

# HOT WIRE

THE JOURNAL OF WOMEN'S MUSIC AND CULTURE

## FESTIVALS

WEST COAST MUSIC & COMEDY  
1990 MICHIGAN JOURNAL  
THE NEW RHYTHM FEST

FERRON'S REST AND RETURN

PORTLAND WOMEN'S THEATRE CO.

ZEINABU IRENE DAVIS: FILMMAKING

CD, CASSETTE, AND LP FORMATS

NINETEEN RIGHTS FOR LESBIAN  
FEMINIST ACTIVISTS

THE ART OF LAURA IRENE WAYNE

CONFESSIONS OF A CLASSICAL  
DYKE BY LEAH ZICARI

REEL WORLD STRING BAND

TWO NICE GIRLS

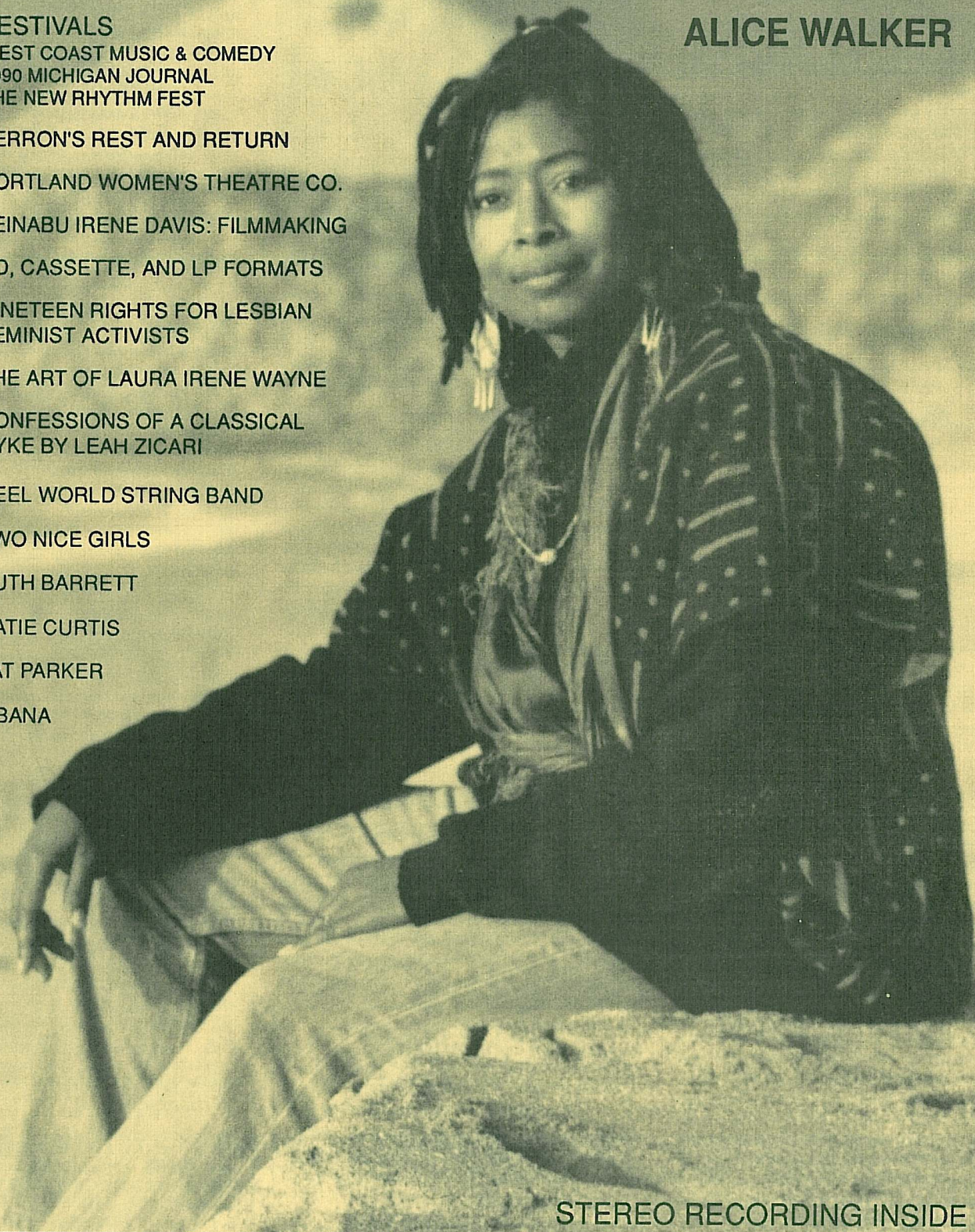
RUTH BARRETT

CATIE CURTIS

PAT PARKER

LIBANA

## ALICE WALKER



Susan Wilson

STEREO RECORDING INSIDE

VOLUME 7, NUMBER 1

JANUARY 1991

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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, literature, and film/video. We strongly believe in the power of the arts to affect social change, and enjoy documenting the combination of "creativity" and "politics/philosophy." We are committed to covering female artists and women's groups who prioritize feminist and/or lesbian content and ideals in their creative products and events. We enjoy helping to both create and strengthen the international community of those who love the creativity of women.

## SPELL CHECK

For those of you who have asked about *HOT WIRE*'s policy re the spelling of the words "woman" and "women"...We spell it the traditional way as a matter of style. However, we respect the preferences of our writers, and that's why you'll see these words spelled several different ways, even within one issue.

## AND FROM THE MECHANICAL SPELL CHECK DEPARTMENT

I find it amusing that some of our most commonly used words are kicked back by our computer's spell-checker as potentially wrong. These include lesbian, homophobia, dyke, womyn/wimmin/womin/womon, antiracism, antiracist, fundraiser, and dreadlocks.

## COMPLAINTS AND QUESTIONS...

...are best addressed to Deb & Ginny, our office managers. Writing directly to them will get you better results than calling and leaving a message—irate or otherwise—on our answering machine.

## IF YOU'VE MOVED...

...in the last four months, or if you will be moving within the next four months, *please* tell us immediately. Magazines mailed to wrong addresses are usually thrown away by the post office, *not forwarded to you, and not returned to us.* We absolutely cannot afford to replace magazines that are lost this way, and in every issue we print a notice to this effect. It is *very frustrating* to receive mail or phone calls saying, "I paid for a subscription but haven't gotten my last two issues. Are you still publishing? Send immediately. By the way, I moved..."



Sara Wolfersberger

'HOT WIRE' editor Toni Jr. urges the Michigan festival crowd to sing the L word. (Pictured here last summer with Kay Gardner and Alix Dobkin, playing together as the Lavender Jane band.)

## READERS' CHOICE AWARDS

It's time again for the annual *HOT WIRE* Readers' Choice Awards nominations. Each year awards are given to recognize women for outstanding achievements/contributions in the area of women's music and culture. The awards are determined solely on the basis of write-in nominations and votes—the *readers* do the nominating and selecting, not the magazine staff. It is time now for readers to send up to fifty words nominating women in two categories: individual and organization. These must be received by February 20 for inclusion in the May issue. Send to *HOT WIRE* Readers' Choice Awards, 5210 N. Wayne, Chicago, IL 60640.

## TAPING SONGS FROM THE SOUNDSHEET

We get inquiries regularly regarding whether or not women can make copies of the songs from the soundsheets onto cassette tapes for their own listening pleasure (usually for use at parties or in the car). This is fine—as long as you are not selling these tapes for profit. (Sale of this material would be an infringement of

## ON THE COVER

Alice Walker's many books of published works include poetry, short stories, essays, novels, and children's books. Her Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *The Color Purple* was made into a major motion picture starring Whoopi Goldberg.

copyright—and would be a direct ripoff of the artists.) The point of having music on the soundsheet is to *promote* the songs, and with LP turntables being gradually but definitely replaced by CD players and tape players, we understand the desire to have the songs on the convenient cassette format. So enjoy. (And by the way, an historical note: Ruth Dworin of Toronto is the woman who originally suggested we do soundsheets, back in 1985. So when you next listen to your little black record, think appreciative thoughts of her.)

## AND SPEAKING OF TAPES...

I have started to work out regularly in the weight room at the school where I am employed. We always have music playing, so I made a tape and donated it. It includes fast-tempo selections from mainstream women artists such as Bonnie Raitt, Aretha, Martha & The Vandellas, Gloria Estefan, Janet Jackson, Alicia Bridges, Sister Sledge, and Donna Summer—plus cuts from our pals Melissa Etheridge (several songs), k.d. lang ("Bop-alena" and "Big Big Love"), Teresa Trull ("Rosalie" and "A Step Away"), DEUCE ("Partly Sonny"), Ferron ("Misty Mountain"), Linda Tillery ("Special Kind of Love"), Deidre McCalla ("All Day Always"), Casselberry-DuPrée ("Positive Vibration"), Sherry Shute ("No Crime"), Helen Hooke ("Sex Roulette"), Meg and Cris at Carnegie ("Anniversary" and "Come Hell or High Water"), plus Meg Christian's "Gym II." It's great fun to watch these selections become "hit songs" with the teachers and students who hum along as they work out, and I love hearing the familiar strains of these songs floating in the hallways as I walk by. Plus, I love knowing that some of the girls who are hearing this music now will encounter it again later in life, and that they will always remember they heard it first in their high school.

I strongly urge women who are making similar anthology tapes—for work-out music, for dance party music, etc.—to *seriously put effort into including women's music.* I am often surprised (unpleasantly) to notice women's music by its absence. For example, tapes are frequently played as ambience music before a women's music concert starts—and these tapes feature good mainstream women but not "our own." Each of us can take responsibility for doing something about that! After fifteen years, there's *plenty* to choose from, in just about every style of music. ●

Toni Armstrong Jr.  
Publisher/Managing Editor



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# HOT WIRE: THE JOURNAL OF WOMEN'S MUSIC & CULTURE

VOLUME 7, NUMBER 1, JANUARY 1991

## FEATURES

- 2 Alice Walker interviewed by Toni Armstrong Jr.
- 18 Woman With a Mission: Zeinabu irene Davis on Filmmaking
- 20 Womyn Work by Laura Irene Wayne
- 22 Nineteen Rights For Lesbian Feminist Activists by Terri Jewell
- 24 Ferron Returns to Women's Music as told to Laura Post
- 28 Confessions of a Classical Dyke by Leah Zicari
- 40 The Double Bill: fantasies compiled by Toni Armstrong Jr.  
featuring Karen Williams, Julie Homi, Jewelle Gomez, Suede, Audre Lorde, Terri Jewell, Alix Dobkin and Lee Lynch
- 44 Libana: Celebrating Women's World Music by M.Rounds
- 46 The Reel World String Band by Bev Futrell & Karen Jones

## 1990 FESTIVALS

- 30 Report From the West Coast Women's Music and Comedy Festival by Dell Richards
- 32 1990 Festival Photos
- 34 1990 Michigan Journal by Liza Cowan
- 38 A New Attitude, A New Festival: Rhythm Fest by M.J. Hochberg
- 48 Poetry at Women's Music Festivals by Pat Parker

## DEPARTMENTS

- 6 Hotline by Toni Armstrong Jr. and Annie Lee
- 10 Soapbox Letters from Readers
- 11 Inquiring WimMinds Want to Know  
Irene Young, Joy Julks, Katherine V. Forrest
- 12 Opening Night by Claudia Allen  
"The Portland Women's Theatre Company"
- 14 The Audio Angle by Dakota  
"Final Vinyl: Say Goodbye"
- 16 On Stage and Off "How to Sell Your Music and Still Face Yourself in the Morning" (Catie Curtis), plus "Two Nice Girls" (Noelle Hanrahan)
- 50 Re:Inking "The Making of Two Books: *Take Me to the Underground* (Renee Hansen), and *Silverleaf's Choice: An Anthology of Lesbian Humor* (Ann E. Larson)"
- 52 Freestyle by Kay Gardner  
"Are White Spiritual Feminists Exploiting Native American Spirituality?"
- 54 Mulling It Over by Robin Fre  
"Ruth Barrett: Tasting of Mysteries"
- 58 'Dykes to Watch Out For' cartoons by Alison Bechdel
- 60 Classified Ads
- 64 Soundsheets by Joy Rosenblatt "Inside Track" Ferron; "I, Black Woman" Faith Nolan; "Kadistu" Ruth Barrett; "Naomi" Alice Di Micele; "Children's Song (Wouldn't That Be Fun?)" Leah Zicari



*Spirit Helper for Modern Times*

# ALICE WALKER

Interviewed by Toni Armstrong Jr.

Alice Walker was born in Eatonton, Georgia. She attended Spelman College in Atlanta, and received a B.A. degree from Sarah Lawrence College in 1965.

She is the author of the novel *'The Color Purple,'* for which she won the Pulitzer Prize and the American Book Award in 1983, the same year she published *'In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose.'* In 1984 came her fourth volume of poetry, *'Horses Make a Landscape Look More Beautiful.'*

*'The Color Purple'* was the basis of a major motion picture in 1985, and three other works—*"The Diary of an African Nun," "Finding the Green Stone,"* and *"How Did I Get Away With Killing the Biggest Lawyer in the State? It Was Easy"*—have also been the basis of films.

