent a reminder either three times per year (with each issue) or once a year; still

others give a one-time large donation (\$1,000 is the record, but \$500, \$200, or \$100 amounts are not uncommon). Thank you, thank you, from all of us who create and who read *HOT WIRE*.

FUNDRAISING ACTIVITIES

We've been pretty assertive this year about fundraising activities. We had a Country Western Line Dancing Party With Maile & Marina in August which raised almost \$2,000. (And it was so much fun, we plan to make it an annual event.) This year's yard sale netted \$184. And, best of all, we finally found our grant writer! (We've only been searching for eight years.) As a result, we received a grant from the Harmony Women's Fund for a heavenly \$3,500.

AND THE BOTTOM LINE IS...

Between responsible financial management, generous support from the Fairy Godmothers, and money brought in by our fundraising events, we've been not only able to survive this recession, but have even *grown* a little bit. We were able to buy our long-desired fax machine (HP FAX-200), which has made our lives so much easier. We now pay our business manager \$6,500/year (twenty hours/week) and our office manager \$975/year (three hours/week). We know we

continued on page 7

ON THE COVER

In this issue, Z Budapest—writer, teacher, and one of the most prominent proponents of feminist women's spirituality—discusses her childhood, her basic beliefs, and her current plans for a new Goddess Festival in Europe.

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that we can no longer list everyone in the
masthead. Please look on page 5 in this issue.

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feminist spiritual revolutionary

Z BUDAPEST

Interviewed by Toni Armstrong Jr.

Zsuzsanna Emese Budapest describes herself as a "Hungarian-born genetic witch." One of the most well-known proponents of feminist witchcraft, Z has been instrumental in creating and publicizing the women's spirituality movement for more than twenty years. She has written the classics 'The Holy Book of Women's Mysteries' (Wingbow Press, 1985), 'Grandmother of Time' (Harper Collins, 1989), and 'Grandmother Moon' (Harper Collins, 1991). She produces the Goddess TV (GTV) show '13th Heaven,' which is syndicated on seven cable stations in the Bay Area.

Z was born January 30, 1940 in Budapest. World War II and its aftermath were indelibly imprinted on her soul. Growing up, she experienced dire poverty, spent time in a convent, and was sick with multiple infections until penicillin reached Hungary when she was ten years old. As a teenaged student, she participated in the 1956 Hungarian Revolution; with her city shot to pieces, she left of the country, journeying on foot to the Austrian border.

Three years later, at the age of nineteen, Z moved to Chicago, married, and had two sons. She participated early and heavily in the feminist revolution of the '60s, developing and promoting her views on woman-centered spirituality.

Today she is a writer and lecturer, and is looking for producers to help her travel and give fun-filled Goddess witchcamps for women. Currently, she is planning to produce a European Goddess festival in Hungary in the summer of 1994.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN WHEN YOU CALL YOURSELF A "GENETIC WITCH"?

All of our family members were herbalists or healers; I come from a long line of witches. To be a witch is to be part of a pre-Christian belief system. We honored Mother Nature, not a male god. My mother—who was an artist, a sculptor—could read palms, visit the dead at night, tell stories from the other side at breakfast time. For a long time I thought everybody's mother talked to the dead and brought back messages. My mother's sister is still alive; she's a pharmacist, and grandfather was a country doctor.



Zsuzsanna at age twelve (1952). "She is the kid who haunts me," says Z today.

HOW DID YOU SELECT YOUR NAME?

I was born in Budapest. When I took it as a name, there was already a Judy Chicago, a Wanda West Coast, and a Norma New York, so I thought I'd better act fast, before some other Hungarian lesbian took this one. It was in the early '70s, when we were all shedding our patriarchal names, but for me it was more. I loved my country, and I felt if I could just say my birthplace as my name every day, I would stay connected to it forever.

YOUR CHILDHOOD WAS QUITE DRAMATIC. UNDER WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES DID YOU FINALLY LEAVE YOUR BIRTHPLACE?

The Hungarian Revolution was a life-changing event for me. I remember when I saw the first leaflet in my life, coming out of my high school—it was a student-organized demonstration on October 23, 1956. What a heady experience. My entire class went to join the demonstration; I wrote about this in detail in my book *Grandmother of Time*. Four of my classmates died that evening; the secret police shot at us from the bushes of the museum.

Cowards—we were unarmed students and sixteen-year-old girls.

The city was shot to pieces. I felt horrible. I visited my best friend Maria and said to her, "Let's go, there's nothing left here; let's not be sweet sixteen in the ruins." But she said no; her mother needed her. Now she hates me for leaving her behind; she still hasn't forgiven me.

SO YOU LEFT?

Yes. I walked out of the country—to the Austrian border, about 250 kilometers—with only a knife, some bread, a little lard, and an onion in my bag.

The night before I left, I prayed to my grandmother, who is my guardian spirit. In her time, she was a suffragist, founded schools for girls, published newsletters, and gave speeches. She said my name as the last word in this world, which means she signed up to look after me. On my long journey on foot from Budapest to the Austrian border, I often felt miraculously saved by Grandmother's protection.

LAST SUMMER, YOU WENT BACK TO HUNGARY—WHY?

Two years ago, my revolution of 1956 was won at last. Free elections were held; Hungarians elected a lot of poets and artists to their Parliament. I wanted to see it, feel it, in this newness. I had visited every five years or so, when my mother was still alive. Since she died, my country had to do something dramatic to get me back.

WITH ALL THE RECENT CHANGES IN EUROPE, WHAT WAS IT LIKE?

To begin with, I cannot spread the mythology about the Budapest airport any more—it's no longer true that they let go of trained falcons to scare off the starlings a half an hour before the planes take off, lest the birds fly into the whirling wheels. This used to be true, but no more. They have built an entirely new airport where I landed this summer. And the agony of entering the country is gone also. Just like elsewhere in Europe, you flash your passport, they gaze at it. Then I have to say, "I am a writer—that's my pen name," and the

young officer acts sophisticated and nods as if this was the most natural thing in the world, being called "Budapest." I experienced none of the humiliation of two years ago, when my lover and I were literally thrown off our train on the very border at Hegyeshalom in the midst of a cornfield for the lack of a visa. I didn't think we needed one any more. I was wrong.

WHAT HAPPENED?

They have become free. Hungarians are an ancient people, but they figured out economy as well. Magyarország [Hungary]—my home of old—has joined the world. Tourists are now everyone, though mostly Germans; the Americans stayed away this year because of the war next door in Serbia/Bosnia. That's an act of extreme caution, like not visiting New York because of the L.A. riots. I was alone this year, a risky business.

YOU GREW UP DURING WORLD



Z Budapest: "After the second World War, I was placed in a nunnery because my mother thought the Christians were the only ones who had something to eat...You have not known excitement until you have lived with hundreds of repressed females in all age groups. My beloved was Eva, the third from the right in the last row." Zsuzsanna is the second from the left in the second row; in the center is Sister Gabriella and Sister Josephine (in glasses).

WAR II IN THIS AREA?

Yes. And after the second World War, I was placed in a nunnery because my mother thought the Christians were the only ones who had something to eat. At the nunnery I became interested in lesbianism, which was thick everywhere. You have not known excitement until you have lived with hundreds of repressed

females in all age groups. The nuns came in couples; I still think of Sister Josephine, who was the butch, and Sister Gabrielle, who was the femme. Sister Gabrielle looked after me, and she never hit me, though she did hit the other girls—I always took that as a special sign of love. I grew up in boarding schools after the nuns had to disband. I made special friendships with girls, and met Mary when I was nine. We loved each other.

WHEN, AND UNDER WHAT CONDITIONS, DID YOU MOVE TO THE U.S.?

Moving to the U.S.A. was relatively easy. After I finished high school in Innsbruck, I got an international scholarship. I attended the University of Vienna, and got my green card and visa to the U.S.A. when I was nineteen. I came to Chicago and got married within three weeks to a boy I had been going with in Budapest. I had already broken up with him, but here we were the only ones who knew each other. I think we did the emigrant thing,

The "Women's Revolution" was the second revolution I had experienced in my life. This sacred phenomenon—which, like the winds, picked up my sails—gave me self-esteem and female identity. For the first time in my U.S.A. life I had friends, women friends. Since Maria, I hadn't had any real friends; married women didn't have friends, unless it was the wives of the friends of the husbands. But then I got divorced, and *voilà!* I was eligible for female friendships. What a gift that was!

I went to an early demonstration for women's rights in Los Angeles. Later, I staffed the women's center on Mondays—I chose Monday because it's a moon day, a day for feelings. I learned so much listening to others. This is where I conceived of women's spirituality. No matter what we were talking about—homelessness, childcare, the ERA—some men always managed to wave the Bible in our faces and call us names. "Satan's daughters," "godless women," "sluts," etc. I pointed out to my sisters that we needed our own cosmology. We needed a feminist religion, combining feminism with the dreaded and maligned witchcraft. I advocated returning to worshipping life in the symbol of the Goddess.

HOW WAS THIS IDEA RECEIVED?

Actually, it wasn't easy for feminists to swallow. Most women were burned so bad by religion, they were allergic to any mention of it. But I have persisted. I have always predicted that those political activists who know how to replenish their souls will have longevity, while those who don't deal with their souls will burn out.

It was a long battle, very long, but nowadays women's spirituality dominates the bookstores, we have bestsellers—the Goddess is no longer a scary idea. I take pride in that. There's a lot more to it, and I've written about a lot of it in my books.

SO WHAT'S IT LIKE NOW FOR YOU PERSONALLY TO GO "HOME"?

First comes the rush of tears when I hear the language—the beloved, difficult tongue that I used to be so good at. I won recital contests when I was in high school. Now I have an accent that I cannot even hear—my brother tells me these things. My Aunt Titi is there; she's seventy-seven this year. On this last trip, she made me stuffed mushrooms and rizibizi, a green salad combination. She says she remembered that I loved those things. I actually hate stuffed mushrooms; what I loved was stuffed cabbage, but she is forgetful

made a family. When a woman doesn't have family ties, she can make some. I had two sons before I was twenty-two. They are grown now, and turned out to be good friends of mine. I'm very grateful for that.

HOW DID YOU BECOME INVOLVED IN WHAT'S NOW KNOWN AS "WOMEN'S SPIRITUALITY"?

nowadays.

When I was there, it was like "so far not so good." I felt myself changing—my normal, easy-going persona, my secure personality, recedes. The little girl from the old days gets evoked by the cobblestone roads.

As we drove home, I saw the landscape of soot-covered beautiful houses, with the walls falling down, that ancient imperial yellow pain still showing in patches. I saw only one graffiti, which read, "Jutka, I love you! Mouse." Oh, Goddess, the tears came into my eyes—I quickly covered up with my sunglasses.

Hungaria. How quickly she claims back my emigrant soul—how, by the time I reached the house, the language was streaming back into my brain in coherent long sentences. Words flushed my tongue, words that I have not used since the last time I was there. I know I must be careful there; the place is so powerful, I usually lose my identity within hours.

AND THEN...?

...and I then become this hungry, abandoned, scared girl who used to starve here, and I need to eat this country through its foods and beers and wines, stuff it into my mouth and assimilate it so deeply that it will never get lost again. Especially I must be careful when we are already in the city, seeing the streets—so familiar from when I was very young—pockmarked still by bullet holes. "Why can't they just get some plaster and work on these houses already!" I wanted to yell suddenly with that little-girl fright. The war was almost a lifetime ago, the revolution forty-some years ago. What is wrong with everybody?

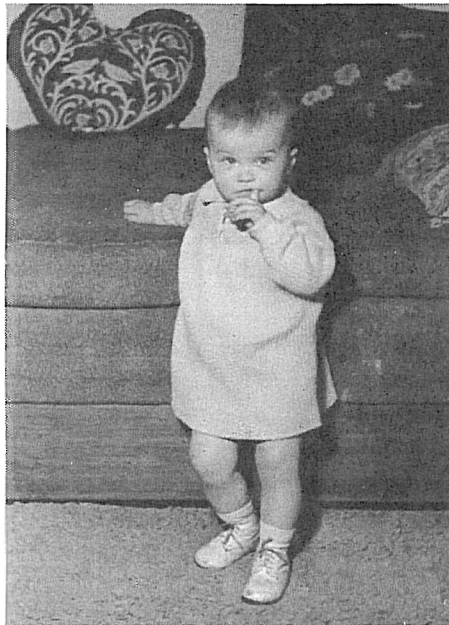
My family doesn't see the bullet holes. They are used to them—it's part of the city's charm, I suppose. But I want the bullet holes to be covered up, because after a few days, when I walk along on the streets, shopping, I start hearing the sounds of the shots that created the holes. *Boom...hissss...bam!* If I get onto a quiet little street...even if there is a restaurant nestled underneath old chestnut trees, even if it has soft music streaming out, the comforting smells of lecco and baked port tickle the nostrils...even that is not enough to stop the sounds of the war, plus the civil war, rushing my senses.

On other visits, I held on to my key-chain, afraid that Oakland would disappear. I *do* live elsewhere, I *do* have a life and a lover in California, these are my car keys. I chanted my mantra to hold on to my identity. In spite of this, sometimes I

lost the feeling that I had another life, and the city—this ancient, seductive monster—swallowed me up. My feelings, my adult self, all gone.

HOW WAS THIS MOST RECENT TRIP? DID YOU FEEL THAT SAME SWALLOWED UP SENSATION?

Not this time. This time I was only staying five days and I had a mission: to find the feminists. I had some phone numbers, planning to see about finding support to produce a European women-only festival. I want to import a version of the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival there. On this continent they have spirituality



Zsuzsanna at two years old. The apartment was bombed to the ground the following year.

festivals, but not for women only. When I was giving workshops in Germany about the healing powers of the Goddess, women made reservations months in advance. It was the most popular workshop out of more than 100.

HOW DID THE EUROPEAN FEMINISTS RESPOND TO YOUR FESTIVAL IDEAS AND PLANS?

They lit up at this Hungarian festival prospect. Hungary to them is a southern playground, with the best of foods and wines—as well as the Balaton, the largest lake in central Europe. I was nervous looking for a venue.

DID YOU FIND A SUITABLE ONE?

Well, my brother Imre found two places he recommended: one on top of a mountain in an old growth forest, with a

swimming pool; the other directly on the Balaton. The mountain top is beautiful, and close to the city, but too big. I would need 1,200 women to come and fill it up if I were to rent the whole place. Also, it's too...civilized. Too many buildings, too much the spirit of the old commie camp this used to be. But what a great outdoor stage already in place!

The place on the Balaton was filled with German RVs when we went to see it. It was hard to visualize it empty. Vanyorcvashegy, it is called. I worry that even I cannot pronounce it right—we'd have to rename it. It's isolated, so we could make all the noise we like. On one side it's nothing but reeds, and the other side is empty also—easily controlled for entrance. I can see 800 international women naked here, and safe. No stage, though; we would have to rent or build one. No problem. Kata, my sister-in-law, assures me I can get indigenous folk artists, choirs, dance groups, even individual singers—as many as I like.

IF YOU DECIDE TO GO FORWARD WITH THIS IDEA, WHEN WILL THIS EUROPEAN FESTIVAL BE HELD?

Here is the deal. I'm inviting women of the world to be my guests in 1994, during the full moon in August, on the Balaton. Spend a week swimming, horseback riding, wine tasting, visiting fallen castles, and playing—culminating in a women's weekend. It will be different. Celebrate the Boldogasszony, our local pagan Goddess, whose moon it is. If you are a white woman, explore your own spiritual cultural roots with me.

THIS FESTIVAL WILL PRIMARILY EMPHASIZE THE SPIRITUAL CULTURAL ROOTS OF WHITE WOMEN?

This will be a festival for *all* women. But in Europe—as I find it here—white women are lost. We don't know what to do with our roots. Nobody knows enough about it. White people colonized the world, enslaved other races—and we are hated. Women are very sensitive to this, and they want it to change. So, lacking insight, white women imitate Native Americans, or Black people, or Latinas—any ethnic group that might not have lost their spirituality to white, patriarchal Christianity. When I saw this emerge in the '70s, I was heartbroken. I feel it's racist to steal the spiritual traditions of other ethnic groups—it is a different kind of theft, but bad nonetheless. American women insisted for a long time that they had this much or that much "Indian blood" in them, so



Zsuzsanna and her first love, Maria, in 1955. "This is the only picture we have of us together," says Z.

now they would wear feathers and call themselves by Native American names. That is not helpful. Other races want to come together with people as equals, not imitations.

White roots, long lost as they may be, can be remembered in women's circles, or even recreated. We just have to have patience and imagination, and faith that we too are authentic people. The women can give birth to new traditions that are not oppressing anybody. Everyone interested in such ideas will be welcomed with open arms. Think of giant communal rituals performed by hundreds of women. Think of banners proclaiming this is the camp of Dutch women, or the French, the Italians, the Swedes, the Danes, or the Russians. Folk music, folk dances, ethnic pride. And most of all, rituals.

DO YOU HAVE A NAME FOR THE FESTIVAL YET?

I change the name daily. I'm thinking of calling it the European Women's Moon Festival, or maybe the International Women's Moon's Festival in Hungary. Sometimes I call it the Hungarian Goddess Festival. The only thing I'm sure of is that our logo will feature the local Mermaid of the Balaton.



1974: the feminist witch giving a Goddess blessing for a N.O.W. conference in Los Angeles.

THE LESBIAN-FEMINIST COMMUNITY IS HIGHLY EVOLVED IN MANY PLACES IN EUROPE. I ASSUME YOU ARE WORKING WITH WOMEN IN EUROPE TO PRODUCE THIS EVENT?

Ah yes, I found the Hungarian feminists—all four of them to begin with. One is English but speaks perfect Hungarian. She says by 1994 there may be as many as forty of them. I thanked her for working in my country with the women; she thanked me for my ambitious plan. German, Swiss, and Austrian women have already volunteered their services to give workshops and help translate.

DOES HAVING THIS FESTIVAL IN THE WORKS MAKE IT EASIER EMOTIONALLY TO GO HOME?

You know, this last trip, the gunshots were not so loud on the streets of Budapest when I walked by the bullet holes.



Z Budapest today: "Women can give birth to new traditions that are not oppressing anybody."

The canons didn't go off when I glanced up to the Witches Mountain [now called the Gellert]. The ghosts of the past were milder for me. Maybe the power they have to tear my heart out will decrease in equal measure with my sacred work at home.

Those interested in bringing Z to town or becoming involved with the European Goddess Festival can write Z Budapest, P.O. Box 11363, Oakland, CA 94611. •

ABOUT THE WRITER: Toni Armstrong Jr. is a writer and editor who learned most of what she knows from nuns, who are famous for their strict approach to academic discipline. The kindest was her first grade teacher, Sister Therese, at Holy Family School in South Pasadena, California. Reading has always been one of Toni's favorite things to do in her spare time, and she especially enjoys reading vampire novels, stories involving time travel, and back issues of 'HOT WIRE.'

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SOAPBOX

Thanks so much for an excellent magazine in every way, from the articles and features to the artists you give exposure to, both new and longtime friends. Even the paper it's printed on, the typesetting, and layout make reading your magazine a sensual experience.

The Jamie Anderson interview struck a chord. Twenty-one years ago, I met a woman who to this day continues to have a profound effect on me. We met because the two guys we were dating were friends. Who knows where they are today, but she and I are as close as ever. She is an open lesbian celebrating her tenth anniversary with her lover, and I am celebrating my eleventh with my husband and our four children. Though our lifestyles differ, we have learned and grown from each other—and at the heart of it all has been an unflinching love and acceptance.

I appreciate Anderson's willingness to be "an educator for the straight community," and also her use of humor. Her messages communicate acceptance, and cause us to think rather than be offended. I don't see her songs as "anti-straight." Humor is a powerful vehicle for getting across the message of acceptance.

Other artists who use humor very effectively were also featured in this issue, such as Monica Grant and Judy Fjell. As a Catholic, I love Judy's pope song—so does my brother, who's a priest! Even Catholics can poke fun at themselves! Keep up the good work!

Mary Ann Bachmann, Oakland

.....

I read Helen Hooke's article in the May 1990 issue and have been listening to her album *Verse-ability* lately. I appreciate her presence now, just as I did when I was growing up. I was in a women's band when I was thirteen, and we sang "High Flyin' Woman" (from Helen's great band The Deadly Nightshade). What an empowering song! I find her work still empowering. Wow! Particularly the first two songs on this album—"Never Again" and "Standing on the Line." She's got some significant lyrics and ear-candy hooks. Way to go, Helen!

Susan Herrick, Unionville, Pennsylvania

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

I was a college student in 1972, and *Lesbian/Woman* by Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon was the first lesbian book I ever read. It had a profound effect on me and my friends. It was a pleasure to read about the lovely authors and see how good they look in the '90s. They are an inspiration to two or maybe even three generations of women. They'll never know most of us, but they changed our lives. Without that book, the course of lesbian liberation would probably have taken a radically different course. I'm curious about one thing; in the updated version of *L/W*, lesbian music is discussed but *HOT WIRE* isn't included. I think *HOT WIRE* is generally acknowledged and respected as "the" lesbian music/culture publication. For many, it's their primary source of info on what's happening in the industry, since publications like *Ms.* and *Mother Jones* generally ignore us. Was there a reason for this omission? Is it because it isn't identified as a specifically lesbian publication in its title?

Roz Webster, New York City

Del & Phyllis reply: We shuddered when we saw the already-printed publicity blurb using the word "complete" in describing the twenty-year update of our book. It reminded us of political gatherings in which all the political officials present were recognized and followed by the inevitable apology for inadvertently omitting some.

Mea culpa times two. We are embarrassed and unable to explain how we happened to leave out *HOT WIRE* in our account of the emerging lesbian culture. We were so intent on featuring pioneering recording artists of the '70s that we overlooked this pioneering magazine. *HOT WIRE*'s features are vital elements in artist-audience bonding.

We agree that *HOT WIRE* is "the" lesbian music/culture publication. We regret that this highly professional and quality magazine has not been fully recognized. We pledge to Toni Armstrong Jr. that we will be walking-talking advocates of *HOT WIRE* at all of our future readings at bookstores and other gatherings.

Thank you, Roz, for your kind words about *Lesbian/Woman*, and for reminding us that *HOT WIRE* has a definite part in lesbian herstory.

Answers to September Trivia Question

Why, you ask, is the combination of Shirley MacLaine/Audrey Hepburn significant to lesbian herstory? Well, you probably are not even aware of the *real* significance of this combo, so I'll tell you. One Saturday night sometime in the late '60s (in my early teen years) I was begrudgingly babysitting my little sister. When I finally got her to go to sleep, I went downstairs and turned on some strange movie on the TV. Lo and behold, before my very eyes, in my very own living room on the family TV, there appeared the most peculiar sexual tension I had ever witnessed between two actors. I was totally glued to the screen. For me, seeing *The Children's Hour* was my first indication that I was not the only female in the entire world who had these strange feelings. So, you see, the significance of this combo is that Shirley and Audrey provided me with my first pre-coming out validation, no matter how horribly the movie ended! I also thank Lillian Hellman for writing this scathing drama in 1934. I'll never forget it.

Martha L. McLean, Asheville, North Carolina
P.S. Is there anyone out there from Lyons Township H.S. (LaGrange, Ill.) class of '72?

.....

Shirley MacLaine and Audrey Hepburn co-starred in the second film version of Lillian Hellman's *The Children's Hour*. This movie was the first thing I ever saw on TV that dealt with lesbians, latent, closeted, or otherwise, and no cause of optimism for a young adolescent girl who was attracted to other girls. Hellman was apparently more concerned with her theme of the destructive power of rumor and innuendo than with lesbians or being gay positive, but who knew that in junior high?

Mary Dettloff, Schaumburg, Illinois

.....

Lillian Hellman's script first reached the screen in 1936 under the title *These Three*. In this initial film version the content of the play was greatly altered. Instead of having the student accuse the two teachers of being lesbians, the director (William Wyler) had the child accuse one of the women of having an affair with a man. In 1961, Wyler again directed Hellman's play, but this time he stuck to the play's original story. Although *The Children's Hour* deals more with the ramifications of lies than with lesbianism, Wyler did not submit the film to the Johnston Office because of the Hollywood Production Code, which forbade any discussion of sexual deviation. But after the film was finished, the Johnston Office changed its stance on the sexual deviation clause, thereby making *The Children's Hour* one of the first films to be released under the new clause of the Production Code.

Anne Thompson, Kalamazoo, Michigan

Since I first wrote "Marie" in 1986 [see article in November 1987 issue], I have occasionally received news updates on other female couples who have taken their cases to court (or school boards, or town councils) in order to be allowed to go to their high school proms together. This year's story had a new twist, though, and I wanted to pass it on.

Two young women in Massachusetts (Dedham area) tried to buy a ticket to their prom this past spring and were refused. Why? Because they *weren't* lesbians! It seems that a non-discrimination policy protecting gay and lesbian couples would have allowed them to go to the prom if they had sworn that they were dykes. The young women responded that, well, they could lie and make it easy—they had no problem with lesbianism per se—but they felt that they wanted to stand up for their right, as two straight women, to attend the prom together. They won their case. I love this country.

Laura Berkson, Kingston, Rhode Island
 Editor's note: "Marie" has been recorded by Laura Berkson, Cathy Winter, Charlie King and Martha Leader, and Judith Kate Friedman. Ronnie Gilbert has included it in her concert repertoire since '87.

Up until now, your Patricia Charbonneau cover [March 1987] has been my favorite. But, I must confess that the new Jamie cover is at least equally appealing. Her charm, whimsy, and cynicism all seem to leap off the page. It seems really natural and somehow genuine, unlike most "star" photos on magazine covers. A lot like her shows. And I love the DC in '93 button!

Monique S., Country Club Hills, Illinois

I spent some time in Chicago in the '70s, and then returned briefly in the '80s. (I move around a lot due to my job.) Your article was right on target; the community has *always* been bustling with activity. Unlike some bigger cities which shall remain nameless, Chicago women manage to be able to work together in true coalitions, and keep cultural things going for more than a year. Unlike smaller towns, there's a lot of choices about what to do. It's always been a comfort to me that whenever I'm passing through town or coming to visit, I can count on dropping in at Women & Children First, and that Mountain Moving Coffeehouse will have some show on Saturday night. I guess I feel about these places like some people do about their temple or church in their hometown...it would just be shocking to "come home" for a visit and find out it was gone. I'm sure it,

and all the other Chicago "institutions," take a heck of a lot of work to keep going. More than most women realize, I bet. So, here's a pat on the back to all of you in Chicago, including the *HOT WIRE* staff, of course. Your town gets an A+ rating on my travelmeter.

J.A. Malkanov, Portland, Oregon

First and foremost, thanks for such an excellent publication. As a radio DJ, *HOT WIRE* keeps me up to date with new artists—the soundsheets are great for that. I can't say enough about the articles and interviews. Excellent work, sisters.

My radio show "Now's The Time" (WMUA-91.1 FM) features music, news, and interviews of special interest to lesbians, feminists, and allies. I've been on the air with this show for five and a half years. I am proud to say that for the past two years, "Now's The Time" has raised more money during the station's annual fundraiser than any of the three hour shows! Thanks again for your quality magazine and best wishes for continued success.

Judy O', Amherst, Massachusetts



The trivia question this time comes from Suede, who (along with Lea DeLaria) represented women's music and culture on the '20/20' Northampton show. "Why can't you masturbate with these two fingers?" she asks. The first reader to correctly answer Suede's query will receive a free subscription to *'HOT WIRE'*.

EDITOR from inside front cover

must expand the latter position to at least ten hours/week as soon as is humanly possible—our office manager is now doing *at least* twelve hours. (This works out to a whopping \$1.63/hour during a light *HOT WIRE* office work week.) Finally, to expand our circulation, we should hire someone to do a promotional campaign. So...we continue to need an influx of cash. If you've been thinking about becoming a Fairy Godmother, this would be a *great* time to join up.

WHAT WE NEED RIGHT NOW

In order to take care of hiring the minimum staff we *really* need to run *HOT WIRE* properly, we figure we should take in at least \$6,000 more per year in donations and fundraising activities. In the big scheme of things, that is *so little* and would go *so far*...it would enable some of us who do zillions of hours of unpaid labor to finally get a break. Think of it: if fifty women would each donate just \$10/month, that would take care of it. Can you help us meet this goal? If so, please write FAIRY GODMOTHER: PAID WOMAN-HOURS on the memo line on your check.

HELLO AGAIN, NORTHAMPTON!

Girls, you are the most popular dykes in the nation. First the *Enquirer*, now prime time television. Did everyone see the feature on *20/20* last October? The show claimed one out of seven women in Northampton is a lesbian; by this time next year, after millions of viewers have seen the show, it will probably increase to one in five!

READERS' CHOICE AWARDS

It's time to write in nominations for the next Readers' Choice Awards. Please write a succinct statement describing in what way(s) your nominee (individual or group) has made an important contribution to women's music and culture. Send to Readers' Choice/*HOT WIRE*, 5210 N. Wayne, Chicago, IL 60640. •

Toni Armstrong Jr.
 Publisher/Managing Editor

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HOTLINE

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

WOMEN

The first female player in the National Hockey League made her debut in a game last September. Twenty-year-old goalie **MANON RHEAUME** is the first woman to play in one of the four major pro sports leagues.

A nationwide steering committee has raised more than \$100,000 in a bid to endow an **ANITA FAYE HILL LAW PROFESSORSHIP** at the University of Oklahoma where Hill teaches. The group hopes to raise \$250,000, which would be matched by the school to create a teaching post focusing on workplace equity, reports the *Chicago Tribune*.

KATE CLINTON and **MELISSA ETHERIDGE** performed at the second annual Hollywood fundraiser for the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute last September. The event raised \$170,000 and was attended by Dana Delany, Sally Struthers, Judith Light, Richard Gere, and James Woods, reports *Lesbian News*.

When not gigging with Rita Coolidge, bassist **LYNN KELLER** has been playing in L.A. with a six-woman Motown group called The Suits. She also toured recently with The 5th Dimension and Olivia Newton-John, and plays bass with several women's music artists at festivals.

URBAN BUSH WOMEN wowed the crowd at the second annual Dance Africa festival in Chicago last October with their piece *I Don't Know But I've Been Told If You Keep On Dancin' You'll Never Get Old*, "a tribute to the drill teams, drum majorettes, and double dutch groups who keep the spirit of dance alive in the public schools."

SHERRY HICKS, best known in women's music for her dynamic sign language interpreting, has created a one-woman autobiographical show dealing with her CODA (children of deaf adults) experiences. For booking info: Sherry Hicks, 2317 Carquinez, El Cerrito, CA 94530. (510) 215-1625.

EMILY A. LEVY has been appointed to the citizens' advisory committee for implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act in the city of Santa Cruz. Her job will include making recommendations, and she'd like to hear from other women doing similar work. Emily Levy, P.O. Box 1174, Felton, CA 95018. (408) 429-8946; TTY through Calif. Relay Service (800) 342-5966.

HOTLINE presents capsule reports of past happenings, announced upcoming events, and passes on various tidbits of info. This column is dedicated 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.



Toni Armstrong Jr.

The most recent Pat Parker Poetry Award went to **HOT WIRE** staff artist Laura Irene Wayne (above right, with girlfriend Johanna). To honor the memory of Black lesbian feminist poet [and former **HOT WIRE** staffer] Pat Parker, **WIM Publications** offers an annual prize for poetry or dramatic monologue written by a Black lesbian poet.

The **BRILLE VERSION OF LAURA BERKSON'S ALBUM LYRICS** are now available, free of charge. Brave Ann Music, P.O. Box 1616, Kingston, RI 02881. (401) 782-8625.

FERRON fans, take note: She is releasing her first independent instrumental album, entitled *Resting With The Question*. Ferron c/o Cherrywood Station, P.O. Box 871, Vashon, WA 98070.

The Chicago feminist arts community got behind **CAROL MOSELEY BRAUN** last fall in her quest to become the first African-American woman in the U.S. Senate. Fundraisers included a day at novelist **SARA PARETSKY's** house (coordinators included writer/**HOT WIRE** founding mother **YVONNE ZIPTER**); a night on women's health featuring **GLORIA STEINEM** and feminist disabled rights activist **MARCA BRISTO**; and a party at playwright **CLAUDIA ALLEN's** house.

"Traveling throughout the most western part of Europe was like living the Lesbian Connection, especially at the Galway Women's Summer Camp," says **MARLA BB**, who sang her sassy mama blues to a rowdy Irish, English, Scottish, Welsh, North American, South American, Canadian, German, and Gypsy crowd of women.

RITA FALBEL, editor of *Bridges* magazine and a member of the coordinating committee of the

Jewish Women's Committee to End the Occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, has released a second album: *Timepieces: Between Jewish Past and Future*, which covers the music of the Diaspora in Hebrew, Ladino, Yiddish, Arabic, Spanish, German, and English.

Women putting together an "**ALL-WOMYN'S RANCH**" are now looking for lesbian financial partners. **DHCC**, Box 472, Bay City, TX 77414.

During the elections last fall, **KATE CLINTON** encouraged voters to mark their ballots for the Clinton/Gore ticket: Kate and Lesley. We wish.

WHOOPI WATCH: Ms. Goldberg, whose half-hour talk show debuted last September 14, has made sure that her show is extremely forthwith on the topic of homosexuality. Gay/lesbian celebrities (including k.d. lang) have openly discussed their lifestyles, and hetero stars (such as Elizabeth Taylor) have addressed AIDS and the impact of gay creative talent on Hollywood. Whoopi has also recently starred in the films *Sister Act* and *Sarafina!*, and participated in the hurricane relief show organized by Gloria Estefan in Miami. And in her spare time...

FOND FAREWELLS

The award-winning **OUT/LOOK** magazine has declared bankruptcy. The board of the beautifully designed Bay Area-based gay/lesbian publication voted to suspend operations when fundraising efforts did not meet their expectations.

MARY WELLS, Motown's first major female star, died from cancer last July. "She was a hometown girl made good—and she was the first female there in a man's world," said ex-Supreme Mary Wilson in *People* last August.

The May '92 West Coast tour was the swan song for **TWO NICE GIRLS**. They are in the process of making a documentary film entitled *Out on the Road With Two Nice Girls*. Two Nice Girls, P.O. Box 1600, Austin, TX 78765.

SHIRLEY BOOTH—best known as the outspoken TV maid Hazel—passed away last October 16 at age ninety-four. She won three Tonys and an Oscar during her eighty-two-year acting career. She owned a twenty-five percent share in *Hazel*.

Farewell to pioneering geneticist **BARBARA McCLINTOCK**, whose discoveries about "jumping genes" (the movement of small segments of DNA around chromosomes, causing unexpected patterns in heredity) won her a 1983 Nobel Prize and revolutionized her field. She died at the age of ninety in New York last September.

ANNIVERSARIES

Congratulations to the women who have kept *SOPHIE'S PARLOR* radio show on the air waves in Washington, D.C. for twenty years!

The **WOMEN'S PRESS OF CANADA** celebrated its twentieth last September. The celebration included music by Sherry Shute and Lee Pui Ming, reports *Feminist Bookstore News*.

REDWOOD CULTURAL WORK celebrated its twentieth anniversary season with a special concert last October 30.

BROADSHEET, New Zealand's feminist magazine, celebrated its twentieth last September 19 (Suffrage Day) at the Listener Women's Book Festival. New Women's Press, now celebrating ten years, joined *Broadsheet*.

THE PAGODA celebrated its fifteenth year as a spiritual/cultural home and retreat/guest house for lesbians. Renovation has made some of the retreat wheelchair accessible. The Pagoda, 2854 Coastal Hwy., St. Augustine, FL 32995.

"FACE THE MUSIC" community-produced weekly women's music show on public radio celebrates its thirteenth anniversary this January. Debbie LeVoi, "Face the Music," WFBE-FM, 605 Crapo, Flint, Michigan 48503-2094. (313) 760-1148.

Thirteenth anniversary celebrating for **CRAZY LADIES BOOKSTORE** in Cincinnati last July included a benefit concert featuring The Sugarhill Duo (Jay Albright and daughter Punky) and a cruise on the Ohio River.

LESBIAN CONTRADICTION celebrated its ten-year anniversary by publishing a "Best of *LesCon*" issue (December 1992). *LesCon*, 584 Castro St. #263, San Francisco, CA 94114.

NEWS

SPINSTERS BOOK COMPANY HAS BEEN SOLD to Joan Drury, executive director of the Harmony Women's Fund and founder of the National Lesbian Writers Awards. Spinsters Ink (new name) can be contacted at P.O. Box 300170, Minneapolis, MN 55403. (612) 377-8431.

WOMEN-OWNED BUSINESSES, not Fortune 500, will be the source of new jobs in the U.S. According to the National Foundation for Women Business Owners, women-owned businesses and the massive Fortune 500 companies now employ about the same number of workers: 11.7 million. In the next year, jobs with the Fortune 500 companies will drop by about 250,000; businesses owned by women will add 350,000 jobs.

Lesbian poet **ADRIENNE RICH** won the \$20,000 Poets Fellowship from the Academy of American Poets. The annual fellowship is awarded for distinguished poetic achievement.

Lesbian/gay/bi students who attend Occidental College may be eligible for **SPECIAL SCHOLARSHIP MONEY**. Financial assistance may be available should students be cut off financially

after coming out to their parents. Lambda Emergency Scholarships Fund, J. Poullard, Occidental College, 1600 Campus, Los Angeles, CA 90041.

ANN LANDERS ASKED HER GAY READERS, "Are you glad to be gay, or would you rather be straight?" Out of more than 100,000 responses, ninety-five percent said they'd rather be gay.

Entertainment Weekly reports that of the twenty-five top-selling albums of all time, only one is by a woman: **WHITNEY HOUSTON** (nine million). Top seller of all time? Michael Jackson's *Thriller* (twenty-one million). Okay, so *The Changer and the Changed* (more than 250,000) has a way to go.