Alice Walker's other published works include two collections of short stories [*'In Love and Trouble'* and *'You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down'*]; three earlier volumes of poetry [*'Once,' 'Revolutionary Petunias,'* and *'Goodnight Willie Lee, I'll See You in the Morning'*]; two previous novels [*'The Third Life of Grange Copeland'* and *'Meridian'*]; and a biography of Langston Hughes written for children. She has also edited a Zora Neale Hurston reader [*'I Love Myself When I Am Laughing, and Then Again When I Am Looking Mean and Impressive'*]. In 1988 she published a second children's book [*'To Hell With Dying'*] and a second book of essays [*'Living by the Word'*]. Her latest novel, *'The Temple of My Familiar'*—which she calls "a romance of the last 500,000 years"—was published in May of 1989 by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. Her works have been translated into twenty-two languages, including Chinese, Russian, Finnish, Spanish, French, Hebrew, and Serbo-Croatian.

She started her own publishing company, Wild Trees Press, in 1984.

**HOT WIRE: WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH WILD TREES PRESS?**

**ALICE WALKER:** We've stopped. It was founded in 1984, and I was publisher



Alice Walker: "On my desk there is a picture of me when I was six—dauntless eyes, springy hair, optimistic satin bow and all—and I look at it often; I realize I am always trying to keep faith with the child I was." [From *"Looking to the Side, and Back"*]



"I think I'm part of so many communities because I feel connected to so much of life."

and Robert Allen was business manager. Belvie Rooks was publicist. It was basically about having something engrossing to do in the country when Robert and I were not working on our various books and articles. And to publish really wonderful books by other people. It was sort of like a cottage industry; we published six books by six great people, including launching the press with California Cooper's *A Piece of Mine*. But after the sixth one—a fabulous book by a Balinese painter that we met in Bali—it became too much. We became too successful. We didn't really want to turn it over to other people because it was our vision. We stopped in 1988.

**WHAT HAPPENED TO THE WORK OF THOSE WRITERS?**

Well, California Cooper went on to St. Martin's Press and Septima Clark's book was picked up by Africa World Press. The Balinese painter's book, we just gave him all the copies and sent them to him in Bali, and he just sells them out of his gallery. I think there are two that nobody has offered to buy yet, but the rest are continuing.

**DO YOU MISS IT?**

No, not at all. It was a big strain because I had to read hundreds of manuscripts in addition to my usual flood of stuff. And it was ruining my eyes.

**PUBLISHING ALWAYS SEEMS LIKE SUCH A GREAT IDEA, AND THEN THERE'S ALWAYS SO MUCH MORE THAN YOU ANTICIPATE. I KNOW WHEN WE STARTED HOT WIRE IT WAS THAT SAME THING: "WELL, WE'LL JUST DO THIS. IT WILL BE GREAT." AND THEN ALL OF A SUDDEN IT TAKES OVER YOUR LIFE.**

But it is great. What I love about our six books is that they are as perfect as we could make them—in every way. Each writer had everything to say about the jackets, the design, and the illustrations.

Robert Allen





Gathering of great minds, winter 1977. From left: (standing) Verta Mae Grosvenor, Alice Walker, Lori Sharpe, Bessie Smith [in photo], Toni Morrison, June Jordan; (seated) Nana Maynard, Ntozake Shangé, Audrey Edwards.

## WOMANIST

1. From *womanish*. (Opp. of "girlish," i.e., frivolous, irresponsible, not serious.) A black feminist or feminist of color. From the black folk expression of mothers to female children, "You acting womanish," i.e., like a woman. Usually referring to outrageous, audacious, courageous, or *willful* behavior. Wanting to know more and in greater depth than is considered "good" for one. Interested in grown-up doings. Acting grown up. Being grown up. Interchangeable with another black folk expression: "You trying to be grown." Responsible. In charge. *Serious*. 2. Also: A woman who loves other women, sexually and/or nonsexually. Appreciates and prefers women's culture, women's emotional flexibility (values tears as natural counter-balance of laughter), and women's strength. Sometimes loves individual men, sexually and/or nonsexually. Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male *and* female. Not a separatist, except periodically, for health. Traditionally universalist, as in: "Mama, why are we brown, pink, and yellow, and our cousins are white, beige, and black?" Answer: "Well, you know the colored race is just like a flower garden, with every color flower represented." Traditionally capable, as in: "Mama, I'm walking to Canada and I'm taking you and a bunch of other slaves with me." Reply: "It wouldn't be the first time." 3. Loves music. Loves dance. Loves the moon. *Loves* the Spirit. Loves love and food and roundness. Loves struggle. *Loves* the Folk. Loves herself. *Regardless*. 4. Womanist is to feminist as purple to lavender.

—From *'In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose'*  
by Alice Walker (1983, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich)

So each book was a partnership and it was beautiful. It felt really good.

**YOUR DEFINITION OF "WOMANIST"—ANYTHING YOU WOULD CHANGE OR ADD, OR ARE YOU STILL TOTALLY SATISFIED WITH IT?**

I feel pretty good about it the way it is. I don't think there's anything I would add, no. The point of it was to have a word that non-lesbians and lesbians could use and understand that they were equally women, equally valid, and that the basis of their self-respect was their own self-love. Rather than having a word that immediately put some people in the position of defending whatever.

**HAVE YOU FOUND THAT IT'S GETTING INTO COMMON USAGE?**

Yes, people use it all the time. Interestingly enough it's used in spirituality and religious explorations, which pleases me very much because so much of my work is about spirituality and religion. And that's of course an aspect that the mainstream doesn't recognize, and if it did recognize wouldn't know what to do with it.

**WHEN YOU WRITE ABOUT SPIRITUAL THINGS, DO YOU DO MUCH REWRITING OR DOES IT PRETTY MUCH FLOW?**

All of my work happens before I start to write, or most of it. I really am a great believer in waiting for it to compose itself. And then writing it as it is already composed. Some of my more frustrating times occur as I'm writing. I may come up with half of something and not know what the end is, and often because I have started too soon, I never know what the end is.

**FOR EXAMPLE...?**

Well, this is a very strange example because something actually did come out of it, and to most people it would appear to be a whole thing, but to me it is a half thing. One of my stories is called "Laurel" [from *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down*]. I wrote this story because it was very important to me to acknowledge and validate in writing some of the really intense emotional and sexual relationships between Black women and white men who worked together in the civil rights movement in Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia in the '60s. So I sat down and I wrote this story based on this very passionate relationship. Part of it's



about this young white man who came down to work in the civil rights movement and he was run off the road by the white racist Klan or whatever they were. He was almost killed, and to this day if he's still alive he can hardly walk or talk. So I wrote this story about that experience and going to see him after he was in the hospital. It's a story, and it's a complete story—but what I understood much later is that it's just, for me, the starting point of a much longer story. I mean, it was really a novel rather than a short story, and if I had had patience I would have understood that.

#### **DO YOU THINK YOU'LL DO MORE WITH IT EVENTUALLY?**

No, it's done. But that was one of those times when it was so painful and so scary and so risky...I felt that if I didn't write it then, I wouldn't do it at all.

#### **HOW DO YOU FEEL YOUR WRITING HAS CHANGED OVER TIME? HAS BEING FAMOUS HAD AN IMPACT ON EITHER YOUR WRITING OR YOUR CREATIVITY?**

Well, I find myself overwhelmed by the things that come to me from other people. They want me to read things, come and speak, join marches, endorse this and that. And it's a very great struggle not to be inundated with other people's needs. It's something that I'm learning to do very well, but it takes its toll. Even though I have an assistant [Joan Miura] who's wonderful and really fights to make sure I have time and space to create, it's still very difficult. And I think that is the biggest problem that has come with my degree of notoriety.

#### **CONTINUALLY BEING IN DEMAND... HOW DO YOU DECIDE?**

The best thing for me is that I have a kind of natural cycle where I work and work and I do things for other people (and for myself, of course)—I go here, and I speak there, and I protest here—and then I just get exhausted. Then I withdraw, and I've learned when I start feeling better and stronger after being depleted not to come back out so soon. Instead I stay and spend time on myself, to do my own work. That really helps. It's about the best I can do so far.

#### **STAY HOME A LOT, READ, WRITE, THINGS LIKE THAT?**

Right. And I want to do more of

that, because I think that although I may be useful in these other areas, it is really in my writing and in my thinking that I can be *most* useful, and above all feel myself more centered and in my real being.

#### **YOU END UP PRETTY MUCH IN CYCLES THEN—REAL BUSY, THEN YOU'RE A HERMIT FOR A WHILE?**

Yes. And those hermit periods are really great. They're *both* great in a way, but I think the hermit side of me is the more "me" me.

#### **WHAT DO YOU FIND THE MOST REJUVENATING THESE DAYS?**

Actually, I go to a therapist. I've been having some knotty knots that I need some help with, and I've been going to see this really wise woman. I think that has been the most rejuvenating thing because it's such a relief to have someone help you untie knots that you just can't do yourself. So I've been feeling really good about that. Also, my daughter and I just gave a huge housewarming party for ourselves in the country. We danced for hours and hours with all these other wonderful dancing people, and that felt great. The next day I thought I wouldn't be able to move, and in fact I was just perfectly energized. So, I think dancing with people you love is a wonderful thing. And of course I spend time outside walking, gardening, swimming—all of the everyday things that you would do during the summer.

#### **YOUR WORK SPEAKS TO SO MANY COMMUNITIES, AND SO MANY COMMUNITIES THINK OF YOU AS ONE OF THEM. HOW DO YOU RECONCILE THE CULTURAL DIFFERENCES AND ALL THE EXPECTATIONS? EVERY COMMUNITY IS DYING TO HAVE A SPOKESPERSON. I REMEMBER EVERY TIME I OPENED A MAGAZINE OR NEWSPAPER SOMEBODY ELSE WAS MAD ABOUT THE WAY THE COLOR PURPLE WAS BEING MADE—HOW BLACK MEN WERE BEING REPRESENTED, HOW THE LESBIANISM WAS PORTRAYED. HOW DO YOU HANDLE ALL THAT?**

Well, I don't know if I handle it at all. I think I'm a part of so many communities because I feel connected to so much of life, and it all feels perfectly natural. The only time I cannot be active in a particular community is when I'm tired—I'm too exhausted and I have to say no. Just recently there's been a very

big fight against the logging companies up in Mendocino, where I live. And I haven't been much a part of it except to donate money and to offer my house for people to come and speak about it. I've felt a little bad about that, because I really care very deeply about trees. But I've just been really exhausted, so I haven't been able to go and speak at rallies or sit-in, or participate in any of the things that have been happening this summer. But I have to say to myself that my energy is limited and I'll just sit this one out; there will always be another thing to do when I'm feeling stronger. I don't mind giving my time or whatever I have when I have it. What I'm learning now is that when I *don't* have it there's no need to feel bad. I can just withdraw and know there will always be another time.

#### **AND IN TERMS OF THE KINDS OF PRESSURES THAT VARIOUS GROUPS WANT TO EXERT? FOR EXAMPLE, AROUND THE MOVIE...?**

Well, that's their problem really. I mean it really is. You know if they have a story that they would like to say differently, then *they* should do that. I know that I did my absolute best in the writing of the book and also what I could do for the movie.

#### **WHAT WAS YOUR ROLE?**

Consultant. Some people understand how hard it is to make a movie, and how many people have input, and how you don't ever have control—nobody has control, not even the director has complete control. People who understand didn't really condemn my efforts. It's only people who have a very naive notion of movie-making and a very judgmental frame of mind who were upset because it wasn't exactly the way *they* wanted it to be. Well, it wasn't exactly the way *I* wanted it to be either. I wanted more explicit womanism and paganism, for instance, and not so much preacher and church and Mister in every frame. But it is still a very good movie, and it still does very good things for people. It moves them to think about incest and child abuse and sexual domination and all those things that are sometimes very difficult for us to deal with.

#### **SO EVEN AS IT'S HAPPENING, YOU'RE ABLE TO JUST SAY, "WELL, THAT'S YOUR PROBLEM"—AND IT JUST DOESN'T BOTHER YOU?**

Of course it bothers me, although I



don't think it bothers me in the way it might bother someone else. But that's only because when you do your very best to do your best, you feel differently than you feel if you only make half an effort. I feel like I had very nearly killed myself making this the best that it could be, and to ask anything more of me would be to ask me to just give up my life itself—and that's too much. So then it was very easy to say, "No thank you. This is *my* life and you're not going to get that. I will give you all of my work and a lot of my love, but you're not going to get my life." At that point I just turned to taking care of myself and trusted that people who didn't like it would either not go see it or would grow to be a bit more charitable in their judgement of other people.

**MOSTLY PEOPLE DID.**

Yes, mostly they did. There were so many people who let me know that they were just fine. And there are people who had problems with it and pointed them out, but said that overall they had gotten x, y, or z from it. And that was good. The main thing is that when you create it's so much about what you need to do for yourself and how you're growing that I think it's really fatal to be deterred by other people's prejudices and disappointments or angers. You can always just be stopped in your tracks.

**A LOT OF THE WOMEN WHO READ 'HOT WIRE' ARE CREATIVE—IN MUSIC, FILM, ART, OR WRITING. MANY ARE SURROUNDED BY FAMILY, FRIENDS, OR COMMUNITIES THAT AREN'T SUPPORTIVE OF WHAT THEY'RE DOING. WHAT**

**ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR THEM?**

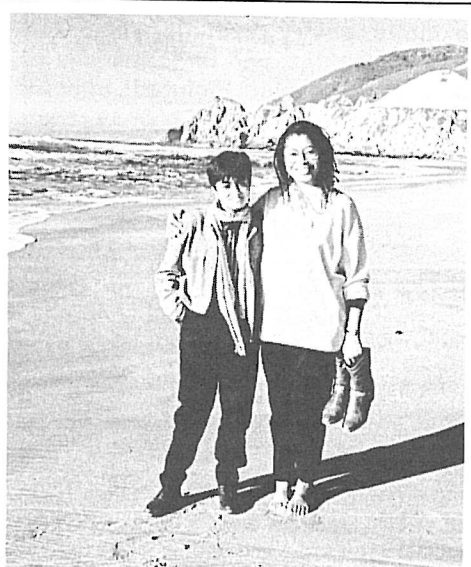
Just remember that you have a right to your vision, whatever it is. And if your vision is not about killing the planet and hurting other people, then you have a duty to your soul to make it visible, to manifest it. In writing a book like *The Temple of My Familiar*, for example, what I understood was that this wasn't the mainstream world's notion of creation, time spent on this planet, history, and women and men and animals, but this is my vision. In the tradition of the Sioux Native Americans—and I really appreciate some of their wisdom—every person by a certain age is supposed to have had a great vision. And if you're lucky enough to have this, then you have to act it out. I think that every whole person, at least once in her or his life, is given a great vision. It's not even that you're given it—you work for it, but the moment that it comes it's so graceful that you *feel* like it's given to you. Then it's your responsibility at that point to manifest it. It's obviously by its nature a healing thing, and you really have to be true to it. And that is the burden and joy of the artist. You do have this great vision—great not in terms of huge or anything, but great in terms of where you are finally able to get. You have enlarged your own vision of what you're able to understand and see. That's why it's a great vision—its the biggest one you've had yet.

**DO YOU THINK OF THIS VISION AS AN INSIGHT, OR SORT OF A MEMORY REVEALED, OR...?**

It's the culmination of all that you have thought and dreamed, wondered about and feared and learned throughout your whole life and possibly lifetimes before. It's a moment when you feel like you have a grasp of the whole. You could call it an insight, but it's about the whole rather than about a fragment. For example, if you take my short stories—all of those are sort of fragments, and even the other novels are sort of fragments even though they are about whole worlds. But *The Temple of My Familiar* is different in the sense that what is glimpsed in it is the whole, not just this community or that

*continued on page 59*

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



"It's the same story wherever you go, and it is one immense story that women are writing." (Top: with Balinese friend Ketut; second: from left, designer Renée Moreno, painter Ester Hernandez, writer Alice Walker, photographer Graciela Iturbide; third: with Indian/British filmmaker Pratibha Parmar; bottom: with Dutch-American artist Sherard.)



Rebecca Walker



# HOTLINE

by Toni Armstrong Jr. and Annie Lee

## TRIVIA CONTEST

The TV show *The Avengers* premiered on British TV in 1961, and was one of the first to feature a strong woman character—the judo-expert, crime-fighting, liberated Mrs. Catherine Gale. When the show came to U.S. TV in 1966, Mrs. Gale was replaced by Emma Peel, and eventually Tara King. The first reader to accurately name all three actresses will win a year's subscription. Send answers to **HOTLINE TRIVIA CONTEST**, 5210 N. Wayne, Chicago, IL 60640.

## WOMEN

Singer **MARY WELLS**, 47—whose '60s hits for Motown include "My Guy" and many others—is receiving outpatient radiation treatment for throat cancer at County USC Medical Center in Los Angeles. She has no health insurance, and was recently evicted from her apartment. Donations can be sent to Mary Wells Care and Treatment c/o Rhythm and Blues Foundation, the Smithsonian Institution Museum of American History, Room 4603, 14th St. and Constitution Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20560.

"**LESLEY GORE ON K.D. LANG...and Vice Versa**" is the title of the conversation between the two women singers in the September *Ms.* magazine (in a format similar to *HOT WIRE*'s "Confabulation" column). The conversation focuses on being a popular female singer in the '60s compared to the '90s.

**MELISSA HOWDEN**, formerly with Redwood Records doing marketing, publicity, and road management for Holly Near, is now director of marketing and promotion at Chameleon Records. Following her time with Redwood, Melissa worked in independent film. **HOLLY NEAR** and **FERRON** have also signed with Chameleon.

The May/June 1990 issue of *Aché* features a lengthy interview with women's music pioneer **GWEN AVERY**. Among other things, she and Skye Ward discuss Black lesbian invisibility in women's music from the early '70s to the present. The same issue includes an interview with comic **KAREN WILLIAMS**. *Aché*, P.O. Box 6071, Albany, CA 94706. (415) 824-0703.

**HOTLINE** presents capsule reports of past happenings, announces upcoming events, and passes on various tidbits of information. Send press releases, notices, and newspaper clippings to **Hotline/HOT WIRE**, 5210 N. Wayne, Chicago, IL 60640.



Toni Armstrong Jr.

**Wholesome Roc** is a multicultural alternative art space providing gallery exhibits, poetry readings, video and film screenings, and performances of music and theater. Pictured: **Simone Bouyer** and **Stephanie Coleman**, owners of **Wholesome Roc**, 1444 N. Greenview, Chicago, IL 60622. (312) 252-1905.

Metal rocker **LITA FORD** was one of the headliners at the fiftieth annual Black Hills Motor Classic motorcycle convention in Sturgis, South Dakota last year. 275,000 bikers participated.

Writes **MOLLY NELSON** of Oklahoma City in the September 20 issue of *Rolling Stone*: "As a black woman, I find it offensive that explicitly violent, anti-woman lyrics are being considered black culture. Being a black male does not make you sexist, and finding 2 Live Crew's lyrics obscene does not make you a bigot. It is too bad the media has made martyrs of this group."

Have you heard **BETTE MIDLER**'s "From a Distance" on the radio yet? We guess she must have heard **SUEDE**'s version on the July 1988 soundsheet in *HOT WIRE*. (One major difference is Suede plays trumpet on her own version.)

**CARYLE MURPHY** of the *Washington Post* was the only American reporter in Kuwait when Iraqi troops invaded last August 2. According to *Time*, "Her calm, lucid eyewitness reports—some printed without bylines to disguise the fact that she was there—will surely be among the prime candidates for journalism prizes next spring."

The new **AWMAC** board: **SANDRA WASHINGTON** (president), **SHERYL SMITH** (vice president), **CATHY ROMA** (secretary), **DEB CIRKSENA** (treasurer). Other steering com-

mittee members: **RETT SCAUZILLO** (technicians), **KAREN HESTER** (labels), **MERLE BICKNELL** (record distributors), **RUTH SIMKIN** (producers), **MARTIE VAN DER VOORT** (performers), **MARTHA RICHARDS** (legal/financial), **MARY CROWDER** (sign language interpreters), **JACQUELINE GROSS** (feminist press/bookstores), **JILL CRUSE** (designers/photographers/film-video), **HALEY** (managers/bookers), **VONDORA CORZEN** (women of color). Committee chairs: **MANDY CARTER** (conference '91), **DEB CIRKSENA** (budget/finance), **BOO PRICE** (by-laws), **MARY CROWDER** (education), **RUTH SIMKIN** (fundraising), **JACQUELINE GROSS** (ethical/judicial), **VONDORA CORZEN** (membership), **HELEN HOLGATE** (PR) **JUDI FRIEDMAN** (affirmative action).

Growing up, country music star **WYNONNA JUDD** says she dreamed of becoming a backup singer for **BONNIE RAITT**. Bonnie plays slide guitar on the recent recording "Rompin' Stompin' Blues" by Naomi and Wynonna Judd. Referring to the song, Wynonna says, "To this day, when I sing it onstage, I shut my eyes and Bonnie is right along with me."

**Z BUDAPEST** spent ten weeks in Europe, including a visit to her native Hungary, according to *Thesmophoria's New Moon*. She observes that the Goddess Movement there is growing fast, but that it is "not safe to be a feminist" in the countries she visited.

## HONORS

**WHAT DID MISS DARRINGTON SEE? AN ANTHOLOGY OF FEMINIST SUPERNATURAL FICTION**, edited by Jessica Amanda Salmonson, received the Readercon Small Press 1990 Award for Best Anthology and also a Lambda Literary Award in the Lesbian Science Fiction category.

**JINX BEERS**, who published *The Lesbian News* from 1974 to 1989, was named Woman of the Year by the Long Beach Lambda Democratic Club last fall.

At the Emmy Awards last fall, *The Simpsons* was nominated for best animated program, but **NANCY CARTWRIGHT**—who would have been eligible for a best actress prize as the voice of Bart—was ignored, according to *Entertainment Weekly*.

According to Mary Lou Novitsky, producer of the TV show *Deaf Mosaic*, **SHANNON JONES** was declared All-Around Logging Champion for the second year in a row at the 1990 World Deaf Timberfest in Oregon.



MARY MORELL's manuscript *Final Session* (or *Fatal Session*)—"a murder mystery written for fun and revenge"—is the winner of the Spinsters Lesbian Novel Contest. Joanna Russ was the judge for the contest, which carried a \$2,000 prize. The book will be published by Spinsters this coming spring. Mary is co-owner of Full Circle Books in Albuquerque.

AUDRE LORDE was chosen to be recipient of the second annual Bill Whitehead Award, given by the Publishing Triangle to honor a writer's general contribution to the development and furthering of gay and lesbian writing. Audre accepted the recognition, but took the Triangle to task for tokenism. She refused the monetary part of the award, according to *Feminist Bookstore News*, charging the Triangle to use the money to promote new lesbian/gay writers of color in the coming year.

WHOOPI GOLDBERG was presented with the Human Rights Award of the American Civil Liberty Union's Lesbian and Gay Rights Chapter last September in Hollywood.

The national lesbian/gay quarterly *OUT/LOOK* was named Best Special-Interest Publication by the *Utne Reader* Alternative Press Awards. Also, for the second year in a row, *OUT/LOOK* received the Best Overall Design Award from the Gay and Lesbian Press Association.

Clothespin Fever Press singled out Paragon Press for "MOST GODAWFUL TITLE" for *Life is Painful, Nasty and Short...In My Case It Has Only Been Painful and Nasty: An Informal Memoir of Djuna Barnes* (1978-1981).

## ANNIVERSARIES

AMAZON BOOKSTORE (Minneapolis) celebrated its twentieth anniversary with Holly Near. It is the oldest women's bookstore in the U.S.

And *OFF OUR BACKS* women's newsjournal (Washington D.C.) recently celebrated its twentieth anniversary. *oob*, 2423 18th St., Washington, DC 20009.

The WOMEN'S MUSIC ARCHIVES (based in Fairfield, Connecticut) is celebrating its fifteenth anniversary. They perpetually seek donations of recordings, photos, concert and festival memorabilia, press kits, T-shirts, posters, buttons, and other items that are representative of woman-identified music by women. Queries to The Women's Music Archives c/o Kim Kimber, P.O. Box 217, New Haven, CT 06513.

The WOMYN'S BRAILLE PRESS, created in Minneapolis by six blind women, celebrated its tenth anniversary last fall. WBP produces feminist literature on tape and in Braille. According to *Dykes, Disability & Stuff*, there are now more than 250 subscribers on three continents, more than 500 books on tape, and dozens in Braille.

The all-time best-selling album in women's music is Cris Williamson's *THE CHANGER AND THE CHANGED* (Olivia Records), which made its debut in 1975.

The CHICAGO FOUNDATION FOR WOMEN recently celebrated its fifth anniversary. To date, they have awarded \$863,000 in grants by giving financial assistance to 150 programs. Women's and girls' groups receive less than four percent of the foundation philanthropic dollars awarded in the U.S.

*HOT WIRE* begins its seventh year of publication with this issue. We will celebrate with a benefit this spring at Mountain Moving Coffeehouse, featuring the slideshow by cartoonist/staff member Alison Bechdel. We also plan to have our annual staff brunch the morning after Alison's show.

## FOND FAREWELLS

ANNE PRIDE, editor of one of the first feminist presses of the '70s, died of cancer in Pittsburgh on April 24, at the age of 47. Anne directed two women's publishing companies—KNOW, Inc. (founded in 1970) and Motherroot Publications (founded in 1977). She also edited *Motherroot Journal*, a book review quarterly which emphasized books from feminist and other alternative presses.

AURORA, the journal of speculative feminist science fiction, has ceased publication with its summer 1990 issue. The pioneering *Janus* (which evolved into *Aurora*) premiered in 1975, and earned three Hugo nominations over the years. Since 1982, the journal has been published irregularly and is now officially saying goodbye to its friends and fans. Feminist SF fans interested in back issues can send SASE to *Aurora* c/o SF3, P.O. Box 1624, Madison, WI 53701-1624.

## GROUPS

One of the projects of the Association of Women's Music and Culture (AWMAC) is to get health insurance at group rates for women who are self-employed. If interested, SASE to Deb Cirkensa c/o AWMAC, 2124 Kitteredge St. #104, Berkeley, CA 94704.

The AUSTRALIAN GAY ARCHIVES houses an extensive collection from all over the world. Send lesbian music recordings, press kits, posters, buttons, T-shirts, publications to AGA, P.O. Box 124, Parkville 3052 Australia.

The WOMEN'S SPIRITUALITY FORUM is a nonprofit organization dedicated to "bringing the Goddess to mainstream and feminist awareness." The Forum sponsors educational programs, public events, holiday rituals and celebrations, an ongoing series of monthly gatherings, a speakers bureau, and an info/referral service. They produce the cable TV series *13th Heaven*. WSF, P.O. Box 5143, Berkeley, CA 94705. (415) 420-1454.

CIRCLES OF EXCHANGE is a round-robin correspondence and creative exchange for spiritual women across North America. SASE to Nan Hawthorne, 4807-50th Ave. South, Seattle, WA 98118.

The non-profit ORGANIZATION FOR EQUAL EDUCATION OF THE SEXES has produced four new Spanish-language posters encouraging young people to complete high school. They feature teenage girls from various Hispanic backgrounds. Posters and a catalog are available from OEE, 808 Union St., Brooklyn, NY 11215. (718) 783-0332.