Feminist Bookstore News reports that two of the editors who publish *Esto*, the Latina lesbian magazine, lost their homes in **HURRICANE ANDREW**. A relief fund has been established to help "disastered dykes" who fall between the cracks in FEMA and other "family"-oriented relief programs. *Esto/Hurricane Relief*, 4700 NW 7th St., Miami FL 33126. (305) 751-8385.

The first park in the U.S. to commemorate women's achievements is scheduled to open this March in Dade County, reports the *Chicago Tribune*. The sixteen acre, \$1 million **WOMEN'S PARK** will contain paths and picnic tables named for feminists who have shaped Florida's history.

The first and only **FEMINIST UNIVERSITY** in the world, Kvinneuniversitetet ("The Women's University") has been founded by a social psychology professor in Norway, reports *Sojourner*.

HONORS

Winners of the fourth annual Lambda Literary Awards, sponsored by *Lambda Book Report*, included **JEWELLE GOMEZ** (Lesbian Science Fiction/Fantasy, *The Gilda Stories*); **ADRIENNE RICH** (Lesbian Poetry, *Atlas of the Difficult World: Poems 1988-1991*); **SANDRA BUTLER** and **BARBARA ROSENBLUM** (Lesbian Nonfiction, *Cancer in Two Voices*); **BLANCHE MCCRARY BOYD** and **JEWELLE GOMEZ** (tie, Lesbian Fiction, *Revolution of Little Girls* and *The Gilda Stories*); **KATHERINE V. FORREST** (Lesbian Mystery, *Murder By Tradition*); **CARLA TRUJILLO** (editor, Lesbian Anthologies, *Chicana Lesbians: The Girls Our Mothers Warned Us About*); **LILLIAN FADERMAN** (Editors' Choice, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers*); **BARBARA GRIER/DONNA McBRIDE** (Publishers Service Award, Naiad Press).

GLORIA ANZALDÚA (*Borderlands-La Fronteras: The Mesiza* and *This Bridge Called My Back*) has won the 1992 Sappho Award of Distinction from the Astraea Lesbian Foundation. \$11,000 in additional grants were awarded to five emerging lesbian writers: poets **JANICE M. GOULD** and **RUTH L. SCHWARTZ**; fiction writers **KELLEY ESKRIDGE**, **LINDA MORGANSTEIN**, and **KYNA JANINE P. TAYLOR**. Astraea, 666 Broadway #520, New York, NY 10012. (212) 529-8021.

SIGNE WILKINSON (*Philadelphia Daily News*), has become the first female editorial cartoonist to win the Pulitzer Prize, according to *NOW Times*.

HOT WIRE staffer **TERRI JEWELL** recently won a \$100 poetry prize in the African American Women's ETA Creative Writing Competition. She continues to work on several book projects.

WIRED WOMEN DANCE PRODUCTIONS (St. Louis) was selected as a 1992 winner of the "World of Difference" award. This community service award is given in recognition of organizations who have taken an active stand against racism, prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination, and who attempt to foster mutual respect between all people. Wired Women also received a \$1,000 Regional Arts Commission grant.

Cheryl Marie Wade's video **HERE** has won a Bronze Apple at the National Educational Film & Video Festival; Honorable Mention at the Louisville Film & Video Festival; Third Place at the East Bay Video Festival; Special Merit Honorable Mention at the Media Access Awards; and the Robinson Award for Artistic Achievement. [See related entry in Film • Video section of "Hotline."]

QUOTABLE QUOTES

Joan Nestle writes in the *LHA Newsletter* (#13): From a story told around the Lesbian Herstory Archives table: the speaker, a Jewish woman in her late seventies, says, "I had a chance to read a copy of *The Well of Loneliness* that had been translated into Polish before I was taken into the camps. I was a young girl at the time, twelve or thirteen, and one of **THE WAYS I SURVIVED IN THE CAMP** was by remembering that book. I wanted to live long enough to kiss a woman."

"I felt that it was time, in terms of the public consciousness, to talk about it openly, and I feel a responsibility to the gay community as well as to myself," said **K.D. LANG** on the *Arsenio* show last August 10. "But ultimately, it was to alleviate all the pressure that's been on me. You know, as a public image, there's always been this undercurrent of speculation."

Tennis star **MARTINA NAVRATILOVA** cast her ballot for Bill Clinton last November. "As a working woman, I would have a really hard time voting for President Bush," she said in *People*. "He has been terrible on child care, maternity leave, and rights to abortion. I would like to represent my country in war, but as a gay woman I would not even be allowed to enter the armed forces. I think it's time for a change." Martina has been a U.S. citizen for eleven years.

"Every once in awhile I hear from women that have been inspired by me, and it just gives me fuel to go. On the other hand, when I get slagged by men, *that* gives me fuel to go," said **JENNIFER BATTEN** in an interview in *Sound Check* last summer. In 1987, she beat out 100 other guitarists to win a spot in Michael Jackson's touring band.

AMANDA DONOHOE (formerly *L.A. Law*'s C.J. Lamb) on her TV movies about an ex-cop who becomes a bounty hunter: "It's definitely about creating positive, powerful role models for women. I'm fed up with seeing women as victims and appendages. Haven't we had enough of that?"

she told *Entertainment Weekly*. The first movie in the trilogy, *Nothing Personal*, aired last fall.

GATHERINGS

Activists representing lesbian, gay, bisexual, and AIDS-related organizations throughout the U.S. will meet during January 15-17 in Dallas to plan the **INTERNATIONAL MARCH ON THE UNITED NATIONS TO AFFIRM THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF LESBIAN/GAY PEOPLE**. The international march and rally will be one of several events planned for June/July 1994 in New York City to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Stonewall rebellion. Stonewall 25, 208 W. 13th St., New York, NY 10011-7799.

GAY GAMES IV, to be held in New York, is now set for June 17-25, 1994. Gay Games IV, 135 W. 20th St., New York, NY 10011. (212) 633-9494.

THE ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN'S MUSIC AND CULTURE (AWMAC) will hold its annual women's music industry conference in early June in Bloomington, partially in conjunction with the National Women's Music Festival. AWMAC, 2124 Kittredge St. #104, Berkeley, CA 94704.

AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE INTENSIVES for lesbians are in the works for several dates and locales, including St. Augustine, Florida (winter break); Santa Barbara, California (late May); Pocono/Catskill Mountains (early September); and Hawaii (November). SASE to Particular Productions/ASL Intensives, 2854 Coastal Hwy. #7, St. Augustine, FL 32095.

The **18TH MIDWEST WIMMIN'S FESTIVAL** is being scheduled for June 3-14 in central or southern Missouri. MWF, 102 N. Garth, Columbia, MO 65203. (314) 449-8719.

WISCON 17, "a convention of speculative fiction and feminism," will take place March 5-7 at the Concourse Hotel in Madison. Lois McMaster Bujold will be one of the guests of honor. Wiscon 17, P.O. Box 1624, Madison, WI 53701-1624.

The first **PACIFIC COAST WOMEN'S MOTORCYCLE FESTIVAL** is scheduled for September 10-13, 1993. Creative Riding Productions, P.O. Box 423717, San Francisco, CA 94102. (415) 905-4511.

The **FESTIVAL OF WOMEN'S MUSIC** took place at the Aotea Centre in Auckland, New Zealand last December 5-6. The weekend featured the Auckland Philharmonic Orchestra performing contemporary music by New Zealand and Asian composers, conducted by Odaline de la Martinez. It was the first time that the APO was conducted by a woman. Festival of Women's Music, P.O. Box 4065, Wellington, New Zealand.

An international conference entitled **JUDAISM, FEMINISM, AND PSYCHOLOGY: CREATING A SHELTER IN THE WILDERNESS** was held last October in Seattle. Sponsored by the Jewish Women's Caucus of the Association for Women in Psychology, the event created a forum to explore being Jewish and female. Kayla Weiner, 600 1st Ave. #350, Seattle, WA 98104. (206) 343-0828.

The sixth **NATIONAL BLACK GAY AND LESBIAN CONFERENCE** will take place February 11-15 at the Hilton Hotel in Long Beach. This year's theme is "Black Lesbians and Gays: Building Bridges, Making Connections." 2538 Hyperion Ave. #7, Los Angeles, CA 90027. (213) 666-5495.

The first **MOSCOW AND ST. PETERSBURG LESBIAN/GAY INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL** was held last summer. 20,000 people reportedly attended.

The third annual conference of **LESBIAN/GAY ALUMNAE OF VASSAR COLLEGE** will take place on the Vassar campus May 14-16. L. Berkson, Box 1616, Kingston, RI 02881; Donna Lopez, AAUC, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY 12601.

The eighth annual **LESBIAN ART MOVEMENT SHOW** took place in Chicago October 16-November 20. The Chamber of Commerce invited it to be included in a citywide multicultural arts festival. Women's Art Shows, Urban Art Retreat, 3712 N. Broadway #700, Chicago, IL 60613.

POWERSURGE, the first international lesbian S/M conference, was held over Labor Day weekend. With 350 participants, organizers plan to make the weekend an annual event. Powersurge, 1202 E. Pike St. #819, Seattle, WA 98122-3936.

An unprecedented number (108) of **OPENLY GAY AND LESBIAN DELEGATES** and alternates gathered during the 1992 Democratic National Convention, according to *dinah*.

An **AUSTRALIAN LESBIAN FESTIVAL AND CONFERENCE** is being planned for October 1993 in Western Australia. Lesbian Festival and Conference, P.O. Box 985, Fremantle, Western Australia 6160.

MARCH ON WASHINGTON

The 1993 **MARCH ON WASHINGTON FOR LESBIAN, GAY, AND BI EQUAL RIGHTS AND LIBERATION** will take place on April 25. Pre-march festivities begin on April 21 and include historical exhibits; chorus festival; motorcycle run; lesbian/gay band concert; more. On April 24, Rev. Troy Perry will formalize the union of thousands of lesbian, gay, and bisexual relationships. March on Washington, P.O. Box 34607, Washington, DC 20043. (202) 628-0493 (voice), (202) 628-0471 (TTY/TDD), (202) 628-0472 (fax).

HOT WIRE is organizing a **LESBIAN MUSIC AND CULTURE CONTINGENT** to participate in the March. We are actively inviting all interested women to march with us. Bring drums, portable instruments, banners, and signs if you can. We are also getting rooms in a local hotel. If you're interested in helping us publicize this, contact **HOT WIRE**/March on Washington, 5210 N. Wayne, Chicago, IL 60640.

Lynn Thomas has written an **ANTHEM FOR THE MARCH** entitled "Together, Proud, and Strong." She has been traveling around the country doing a "We Are The World"-style recording and videotaping project. By press time, more than

sixty lesbian and gay singers had participated in studio sessions in Philadelphia, Berkeley, Chicago, Los Angeles, and elsewhere. Plans include a documentary video and a cassingle. The anthem will be sung by hundreds on the steps of the Capitol during the weekend of the March. For info, or to receive the music and lyrics, SASE to Lynn Thomas, 3312 Ridge, Perkasio, PA 18944.

GROUPS

The **INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE OF WOMEN COMPOSERS** was founded in January 1975 by Nancy Van de Vate and now has members representing two dozen countries. The seventeen-year-old organization is devoted to creating and expanding opportunities for—and documenting info about—women composers of serious music. ILWC, Southshore Road Box 670, Point Peninsula, Three Mile Bay, NY 13693.

The new **WOMEN'S LIBRARY IN AUSTRALIA** is seeking donations of feminist/lesbian publications from all over the world. P.O. Box 271, Newtown NSW 2042, Australia.

SISTER NAMIBIA COLLECTIVE is a group of feminist women who publish a newsletter and run a resource center for African women. They need donations of videos that focus on strong independent women and their relationships with each other. Sister Namibia, c/o Elizabeth Khaxos, P.O. Box 3723, Windhoek, Namibia, Africa.

GAY AND LESBIAN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL TEACHERS hosts conferences, retreats, and is planning a group to march in Washington, DC. To receive their newsletter, write Kathy Henderson, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA 01810.

A new **LATINA LESBIAN ARCHIVES** has started in Tucson. According to *Sojourner*, it's now collecting photos, oral history, works of art, letters, articles and other items to document Latina lesbian history. Yolanda Leyva, 1651 N. Old Pueblo, Tucson, AZ 85745.

The **LESBIAN PHOTOGRAPHERS NETWORK** is seeking global contact with lesbian photographers for networking and for a mail-order catalog of select photos celebrating our geographical and cultural diversity. Send info with a sample of your work to L-SEA-L, 348 Carlisle NE, Albuquerque, NM 87106.

The **LABRYS PROJECT** is a collective of lesbian incest survivors who hope to buy or lease a building. They plan to fund the project without government assistance. Make checks out to New Mexico REEF/Labrys Project; mail to Labrys Project, P.O. Box 40097, Albuquerque, NM 87196.

In the Best Interests of the Children is a non-profit group dedicated to fundraising and helping **CHILDREN/TEENS WITH HIV/AIDS**. Cris Williamson (chairperson of the board) and Tret Fure (member of the board) have given several benefit concerts to raise funds, and organized a ten-day statewide outreach effort that sparked more than a dozen separate multicultural, multimedia events.

The international **FRAU UND MUSIK** (Women and Music) is a confederation of women composers, musicians, musicologists, music teachers, and others interested in music. In existence since 1978, they focus on classical music and publish a magazine, written mostly in German (with a few English entries). Their archives contain thousands of compositions as well as many manuscripts, books, and other materials. Internationaler Arbeitskreis, Frau und Musik, c/o Adelheid Klammt, Vogesort 8F, D-3000 Hannover 91, Germany.

The **AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY WOMEN EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION** awards fellowships to teachers who are striving to create equity for girls in their classrooms. AAUW Educational Foundation, 1111 Sixteenth Street NW, Washington, DC 20036. (202) 728-7628 ext. 21.

THE LITERARY EXCHANGE welcomes members. Membership includes a free subscription to *The Literary Xpress* (a "free paperzine for wimmin of color"), book discussion notes, and discounts to events. SASE to The Literary Exchange, P.O. Box 438583, Chicago, IL 60643. (312) 509-6881.

The **ARAB/ARAB-AMERICAN LESBIAN NETWORK** offers pen pals, resources, and support. AALN, P.O. Box 1504, Lawrence, KS 66044.

Rabbi Sharon Kleinbaum, an openly lesbian graduate of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, took over the 1,100-member **CONGREGATION BETH SIMCHAT TORAH** in New York last August. It is the country's largest lesbian/gay synagogue, reports *New Directions for Women*.

To help push for inclusion of **WOMEN'S SOCCER IN THE 1996 OLYMPIC GAMES** in Atlanta, contact The Women's Soccer Foundation, 608 NE 63rd St., Seattle, WA 98115.

DOCUDYKES is a new organization formed to research and record the herstory of Texas lesbians. Projects include documentation of the Texas Lesbian Conferences, an oral history of Austin lesbian activism in the 1970s, and the preparation of an orientation guide for researchers. Docu-Dykes, P.O. Box 402063, Austin, TX 78704.

WOMEN OF MUSIC AND ENTERTAINMENT NETWORK is a non-profit association founded to support women's activities in the music and entertainment industry. They offer monthly meetings, workshops, networking, a quarterly newsletter, and referrals. WMEN, 370 Wallace Rd. #D-17, Nashville, TN 37211. (615) 834-5239.

Tsunami Records and Frost Fire Records are collaborating on a compilation CD to be released this spring. Entitled *A FAMILY OF FRIENDS*, the album will include previously unrecorded material by June Millington, Sue Fink, Alix Dobkin, Jamie Anderson, Melanie DeMore, Pam Hall, Venus Envy, Mary Watkins, Laura Berkson, Mimi Baczewska, Yer Girlfriend, Leah Zicari, The Wild Hearts, and Diane Lindsay.

New Dehli has its first lesbian group, **SAKHI**. Members of the group have space in the gay magazine *Bombay Dost*. SAKHI, P.O. Box 7032, Srinivas Puri, New Dehli 110065, India.

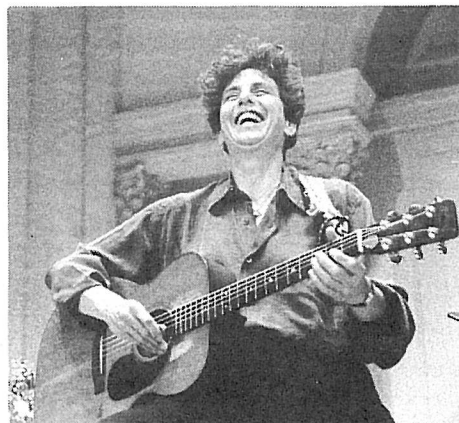
A new grassroots organization dedicated to supporting **WOMEN'S SPORTS** is starting now. SASE to P.O. Box 49648, Austin, TX 78765.

LESBIAN VISUAL ARTISTS is proud to announce that their membership is now 200+. The group is a conduit for communication among artists regarding all aspects of life. LVA, 3543 18th St. #5, San Francisco, CA 94110.

FILM•VIDEO

With almost no hype, *FRIED GREEN TOMATOES* did better at the box office (\$80 million) than *JFK* (\$69.7 million), *Bugsy* (\$48 million), or the *Prince of Tides* (\$72 million), according to *TV Guide*. So much for those who say the public isn't ready to accept a woman-identified comedy featuring a romance between the two main characters.

The C. David Memorial Trust has given \$100,000 to start a **FELLOWSHIP IN FILM AND VIDEO FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS AT UCLA**, reports *Lesbian News*. The fellowship's purpose is to promote positive images and increased cultural and education awareness of the gay/lesbian community through film and video.



Toni Armstrong Jr.

Alix Dobkin made her Carnegie Hall debut June 26, 1992, billing the show as a "Pride Celebration Concert." Joan Nestle acted as emcee; Marilyn Van Veersen provided sign language interpretation. The bash was a Particular Productions (Lin Daniels) event.

Cambridge Women in Cable is looking for **VIDEOS WITH STRONG FEMINIST AND MULTICULTURAL THEMES**. 1/2" and 3/4" formats are sought. Send info about tapes (not the tapes): CWIC, Cambridge Women's Commission, 57 Inman St., Cambridge, MA 02139.

CALLIE KHOURI, who wrote the screenplay for *Thelma and Louise* and now has a two-script deal with Sony, is working on a script for Warner's called *Sisters*, about two sisters and their Tennessee walking horses, according to *Premiere*.

CHICAGO FILMMAKERS is seeking experimental films and films by women, people of

color, lesbians, gay men, and Chicago area artists. Picture Start Collection at Chicago Filmmakers c/o S. Hoffman, 1229 Belmont, Chicago, IL 60657.

CHERYL MARIE WADE, former director of Wry Crips Disabled Women's Theater, has released a poetry performance video entitled *Here*. Cheryl is editor of Squeaky Wheels Press annual anthology of disability arts, and is one of the original members of Axis Dis/abled Dance Troupe. Cheryl M. Wade, 1613 5th St., Berkeley, CA 94710-1714. (510) 525-7960.

"Smooth Move," a song by Ellen Seeling and Jean Fineberg (DEUCE) is featured in the new film by Tami Gold entitled *JUGGLING GENDER*.

The ninth annual **INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY VIDEO FESTIVAL** will take place on March 7 in the form of a five-hour cablecast in the Boston area. The cablecast, with the theme "The 1990s: How We See It," will include interviews and a variety of excerpts from submitted videos. International Women's Day Video Festival, Box 391438, Cambridge, MA 02239. (617) 628-8826.

The lesbian film *CLAIRE OF THE MOON* premiered to a packed house of 1,200 on May 28 in Portland, Oregon. Attending the premiere were Teresa Trull (who wrote a song for the film), Barbara Higbie, Barbara Grier, and Donna McBride, as well as the cast and crew. *Claire of the Moon* was shown in ten cities prior to its wide release this January.

TV•RADIO•THEATER

Roseanne Arnold told *QW* that future storylines of *Roseanne* would feature a **LESBIAN RELATIONSHIP FOR JACKIE** (Laurie Metcalf). Join the letter writing campaign that is pushing for this development: Carsey-Werner Co., 4024 Radford Ave., Studio City, CA 91604. Maybe Aunt Jackie can help Darlene out of the closet.

IN THE LIFE, the only gay and lesbian public television show in the U.S., is a talk show hosted by Kate Clinton that features theater, comedy, film, music, and other topics of interest. It has been shown on public broadcasting stations in some cities. Viewers need to call local PBS affiliates and request it. SASE to *In The Life*, 39 W. 14th St. #402, New York, NY 10011.

Los Angeles radio report: Station KFI cancelled an appearance by **SUSIE BRIGHT** last September, just three hours prior to airtime. The author of *Susie Bright's Sexual Reality* was yanked because of the subject matter of her book. Also in *continued on page 52*

ABOUT THE WRITERS: Annie Lee reads feminist publications, goes to the movies, and dances around the house singing "I Feel Good" in her spare time; Jamie Anderson has been on her 'Center of Balance' tour; Joy Rosenblatt is an expert in women's music, with an extensive collection of recordings; Toni Jr. and Tracy Baim (both born January 12) jointly sponsor a huge Capricorn party in Chicago in January. All female subscribers are invited.

LESBOMANIA

FEST SIDE STORY and ELIZABETHAN DRAMA

By Jorjet Harper

FEST SIDE STORY

I've been working on my lesbian musical, an all-woman version of *West Side Story*. It's a tragic tale of star-crossed love between an idealistic young ultra-radical lesbian separatist and a freewheeling apolitical devil-may-care girljock of polymorphous sexual persuasion.

Each belongs to her own gang of friends. And the feuding between the two hostile subculture groups—the Seps and the Tarts—sets off a chain of events in which the innocent young lovers are doomed.

It begins as Richi and Natalie meet by accident at a late-night dance at a women's music festival. They are enchanted by each other—it's as if the rest of the dance tent had dissolved away, and only the two of them exist.

In a rousing song, the nervous Seps warn Richi against Natalie, since she's a Tart and may even be bisexual. She can't be a real lesbian, they sing, because "When you're a dyke you're a dyke all the way, you are never a het, there is no fuckin' way," etc.

The Tarts, led by Natalie's overly protective sister George and George's lover Rita, tell the naive Natalie that the Seps have made them feel like second-class lesbians simply because of their laissez-faire approach to sex. They sing and dance lustily: "I like to be in a merry cunt, okay by me in a merry cunt," etc.

Can the young lovers overcome the hatred of the two warring groups? In a

momentary burst of hope, they think of *one thing* they all can agree on despite their vast differences, sweetly singing as a duet:

The most beautiful sound I ever heard:

Martina—Martina Martina Martina!

All the beautiful sounds of the world in a single word: Martina...etc.

Mar-TEE-na! I've just seen a dyke named Martina!

And suddenly that name will never be same for me!

Martina, I've just watched a game with Martina!

And suddenly I've found how wonderful a sound can be!...Martina!

*Say it loud and it's tennis playing
Say it soft and it's tennis skirts swaying...*

(The instrumental bridge comes in with violins and added tennis-ball thwumping sounds, during which Richi and Natalie, holding hands, gaze off beyond their squalid, hastily-erected tents toward an immaculate tennis court hovering in a cloudless blue sky.)

Martina! say it loud

it's a dyke sensation

Say it soft and it's Lesbian Nation

Martina, I'll never stop saying Martina!

The young lovers vow that if they can't reconcile their gangs, they will run away and seek work together at a tennis camp (and here they sing the plaintive "There's a Space for us, somewhere a Space for us...").

But the subcultures' hostility proves too powerful for them when the Seps and Tarts rumble in the chem-free camping area. In the melee, Richi's best friend Russ and Natalie's sister George are fatally wounded. Rita becomes crazed with thoughts of vengeance. Richi, who at Russ's demise is thrust into the position of leader of the Seps, is chased by angry Tarts into a PortaJane. Natalie rushes in to save her. Too late—for the PortaJane topples over, smothering the lovers and burying forever their dream of lesbonuptial bliss.

Humbled and united at last by this senseless tragedy, the Seps and Tarts vow

that from now on they will stop sniping at each other in lesbian publications, and learn to live in the peace and harmony for which the young lovers have paid such a terrible price at the music festival.

Curtain.

ELIZABETHAN DRAMA

I don't have a neon pink triangle or a purple labrys hanging in the window of my apartment, but it must be pretty clear to my neighbors that I'm not a single gal in search of a husband. My lover drives a huge red convertible which no one on the block has failed to notice, and dykey-looking women wearing *Outlines* T-shirts are always ringing my doorbell.

My neighborhood is not the hippest, and it sure ain't the New Town gay ghetto. Mountain Moving Coffeehouse used to be right around the corner, though, and it was kind of fun to watch the expressions of puzzlement on our straight neighbors' faces when droves of dykes converged on the area every Saturday night.

My lesbian friend Paula lives upstairs. I think she's more difficult for the neighbors to figure out than I am. She's very pretty, and when dressed for work, looks like a well-groomed corporate femme.

My western windows face a single-family house owned by a genuine nuclear family: husband, wife, and four kids. They have vicious arguments. Their yelling—and sometimes the screams and crying of the children—can be heard way out into the street. The cops have been called many times.

Needless to say, they are not ideal neighbors, especially when I need to get some sleep and they are re-enacting the Battle of Gallipoli in their bedroom.

Benny, the third child of this unhappy family, is about seven. Usually a very quiet kid, he was bouncing a volleyball in front of our building one sunny Saturday afternoon while Paula was sitting on our porch steps.

LESBOMANIA: 1.) An overwhelming interest in all things pertaining to lesbians. 2.) Elevation of mood, enthusiasm, or pulse rate at the thought or mention of anything relating to lesbians. 3.) An extreme form of lesbophilia. 4.) A euphoric state in the coming out process for many lesbians. 5.) A syndicated lesbian humor column written by confirmed lesbomaniac Jorjet Harper.

"You don't go to the *Elizabeth Church*, do you?" he piped up.

"The *what*?" said Paula.

"The *Elizabeth Church*. You know," he said, "around the corner, where all the *Elizabeths* go."

Then, of course, Paula understood. She and I and our lovers sometimes walked to *Mountain Moving* together on a Saturday evening.

Paula, amused, asked him, "What's an *Elizabeth*?"

Benny, still bouncing his volleyball, said, "That's when two girls kiss each other *all the time*." He made an ugly face to demonstrate his revulsion.

"That doesn't sound so bad to me," Paula replied.

"Oh, it *is*," he told her earnestly, nodding his head. "It's really bad."

The windows of Paula's apartment also face Benny's parents' house, and she

too has heard the shouts from their war zone.

"You know what I think is bad?" she said to the boy. "When people yell and scream and act mean to each other."

This caught Benny by surprise. He didn't have a ready answer. He stopped bouncing his ball and stood there thinking.

"Yes," he said pensively. "That's not good at all."

"And I think kissing is a lot better than that," Paula added.

He stood there awhile longer, the volleyball still frozen in his hands. Finally, he said, "Yes, you're *right*." Then, quick as a flash, he ran off down the street.

Ever since this talk, Benny has been very nice to us *Elizabeths*—and his mother has also been friendlier. Probably it's a coincidence, but maybe Benny said something at home that was able to make a difference—because since then, the loud,

terrible arguments have significantly diminished, too.

Jesse Helms and the Coalition for Family Values, take note. Here's a clear case in which a lesbian has undermined the nuclear family—undermined its child abuse, domestic violence, and homophobia. •

ABOUT THE WRITER: Jorjet Harper has written extensively on lesbian issues and women's culture. Her reviews, news articles, features, and interviews have appeared in over thirty journals and magazines. Last summer, she read segments from "Lesbomania" in Chicago, New York, Paris, and Berlin. She is now working on a comic novel and on a book-length collection of her "Lesbomania" humor columns. She has been with 'HOT WIRE' since its first issue in 1984 as a writer, photographer, and advisor.

1993

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- Autobiography of a Lez Tailor
- Vanity Fairy
- Amadykus
- On a Queer Day You Can See Forever

Diane F. Germain © 1992

FADE IN • FADE OUT

WOMEN AS FRIENDS AND LOVERS

By Paula E. Langguth

By what criteria do we deem a relationship between two women as either romantic or platonic? Is the bedroom scene a necessity, as critics of the *Fried Green Tomatoes* film adaptation claim? Or is the heightened tension of a veiled relationship, never explored on camera, an alluring tease and testament?

Many filmgoers expressed dismay that the lesbianism had been "removed" from the film version of *Fried Green Tomatoes*. I disagree. Never before had I seen a film which explored a stronger lesbian couple—not even films where the bedroom scenes were the apex of the film's climax. The loving loyalty of Idgie and Ruth was the centerpiece of a vivid floral arrangement.

Their relationship was so compelling, and the quality that made their intimacy sing on the big screen was the emergence of strong, independent women who relied on each other for comfort and support—and who used their relationship as a springboard to new ventures. The story of Idgie and Ruth sent me on a venture of my own: to find other films that depicted the awakening of two women. The results were truly gratifying.

•FADE IN•

THE CHILDREN'S HOUR

This popular screen adaptation of Lillian Hellman's play of the same name is actually the *second* screen version directed by William Wyler. Unfortunately, the more subtle yet more starkly shocking rendition [*These Three* (1936), starring Miriam Hopkins, Merle Oberon, and Bonita Granville, and featuring a screenplay by Lillian Hellman] isn't widely available on video.

Even so, this 1962 version—with Audrey Hepburn as Karen Wright and Shirley MacLaine as Martha Dobie—is



In the 1962 version of 'The Children's Hour,' school teachers Karen Wright (Audrey Hepburn) and Martha Dobie (Shirley MacLaine) experience the devastating effects that a single lie with a kernel of truth can have.

quite powerful. Karen and Martha are long-time college friends and the proprietors of the Wright-Dobie School for Girls, a small preparatory school which is the temporary home for twenty young women, including one manipulating pathological liar and one kleptomaniac (a very young Veronica Cartwright).

Just when the women's devoted friendship is shaken by Karen's announcement of her engagement to her erstwhile beau, Dr. Joe Cartin (James Garner), his young niece (Mary the manipulator) plants the seeds of a scandal in her grandmother's head. One by one, the students are picked up and withdrawn from the boarding school, with no explanation to the teachers. Finally, the women are devastated to learn the truth: everyone now believes they are lovers.

Whether the rumors are true or untrue is ultimately inconsequential, and *The Children's Hour* accurately depicts the

destructive power of accusations and the amoebic spread of guilt by association. By implication, every spoken word, every gesture, every touch between Karen and Martha—and everyone they meet—takes on a hundred different meanings.

As their lives are transformed, the soft-spoken Karen and her quick-tempered protector Martha exchange roles amidst the awakenings of emerging sexuality. This is an excellent film that shows how a single lie with a kernel of truth can irreversibly change the fate of two women, and an entire group of people.

Despite its controversial ending, *The Children's Hour* is considered to be one of the great lesbian classics. Many women report that seeing this film marked the first time they experienced anything—other than their own private feelings—with explicit lesbian overtones. Considering the political and cultural climate of the early '60s, this is an amazing film.

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.

BETWEEN FRIENDS

This 1983 made-for-cable film would make a perfect documentary of the plight of divorced women: Marriage removes women from their friends; divorce reunites women.

Mary Katherine Castelli (Carol Burnett) and Debra Shapiro (Liz Taylor) are two very different divorcees, brought together by an auto mishap. Mary Katherine is a real estate broker and single parent, trying to raise her daughter and live out her own private sexual revolution at the same time. Debra is a wealthy divorcee (with a wealthier suitor), a gourmet cook and a burgeoning alcoholic who reflects often on what her father—rest his soul—would think of her now.

But what the two women have most in common is a lack of friends. Thrown together by chance when a winter storm strands Mary Katherine at Debra's home, the women confide in each other and turn from strangers into friends. Melting their inhibitions away with bottles of wine, they have an adult slumber party and reminisce about childhood friendships where two women could hold hands in public without attracting attention.

Based on the novel *Nobody Makes Me Cry* by Shelley List (who also co-produced the film and co-wrote the teleplay), this film explores the growing relationship between two women, the power sex has to complicate relationships, and how often society's restrictions further muddy the waters.

Through the thicket that is life, Mary Katherine and Debra explore their views and beliefs about men and relationships, never noticing that the lines of their own relationship have been blurred. Mary Katherine's cynicism wears away, and her search for power gives way to the search for the strong bonds of friendship. Debra's childlike dependence gives way to womanly acceptance of a helping hand as she grows up enough to stand on her own.

Early on, Mary Katherine states that the nicest thing about the independence brought about by the sexual revolution is that no man ever gets close enough to her to make her cry. In the end, only one person ever makes Mary Katherine cry. And they all lived happily ever after.

Ain't life grand?

LIANNA

This powerful classic, made in 1983 by director John Sayles, is often derided as a movie with an unhappy ending, but it just ain't so.

Once upon a time, Lianna (Linda Griffiths) was a college student who became enamored of her professor (aptly-named "Dick," played by Jon DeVries), married him, and dropped out of college for appearances' sake. After having two children, Lianna decides the time is right to resume her studies. She takes a child psychology class and strikes up a friendship with Ruth (Jane Halloran), her pixie-ish professor.

Over the years, Lianna's husband has become increasingly arrogant and bitter, and has steadfastly continued his womanizing ways. Partly because of her growing crush on the professor and partly as revenge, Lianna decides to expand her friendship with Ruth. In doing so, Lianna reawakens her long dormant sexuality and throws a gigantic monkey wrench into her calm suburban life.

Lianna is a realistic portrayal of the anxieties and worries of a suburban housewife who is facing her emerging sexuality and its implications to her life and the lives of her children. After her husband tosses her out of the house, Lianna dis-



Lianna (Linda Griffiths, right) falls in love for the first time with her own Dr. Ruth (Jane Halloran).

covers that her close friend Sandy (Jo Henderson) is becoming increasingly distant, and her own relationship with Ruth is not as secure as it seems. But she is also empowered by her new-found independence and the invigorating discovery of her sexuality.

For Lianna, there will be no turning back. She has awakened to a new and glorious world that she had submerged for too many years. Her strength, and her friendship with Sandy, will be the beacons

that guide her on her travels.

The film includes classic coming out scenarios and a great soundtrack. If you haven't seen this movie yet, it's a must-see. And if you've seen it before, why not try looking at it again in a different light?

ENTRE NOUS

The year 1983 was indeed a good year for strong female couples in film.

Translated as meaning "Between Us," *Entre Nous* is subtitled in English and is the story of director and producer Diane Kury's mother, Helen. Newly orphaned in 1942 and facing slow starvation in a deportation camp, Helen (Lena) Weber (Isabelle Huppert) enters into a marriage of convenience with Michel (Guy Marchand), a soldier in the French Foreign Legion. The two ultimately escape over the snowcapped mountains into Italy.

Ten years and two children later, Lena finds herself back in Lyons, attending her daughter's recital while her husband works as a garage mechanic. Here she meets Madeleine, an artist who married a wheeler-dealer businessman/sometime-actor, after her own young husband was gunned down by the military during the war.

The two women initiate a languorous relationship, becoming friends where neither had friends before. Indeed, the film intimates that men purposely keep women apart from each other—so women won't become friends and ultimately lovers. Although the romantic nature of Lena and Madeleine's relationship is only alluded to, Diane Kurys leaves no doubt by the end of the film that Madeleine and Lena were life partners.

Entre Nous was one of the films that helped set the stage for the acceptance of Donna Deitch's lesbian cult classic *Desert Hearts* in 1985.

•FADE OUT•

ABOUT THE WRITER: Due to a time crunch, Paula E. Langguth will be going on sabbatical from 'HOT WIRE' for at least a year. We wish her the best of luck with the book she is co-authoring with a doctor in Los Angeles.

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MULLING IT OVER

MELANIE DEMORE: SHARE MY SONG

By J. Antoinette Johnson-Gross

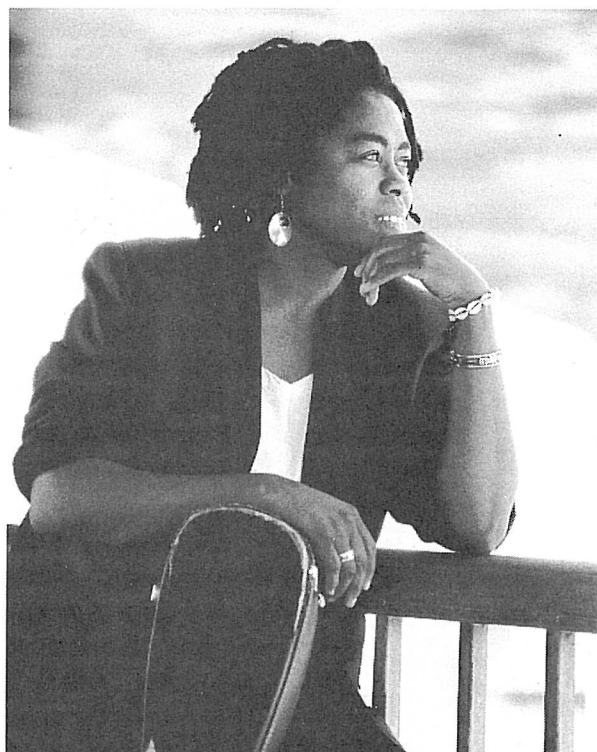
For the past several years, Bay Area audiences have been treated to the music of African-American singer/songwriter Melanie DeMore. She's been developing a national following through performances at festivals around the country, and her fans nationwide were delighted when her latest recording, *Share My Song*, was released by Redwood Records last fall.