Midwestern women: to get on the mailing list of JUMPIN' JERUSA PRODUCTIONS, write 2559 Lakeshore, Niles, MI 49120.

Girls Clubs of America, Inc.—the national youth organization serving 250,000 girls and young women—is changing its name to GIRLS INCORPORATED "to better reflect the seriousness of its mission and its leadership as an advocate for girls," according to *New Directions for Women*.

Olivia Records is opening a marketing division to give OLIVIA HOUSE PARTIES—"like women's music Tupperware parties," says the *AWMAC Newsletter*. Women interested in being sales reps should contact Olivia Records, 4400 Market, Oakland, CA 94608.

Teachers note: the gay/lesbian caucus of the AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS is gaining momentum. At the convention last July, the AFT added a "non-discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation" clause to their constitution, reports *dinah*. For further info: Jan Lenz (513) 242-2491 or Polly Riseling (513) 681-3439.

## MOVIES, TV, THEATER

GODDESS TELEVISION—"GTV"—enters its third year of taping, with guests including Vicki Noble, Elinor Gadon, and Gaia's Voice Choir, according to *Callisto*. Hosted by Zsuzsanna Budapest, the show *13th Heaven* is now seeking women to serve as technicians and crew. To volunteer, be part of the live studio audience, or sponsor GTV in your cable area: GTV, P.O. Box 5143, Berkeley, CA 94705. (415) 420-1454.

In her August 1990 keynote address at the annual Screen Actors Guild convention, MERYL STREEP derided the American film industry for the low number of parts for women. According to a Screen Actors Guild study, women took twenty-nine percent of all movie parts in 1989. Three years ago, according to the same study, actresses claimed one third of all film roles. "If the Hollywood trend continues," Meryl said, "by the year 2,000 we will have thirteen percent of roles...and in twenty years we will be eliminated from the movies."

Speaking of MERYL...Did you notice the pink



triangle button on her jean jacket in *Postcards from the Edge*?

Following *Peppermint Soda* and *Entre Nous*, Goldwyn's *C'EST LA VIE* is the final installment in Diane Kurys' autobiographical trilogy. This time the story is told from the point of view of a thirteen-year-old girl who's watching her parents' marriage break up, according to *Premiere*.

NORA DUNN has been dropped from the *Saturday Night Live* cast. SNL denies that her boycott of the May 12 show (hosted by the sexist/homophobic Andrew Dice Clay) was a factor in the decision. Nora plans to publish some of the more-than-2,000 "incredible, eloquent, intelligent, witty letters" she received supporting her stand. She says writers ran the gamut of Clay's targets—minorities, lesbians and gay men, women, the disabled. "These are all the people who have been abandoned by the media and do not have a voice," says Nora in *Mother Jones*.

## GATHERINGS

The NATIONAL LESBIAN CONFERENCE (April 24-28 in Atlanta) is seeking proposals to fill hundreds of slots for workshops and panels "in both traditional and non-traditional formats." More than 5,000 lesbians are expected to participate. Send one-page descriptions and short bio on yourself/your experiences to NLC, P.O. Box 1999, Decatur, GA 30031. (404) 373-0000. For other NLC info, SASE to Michelle Crone, P.O. Box 3057, Albany, NY 12203. (518) 463-1051.

New York will be the host city for the 1994 GAY GAMES IV. SASE to The Federation of Gay Games, 584 Castro St. #383, San Francisco, CA 94114.

The Black Gay and Lesbian Leadership Forum will sponsor its fourth annual NATIONAL BLACK GAY AND LESBIAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE February 13-18 in Los Angeles. SASE to Yolanda Whittington, 914 S. Wilton Pl. #221, Los Angeles, CA 90019. (213) 735-9881.

The fifth annual WOMEN IN THE VISUAL ARTS SHOW will celebrate International Women's Day in New York City March 7-31.

Women in the Director's Chair has scheduled its tenth annual WOMEN'S FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL during the week of March 8. SASE to Women's in the Director's Chair, 3435 N. Sheffield, Chicago, IL 60657. (312) 281-4988.

OUTWRITE '91, the national gay/lesbian writers conference, will be held this March in San Francisco. SASE to OUTWRITE '91, 2940 16th St. #319, San Francisco, CA 94103.

A conference celebrating AUDRE LORDE AND HER WORK was held in Boston last October 5-8. Entitled "I Am Your Sister: Forg-

ing Global Connections Across Differences," conference events included readings, and films honoring Audre Lorde and celebrating women and women's communities.

Phranc headlined a benefit concert—with Sue Fink as emcee—for PROJECT 10/Santa Monica High School last September. Waves, the Santa Monica Bay Area Lesbian and Gay Alliance, has been working with the Santa Monica-Malibu School District this past year to bring Project 10—a counseling and education curriculum designed to inform students about les-

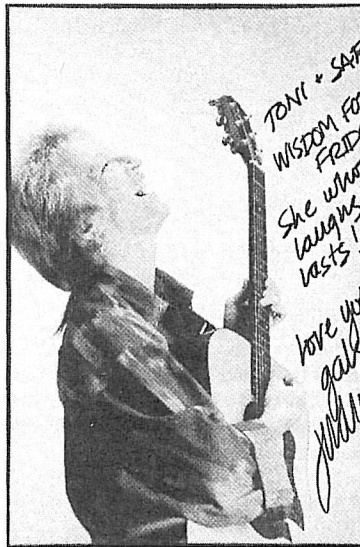


Photo by Irene Young

Irene Young

**Singer-songwriter Judy Fjell still aspires to have her picture on every woman's refrigerator. To receive the latest picture-postcard, SASE to Judy Fjell, P.O. Box 1065, Davis, CA 95617.**

bian/gay issues—to Santa Monica High School. Proceeds from the Phranc/Sue Fink benefit will be used to pay for books for the school library and for training teachers and counselors about the needs of lesbian and gay youth, reports *The Lesbian News*.

The first JAPAN-U.S. CONFERENCE ON WOMEN'S ISSUES is planned for May 3-7 in Phoenix, jointly sponsored by Women's Organizations of Japan & America along with Global Interactions, Inc. The official languages of the conference will be Japanese and English. For info on planning, attending, presenting, or sponsoring, SASE to Global Interactions, 3332 W. Thomas Rd., Phoenix, AZ 85017. (602) 272-3438. FAX: (602) 272-2260.

Olympia Dukakis hosted WOMEN IN CONCERT, a benefit event to try to help combat the cycles of poverty, illiteracy, and violence that affect women and children. Performers included Dionne Warwick, the Roches, and Wynonna and Naomi Judd, reports the *Chicago Tribune*.

The second annual ZORA NEALE HURSTON FESTIVAL OF THE ARTS is scheduled for January 24-27 in Eatonville, Florida. The contributions and significance of Zora Neale Hurston and her work are detailed in the writings of Alice Walker.

Through May: "Men and Women: A HISTORY OF COSTUME, GENDER, AND POWER" at the National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. "A feminist exhibit illustrating how clothes have been used to enforce society's strict images for males and females, and how they have changed from the 1780s to the 1980s," according to *New Directions for Women*.

## WANTED

Researcher currently working on a thesis for an MA in Social Anthropology seeks information from women who have been or currently are on IN-VITRO FERTILIZATION programs. Sally Abel, Anthropology Dept., University of Auckland, Private Bag, Auckland, New Zealand/Aotearoa.

PAPERBACK BOOKS wanted for women in jail. Poetry, lesbian erotica, fiction, and books by/about people of color especially in demand. To donate, contact Amy or Catherine at Alameda County Library, (415) 745-1477.

The literary executor of BARBARA DEMING's estate is looking for a feminist scholar to write about the life and work of this civil rights and anti-war activist. Barbara's papers have recently been brought to their permanent home at the Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College. Contact Judith McDaniel, 28 Corlear St., Albany, NY 12209.

Registered nurse working with dying people in hospice situation is doing research project on DAUGHTERS WHO HAVE LOST THEIR MOTHERS. Letters, essays, journal entries, artwork, photos, etc. "Confidentiality will be maintained." Di Graham, 23 Hiropi St., Newton, Wellington 2, New Zealand/Aotearoa.

## SUBMISSIONS SOUGHT

Anthology now being compiled on the topic of LESBIAN HEALING from loss of relationships due to break-up or death. Stories should focus on recovery. SASE to Anita Pace, P.O. Box 57795, Sherman Oaks, CA 91413.

Susan T. Chasin and Sarah Barbara Watstein seek contributions for an anthology tentatively entitled *WELLNESS: Optimum Physical, Mental, and Spiritual Health*. Queries with SASE to Susan Chasin c/o *Visibilities*, P.O. Box 1258 Stuyvesant Station, New York, NY 10009-1258. (212) 473-4635.

Rising Tide Press is soliciting manuscripts for full-length LESBIAN NOVELS in all genres. Nonfiction also welcome. For guidelines, SASE



to RTP, 5 Kivy St. Huntington Station, New York, NY 11746. (516) 427-1289.

Joan Nestle wants creative writing, essays, and photos for an upcoming anthology exploring **BUTCH/FEMME IDENTITY** from women who define themselves as butch or femme. Cassette format acceptable. Joan Nestle, 215 W. 92nd St., New York, NY 10025.

The producers' caucus of AWMAC is planning a **WOMEN'S MUSIC CALENDAR** as a fundraiser. Send dates (birthdays, festivals, historic events) and photos to Helen Holgate, Rainbow Productions, P.O. Box 2951, Norman OK 73070.

*Hag Rag Intergalactic Lesbian Feminist Newspaper* deadlines: **ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES** due February 1; **WIMMIN'S/WOMYN'S SPACE** due April 1; **HORIZONTAL HOSTILITY** due June 1. Also, **LESBIAN ORGANIZERS** who are organizing and performing in difficult, fun, or creative ways are invited to send stories along with 100-word bio sketch and photos. For contributor guidelines, SASE to *Hag Rag*, P.O. Box 1171, Madison, WI 53701.

**WHAT IS A LESBIAN?** anthology seeks "radical, creative, uncensored approaches" to the topic. SASE to Lise Weil, P.O. Box 70, Montague, MA 01351.

**AFRAGODDESS**, a spiritual and cultural network, seeks articles, reviews, short stories, rituals, and notices of events for its quarterly *Mamaroots*. SASE to Asungi Productions, 3661 N. Cambell Ave. #108, Tucson, AZ 85719-1524.

*Dykes, Disability & Stuff*, the international networking newsletter especially for **LESBIANS WITH DISABILITIES AND/OR CHRONIC ILLNESSES**, seeks fiction, art, poetry, comics, news, resources. Available in Braille, cassette, print, and large print, so those interested in subscribing need to specify format. *DDS*, P.O. Box 6194, Boston, MA 02114.

The *Yale Journal of Law and Feminism* seeks new work dealing with issues related to **WOMEN AND THE LAW**. Autobiography, fiction, poetry, essays, artwork. SASE to *JLF*, Box 401A Yale Station, New Haven, CT 06520.

*Making Waves: A JOURNAL BY AND ABOUT ASIAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER WOMEN* seeks essays, articles, prose, poetry, fiction, and artwork for its upcoming issue. SASE to Nancy Yamaguchi, Center for Women Policy Studies, 2000 P St. NW #508, Washington, DC 20036. (202) 872-1770.

*Broomstick* seeks submissions for its second annual **WRITING CONTEST BY, FOR, AND ABOUT WOMEN OVER FORTY**. Deadline: March 30. For entry form and details, SASE to *Broomstick*, Box 251 RD#1, Uniondale, PA 18470.

The National Women's Studies Association sponsors several writing prizes, scholarships, and fellowships. The **PAT PARKER POETRY AWARD**, founded by Women in the Moon Press: \$250 awarded for an outstanding poem by a Black lesbian feminist poet. Applicant's name should not appear on the submitted poems, only on the cover letter; applications must be postmarked by March 31. The **ILLINOIS-NWSA MANUSCRIPT AWARD**: \$1,000 prize in addition to publication for the best book-length manuscript on women's studies. Looking for any subject that expands understanding of women's lives or gender systems. Two **PERGAMON-NWSA SCHOLARSHIPS** for graduate interdisciplinary work in women's studies are available, as well as an award for graduate work in **JEWISH WOMEN'S STUDIES** and the **NAIAD PRESS AWARD FOR LESBIAN STUDIES**. SASE to NWSA, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742.



Playwright Claudia Allen in Los Angeles for a reading of her play 'The Long Awaited,' featuring 'Golden Girl' Rue McClanahan in the lead role.

The National Gay Alliance for Young Adults sponsors an **ANNUAL ESSAY CONTEST FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS** in grades ten through twelve. The theme of the 1990 contest was "What Is It Like Being Gay/Lesbian in America Today?" For info re the 1991 contest, SASE to NGAYA, P.O. Box 190426, Dallas, TX 75919-0426.

## PUBLICATIONS

**BROADSHEET**, the feminist magazine of New Zealand/Aotearoa, changed distributors last September, resulting in a short-term but serious financial shortfall. They are in need of an injection of funds right now. Send checks to *Broadsheet*, Suite 5 Eden Hall, 476 Mt. Eden Rd., Mt Eden, Box 56-147, Auckland 3, New Zealand/Aotearoa.

**EMERGE!** is a "healing journal of emergence" by/for Christian Scientists who support lesbians and gay men. *Emerge*, P.O. Box 581, Kentfield, CA 94914. (415) 485-1881.

The spring issue of *AQUELARRE: Latin American Women's Magazine* featured women and art. The articles in each issue are published in both Spanish and English. *Aquelarre*, P.O. Box 65535 Station F, Vancouver, BC, Canada V5N 5K6. (604) 251-6678, FAX (604) 553-3073.