Born in the South Bronx in 1954, Melanie is the product of parents who were both involved in music and the theater. Her mother was once offered a scholarship to study voice at Juilliard, but didn't accept it because, according to Melanie, she didn't want to make music her career. Her father was in the Army, which resulted in the family's big move in 1963 to Anchorage, Alaska. Melanie says that her father wanted to get the family as far away from New York City as he could, and Anchorage seemed to be the logical choice. She stayed there until 1968, and remembers it as a great experience—and totally different than the South Bronx. "I asked my mother where the winos were," says Melanie, "and she said it was too cold outside for them."

Musically, Melanie started out at the age of five with piano lessons. ("My mother scraped together the \$5 for lessons every week," she says.) She sang in her church choir, and taught herself to play the flute at age eleven; she had no formal training on the instrument until college. During high school, she played both the flute and piccolo in the band, and electric bass in the stage band. Singing wasn't her prime concern at the time, although she did participate in her high school choir.

When she was older, Melanie attended Incarnate Word College in San Antonio, Texas. She holds a degree in Piano, Flute, and Music History, and this multi-faceted

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



Melanie DeMore: "It's important to me to sing the truth...I believe that we are all aspects of God/Goddess, no matter who we are."

education shows through in her style and lyricism. But with the end of college in 1976 came an education of a different sort: she entered a convent at the age of twenty-three run by the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word.

The order serviced a largely Spanish-speaking congregation, so Melanie learned to sing in both Spanish and English. She looks at her time in the convent as a very positive one that brought her into contact with the Black Catholic community and exposed her to social issues.

The decision to join a convent was not a spur-of-the-moment impulse: Melanie had been raised Catholic, and had first considered joining an order when she was twelve years old. Her parents, though supportive, tempered her youthful enthusiasm with common sense. According to Melanie, they encouraged her to have her

life first, and then join the order when she got older if she still wanted to.

In 1973, after the death of her mother, Melanie seriously began the process of entering the convent. One of the sisters in the order asked her to write a song for an ecumenical conference in Washington, D.C. that explored the issues of women in religious life, and Melanie's "Woman Get Down From The Altar" became the theme song of the conference. Her interest in joining an order was rekindled, and she began to research the congregation. She recalls that her friends, not knowing of her childhood ambition, thought she was out of her mind.

Once set on this path, Melanie embarked on the year-long process it would take for her to enter the order. This included psychiatric testing; obtaining recommendations from teachers and priests; meeting with a spiritual director who asked about her beliefs, both spiritual and worldly; and extended talks with the sisters themselves, including the Superior General of the order. All of her financial debts had to be settled prior to entering, so she took a job as a forklift operator at Sears and paid off her loans.

Her perseverance paid off, and Melanie entered the convent on August 15th, the Feast of the Assumption of Mary.

As a progressive congregation, it was optional for the sisters to wear habits. Melanie resided in the Motherhouse with the postulants, novices, and some of the older sisters. Her day started at 4 a.m. with prayers, Mass, and a community meeting. By 8 a.m., she was over at Incarnate Word High School, where she taught music and choral singing. The student body was all female, as were most of the faculty. Melanie was also in charge of music for the congregation.

When she was alone, Melanie would go to the Motherhouse chapel and play guitar or flute and sing. It was there that

Irene Young

she composed "Come Follow Me," the song that was to become the title of her first album.

In her five years with this community, she says she learned many things. "I found out more about the role of women in religious and spiritual life than I did as a lay person," she says of her experience. "Women have been running things for themselves in the church for hundreds of years. They taught me what it meant to be a feminist from a spiritual point of view. They ran their own lives." The sisters worked in the community around them, in the jails, the barrio, and in local drug rehab. Their view was one of being involved but detached. As Melanie explains, "This means you do your work in a loving, spiritual way, but don't become overwhelmed by it."

Melanie DeMore—the only African-American woman in a community of 900—eventually left the order in 1979, because she felt that her mission was larger than the community that she was in. She left, but didn't break off her ties there completely, and is still considered an associate.

In what ways does she feel her underlying spirituality has stayed the same throughout her life?

"It's important to me to sing the truth, to sing for God/Goddess or whatever," she says. "I always write *sing for God* at the top of my set lists; it's the right thing to do. Sing the truth. Sing for Gurumayi. I believe that we all are aspects of God/Goddess, no matter who we are."

The wearing of different hats is something that Melanie does well. Like any number of cultural workers in our community, she has paid her dues in and around the business: doing musical theater and working as musical director in several small theatrical companies while she lived in Texas (from 1968 to 1983). She even spent some time in Austin as a cook.

Today, along with performing her own solo work, Melanie serves on the conducting staff of the Oakland Youth Chorus (OYC) and as musical director/conductor for Voices: Bay Area Lesbian Choral Ensemble.

The OYC, with whom Melanie has been associated for the last four years, is made up of young people, between the ages of fourteen and twenty-one, who are working and singing together in a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic environment. When Melanie talks about her work with the OYC, it becomes very clear that she puts her heart into the people and things she works with.

"I love working with these young singers," she says. "I want them to feel proud and strong; to fight for their own lives." The kids sometimes come to her concerts and are very aware of her career. Her work with the chorus has brought her into contact with artists like Bobby McFerrin, John Hendricks, and White Eagle, all of whom have performed with the chorus in the past several years.

Working with Voices choir for the past three years has been a gratifying experience for Melanie. One of the unique aspects of Voices is their striving for diversity, which Melanie sees as vital. From its beginning in 1988, Voices has had a dual commitment to achieving musical excellence and expressing lesbian strength and pride. "Voices is a culturally diverse group. We sing music that is reflective of women's voices and makes them feel fierce about being women," she says.

The whole subject of diversity within the women's community is a loaded one. Looking at the outside world, we see that it's fraying at the edges. But Melanie believes in the power of women. "Women can make the changes," she says. "As women, we have to find our voices—we have to believe that we can say what we want, that we have a right to be alive. But we need to pull ourselves together. We need to address our own internalized racism and fear of people's differences in order to be able to do it."

Melanie has faith in the power of songs to pull together diverse people—she cites hits like "We Are The World" and "Talkin' 'Bout a Revolution" (Tracy Chapman); the material of Sweet Honey in the Rock; Ferron's "Testimony"; and Sue Fink's "Leaping (Lesbians)."

"Every progressive group has used 'We Shall Overcome' to pull people together," she points out, "and Aretha Franklin's 'Respect'—you can bring more people together with music than at a political event." Calling attention to the liberation struggles of people around the world, she points out that revolutions are spread by music. "It rallies people, and it gets banned—because it carries the message. Music can also change the way you feel about yourself, and make you feel connected to the community."

In looking at women's music festivals, Melanie sees the seeds of change but also sees the need for still more. "I want to see more diversification at the festivals. A lot of the performers are women of color, but we need more sisters in the audience," she says. "Things have to change. Most producers know this and

want to make the changes, but they don't know how to go about it." A solution? "They can ask for help within the community, and really listen to what the women have to say," she suggests.

Crossing boundaries and creating bridges between people is part and parcel of the person who is Melanie DeMore. She brings her talents to people in prison through a class in Sound Awareness, which she developed to help people become more conscious of what they listen to, and how music and sound affect everyday life on an emotional, physical, political, and spiritual level. Melanie points to young people as an example. "They memorize words to songs before they know what they mean," she says. "It affects their behavior and how they interact with each other and society." She talks to her students about censorship and how women are treated in music. "All of the music dictates how people speak, walk, and act. Music is the most universal of the arts," she says.

Melanie has found that both women and men have been "extremely receptive" to her as an African-American woman and as an artist. ("I teach them to be conscious of what's around them," she says.) She sees people in our society as "walking wounded"—bombarded every day by sights and sounds that we unknowingly process in our minds without really thinking about it. The resulting effect, a sort of emotional overload, prevents us from making changes that are so desperately needed.

Women musicians with style and powerful ideas are on the rise in the mainstream music industry, even though they have been a part of the women's music scene since its inception. Why the mainstream change? "People are tired of being screamed at," Melanie says. "Look at Tracy Chapman, Suzanne Vega, and Sinead O'Connor; who would have thought that they'd be this popular? People are ready to be sung to again, and those songs make you listen. We need music that reaches people."

Melanie's own music follows in that vein. Her first cassette, *Come Follow Me*, was recorded in Taos, New Mexico and released in 1986. Recorded at IMA Cultural Center/Studio Retreat in Bodega,

continued on inside back cover

ABOUT THE WRITER: J. Antoinette Johnson-Gross is an African-American freelance writer living in Oakland, California. Her work has appeared in 'Common Lives/Lesbian Lives,' 'Womanews,' and 'Mama Bears News and Notes.'

WOMEN'S MUSIC, MUSCULAR DYSTROPHY AND ME

By Kim Wilcox

If someone would have asked me a few years ago to predict where I'd be today, I never would have dreamed the turns my life has taken.

Four years ago, I was diagnosed with Muscular Dystrophy (MD). I used to enjoy riding a bike, exercising, dancing, playing volleyball, and going for long walks. At the onset of my disorder, my legs started to go numb from the knee down. I lost sensation in my feet, and they started to drag and drop. It got to the point where I could be on my legs for only ten or fifteen minutes before they would become numb. Within a month of diagnosis, I was fitted for braces on both legs, devices which would allow me to walk or be on my feet for two or three hours a day.

At the time of onset, I was twenty-nine years old, working as a youth counselor, and envisioning that I would finish my last year at college while I worked forty hours a week. Three or four nights a week I was playing music in a five-piece band, and I thought the energy I had would propel me to higher and higher achievements.

And then I was diagnosed. They informed me that there is no cure for Muscular Dystrophy. Although the form I have is rarely fatal, a certain percentage of people do become wheelchair-bound. MD is a degenerative disorder; how fast the disease progresses varies. There are almost two dozen types of MD. Some cause the muscles to deteriorate in parts of your body; some attack your nervous system. Some attack only children, others only adults—and some are fatal.

I have a peripheral nerve type which affects the extremities (hands and feet). Essentially, the nerves do not fire the muscles fast enough. The nerves in my lower legs fire at one third the speed of normal; my hands fire at one eighth. (This is determined by specialized testing and by nerve biopsies.) My legs are currently

ACCESS articles present viewpoints and information about issues of accessibility within the women's music and culture network.



Chris Convessor

Kim Wilcox: "My disability at one time was a great source of pain for me; I was angry at my body and refused to accept my limitations. These days, I accept myself. I see my disability as a source of strength that has made me a more sensitive person; I have gained an acceptance of others that I didn't have before. Having Muscular Dystrophy no longer brings a sense of pain or shame, but is now a source of inspiration."

stable, though my hands have recently lost strength. This is a degenerative disorder; as a result, I have lost physical stamina and strength.

I have poor balance now. I feel sometimes like a Weeble—I wobble but I don't fall down. I've also lost some fine motor skill in my hands; I can use a device that holds the pen for me. My metabolism has slowed down, so I've gained weight—and I get cold easily. Heat doesn't have the same effect it once did; I can be in ninety degree weather and not break a sweat. I've burned my hands in hot water, like when I'm washing dishes, because I've lost the ability to immediately feel the heat.

All this has been frustrating at times. But one thing hasn't changed—I don't "look handicapped" to most folks. At a

glance, you may not notice, but spend a day with me and it becomes crystal clear.

I have no problem with the various labels the feminist community struggles with—disabled, handicapped, differently abled, physically challenged, and so forth. I am all of these. But I *am* against stereotypes, such as the idea that someone in a wheelchair is also "feeble minded." (I am physically but not mentally impaired.)

Being disabled in a society that is as vain as ours is—well, it's very difficult. Success in the entertainment business depends *so much* on how a person looks. If we could evolve to a point where people could accept each other's limitations as diversity, and keep the differences in perspective as a strength, we could build emotional bridges—which are just as important as ramps.

Don't be afraid to talk. Sensitivity is good but sometimes stops the dialogue; acknowledging my handicap is not degrading, it's refreshing. Doing a pity stop or feeling sorry for someone *is* degrading and condescending, of course; if this is all you see, then there really is nothing to talk about. But, as the feminist community emphasizes, moving beyond ignorance and fear is what's important.

I found out the hard way that there is discrimination that runs rampant in the government. Six months after my diagnosis, I lost my job with the State of Michigan. I had been working as a youth counselor in a facility for delinquent male felons aged fourteen to nineteen. It was the policy of the state then (and now) that disabled individuals are not allowed to work in a prison in direct contact with any type of felons; it can be dangerous. You need to be able to defend yourself for the sake of your co-workers, the clients, and yourself. With this in mind, there is no dispute. But I was qualified to work in other positions which don't require physical defense, and there was no attempt to relocate me.

I wasn't protected by the civil rights laws that protect the disabled; I had no federal or state protection because I hired

in healthy. (I have discovered that when you "hire in as a handicapper," you have many more rights than if you hire in healthy and later *become* disabled.) It was a shock, and I'm still working with my lawyer to resolve the matter.

Right about that time, my lover of six years decided that she was not a lesbian—she was just living a lesbian lifestyle. She left me for a man, which added fuel to the flame of pain.

Well, it seemed my life was on a downward spiral, out of control. This period brought me much pain, but I can see now that it brought much personal growth, too. I needed to regain my confidence and take control of my life again. Music had always provided me with a sense of strength—it's a part of my life that no one can take from me—but I found that even music was not enough to pull me through such trying times.

My first positive step toward healing came through joining a lesbian support group which I had read about in the campus newspaper. We had no particular agenda—it was simply a time to talk about whatever was bothering us. For me, it was being left for a man. I thought I was the only one; it was devastating and humiliating. I soon realized that I wasn't alone, and it wasn't necessarily a reflection on me. As many other women in my position have come to discover, the whole thing was mostly out of my control.

I decided to return to school, and finished my B.S. in sociology at Michigan State University.

Slowly the life in me started to return. In December of 1990 I had my first introduction to women's music. A friend took me to a small women's concert put on by Our Living Room Productions in Lansing, and I performed a half-hour of original songs, substituting for an act that had cancelled due to severe stormy weather. (Prior to this, I had heard only two women's music recordings—one by Holly Near, the other by Cris Williamson. But I had actually been writing women's music for ten years, and I had more than fifty songs by the time I did this particular gig.) The women in that first audience were the first to hear my originals, and they seemed to like what they heard. I'll always be grateful to the women in that audience; it was like coming out all over again.

I was surprised at the love and support I felt, and it inspired me to continue writing and performing women's music. It encouraged me to make an album. Writing took a new twist, taking me in a direction that focuses on relationships—love, hate,

lust, hurt. I focus on feelings that encompass fantasy as well as reality. My song "Joey," for example, is about a woman who is beautiful, talented, and educated, but hates who she is and what she has become. "Fantasy Women" is about women who go to concerts, watch the performers, and fantasize about meeting them. (I myself have wondered what it would be like to meet Holly Near or Barbra Streisand.)

I have never considered myself to be a politician, although I'm starting to realize that in my own way I actually am one. I've been told that I write with sensitivity, that I have a way of saying things that people feel but have a hard time expressing. I do believe that the past four years have made me a more compassionate human being. I have a side of me that is very childish, and ideas for humorous songs usually start there.

In the last two years I have performed in the central Michigan area on numerous occasions. I made my album *True Stories*, and hope to release my second this spring. I finished my degree, and found a new job that is challenging and fulfilling, working as a residential counselor for Community Mental Health. And I'm currently attending Central Michigan University pursuing a masters degree in Health Service Administration.

I'm involved now in a loving relationship with a woman who loves me with or without my physical limitations. My

"If we could evolve to a point where people could accept each other's limitations as diversity, in perspective as a strength, we could build emotional bridges—which are just as important as ramps."

disability at one time was a great source of pain for me; I was angry at my body and refused to accept my limitations. These days, I accept myself. I see my disability as a source of strength that has made me a more sensitive person; I have gained an acceptance of others that I didn't have before. Having MD no longer brings a sense of pain or shame, but is now a source of inspiration.

Recently, I started a music club in Lansing called The Island Club (after the island of Lesbos). It is a place where women can come and hear solo performers and duets, dance to a live band, and enjoy a catered dinner. This is the only handicap-accessible event in this area. The Island Club happens every other month, and press kits from touring and local performers are welcome.

I now perform women's music only. I am involved in my community as a lesbian artist, and perform benefits for charities such as the Council Against Domestic Assault and for causes such as AIDS. I feel that my personal problems have made me a stronger person. I still have a long way to go, but I think if it weren't for my experiences I wouldn't be who I am today. It has been difficult for me to disclose having a disability because I've been afraid of rejection, personally and professionally. Fortunately, my community and my lover have given me a sense of well-being.

A friend asked me, "Kim, what took you so long to play in the women's music and culture network?" I'm not really sure. Could be that the time just wasn't right. But I'm here now—learning, growing, and healing.

Hear "That Girl" from Kim Wilcox's album *'True Stories'* on the soundsheet in this issue of 'HOT WIRE.' •

ABOUT THE WRITER: Kim Wilcox became involved in music at sixteen, starting with classical voice lessons. At nineteen, she joined her first band, and has played professionally since age twenty. She can be reached at The Island Club, P.O. Box 653, Charlotte, MI 48813.

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DONNA ALLEN

By Toni Armstrong Jr.

Dr. Donna Allen is a labor economist, historian, publisher, editor, theorist, and activist (civil rights, civil liberties, new politics, peace, and women's movements). She is author of 'Fringe Benefits: Wages or Social Obligation?' (1969), on the theory of non-wage income, published at Cornell University for whom she taught in the 1950s; co-editor with Dr. Ramona R. Rush of 'Communications at the Crossroads: The Gender Gap Connection' (Ablex, 1989); and writer of the just-completed 'Media and Democracy: Why We Don't Have National Health Insurance.'

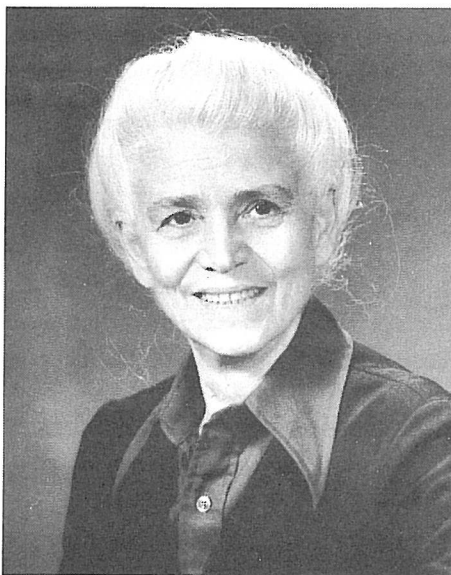
During the first wave of radical feminism in the 1960s, Donna was fully present and accounted for, including participating in the first televised feminist street action—the 1968 protest against the Miss America pageant in Atlantic City. She founded the Women's Institute for Freedom of the Press in 1972, and immediately launched the monthly 'Media Report to Women,' editing and indexing it for fifteen years.

Donna received her first award at the age of nine—for best book review by an elementary student. It was printed in the Chicago 'Daily News,' and she received \$5—a lot of money for a child back in 1930. Subsequent honors and awards have included the Broadcast Preceptor Award (1978); the Headliner Award (1979), Women in Communication Inc.'s highest award; the Wonder Woman Award (1983); and an award in 1988 from the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication for "Outstanding Contributions to Women in Communication." In 1989, the American Journalism Historians Association honored Donna for her efforts to preserve documents important to the history of American journalism. Since January 1991, the "Hotline" column in 'HOT WIRE: The Journal of Women's Music and Culture' has been dedicated to her, in honor of her lifetime commitment to facilitating communication among women.

In this first part of a two-part article, we look at the early life and times of this remarkable heroine—up to the important shift that occurred in her thinking in 1968. Part two will cover the period from 1968 to the present, including her involvement in feminism and woman-centered media.

Donna Allen will sail into her seventy-third year of life this August, best friend to the woman-oriented media community, and one of feminism's most glorious standard bearers.

"I suppose in a way I was born a feminist, because my mother was one," says the founder and former publisher of the groundbreaking *Media Report to Women* and *Index/Directory of Women's Media*. "All the women in my family on both sides were very strong women. I think I just grew up knowing that this was the way the world was. Of course, I discovered differently later, but my mother and father were both equals—or, as my father said, '[Mother] was more equal than [Father].' I was always appreciative that he was that



way—it helped me to grow up with the idea that women and men *should* be equal. My mother was a smart woman, and he knew that and respected it." She recalls being treated the same as her two brothers when they were growing up in the North Woods of Michigan. "It was only when we got out into the world that we discovered it was another way," she says.

Her mother, Louise, a teacher, was a big believer in the power of higher education, having already graduated from the University of Michigan in 1915. Her father, Caspar Rehkopf, worked at a variety of

jobs until 1925, when he finally came home and said, "If I had a college education, I wouldn't be doing this work." Donna's mother held him to a pre-marriage agreement that should he ever come to regard college as necessary to advance in his work, he would go—regardless of family size or financial status at the time. The family moved downstate, Caspar enrolled in metallurgical engineering at Michigan State, and he eventually graduated with high honors.

Not surprisingly, Donna was encouraged by her family to pursue higher education as well. Her mother wanted her to be a lawyer; her father imagined her future as a foreign correspondent. (She had pursued journalism at Morton H.S. in Cicero, Illinois, where she lettered in debate, intramural sports, and music.) She worked a variety of jobs to put herself through college, including maid service, child care, tutoring, lifeguarding, and clerical, infirmary, and ice cream parlor jobs—as well as journalism and writing for pay. She got her liberal arts degree from Morton College, and went on to earn a degree in History from Duke University (1943), a masters in Economics (Labor Relations and Fiscal Policy) from the prestigious University of Chicago (1952), and a Ph.D. in History from Howard University (1971).

Donna's parents were nurturing and supportive. "I was unable to take part in extracurricular activities at Duke because I had to carry an extra heavy load of subjects, having lost credits in transferring from another college—I also had to work for income," she recalls. "I held five jobs during my first year, and this strenuous load affected my grades. I received three Bs and three Cs, unlike my previous custom of getting all As. When I wrote a discouraged note to my mother about it, she sent me \$20 for each B and \$30 for each C."

In addition to being intellectually and creatively active, Donna was politically aware from an early age. During World War II, she interviewed for a radio news job in North Carolina, but rejected the idea when she realized she could neither fit

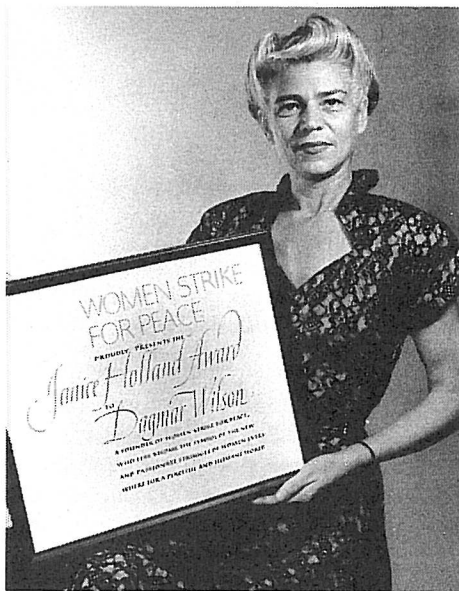
into nor change the racial attitudes of that region at that time. Instead, she took a job with the War Department, working as a "confidential specialist" (assistant cryptographic specialist) in the Office of the Chief Signal Officer, dealing mostly with the Japanese shipping codes. She moved a few times during the war years with her husband Russ, who was in the Air Force. As one of her many jobs, she worked at the Camp Hahn Library near Riverside, California, and used her recent Signal Intelligence experience with code work to devise a code for calling in library books of soldiers to be shipped overseas without giving away troop movement information.

"In the 1940s and 1950s, my work focused on economics," she says, "in the hope that more equal political participation in self-government would result from better wages and conditions for the working-people majority, including women, Blacks, and other minorities—giving them more voice in the decisions affecting their lives." During that decade, she designed houses for her family to live in, and worked on progressive political causes (such as the campaign to prevent the execution of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, and the 1953 action against the CIA overthrow of the newly-elected Guatemalan government).

"We had to battle not only the appalling lack of public information on extremely important political issues, domestic and foreign affairs, but also often media misinformation as well," she recalls. "Much worse, we had to battle the belief that these issues should not be discussed in public—or even in private, as if critically discussing decisions of the government was not democracy-in-action but rather disloyalty." She taught industrial relations and labor economics for Cornell University in New York during this time.

Dr. Allen says her experiences in the 1950s changed her beliefs. "I came to understand that there weren't economic solutions to political problems in a democracy. Although still knowing communication to be the right route to political participation, I now saw clearly that it was not just the communicating that determined

Donna in 1923 with her mother Louise Densmore Rehkopf; in 1937, as a high school junior (with letter for intramural sports); in 1962, Donna was the Mistress of Ceremonies for the Women Strike for Peace awards ceremony, honoring Linus Pauling and other peace notables.



one's participation, but the *number of people one could reach with her or his information* that measured the extent of one's success in having an influence on political decisions—and then in turn their economic welfare. The view of the rich prevailed not merely because they were rich, but because they used their wealth to *buy the means to reach a larger number of the public* than others could reach. Thus they were able to determine what the issues were and the terms of debate.

"From the close of World War II in 1945, I saw the mass media make anti-communism the major issue facing the nation and the world. The only debate allowed was on how best to fight communism, not whether there were other, better policies. I saw the newspaper reports increase in number and variety, from a few in 1946 to many each day: spies and conspiracies, communists in government/unions/organizations, loyalty oaths, etc. The Un-American Activities Committee hearings were always placed on the front page, as were those of its Senate counterpart, and especially the utterances of Senator Joseph McCarthy. Anyone who criticized the government was said to be suspected of being a communist," she says.

Knowing that eighty-seven percent of daily newspapers had stated editorial affinity with the Republican Party, Donna considered this "Communist threat" to be a hoax for political gain to drive the Democrats out of office, and to repeal the New Deal legislation—that they had so strongly opposed editorially—by silencing such views.

"I knew there were very few actual communists in the U.S., and that all were known to the FBI, who harassed and—with the aid of media—exposed them to neighbors, employers, and other associates," Donna remembers. "I knew that people labelled as communists (or suspected communists) could not hold union office or public office—sometimes not even their jobs. Or they were not hired. I saw many friends drop out of political participation altogether; this threat kept many Americans from exercising their First Amendment rights. Politically, I came to realize that the climate created by such news stories could even reverse the *economic* gains I had worked for. Attitudes created by mass media coverage had clear political, social, and even economic effects, stemming from their white, wealthy, male owners. I saw people put in jail for defending the First Amendment, or even using it; I watched people be charged with sedition for selling a house to a Black

family—all as a result of the media-created climate of opinion in the country, and the silencing of other viewpoints."

Donna also became very concerned about the proliferation of nuclear technology. "I saw that nuclear weapons testing was poisoning the food and the atmosphere, as it had already poisoned the fish off the coast of Japan. As a woman and as a citizen, I wanted to participate in these critical life and death decisions being made—ones that affected the lives of all of us and of the planet—but I was unable to be heard. Sadly, in a democracy based on freedom of expression, I could not communicate to enough of my fellow citizens to have any influence in the decision-making."

Donna came to believe that the only way to reach the public with the information that was not being heard—and therefore could not be taken into account by the average person—was to join with the growing number of others who, like herself, were trying to communicate new information about social needs, discrimination, military spending, the dangers of nuclear weapons, and other political problems. "It was clear to me then that political power depended on the number of people one could reach with one's information," she says. "My rationale was that if we worked together, we could eventually overcome the constant attacks in mass media and get enough information to the public to counteract the harmful effects of mass media as a major source for the continuing reinforcement of existing bigotry and militarism, and for perpetuating war and discrimination by educating each new generation to accept them."

From the late '50s until the late '60s, she worked with others in the hope that through greater numbers they could reach the public, both directly and through persuading the mass media to cover them as news. "We believed we could make democracy prevail by matching the communication outreach of the few wealthy mass media owners whom the public could hear. Together we held conferences, wrote, spoke, ran for office, undertook dramatic actions in public, and organized marches. We hoped these events would obtain news coverage. When the media ignored us or distorted our message by giving extensive and repetitious coverage of those who called us names—thus telling people not to listen to us—we worked still harder to find new ways to be heard. The more we were squelched, the more we realized that our rights were in danger, and the harder we worked to be heard," she says.

During those years, Donna finished writing her book on the fringe benefit movement for Cornell; participated with civil rights groups to desegregate housing, public accommodations, education, and employment; joined with the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, as well as the National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy; helped organize the local Washington Area Committee to Abolish the Un-American Activities Committee; was a lobbyist, writing speech material for several Representatives; worked with others to organize an end to nuclear testing; and did extensive research and public speaking on the economics of disarmament.



January, 1943: graduation from Duke University with a degree in history.



November, 1945: Donna at age twenty-five with daughter Dana.

"On a stopover in Paris en route back from an international peace conference in Vienna in 1964," she recalls, "I was arrested at a fifteen-nation European demonstration against nuclear NATO, and spent some six hours in a French jail, providing me a platform at that evening's rally shared with Eve Curie and other notables."

Donna spoke that night—with Canadian Senator Therese Casgrain as her interpreter—to an audience of 5,000.

"The Vienna presentation was my last on the subject of the economics of disarmament, however, because my message about the economic benefits of disarmament was being undone by the media's consistent linkage of the subject with unemployment and recession," she says. "Their headlines for articles on this subject were like: 'Will Disarmament Bring Depression?' and 'Woman Claims Disarmament Will Not Cause Unemployment.' Seeing that the media was using my message to raise and reinforce fears among the public—thus turning more people *against* disarmament—I admitted defeat by the media and stopped writing or speaking on the subject."

Like many others who questioned government policies at the time, Dr. Allen was subpoenaed to appear before the House Un-American Activities Commission. Her subpoena came in December, 1964. HUAC was supposedly investigating communist influence in the attempts of Donna and two other people to persuade the government to grant a visa to a Japanese peace leader to do a ten-day speaking tour.

"We refused to testify in secret, and demanded that the press and the public be admitted to the hearing room," she says. "We were cited for contempt of Congress, tried in Federal court on April 7, 1965, and convicted and sentenced June 4. A public support group of prominent Americans—including many well-known writers and other media people—was established, called Defenders of Three Against HUAC. Several testified in our trial. After much notoriety—but many media appearances and speaking tours, and several brochures written—the conviction was overturned in the Court of Appeals on August 2, 1966. I responded by offering to serve as a part-time Washington representative for the National Committee to Abolish the House Un-American Activities Committee, shortly renamed the National Committee Against Repressive Legislation." She continued this part-time position from 1965-74.

In 1965, Donna wrote, published, and distributed thousands of copies of *What's Wrong With the War in Viet Nam*, and was one of the thirty-one individuals who called for and organized the Assembly of Unrepresented People in August 1965, a joint effort of the peace and civil rights movements. As they stated in the opening sentences of their Call, "In Mississippi and in Washington, the few make decisions for

the many. Mississippi Negroes are denied the vote; all Americans are denied influence over the terrible war carried on in our name in Viet Nam..."

These activities (plus working to win political recognition for African Americans in state and national electoral politics, and running as a peace and freedom candidate for delegate to the Republican National Convention) resulted in Donna doing many speeches, talk shows, and conference panel presentations.

Throughout the '60s, Donna was heavily involved in the activities characteristic of that era. She was one of the founders of Women Strike for Peace; her house was a way station for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) people coming from the South up to the North to get money for the civil rights movement. With her family, she picketed Glen Echo Amusement Park outside Washington, D.C. until it became desegregated in 1961, a political action which was partial inspiration for a pivotal scene in the film *Hairspray*. She was on the board of the National Conference for New Politics, and herself ran for political office. Her children (Dana, Indra, Martha, and Mark) were active as well. Dana participated in a civil rights (CORE) sit-in there, with her case going to the Supreme Court.

It, along with others, precipitated the Court decision against segregation in public accommodations.

"In June of 1968, when the publisher at Cornell requested a revised and updated second edition of my book, I happily agreed," Donna says. "I was pleased to get out a second edition, and I had come to the conclusion that even when using all forms of communication that we could devise, and despite our great numbers, we still could not match the number of people that the relatively few mass media owners could reach with their information and opinions.

"It was more than clear to me now that their vastly superior ability to reach the majority of the public twenty-four hours a day gave them the power to disseminate name-calling, and to successfully persuade the public not to listen to our information, opinions, and facts. Their news stories gave little or no space to the message our activities were trying to convey, but a great deal of space for attacks on us: for example, the page one banner headline in the *Washington Star*: 'Two Women Indicted.' Mechanics of demonstrations, numbers of people, route, and police actions were reported, *but not our message*. The media were not 'our free press'—they did not speak for us or report

our news. Our press conferences were usually ignored, and when they weren't, the coverage was often derogatory. They did not fulfill any 'public right to know' our information," she recalls.

"I concluded that the efforts we'd been directing toward the government would better be directed toward the *media*, whose few owners with their massive outreach had more to say about government policies than we did, despite our greater numbers (compared to the few media owners). I concluded that a media structure that permitted such unequal power among citizens was unsuitable to democracy, and for all to be heard as equals, we would need to restructure the communication system itself."

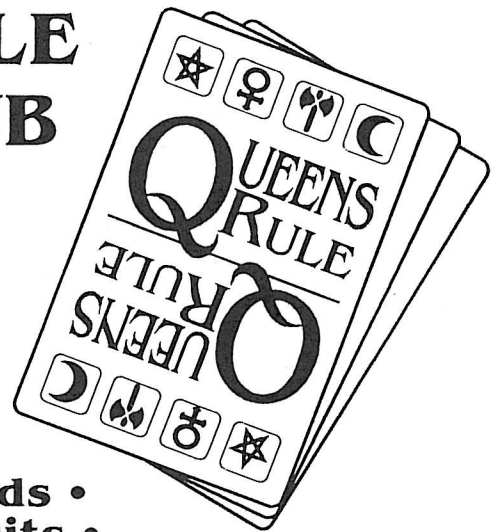
In part two, we will delve into stories of Donna's emergence as a radical feminist, her work putting media access into the hands of women, and her activities today. She can be reached through Women's Institute For Freedom of the Press, 3306 N. Ross Pl. NW, Washington, DC 20008. (202) 966-7783 •

ABOUT THE WRITER: Toni Armstrong Jr. is a writer, editor, and a founding mother of 'HOT WIRE.' In addition to her extensive work in women's music and culture, she has a career in special education, is a photographer, and loves to play roulette in Vegas.



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*Penny Marshall's 'A League of Their Own'
provides a fresh view of their moment in history*

THE ALL-AMERICAN GIRLS' BASEBALL LEAGUE

By Yvonne Zipter

If I tell you that there were once women who played professional baseball in this country, you probably won't be surprised—unless, that is, you never read the newspaper, watch TV, or go to the movies. With the release of Penny Marshall's *A League of Their Own* last year, there has been a media blitz about the All-American Girls' Professional Baseball League (AAGPBL), and it's hard to imagine anyone who hasn't heard about them today.

But only five or six years ago—when I discovered that this league existed while doing research for my book *Diamonds Are A Dyke's Best Friend* (1988, Firebrand Books)—female professional baseball players were only a distant memory for some folks, a dream for many young women, and not much more than a laughable idea to much of the male population.

The movie, as entertaining as it might be, and as valuable as it has been in resurrecting this long neglected part of our history, has only touched the surface. If you have found yourself wanting to know more about that league, you can start here, with this article I wrote for *HOT WIRE* five years ago and am now updating. But if you're really interested in learning more, don't stop here: there are many sources of information on the AAGPBL now, and you owe it to yourself to check them out.

• • • • •

Sporting events, both amateur and professional, are major forms of entertainment for the millions of people who participate in and watch them. Professional competitions have become major media events, and athletes can achieve celebrity status commensurate with that of famous musicians and movie stars.

No matter how skilled they are, however, women's teams don't make the news very often. Exceptional women's teams—from the amateur Raybestos Brakettes softball team of Connecticut to our now-

defunct professional basketball, softball, and volleyball leagues—have gotten scant media attention. The few isolated women involved in the more "ladylike" sports of tennis, gymnastics, and figure skating who have gotten so much attention in recent years might give the misleading impression that media coverage of women athletes has improved. But the fact is, with the exception of the excitement generated by the occasional hot women's Olympic team, there is very little coverage of women's team sports. And what there is of it is often denigrating or patronizing.

This hasn't always been the case, however....

Once upon a time, women were paid twice the average national salary to play baseball; a million fans came out to see them in one season; they were featured in national magazine stories and Movietone Newsreels; daily box scores and league standings were published in newspapers throughout the Midwest; they played ball at Wrigley Field, Comiskey Park, and Yankee Stadium. They played six games a week plus a double-header on Sunday.

From 1943-54, there existed in this country a professional women's baseball league, whose skill levels and attendance figures frequently surpassed the men's semipro teams popular in that day, and occasionally competed with the men's professional leagues. Generally known as the All-American Girls' Professional Baseball League, they were all but forgotten until a few years ago.

But thanks to the pioneering research and writing of Merrie A. Fidler and Sharon L. Roepke, and the subsequent efforts by *Sports Illustrated's* Jay Feldman, the wonderful world of women's professional baseball was ultimately brought to the attention of the likes of director Penny Marshall, and the AAGPBL is beginning to get some of the recognition it so rightfully deserves. Regardless of whether or not you're a sports enthusiast, the AAGPBL is

a fascinating and important chapter in women's history—not just sports history but social and cultural history as well.

Though many of us may not know their names, the women of the AAGPBL started a path for us to follow. Not only did they break ground for building a positive image of the athletic woman, for physical strength and dexterity, but they also served as early role models for women seeking financial and mental independence. Who were these women? How did they get started? What was their experience of being "lady ballplayers"? Where are they now? What do they have to teach us?