A new literary magazine showcasing the artistic and writing talents of **WOMEN IN THE SOUTHEAST** is starting. Entitled *Moonseed: A Collection of Southern Feminist Art*, the periodical needs seed money now. Checks payable to Women's Energy Bank. Send to Rena c/o WEB, P.O. Box 15524, St. Petersburg, FL 33733-5524.

**CRAZY QUILT**, "a patchwork of writing from women of all descriptions, a place for us to share our secret wisdom, our forbidden thoughts, our journal entries and dreams, our imaginings and our realities with each other," is a new quarterly. Organizer Carol SheBear also founded *SageWoman*. SASE to *Crazy Quilt*, P.O. Box 390575, Mountain View, CA 94039.

The new *Two Eagles: An International Native American Gay and Lesbian Quarterly* features articles, writing, and art by **NATIVE AMERICANS** with special emphasis on spiritual and cultural concerns. American Indian Gays and Lesbians, P.O. Box 10229, Minneapolis, MN 55458.

"Don't be isolated; link into active lesbian networks," says the new monthly *AUCKLAND LESBIANS Newsletter*, P.O. Box 46-118, Herme Bay, Auckland, New Zealand/Aotearoa. Phone Karen (09) 764-380 or Megan (09) 861-017.

*OCTAVA: A Newsletter for the Eight Seasonal Feasts*. "Women's wisdom, scholarly articles, myth, ritual, dreams, herbs, gardens, women's history, food, music, letters, reviews, calendars, poetry." SASE to *Octava*, P.O. Box 8, Clear Lake, WA 98235.

The first women's press in the USSR is in the process of forming. The purpose of *Ariadna*, according to *Feminist Bookstore News*, is to publish modern **WOMEN WRITERS FROM THE USSR** and other countries, to present forgotten or unknown women authors of the past, and to promote lesbian culture. For info/to help financially, write N. Panina, Malaya Naberezhnaya 13/7-17, 123362, Moscow, USSR. ●

**ABOUT THE WRITERS:** *Annie Lee* works for a commercial printer in Chicago. She also does production work on both '*HOT WIRE*' and '*Outlines*,' which is as close as she gets to aerobic exercise. *Toni Armstrong Jr.* has been involved with women's music and culture for the past fifteen years. She would like to hear from anyone who shares her interest in female vampires.



# SOAPBOX



Toni Armstrong Jr.

Alix Dobkin always waxes enthusiastic about 'HOT WIRE.' Pictured here with (from left) Vicki Randle, Jemma Mammia, Alix, ASL interpreter Sherry Hicks (in a rare vocal performance), Penny Rosenwasser, and Debbie Fier.

*This letter was sent to the new Ms. magazine.*

Dear Robin, Gloria & Ms. Editors:

I've just finished a cover-to-cover reading of *Ms.* (Vol.1#2). It's good-looking, well-produced, well-written, and Andrea Dworkin is brilliant (as usual), but I am left feeling aggravated, frustrated, and angry. Why is this?

The answer: Your magazine may be by and for women but it's about men and how bad they are for women. This is important information, and I'm always happy to read women writing the truth, but we all know all this already. Or should. Why are we stuck here?

I've also just finished reading *HOT WIRE (The Journal of Women's Music and Culture)*. It, too, is good-looking, well-produced, and well-written. It leaves me feeling hopeful, inspired, and happy. Why is this?

The answer: It's about women.

XX, Alix Dobkin  
Woodstock, New York

The conversation between Alison Bechdel and Kris Kovick [September 1990 issue] was brilliant. I see their cartoons and never really wondered about the women behind the jokes. I have a much deeper appreciation of their art. And it's good to know they're really funny in real life too.

Sheila Polk  
Boone, North Carolina

**SEND LETTERS to SOAPBOX/HOT WIRE, 5210 N. Wayne, Chicago, IL 60640. Letters may be edited for length and clarity. Please enclose your address when writing.**

Women are still struggling to find a voice and outlet for our creativity in American theater. This covers women of color and of varied religious and ethnic backgrounds. Production costs being what they are, small theater groups crop up, mount a production—and then we lose touch with those daring, innovative women. Each spring the women's theater festival in Massachusetts gives us a taste of what's hiding out in the wilderness of women's theater. For the most part we have to rely on word of mouth and being in the right place at the right time. It's a lot of work to keep up with who's out there beyond New York's Women's Project and Productions and Minneapolis' At The Foot of the Mountain. Still, there is amazing work being done by women who are seen only as flashes in the male-dominated theater scene. I would like to hear from other women to put together an anthology and bibliography of lesbian plays and playwrights—a ready resource.

Anne Clare, New York City  
Editor's note: The curtain goes up in this issue on a new column by Claudia Allen. See "Opening Night" on page 12.

Kia Ora,

Greetings in my indigenous language. Aotearoa, you will note, is the correct name of my country, but unfortunately it cannot stand alone with the international postal services. I am writing in the hope that you can put me in touch with the woman who wrote "The Mountain Song" ("I have dreamed on this mountain/ since first I was my mother's daughter/and you can't just take my dreams away.....").

The song has become very special to many of us in women's and indigenous struggle here. The reason I need to contact its author is that I have just had a feminist political novel set in Northern Ireland accepted for publication here. "The Mountain Song" was part of my inspiration for a title, because the land struggle is equally significant to both my people and the Irish people. Also, in Belfast, where the novel is set, is The Black Mountain—a beautiful, inspiring mountain that to me as an indigenous woman is a source of much spiritual strength. My novel—set in West Belfast during the '70s and '80s—tells the story of Deirdre, a pro-Republican woman who challenges sexism and racism from the time of her teens until her widowhood as she nears fifty. Her attachment to Ireland runs deep, and the mountain is a symbol of hope and eventual peace with justice and is threaded through the story.

"The Mountain Song" has given me so much inspiration in our women's movement struggles, and I have sung it many times as a form of nonviolent protest at frontline political actions. I first heard it ten years ago, being sung by Maori lesbian women at the protest against the annual celebrations of the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi. I hope very much to obtain permission to use the title and include the rest of the song in my novel, as I feel very strongly that the song is a part of Deirdre's story. I am hoping that you will pass this letter on to the songwriter, and that she is prepared to give her permission. I have been in our women's movement for over ten years now.

Anna Meihana  
Auckland, Aotearoa (New Zealand)

Editor's note: "The Mountain Song" was written by Holly Near. She can be reached through Redwood Records, 6400 Hollis St. #8, Emeryville, CA 94608. Please see the classified ad section of 'HOT WIRE' for the addresses of many more performers, publishers, producers, craftswomen, etc.

Michelle Shocked is very brave [September 1990 issue]. Do you suppose more women performers will be as honest now that it's the 1990s? Seems to me Shocked has a lot to lose, and wants to "make it" based on who she really is, not on some media package. It's a real challenge to other feminists and lesbians to do the same, though she herself would never presume to tell them what to do. I had never heard of "outing," and I think I agree with her moderate views about it as a political tactic.

M. Marshak  
Ellicott City, Maryland

**BUY FROM WOMEN WHENEVER YOU CAN**



# Inquiring WimMinds Want to Know

**FOR KATHERINE V. FORREST, my favorite writer: How do you get ideas for books? You write so many different things.**

*Karen Desmond, Pasadena, California*

Katherine V. Forrest responds:

Thank you for your high compliment and your good question. The variety of my work is due to the fact that like most writers, I tend to write the kind of books I prefer to read. I've always read good women writers wherever I've found them, and some of the best of them work in the mystery and science fiction fields, while others observe a more conventional milieu.

My own novels evolve out of a situation or premise that I want to explore. In *Curious Wine* it was the passion and beauty and rightness of our love, and why we are willing to accept the high price that we pay. In *Daughters of a Coral Dawn*, it was the kind of world women might build, given our feminine nature and if left to our own devices. *An Emergence of Green* is a contemporary coming-out story reflecting the awareness of our sexuality in the mid 1980s. The Kate Delafield mystery series arose from my desire to portray a contemporary lesbian life in process—a lesbian woman in the high-visibility, high-pressure, difficult profession of police work.

I hope to continue to write these many different kinds of novels.

**FOR IRENE YOUNG: How many pictures do you take of a subject in order to get one or two she can use professionally? Also, how much in advance do people have to hire you? Finally, if you had to choose one woman from women's music, who would you say was the most fun to photograph?**

*Beth Gebert, New Haven, Connecticut*

Irene Young responds:

I usually shoot four rolls of film in a promo session, and I would say there are at least twenty to twenty-five



**Joy Julks: "Playing behind singers, the five-string gives me a smooth, rounded sound."**

good photos from our work...sometimes more. Getting a photo worth using professionally is easy...getting a masterpiece is the goal, and that depends not only on me, but the performer as well. People book me two weeks to a month in advance, but it really depends on the type of session they want to hire me for.

As to who the most fun to photograph is, I guess I try to make it look like fun, but it is a lot of work and takes energy. (And not everyone is a pleasure to work with.) Cris Williamson has always been good to work with. I feel she has an understanding of what I go through. Judy Fjell is incredibly nice and fun. Jennifer Berezan is inspiring, and Dianne Davidson gives me the photographs rather than my taking them. I like to work with people who let me grow, and who like to do it right—right from the start. The main thing is getting better. I always want to get better.

**FOR JOY JULKS: I am a big fan of women who play bass, most especially Joy Julks. Specifically I would like to know what equipment (bass and amp) she owns now, what she would buy if she had an unlimited budget, and what she thinks of five- and six-string electric basses.**

*LaDonna Austin, Dayton, Ohio*

Joy Julks responds:

I'm pleased to hear from people who are enjoying what I'm doing on the bass. My current equipment includes: a Tobias six-string bass, a Tobias five-string fretless bass, a Tune five-string bass, and a Zon five-string bass. The amp I'm using now is an S.W.R SM400 with Goliath Junior speaker cabinets. For bigger shows I use one or two fifteen-inch cabinets underneath the Juniors. For effects I'm using a Digitech Bass Harmony Machine for occasional octave below doubling and other preset harmonies that are good to use for solos, and the Alesis reverb units for reverb and delay and chorusing.

For me the five-string is the norm because the low B-string provides a real rich sound that's ideal for playing many styles. In rock, you can really pump with a good five-string that has a tight, punchy low B. Playing behind singers, the five-string gives me a smooth, rounded sound. (Keep in mind that you should use the low B string sparingly, with taste.) On records by adult-contemporary and R&B singers, such as Anita Baker or Angela Boffill, you hear the five-string bass almost exclusively. The six-string bass is more of a specialty instrument that is excellent for jazz but can be used in the same way that a five-string is approached. The four-string bass is still very common and is still the easiest to "slap" on.

If I had an unlimited budget, the first thing I'd pick up would be a Mac Plus computer for writing and sequencing. Then maybe I'd purchase basses by all the "top builders" (such as Ken Smith, Moon Basses) and I'd probably get another Tobias with different wood than the ones I own now.

Well, didn't mean to write an entire book, but I hope this answers your questions. Thank you and hope to see you at future concerts or clinics. ●

# OPENING NIGHT

## THE PORTLAND WOMEN'S THEATRE CO.

By Claudia Allen

Welcome to the opening night for my new 'HOT WIRE' column about women's theater. As I find them, I'll tell you about theaters and theater groups worth knowing about. And I want "Opening Night" to be a forum for upcoming lesbian playwrights. I want to let 'HOT WIRE' women know where to see a good lesbian play, be it in Chicago or Oregon, and I hope to present excerpts from unpublished lesbian plays to introduce us to women who will be writing the lesbian plays of tomorrow. (And hopefully someone out there has a theater or a barn or a porch where they can produce some of these playwrights.) "Opening Night" is about opening doors.

There are many reasons to go to Portland, Oregon: the roses, lilacs, and hydrangeas in the spring; the sounds of Musica Femina; Powell's Bookstore; fresh chinook salmon; a nice view of Mt. St. Helens (from a safe distance); and that wonderfully mild weather. But there's no better reason to visit than to see a play done by the dynamic Portland Women's Theatre Company.

Ten years ago the women of Portland started a theater company for women only, and today PWTC is still there. It's thriving, and there are still no men allowed on stage.

Over the years, the women of PWTC have gone from being theatrical hoboes—renting space wherever they could—to becoming the proud lesbian parents of a space all their own. They knew that to grow is to take chances, so when current Artistic Director Cherise Millhouse saw a storefront for rent, they took the leap.

It's all woman-built and woman-maintained, with a seating capacity of about fifty, a steady group of volunteers, and a talented pool of actresses that includes the daughter of a Mouseketeer. Their primary source of revenue is through ticket sales, and they accept private contributions. They have twice re-

ceived the local Metropolitan Arts Commission grant through the city of Portland.

The PWTC started out as a collective, and two years ago they formed a seven-woman board of directors. The board members—all of whom have other full-time jobs—wear many hats: in addition to volunteering their time for board responsibilities, they act, build sets, take publicity photos, and so forth. Although most of the work is done on a volunteer basis, the organization does contract for specific positions, such as director, technical director, and set designer.

In the early years, the group had quite a difficult time in their script searches, according to Cherise. They used to advertise in the *Village Voice* and in local newspapers, and depended heavily on word-of-mouth networking. But, "starting about a year ago, the Lavender Network started up. It's made up of gay theater companies, and they have a script referral service," she says. "Scripts are also arriving unsolicited now, thanks to publicity generated through the International Playwrights Association."

The theater company has open auditions, which are advertised through the mainstream press, the monthly news-magazine *Just Out*, and The Lesbian Community Project newsletter. The group also sends out their own newsletter—entitled *Showcase*—three times a year to publicize their events.

PWTC plays usually run Friday and Saturday nights for six or seven weeks. They've done the lesbian classics of Jane Chambers as well as a takeoff on the legend of Nancy Drew; plays by Leslea Newman and Sarah Dreher; and all sorts of other new works by women, including the one-act version of my script *Movie Queens*.

"We did *Last Summer at Bluefish Cove* by Jane Chambers twice," says Cherise. "It's about a group of women who traditionally meet at the ocean every year.

This particular year is very special, because one of the women has terminal cancer, and all of her friends believe that it will most likely be her last.

"*This Child's Family* by Amy Rubin is a play about a group of women who have been together as friends for many years, and have swapped partners a couple of times. They have a tradition of gathering for Thanksgiving every year. A woman by the name of Sada and her partner have a special reason for being excited about this particular Thanksgiving gathering: they are going to tell their friends that Sada has been artificially inseminated and is pregnant. It's the first time any of them has had a child," says Cherise.

"*Paradykes Lost* by Lisa Krohn is a Noel Coward-type genre mystery-comedy which takes place in the late '30s/early '40s. This nasty, evil woman has invited everyone for the weekend. Several guests and two uninvited people (burglars) show up. The detective, of course, has to solve the mystery. There's lots of physical comedy in this show.

"We did the world premiere of *Ladies Room* by Aden Ross, about a group of women who have come to Las Vegas for various reasons. The central characters are a lesbian blackjack dealer—who meets a woman who has just graduated from the seminary and is on her way to Beaver, Oregon when her car breaks down—and the seminarian, who has some very fixed ideas about what kind of people lesbians are. The lesbian blackjack dealer has some very fixed ideas about who religious figures are, too; it's quite cerebral. The whole play takes place in a Las Vegas ladies' restroom, so it's a very ornate set—lots of reds and golds. It's a question of direction; how we define ourselves. The dialogue is very lively and thought-provoking.

"In January, we're doing the West Coast premiere of *Framework*, a play by the Australian playwright Sandra Shot-



lander. This one is also about how women define themselves. It centers around two women: a former Australian who's lived in New York for twenty years and who is just ending a marriage meets a younger woman in the New York Art Museum. The two pieces of art that are interwoven throughout the play are Georgia O'Keefe's 'Black Iris' and Picasso's portrait of Gertrude Stein. The characters, of course, identify with those. It's about how they meet, how they fall in love, and how they become individuals.



directed by Kathy Duff  
April 14 to May 22, 1989

## Portland Women's Theatre Company

"In the spring we're going to do *Against The Rising Sea* by Kelly Matterson. It's a compare-and-contrast between two lesbian couples, one of which has been together for thirty years. One of the older women has been crossdressing as a man so she could work in construction and keep them going. Of the younger lesbian couple, one woman is into instant success and instant relationships—a motivated, bright, successful woman. She's very interested in the older lesbian couple's home (which they built), and is trying to negotiate the sale of it. Her partner is sort of looking at both of the relationships, and wondering if maybe they're not missing something along the way by jumping into all of this so quickly. It really questions values," says Cherise. "And one of my favorite things about this

play is that we get to pay our respects and acknowledgments to the old diesel dykes that paved the way for many of us—and I like that."

When the Portland Women's Theatre Company produced *Movie Queens* in the spring of 1989 as part of the "Just Between Us" evening of one-acts (which ran from April 14 through May 22), I was given a tremendously warm welcome. I even got to take part in their party specialty: charades. A highlight was someone acting out a famous line blunder (from their production of *Last Summer at Bluefish Cove*) in which an actress declared that she never put a finger in—rather than laid a finger on—Donna.

Professionalism mixed with playfulness are what I find so special about this company. They work damned hard to produce good theater on a shoestring, yet they'll also hold contests to determine who in the company has the best lips (former Artistic Director Kathy Duff always wins) or the best hair (Cherise Millhouse runs strong in this category).

But don't for a minute think that just because they're not tiresome and dogmatic the women of PWTC are not serious about their purpose. In your program, you'll read the following statement:

*"The Portland Women's Theatre Company is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization dedicated to presenting productions that focus on women's issues, both lesbian and straight. We hope our efforts will help to nurture respect within our community for the diversities in all of us."*

The women of the Portland Women's Theatre Company are there to produce theater that nurtures and celebrates our lives. If you live in the Northwest—or if you're looking for a beautiful area to visit—try to time your visit to take advantage of a great natural resource: the Portland Women's Theatre Company.

*For more information or to get on their mailing list: Portland Women's Theatre Company, 1728 NE 40th, Portland, OR 97232. (503) 287-7707. Also, the Lavender Network can be reached c/o Cherise, Portland Women's Theatre Company.●*

**ABOUT THE WRITER:** *Claudia Allen is the author of numerous lesbian and feminist plays and short stories. Her play 'The Long Awaited' won the Jeff Award for Best New Work making her the first woman to win this honor.*

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# THE AUDIO ANGLE

## FINAL VINYL: SAY GOODBYE

By Dakota

When you last visited your local women's bookstore or neighborhood record store, you may have noticed a dearth of 12" vinyl records. Lining the racks instead are compact discs and cassette tapes. Mainstream record companies claim that LP demand has fallen off drastically—but then again it's in their best interest to manipulate that demand for the sake of higher profits. As technology is refined, manufacturing costs drop. However, you may have noticed that the cost of CDs in your local record store *hasn't* gone down much from their debut prices a few years back. Mainstream record companies are making even more money on CDs than they did on LPs.

Nonetheless, CDs are certainly here to stay, and LP manufacturing is dwindling. In Nashville, one of the music industry's hubs in this country, LP manufacturers have all but disappeared. Three years ago, there were twelve pressing plants operating in Nashville. As of September 1990, there were two left, and only one pressed 12" (regular album size). It's clear that within a very short time, LPs may not be manufactured at all.

According to one industry source, however, LPs are selling well in certain genres of music. Tin Pan Alley, Delta blues, and rap music all sell well on LPs. In fact, approximately fifty percent of all rap music sales are on LPs, the other fifty percent are cassettes; CDs are virtually non-existent in that market. Also, rap sales account for more than half of all LPs sold.

Companies like Rounder that are selling Delta blues and other genres of music report that LP sales are strong. Women's music sales to individuals still reflect some demand for LPs, though cas-

**THE AUDIO ANGLE** discusses information about recording, live sound engineering, the mysteries of the recording studio, and other topics of interest to audiophiles.

sette format is stronger, and women's music LPs don't sell well in record stores.

The well-known music industry magazine *Billboard* reports "sales by format" figures for the industry. Cassettes top the list at seventy-three percent of the market; CDs have twenty-two percent; and LPs lag behind at five percent. Rap LP sales account for more than half of all LPs sold. Though pressing plants are closing, LPs are still expected to be available—at least for now. Expect the cost of manufacturing LPs to rise, due to the paucity of pressing plants.

### LPs LOSING

The trend is clear, and in women's music, like mainstream music, LP sales are weak. Olivia Records and Ladyslipper (both records and distribution) report "negative" LP sales—which means that LPs are being returned from retail outlets. They're just not selling. Olivia's four newest projects were released on cassette only. On previous releases, LP sales were "nominal," according to Mary Massara at Olivia. Ladyslipper and other women's music labels report similar sales trends. Laurie Fuchs says that as a distributor, Ladyslipper will still carry LPs if available, but as a record company, they are not pressing LPs. Their three most recent projects were released either as cassette-only or cassette/CD.

### WHAT INDEPENDENT ARTISTS ARE DOING

Tsunami Records, which released Jamie Anderson's *Closer To Home* album in 1989, came out with LP and cassette. The LP was pressed primarily with airplay and promotions in mind. "Although the LPs have been selling," says Jamie, "they have been used extensively for promo copies to both college and community radio stations."

Other independent artists, such as Sue Fink (Frostfire label), are going with

cassette and CD releases. Still others, like Mimi Baczewska, Erica Wheeler, and Catie Curtis are releasing their music on cassette only.

Laurie Fuchs stressed that the target market\* has a lot to do with the importance of the various formats. The New Age/spirituality market has long favored cassettes. However, more mainstream-oriented New Age music, like that on the Windham Hill label, must be offered on CD.

As an independent, some of the questions to ask before deciding on formats are: Who do I want to reach? Are there radio stations out there that play this type of music? Are they commercial or non-commercial (like college stations and community stations)? Will they play my music? Is airplay important to my success? What other ways can I build a following?

Sue Fink released her second (and latest) album *True Life Adventure* on cassette and CD; her first project [*Big Promise*] was released on cassette and LP. "I don't take LPs on the road with me and I only sell them occasionally. They're too hard to carry around," she says. "But if you want to get airplay or even reviews, it's important to have LPs or CDs." Although she hasn't heavily promoted her latest album to radio stations, she recognizes that for most independent artists a CD promotion to radio stations—at about \$6 per unit total cost—can get expensive fast.

It is also important as an independent artist to check into the sales figures of various formats (cassette, CD, LP) in the genre and market that you are trying to reach. If you are a rap artist, for example, LPs will probably sell. Check with independent labels who sell the type of music you offer and find out what formats *they're* having success with. Also keep in mind that if you do not have LPs or CDs, you will have a more difficult (if



not impossible) time getting radio airplay. So decide how important airplay is to your success *before* deciding on formats.

Whether an artist is new or established, promotions are an important part of sales. Bookstores and other outlets generally prefer promo copies on cassette. However, radio stations require either LP or CD because cassettes are so difficult to "cue up" (start at the beginning of the song). The initial cost of CDs is higher than that of cassettes, and for a small independent company, it can be prohibitively expensive to manufacture CDs and send them as promos. For independents, this can mean the difference between greater exposure through radio airplay and no airplay at all.

### FORMAT CHOICES

What are your choices, given that as an independent artist your resources are limited? (If you have unlimited financial resources, I'd love to meet you.)

A common choice is to release LPs along with cassettes. Keep in mind that unless you are working in one of the previously mentioned genres, you will probably not sell many LPs. But if you can get LPs for a fairly low cost, they are still good for sending to reviewers and radio stations. The 12" square format for album covers tends to be very expensive to have printed in four colors, which drives unit prices higher.

Your second viable option is to release cassettes and CDs. You will have a higher initial investment than a cassette-only release, but you stand to earn more when you sell the CDs. Remember that because the per-unit price is a bit higher, it's going to cost you more to send them to radio stations and reviewers, so you'll want to be very selective in that process.

Finally, you can release your material only on cassettes. The costs of mastering, duplicating, and printing are far lower than for any other type of release. In women's music, there seems to have been a stigma about cassette-only releases, many viewing this format as a "less than serious" effort. But cassettes are still an inexpensive format and have the ability to reach many more listeners than CDs. The cost of a portable cassette player is low enough that it is well within the reach of many more people than are stereo systems and CD players. CDs are more expensive and are considered "better" than other formats, but how many women own CD players right now? Most do, however, have a cassette player

in their home, in their car, and/or in their backpacks (in the form of a "walk-woman," as we call the tiny portables). No one on my block has a CD player in her car...yet.

Historically, a project that came out on cassette and LP had more perceived legitimacy than a cassette-only release. Why? Perhaps when music came out on LP and cassette, it was an indication that there was more money behind the project, which lent it a measure of legitimacy. The good news is that everyone interviewed for this article agreed that there used to be a negative attitude toward cassette-only releases and that it has shifted recently. Will the CD lend the same legitimacy as an LP once did? Most likely. CDs are another indicator that there is more money behind a project. Does it make the artist "more serious about her music"? Not necessarily. It just means there's a bigger financial risk to the artist, her investors, and her label.

It's important to understand our cultural attitudes about the various formats so we can be intelligent consumers as well as responsive artists. Often cassette-only releases are the result of women scraping together every spare nickel they can conjure up to put a project together. Granted, some projects that come out on cassette-only are less than ideal (okay, some are even bad). But some are truly excellent. [Like Adrienne Torf's new *Find a Way* album.] A cassette-only release is often the result of hours of labor and is a viable means of making many types of music available at a relatively low cost. Conversely, because a cassette-only release is more accessible, there will be a broader range of women making cassettes, and they *will* run the gamut from superb to horrendous. Remember, well-written songs and a well-produced recording will receive the attention from listeners that it rightly deserves, regardless of formats. And garbage will always be garbage.

One final "four-letter word": duplication. Since the rise of cassette popularity (and now the advent of DAT tape format), unauthorized duplication has become a major problem for independent artists. Many women don't think twice about giving a copy of a tape to a friend ("It's a *great* tape, I'll make a copy for you..."). *Resist the temptation!* That practice undermines the entire women's music industry by denying rightful income to women's music artists, labels, distributors, and others.

Profits for independent companies are tiny (if they exist at all). It's entirely possible that on a small project the artist is making anywhere from about 25¢ to \$3 per cassette sold (sometimes more, but we're talking about small, independent labels here). Your decision to buy instead of copy could be the deciding factor in whether or not that artist can afford to make her music available in the future. It's safe to say that the future of women's music depends on *not* copying tapes. If you enjoy women's music, help ensure its future by *purchasing* rather than copying.

### FORMAT FINANCES

The choice in women's music is now almost solely between cassette only releases and cassette/CD releases. That choice raises numerous economic considerations for independent artists and labels.

As Karen Kane mentioned in her "Audio Angle" column [January 1990 *HOT WIRE*], the manufacturing costs of LPs now rival that of CDs. LPs costs have gone up, while the cost of CDs have come down. As technology is refined, the cost of manufacturing CDs should come down even further. With the cost of CD players now about equivalent to a good cassette deck in a stereo system, many more people are purchasing CD players instead of record players.