THE BEGINNING

The AAGPBL was started in 1943 by Philip K. Wrigley, owner of the Chicago Cubs and the Wrigley Chewing Gum Company, who feared that the projected "manpower" crisis caused by World War II would adversely affect men's professional baseball. The AAGPBL was organized as a substitute entertainment at a time when it had become the patriotic duty of women to tackle a variety of previously male-dominated occupations. Most went on to work in factories. Professional women musicians suddenly had greater opportunities [see "The International Sweethearts of Rhythm," March 1985 *HOT WIRE*, and "Women in Symphony Orchestras," November 1986 *HOT WIRE*]. And some women entered the sports arena, as football coaches, jockeys, umpires, caddies—and ballplayers.

At its inception, the AAGPBL was set up as a nonprofit organization governed by a board of trustees: Wrigley, Paul Harper (an attorney for the Cubs), and Branch Rickey (general manager for the Brooklyn Dodgers). Arthur Meyerhoff, a principal advertising agent for the Wrigley Company, was also enlisted to help with the league. The stated purpose of this organi-

zation was to build morale, raise money for war bonds, develop youth programs, and visit service hospitals. Originally, Wrigley intended the league to play in National League ballparks on off-dates, but black-out regulations and other complications prevented him from carrying this out. (The AAGPBL did manage, however, to play at some of these ballparks for exhibition games.)

Four Midwestern towns—war production centers where men's and women's softball had been popular in the 1930s—were selected as league team sites: Racine and Kenosha, Wisconsin; Rockford, Illinois; and South Bend, Indiana. At its height, the league had as many as ten teams, all in the Midwest.

Its players, however, came from across the country and from Canada. Thirty scouts scoured baseball and softball diamonds for outstanding athletes; tryout camps were set up, to which hundreds of women flocked. Seventy-five women were selected from these regional tryouts to attend final tryouts at Wrigley Field. Sixty of them were selected to staff the original four teams.

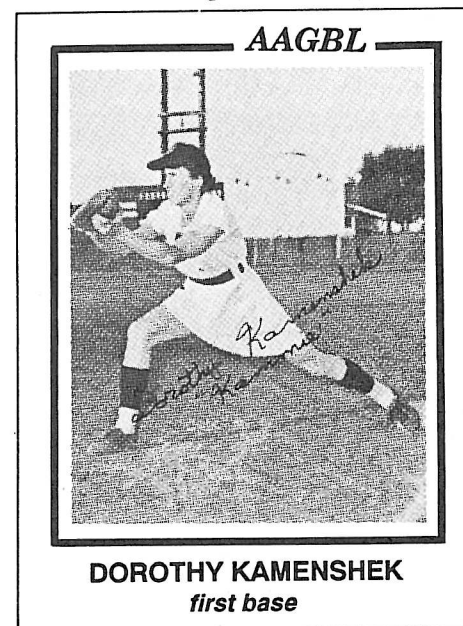
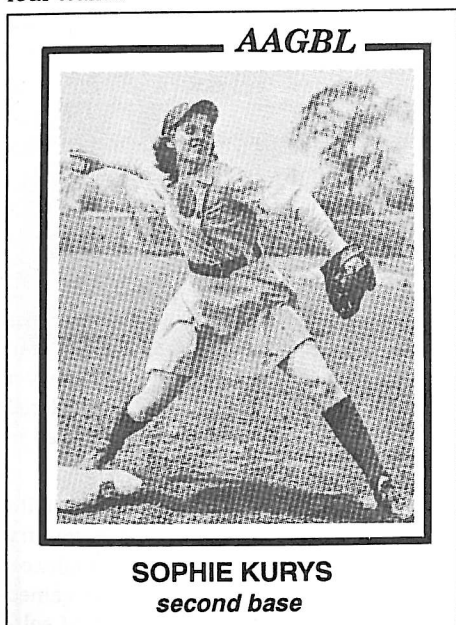
1943 to 1949, attest to the popularity of this brand of major league ball. In 1948, for instance, the Racine Belles and Rockford Peaches both outdrew the populations of their cities. As former player Pepper Paire said in a 1985 *Sports Illustrated* interview, "People may have come out the first time just for laughs and to see the legs, but they kept coming back—and that was because we played good baseball."

For women such as Pepper who would "rather play ball than eat," the AAGPBL was a dream come true. And for some it was more than that: it was a way off the farm, out of the small town, out of poverty. And just for these reasons, the women were willing to put up with the stringent regulations imposed on them by the league: no short haircuts; dating only with a chaperone's permission; no shorts, slacks, drinking, or smoking in public; and strict bedtime rules. As the movie *A League of Their Own* portrayed, the uniforms were somewhat impractical dresses with flared skirts (not the ideal attire for sliding!), and players were required to attend charm school for lessons on hair styling, makeup, and deportment.

the turn of the century), Wrigley sought to develop an image of propriety for his league. He was also concerned that no one mistake his players for men wearing dresses, and that no one accuse them of lesbianism.

While I wish I could say that Wrigley's concerns are now outdated, the issues of gender identity and sexual orientation still plague women athletes today. And, looking at it pragmatically as the former players do, it seems likely that the image of the ball players *did* contribute to the success of the league. The women of the AAGPBL were, after all, a reflection of—as well as a changing force in—society, mirroring the culture's insistence on "feminine" values while at the same time demonstrating to women and men alike that women were capable of much more than previously believed.

Unfortunately, it wasn't enough in the long run. The end of the war brought with it a return to more traditionally sex-defined roles and, by the end of the 1950s, women athletes, musicians, and workers went back home—to the again-popular idea of home being "a woman's place."



Initially, the league was known as the All-American Girls' Softball League—though the game was actually a softball-baseball hybrid, with its softball-sized ball, expanded diamond size, and baseball rules. From there, the game evolved rapidly, the ball becoming smaller and harder, the diamond larger, the pitching faster and, by 1943, overhand, until it was not much different from regulation baseball. In 1945, the league officially changed its name.

Attendance figures, especially from

Though such restrictions and requirements seem ridiculous and sexist today, the players looked at it very pragmatically. At the time, it was what they had to do to play ball. So they did it. Today, most are still firmly convinced that the success of the league owed much to this stress on "femininity"—a view clearly shared by the league's administration at that time. Seeming to bear in mind the variety of accusations leveled at the Boston Bloomer Girls (a team of women ballplayers who toured the country around

THE END

But this de-emphasizing of women's participation in occupations historically defined as masculine was only one factor contributing to the demise of the AAGPBL. Other factors included drastic cuts in the promotional budget; reduced game attendance because of changing recreational habits (more TV, travel, etc.); the reduction of the talent pool because of the switch from softball to baseball; adminis-

trative changes and changes in league structure; and the loss of key players due to injuries, retirement, and recruitment by semipro women's softball leagues.

On September 5, 1954, the women of the AAGPBL turned in their uniforms and went home for good.

The period following the end of the AAGPBL was a time of ambivalence for many of the women. Certainly, they were glad to have had the chance to play major league ball. Many were also appreciative of the opportunities and experiences they would never have had otherwise. And for many, the taste of independence the AAGPBL had given them inspired them to goals uncommon for women in those days. Many started their own businesses or went to college; others pursued professional careers in other fields of athletics, such as golf. (Former AAGPBL pitcher Joanne Winter, for instance, toured with the LPGA for awhile.)

Nevertheless, most of the women were sad and disillusioned as well. Some of those who had been signed late in the league's history barely got to play—or didn't get to play at all. The accomplishments of those who had played were quickly forgotten by the public, and soon the whole league was such a distant memory that the women were often not believed when they talked about their major league baseball days.

Consequently, many of them packed their scrapbooks away and stopped talking about their years as baseball players. Many of them stopped talking, as well, because they were made to feel ashamed of their athletic prowess. In those years when the weak, vulnerable woman of the '50s and '60s was so highly prized, any admission of strength, agility, intelligence, and independence was often perceived as being tantamount to declaring oneself a freak.

TODAY

Luckily for us, as the late 1970s and '80s ushered in the beginnings of an era of pride in the athleticism of women, the women of the AAGPBL began talking again. And in 1982, an AAGPBL reunion was held in Chicago, to be followed by several more—one of which was held in Fort Wayne, Indiana, in September 1986, (an event I was privileged to attend). If I had been impressed by what I had read about their youthful feats and accomplishments, I was doubly impressed by these living, breathing women, now in their fifties, sixties, and seventies. Their spirit, energy, and enthusiasm were refreshing,

AAGBL



CONNIE WISNIEWSKI
pitcher—outfield

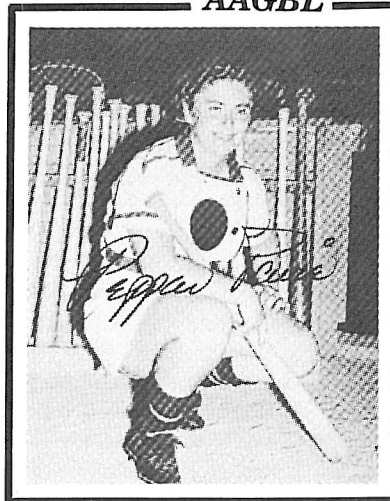
AAGPBL TEAMS

Rockford Peaches 1943-1954
 South Bend Blue Sox 1943-1954
 Kenosha Comets 1943-1951
 Racine Belles 1943-1950
 Milwaukee Chicks 1944
 Minneapolis Millerettes 1944
 Fort Wayne Daisies 1945-1954
 Grand Rapids Chicks 1945-1954
 Peoria Redwings 1946-1951
 Muskegon Lassies 1946-1950-53
 Muskegon Belles 1953-1954
 Kalamazoo Lassies 1950-1954
 Battle Creek Belles 1951-1952
 Chicago Colleens 1948*
 Springfield Sallies 1948*

* Official league members 1948 only; played exhibition games in 1949-50, and served as player development teams.

Compiled by former AAGPBL member Faye K.
 Dancer from various league publications.

AAGBL



LAVONNE PAIRE
catcher—shortstop—third base

and I watched with rapt attention as these women threw themselves (in some cases literally) into a fast-paced volleyball game at a picnic—this after they had spent the morning either playing golf or bowling. I stood in awe at being in the presence of heroes and role models I hadn't even known I'd had, feeling a little cheated.

The next day, as I watched these women play a four-inning baseball game, I wished for the first time in my life that I had been born twenty years earlier so that I could have seen these women during their peak athletic years. Watching Nancy "Hank" Warren—at about age seventy—out there on the pitcher's mound, hurling the ball across the plate, I could easily imagine how thrilling it must have been to see these women—with names like Wimp Baumgartner, Snookie Doyle, Beans Risinger, and Slats Moellering—demonstrate their considerable skills in the 1940s and 1950s.

I remember reading how Wally Pipp, former New York Yankees first baseman, had described Dottie Kamenshek as "the fanciest fielding first baseman [he'd] ever seen, man or woman," and how "Kammy" and Eleanor Engle both had been offered contracts on minor league men's teams. (Kamenshek reportedly refused the offer, and Engle's was withdrawn as a rule was quickly devised barring the signing of women as players.) I remembered hearing about Sophie Kurys' record 201 stolen bases in a single season; about how Dorothy Schroeder had been deemed by former major leaguer Charlie Grimm worth \$50,000 "if she were a man"; about the incredible pitching and batting records of women like Connie Wisniewski, Jean Faut, Dottie Wiltse Collins, Betty Weaver Foss, and Joanne Weaver...and I wondered why these women were not represented in the Baseball Hall of Fame.

There are many things wrong with the way sports are played in this country today, including drug abuse and violence. But a lot of positive things can be gained by playing team sports: a sense of self-worth, leadership, commitment, cooperation, and so on. But women are still denied (or discouraged from) participation in sports—particularly teams sports. Psychologist Roberta Bennett talks about how, in this society, sports are like a male rite of passage and must, therefore, be protected from intrusion by women. After all, what good would a male rite of passage be if women were participating in it?

Still, if the women of the AAGPBL and our more recent professional teams—softball, basketball, and volleyball—were

held up as the role models they are, if they were given their rightful place in history, then perhaps young women would more often find the courage to stay active in the sport of their choice and not give in to peer pressure to conform to traditionally acceptable roles for women. Regardless of the projected effect, though, the point is that sporting women deserve a place in history and deserve to be recognized for their achievements at least as much as male sports figures do—maybe even more because of the prejudice and obstacles they had to overcome.

The good news is that the women of the AAGPBL, at least, have been given a solid if still relatively small place in history: besides the film and the articles that have proliferated in its wake, there is now a permanent exhibit at the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown on women in baseball, of which the AAGPBL is a part. Sources tell me that this exhibit is not quite the big splashy affair that is portrayed in *A League of Their Own*—it's a simple glass display case (of which the AAGPBL is only one part). But it's a start. "The collection of tarnished trophies, faded photos, and unique uniforms honors the 545 women from the U.S., Canada, and Cuba who served in the league from 1943 until it ended in 1954," says Los Angeles-

based writer Nancy Randle.

And there is another sign of hope for the future of women in baseball: Karen Kunkel, executive director of the AAGPBL, said in a *Chicago Tribune Magazine* article last July that there is feasibility research going on in the Southeast for a women's baseball league. She believes, as do I, that finding the talent to fill such a league would not be a problem. The problem would be the money and the media: that is, getting the kind of support necessary to make such a league viable.

If they do pull it off, you can be sure

that I'll be in the front row with a bag of peanuts and a score card, cheering them on. •

ABOUT THE WRITER: *Yvonne Zipter is a syndicated columnist and the author of two books: 'Diamonds Are A Dyke's Best Friend' and the poetry collection 'The Patience of Metal,' which is a Lambda Literary Award Finalist, runner-up for the Poetry Society of America's Melville Cane Award, and a Chicago Book Clinic Honor Book. Yvonne was one of the founding mothers of 'HOT WIRE.'*

WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE AAGPBL?

- Lois Browne, *Girls of Summer* (New York: Harper Collins, 1992).
- Sharon L. Roepke, *Diamond Gals* (1986; 2d ed., 1988). \$3 plus \$1 postage/handling. AAGBL Cards, P.O. Box 3332, Kalamazoo, MI 49003.
- Sharon L. Roepke, AAGBL Baseball Cards (four sets). \$12 each plus \$1/set postage/handling. AAGBL Cards, P.O. Box 3332, Kalamazoo, MI 49003.
- Jay Feldman, "Perspective," *Sports Illustrated*, June 10, 1985.
- Merrie A. Fidler, "The All-American Girls' Baseball League, 1943-1954," in *Her Story in Sport*, ed. Reet Howell (West Point, N.Y.: Leisure Press, 1982).
- Nancy Randle, "Their Time At Bat," *Chicago Tribune Magazine*, July 5, 1992.
- Documentary *A League of Their Own*, produced by Kelly Candaele and Kim Wilson, available from Filmmakers Library (212) 808-4980.

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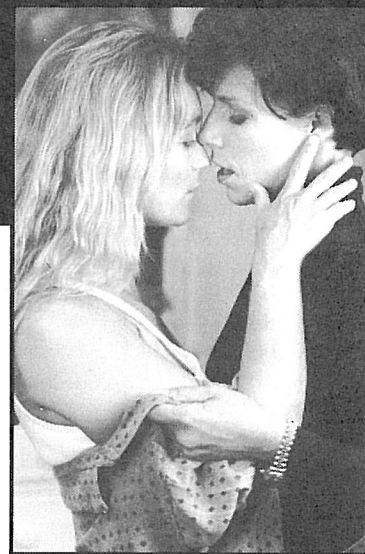
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MARY WATKINS

By Ekuia Omosupe

Mary Watkins has three albums of original work: *Something Moving* (1979, Olivia Records), featuring a jazz fusion quartet; *Winds of Change* (1982, Palo Alto Jazz), a live recording featuring a forty-two piece jazz orchestra; and *Spiritsong* (1985, Redwood Records), a collection of solo piano pieces. Her latest release, *The Soul Knows*, is composed of traditional works. Why did she choose to arrange existing works rather than use her own compositions for the new tape?

"My daughter asked me to make an accompaniment tape for her church," Mary says. "A woman who sells gospel music played the tape in her store one day, and a customer had an emotional/spiritual experience while listening to 'Amazing Grace.' The owner called me, told the story, and suggested that I do a whole album of this kind of music. That's really how the idea came about. I listen to the songs a lot myself, because they are very comforting to me; it occurred to me that other people might be comforted by the music as well. I know that 'Amazing Grace' is universally loved. So, I went about putting together some of the more famous traditional spiritual music, and some of my own favorites."

When Mary was a child, her family attended church regularly on the north side of town [in Pueblo, Colorado]. "But when I was eight, they changed membership and began attending on the south side" she recalls. "The first Sunday I attended the new church, there were probably seventy-five people in the congregation. I had never been in a gathering with so many Black people before, so I was in awe. Even more exciting, this church had an organ! The congregation was very spirited and very warm, and when the organ played and they sang

'Holy, Holy, Holy,' they really sang! This was transforming! That's when I first realized in a personal way the power of music. I loved it, and I loved seeing and being with all of these warm, beautiful people. This music became my lifeline, my connection to God, to the Infinite. I began to experience the healing power of this special music at that time. This is how I realized God/Goddess, the Creator, the Higher Power, or however one chooses to identify this supreme experience. It was exciting, it was beautiful, and I said, 'Music is what I want to do, and I always want to do music that is about this kind of love.' "

Mary feels strongly that music has gotten her through the years. "As a kid, I thought no one loved me—but the music loved me," she says. "I was being loved by the whole environment. When I joined the church that day, all the people in the congregation hugged me. I thought they loved me. I'll never forget that day; it's



frozen in my memory. In a way, this is what the whole album is about. The soul knows that it is loved."

There are many things about this music that Mary says she finds comforting. "The harmonies are not complicated, and the melodies are very soothing. Peo-

ple react to this. The music isn't threatening. The forms are simple and familiar. For me, they represent the good things that comfort me about the church community I grew up in that gave me a sense of continuity. They remind me of the times when I felt that I belonged and that I was loved."

Music is acknowledged by many to be a healing force. Mary says that it's been a major force in her own healing, and that the music is an instrument and she is a channel. How does she understand music as her social, political, and spiritual work?

"I never set out for music to have this function," she says. "I didn't choose it. It chose me. Arrangements of tones and vibrations have an affect on the body, on our minds. It's like a lifeline. I have to share this; I'll share it with anybody. If you happen to be the grand wizard of the KKK, it's for you, too—the bigots, the Nazis, the skinheads. It's for anybody. I don't have anything to do with it, except

Irene Young

that it comes through me. It's the thing that we need the most. We need love. And somehow a truer, deeper sense of who we really are. We are fighting against each other, blaming, accusing, attacking, and there's a lot of music out there that incites that kind of thing. I want to do music that inspires people to be kind to each other, to be kind to themselves, to love each other, to love themselves. That's the first thing, that you love yourself. If something is touched in you, even if it's for half of a second, if only for a flash, you love, you have loved. And that is healing."

Like any artist, Mary Watkins has had obstacles in her career. What have they been?

"This is a philosophical question," she muses. "I could say 'me,' and that would be true to some extent, you know. My experience in the world as a woman,

as a Black woman, and as an independent woman, has shown me that the world is an unfriendly place. There are a lot of obstacles to overcome. I do understand how I let certain things stop me, such as the fact that there weren't any models out there for me."

Mary decided as a young person that she wanted to be a composer. "I knew that this was what excited me, but it was a long time before I found out that there were women composers," she says. "I was going through the biographical encyclopedia of music composers and I came across the name of Ruth Crawford. And I thought, what is this? How unusual! It was pretty amazing to me, as if I had been asleep. They were invisible. It was probably another fifteen years before I asked the next question: why?"

"I had a music history teacher who was really a smiling, friendly bigot. He wouldn't credit African Americans for their contributions to jazz. He didn't really want to acknowledge jazz at all, and when he did, he did not want to credit Blacks. One day I asked him about women conductors, and he condescendingly mentioned one woman conductor who lived in Denver. It was rare to hear of a woman who conducted a symphony orchestra." Mary recalls that he talked about her as if she was third or fourth rate.

"I probably internalized all of the racism, sexism, and negative criticism that I had encountered, yet there was a part of me that was very strong, and is even stronger now. I said I will never give up. While I might have detoured along the way, or stood back for a while, or believed that I couldn't do it, there was the other side of me that believed—yes, I will. These parts were at war with each other for a number of years, so my progress was slow," she says. "But the part of me that said I will never give up meant just that, so I never did. A lot of this had to do with being safe. How can I be who I want to be? How can I be the person I really think I can be without getting squashed, without getting done in? There were definitely a lot of little traps along the way."

Fortunately, Mary was nurtured and supported by her family to move forward and to pursue her interests in music. Her mother encouraged her to study music. "She wanted me to have the opportunity that she never had," says Mary. Her mother started her on piano lessons when she was four years old, not knowing the recommended age to start a child in music. "She didn't know if I was talented or not," says Mary. "I was adopted. These

were't my blood relatives, so they didn't really have anything to go on. But it turned out that I was very musical. I grew up A.M.E. [African Methodist Episcopal], and played for the junior choir in our church when I was eight years old. Later on I played the organ. When I left home I looked for a church to play for."

In college, Mary majored in music. "For a long time I was lost," she says. "I didn't know what I wanted to do. I felt invalidated as a human being. That's how I spent most of my younger years, feeling invalid, totally invalid, except for the validation I got from my family. There was no consciousness about Black people as human beings with sensitivity, with feelings and desire. Nothing. There was one insult after another, and you could expect disrespect to come from anywhere. So when I was very young, I used to listen to people carry on about Jesus, and I wondered, how do you know he isn't racist, everybody else is?"

"I was sad a lot when I was a kid, because in grade school I was usually the only Black person in my class. I was really disturbed about the state of Black people in the world, but I couldn't articulate that as a child. I felt out of place as a woman, and upset about what was expected of me. I always felt that we were pulling in: 'Don't laugh too loud, don't get your hair wet, don't do this, don't do that.' What could you do? You just couldn't be a full human being," she says.

"When I got my first pair of high heels, I didn't feel thrilled. I was upset because it meant pulling in even further. So, here come the high heels, now you're a young lady. You pull everything in. You're in a cage. Then you have to wait to be chosen. Who's choosing you? People are still unconscious. The hostility and the resulting self-hatred are a disease. When you talk about obstacles, those were the obstacles. So, it's all of this internalized stuff and you struggle with it. It's like moving in quicksand," she says. "It wasn't this way for everybody, but this is how it was for me. It was hard."

Mary says she became a composer because she wanted to create. She recalls being in the band; when the instructor would ask the French horns and the flutes to play from line H to J, for instance, she would listen and wonder about other combinations of instruments on those same notes. "I would find myself wondering what they would sound like playing that same scale, or playing some notes that I had created," she says. "I started to wonder what I could write, and what it

would sound like. Toni Morrison said, 'I write what I want to read.' I write what I want to hear. I create worlds and my own reality. I write to heal and to create the experience of love, excitement, whatever it is that may somehow compensate for some of the inadequacies in life."

Mary's musical influences are many and varied. She's had classical training, and graduated from Howard University with a degree in composition. The piano is her primary instrument, though she has learned to play other instruments, including the tuba and the trumpet. "All music has influenced me: jazz, country western, pop, religious," she says. "I just absorb it."

Her dream is to do music drama. "I want to deal with the subjects we have been talking about," she says. "I would like to share my experiences, and hope that other people are helped by them. Share the pain and the healing. I think I'm now in a place where I can share a lot of these things and put my work out there. I believe people will be helped, and that can be very invigorating."

This accomplished performer and composer has many thoughts to share with other musicians, insights that have served her as she has continued to move forward past the obstacles that would have crushed her if she were not the strong, committed person that she is. Being centered is something she especially stresses.

"It's really important to know yourself," she says. "Your center has to be cared for if you are going to last. I guess everybody is a channel, and you need to be open so you can give your best."

The song "By and By" from Mary Watkins' new album 'The Soul Knows' can be heard on the soundsheet in this issue of 'HOT WIRE.' 'The Soul Knows' is available from Wenefil, 5337 College Ave. #425, Oakland, CA 94618. •

ABOUT THE WRITER: *Ekua Omosupe taught for seven years at the University of California in Santa Cruz. She currently holds a tenure track position at Cabrillo College in Santa Cruz, where she teaches English, writing, American literature, and women's studies. She is a poet, a scholar, an essayist, a single mom, and a lesbian. She is presently writing her dissertation on "The Politics of Constructing Black Lesbian Identities Among Lesbians of African Descent in the United States."*

GREETINGS, GODDESS BABES

TAM'S JAM IN BELLINGHAM

Reported by Laura Post

For the third year in a row, booking agent turned festival producer Tam Martin has put together a sensational lineup of performers, ASL interpreters, and other entertainment at the Pacific Northwest Women's Music and Cultural Jamboree in northern Washington state. The three-day "Tam's Jam in Bellingham"—traditionally scheduled on or near the 4th of July weekend—is very comfortable (set on a campus) and very organized (professional program booklet, meticulous adherence to the schedule). The festival is set in a very white part of the country, where racist and neo-Nazi organizations are gathering strength every day.

Friday, there was line dancing, pick-up softball, tennis lessons, and full-length feature films, including *Beaches*, *Coal Miner's Daughter*, and *The Long Walk Home*. Workshops included the packed house for "Lesbian Bed Death—Not!" (Judith Avery and Laura Post); musical arranging (Motherlode); open acoustic guitar tunings (Sam Weis); and the music business (Sandra Washington). Jamie Anderson kicked off the live shows with her personable stage presence and sharp, funny tunes. Motherlode—Janet Peterson, Nan Collie, Kathleen Fallon, Marie Eaton (two mothers, two not)—played woman-identified contemporary folk.

The smooth energy of the four women segued into the hot energy of Laura Love in a tight duet with Linda Severt. They opened with Laura's signature a cappella interpretation of "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot." Her unself-conscious connection to the music shone in her swaying through "I'm Your Daughter's Lover," funky bass lines, her innovative funkabilly genre, and Linda's "Git Up, Git Down, Git Back Up, Just Wanna Go Back To Bed Blues." During a set change, emcee Lisa Koch passed the time by calling up a suitably butch-looking woman from the front row to hold a cigarette lighter as Lisa toasted a marshmallow and led a sing-along of her lesbo version of "Kumbaya."

Saturday midday, the four funny

women of WYMPROV expounded upon pets, love, and day-to-day life as women. Saturday afternoon, the comic duo of Dos Fallopia (Lisa Koch and Peggy Platt)—greeted by the impromptu pelting of Lisa with marshmallows by the audience, instigated by a festival worker—did a rapid-fire series of side-splitting political skits. As Compost Morning Dew and Dolphin-Free Tuna Woman, Peggy and Lisa (on acoustic guitar) performed a selection from *My Uterus Sings*; as Mindi and Bambi, they demonstrated "politically incorrect aerobics" to a one-two-three beat, spoofing each of the then-three Presidential candidates ("boff the model/play the sax," "throw up and pass out/that's not prudent," "fuck the people/fuck the people"). As Ethel Merman and Kate Hepburn, they sang vocally-true parodies of "Good Vibrations" and "Where The Girls Are"; as Fran and Annie, they hosted twelve-step inner child day care. As The Surly Bitches, they did a faux-rock cut from *Penis-Free Planet*; and, during a set change, they introduced the monotonously familiar "la-la song" (the musical theme from the film *A Man and A Woman*).

Following an engaging verbal duo is tough, but intensely musical Sam Weis did it well. A virtuosa on twelve-string guitar with a rich, velvety voice to match and a smoldering sensuality, she amply demonstrated why she won the 1991 Northwest Area Music Association award for Best Acoustic Guitarist and why her music was honored as Best Acoustic Recording.

The four women of The Righteous Mothers (Lisa Brodoff, Wendy Crocker, Marla Beth Elliott, and Clare Grausz) provided a change of pace. As much good humor and spirited theatrics as close harmonious singing against keyboard, guitar, bass, and percussion, they mimed childbirth as a sea chanty, celebrated with a bluesy affirmation of fat thighs, and did a boogie-woogie/gospel send-up of Christian church music that managed to tweak Supreme Court Justice Scalia and some remarks he had made about naked Hoosiers

in the Hoosierdome. Their tribute to a courageous woman who fought off a male attacker proudly claimed female space in the hall of legends, and drew the first standing ovation from the 800 or so attendees.

Saturday night, Margie Adam—returned eager and energetic from her seven-year "radical's sabbatical"—caught our attention with her joyous "Wake Up Call," then proceeded to sweetly electrify with sparkling voice cascading over radiant piano music. A touching anecdote about friends introduced "After the Break-up," while "It's My Heart That's On My Side" showed how to trust oneself. Her '70s classic "The Unicorn Song" reiterated how we—as women and as lesbians—must continually struggle to survive and thrive in a hostile world.

The ever ebullient Washington Sisters did their contemporary pop/jazz/calypso songs of love and politics. Accompanied by their "band-in-a-box," the twins gave forth with "Breaths," an a cappella naturalistic recipe for life ("listen more often to things than to beings") in the style of early Sweet Honey in the Rock. They fooled around with the tall tale of a third—unfortunately straight—twin ("Shana"), and Sharon sang her debut songwriting piece, a solo love ballad. They talked about unacceptable apartheid, the U.S. government's racist intervention at Big Mountain, the 500th anniversary of Columbus and the decimation of the Native Americans subsequent to his "tripping over this continent," all leading into their forceful "Say NO," which brought the crowd to its feet in solidarity. A sizzling, impromptu medley of "Lift Every Voice" (the Black National Anthem, for which the mostly white audience knew to rise), the traditionals "Amazing Grace," "Oh, Mary," and "Let It Shine," and their own jazzy "Pray for Peace" ("love, compassion, no more oppression") framed Sharon's comments about "the women who aren't here...don't ask the festival organizers where we are—ask yourselves where we

are in your lives."

The evening's emcee, playwright/director Christine Wheeler, introduced Cris Williamson and Tret Fure by recalling a gig by Cris, twenty years before, in a North Hollywood club and making some flattering yet embarrassing allusions to Tret's sensual appeal. Cris and Tret, musical collaborators for more than ten years, sound as if they were born to harmonize together. Fresh from groundbreaking tours through Australia and Russia, poet/teacher/life observer Cris had written two new songs. "Little World Spinning Blue" earnestly encourages coalitional goals while offering coalitional tools ("Music is the charmer...together we'll break through"). Her delicate "Living On" commemorates those surviving AIDS losses when the "caring quotient" has eroded. Tret also had a new (piano) song to share: "Something Blue," an empathetic slant on the Oregon Citizens Alliance—one example of the aforementioned racist/pro-white groups—who deserve, perhaps, pity as well as censorship.

Cris's smoky soprano a cappella version of Leonard Cohen's "Sisters of Mercy" was stunning; Tret elicited tears with her reverential "Hold Me To Your Heart." Cris talked about her contributions to fighting pediatric AIDS, and about the value placed on the arts in Russia. They returned to the stage for the festival's first encore—"Waterfall."

Sunday morning rolled with The Jamboree Chorus, born out of a workshop by conductor Karm Hagedorn. Their three numbers—"Freedom," (arranged by Ysaye Barnwell), a spiritual-made-lesbian ("Fly Away Home"), and Libby Roderick's simple affirmation "How Could Anyone"—were surprisingly crisp and full. (Of course, the audience teasingly whispered the "la-la song" as the chorus began to sing. Surprise! The chorus's first offering was a few bars of the "la-la song!")

Robin Flower, Nancy Vogl, and Libby McLaren—three talented individual musicians—have recently regrouped as The Wild Hearts. These seasoned performers bring well-matched voices and technical excellence on six instruments (accordion, acoustic guitar, fiddle, keyboard, mandolin, and piano) to their covers of Cajun, Irish, bluegrass, and folk/country standards, in addition to their own socially-conscious original material. Their camaraderie was warming on Libby's empowering "Howl at the Moon," Nancy's bold "Year to Year" (about the perpetuation of child abuse), and Robin's "The Ringer," exploring the power of children's

dreams to change the world. Nancy said hello to her high school teacher, Maggie—who might have been in the audience—and received great applause for her reworked "Crime of the Century": new "crimes" included environmental toxins, the S&L bailout, Desert Storm, and the Rodney King incident. The Wild Hearts showed their more playful side with familiar bars interspersed unexpectedly during songs, and "Antananarivo," about women's similarities across the world.

As Judith Casselberry and Jaqué DuPreé got ready, emcee Matina Bevis joked about the four basic Southern food groups: pork, grease, flour, and grits, with the possible addition of mayonnaise. Then Judith (on rhythm guitar and deep, rich voice) and Jaqué (on high vocal counterpoint) powered the room with their strong music about surviving as African-American women. "Strong-But Bitter Seed" was a direct resistance to misogynistic violence; "King James Version" put Africans back into the Anglo-whitewashed Bible. In between, they aired their dissatisfactions with the current administration ("Let him find a job like everyone else"), the upcoming elections, and the system in general. They were cheered back for two encores, including a full-tilt cover of the Eagles' "Take It to the Limit" (performed with The Wild Hearts) that brought down the house.

Just when we thought that nothing could top what we had just witnessed, the irreverent Venus Envy emerged. Lisa Koch was funny in Dos Fallopias, and Laura Love and her funky bass blazed with Linda Severt, but put the three of them together with the voice of Linda Schierman, and you've got a band that can write funny material, cleverly rework standard songs to be hotly political, sexual, and lesbian, and play a groove so deep that one might want a surfboard to ride in it. Sporting marshmallow earrings, Lisa and company cha-cha-ed out and did a "venue" medley, including Frankie Avalon's "Venus" and Bananarama's "She's Got It," while dancing in line.

The Festival ended with Venus Envy's ringing medley "Put a Little Love in Your Hearts"/"What's It To Ya" (an adaptation, with attitude, to the tune of the "Hallelujah Chorus" from Handel's *Messiah*)/a liberally reworded "Chain of Fools"/Laura's "Nelson" (Mandela's release is not enough progress)/"Thank You"/"My Boyfriend's Back" (with new "She's a lesbian now" refrain)/and, finally, "America," with "sisterhood" gracing the lyrics. •

AND NOW, A WORD FROM OUR PRODUCER...

"I started this festival—even though there are so many others—because I was born and raised in the Pacific Northwest, and it holds a special place in my heart," says Tam Martin. "I've heard over the years from friends who live up here how difficult it is to get all the way down to Yosemite, and how great it would be to have a festival closer to home. Since I attended my first two years of college at Western Washington University in Bellingham, it seemed a logical place to start this new festival," she says.

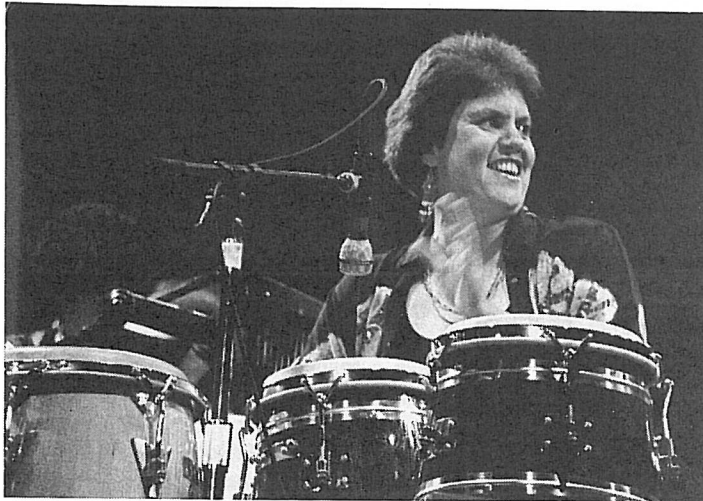
"My goals from the beginning were to make this a festival women would want to attend, even those who'd never been to a festival before. I wanted to offer a variety of music/comedy/culture in a comfortable setting—dorm housing and food, with flush toilets and private hot showers. I wanted the workshops to appeal to a variety of interests (still women's spirituality workshops, for example, but also how to start your own business, how to buy your first home, etc.) In essence, I tried to create a festival that I—as a thirty-four-year-old ex-Girl Scout/now business-woman—would want to attend!"

As a music producer, Tam tries to balance the stages "with at least one comic emcee, a national performer, a Northwest performer, women of color, etc." Performers featured the first three years included Kate Clinton, Cris Williamson, Teresa Trull, Ferron, Deidre McCalla, Casselberry-DuPreé, Dos Fallopias, The Washington Sisters, Motherlode, Venus Envy, Karen Williams, Peggy Platt, The Seattle Women's Ensemble, The Righteous Mothers, Margie Adam, The Wild Hearts, Jamie Anderson, Marga Gomez, Renee Hicks, and Judy Fjell.

Tam plans to keep doing the festival the first weekend in July on the campus of WWU. "The format will remain the same: four concerts, two dances, a workshop series, a crafts fair, a visual arts display, open mic/showcasing of new talent, movies, swimming, tennis, and softball," she says.

The 1993 Jamboree is scheduled for July 2-4. For registration, send SASE to PNWMCJ c/o Beachfront Productions, 25-6 NW 23rd Pl. #416, Portland, OR 97210-3534. (503) 223-7237, fax (503) 223-7325.

ABOUT THE WRITER: Laura Post writes about women's arts, entertainment, and culture in her syndicated monthly column "Muse News."



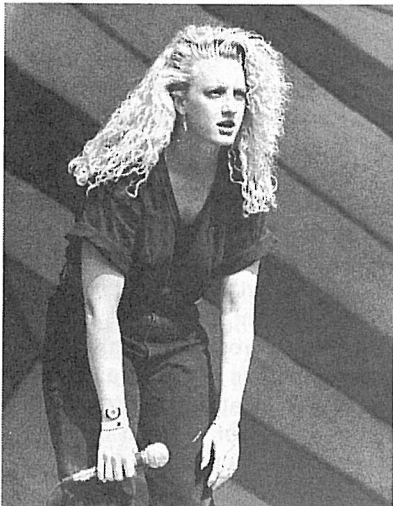
Toni Armstrong Jr.

Carolyn Brandy, who gained early fame with the jazz ensemble *Alive!*, fronted her own band at Michigan last summer, playing original high-energy Latin music.



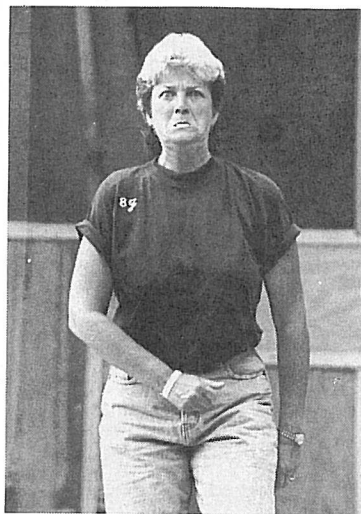
Marcy J. Hochberg

The members of Axis Dance Troupe, together since 1987, explore new ways of moving beyond the traditional dance form and challenge ideas about art and disability.



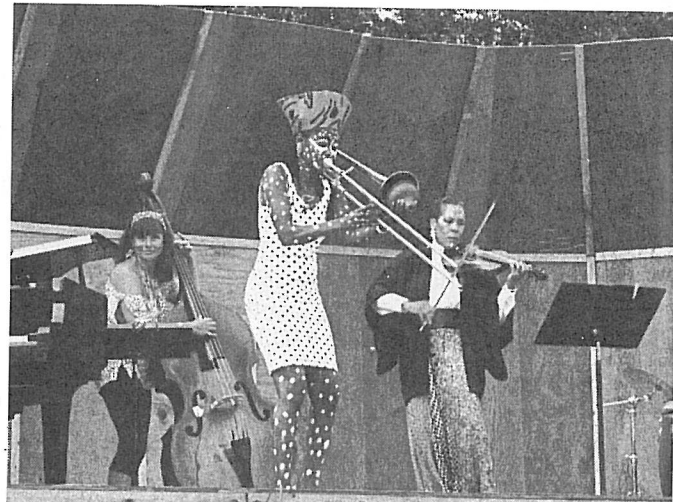
Marcy J. Hochberg

Suzanne Westenhoeffer has been bringing her out-lesbian humor to mainstream comedy clubs.



Toni Armstrong Jr.

Deaf comic Susan Jackson wowed the Michigan Acoustic Stage audience.



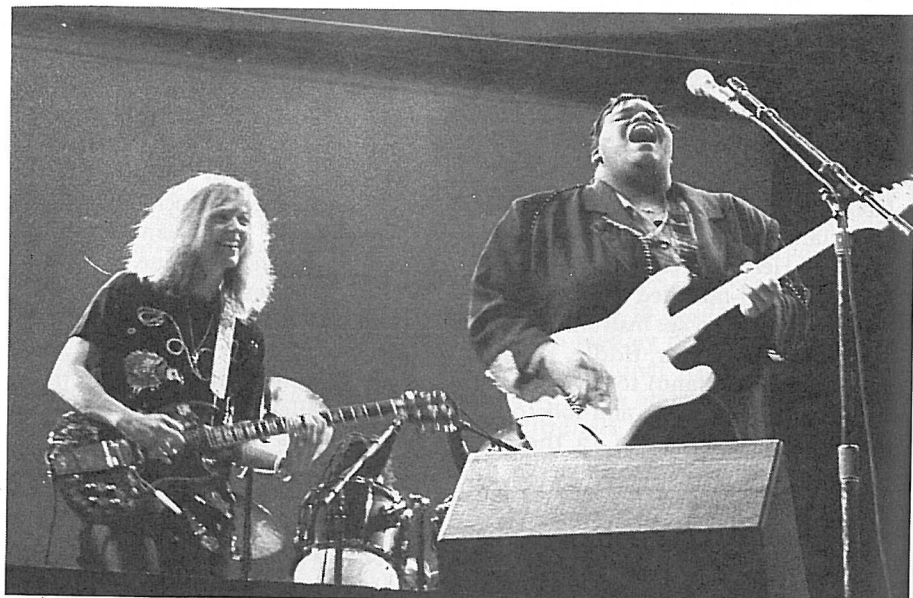
Marcy J. Hochberg

Living on the Edge is the Bay Area's newest all-woman ensemble. (From left: Suzanne Vincenza, Angela Wellman, India Cooke; also M. Watkins, C. Brandy, Renaye Brown.)



Toni Armstrong Jr.

ASL interpreter Joy Duskin at ECLF '92.



Marcy J. Hochberg

Helen Hooke (left) rockin' with Toshi Reagon on the Michigan Night Stage.



Marcy J. Hochberg

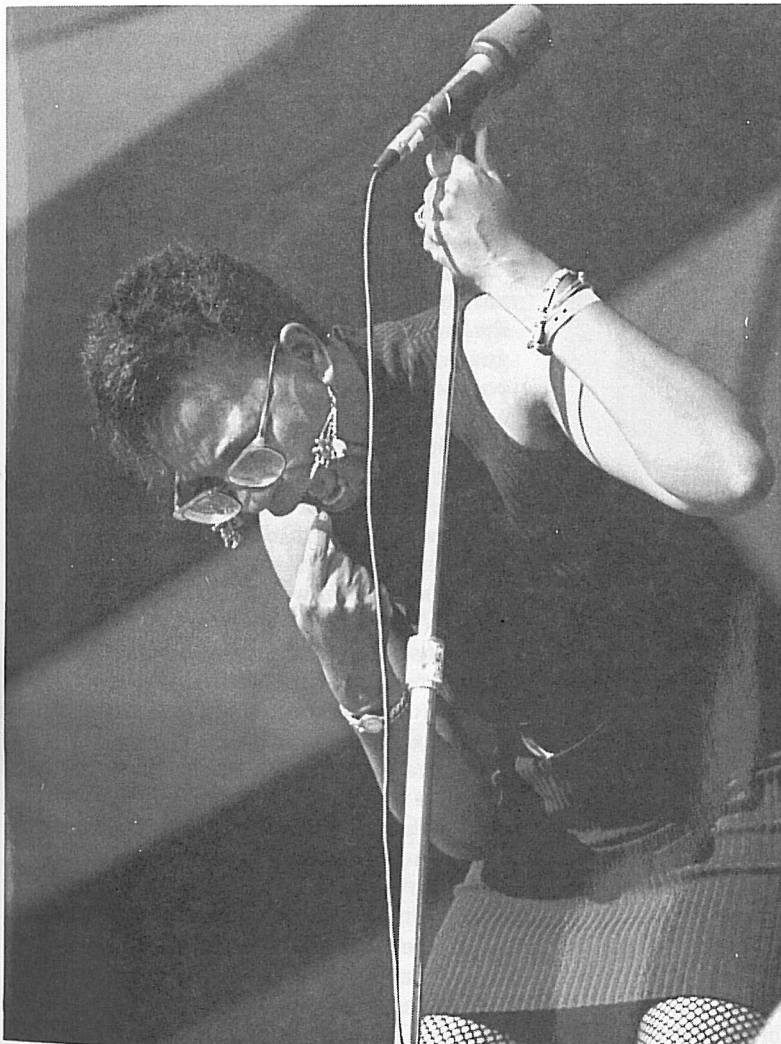
Vicki Randle reveals her sweet, sensitive side during her solo sets.



Toni Armstrong Jr.

New Yorker Nedra Johnson puts the B in R&B with her low, sensuous voice and funky, down-home bluesy bass lines.

on the '92 festival circuit



Toni Armstrong Jr.

Karen Williams regaled audiences with pointed political commentary and hilarious anecdotes about femmes and their poor butches.



Toni Armstrong Jr.

Sue Fink likes to bring someone up on stage—in this case, Susan Herrick—and play a guessing game with the audience.



Toni Armstrong Jr.

Dance Brigade's 'Goodbye Columbus' piece is a view of the last 500 years of history from the perspective of women.

FIRST WEST COAST LESBIANS' FESTIVAL

Reported by Toni Armstrong Sr.

Last June, my partner Lois and I attended the First West Coast Lesbians' Festival at Malibu, California, and have to report it was one of the classiest, friendliest festivals we've ever been to. And I've attended many in the last fifteen years.

The first was in the late 1970s at the University of Illinois in Champaign as a guest of my daughter, and I've never been the same since. A group of young college women in their twenties—full of courage, vision, and musical excitement—drew hundreds of women together on the campus to form what we would eventually refer to as "women-only space." This was a completely electrifying concept for most of us—especially me, a mother in her fifties living a fairly conventional lifestyle.

The talent, workshops, and brilliant new women-empowering ideas I encountered in Champaign totally hooked me on this idea of festivals. And it was there that I first met the young Lin Daniels; who could have known then that she would go on to establish [with Myriam Fougère] the first women's music festival incorporating the word "lesbian" into its title? And who could have predicted that her equally young pal (my daughter) would go on to create *HOT WIRE*? At the time, "women's music" itself was only an infant.

In the years since, I've gone to at least five National Women's Music Festivals, now moved from Champaign to the Indiana University in Bloomington (three of those with my life's partner). We've also attended five of Robin Tyler's West Coast Music and Comedy Festivals, first in Santa Barbara and then at Yosemite Park. Our Michigan festival experience is limited to one year (the tenth anniversary), when the size of the land and the thousands of women from all over the globe blew our minds. (If you've never been to a Michigan festival, you should go at least once for the culture shock of it.) Last April, Toni Jr. again took me to a one-of-a-kind gathering, the Gulf Coast Women's Festival in Mississippi. What an eye opener. I spent a lot of time talking with the local women,

and learned about some of the dramatic difficulties suffered by our sisters in the Deep South.

In short, I've accumulated a lot of notches on my festival belt over the years, so I can report from experience what a treat this first annual West Coast Lesbians' Festival was. The warmth, privacy, and natural Malibu beauty were fantastic!

FIRST ANNUAL WEST COAST LESBIANS' FESTIVAL!



JUNE 5 - 7, 1992!
in Malibu

When we first arrived, we felt welcomed. The women greeting and directing everyone at the entrance were very friendly, there were signs everywhere, and the program booklet given out at the gate was so complete that we had no trouble finding anything. We liked it that the producers, Lin Daniels and Marilyn Van Veersen, were highly visible throughout the festival; they were available to everyone on the land for complaints, questions, and just plain old socializing.

The festival site was laid out well. The way cabins, tent areas, and RV spaces were situated, it was possible to feel a sense of privacy without it being a hard-

ship to get from point to point. Speaking of getting around, one service for which I was most grateful was the constant shuttle. We rarely had to wait more than five minutes, which was most appreciated by this senior citizen. I'm generally a good sport and will try most festival activities, but at almost seventy years old, I simply can no longer manage long distances over uneven terrain, and even standing around for extended periods can be painful.

The performers on both the Day and Night Stages really connected with the audiences. The Day Stage was raucous—with the delightful lessening of inhibitions that only old-timer Maxine Feldman can instigate. (It was her first California appearance in more than a decade.) Night Stage was held indoors, and offered a very pleasant surprise—entertainment without mosquitoes and pesky bugs flying around.

In general, the festival offered a good variety of live entertainment. Since one of the producers (Marilyn) is also a sign language interpreter, attention was obviously paid to having interpreters at all performances. Some of the stage highlights for me included Sue Fink's inimitable zaniness, which definitely sparked up the atmosphere, and newcomer Pam Hall—the Mississippi heartthrob—who absolutely mesmerized us with her sultry singing style and especially with her auctioned-off kisses. (At the East Coast and West Coast Lesbians' Festivals, auctions are held to supplement the gate receipts. Performers and craftswomen donate fun things.)

Although Alix Dobkin is taking a sabbatical to write a book, she wouldn't miss the debut of a new lesbian festival, and her presence reminded us how smart we are to make such woman-identified space for ourselves. As usual, Maile and Marina's line dancing/two stepping sessions were well attended, with much laughter and high spirits.

Special interest areas at the festival included Lesbians of Colors, Jewish lesbians, sober support, readings by writers, anti-racism work, and video screenings—

all of which I've been told have been part of the East Coast Lesbians' Festival since its first year. I especially liked the centrally located "Video Garage." The selection of videos available was considerable, and k.d. lang's *Harvest of Seven Years*—a belly laugh of a treat which many of us had never seen before—was played over and over. The Video Garage was a nice way to cut out and sit down for a quiet couple of hours in the company of other women.

The workshops (called Dykeshops) were interesting and again, very conveniently placed in beautiful outdoor settings. Topics included self-defense, spirituality, ageism, personal aspects of lesbian life, and politics—in other words, the usual festival fare. Alix Dobkin held an extraordinary session on how women can collectively heighten public awareness of women's second class status and bring about change. She proved again that she is one powerful speaker who can hold women of all ages in the palm of her hand.

Mealtimes were a happy occasion, and the food was great. Good meals are available in the dorm cafeteria at Bloomington, but of all the festivals we've attended, not one even comes close to matching the quality and variety of the food served at this first Malibu festival. We like the idea of eating inside at tables and having men prepare the food, serve us, and clean up afterwards. Some women may have been perturbed that this arrangement eroded the concept of women-only space. But from my perspective *it was really nice not to have any women cooking and sweating and cleaning*. It seemed that the men were very unobtrusive, fast, and gone before anyone knew it. To accommodate women who don't like men on the land, though, maybe the producers could shop around for a women-run catering service which could produce comparable service at competitive prices—but I liked it that for a change women didn't have to do that kind of work.

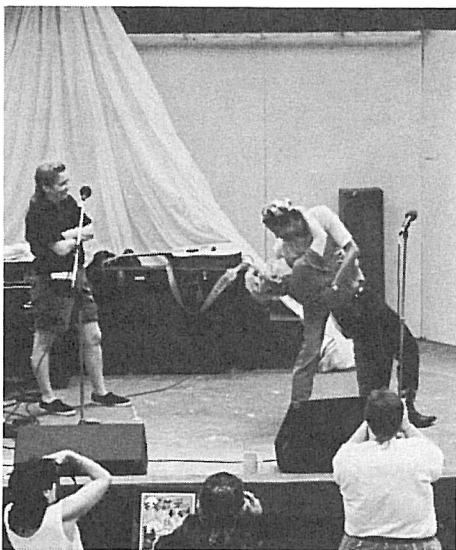
In the interest of providing a space that feels safe for all, the producers asked that attendees leave behind any "symbols of institutional oppression" for the duration of their stay. "Blatant examples of these are whips, handcuffs, and swastikas," read the program. "The idea for the beautiful bracelet you were given upon entrance stems from that wish to throw off symbols of oppression. Women who have been incarcerated or committed to mental health facilities object strenuously to being forced to wear plastic hospital-type

armbands."

Although all women and girls are welcome to attend, the policy of the festival is that only lesbians can be in creative and decision-making positions, such as performer, craftswoman, or organizer. It's the intent of the producers that everything created in this particular setting be coming from lesbian energy. The weekend was dedicated to the memory of Pat Parker. "Her vision and courage remain in our Lesbian hearts and minds," stated the program.

One of our most delightful discoveries at this festival was that the proportion of older women (forty and over) to younger women was much higher than at most other festivals, with the exception of Gulf Coast, where there was a uniquely high number of mothers and daughters (and at least one grandmother). It was wonderful to have this blend of energetic women of all ages. There were levels of entertainment and activities to suit all of our age groups, together or separately, and the exchange of ideas and views between women with significant age differences was enlightening.

Some of us started kicking around the idea of an "Over Forty Festival," and at first it sounded great. After some serious thought, though, our personal conclusion was that we would rather always go to festivals with an all-ages range. The old festi-goers are good role models for the



The antics of Pam Hall and Sue Fink (with ASL interpreter Conni Johnson) entertained the small but enthusiastic crowd at the first West Coast Lesbians' Festival in Malibu last June.

young up-and-coming lesbians, while the young keep the older women from becoming complacent and, well, fossilized.

There are constant changes coming about in the lives of our younger generation in the swiftly changing social scene; as an older woman, I don't want to become closed to new ideas.

Because of the unusual number of older women, my partner and I fell into a new friendship with two other couples. We expect it to become a long-time friendship in time, even though one couple lives in Sebastopol, the other in Tucson, and we're from the San Diego area. I mention this only because I want many, many women to go to festivals to widen their horizons. New, unexpected friendships are one of the biggest bonuses of going to women's music and culture festivals.

I have only one suggestion for the producers to improve this festival. The first day, the performers ate in the dining hall with everyone else. After that, they were conspicuous by their absence, and were missed. At a festival of this small size, the increased accessibility and visibility of performers is really good for morale and for building community. Since the performers are housed separately, they may be able to find as much privacy as they need without having to eat separately. One of the things that was so appealing about the early festivals was the opportunity to meet—however briefly—performers like Linda Tillery, Holly Near, Ginni Clemmens, and Margie Adam. That *feeling of connection* is unlike what women are allowed to experience in mainstream entertainment venues, and a festival like this one is the ideal setting to promote such an atmosphere. It develops our sense of feminist community and promotes fierce audience loyalty to the performers.

When all is said and done, if Lin Daniels and Marilyn Van Veersen decide to have a 1993 West Coast Lesbians' Festival at Malibu, we can be counted on to be the first to register (along with several old friends we'll drag along). Our new-found friends Karen, Annie, Pat, and Connie also swear that they'll bring their contingent of friends. We need a lot more women to come to Malibu in 1993 to make the festival work without sending the producers to the poor house. It would be a pity if Malibu were not repeated. It was a glorious festival. •

ABOUT THE WRITER: Toni Armstrong Sr. is retired from her previous professions in the legal and medical fields. She enjoys bowling, talk shows, books exploring the forensic and legal aspects of crime, and of course reading each issue of 'HOT WIRE' from cover to cover.

SILENT PRE-FEST

first lesbian-oriented ASL intensive held last June in the Poconos, just prior to ECLF

Reported by Toni Armstrong Jr.

It's lesbian summer camp with a twist: when the "counselors" say *no talking*, they mean it!

It's June 1992, before the fourth annual East Coast Lesbians' Festival. More than fifty women from all over the country gather, coming together for the first-ever American Sign Language (ASL) Intensive for lesbians. Primed to experience three days and nights of silence, every woman arrives with her own reason for participating: some are in training to become interpreters; others want to learn to communicate with their Deaf relatives and friends; still others are preparing for their own progressive hearing loss; and some are just plain curious.

As for me...my interest in sign language and Deaf culture is longstanding and varied. My first exposure to the language was in college when a girlfriend taught me to fingerspell the alphabet. Over the years, through my work as a camp counselor and a special education teacher, I've met young people who use sign language. Since 1985, I have sponsored a sign language club in the public high school where I'm employed.

And, most significantly, I've consistently encountered this beautiful language at festivals and in other feminist cultural settings. For years, as a professional photographer specializing in live concert work, I have needed to sit near the stage—which has usually placed me in or near the seating area reserved for Deaf and hard of hearing women. These festival experiences inspired me to make a serious effort to learn ASL; I've never aspired to becoming an interpreter, but have wanted to be able to make friends with the women around me. I began taking classes with a Deaf teacher a few years ago, and have pursued private tutoring with her.

As we arrive at the beautiful site in the Poconos, it's clear that we each have come with our own history, hopes, and motivations—but we all agree on one

thing: having an ASL immersion experience where all the teachers, participants, and planners are lesbian feminists seems like a three-day slice of heaven.

Whatever our reasons for coming, none of us, upon arrival, is fully aware of the profound, many-layered experience awaiting us over the course of the next three days and nights. We are strangers and near-strangers—Deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing—with fluency levels ranging from certified interpreters to novices who have never so much as fingerspelled their names using the manual alphabet.

In the mornings and afternoons, we are divided into beginning and advanced groups for workshops focusing on Deaf language and culture. As a whole group we eat meals; create and perform skits; and watch storytelling. There are group lectures covering Deaf humor, language, etiquette, the importance of eye contact, recognition of important cultural figures, and differences between Deaf and hearing cultures (with some classic imitations of hearing people singing along with their car radios or talking on the phone while doing five other things).

We also play games, and have lots of leisure time in which to practice our skills. The word game Boggle provides a good chance to practice our fingerspelling (with craftswoman Carolyn Whitehorn proving to be the most tenacious fingerspelling beginner of the week).

Teachers Eileen Forestal and Susan Jackson facilitate physical games based on mime and quick responses. Hour by hour, day by day, self-consciousness falls away, and our signing skills, friendships, and comfort level with the language and each other develop.

We are all on our honor to maintain silence at all times—in the cabins, on the trail, down by the lake, and at night during private time. We are not allowed to use alarm clocks or radios. The goal is to create—as completely as possible in a

hearing environment—a Deaf experience, where creative problem solving, new ways of thinking, and teamwork become a necessity. How *do* you wake up in the morning without an alarm or a knock on your door? How do you get a friend's attention all the way across the land without yelling? How do you get across to someone an abstract thought for which you don't have the vocabulary?

A few women with very little signing experience become quickly frustrated with having to mime everything. Several (self-identified as highly verbal types) find it a challenge to keep the vow of silence, though they do. A high percentage of women seem to feel that everyone else has more advanced signing skills. The more fluent signers sometimes have conversations that leave the beginners shaking their heads in bewilderment. But for the most part, women are patient and help each other, signing things over and over, or slowing down to one distinct letter or sign at a time whenever necessary.

For many, it's the first time they've experienced what it feels like to be in a minority of people who can't communicate fluently, who are not fully included in the goings-on, or who are challenged to make themselves understood on a daily basis. We mime, mime, mime.

The intense three days conclude with a stimulating lesbian-erotic performance by Susan Jackson, followed by an emotional closing circle in which we share feelings. Students and teachers alike are in agreement that it's been an intensely personal—as well as an effective community-building—educational experience.

It's jarring to hear voices again after being immersed in another mode of thought for three days—and it's interesting to observe how eye contact is immediately broken when hearing interaction again takes over. But the connection has been powerful, and the next Silent Pre-Fest can't happen soon enough.

MARILYN'S BRANCHILD

Interpreter Marilyn Van Veersen—whose distinctive look and signing style are well-known to women who attend women's music festivals—conceived of and produced the ASL intensive. The idea of creating a whole series of lesbian feminist sign language intensives has been growing in Marilyn's mind for awhile.

"As with most disciplines, I had to attend hetero institutions for four years in order to learn ASL and interpreting," she says. "My teachers and administrators clearly admonished that I would never work as an interpreter looking as dykely as I do. I imagined that all of this work and dedication I was putting into learning the discipline would be so much easier in a lesbian-positive environment."

She noticed that lesbians seemed to flock to ASL classes in disproportionately large numbers and were some of the most skilled students with whom she worked. Also, the response to interpreted events has been consistently enthusiastic. "For as long as I have been working as a performance interpreter, lesbians have approached me after a performance to ask questions about the language, the people, the possibilities of learning ASL, and so on. As a hearing person, I don't feel qualified to answer some of their questions, and other questions require much more time or patience than I have after an evening's work," says Marilyn, who has always felt that these women and their questions need to be taken seriously.

"If someone wants to become an interpreter, she has to do it the long hard way. But I began to think that offering a taste of ASL—with a large dose of Deaf culture taught by Deaf lesbian teachers—would serve an increasing need in the lesbian community. I also believe that lesbians in groups together learn differently than we do in mixed (lesbian and straight) groups. I was curious what would happen if we put a bunch of focused, committed dykes together with two highly skilled lesbian Deaf teachers for three days in a completely supportive environment," she says.

"I think there is something very special happening among lesbians that draws them to this language," she theorizes. "It was my experience, and that of many other dykes I have spoken with, that the first time I really watched sign language—on stage at a women's festival—I felt it inside my body. I felt I could almost understand it—not intellectually, but physically. I was fascinated that a language I knew nothing about could elicit

such a body-centered response from me. But that's just the point. We speak the language of our oppressors, English, which erases our existence as we speak it. It's a language that comes from the head and keeps the user within her head. What better way to separate women from their own power!" [Editor's note: see articles by Suzette Haden Elgin in previous issues of *HOT WIRE* on linguistics and women, including the language Láadan, for extended analysis of this idea.]



Toni Armstrong Jr.

We play physical games based on mime and quick responses. Hour by hour, day by day, self-consciousness falls away, and our signing skills, friendships, and comfort level grows.



Toni Armstrong Jr.

The first "Silent Pre-Fest" ASL Intensive last June was the idea of interpreter Marilyn Van Veersen (left), and was taught by expert Deaf teachers Susan Jackson and Eileen Forestal.

"ASL, in contrast, is body centered, requires the use of movement, expression, total body involvement, and can describe anything—including the complex emotions and processes involved in being a lesbian," says Marilyn. "So I think the language itself holds something very basic that lesbians, who are aware of language as a living entity, need. And of course there are the Deaf lesbians. This is their language, in which they think. That's very

exciting to me as a radical dyke who wants to think her way out of the patriarchy. We bemoan the lack of visionaries among us, dykes who can visualize a new way to live—and here, living among us but separated by language, are *visualization specialists*...and very interesting dykes, I might add."

Marilyn also believes women are interested in American Sign Language because it is closer to a woman's conceptual way of thinking. "It requires the thinker to see the whole picture instead of starting at one point and running in a straight line with it until you arrive somewhere," she explains.

As she was planning the intensive, Marilyn knew the teachers would have to be Deaf. American Sign Language—the third most widely used language in the U.S.—is the native language of the Deaf. "I don't believe it should be taught by hearing people," says Marilyn. "Aside from considerations of complexity, nuance, subtlety, and semantic range—which are extremely difficult for second language learners to pick up, let alone teach—I feel that it's the right of Deaf teachers to teach their own language. There is so much more involved in learning ASL than just linguistics. The language is the basis of a strong and viable culture, shared by a large group of people who live among us as an invisible minority. In order to appreciate ASL on any other than a very superficial level, students must also learn some of the complexities of Deaf culture and acquire a definite respect for the cultural differences which they are bound to encounter," she stresses. "And, aside from all the political reasons for choosing Deaf teachers, it has been my experience that learning from a skilled Deaf teacher is just more fun."

Marilyn selected Eileen Forestal and Susan Jackson as the teachers for the first intensive because of the respect she has for their professional skills. "Although I was never fortunate enough to have taken any classes from Eileen or SJ, I knew of their reputations," she says. "I first met Eileen a few years ago, at Michigan. I was on stage interpreting a particularly difficult song that contained a four-minute orgasm. Just about the time when my inner critic was beginning to ask me what the hell I was doing, I looked down into the Deaf seating area and made eye contact with this beautiful Deaf dyke—Eileen—who had the most encouraging and supportive grin on her face and in her eyes. At the end of the song, she was on

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CELEBRATING JEWISH IDENTITY AT FESTIVALS

By Bonnie J. Morris

daughter of Myra, Sadie, and Rocheleh

And Ruth said to Naomi, entreat me not to leave thee, and to depart from following after thee; for whither thou goest, I will go; and whither thou lodgest, I will lodge. And Miriam took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances; and Miriam sang unto them.

Attend any women's music festival today and you are likely to encounter at least one woman wearing a *kippa*—a small round skullcap, crocheted or of silk, often with Hebrew lettering around the edges. This is a symbol of Jewish religious observance and identity usually associated with Orthodox men. At festivals, however, the *kippa* takes on a more practical function, instantly identifying its wearer as a Jew among the hundreds of other women present. For, because we don't all "look Jewish," it is sometimes difficult to locate our own ethnic group at the very festivals which provide a safe time and space for exploring women's ethnic diversity.

Jewish women's space is a luxury—and a necessity. We create it wherever and whenever we meet. When we are alone as individuals, we make Jewish women's space in our homes, our footsteps, our conversations. Anywhere I am present is Jewish women's space from the top of my head to the soles of my feet, to the perimeter of my words, my breathing. When I connect with another Jewish woman, we double that space. When a third Jewish woman joins us, we triple that space.

Whenever we connect, we multiply, reviving the tribes of women from whom we are descended. This imagined and created space contains the stories of our mothers, daughters, sisters, teachers, lovers; within that space, we become our own biographers, marveling that we have beaten the odds against our own survival as Jewish women.

Women's music festivals offer a setting of natural beauty and spiritual energy—an ideal time and place for Jewish women to find one another and network

under green trees, whether we choose to address our complex oppression—as Jews, as women, and/or as lesbians—or to celebrate our lives through energetic song and dance.

Over the past ten years, Jewish women's visibility at festivals has increased steadily, due in part to the tremendous awakening of Jewish lesbian identity triggered by the 1982 publication of *Nice Jewish Girls* by Evelyn Torton Beck. This anthology opened a watershed of Jewish feminist and lesbian writing during the 1980s, including *The Tribe of Dina* (edited by Melanie Kaye-Kantrowitz and Irena Klepfisz, 1989); *Twice Blessed: On Being Lesbian, Gay, and Jewish* (edited by Christie Balka and Andy Rose, 1989); *Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism From a Feminist Perspective* (Judith Plaskow, 1990); and *Deborah, Golda and Me* (Letty Cottin Pogrebin, 1991). On the periodical front, the feminist-Jewish *Lilith* has been publishing since the 1970s, and recently *Bridges* has made its debut.

With this wave of Jewish women's voices in print came an accompanying increase in Jewish lesbian visibility through women's music and comedy. A *partial* list of prominent festival performers who affirmed their Jewish identity on stage and in song throughout the '70s and '80s includes Robin Tyler, Judith Sloan, Marla BB, Laura Berkson, Alix Dobkin, Maxine Feldman, Sue Fink, Ronnie Gilbert, Lynn Lavner, Linda Hirschhorn and The Vocolot ensemble, Klez-Meydlekh, Paula Walowitz, and of course Phranc (who bills herself as your "basic all-American Jewish Lesbian folksinger").

Today, the popular women's music distribution company Ladieslipper features an entire section of Jewish-identified recordings in its catalog, and festival audiences across the country enjoy such moving performances as Phranc's "Take Off Your Swastika"; Judith Sloan's beloved stage character Sophie [see "Reclaiming a Past," July 1987 *HOT WIRE*]; Laura Berk-

son's "Miriam"; and Alix Dobkin's Yiddish folk songs. [Editor's note: And Bonnie Morris's own one-woman show, *Passing*.] Collectors of rare women's recordings might hunt for Marla BB's offbeat single, a Hebrew cover version of the Rolling Stones' "Beast of Burden"!

It's not surprising to find talented Jewish women weaving their heritage into festival sensibility. Traditionally, many Jewish women found a place to be daring and outspoken in the world of theater and comedy, as Robin Tyler explained in her "History of Comedy" workshop at the National Lesbian Conference in 1991. Barred from participation in the male world of Jewish scholarship demanded of their brothers—and also barred from many "female" career opportunities in anti-Semitic America—Jewish women in this century found public acceptance as actors and comics. The difficult yet rewarding rise to stardom brought women performers from the "Borscht Belt" of Jewish resort hotels to the Broadway stage, to the Hollywood film studio, and finally into our living rooms via the television screen.

Household names that may not always be recognized as Jewish include Sophie Tucker, Fanny Brice, Lauren Bacall, Shelley Winters, Barbra Streisand, Bette Midler, Roseanne (Barr) Arnold, and Sandra Bernhard. This legacy of Jewish success in the entertainment world remains controversial, though. Many Americans still believe that Hollywood—and all of the media—is "dominated by Jews." In image-conscious Hollywood, a proudly Jewish feminist woman—especially one who also speaks out in favor of gay/lesbian rights—can pay a steep price for being so "out." Despite the consistent top-of-the-chart ratings earned by her hit TV show for four seasons, Roseanne Arnold had never been nominated for an Emmy until last year. (The show itself has yet to be nominated.) Though she's made it a running joke on her show, the snub is an

insult not only to Roseanne but also to her legion of fans who love her "as is."

With the rise of the contemporary feminist movement, Jewish women have also played key roles in fighting the sexism which had declared them second-class citizens in their own religion as well as in U.S. society. Gloria Steinem, Bella Abzug, Adrienne Rich, and other Jewish feminists endured Jew-baiting as well as woman-hating in their outspoken challenges to the white Christian patriarchy. These role models in activism have encouraged many Jewish women in America to critique oppressive religious institutions while still retaining a proud ethnic identity.

Even within the politicized realm of women's music festivals, creating Jewish women's rituals and gathering spaces has not always been easy. Most festivals provide a regular meeting space or tent for women of color, and though many Jews are in fact women of color—descended from the great Jewish communities of Morocco, Iran, Iraq, Yemen, Egypt, Spain, Turkey, and Ethiopia—those who are white-appearing do not expect to hold their workshops in the space for women of color. So festival workshops intended for *all* Jewish women are—ironically—

rears its ugly head, even in feminist circles: we hear that we are "pushy," or taking over.

The discomfort many festie-goers still feel toward overt Jewish symbols and celebrations is most evident at those festivals which rent Jewish summer camps, where a Star of David flag or carving may be part of the grounds. Many Jewish festie-goers delight in such reminders of their own heritage (or their own pasts as summer-campers, before they became festival dykes); yet women of all backgrounds may raise questions about the appearance of "Israeli" symbols in festival space. Maxine Feldman resolved this conflict at one festival simply by taking the camp's Jewish flag and pinning it on her own cabin door.

Regrettably, to many concerned women today, symbols of Jewish pride, ritual practice, and group identity have come to signify the Israeli occupation of Palestine. This leaves Jewish feminists and lesbians in the precarious position of constantly explaining that our righteous ethnic visibility is *not* equivalent to actual support of Israeli military policy. I wonder if *any* American Jewish feminist or lesbian feels her politics are accurately repre-

sented by the male military and religious government of Israel. Yet we are *held accountable* for Israeli state maneuvers. At festivals, our non-Jewish sisters are not similarly identified with the policies of "their" (ours, too) Reagan and Bush administrations.

Today's new wave of anti-Semitism has given rise to attacks from all sides: right-wing, left-wing, white, and Black speakers are again blaming Jews for society's ills. The old libel "Christ-killer" once created a dangerous stigma for the Jewish child in the Christian schoolyard; today's assumption that all Jews are genocidal-imperialist-Zionists permits hate crimes and hate speech to flourish anew. In this recent political climate—when David Duke and Patrick Buchanan both ran for the office of U.S. President on platforms that included strong anti-Jewish and anti-gay planks—it was particularly meaningful for Jewish women to find one another at festivals, to discuss strategies for activism and survival, to be "out" *as Jews*.

Because we are a diverse and multi-racial group, and because most festivals do not provide a Jewish women's space, how do we find one another? Wearing a *kippa* is one solution, as is moaning "*Oy, gevalt, vay iz mir*" until someone responds. But more likely, Jewish women turn to their festival program to hunt for workshops and rituals with Jewish content.

The popularity of woman-identified Shabbat and Passover services suggests that you don't have to be religiously oriented (or even Jewish) to enjoy good food and sweet music in the company of women invoking their foremothers. The Gulf Coast Women's Festival (GCWF), held each year on Easter weekend, has always been sensitive to its Passover-observant guests. Hundreds of women have now participated in that rarest of feasts, a lesbian Seder held in Mississippi! Using Ruth Simkin's *haggada*—a lesbian-feminist interpretation of the Passover ritual—the Gulf Coast Seder involves all women present, with Jewish performers leading the way. The 1991 Seder featured Laura Berkson and Sue Fink singing traditional and non-traditional blessings, while in 1992 sassy Jewish mama Marla BB gave it a Sephardic twist. Under Spanish moss and fringed palmettos, with winds blowing provocatively from the Gulf of Mexico, woman-made matzo balls never tasted so good.

Yet the integrity of Gulf Coast producers Wanda and Brenda Henson in scheduling a Seder each year nearly cost them the festival. The Methodist summer camp used by GCWF in 1991 broke its contract with the festival for 1992 upon learning there would be a Jewish Seder. Frustrated with her ongoing search for low-cost, accessible, women-only land, Wanda's opening remarks at the 1992 festival were, "Sisters, here is how anti-Semitism directly affects *your* lives!"

The accessibility of woman-identified Seders and other Jewish gatherings to non-Jewish festie-goers is an important



Women who helped put together the Seder at the 1992 Gulf Coast Women's Festival included (from left) Judith Sloan, Bonnie Morris, Judith Kate Friedman, Sue Fink, Jane Emmer, Marla BB, and The Captain.

landless, held on an ad hoc basis. While the East Coast Lesbians' Festival has always offered and advertised a Jewish lesbians' tent, ECLF producer Lin Daniels (who is Jewish) has received criticism for her pioneering vision. One anonymous letter accused the ECLF organizers of "cultural nepotism"—i.e., having *too much* Jewish visibility. Where more than one or two Jewish women are present, or are in positions of leadership, the old stereotype

resented by the male military and religious government of Israel. Yet we are *held accountable* for Israeli state maneuvers. At festivals, our non-Jewish sisters are not similarly identified with the policies of "their" (ours, too) Reagan and Bush administrations.

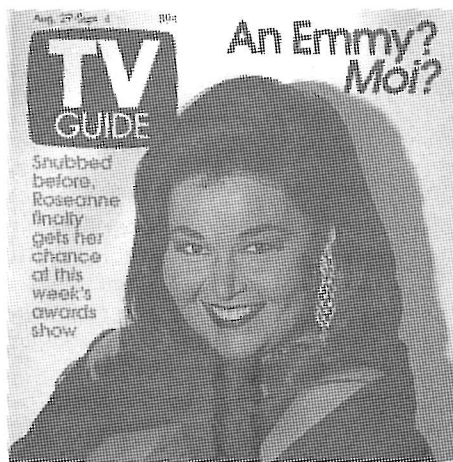
Today's new wave of anti-Semitism has given rise to attacks from all sides: right-wing, left-wing, white, and Black speakers are again blaming Jews for

part of educating all women about diversity. Jewish lesbian artist Etana Finkler captures the spirit of these multicultural occasions in her stunning watercolor cards, and other craftswomen and artists similarly offer Jewish-accented work to the eager consumers strolling through festivals.