Since there are now several choices of format to choose from (cassette, LP, CD, cassette single, CD single, vinyl single), for many artists the choice is one constrained by finances. Most artists in women's music do not release singles, as sales do not justify the extra costs involved. With LP pressing plants closing, you'll find higher and higher LP pressing costs. So you can see why the two other formats are the clear-cut choices by mainstream labels and by many independent labels as well.

*continued on page 57*

**ABOUT THE WRITER:** *Dakota is a computer-dweeb and MBA by day; she is an independent record producer and co-owner of Tsunami Records by night. She is starting a support group for women interested in economics.*

### YARD SALE REPORT

'HOT WIRE' sponsored a fundraising yard sale in September and raised almost \$600 for our coffers. Women from our local community and from the Seps conference were extremely supportive. Thank you!

## ON STAGE AND OFF

# HOW TO SELL YOUR MUSIC AND STILL FACE YOURSELF IN THE MORNING

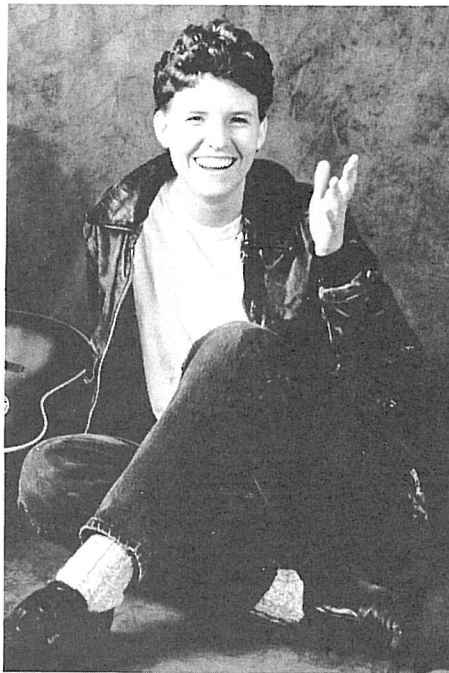
By Catie Curtis

Suppose you were the person booking acts for a coffeehouse. Would you feel confident hiring a performer you had never seen before, who called and said, "Well, I was just wondering, because, well, I do play guitar and sing, and I've written some pretty good songs, and anyways I was hoping maybe, if you have an opening, I could play at your coffeehouse?"

Most of us wouldn't.

Yet this is how I presented myself when I first started making booking calls here in Boston. And believe me, I wasn't buying the cat food (or anything else, for that matter) with my profits. I was not getting the gigs I wanted and I couldn't understand why. I knew that I was at least as good as others who were out there performing regularly—yet many of the places where I wanted to perform were not even giving me a chance. Finally, I realized that it's not always how good we are, but how good we (and others) say we are.

In general, people don't like to hear others brag. If someone walked up to me and said, "I'm a hot new performer and everywhere I go masses of fans follow," I would probably assume this person to be something of a sociopath. Most of us have an innate sensibility advising us against going around talking about all of our talents. (I've noticed that women tend to have this sensibility more than men). But sometimes modesty can prevent good music from ever being heard by an audience larger than, say, one friend. When I go to open mic's in the folk community, there are at least five times more men than women who get up on stage, and I wonder if it's because a lot of women feel their music isn't worth performing, or they don't want to "compete" with men,



Susan Wilson

**Catie Curtis: "The whole process can be very hard on those of us who struggle to define our own self worth."**

or what? The music business is still dominated by men, and maybe part of the reason is that society teaches us as women that it is okay to be good at something, as long as we don't bring too much attention to ourselves.

But we have to make a big deal about ourselves, no matter where we perform our music. We deserve to be recognized for what we do. Fortunately, there are several ways to show how good we are without constantly having to say it.

The first contact with the coffeehouse, club, or festival is often made by sending a promo packet. "Wait!" you might say. "Packet? That sounds like packaging!" Yup, sure does. For a while I resisted. I sent out the most plain looking notes, probably scribbled on the back of

old grocery lists, and my home recordings, taped over forgotten albums by bands like Foreigner and Journey. I wouldn't recommend this approach.

A good packet should include a nice-looking and unabashedly glowing "bio" (information sheet like a resume in narrative form), supplemented—if possible—by a couple of good reviews (sometimes hard to get together, but painless thereafter). It is important to include a high-quality demo tape with an aesthetically pleasing insert, or J-card. Sometimes it's important to send along an 8x10 black and white photo as well. All these materials will cost you money at first, but when you start getting gigs, they pay for themselves. Try to remember that it is a business.

Once the press packet is sent, it's time to start thinking about the dreaded phone calls. Most of the time, more than one phone call has to be made before a gig will be granted to a less-than-well-known performer. Often it takes several well-timed calls to the person booking music. Don't get discouraged. Just ask when you should call again, mark it on your calendar, and call back. If you have a hard time speaking about yourself with unbridled enthusiasm, try to get an outgoing friend with a confident manner to make some calls for you. If you can afford it, you may want to hire a booking agent. She will find the contacts, make the calls, and negotiate your contract with the producers.

And while we're on the subject of others doing the talking for you, start collecting quotes. Anytime someone with a good reputation in your field (a radio DJ, a critic, a club owner, another performer) says something nice about you, ask if you can quote them. If it sounds impressive, use it on your "bio." [For more detailed information on press kits, contracts, demo tapes, and booking, see articles in previous issues of *HOT WIRE*: "The Do-It-

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



Yourself Agent" by Kay Gardner, July 1985 and March 1985; "Bananas, Production Notes, and Press Kits" by Kay Gardner, November 1985; "Playing the Conference Circuit" by Gerri Gribi, November 1985; "Tour Booking and Promotion" by Susie Gaynes, Penny Rosenwasser, Jill Davey, and Trudy Wood, July 1986; "Playing the College Circuit" by Elaine Townsend, July 1986; "The Captive Audience: Playing in Prisons" by Gerri Gribi, July 1987; "Demo Tapes" by Karen Kane and Cris Newport, March 1988; "How to Get Airplay on Non-Commercial Radio" by Kay Gardner, September 1990.]

The whole process can be very hard on those of us who struggle to define our own self-worth without depending on what others say and think about us. Truth

is, though, in this business we constantly must prove that we will draw a crowd. That we *will* be liked. It's not easy. The risks of believing our own promo material (which says we are flawless) or of believing our critics (who can't find anything right with what we do) are enormous.

It helps to have a sense of humor about the whole thing. At the West Coast Women's Music and Comedy Festival, I visited the wonderfully funny performer Jamie Anderson at the booth where she was marketing her T-shirts which quoted her "Why Do Straight Women Look So Butch To Me?" song. The first thing out of her mouth was, "Well, here I am shamelessly promoting myself." And recently Eve Goodman, a talented singer/song-

writer from Boston, sent me some of her best quotes (about herself) so I could advertise a gig we were doing together. She wrote, "Well, C.C., here's the sludge, use what you want." She couldn't have said it any better.

Ultimately, we have to learn to separate our true identities (our sense of self) from the image that we try to put across or that comes back to us in the form of a review. So go for it, tell the world how great you are, and then have yourself a good chuckle. ●

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**ABOUT THE WRITER:** Hear "Dandelion"—the title cut from Catie Curtis's album of twelve original songs—on the soundsheet in the September 1990 issue of 'HOT WIRE.'

# TWO NICE GIRLS

By Noelle Hanrahan



Born and raised on the fertile Austin, Texas 1980s hardcore punk music scene and the folk-infused women's cultural community, Two Nice Girls are founders Gretchen Phillips and Kathy Korniloff on acoustic and electric guitars, with Pam Bargar on drums, and Meg Hentges rounding out the band on bass. *Like a Version*, their second recording on Rough Trade Records, is a six-song EP re-

leased in May which consists of five covers and a remix of their rousing anthem "I Spent My Last \$10 (On Birth Control and Beer)." They are currently working on a full-length album slated to be released in early '91. Being signed to an alternative independent label with a solid reputation has been a big plus for the career of Two Nice Girls, bringing them to the attention of critics and fans who

follow independent rock and punk/new wave bands.

Take heed of my warning: if you know anything about this band, avoid the creeping temptation to label what they do. Originality, daring, courage, and lesbian sentiments on vinyl often get labeled incorrectly when frustrated critics who are really high on heavy doses of homophobia don't get where the music is coming from.

The women of Two Nice Girls are exploring powerful terrain. They are the vanguard of "out" lesbians in mainstream music who—along with Phranc (Island Records)—are openly documenting the complex emotions and reality of their experience as lesbians. It is interesting to watch this occur in the mainstream, after a long period of time in women's music where lyrics dealing with lesbian-feminism have been notable in their absence. It has been observed that in the 1980s, several feminist/gay male performers put more explicit emphasis on lesbians in their lyrics than many lesbian performers did, even when the women were performing to lesbian audiences. The women of Two Nice Girls are not willing to deny their lesbian-feminism by omission.

"I have an unflappable optimism about the world right now," says Kathy. "I am doing this because it is important to me to take a lot of risks and come out—to talk honestly about my life and the lives

*continued on page 27*

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**ABOUT THE WRITER:** Noelle Hanrahan writes freelance for several publications, including 'Outweek' and the AWMAC newsletter.

# WOMAN WITH A MISSION

## Zeinabu irene Davis on Filmmaking

I was introduced to the power of mass media by a Black woman. Filled with a thousand pounds of energy, vitality, and political consciousness, Gini Booth, a young Black single mother, became my mentor and big sister in 1980. As a sophomore at Brown University, I thought that a media internship would be interesting and would certainly enhance my future credentials as the world-renowned international lawyer I was bound to become. One month of working with Gini was to change that desire for a law degree forever.

Gini was the host and producer of *Shades*, a minority public affairs program broadcast on the local public television station in Providence, Rhode Island. Through the experience of working with her, I quickly discovered the power of the media and began to see that the power in shaping views lay not only in front of the camera, but behind it as well.

In 1981, I decided to spend some time studying in Kenya, East Africa. This experience proved to further instill goals of working in media that had been fostered in me from working with Gini. While in Kenya, I met another woman from the States, dancer and journalist Asma Feyijimi, as well as the celebrated Kenyan author, Ngugi wa Thiong'o. From the verandas of various bars in Nairobi, Asma, Ngugi, and I would discuss many issues, including the number of foreign film companies that came into the country to do wildlife films. These filmmakers always seemed to ignore the rich history of the Kenyan people.

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**ABOUT THE WRITER:** *While not awaiting her period with a bag of potato chips and chocolate ice cream by her side, Zeinabu irene Davis is an independent filmmaker who primarily teaches film production at Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio. For more information on Zeinabu's films: Wimmin with a Mission Productions, 275 W. Center College St. #144, Yellow Springs, OH 45387.*

At that time, Ngugi was working on a play, *I Will Marry When I Want*. Asma was acting in the play, and Ngugi had asked me to do slides for him as a backdrop for the set of this outdoor production which would use the local community as its base for actors. Though the play was historical in nature, the Kenyan government felt it was too politically charged to be staged. Three days after the play opened in Nairobi to packed houses, the government bulldozed the theater. I have never forgotten this profound and deeply moving connection between art and politics. After those experiences, I vowed to come back to Kenya someday and work with Ngugi on a peoples' narrative history of Kenya.

When I returned to the States, I knew I wanted to be a director, but I didn't want to work in television—I wanted to work in film. Unfortunately there weren't (and still aren't) too many women film directors to seek out for apprenticeships or even advice. I also knew that working my way up the ladder would take too long—I had too many stories that needed to be told as soon as possible. So, I began to look into graduate programs in African and film studies. After speaking with a number of independent Black filmmakers, I decided to go to the site of what one critic has called "The L.A. Rebellion," a term that described the new and innovative work done by Black graduate students at UCLA film school. I knew that was the place for me.

I initially enrolled in the African Studies program, and quickly realizing the need for an automobile in Los Angeles to do anything, I worked several jobs and saved money for a car and for film school projects. By the time I got into the film school, "The L.A. Rebellion" had ended and there were fewer Blacks in the school than ever. Needless to say, it was a difficult experience to study there. Any independent visions I may have had about film were often crushed by the

shadow of Hollywood conventions and narrow-minded professors who were always at your back. Though I had some good instructors there, most did not teach well. Personally, I learned more from my fellow students than I did from most of my instructors.

Though I came to the film school with a bent towards documentary, I chose to explore different genres—during my four years I made and worked on narratives, documentaries, music video, and even did some animation. Though there is a natural stigma that leans towards film since the image is generally more beautiful than video, I still choose to work in both media. The project and its financial considerations decide the medium for me.

To this day, I hate to be labelled as any particular type of filmmaker. I might do a video documentary this year and an experimental narrative the next. The only element of my work that unifies the whole is that my work is centered around women of color and mostly Black women. I identify very strongly with the historical truth that is the African diaspora, which for me means this: as an African American woman I base my culture and philosophy of life in the Black experience of North America, but I also realize that I have roots in Africa, the Caribbean, and Latin America. I feel free to borrow from that larger cultural base for both my personal tastes and for the subjects and ideas that I choose to explore on the screen. For instance, in my film *Cycles*, many women have asked me about the intricate ground paintings that the actresses dance on. This ground painting is called a "Veve," and is done in Haitian Vokun ceremonies to invoke the various goddesses from whom one might request guidance. In *Cycles*, the main character, Rasheeda Allen, dreams of Erzulie Freda—goddess of creativity, fertility, and beauty—and finds comfort in her identification with the goddess.