Despite the increasing support of Jewish lesbian culture, some women express disappointment that there are not more performers and festie-goers comfortable as Jews. Internalized anti-Semitism, anger at Israeli military policy, and disgust with the sexism of Orthodox Jewish institutions has made it difficult for many Jewish women to claim Judaism as a home base. ("It was harder for me to come out as a Jew than to come out as a lesbian," says Alix Dobkin.) The negative self-image can be overturned or reinforced by festival culture. Several festivals now offer workshops on unlearning anti-Semitism, and the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival has maintained a Jewish women's resources table in its well-traveled Community Center since 1991.

Speaking as a Jewish lesbian activist whose work has ranged from offering intensive workshops for Jewish lesbians, to presenting my one-woman play (*Passing*) on Jewish women's identity, to coordinating Jewish women's programming at Michigan, I am seeing an excellent progression towards better representation of Jewish heritage at festivals around the country. The single most damaging phenomenon in *feminist* space for Jews is still the ongoing assumption that we are a "negative" minority: responsible for Biblical patriarchal values, for Arab genocide, for economic and media control around the world. These stereotypes make it impossible for non-Jewish women to see the working-class Jew, the Jewish woman of color, the Jew of Arabic heritage, the Jew who revives goddess worship, the Israeli lesbian battling racism and sexism in her society.

Festivals provide an opportunity for *stereotype busting*, and for positive networking between Jewish women and others, particularly women of color. The East Coast Lesbians' Festival situates its Jewish Lesbians tent directly across from the Women of Colors tent, for easy access and cooperation in workshops on racism. Robin Tyler's West Coast Women's Music and Comedy Festival typically provides a meeting space for Jewish women in an open-sided tent which can accommodate dancing, which is as much a tradition of Jewish women's gathering as drumming is



TV Guide/Timothy White

There's a price to pay for being "out" as a Jew and a feminist.

for women of African descent.

The coordination of Jewish women's workshops or events in "public" space at festivals enhances the naturalness of our participation in any festival's vision. When a Klezmer band played Jewish dance music at the Michigan festival in 1991, both Jewish and non-Jewish festie-goers leapt up to perform the Hora in front of the Day Stage, an afternoon of dancing so athletic that at least one show-off (okay, me) needed a trip to the massage table immediately afterwards. But that afternoon also inspired non-Jewish festie-goers, who saw the active exuberance of Jewish women's space. (One observer later described our dancing as "a goddess greeting card come to life.")

With a new generation of Jewish-identified performers, writers, and even lesbian rabbis attending festivals, the next question should be how our collective creativity is reshaping Judaism. By reinterpreting our spirituality to focus on female imagery, or inventing new non-traditional rituals centered on Miriam and Ruth, we are able to participate in our own heritage without accepting the limitations of past worship. This exchange of ideas and ideals which transpires at festivals has led to the formation of radical holiday celebrations, Jewish lesbian support groups, and alternative synagogues.

Ultimately, the determination of Jewish women to challenge damaging stereotypes while promoting a feminist spiritual transformation can only strengthen the matriarchy we all dream of. •

ABOUT THE WRITER: *Bonnie Morris is a professor of women's history and American ethnic history, currently teaching at St. Lawrence University. When not attending women's festivals, she may be found working out at the local ice arena.*

RESOURCES ON JEWISH WOMEN'S IDENTITY

TWELVE ESSENTIAL BOOKS

- *Deborah, Golda and Me.* Letty Cottin Pogrebin. Crown, 1991.
- *Dreams of an Insomniac: Jewish Feminist Essays, Speeches, and Diatribes.* Irena Klepfisz. Eighth Mountain Press, 1990.
- *Exile in the Promised Land.* Marcia Freedman. Firebrand Books, 1990.
- *The Jewish Woman.* Ed. Elizabeth Koltun. Schocken, 1976.
- *Jewish Women's Call for Peace.* Rita Falbel, Irena Klepfisz, and Donna Nevel. Firebrand Books, 1990.
- *Nice Jewish Girls: A Lesbian Anthology.* Ed. Evelyn Torton Beck. Beacon Press, 1989 (second edition).
- *On Being a Jewish Feminist.* Ed. Susannah Heschel. Schocken, 1983.
- *Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism From a Feminist Perspective.* Judith Plaskow. Harper and Row, 1990.
- *The Tribe of Dina.* Ed. Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz and Irena Klepfisz. Beacon Press, 1989.
- *Twice Blessed: On Being Lesbian, Gay, and Jewish.* Ed. Christie Balka and Andy Rose. Beacon Press, 1989.
- *Written Out of History.* Sondra Henry and Emily Taitz. Biblio Press, 1990.
- *Yours in Struggle: Three Feminist Perspectives on Anti-Semitism and Racism.* Elly Bulkin, Minnie Bruce Pratt, and Barbara Smith. Firebrand Books, 1984.

OTHER RESOURCES

- An excellent, thorough, easy-to-use, ninety-page bibliography, "In search of Lesbian/Gay Jewish Visibility," has been compiled by Canadian archivist John Howard Abush, 1407-50 Alexander St., Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4Y 1B6.
- Two important periodicals are *Lilith*, a "mainstream feminist" magazine for Jewish women since the early 1970s, and *Bridges*, a newer lesbian-feminist journal with scholarly and political essays (plus poetry and much more) by and about Jewish women. *Lilith: The Jewish Women's Magazine*, 250 W. 57th #1328, New York, NY 10019. (212) 757-0818; *Bridges*, P.O. Box 18437, Seattle, WA 98118.
- However you define "Jewish women's music" (Barbra Streisand? Israeli pop artists? Yiddish lullabies?), the Ladyslipper catalog will delight you with its full-page repertoire of Jewish women's recordings. Tapes available through Ladyslipper include English, Hebrew, Yiddish, klezmer, children's, and holiday/ritual music, as well as material by contemporary women's music artists. Ladyslipper, P.O. Box 3124, Durham, NC 27705. (919) 683-1570.

THE POLITICAL IS PERSONAL IN THE DEEP SOUTH

By Toni Armstrong Jr.

Brenda Henson remembers the first festival she and her lover Wanda attended—the Southern Women's Music and Comedy Festival. Especially for Wanda, there was a huge element of culture shock.

"I'm not kidding you—Wanda almost jumped into the lake," Brenda recalls. "There was a woman coming down the path in this little macrame hat and macrame bra, with a piece of chiffon around her hips and little dancing bells around her ankle, singing about the Goddess..."

"I fell off my cane," agrees Wanda, who was born and bred in the Deep South. "It was real scary to me. But when you've been taught about demons..."

"...it's difficult to assure the women here that women's spirituality has nothing to do with devil worship," says Brenda. "This was about the Goddess, of course, and reclaiming a pre-Christian religion that celebrates women."

Wanda—who considers herself in recovery from having been a Pentecostal—grew up in a right-wing environment where it had been prophesied in her church that she would become a preacher.

"She was very prudish," says Brenda. "The nudity just freaked her out. In addition to the spirituality element, the looseness of the women was a shock. They weren't reserved and conservative."

Wanda nods. "I had gone to that first women's festival very Pentecostal. We were told in church that we were *in* this world but not *of* this world. We didn't mix with worldly people. I grew up around my family, my cousins. You're very sheltered when you live like this. At sixteen years old I got pregnant and got married," she recalls. "When I got to that first festival, I could barely speak up for myself or make myself known to other people, because I was very shy. But see, now the energy has turned itself around. Going to that festival was a total transformation for me. Now I'm a feminist, and my energy is going into all that I'm doing. I know firsthand why it's so important to have a lifeline available for sisters in the Deep South," she says.

Brenda, originally from Ohio, comes from a Unitarian background. "I wasn't as



Toni Armstrong Jr.

Brenda (left) and Wanda Henson, producers of the Gulf Coast Women's Festival: "We want to bring feminism here because it brings life."

scared about a lot of things when we first walked into the festival," she says. "I was just coming out, so it was like, 'Oh, great. This is my culture? Well, yeah, this is wonderful.' I hadn't been arrested for homosexual conduct in public like Wanda had, or suffered through all the things she had."

Today, Wanda points out that her upbringing—which, though extreme, is not atypical for many women raised in the Deep South—leaves women totally unfamiliar with feminist concepts. "When I was a kid, my father was in the Klan and in the John Birch Society," she says. "When you come from that background, you are constantly hearing horrible degradations against many types of people. Then you get into this women's culture, and you're *with* many types of people—you have to rethink *everything*." Not surprisingly, Wanda didn't immediately accept some of the feminist ideology she encountered at festivals, but says going to workshops on topics like anti-racism, anti-Semitism, and fat oppression had a tremendous impact.

Wanda and Brenda are quick to point out that their Southern region is generally misunderstood by women who live elsewhere. When Robin Tyler—for whom they

have high praise—brought the Southern Women's Music and Comedy Festival to Georgia, for example, there was an immediate culture clash. "She didn't know yet how to speak to the culture here," says Wanda. "Local women were upset that she had the nerve to call it a 'Southern' women's festival." Suddenly imported into the region were things that are standard at feminist festivals in other parts of the country, including women's spirituality, a direct way of speaking that can be considered rude in the South, and of course vegetarian food.

"Wanda ended up in a hypoglycemic attack, and was sick by the time we got home," recalls Brenda. "It was all just so foreign to us."

Still, mental and physical challenges aside, they are fierce in their belief that the festival literally changed their lives. "I went into Robin's festival a desperate, tired woman, full of pure hopelessness," says Wanda. "I got into the festival there, and for the first time began seeing people that were expressing things like what I thought. Things that people had told me I was a fool and crazy for thinking. I have to stress this point, because it's the same

point that many of my sisters are at today, and it's why I work so hard. When I hear sisters say to me that the feminist movement is dying, I feel like, *you can't die, we haven't had our chance yet*. I get real desperate over that, because I know where I was, and I see it in my sisters everyday. There's so much hopelessness, lack of education, and poverty here among women."

During the years when the Hensons were operating Southern Wild Sisters Bookstore, they ran a foodbank for women out of it. The bookstore went out of business when the Gulf War took too many of the customers—who were mostly women stationed at the military bases along the coast—away from the area. They now run three foodbanks.

"The physical poverty keeps folks busy here, but what about the other, the poverty of the spirit?" asks Wanda. "I finally know now what it means to live in freedom, and it means a lot to gain enrichment. The first time we had a Seder at our festival, those Jewish women brought all this wonderful information in. It was liberating just to hear it. And I thought, gosh, here's yet another thing that needs to be spread. There are many things like this that my sisters have to share, things that bring life. And when you're living in a place where there's no life, where there are so many walls that people look zombie-like...and then you go off to these festivals and see role models for the first time... well, I just wanted to touch Miss Tyler and tell her *thank you for changing my life*. I will always honor her for that."

The Hensons also appreciate that in subsequent years Robin Tyler has allowed women from the fledgling Gulf Coast Festival to come to the bigger Southern Festival and learn how to do specific jobs. "Some of our women who have gone are completely transformed now," says Brenda. "They work at Robin's festival and come back to ours with the knowledge they got there. I certainly understand it. We went to Southern that first time and came home and sold everything we had so we could go to the Michigan Festival. We just wanted more and more."

Wanda and Brenda acknowledge that there are many wonderful things about the South, and have had to fight against the stereotype that people from the region are stupid. They resent the attitudes of superiority they have encountered from some women in other parts of the country. But they both express great concern for the limited options available to women, particularly lesbian women, in Mississippi.

"We want to bring feminism here because it brings *life*," says Wanda. "I want to show my sisters that there are options other than the bar. Our bar has always been butch/femme—like there was no '70s or '80s here in Mississippi. So what do we do if we want to show something other than drag shows? We have a high rate of addiction, especially to alcohol, in our community, and the suicide rates are sickening. It's because of the hopelessness. But just in the few short years that Brenda and I have been working in the area, we've already seen a reduction in the number of crisis calls."

"And healthier relationships in the women," adds Brenda.

"Before I knew about feminism, all I knew was despair," says Wanda. "That's why I keep saying that I honor the Southern Festival and Robin Tyler so much. I went in there having tried every way to deal with life, and nothing was working for me. My ideology was not like anybody else's. I had gotten divorced in 1975, thinking I was different, and kept feeling that way. I couldn't talk to people around me. I was a nurse until I hurt my back, but I just didn't fit in anywhere. I didn't look like anybody I knew, and I was very much all by myself in this. And so I get to this festival and at least some of the women *looked* like me. Some of them even had my accent. I couldn't believe it."

Women active in the feminist music and culture world take it for granted that everyone who goes to festivals is involved in woman-identified community groups and activities—but that was another bit of culture shock for the Hensons at first.

"The women at that festival were involved in so many projects!" says Wanda. "There wasn't an opportunity in life for women like me to do anything other than be *subservient*. Maybe we could join the Daughters of the American Revolution or something, but there were no real role models. Everybody kept telling me, 'Well, what's wrong with you is you have got to make yourself more humble. Lower yourself. Get a little lower. You're not humble enough for your husband.' I heard these things from my family, from my mother. I divorced when I was twenty, and I thought maybe I was different after he called me 'queer.' Going to that festival, I went in with all these feelings of hopelessness, but thinking that *maybe* things would be different for me in this place. I had read and re-read the festival literature, and *Lesbian Connection*. I had a few lesbian albums, which I read and re-read the backs of, trying to glean information. I

sang the songs by Alix Dobkin and Cris Williamson. But my experience was *very* limited before I set foot on that land."

Brenda says she had only been out for a year at the time. "Wanda brought me out, and she was introducing me to the culture. She told me how we had our own books, and our own music, and our own festivals—we had all these things, though she herself had never been to a festival. She'd been in relationships with women who wouldn't participate, and so she didn't give me an opportunity *not* to participate; she was determined to introduce me to the culture. She just said, 'Let's go!' and I said 'Great, let's go!' And then she had to go herself, because I had agreed."

Wanda says the women she knew considered the Southern Festival to be somewhat threatening. "It was happening, in a sense, 'over there'—not something that could happen or ever would happen in Mississippi. I had to let go of a lot of fear just to go."

In 1989, they were finally ready to bring the baby home, and produced their first annual Gulf Coast Women's Festival [see January 1990 issue of *HOT WIRE*]. Both of them have jumped with both feet into making women's music and culture a part of their daily life. Now, in addition to producing the Gulf Coast fest, the Spirit-fest weekend, and local concerts, they also distribute feminist books and magazines, and mentor would-be concert producers throughout the South.

It has been a struggle since the beginning to find and keep land for their festival weekends. Most of what the Hensons are trying to accomplish—though perceived by feminists as life-enhancing and morally correct—is alienating (at best) to the people in their local region. The women's spirituality elements seem like devil-worship, and last year they lost their festival site because they planned to have a Jewish Seder on it. Maintaining lesbian visibility for the festival, of course, requires an enormous amount of bravery.

Visibility is a major goal for them, even in sticky situations, such as when trying to persuade church camp board members to rent them land for the next festival.

"I will not compromise any more on the issue of visibility," says Wanda. "I don't 'pass,' and I'm willing to put my life on the line—I have, actually. As an out dyke I do it every day here, but I'm committed. When we went to present our case to the camp board for the 1992 festival, I figured I'd give the women of the board the opportunity to check me out, to

see a role model of strong sisterhood—and they won't forget seeing me in that meeting. They were nervous, but I connected with them. Brenda wears a lesbian symbol necklace, because a lot of people mistake her for a straight woman. My little sweetie tries real hard to get visibility, and lots of times she just can't, but I never have had that trouble. I like the way I look, and I like the way I sound. The silence isn't there any more, and I'm proud of that."

Maintaining visibility and still persuading the powers that be to cooperate is a difficult juggling act for the Hensons. They use whatever they can; for example, the board examines all press kit materials, so on Sue Fink's bio the Hensons underline that she once played for Richard Nixon. ("Oh, they like *that*," says Wanda.)

"When we were trying to get the land for '92, the men just checked through the stuff hastily, but the women spent a lot of time looking at the information we presented. I covered all bases in my presentation, and then they started in on me. 'Well, what's this *Seder*?' Fortunately, I'd gone to the Seder at our festival, so I knew some of the right words to say. I explained that our focus is multicultural, and—like for myself, never having had the opportunity to know Jewish folks—we get to go to the Seder and share our heritages and our cultures. Believe me, on paper what this festival is about looks better than any team of Methodist Sunday School teachers," chuckles Wanda.

Despite their well-planned and convincing presentation, they were denied the land—long after their publicity had gone out—even though they had had a verbal contract with the organization. They were able to secure a Boy Scout camp at the last minute and still hold the event, but the weekend suffered financially from lower than expected attendance, and was plagued by men on the land and male violence at the gate.

One of the male caretakers who refused to keep a low profile during the festival was screamed at by a handful of women who were determined to have women-only space, and Wanda decided to confront the issue head on. "I went with him to the office and explained the *necessity* for women-only space," she says. "I said, 'Do you understand that one out of every three women is going to be assaulted in her lifetime and possibly raped? I myself have been raped by two total strangers, not counting the times my husband raped me.' See, I viewed this as another opportunity

in my day; I take care of what comes into my space. I think of these things as opportunities to pass on feminist consciousness. This man had never heard any of it before. He's never going to see a women's studies book—hey, I've never gotten one myself, except when we had the store."

Wanda says he listened carefully. "Then he said, 'I find all this interesting. I just didn't know. I just had no idea.' I told him there was a war going on against women, and women were beginning to know it, beginning to speak out against it. He just leaned back in his chair and said, 'Well, there's no way you'll be able to use *this* camp again. We're just not going to be able to do this.' He was being totally open and sincere with me. 'Lady,' he said, 'you're going to have to get a camp with a ten-foot high fence, with electrical wire around the top of it, in order to keep women safe.' I said, 'Sir, do you mean to tell me that women will have to live in *prisons* in order to be safe?' I explained that my work for the weekend was leadership—leadership for women, to build them up so they can be strong. He said, 'Well, I sure do wish you well in your work, but you're not going to ever, *ever* get that. You're going to have to have your own land.' "

That very night, a woman was sleeping in her car near the gate, waiting for another woman to arrive. Men came in a car

was there, and car noises had been loud all night out by the gate. This incident is yet another example of why we're so absolutely *determined* to get enough money to purchase our own land."

Challenges aside, the Hensons are committed to continuing to create healing, loving space for women in the Deep South. Over the years, women from many states around the country—as well as from a few other countries—have attended their small but unique festivals, which feature nationally known women's music acts as well as homegrown talent (such as Night Stage headliner Pam Hall from Jackson).

"You know, Southern women watch each other," says Wanda. "You can say a million things to me as a Southern woman, but sister, I'm gonna *watch* you. And we've been so impressed with Sue Fink. She's helped us a lot every year—and I did see her in a pair of blue jeans, not spandex, so she's coming along. I absolutely adore this woman's genius and her ability to create community. She has a gentle, loving spirit—she's a *cheerleader*. We want to give something every year that will honor a woman who is living the concept; we don't want to wait until somebody dies before we say nice things about her. So we've decided to give out the Sue Fink of the Year Award. What goes around comes around in this community." At the 1992 festival—which

also featured a joyous Mardi Gras-style celebration—the trophy was given for the first time. Sue herself was the recipient of this new award.

The Henson-run festivals are small, intimate, and have a family feel. Women who wish they'd had the opportunity to march with Martin Luther King, Jr. in support of civil rights, or take part in the huge feminist marches of the '70s and '80s, have another chance now to "be there" when it counts politically. Less dramatic perhaps, but no less significant, is the stand women are taking today in the Deep South—for their beliefs, for their very lives. All feminist

women are invited now to join hands with their Southern sisters, and to stand and be counted.

For info on the '93 Gulf Coast Festival or to contribute to the Land Fund: 1806 Curcor Dr., Gulfport, MS 39507. •

ABOUT THE WRITER: Toni Jr. and her mom love this festival, and plan to go South for it every year.



The Gulf Coast Women's Festival is small, intimate, and has a family feel. (Pictured: The Girls' Chorus, led by Lynn Thomas, sings on the 1992 Night Stage.)

and a truck, and were attempting to steal something that was attached to the top of her vehicle. "When they saw her sleeping—with no clothes on, she felt safe since she was at a women's festival—one guy dropped his pants and started masturbating at her," Wanda says. "It took several minutes of horn-blowing for security to respond, because they didn't know she

WHAT IS WOMEN'S MUSIC?

WHINE, WOMEN-ONLY AND SONG

By Kris Kovick

Cross-pollination. The process of developing women's culture in the age of AIDS, cancer, and hopelessness; the rejuvenation of our community by exchange. I'm going to talk about a layer of our community that gives me a great sense of optimism, and will describe a slice of our culture—the music, politics, and performance of urban queers.

I think the women's community of the '70s has helped shape the new emerging power I see in the next wave of feminist activism. Women of my generation have cause to be proud of what we've accomplished, of the legacy we've created for the next generation.

The reason I use the term "cross-pollination" is because we're not sure how culture is transmitted—maybe in the wind, as the ancient matriarchs believed, or maybe in the media, as matriarchal mavens now suppose. I don't know how it happened, but '70s feminists have raised up a generation of kids, now in their twenties, whose bottom line is Gertrude Stein.

In the last twenty years, feminism has been in the air, no matter what the administration said. In addition to this, poverty rose as expectations plummeted—with a big effect on teens. Violence levels soared for young adults, both on the streets and in their homes, and this is the generation that is breaking the silence on abuse. Examples of this are Salt-N-Pepa's raps against sexism; k.d. lang's coming out (both as a vegetarian and as a lesbian);

Sinead O'Connor tearing up the Pope's picture on *Saturday Night Live*; and Madonna. (She is Marilyn Monroe with an MBA.)

Actually, I'm far less interested in

about women and AIDS, and the more generalized health care nightmare of Amerikkka. At the same time, I felt lesbian feminists were angrily condemning and denying bisexuality, intravenous needle use, and sex work among dykes. You'd think we were immune to the HIV virus, which is the single greatest killer of women between the ages of sixteen and thirty-five. HIV is a serial killer!

No matter if you're gay or lesbian, you know our collection of communities has been from time to time racist, classist, ableist snots. When I first encountered sexism at Queer Nation, the guys just didn't get it. And they must have thought dykes were pretty scary castrationists or judgmental birkenstockers who think safe sex is a back rub. (It is, isn't it?)

We had to painfully educate each other about rape, bashing, race, class, and gender. We were exiles of other social movements who'd found us too challenging. Runaways, activists, and exiles. It felt like feminism was coming alive in new, unexpected places.

Act-Up hags and Queer Nation dykes are a young, ethnically diverse feminist crowd. The whole scene is bent. Not everyone is a lesbian. Some are bisexuals ("bykes"). Others are queer wannabes. I have a friend who is technically straight; she sleeps with only effeminate men. Over and over I am reminded that desire isn't chosen, we just have to make the best of it. My town [San Francisco] is a haven for this kind of perversion, and I have been in the shadow of it for a while now. It is a politically sophisticated urban culture of unindicted conspirators, lovers, drag queens, revolu-

tion, and I have been in the shadow of it for a while now. It is a politically sophisticated urban culture of unindicted conspirators, lovers, drag queens, revolu-



WHAT IS WOMEN'S MUSIC? is a series of essays written by women with different perspectives addressing this eternally debated topic.

tionaries, artists, and small town fools.

I don't know who dresses them, but here's the basic uniform: a tattered plaid shirt worn tied-up like a skirt or a shawl; underneath that, a tiny, tight T-shirt, usually ripped to shit. Some of 'em wear bras on the outside of their clothes. Next, leggings—several pairs—plus holey long underwear. Lastly, big black boots from hell. They kinda look like Pippy Longstocking as a dungeon diva.

Don't be fooled! The boys and girls dress alike. Skirts are back, and generally the guys who wear 'em can quote Judy Grahn. They might look like crack-smoking, satan-worshipping motherfuckers from Dante's *Inferno*, but they're just young queer activists. They're pro-choice, and they riot!

Try to imagine the music of this scene: loud, metallic, angry, funny. The most popular bands are the all-girl ones: Tribe 8, Bikini Kill, Lunachicks, Ann Planet and the Earthlings, and—probably the most famous—L-7. Right away, I have to confess I am a generation away from the sound. What I call "punk" my friends in the scene call "pop" or (worse) "folk." I don't pretend to listen to college radio, but I'm a voyeur of this part of our culture, and I rage with them.

Bikini Kill, a D.C. band, is associated with a huge phenomenon around the country called "riotgrrrl." Riotgrrrl is something like a cultural underground railroad for young girls. It was started in 1991 by Bikini Kill philosopher/bassist Cathleen Hannah, who wrote the book *The Most Beautiful Girl is a Dead Girl*. Small groups of girls who are sick of male violence and privilege get together for meetings which have no facilitator, no dogma, no agenda. Riotgrrrl started getting huge in '92, and the scene has grown as Bikini Kill has become more popular.

At a recent riotgrrrl meeting held at the Positive Whore House in our nation's capital, Laura Sister Nobody told me a couple of hundred girls and women came together one night to discuss the topic "Sex with Ed." (Ed was somebody's boyfriend.) One girl said, "If I never have to give head again, I'll be happy." The room heartily agreed.

Then a small voice said, "I have never said this before, but I am gay." There was silence. The room seemed to inhale. There was shame. And then a voice in the back said, "Me too." And another and another. In ones and twos, then in tens and twenties, girls started coming out like those mass conversions in early Christianity.

Finally the number of abused women

and girls is beginning to outnumber perpetrators. This, oddly, makes me optimistic. The music of Bikini Kill is like cultural lube, greasing the way out of the patriarchy.

Many of these women's bands start their gigs by yelling, "*Revolution grrrl style now!*" Some bands parody violence, but they tune in to a kind of rage we have, and make lots of young women feel stronger instead of victimized. The politics of these bands are almost drowned out by the sound, but I think it's the politics of pro-choice feminist rage.

My favorite band, Lunachicks, recently released an album—*Babysitters on Acid*. You talk about women making a loud, heavenly sound that touches the sky! You can almost hear them practice from *my* house, and they're based in Manhattan.

Tribe 8 is the punker girl's equivalent of Lunachicks in the Bay Area. The typical Tribe 8 show is in an abandoned warehouse. It's a young crowd, sixteen to twenty-five. IDs are not required. You see worn-out levis, leather, lace, tattoos, hoops, Mohawks. Half the crowd is clean and sober, the other half is on acid. After the band warms up, Lynn Breedlove, lead screamer and lyricist of Tribe 8, will tear her shirt off and continue raving, tits out. This begins a topless slam dance on the floor. It's like rugby without the ball. It attracts baby dykes and horny guys. Sometimes there are fights.

Some women reading this are saying, "Yuck! That's not my idea of fun. That's violence!" It's true that the music taps into rage, and it's true that there are rowdy, howling skirmishes. But these concerts reflect the larger culture in interesting ways. For example, the number one growth industry in this country in the late '90s isn't light rail or medical technology—it's private security systems. Hell! Lesbianism has been the private security system for women's rights for the last twenty years! When you're slammin' to protect an abortion clinic, haven't you ever wished for a back-up band that was the sonic equivalent of a rocket launcher?

Another example of cross-pollination in our culture is Alison Bechdel's cartoon character Lois. She knows what she likes. Maybe she's a pig, but she's a *feminist* pig, and she's hip to what's happening in the various parts of women's culture.

Gorilla Girls in New York and Chicago are doing to the art world what Act-Up is doing to health care. Photographer Phyllis Christopher chronicling the hilarious "return to flannel" movement; Karen Everett's *Lesbian Fashion Show*; Ren Volpe's

Womyn's Barter Network—all are examples of this eclectic style.

By far the scariest example of cross-pollination is the work of Shelly Mars, which I'd like to discuss—but first let me talk about a few of my experiences in the world of lesbian feminist culture.

I came out in 1971 in college. I was the official dyke on campus, the only one, answering questions about perversion, meeting with other homosexuals, volunteering on the rape crisis hotline, and working on my master's degree on intellectual tidbits.

In the mid '70s, my lover and I moved up to Seattle, where she taught women's theory at the U. I have been a cartoonist all my life, and I took a stack of Valentine cards I'd made to the local women's bookstore. I was poking fun of the holiday by making cards that acknowledged non-monogamy. A lacy heart read "Have a heart...someone else's." I left them with a collective member, saying, "You can keep the profits." The next day, three women were at my door. They said the collective refused to carry my cards because the holiday was patriarchal—and anyway, my work was woman-hating.

It's one thing not to have access to the male-dominated media, quite another to be censored in one's community. For an artist, censorship is like exile—it's terrifying. I stopped showing my drawings to people for almost fifteen years, because I didn't want to get trashed. (In the mid '80s, I started seeing Alison Bechdel's cartoons, and I thought she was really brave as well as talented. We started corresponding, and I felt I could put my stuff out there, too.)

By the early '80s, when some of the festivals started having "no S/M" policies, I'd just about had it with this movement. (And not because I'm into S/M; I'm embarrassingly vanilla.) I just believe S/M is part of the imagery of sexually compromised people, and S/M imagery is an exciting way to get women to speak boldly about violence, no matter what their perspective. It's as valid as JoAnn Loulan handing out doll babies to incest survivors, and just as wacko.

But back to Shelly Mars. She casts a large net in the genderworld. I understand some women who saw her performance at the East Coast Lesbians' Festival last summer felt she was dangerous, and called her act "forced voyeurism." To my way of thinking, her work is definitely interactive, but safe. Walking out or heckling are *always* options to "forced voyeurism." I say groan and forget it!

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ON STAGE AND OFF

ANNE SEALE AND SASHA HEDLEY

On Working and Touring Together

Anne Seale is a comic songwriter/singer based in Webster, New York, a suburb of Rochester. She started writing her satirical lesbian-oriented songs shortly after moving into her home there, which has caused her to wonder if the house is built over an ancient lesbian burial ground. The offbeat, tongue-in-cheek songs that make up her 'Sex For Breakfast' album offer irreverent commentary on lesbian life and love. Excerpts from the songs "Women, Womyn, Wimmin" and "A Lesbian Cemetery" are played by 'HOT WIRE' editor Toni Armstrong Jr. as part of a workshop she has given at the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival and elsewhere entitled "Women's Music Listening Party: Artists with Cult Followings."

Sasha Hedley is a Rochester native who is active in the music scene there, most recently in the jazz/pop duo Standard Deviation. She has accompanied Anne from the beginning, and plays piano and bass on the album 'Sex for Breakfast.' She is also a songwriter who comes from a family of musicians; one brother played piano with the Buddy Rich band, and another plays drums. "Music has been our life," she says.

Anne and Sasha have performed in a wide variety of venues, including women's festivals, music clubs, at gay pride rallies, in bookstores and coffeeshouses, at colleges, in concert (alone and with the Rochester Women's Community Chorus), and at the 1991 National Lesbian Conference in Atlanta. Anne has appeared on 'Lambda Reports' TV show in Denver and 'Alternating Currents' radio show in Cincinnati.

"Sasha and I have been performing together about two years now," says Anne, "and we were certainly no spring chickens when we started. I was fifty-one; Sasha was forty." Anne, who began writing lesbian songs in 1988, created stories and plays for children (when her own were small), which she sold to publications such as *Plays, Inc.* and *Jack and Jill*. "I didn't start writing songs, though, until after I came



"I think it's important for us to be able to laugh, especially at ourselves," says Anne Seale (left, with accompanist Sasha Hedley). "Many of us are serious and grim because of all we've seen and experienced. I'm of the school that believes we create our tomorrows with our thoughts today. If we have grim, critical thoughts, we insure a grim, critical future. Humor and laughter break that cycle."

out and joined the Rochester Lesbian Writers' Group," she says. "If I have anybody to thank for encouragement, it's them. Right now I sing my own songs mainly because nobody else knows them."

When Anne and Sasha started touring, they went in Anne's Toyota station wagon. "There was you and me and Linny, who travels with us on the bar tours, plus all our props and instruments—I think we had a piano, two guitars, and a bass—plus all our luggage," recalls Anne. "And pardon me if I mention it, Sasha, but you are no light packer."

"At least I'm consistent."

Eventually Anne bought a big blue cargo van. She says it's not as comfortable, but now there's room for everything.

Touring is always a challenge, especially for inexperienced traveling musi-

cians, and Anne and Sasha were no exception. "That trip to Denver was our first bar tour," Anne recalls. "We were totally green. My personal items were bungeed to the top of the car all the way to Denver and back. I kept looking in the rearview mirror, expecting to see my aqua panties being wafted over some farmer's field. And it was a shock to have to deal with all the problems that cropped up—like the sound systems from hell."

"Sometimes I could even hear the piano," adds Sasha.

"After that, we learned to bring our own system, but having little knowledge of how it works, we had some terrible experiences with static and feedback. One of us really has to take to take a course in that sometime," says Anne. "The most exasperating thing is that the system

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

always sounds great in the sound check, but halfway into the second song, which is usually, 'She Snores'..."

"...the demons come in to mess it up."

"Homophobic demons, I guess."

Sasha recalls their first out-of-town gig, at the 1991 National Lesbian Conference in Atlanta, where they played in the conference's Labrys Lounge. "I had never seen so many lesbians in one place before. It was positively teeming," she says.

"We had a super room at the Radisson, mostly because of your disability status," Anne adds. "It was right on the first floor, opening out to the swimming pool. I was in heaven."

"There are some perks to being disabled," says Sasha. "I especially liked the NLC marketplace. Every nickel I owned went into it, and a few I borrowed from you, Anne," she says. "Talking with those merchants opened up my interest in crystals, which has grown incredibly since then."

"You have a roomful of rocks now," Anne observes.

"True. One thing I like about being on the road is stopping at rock shops and New Age shops all over, because whether or not I buy anything, I always feel so much better just for having gone in," says Sasha.

"One thing about all the traveling we have to do," says Anne, "is we're together so much—we talk, talk, talk. We probably know more about each others' childhoods, relationships, likes and dislikes, etc., than most lovers do. The two of us could go on *The Newlywed Game*."

"If I have to hear one more story about Camp Shabonee..."

"My first lesbian hunting ground! Mugsy, if you read this, it's me, Tadpole, and I still love you."

Actually, they concede, even though they're able to entertain each other on the road, touring has been stressful for them. As happens to most traveling acts, they have to find their way in strange cities, find decent places to eat and sleep, and somehow locate the often well-hidden music clubs in which they're booked to perform. "Often we are not given sufficient information—such as that there's no number or name on the building, and the entrance is at the back or on the third floor or whatever," says Anne. "You can't stop just anybody on the street and say, 'Hey, do you know where the gay bar is?'"

Keeping costs down is always a priority, which means they have to cover a lot of miles in a short time. "In short, I tend to get really stressed on the road, and pass it on to Sasha and Linny," admits Anne.

"It's not easy," agrees Sasha. "I might not do any of the driving, but I have my eyes on the road every minute. And sometimes it pays off, as in Arkansas when we came out of a gas station the wrong way, and I said, 'Wait a minute—we just passed that house, but it was on the other side.' And you're always going, 'Oh, I can wait 'til McDonald's...'"

"Now there's a situation where men have the advantage," Anne says. "All they need is a tree."

"Every time there's an exit, it seems we need to take it. I've never been so well-hydrated in my life as when I travel with you. I get a total body workout."

"Yes, I do tend to force fluids. We've stayed in some *lovely* motels, though. I remember the time you saved the toilet seat seal, the one that says *sanitized*, and put it back on before we left. And what about those rooms with the wallpaper murals?"

"Oh yeah, Disneyland on bad acid."

"And the color scheme is often..."

"...disgusting. And everything is nailed to the wall, thank you for trusting me. Even their screwy hangers are 'Nope, you can't take me home' models."

"I really wanted one, too. Actually, apart from our love for music, we're pretty diametrically opposite," says Anne. "I'm a type A person, driven to be not just on time, but *early!* You're very laid-back."

"My goal is to just *get there*. You, like, freak out when we get lost. I'm the one who wears the St. Christopher medal, and also the St. Anthony's, and I'm not even Catholic."

"Do you really wear those?"

"I need all the help I can get."

Like most performers, Anne says she likes to perform, "but I don't much care for the getting there and back and setting up and so forth. If only I could be magically transported to the stage, and, after the final bow, whisked back to my own little bed..."

"...just wrinkle your nose..."

"...and click my ruby slippers. On a trip, when we are many days in each other's company, the togetherness does get a little wearing. We're glad when we get home to our own separate domiciles."

"This is true, but considering everything—like who smokes, who doesn't, and who gets really upset with it—we've come out of it alive every time."

"We've had some...*odd* experiences in some of the bars we've performed in, like the night of the strippers in Youngstown," Anne recalls. "The show didn't start until after midnight. They alternated our act with female strippers. Nobody was there

to see *us*."

"Yeah—we were the 'Waiting for the Stripper' music."

"But the strippers *were* worth waiting for," says Anne.

"I didn't know people could *do* that! Like the way that one grabbed a dollar bill..."

"...one talented woman! So, Sasha, what do you consider the high point of our undertaking so far?"

"The Women's Motorcycle Festival. They got really into the performance."

"Oh, yes," says Anne. "And I had my first ride ever on a motorcycle there, in their parade run from Aurora to Ithaca and back. I was absolutely terrified for the first fifty-nine miles, but I enjoyed the last mile pretty much."

They both agree that they love the women's festivals. Neither had gone to one until they started performing at them, starting with the Southern Women's Music and Comedy Festival in 1991. "It's a whole different world, a women's world," says Anne. "I've long been a supporter of the Topfree Equality movement in Rochester, which recently led to the legalization of topfree-ness in New York state. But at that time it was still illegal, so to find a place where I could take my shirt off and not have a man tell me to put it back on—or face arrest—was an unexpected delight. But I know the festivals are rather hard on you, Sasha," she says.

"Well, my idea of roughing it is to stay at a Motel 6. But I must say they go out of their way at the festivals to be accommodating. The staff for the disabled is always very helpful, and they have cars or golf carts to take me where I need to be. I have a definite problem with mobility. The main problem I have is in the craft areas, with the uneven ground."

After Southern in '91, they played Rhythmfest. "A lovely location, friendly people, but was it *hot!*" says Anne.

"You could have fried an egg on somebody's chest."

"The coolest spot was on your cabin porch. As I recall, I couldn't persuade you to budge from it."

"It was a nice place from which to watch the world go by."

"I was camped out back in a brand new fancy tent that kept collapsing on one side, especially when it rained, which it did, a lot," Anne says. "But the performance went very well, and that was the first time we had a tape signing in the Lady-slipper tent. I was impressed."

In 1992, they performed at Campfest and East Coast Lesbians' Festival. "I've met

continued on inside back cover

THE AUDIO ANGLE

MORE SOUND IDEAS

By Dakota

In many communities, there are no professional women sound technicians (yet)—but women's music has flourished over the last two decades because women without experience are willing to take the plunge and acquire skills necessary to put on concerts and coffeehouses. Most often, there's a small group of women who want to bring particular artists to their town—and *someone* has to volunteer to take care of the technical aspects of doing concerts.

These *HOT WIRE* articles are intended to provide would-be women technicians with a working knowledge of "the basics" and the vocabulary of doing live sound. Though you can't learn how to be a good sound technician by simply reading about it, you *can* be prepared to participate in an intelligent discussion when you go to rent equipment or take an entry-level class from the local men.

In the last issue of *HOT WIRE* [September 1992], we went over some of the basic components of sound systems. This second part covers setting up the sound system and doing a sound check. Some basic troubleshooting tips for common sound reinforcement problems are also included.

THE MIXING BOARD

Mixing boards vary greatly, and if you don't own one, you'll be borrowing or renting—in which case it's anyone's guess as to what you'll get. The following is a general overview. As with any such technical information, supplement it with a long talk with the person from whom you get the sound equipment. If you're renting it, ask them to show you how to set it up properly—they should be willing to demonstrate. Take notes, and ask as many "dumb" questions as you need to; just make sure you *understand everything before your sound check*.

Unless you are very familiar with your sound system and the venue, the best

THE AUDIO ANGLE discusses information about recording, live sound engineering, and the mysteries of the recording studio.



Carol Newhouse

From the earliest days of women's music, development of our technical skills has been a top priority. (Pictured: hustling to record a March 1976 concert in Oakland featuring Holly Near, Cris Williamson, Margie Adam, and Meg Christian.)

way to begin a sound check is by setting all the EQ to a "flat" position (the starting point where the EQ is not doing anything). From there, you can more easily adjust the sound. And when it comes to adjustments, less is more. The fewer effects you use and adjustments you make, the better. When you start cranking knobs, you will have to compensate somewhere else, so keep it simple.

A final note—you cannot boost a sound that is not there. For instance, if a singer has a very high pitched voice, no adjustment in the world is going to make it sound low and sultry.

EQUALIZATION

There are usually two (sometimes three) knobs for equalization (EQ). If it's a two-knob setup, one controls the high end (treble) and one controls the low end (bass). If there's a third knob, it controls

the middle range.

Sound bounces off of different surfaces in different ways. For example, a cassette that sounds great in your living room might not sound so good in your car. Without going into some frightening calculus equations, let's just say that you will have to be aware of a few things to make your system sound good.

First, keep in mind that an empty concert hall can be deceiving. At the sound check, you will set up everything to sound pleasing to both you and the artist. However, lots of warm bodies tend to soak up certain sound frequencies. The result is that the sound you thought was so wonderful during the sound check has changed drastically once the show starts. It is still important to get the best sound you can *before* the performance, though, because then you will be able to adjust the sound from a known "good" point.

Since everyone hears things differently, you will have to work with the artist closely. If she tells you to "just take care of it," set the sound up so it sounds good to you and the women who are helping set up. (If you're new at this, it's a good idea to get other opinions.) In many cases, the artist will have definite ideas as to how she wants to sound, and she'll tell you. Remember, she's on stage and isn't necessarily hearing what you are, so it can be tricky. Since a musician's reputation is built partly upon how she sounds in concert, good sound can make or break a performance.

After you've adjusted everything, the audience will come in. In effect, you've just re-created the space (in terms of sound) and you'll have to adjust things once the artist starts and you see how all those bodies change the sound. Sometimes, though, when the room becomes filled with people, all it needs is more volume and all your other settings will be fine.

Hint: If it sounds "muddy" or "fuzzy," there is probably too much bass, so move your EQ to reduce the low end a bit. If it sounds "tinny" or "thin," you have too much treble—reduce the highs a bit. Remember, reducing

the highs is similar to increasing the lows; they work together. If there is no separate EQ for the mid-range, when you increase either the high or low end, your perception is one of reducing the mid-range. Another cause of muddy sound is the use of too much reverb.

POWER

Power, in this context, is electricity. It comes into the venue or onto the land (or wherever you are), and you generally have no control over what and how much comes in. It's just there. If you're outside, you may or may not have generators. Nonetheless, how much power you have coming into a space *will* affect how your sound system works.

Most buildings have wall outlets that have between 110 and 120 volts (ac). Without getting too technical, there are two factors that will be important to your sound—the voltage and the current. Voltage is measured in volts, as in the above example. Current is measured in amps. Wall outlets, for example, may have a rating of 15 amps or 20 amps. Remember this: if voltage or amps are too low, you will not be able to make the sound as loud as you might like. (You do not have to worry about too much current because you can use fewer amps than are available without causing problems.) As a general rule, if the plug on your mixer matches the outlet, you can plug it in. This way, you don't have to worry about too much voltage either.

If the voltage is too low (during a summer brown out, for example)—say 100 or 105 volts—you may have all kinds of strange problems, ranging from equipment simply stopping or cutting in/out to inadequate volume for the hall. But there's just not much you can do about low voltage.

Hint: Don't forget that electrical extension cords can go bad. Make sure you have some spares. Also, there is a very high probability that you will need one more extension cord than you have. So, plan ahead and bring plenty with you. And bring duct tape to tape down cables and cords so no one trips.

OTHER EFFECTS

Sometimes the artist has "effects" on stage that she can use to control her own sound (to some extent). Other times, there are effects on the mixing board—sometimes both. If the artist has effects, set up the mixing board with minimal effects and let the artist adjust her sound on stage. If she has no effects, you can decide on what

effects to use and how much.

A common effect built into mixers is reverb. It tends to make the sound fuller, if used in moderation. But if overused, the artist will sound like she's playing inside a tin can. Reverb, if overused, can also be a source of feedback.

Hint: Between songs, turn the reverb off so the speaking sounds normal. It's distracting to listen to an artist talk with reverb on the microphone.

HAVING TROUBLE WITH FEEDBACK?

1. Immediately turn down main volume.
2. Turn down the microphone (but do not turn down the lead vocal mic during a performance).
3. Turn down the volume of an individual channel.
4. Turn down the reverb.
5. Turn down the high end EQ adjustment.
6. During a sound check, move the house speakers or monitors out of the direct path of the microphones.
7. Consider if you have too many microphones (you may be over-taxing the system). If this occurs during a sound check, start with one microphone and add on until the feedback reoccurs. Then take that one additional microphone off.
8. Turn down monitor volume.
9. Learn how to use a "graphic" equalizer, which can be rented with a sound system. A graphic EQ is connected to the system after the mixing board, so you can EQ the overall sound, not just an individual channel. A graphic EQ has many more choices of frequencies and can be used to enhance the overall sound or control feedback, i.e., if a particular concert hall has a few frequencies which seem to feed back easily ("the hot spots"), a graphic EQ can be used to find and decrease the level of those frequencies—therefore reducing feedback.

VOLUME CONTROLS

Each channel often has its own volume control. These can be used to balance the sound. Often a guitar will overpower a vocalist, for example. The volume on the guitar channel can be turned down a bit without lowering the main volume to the house speakers. Each

channel should be turned up as high as possible (without causing feedback) and the overall volume should be controlled with the main volume.

Hint, if you have monitors: There is usually a volume control for monitors and a separate one for the house speakers (called "house" or "main volume"). The monitors should be loud enough for the performer(s) to hear, but not so loud that the sound is picked up by the microphones and sent back out through the house speakers (feedback).

FEEDBACK

Feedback is an electronic process where a sound gets locked in a loop and becomes amplified over and over again—for example, monitors feeding into a microphone. The sound goes around and around until you get screeching. [See the sidebar in column two on this page for suggestions regarding how to deal with that lovely high-pitched, ear-piercing squeal.]

OTHER PROBLEMS

BUZZING is associated with electricity. Check things like the outlet into which your system is plugged (try moving it), and make sure power cables are not running over/under other sound cables. A bad connection or cable can be the cause.

Often—like ninety-nine percent of the time—lights in the building will affect the sound system, so experiment with turning various lights off/on. (Dimmer switches are notorious for interfering.) If the lights are causing buzzing and you can't stop it, try your sound check with just the lights that will be on during the performance. (Usually house lights are off during the show and may not be worth worrying about).

Assuming the sound is not coming from the performer's pre-show meditation, **HUMMING** is actually low-frequency feedback. Check all possible sources of feedback.

POPPING is also associated with electricity. Popping will happen when someone plugs or unplugs something on a line that is "hot" or has power to it (when the volume is anything more than 0). This not only causes popping, it can (read: *will*) damage equipment. When plugging or
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ABOUT THE WRITER: Dakota has experience doing sound, album production, and artist management. Questions can be addressed to Dakota/Audio Angle, P.O. Box 42282, Tucson, AZ 85733.

BEHIND THE SCENES

STAGE WORKERS

Retts Scauzillo and Kathy Belge

By Toni Armstrong Jr.

RETTS SCAUZILLO

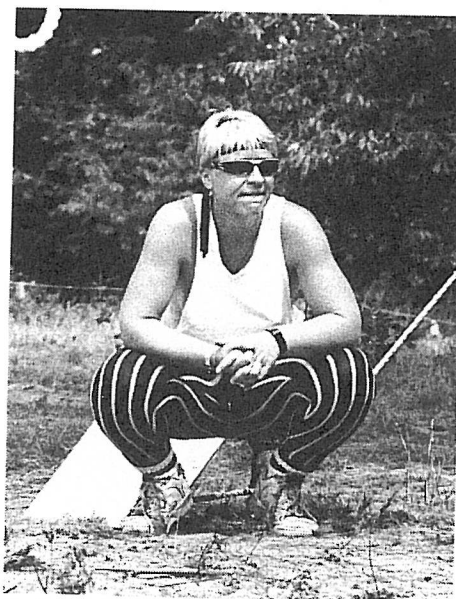
"I lived all of my life on Long Island," says Retts Scauzillo, "and I identify proudly as a New Yorker and as a dyke. We moved to Long Island from 'Da Bronx' when I was three. I grew up in East Meadow, and now reside in Huntington." Born September 21, 1953, Retts describes herself as a "Virgo with Aries Rising and Pisces Moon."

"My parents are working class first generation Italian Americans, both born in New York City. They now reside behind the 'Orange Curtain'—in Garden Grove, California. They are retired grandparents. I'm out to them, and they are accepting of my lifestyle. They consider my lover—ex now—to be part of the family. My mother even tries to fix me up with women from southern California so I'll move there," says Retts. "So far, it hasn't worked."

She is also out to her three siblings, who are, like her parents, accepting of her life. "They are all hets and married with kids," says Retts, who plays eccentric spinster aunt to six nephews and two nieces.

College degrees Retts has earned include: B.S. in Physical Education (1975, Adelphi University), M.A. in Health Education (1981), and M.S. in Special Education (1992, Queens College). "Job-wise, I've done just about everything—pumped gas, made birdseed formulas, cleaned houses, worked as a supervisor for a contact lens company, and picked apples," she says. "Presently, I'm very happy teaching preschool special education. I teach movement education and social skills in a private school where they know I'm a dyke. I work with all women, and they're endlessly curious about my lifestyle."

Retts credits Alix Dobkin—whom she met nine years ago, and Alix's then-



Toni Armstrong Jr.

Retts Scauzillo: "Lesbians learning how to live and work together in an all-women environment...it's revolutionary, and it's my life work."

lover Janis Sommers—with getting her involved in the world of women's music and culture. "Alix pumped me up," Retts recalls. "She made me be a producer, then she encouraged me to do stage and sound work at festivals. She became my mentor, and took me under her wing. I learned a lot from her, and she introduced me to many wonderful lesbians involved in all areas of women's music."

The first artist Retts produced was Lucie Blue Tremblay in 1985, and her first working festival was the Southern Women's Music and Comedy Festival in 1986. That same year, she worked on the Day Stage at Michigan. "As a producer and techie and I met many artists," she says. "Mostly through Alix, I learned the artists' perspective. It was natural for me to become a stage manager, because I understood most of the perceptions needed to run a stage. Plus, I'm a very aggressive leader; I take risks—Alix taught me that."

Over the years, Retts has compiled an impressive women's music resumé.

She's been a concert producer with Hera Productions since 1985; on the stage/sound crew at Southern 1986-1990, and at Robin Tyler's West Coast fest in 1988 and 1990. At Michigan, she was on the stage/sound crew 1986-88, and has been Day Stage manager since 1988. Since 1990, she's been the Showcase stage manager at the National Women's Music Festival, and the Night Stage manager at Rhythmfest.

In her spare time, Retts writes about women's music and women's sports, and has been on the steering committee of the Association of Women's Music and Culture (AWMAC) since 1990. She is a moving force behind the AWMAC technicians' caucus, and enjoys giving workshops.

Never shy, Retts throws herself wholeheartedly into a wide variety of activities in the world of women's music and culture. "I've been on radio shows on Long Island, and been a promoter for Alix—selling shirts and recordings and doing general promotion, just because I love her and we're great friends. Sometimes I travel with her to different communities, and I love doing that. For someone who's behind the scenes, I end up on stage an awful lot. I've occasionally danced on stage—most recently with Mrs. Fun at Rhythmfest '92. I would like to do more dancing if possible; I love it. But no more black leather—I got in a lot of trouble for that in the past," she says with a smile. "I must admit, if I had talent I'd perform. I've done some emcee work, mostly at Hera shows, but other places as well. I love emceeing, but I prefer it to be spontaneous—and I like to do it at café or afterhours shows, informal stuff. I don't think I would be good at the Michigan Night Stage, for example. I'd be too nervous and stiff," she hypothesizes. "Actually, I like to be raunchy."

Well-known throughout the network as a fun-loving type, Retts brings her own unique brand of bubbling—and sincere—enthusiasm with her everywhere she goes. "I love the women I meet, and I love working on stages at festivals," she says. "I love

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.

bringing lesbian culture to Long Island—it's community work, and very powerful. I love being a leader in the lesbian community and creating it as we go along. I especially love being a part of the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival workers' community—it's basically lesbians learning how to live and work together in an all-women environment. It's revolutionary, and it's my life work.

"Women's music is constantly evolving," she says. "If I had it my way, it would be even more lesbian-identified. I'd like all women's music performers to do out lesbian stuff, which is really my interest. Yet I like that there's room for all women—like Judith Sloan, for example."

Retts says many of her personal needs are met by the work she does: her need for lesbian culture, to work and live with lesbians, to have fun, and to learn skills. "I've learned so much through women's music," she says. "I learned how to direct a stage, and everything I know about techie work comes directly from my women's music experiences. You know, women's music techies are amazing—stage work at women's music festivals is like nothing else in the world." She has an interest in helping to set consistent standards throughout the industry, and hopes that in the future technicians will get better pay. "But I'm not in it just for the money," she stresses.

"Women's music changed my life. Meeting Alix changed my life. I suddenly understood my role, how I fit into the lesbian community," she says. "My community is very important to me—it's my family. I care deeply about its growth and development, and I know I can make positive contributions to our culture. I've learned many lessons, and I've made some mistakes, but women like Alix, Boo Price, Lisa Vogel, Toni Jr., Toni Sr. and Lois, JEB, and so many others have helped me to learn from my mistakes and grow. They have taught me through their example—they've been my role models, and I'm forever grateful. Now I've become a role model for young dykes—and I feel confident in my ability to lead and become everything I can."

KATHY BELGE

"A finger in every pie" may best describe Kathy Belge's relationship to the women's music and culture scene. The long-time Syracuse, New York denizen has been involved over the years with radio, concert and festival production, stage crewing, feminist-oriented political activ-

ism, and artist booking/management.

Kathy was born August 18, 1965 in Syracuse, into a large Catholic family of German descent. She and her twin Mary—also a familiar face in women's music and culture circles—are the babies of the family, and have several older siblings, including a sister (Laura) and four brothers (Tom, Joe, John, and Matt). Their brother Bob died in 1972 at the age of seventeen. Both of Kathy's parents are in their early sixties; father Robert is a professor of engineering and mother Betty is a bread baker.

Kathy lived in Syracuse until 1986, when she went on the Great Peace March for Global Nuclear Disarmament. She lived in Cleveland, Ohio during 1987 and 1988, and finally moved back to Syracuse.

Kathy earned her B.A. in 1989 at Syracuse University, with a double major in Magazine Journalism and History. She's had many jobs over the years, including being a lifeguard throughout high school and college, and working as a bookstore clerk in Cleveland. From 1988 to 1990, she was director of the Syracuse Women's Information Center, and labored as a shipping clerk from 1988-1992 for the progressive Syracuse Cultural Workers organization. Since 1990, she has been volunteer coordinator for the Planned Parenthood Center of Syracuse.

Kathy's introduction to women's music came in college. "I went to a small coffeehouse where Cathy Winter was playing," she recalls. "I fell in love with a music



Toni Armstrong Jr.

Stray Kat Kathy Belge: "When I am not at a festival, I have the feeling that I was born to be a part of creating this lesbian culture."

that spoke to me as a budding feminist and peace activist. Later that year, I met a woman who taught me radio production, and we did a weekly women's show on college radio ["Face the Music" on WSPZ, broadcasting out of Syracuse]."

In March 1986, Kathy went on the Great Peace March, which she describes as

an "amazing nine-month journey" (walk) across the U.S. "An incredible group of women formed a musical group—Wild Wimmin for Peace. I did advance work, helping set up performances in towns we passed through, hooking up with the women's communities in the towns. After the Peace March ended in November, four of us planned to move to Cleveland to start a multimedia performance troupe—music, poetry, theater, dance." The plan was for Kathy to manage the venture, called Daughters of an Angry Earth.

"Well, the troupe never quite got off the ground," she says, "but I did join Oven Productions, a collective that has been producing women's music since 1975. Brynna Fish [see November 1987 *HOT WIRE*] sort of took me under her wing, and that's where I learned a lot of what I know now about production. During my time with Oven, roles included production womanager, stage womanager, volunteer coordinator, sound crew, and house womanager."

In 1986, Kathy attended her first festival—Michigan. "The following year I worked for an entire month, and I've been festival-hopping ever since," she says. In 1987 and 1988, she worked on the parking crew for Michigan, and since 1988 is perhaps best known for working on various festival stage crews, including East Coast Lesbians' Festival as well as Michigan Day and Acoustic Stages.

Production of concerts and festivals plays a central role in Kathy's dedication to the national woman-identified creative community. In 1988-89, through the Syracuse University Women's Center, she produced several concerts, including the Washington Sisters and Lucie Blue Tremblay. In 1989-1990, she was part of the core committee to organize Woman Harvest, a small festival/retreat, acting as entertainment coordinator.

She tried booking one tour for Monica Grant in 1990. ("And that's all it took for me to decide I don't like booking," she says.) Since 1990, she's been the founder and sole proprietor of Stray Kat Productions, putting on concerts primarily to benefit not-for-profit lesbian/gay and women's groups.

"I really feel that the communities we create, the way we work together, is important work that changes the world," Kathy says. "There are certain performers, like Rhiannon, Ferron, Margie Adam, Marga Gomez...what they give is so powerful, so transforming, so healing. When I see one of these amazing women perform, I know that that is what it's all

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HOTLINE *continued from page 11*

L.A., a radio station aired an interview with Jamie Anderson, but refused to play her song "Dark Chocolate," fearing that it violated FCC regulations. The song is played on many other stations, and while it is explicitly lesbian, it does not contain wording that violates FCC guidelines.

"WILD WOMYN'S VOICES UNLEASHED" airs Sundays from 5-6 p.m. on 91.7 FM in the West Virginia University vicinity. Send recordings and press materials to Denene Florence, "Wild Womyn's Voices Unleashed," Mountainlair/WV University, Morgantown, WV 26506. (304) 293-3329, fax (304) 293-7363.

Elizabeth Hinkle-Turner has compiled a TAPE OF ELECTRO-ACOUSTIC MUSIC BY WOMEN. The "Women and Technology" concert/radio program includes music by a number of women, and is available to individuals, academic institutions, and radio stations in DAT, reel to reel, and cassette format. Elizabeth Hinkle-Turner, Conservatory of Music, Oberlin, OH 44074. The October issue of *The International League of Women Composers Journal* includes an extensive piece by Elizabeth entitled "RECENT ELECTRO-ACOUSTIC MUSIC BY WOMEN." *ILWC Journal*, Southshore Rd. Box 670, Three Mile Bay, NY 13693.

PUBLICATIONS

THE WOMYN'S BARTER NETWORK is a quarterly publication—part directory, part newsletter—to help women in the Bay Area connect with each other to exchange skills, services, goods, and info outside of the money economy. They also have a list, updated every six months, of women who are interested in temporarily housing traveling women and/or exchanging apartments with women in different states/countries. SASE to *Womyn's Barter Network*, P.O. Box 29, 2543 18th St., San Francisco, CA 94110.

The **NATIONAL DIRECTORY OF WOMEN OF COLOR ORGANIZATIONS AND PROJECTS** contains names, addresses, phone numbers, and key contact people. According to *New Directions for Women*, it is available as a book or on disk from Women of Color Resource Center, 2288 Fulton St. #103, Berkeley, CA 94704. (510) 848-9272.

The second edition of *The ENCYCLOPEDIA OF GAY AND LESBIAN RECORDINGS* contains more than 400 new titles as well as additional indexing and biographical notes. This chapbook-style publication is intended for the use of researchers, and is not for sale to the general public. If you need such a specialized research item, contact Jay McLaren, Postbus 11950, 1001 GZ, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

Join the growing **WOMEN'S MOTORCYCLIST NETWORK** by reading *Chrome Rose's Review* and getting on the mailing list for the annual Women's Motorcycle Festival. SASE to WMF, 7 Lent Ave., LeRoy, NY 14482.

The Halloween/Winter Solstice edition of *OF A LIKE MIND* newspaper lists and describes eleven

periodicals that specialize in some aspect of women's spirituality. OALM, P.O. Box 6021, Madison, WI 53716.

Naiad Press announces the Book of the Month Club and Quality Paperback Book Club have purchased the rights to Naiad Press's *LOVE, ZENA BETH* by Diane Salvatore (senior editor at *Redbook*), reports *Outlines*.

QUEER MONEY quarterly newsletter addresses the unique financial needs of lesbians/gays. *Queer Money*, P.O. Box 59856, Dayton, OH 45459.

SORORITY is a ninety-six page lesbian quarterly with fiction, articles, interviews, photos, cartoons, and puzzles. *Sorority*, Suite 110, 1170 Bay St., Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5S 2B4.



Toni Armstrong Jr.

Seeing double: 1992 was a year for performing twins at Michigan. New Zealand's Topp Twins (Lynda and Jools, pictured above) who took the U.S. by storm last summer, learned the Tush Push from Maile & Marina last August. Sandra & Sharon Washington and Amy & Bitsy Ziff also appeared together on the Michigan festival stages.

Vintage books (hard cover first editions in like-new condition) are among the collectibles that have continued to escalate in price during the recession. Two that you might have on your book shelf are *INDEMNITY ONLY*, the 1982 mystery novel by Sara Paretsky (now selling for \$1,000) and Gloria Naylor's 1982 *THE WOMEN OF BREWSTER PLACE* (now valued at \$400), reports the *Chicago Tribune*.

Billboard magazine devoted their July 25 cover story to the topic of gay/lesbian consumers and the new surge in country music. The article focused on the popularity of **COUNTRY THEME NIGHTS AT GAY AND LESBIAN CLUBS** and the refusal by country acts to perform at AIDS benefits and gay/lesbian-themed events.

With its fourth issue last fall, *BLACK LACE* erotic magazine—featuring the images and experiences of African-American lesbians—began its second year of publication. The forty-four page quarterly includes photos, short stories, poetry, drawings and a centerfold. Edited by Alycee J. Lane, *Black Lace's* contributors include Laura Irene Wayne, Danielle Fox, Claudia Washington, Donna Rose, Letitia Howard, Lunelle Johnson, Detria Thompson, Pat Fowlkes, Ginitta Glass, and Katrice Jackson. BLK Publishing, P.O. Box 83912, Los Angeles, CA 90083-0912. (310) 410-0808.

SUBMISSIONS SOUGHT

Alyson Publications seeks information about **GAY AND LESBIAN FIRSTS AND RECORDS**. Include documentation to the extent possible. Suggestions for entries are welcome. Lynne Yamaguchi Fletcher, Alyson Publications, 40 Plympton St., Boston, MA 02118.

New feminist magazine is seeking essays, articles, book reviews, theory, research, and first person narratives. *At the Crossroads* brings together the tools and perspectives of **FEMINISM, SPIRITUALITY, AND "NEW PARADIGM" SCIENCE** to explore reality, especially the spiritual reality which Western culture de-emphasizes or denies. *At The Crossroads*, P.O. Box 112, St. Paul, AR 72760.

Looking for lesbian artists to submit **PROGRESSIVE ARTWORK FOR GREETING CARD LINE**. SASE to Pukka Press, 223 W. Railroad, Missoula, MT 59802. (406) 542-7707.

Lesbian couples needed for **RESEARCH STUDIES**: (1) Must be in relationship at least four years and live in New York, Boston, Atlanta, San Francisco, or Chicago area. SASE to Tracy Ore, 718 Hutchins Ave., Ann Arbor, MI 48103. (313) 741-9512. (2) Must be living with partner at least two years; send SASE for questionnaire packet. Research based on feminist theory of women's development. Contact Cara at (516) 742-2636.

Kalliope women's art journal is looking for poetry, short fiction, essays, and visual art with the theme **WOMEN OF THE FUTURE**. Mary Sue Koeppel, *Kalliope*, FCCJ, 3939 Roosevelt Blvd., Jacksonville, FL 32205.

HIKANÉ: THE CAPABLE WOMON announces its upcoming themes: Anger, Friendship, and Humor. Submissions can be in print, on tape, or in braille. Enclose short bio note including what your disability is. They edit out "isms." *Hikané*, P.O. Box 841, Great Barrington, MA 01230.

Trivia: A Journal of Ideas seeks submissions, both written and visual. The theme for issue twenty-two is "A Journal of **REJECTED IDEAS**." (They are looking for material that has been rejected due to content.) *Trivia*, P.O. Box 606, North Amherst, MA 01059.

Submissions are wanted for the anthology *Breaking Our Hearts: WHITE WOMEN AND RACISM*. Sharon Franklet, 1084-A Capp St., San Francisco CA 94110. (415) 821-9268.

The 1993 **PAULINE ALDERMAN PRIZE FOR NEW SCHOLARSHIP ON WOMEN IN MUSIC**, formerly sponsored by the International Congress on Women in Music, will be awarded for three outstanding works on women and music at the musicALASKAwomen Conference scheduled for August in Fairbanks. Books, articles, essays, and bibliographies are being solicited. The Alderman Prize has not been awarded since the International Congress integrated with the International League of Women Composers, so the committee will consider works published since 1989. Stephen M. Fry, Alderman Prize, Music Library, 1102 Schoenberg Hall, University of California, Los Angeles, CA 90024-1490. (310) 825-2317, fax (310) 206-2992.

Anthology of **LESBIAN DRAMAS** seeks 1,000-word pieces about dramas in which women have been directly/indirectly involved. Part of the profits will be donated to help fund a support network for battered women in lesbian relationships. Mayan Quake Productions, 836 McCadden Pl., Hollywood, CA 90038. (213) 871-0346.

Personal narratives and photos sought for anthology about **INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS**. Seeking women who are now or who have been with a woman at least fifteen years older or younger. Pat Rutherford/Stacy Saetta, 3060 Porter St. #31, Soquel, CA 95073.

Submissions are being sought for *Dagger*, an anthology dedicated to **CELEBRATING BUTCH WOMEN**. Cleis Press plans to publish the anthology in the fall. Editors Lily Braindrop and Roxxie, *Dagger*, P.O. Box 2587, Berkeley, CA 94702.

Seeking poetry/short prose for anthology on **EATING DISORDERS** (*Food as a Metaphor*). Amy Kossoy, 524 Prospect Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11215.

Essays about **WOMEN'S BOOK GROUPS** wanted. How is yours organized? Why do you like it? What good books have you read? To be published by Chicago Review Press. Elen Slezak, 1550 W. Addison #1W, Chicago, IL 60613.

Publisher/radio producer seeks "delightful **METAPHORS AND SIMILES**, poems written using specified metaphors and similes." Payment and purchase of copyright may be possible. L.O.O., P.O. Box 5915, Takoma Park, MD 20913.

Queries now being accepted for poetry anthology on **WOMEN AND DEATH**. Grand Torpedo Press, 1019 Michigan Ave., Ann Arbor, MI 48104.

Terri Jewell continues to seek writing and visual art pertaining to **BLACK LESBIAN CULTURE** for an anthology. Terri Jewell, P.O. Box 23154, Lansing, MI 48909.

Fiction and creative nonfiction (essays, stories) now sought for anthology about **FISHING** (to be published by Seal Press). Holly Morris, 1901 25th Ave. East, Seattle, WA 98112.

Materials by/about **ASIAN AMERICAN SEXUAL MINORITIES** (lesbian, gay, bi, etc.) sought for bibliographic database to aid research and course development. Literature, films, radio, visual art, etc. Send to Jen Ting, Dept. of American Civilization, Box 1892, Brown University, Providence, RI 02912.

Submissions sought for the anthology *Can't Eat Just One: (Lesbians Discuss NON-MONOGAMY)*. Two copies of songs, poems, stories, journal entries, etc. with SASE to MARIPOSA, P.O. Box 1015, Santa Cruz, CA 95061.

Circler Press, a small women-owned independent publisher of erotic science fiction, seeks submissions for a collection of **WOMEN-ORIENTED EROTIC SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY**.



Sherry Hicks is now touring with 'PHOENIX, the.' Her humorous one-woman show uses music and sign language, and is a realistic look at the life of a CODA (Children of Deaf Adults) in dealing with deaf/hearing issues.

Lesbian, bisexual, S/M, leather, and other alternative sexualities strongly sought. Circler Press, P.O. Box 15143, Boston, MA 02215.

Lesbian plays of any length or style are sought for an **ANTHOLOGY OF PLAYS** showing a diversity of ages, races, classes, dis/abilities, political positions and theatrical styles. Rosemary Curb, International Research Associate, Women's Studies, 524 Homes Hall, Boston, MA 02115.

Silent Partners, an anthology by **LESBIAN PARTNERS OF INCEST SURVIVORS**, is seeking submissions. SASE to C. Bechtel, P.O. Box 16717, St. Louis, MO 63105.

ILGA Bulletin, the newsletter of the International Lesbian and Gay Association, is planning an all-lesbian issue to be published in early 1993. Submissions are being sought from lesbian writers and graphic artists around the world relating to any **LESBIAN CONCERNS**. Annika Dahlback, RFSL-Stockholm, Box 45090, S-10430 Stockholm, Sweden. Questions about submissions in the U.S.: Jorjet Harper (312) 583-2979.

According to *Feminist Bookstore News*, Only-woman Press is accepting poetry submissions and financial contributions for the **MARGOT**

JANE MEMORIAL POETRY PRIZE. Only-woman Press, 38 Mount Pleasant, London WC1XOAP.

The Women's Press/Canada is calling for submissions for two anthologies: the first, a fiction and poetry anthology on **CHALLENGING HETEROSEXISM**, the second, a nonfiction anthology of writings theorizing **HETEROSEXISM AND HOMOPHOBIA/LESBOPHOBIA** from a lesbian point of view. SASE to *Resist*, Women's Press, #233-517 College, Toronto, Ont. M6G 4A2 Canada.

Poetry, artwork, and homespun myths about **MENSTRUATION** wanted for *I Got It!: A Workbook for Girls About Menstruation*. Especially sought are pieces aimed at girls aged eight to sixteen. SASE to *I Got It!*, 827 W. 11th St., Bloomington, IN 47404. Poetry, fiction, memoirs, and creative essays sought for *Mother's Gift*, an anthology about the **ONSET OF MENSTRUATION AND/OR PHYSICAL CHANGES IN GIRLS** aged ten to sixteen. Writing/SASE to Meg Campbell, 94 Sawyer Ave., Boston, MA 02125.

QUEER PLANET REVIEW, a new "lesbian" quarterly magazine, seeks poetry, short stories (under 300 words), photos, graphic art, cartoons. Send submissions and SASE to *Queer Planet Review*, 3023 N. Clark St. #302, Chicago, IL 60657.

Sinister Wisdom, a journal for the lesbian imagination in the arts and politics, seeks works exploring **ETHICS AND COMMUNITY**, codes, challenges, and responsibility. Two copies with SASE to P.O. Box 3252, Berkeley, CA 94703.

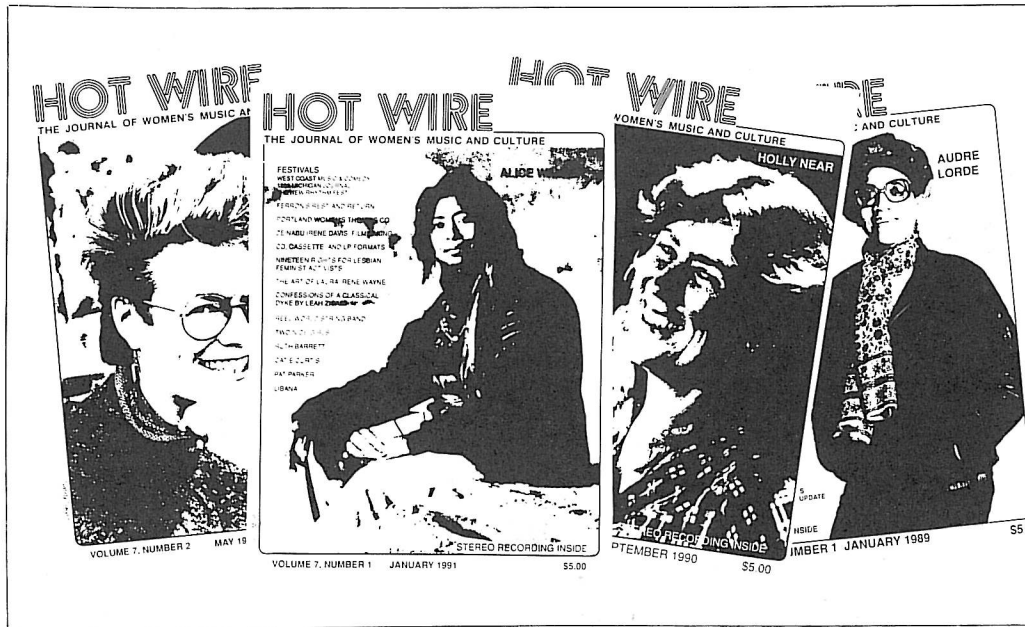
Seeking photos, poems, articles, journal entries, and stories for anthology by and for **WOMEN WITH FACIAL HAIR**. SASE to Lyn Staack, P.O. Box 239, Hartford, VT 05407.

The editors of the newsletter *What Lesbians Know About Cancer* want lesbians to send articles, letters, drawings, etc. that express opinions, ask questions, and share feelings as well as info about **CANCER**. Louder Than Words, P.O. Box 90934, Washington, DC 20090.

Cold Iron, an anthology of writing and art by/about **GAY/LESBIAN PRISONERS**, is seeking submissions. Lin Elliott c/o Indigenous Thought, 6802 SW 13th St., Gainesville, FL 32608.

Short fiction, personal accounts, and poems wanted for anthology. Seeking memorable, outrageous, humorous, bizarre, disturbing, unusual writings by women reflecting diversity of cultures, ethnicity, age, and sexual preference about what the editor is calling **THE DARK SIDE OF LOVE**. Amber Coverdale Sumrall, P.O. Box 334, Capitola, CA 95010.

Morning Star Press seeks submissions for a series of booklets dealing with the **GAY AND LESBIAN CHRISTIAN/SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE**. Janet S. White, Morning Star Press, P.O. Box 765, West Side Station, Worcester, MA 01602. •



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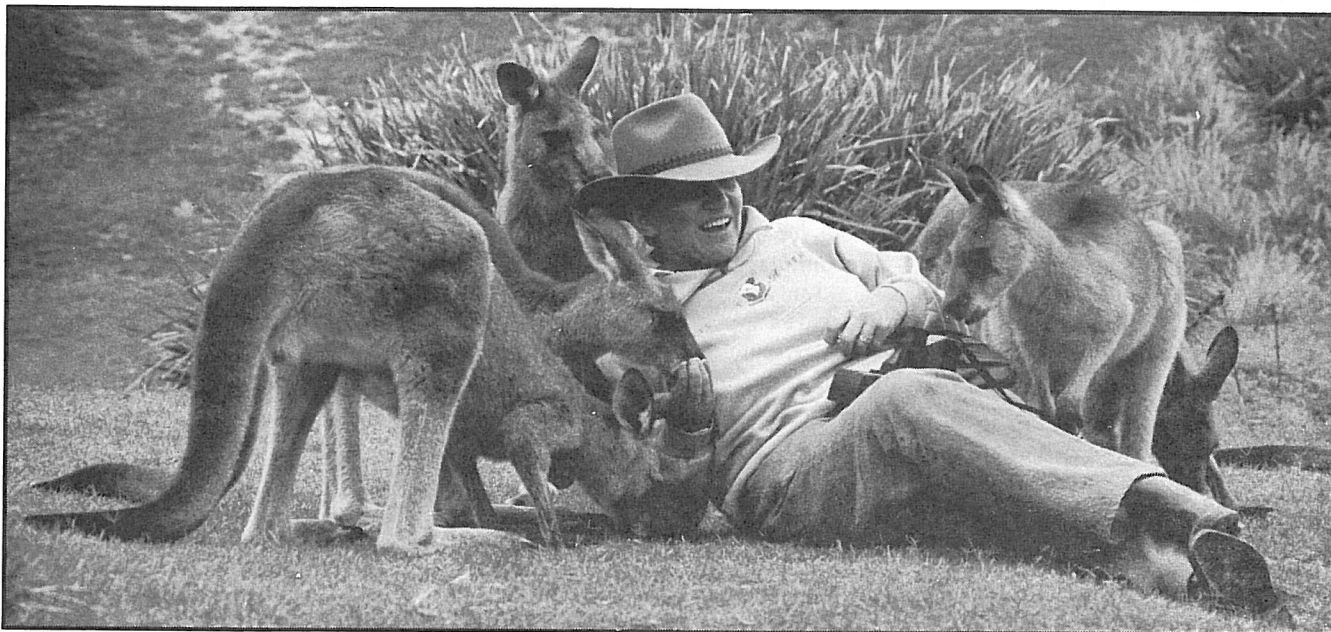
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KRIS KOVICK from 45

Shelly's work is not entertaining. I don't sing along or clap. It doesn't leave me feeling cozy. It's weird, and I like a lot of it. It's also the best drag ever, if audience reaction is a measure.

I once sat in a packed, semi-darkened theater full of women waiting for Shelly to come on. Suddenly the sleaziest, most disgusting misogynist/pervert/wino started decompressing right in the middle of the crowd—this slimeball was jerking off in an audience full of dykes. I thought they'd pull him apart!

It turned out to be Shelly in drag. Then s/he takes the stage in her sleazy "Martin" persona. S/he's wanking a banana and "forcing" her partner, Katy Krocadile, to eat it. Real-life guys like "Martin" are why women go off to the woods without men in the first place.

I understand Shelly has seen a lot of scumbag, junk-bond types from her years in the porn trade. Her parody of them is frightening. What makes her hot is her vulnerability; what makes her heavy is her delight in scaring the shit out of her audiences. When it gets unbearable, she usually does something to break the tension—like the night I saw her, she slid her long white banana down Katy's throat, but Shelly then broke it in two and they both ate it. I thought it was self-mocking and male bashing at the same time. It was a compelling performance.

Personally, I prefer comedy as a way to empower women, but sexual openness is also subversive. Problem is, it's controversial. As victims of sexual violence, many women go to women's festivals expecting to avoid having to deal with it—including in the form of explicit performance art. *HOT WIRE* editor Toni Armstrong Jr. and I have had extended discussions about these topics, including her reactions to Shelly's ECLF performance. Toni's been attending women's music festivals since 1975, and I think she has a most sensible idea.

"I believe it's in the interest of festival producers to create some version of a 'Controversy Cafe'—a separate stage, area, or building where potentially offensive performance art, videos, photography, readings, theater, etc. could take place," she suggests. "Women who enjoy 'cutting edge' provocative art could enjoy it, and festival producers would be free to provide a wider range of entertainment without worrying about who's going to be offended. Performance art is intentionally shocking, thought-provoking. In my opin-

ion, it's not right to put an unsuspecting audience in the position of being *unwilling* voyeurs of acts that include depictions of sex and violence. There are children in these audiences, and many women come to festivals specifically to escape exposure to such imagery," she says.

"But it's also not right to have to *cancel* lesbian performers who want to do their art specifically for all-women, lesbian-oriented audiences. The question becomes how much variety—from how many different types of women—can our festival subculture really tolerate?"

Toni and I agree that the Controversy Cafe idea is a compromise that could work. "Assuming festival producers have good judgment in hiring the performers, I anticipate these Controversy Cafes would get packed audiences and develop cult followings," she tells me. "The truth is, many festival-goers *want* to see what the 'bad girls' are doing—but they don't want to be surprised with it on the Night Stage."

So there's Shelly, and the riotgrrrrls—and on the other end of the female homosexual spectrum, we have the women's culture of festivals and bookstores, arts and crafts—a culture rich in woven scarves and incredibly beautiful hands.

I love being a lesbian, and I respect our culture. But I want to see substantial change in it, not just the creation of more comfortable comas for lesbians. I am sensitive to our desires becoming sanitized and packaged like boneless chicken. I don't want the festivals to be like feminist malls—I want art and ritual that challenge us, enrage us, empower us, tickle us.

I've been to concerts lately that really make me wonder. I've heard songs sung to the inner child; it can be like lesbian *Sesame Street*...endless waterfall music...sometimes I think they play the same song twice. I must sound like the Camille Paglia of women's music; I know I didn't feel this way fifteen years ago.

Sometimes it feels like women's music as we know it has chronic fatigue. The whole scene seems to have become a smug, middle class, therapized, self-congratulatory starfest, with everybody in their purple washable silk. (And beepers! There should be a non-beeper section at the shows.)

The structure of the festivals is important, but the content has to change. There has to be a "just say yes" room, a Tipper Gore area, live sex acts, a tattoo parlor, temple harlots, sacrificial men, boa constrictors, a cigarette machine, lots of perfume, plenty of dogs, target practice

with live ammo, time-share tops, pillories for the P-I, a dating service....

I'm just subvocalizing with a pen in my hand, and maybe it's the therapy talking, but I believe the young genderbender, bisexual, sex-positive feminists and the crusty old birkenstockings have something to offer each other.

The younger generation needs the *continuity of culture* that is provided by the festivals. The many gatherings that lesbian feminists have created over the last couple of decades provide crucial support for women, and are places in which openly lesbian and militantly feminist artists can perform. It's important to many performers to be able to take the audience to a new place through music or theater; the festivals are important places where receptive audiences full of women can be found.

I love the commitment to accessibility found in the traditional women's culture scene, including the sign language we see at many events. Whether it's sliding scales or wheelchair ramps, sensitivity about racial issues or hidden disabilities, the lesbian feminist women's culture has processed it.

Ten or fifteen years ago, women's culture wasn't ready for people like me. But the community has changed. When I went off on my book tour last fall, I expected that people would be more sex-negative than they turned out to be. But my audiences were hungry for sex-positive writing that doesn't put women down (which is what "erotica" is supposed to be).

I think women's culture has changed enough to be ready for the next generation at festivals. These events provide continuity for our culture, which is growing and changing in unexpected ways. They provide a structure in which the momentum of our movement can continue from year to year, decade to decade—and that's how we have a culture.

If we can't criticize this movement from the inside, in our own publications, then we don't have a movement—we have a cult. And I don't believe feminism is a cult.

Ah, continuity. I have to admit I realized after a women's music concert I saw recently that "unicorn" is how we said "dildo" twenty years ago. •

ABOUT THE WRITER: *Kris Kovick thinks topping at a play party is whipped cream. She toured the country last year doing readings from her book, 'What I Love Most About Lesbian Politics is Arguing With People I Agree With' (Alyson Publications, 1991).*

AUDIO ANGLE *from page 49*

unplugging equipment, make *sure* that the volume on that channel is lowered to 0. Loose connections and bad cables can also cause problems.

Popping can also be a sign that you don't have **PROPER GROUNDING** on things. Check that there are three prongs on the power cables and on *all* extension cords you use. Move the power cord(s) to another outlet. Double check connections and wiring. Improper grounding is dangerous to you and to the performer, so make sure everything is properly grounded.

All these wires you're dealing with act like a big antenna. Unfortunately, some venues and some sound systems are more likely than others to have problems. If you are **PICKING UP STRANGE TRANSMISSIONS**, try moving the mixing board a few feet in different directions. (If it's intergalactic, I can't help you.) The cabling itself may be sensitive. You can slowly unplug cables until you get rid of the transmission (from a local radio or whatever). Once you've located the culprit, you can change it. For example, reposition the mixing board, move the microphone, change cables, use a shorter cable, etc.

There are times when nothing you do will get rid of a background transmission. When that happens, do your best to minimize it and get on with the show.

• • •

You may want to check out *Mix Magazine* (an industry publication that discusses the technical side of music—a must for anyone interested in live or studio sound engineering); and *Sound Studio/Production Techniques* (Tab Books, ISBN 0-8306-3250-6), a comprehensive, technical look at the various components of sound—from the electrical properties to microphones, from frequencies to MIDI.

Sound reinforcement can be a high-tech and complex field. However, with an understanding of the basics, you can do a fine job. Good live sound engineering will enhance a performance—and the opposite is also true. If the sound stinks, the musician can be the best in the world and no one will know it. The moral of the story is, be very careful if you've taken on the responsibility of being on the sound crew.

Special thanks to Beth Johnson and Karen Kane for technical assistance and editorial suggestions. •

**SUPPORT
WOMEN'S FESTIVALS**

SILENT PRE-FEST *from 37*

her feet, waving her hands and signing 'wonderful' to me. I have never forgotten that afternoon. When I was considering the intensive, I knew I wanted the hearing students to feel supported in that way.

"Assuming that I would need two teachers, I also thought of Susan Jackson, whom I'd met the year before at the East Coast Lesbians' Festival. I had known of Susan from her reputation in the Deaf community as a skilled actor, and had heard from others of her teaching work. What had impressed me most was her warmth and humor, and I knew how valuable these qualities are to struggling ASL students trying to overcome their own awkwardness and embarrassment as they start to sign."

When approached about being teachers at the Silent Pre-Fest, both Eileen Forestal and Susan Jackson agreed.

Eileen has been involved with interpreter training for seventeen years, and is currently the coordinator of ASL Studies and the Interpreter for the Deaf Program at Union County College in New Jersey. In addition to teaching at the ASL Intensive, she has been Deaf liaison at the Michigan festival, working with interpreters and helping to set up workshops, group discussions, and so forth. She's attended Campfest and NEWMR in addition to ECLF.

Susan, who was born to Deaf parents and whose native language is ASL, has gained national (and international) recognition as an actor with The National Theatre of the Deaf and The Little Theatre of the Deaf. Women's music fans may have seen her at the Michigan festival (performing this year on the Acoustic Stage with Nathie Marbury, emceed by Ramona Galindez), Campfest, ECLF, and SisterFire. She is currently traveling with her one-woman show.

Eileen says she's been trying to encourage Deaf women to go to festivals. "More and more Deaf women are going now," she says. "We have a Deaf cabin at Campfest, and a lot of interpreters. SJ and I encouraged Deaf lesbians to come to ECLF, too. They would feel safe here, and we would set up a special area, workshops, and group discussions. Many of the lesbians here can sign—at least basic signs. It feels good; you know, in the straight world you don't have that. At festivals, many Deaf women feel a little confused, like there are too many people and not enough who know sign; they usually want to be sure that other Deaf lesbians will be at a festival before they go. More and more

Deaf women tend to go to Michigan now; when I went in '90, there were twenty-eight there, which was a lot. This year there were even more. At Campfest, there were fifteen this year and seventeen last year."

Deaf lesbian groups are contacted and encouraged to participate, and Eileen says when they attend, they can feel safe, enjoy themselves, and have a lot of fun. But scheduling conflicts can be a problem, and if a choice must be made, it will usually be to attend the Deaf event rather than the women's culture one. "If we're having the National Rainbow Society for the Deaf Conference, for example, they prefer to save their money to go to that," Eileen says. "That happened in the summer of '91, in Dallas. I think they had about 400 gay and lesbian Deaf people who went. It was the biggest number of Deaf lesbians that have met anywhere—I think about sixty. There are often lots of gay men, but more and more Deaf lesbians are getting involved now."

She says the Intensive at ECLF was a wonderful experience for her as a teacher. "Most of the participants felt, since this is a lesbian environment, that they were really safe," she says. "They found themselves completely immersed in it, and struggling. Their language was taken away from them. They had to learn a second language, but they were really supportive of each other. They seemed very enthusiastic, which impressed me. I've been involved with other immersion courses; people get into it, and they sign and enjoy it. But this felt different—there was a lot more acceptance, more understanding, and respect for each other than usual. In the other immersion courses, it's kind of an ego trip: 'Oh, I can sign, and I can do it better than you.' But that didn't happen here."

Eileen thinks future intensives could be improved by dividing the learners up into more levels, having more Deaf teachers and assistants, and by involving more Deaf lesbians. "And if the intensive happens right before a festival," says Eileen, "there should be some structured support for those who may feel confused and frustrated when their hearing friends arrive. It can be difficult to function in two cultures, with two languages."

The benefits for hearing lesbians learning sign language are obvious, but what's in it for Deaf women? Having to endure endless fumbling conversations as neophyte signers "try out" their skills on them at festivals? Having to watch the watering down of Deaf culture as more

continued on next page

hearing women rush to participate?

Not necessarily so, says Eileen. "I've made new friends, and that's really great. I'm excited about that, and the women who participated in the intensive all felt very united. When I came into the dining room and saw all the signing going on, it felt like it was my home. When we create that environment at a festival, I can come in, say hi, sit down, and just start signing. Another Deaf woman arrived at ECLF and told me that often when she gets to a festival, she feels very alone—it's really hard to find anyone to talk to. But she was able to walk right in here and find people. This is what needs to happen in order for Deaf women to want to come to festivals; if they know there are many women at the festival they can talk to and meet, they'll feel safe," she says.

Music is not a part of Deaf culture, of course, and so is not an element that would draw Deaf women to festivals, even if they're somewhat interested in the interpreters who work the stages. Deaf women generally stress that they'd be interested in more theater, storytelling, and dance at festivals. And, of course, Deaf performers on the bill are always of high interest.

Based on the success of this first ASL "Silent PreFest" Intensive, Marilyn, Eileen, and Susan are optimistic about future ones. "My goals for the event were simple," says Marilyn. "I wanted to provide a safe supportive space in a lesbian environment for motivated, committed lesbians to work together with dedicated lesbian teachers to learn as much as each one could about the language of the Deaf and the lesbians who use it. This was a pilot program, an experiment to see if the need

exists as I have perceived it. I would say from the overwhelming response to the program that the experiment was a success."

Marilyn has established the Women's Institute for American Sign Language Studies, which plans to provide similar programs throughout the country at the request of women in specific communities. Though much is still on the drawing board, Marilyn hopes to offer intensives before the West Coast Lesbians' Festival (late May), again before the East Coast Lesbians' Festival (early September), and before the new Hawaii Fest (the week before Thanksgiving weekend). She is also working on an intensive to be held in St. Augustine, Florida during the week semester break this January.

For further information, contact Marilyn Van Veersen, The Pagoda, 2854 Coastal Highway, St. Augustine, FL 32095. Thanks to Sara Wolfersberger for editorial assistance. •

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KATHY BELGE *from 51*

about. Not just their performance, but the whole interaction between artists and the lesbian audience."

As with many women, the primary thing that keeps Kathy coming back, doing work for an alternative industry that is seldom able to offer financial compensation for long hours of grueling work, is the friendships and relationships she's made in the festival community.

"The lesbian energy is very important to me," she says. "I proudly identify as a dyke, and I love seeing women affirm that from the stage. I like the way we work together, the ways we try to deal with conflict, and how everyone is so out. I would like to see a system where more women are able to make a living, though, not just the performers. And I would like techies to be paid—real money, not just tokens or festival passes for the fifteen-hour days we usually put in," she says.

Ultimately, women's music and culture are an integral part of who Kathy is. "When I'm not at a festival, I have the feeling that I was born to be a part of creating this lesbian culture," she says. •

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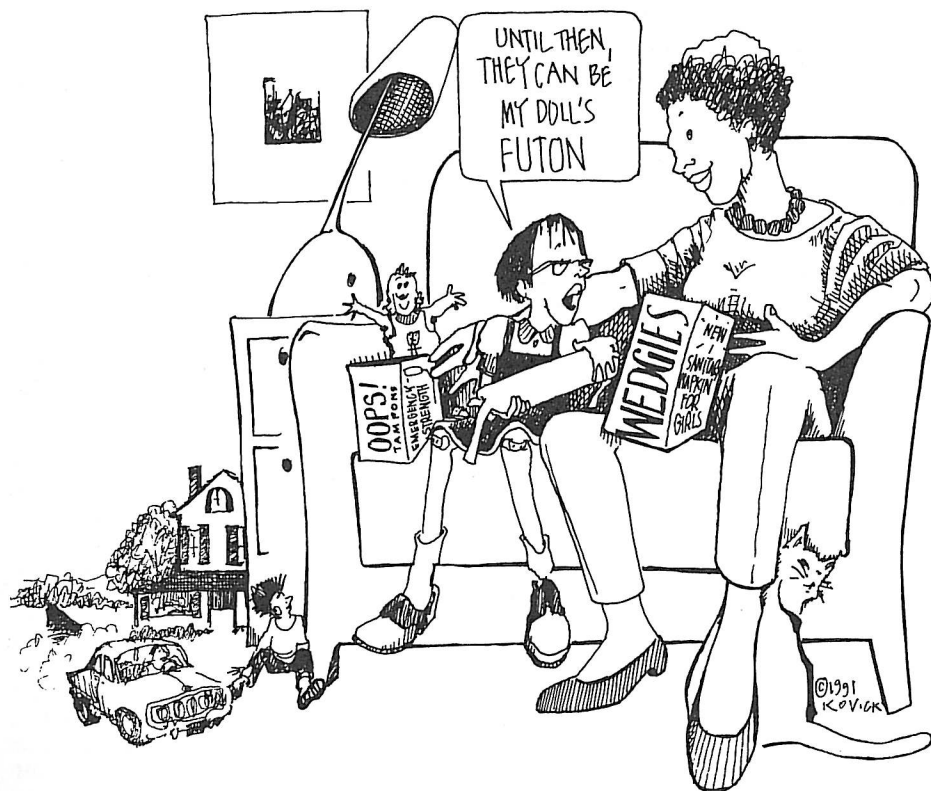
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BITCH: The Women's Rock Mag With Bite. c/o San Jose Face, #164, 478 W. Hamilton, Campbell, CA 95008. *Opposing, clashing viewpoints aired, from heavy metal head-bangers to New Age Wiccans. \$15/12 issues.*

BROADSHEET. 476 Mt. Eden Rd., Box 56-147, Auckland, New Zealand. Phone: 608-535. *New Zealand's feminist magazine. Ten 40-48 page issues per year—regular music section.*

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CAULDREN. PO Box 349, Culver City, CA 90232. (310) 633-2322. *Lesbian-identified publication seeking writers, artists, photographers. 4x/yr; \$13/yr; \$26/2 yrs.*

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.*

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OF A LIKE MIND. PO Box 6021, Madison, WI 53716. *A leading international network and newspaper of women's spirituality. Quarterly; \$13-33/yr, (sliding scale); \$3/sample.*

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WOMAN OF POWER. PO Box 2785, Orleans, MA 02653. (508) 240-7877. *'Woman of Power' can no longer accept unsolicited poetry and fiction. Issue #26: 'Language.' Deadline: March 1, 1993.*

RECORDINGS

BETTER THAN NORMAL, Sue Dunlop. PO Box 28069, Wellington 5, Australia 2040. *A controversial cassette including: "Hairy Legs" and "Tell The Boys."*

CLOSER TO HOME, Jamie Anderson. Tsunami Records, PO Box 42282, Tucson, AZ 85733. *Women's music with strength & humor. "Wedding Song," "Straight Girl Blues," and "Nothing."*

COMMITMENT TO HEALING, Ellen Goode. 125 E. Lake St. Suite 107, Bloomingdale, IL 60108. *Includes: "One Step Closer," and "Take Action."*

DARE TO DREAM, Jamie Fota and FotaSynthesis. PO Box 198001, Cincinnati, OH 45219. *Includes: "We've Become Herstory."*

DEAD BRANCHES MAKE A NOISE, Kathleen Yearwood. Box 11, Egremont, Alberta, Canada T0A 0Z0. *Includes: "Well Fed White People," and "Gynecology."*

DEAR LOVER, Seraiah Carol. Seraiah Carol Productions 5944 S. Princeton Chicago, IL 60621. *Hot new songs from this popular performer include: "I Want To."*

DO SOMETHING CRAZY! Linda Sheets. Hott Scheet Music PO Box 13607 Fort Wayne, IN 46865. *Includes: "Cherry Picking Blues," and "Busy Being Blue."*

EVERYDAY HEROES & HEROINES, Deidre McCalla. Olivia Records, 4400 Market St., Oakland, CA 94608. *Includes: "All Over the World," and "Sing Me To Sleep."*

FIRE AND LIES, Linda Smith. PO Box 957162, Hoffman Estates, IL 60194. *Includes: "Shades of Grey," and "I Can Feel You."*

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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HOME (REVISITED), Janice Giteck, New Albion Records, 584 Castro St. #515, San Francisco, CA 94114. *Modern classical new music. Proceeds will benefit the Names Project.*

I WISH YOU A WORLD, Kristin Lems. Carolsdatter Productions, 221C Dodge Ave., Evanston, IL 60202. *A dozen spirited, provocative new songs, including: "You Can't Beat A Woman."*

IT'S A MIRACLE, Alice Di Micele. Box 281, Williams, OR 97544. *Heartfelt songs about today's politics and environment.*

LEAVE A LITTLE LIGHT BEHIND, Jess Hawk Oakenstar. Hallows Records, 1826 East Willetta, Phoenix, AZ 85006. *Upbeat country rock to moving ballads. Includes: "Dear Gertrude Stein."*

LOOK TO THE LEFT, Anne Feeney. 202 Dewey St. Pittsburgh, PA 15218. *Songs to change the world, including: "Ain't I A Woman?"*

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MY BREASTS ARE OUT OF CONTROL, Dos Fallopia. Tounginchi Productions, 1202 East Pike #712, Seattle, WA 98122. *Ten hilarious songs including: "Mud: The Sister Song."*

NEXT SWEET TIME, Cathy Winter. 1017 Chrysler Ave., Schenectady, NY 12303. *Includes: "Deep Waters" and "Electrician Blues."*

OLD NEW BORROWED BLUE, Heather Bishop. Mother of Pearl Records, Inc. Woodmore, Manitoba, Canada R0A 2M0. *A selection from earlier recordings, plus 5 new songs.*

RETURNING THE MUSE TO MUSIC, Musica Femina. PO Box 15121, Portland, OR 97215.

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ROCKER, Helen Hooke. PO Box 888, Hoboken, NJ 07030. Includes: "Your Body's A Rocket," and "Better Than Ever."

SINCLAIR—READY OR NOT. Quartz Apple Music, PO Box 2104, Costa Mesa, CA. 92628 (714) 722-6023. A collection of her songs performed for political rallies and fundraisers concerned with women's issues of domestic violence, peace, relationships, and empowerment.

SOMEONE SENT AN ANGEL, Ellyn Fleming and Lisa Tee. EF Records, PO Box 117, Northbridge, MA 01534. Includes: "Candlelight and Me."

STRETCH, BREATHE & 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.

THE BEACH, JJ Strong and Miriam Mackie. 39 Landseer Road, London, England N19 4JU. Soulful original songs covering the spectrum of women's experience.

THERE FOR DREAMIN', Chris Collier. 5595 Reilly-Millville Road, Oxford, OH 45056. Includes: "Just For The Moment" and "Something To Do With You."

WIMMIN ON THE EDGE. 1235 Union St., Clearwater, FL 34615. Folk-rock with a twist. Includes: "The Mother."

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.

BOOKS

A SAFE PLACE TO SLEEP by Jennifer L. Jordan. Our Power Press, PO Box 6680, Denver, CO 80206. (303) 733-0041. Detective Kristin Ashe is hired by activist Destiny Greaves to reconstruct her childhood.

A TIGER'S HEART by Lauren Wright Douglas. Naiad Press, PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. From the Lambda award-winning author of 'Ninth Life.'

ANCIENT WAYS: RECLAIMING PAGAN TRADITIONS by Pauline Campanelli. Llewellyn Publications, St. Paul, MN 55164. A joyous guide to celebrating the seasons.

HOT CHICKEN WINGS by Jyl Lynn Felman. Aunt Lute Books, PO Box 410687, San Francisco, CA 94141. A provocative first collection of witty short fiction.

INTRODUCING AMANDA VALENTINE by Rose Beecham. Naiad Press, PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. This tough and unconventional cop solves a series of grisly murders.

LESBIAN/WOMAN, by Del Martin/Phyllis Lyon. Volcano Press, PO Box 270, Volcano, CA 95689-0270. The ground-breaking classic of the '70s is reprinted in celebration of its twentieth year anniversary; updated to include recent developments important to lesbians, including women's music.

LOSS OF THE GROUND-NOTE edited by Helen

Vozenilek. Clothespin Fever Press, 5529 N. Figueroa, Los Angeles, CA 90042. Women's writings about the loss of their mothers.

MORTON RIVER VALLEY by Lee Lynch. Naiad Press, PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. Paris Collins, vagabond dyke, gets embroiled in small town controversies.

MURDER IS GERMANE by Karen Saum. Naiad Press, PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. A 52-year-old ex-nun must unravel this murder mystery.

ON LILL STREET by Lynn Kanter. Third Side Press, 2250 W. Farragut, Chicago, IL 60625. Set in 1976, Margaret finds herself immersed in love and politics.

PAPERBACK ROMANCE by Karin Kallmaker. Naiad Press, PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. A romantic intrigue: Alison loves Carolyn, who loves the mysterious Nick.

RECLAIMING WOMAN'S VOICE by Lesley Shore, Ph.D. Llewellyn Publications, St. Paul, MN 55164. Women's search for connection and wholeness with people and nature.

SHE'S A REBEL: The History of Women in Rock & Roll by Gillian G. Gaar. Seal Press, 3131 Western Ave. #410, Seattle, WA 98121. Interviews, facts, and personal anecdotes from women in the music industry.

SISTER MOON LODGE: The Power and Mystery of Menstruation by Kisma K. Stepanich. Llewellyn Publications, St. Paul, MN 55164. An empowering new look at the ancient mystery of womanhood.

THAT'S MS. BULLDYKE TO YOU CHARLIE! Cartoons by Jane Caminos. Madwoman Press, PO Box 690, Northboro, MA 01532. Captured moments of lesbian life in the city.

THE POETRY OF SEX edited by Tee Corinne. Banned Books, Austin, TX 78710. Poems of sexual pleasure, humor, politics, fantasy, and more.

UNCERTAIN COMPANIONS by Robbi Sommers. Naiad Press, PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. New and more provocative adventures from the author of 'Pleasures.'

WEENIE-TOONS! edited by Roz Warren. Laugh Lines Press, Box 259, Bala Cynwyd, PA 19004. Women cartoonists mock cocks.

WOMEN'S GLIB edited by Rosalind Warren. Crossing Press, PO Box 1048, Freedom, CA 95019. An hilarious and irreverent collection of feminist cartoons, stories, and verse.

WOMEN'S GLIBBER: State-of-the-Art Women's Humor edited by Roz Warren. Crossing Press, PO Box 1048, Freedom, CA 95019. The sequel to the highly praised 'Women's Glib.'

WOMEN'S MYSTERIES: Toward a Poetics of Gender by Christine Downing. Crossroad, 370 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10017. Explores the ways humans imagine sexual difference.

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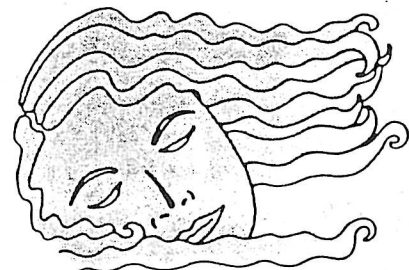
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SOUNDSHEET

Produced by Joy Rosenblatt



Marcy J. Hochberg

MELANIE DEMORE

SHARE MY SONG

WRITTEN BY: Melanie DeMore

PERFORMED BY: Melanie DeMore (lead vocal, twelve-string guitar), Jean Millington (bass, backup vocals), June Millington, Rashida Oji, Lynn Vidal, Melanie DeMore (backup vocals), Jackeline Rago (percussion), Mary Watkins (synthesizer).

FROM: *Share My Song*

Redwood Records
P.O. Box 10408, Oakland, CA 94610
(510) 835-1445.

"Share My Song" is the title cut from Melanie DeMore's second recording, produced by June Millington at IMA Cultural Center/Studio Retreat in Bodega, California and released on Redwood Records. The song reflects the pure joy of singing, and celebrates the power of many voices to facilitate change. The album reflects Melanie's deep connection to the world community and the infinite power of the human voice. She believes that many of us have been silenced for too long and it's time to rise up and be heard.

FEEL FREE TO COPY THESE TUNES ONTO CASSETTE TAPE WITH SONGS FROM PREVIOUS SOUNDSHEETS



CATHY WINTER



KIM WILCOX



MARY WATKINS

Chris Convector

Irene Young



ANNE SEALE

BODY HAIR

WRITTEN BY: Anne Seale

PERFORMED BY: Anne Seale (vocals), Sasha Hedley (piano), marz (guitar, percussion).

FROM: *Sex For Breakfast*

Anne Seale c/o Wildwater Records
Box 56, Webster, NY 14580-0056
(716) 671-3294

The joy of having body hair is only one of the lesbian feel-good songs on Anne Seale's debut album *Sex for Breakfast*. She also addresses the topics of a lover who snores, telephone sex, women's bookstores, and, especially for separatists, a wish to be buried in a lesbian-only cemetery. Anne Seale and accompanist Sasha Hedley have been touring widely since performing at the NLC in April '91, appearing at music festivals (ECLF, Campfest, SWMCF, Rhythmfest), the Women's Motorcycle Festival, and on other stages around the country. In their catalog, Ladyslipper, Inc. says about *Sex For Breakfast*, "What an odd, different sort of a tape!" Anne Seale accepts these labels proudly.

MATERIAL IS RECORDED ON BOTH SIDES IN STEREO. DO NOT BEND THE SOUNDSHEET.

continued on inside back cover

ANNE/SASHA from page 47

wonderful merchants, and have certainly enjoyed hanging out with them," says Sasha.

"It's also been a treat to meet the other performers. I've learned a lot," Anne adds.

Sasha describes ECLF as one of the best festivals they've been to so far. She thought the audience there was "incredibly receptive," and liked how vocal the women were.

"That's true," Anne agrees, "and I got my first taste of lesbian separatism. I attended a gathering at their tent and felt so much at home. When I relocate south—my blood is thinning as we speak—I may investigate some women's communities. We've been invited to sing at the Pagoda in Florida this winter, and I can't wait!"

The material Anne writes is satirical in nature. She sometimes says early in her set, "This show may not be suitable for all family members—it's suitable for one family member in ten." Listener response has run the gamut from cult-status following (with Sasha being admired at ECLF as a "bitchin' babe") to criticism that the songs

are insensitive or even offensive.

"It certainly is not my intention to offend anyone," says Anne. "For instance, the song 'Waiting for Corinna to Come' has been accused of being offensive to pre-orgasmic women. Corinna, however, was *not* pre-orgasmic, as evidenced by the line 'slow and smooth and easy is her style.' She simply loved the sex act so much that she asked me to prolong it. It's a true story."

"And what about that gay bar in Ohio?" prompts Sasha.

"The bartender told us after the performance that there was a woman who was terribly offended because I used a certain word in my act."

"The word was *lesbian*."

"And the same song—'Your Women's Bookstore'—was called 'an anthem for women who don't like to go to bars' by one columnist, then accused of 'glorifying pickups' by another."

"It's confusing," says Sasha.

"And even amusing. I was asked not to do the song 'Leather' on a southern stage, because of a local problem with S/M, although the song's not about S/M.

Conversely, I was advised I might not want to sing 'The Nobody Loves Me Blues' at the Motorcycle Festival because of a line that infers that I might be anti 'discipline.'"

"Are you?"

"I'm not *anti* anything. I'm *pro*-humor. I think it's important for us to be able to laugh, especially at ourselves," says Anne. "Many of us are serious and grim because of all we've seen and experienced. I'm of the school that believes we create our tomorrows with our thoughts today. If we have grim, critical thoughts, we insure a grim, critical future. Humor and laughter break that cycle."

Sasha shares Anne's philosophy on this point, though they're not always in agreement.

"Well, Sasha, we've worked with each other for quite a while now. And like all who work closely together, we do have our differences, our own opinions about how things should be done," Anne says.

"We have different attitudes about things, but we get the job done," Sasha nods.

"And we still like each other," they conclude. •

THAT GIRL

WRITTEN BY: Kim Wilcox

PERFORMED BY: Kim Wilcox (vocals, rhythm guitar, drums, bass), Ellen Rogowski (lead guitar).

FROM: *True Stories*

Kim Wilcox

P.O. Box 635, Charlotte MI 48813

(517) 543-3995

With the exception of one song by Andrew Lloyd Webber, Kim Wilcox wrote the music and lyrics to all of the songs on *True Stories* (in addition to playing the instruments and doing all of the backup vocals). "That Girl" is a song that reflects the shallowness of some women. It's a song about a woman pursuing another woman at a bar; she's teased and then rejected. It asks the question "Are you a tease?" In some cases, what you ask for is exactly what you get. And so it goes.

STRONG HEARTS

WRITTEN BY: Cathy Winter

PERFORMED BY: Cathy Winter (vocals, guitar), Tony Markellis (fretless electric bass), Adenola Knowles (conga).

FROM: *Next Sweet Time*

Season Four Productions

1017 Chrisler Ave.,

Schenectady, NY 12303-1217

(518) 377-6312

Cathy Winter's voice has been woven into the fabric of women's music since 1976 when she performed at the National Women's Music Festival, introducing "Long Time Friends," now a classic at Girl Scout camps across the U.S. and

Canada. She wrote "Strong Hearts" the day she heard the news of fourteen women murdered at a Montreal university in 1989. Once again, the press referred to their deaths as an "isolated incident." We all wish that were really true, that violence against women was a rare and unusual event instead of a reality we deal with everywhere we go. *Next Sweet Time* is her new album on the Flying Fish label.

BY AND BY

WRITTEN/PERFORMED BY: Mary Watkins

FROM: *The Soul Knows*

Wenefil, 5337 College Ave. #425

Oakland, CA 94618.

(408) 426-4204

"When I was a kid, 'By And By' was one of those songs the old folks would pull out of the hat on a special Sunday morning as an expression of joy and celebration," says Mary Watkins. "This was always the moment I lived for! It would seem that all that was wrong with the world would suddenly become right!! Many times since then, to make things right, I have turned to songs like 'By And By' and allowed them to soothe and heal me. I honestly wonder what life would have been like without some of these gospel/hymns. Using these songs, and in particular 'By And By,' my mother sang her way through many a crisis when I was growing up. I rarely ever sang them—in fact I only know fragments of the words to most of them—but the music itself, in its vitality, simplicity, and purity, has never failed to comfort me, to assure me that I am loved, am forgiven, or to inspire a great love within me for all that is. I'm extremely grateful to have grown up with this music."

MELANIE DEMORE from 17

California, Melanie's new album pulls out all the stops, showcasing her deep, textured voice and some superior musical support, including June and Jean Millington, Mary Watkins, Jackeline Rago (from Altazor), Erika Luckett (who wrote the song "Boys in the Square"), India Cooke, Lynn Vidal, Rashida Oji, and Ann Hackler.

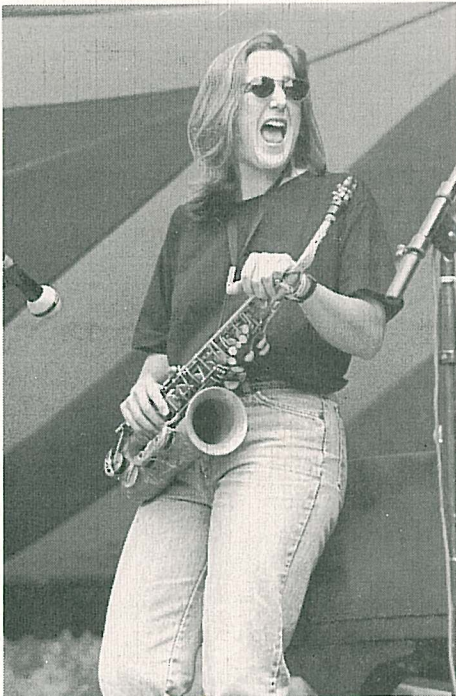
The title cut, "Share My Song" [on the soundsheet in this issue of *HOT WIRE*], is the perfect opening piece. It invites listeners to stand up and take part in the joy of living in this world. "Caught Between Two Hearts" (co-written with Mary Watkins) is a beautiful ballad that captures the confusion that love can bring. One of the most beautiful pieces is "Lady of Peace," which Melanie wrote for her mother. Ann Hackler provides a mournful yet appropriate accompaniment on the cello.

All in all, *Share My Song* is one of the most eagerly-awaited albums of the year, and the future looks bright for Melanie. As an artist, she feels responsible for her audience and wants to pull people out of themselves, out of the problems that they face everyday so that they can dust themselves off and keep going.

By getting people to remember and cherish themselves, Melanie DeMore is a much needed tonic in an otherwise crazy world. •



Toni Armstrong Jr.



Toni Armstrong Jr.



Toni Armstrong Jr.

Women's music festivals are where tradition and innovation meet in feminist culture. Clockwise from top: Margie Adam, Pam Hall, and Melanie DeMore schmoozed at ECLF...Dance Brigade brought their acclaimed *Goodbye, Columbus* show to Michigan; the production spanned 500 years of history from the perspective of women and involved a wide range of performers, including Rashida Oji, Lakota Harden, and Doralynn Folsé...Carol Chaikin heated up the Michigan Day Stage, with her own quintet and as a guest artist on the sets of other performers.