Like other independent filmmakers—such as Michelle Parkerson [see July 1987 *HOT WIRE*] and Martha Wheelock and



Kay Weaver [see March 1988 *HOT WIRE*—I find that the most essential problem we have as filmmakers is financing our visions. Filmmaking is a cash-intensive business, and at every juncture there seems to be some item you must pay for immediately in order to continue your work. Michelle Parkerson stated in her *HOT WIRE* article that it costs about \$2,000 a minute to produce a film; well, some three years down the line, the costs have probably risen by more than half. *Cycles* cost me approximately \$13,000, and this is without the cost of renting the equipment or paying for studio time for the sound mix. Even if a filmmaker does manage to get a distributor for her work, she must still absorb the cost of her prints and publicity materials.

with Yoruba-derived New-World religions such as Santeria (Spanish-speaking America), Vodun (Haiti and Southern U.S.), and Condomble (Brazil).

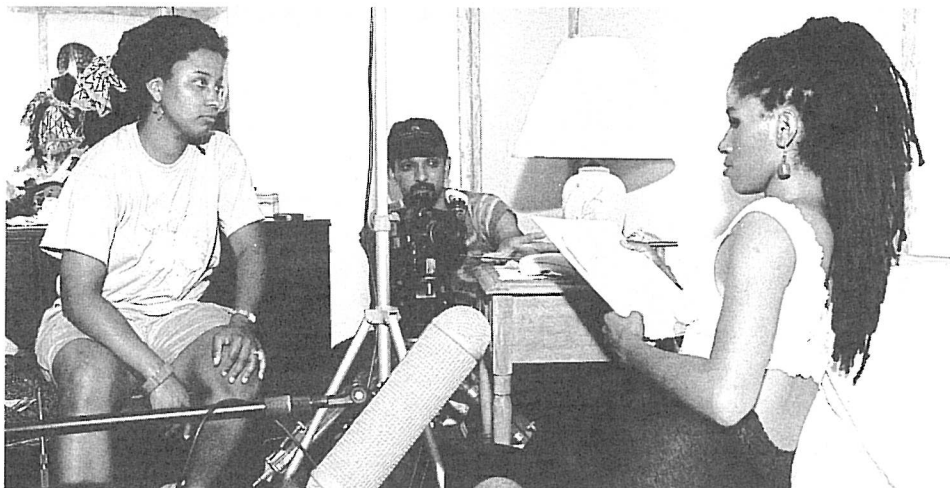
*Cycles* began as a journal entry by one of my best friends, Doris Owanda Johnson, while on a trip to Toronto. For nearly three hours she would not speak on the plane, but was furiously writing. She finally finished when we were just about to land, and she pushed her journal in front of me. What she wrote was so beautiful and simple, the power of her words jumped off the page and immediately created strong visual images for me. I asked her permission to adapt the piece to film.

In the beginning of the process of bringing *Cycles* from the page to the screen, Owanda thought I was crazy—or

University, the camera we used was a hand-wound 16mm Bolex. I went back to that camera for *Cycles* and did some work with pixillation, a process of shooting film that greatly exaggerates real time. I asked Titilayo to continue working with me on the film. She had a full-time job, so we shot whenever we could, which was around the holidays in December 1987.

*A Powerful Thang* began once more as one of Owanda's journal entries, this time in 1988. As a loose sequel to *Cycles*, the story again concentrates on a woman who is waiting. This time, however, the main character—Yasmine Allen, a writer and single mother—is struggling with her need to express her desires for physical intimacy.

Unfortunately, my efforts to fundraise money for the film in Los Angeles



As a loose sequel to 'Cycles,' the story of 'A Powerful Thang' again concentrates on a woman who is waiting. (Director Zeinabu Irene Davis, far left; actress Asma Feyijinmi, far right.)

As an independent I try to do small fundraisers on the side like home and community screenings, but those never bring in any large amounts of cash. The most successful fundraising idea I have had so far is to produce T-shirts that promote my new work. The artwork was done by Yolanda Brown, a Black woman artist from Dayton, and the shirt states the name of my production company ("Wimmin with a Mission"), and the title of my next work, *A Powerful Thang*.

As far as my choice of subject is concerned, I tend to seek out issues or topics that are not generally discussed in public or those not covered in film. *Cycles* illustrates those moments of waiting for menstruation to begin. It is a subtle and very spiritual piece for me. It also reflects my growing knowledge of spirituality and connection with my Yoruba ancestors and

at least not serious. She was wrong. I originally conceived of *Cycles* as an animated film, since I was taking an animation class and needed a project anyway. I asked another friend, Stephanie Ingram (now Titilayo Nkululeko), to be the character Rasheeda Allen in the film. She agreed, and Owanda and I began shooting black and white photographs of Titilayo.

Slowly I began to realize that *Cycles* was not going to work as an animated film. Not only would it take years to do in animation, it needed more of a dramatic impact that I was not quite able to get with the materials and equipment then available to me. It needed to be a live action drama, and so I sought ways to fuse what I had already done in animation with live performance.

When I made my first film at Brown



Edwina Lee Tyler and Linda Thomas Jones in the Afro-Haitian dance scene from 'A Powerful Thang.'

were fruitless. After I moved from Los Angeles to Ohio in 1989, the story began to be rooted in the colorful geography and history of southwestern Ohio, where a rich history of Black culture dating from the Underground Railroad exists. In addition to issues surrounding intimacy, the film also deals in subtle ways with sexual responsibility, and the inclusion of people who share alternative relationships. Unfortunately, most black independent narrative—such as works by Spike Lee, namely *She's Gotta Have It* and *School Daze*, and the Hudlin Brothers' *House Party*—serve only to inflate (rather than eradicate) homophobia in the Black community. Hopefully, *A Powerful Thang* will make small steps in addressing these "taboo" issues surrounding sexuality, and will provoke discussion.

*continued on page 56*

# WOMYN WORK

By Laura Irene Wayne

Growing up female wasn't easy, and growing up as an Afro-American female in a neighborhood infested with drugs and oversexed males was even worse. But then there was Josie. Watching my mother trying to escape the strong hard fists of my father, through overdoses, slashed wrists, alcohol, and mental wards. But then there was Josie. Me as a child, having my brother's unwanted touch yank away my childhood.

But then there was Josie. A next door neighbor, a tall muscular womyn with mahogany skin. She carried herself with strength and stature; nobody even thought to mess with her—and if they did, the thought didn't last very long. She was a safe retreat from a harsh environment. She was my mentor, my savior, my Amazon Queen.

Throughout history we as womyn have overcome the impossible by believing in ourselves, our mothers, our sisters, our lovers, and partners. We have struggled against domination, fought, sacrificed, suffered, and resisted in hope of attaining our divine vision of equality. We were and are soldiers, warriors, politicians, leaders, queens, mothers, and teachers, making many major contributions to society.

For me Josie possessed great authority and power. She was Queen Hatshepsut, the first Warrior Queen in African history, who ruled Egypt for thirty-three years. She was Queen Tiyre, the powerful Nubian Queen of Egypt who ruled before Cleopatra and Nefertiti. She was the African Queen Makeda of Egypt and Ethiopia, the great administrator, builder, and international stateswomyn who ruled a vast empire. She was Cleopatra, the beautiful Black African Queen of Egypt who used strategic methods to protect her throne from the worst aspects of Roman domination. She was Harriet Tubman, an ex-slave who liberated herself and many other African slaves from bondage through the underground railroad. She was Sojourner Truth, the talking

## LAURA IRENE WAYNE "Womyn Work"

Artist's Reception

Studio 856 July 7 7-9 PM  
856 8th Avenue (and "E" Street)



"Womyn Work" continues through July

Viewing by appointment, 233-6149

abolitionist, lecturer, preacher, seer, and teacher of the anti-slavery and womyn's suffrage movement. She was Rosa Parks, who risked imprisonment and her safety at the hands of the white racist police in Montgomery, Alabama by refusing to give up her seat to a white person and go to the back of the bus. She was the spark that created a decade of resistance. She was Fannie Lou Hamer, freedom fighter, public speaker, and Mississippi sharecropper, who became a symbol of determination to overcome discrimination. She was Winnie Mandela, mother of South Africa, the voice of liberation.

Josie taught me that I too have the voice of these womyn, that we are of the same blood. That I have a spark in me lying dormant, waiting for the fire of motivation to light it. So I too can move into action, pick up arms, and resist and organize against all forms of oppression.

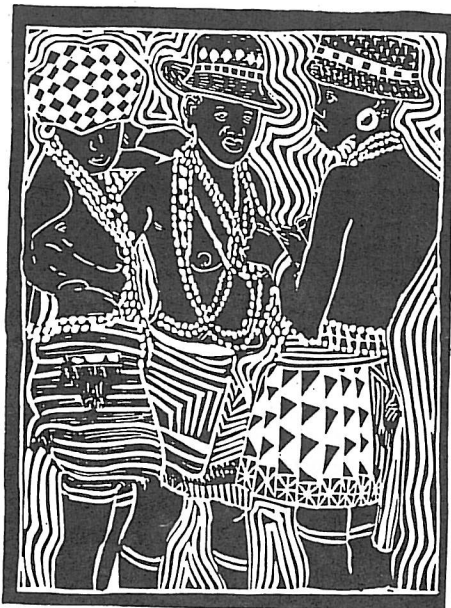
Laura Wayne's woodcut-prints reflect the heritage, culture and experiences of her people and their environment. Some of the people she creates are portrayed with no facial features to avoid perpetuating a stereotype. Her work has illustrated books and appeared in *Outlook*, *Matrix*, *Black Scholar*, and other journals. Her newest work consists of large expressive paintings of a lifestyle seldom seen.

We as womyn are warriors and the world is our battlefield. We possess the voice and strength to overcome hardships and accomplish whatever we partake. The voice is inherent in all of us. For some the sparks have not yet been lit.

As an artist and educator I have chosen to pass this herstory on to other womyn so they too can have positive images of womyn to identify with and gain strength from. This was the foundation of my business Womyn Work, a supplier of womyn cards, T-shirts, prints, paintings, and pins, all created by me, Laura Irene Wayne.

I grew up in a Womyn's World on the lower east side of Detroit—a world of six sisters, and a mother who had many strong Black womyn friends (among them was Josie). This is the world I look into for my strength, my inspiration—to create and re-create Womyn's Work. My





SISTAH  
L. Wayne

Laura Irene Wayne

work reflects the heritage, culture, and experiences of my people and their environment. Some of the images that I create are portrayed with no facial features to avoid perpetuating stereotypes and to cultivate sisterhood. It is as if the blank face is a mirror reflecting the viewer's own beauty.

My talent and inspiration to become an artist was acquired during the many absences of my father, when my mother transformed into this warm loving person. She would turn the kitchen table into an artist's easel, supplying paint, brushes, pencils—anything that we could use to express ourselves through art. I remember how this kitchen-table art brought us together, and gave my mother an inner



Laura Irene Wayne

peace that she passed down to me. Her words were the first words of encouragement that I received. Her self-assured instruction and warmth penetrated my five-year-old soul and helped me form my ideas of becoming an artist. I knew what art could do for me and others, so I set off on my artistic journey to do just that.

The road that I chose has not been smooth by far; there have been many obstacles. As an Afro-American womyn artist, I have been discouraged and harassed by white male professors in the university system, encouraging me to paint and draw as Europeans do, meaning to draw and cultivate white culture rather than my own. Having a strong bond to my culture, nothing could persuade me from painting and drawing how I see fit. I guess it's the Amazon in me.



Laura Irene Wayne

After graduating from Michigan State University in 1984, my life companion Johanna and I moved to California to attend graduate school. In the summer of that year we took our \$300 in savings and invested in Irene's Graphics and Fine Art. I chose the name Irene because it is not only my mother's first, but is also the middle name she gave to her seven daughters. Womyn Work is a division of Irene's Graphics and Fine Art. It is a home-based business run by Johanna and myself, while we both attend grad school and work full-time. We started with four card designs and went from business to business trying to promote them. We created our own catalogs and mailers.

But it wasn't until September of



Laura Irene Wayne

1989 that my artwork captured our community's eye. Recognition led to a group showing in San Francisco entitled "Dynamics of Color Art Exhibit: Works by Lesbian Artists on Racism." Two pieces of my artwork were chosen: "Home Street Home," a print addressing the issue of the homelessness of womyn and children; and "Dream of Freedom," which was chosen for the invitational mailer for the exhibit. I then began to submit my artwork and poetry to other womyn's and lesbian journals and newspapers. My

*continued on page 57*

**ABOUT THE WRITER:** Laura Irene Wayne says it is through the support of her partner Johanna, the womyn's community, and sisterhood that she has been successful with her business.



Laura Irene Wayne

# NINETEEN RIGHTS FOR LESBIAN FEMINIST ACTIVISTS

By Terri L. Jewell

*We activists lobby, march, write, lecture, spend our own money, and engage in physical combat for the rights of other people. We activists are also evicted, fired, listed with the FBI and CIA, jailed, hospitalized, rejected, and branded as rabid, oftentimes due to our passions. So, who stands up for the health, well-being, and rights of the activists?! Well....The first battle must begin at the front lines. Once the Lesbian Feminist Activist stops moving toward something or someone else long enough, she must self-activate so she can continue the struggle for yet another decade without losing her own marbles. There is no specific "type" to such a persona. She is simply who she is. So, listen up, ya'll! "We activists have rights, too!"*

## **1. YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO PUT YOURSELF FIRST SOMETIMES.**

The committee will not fall apart if you do not chair it or if you choose to miss a meeting or two. If it does, the others involved weren't serious to begin with anyway, so go out and have a snack under a tree. Watch the women walk by, and smile at each and every one of them.

## **2. YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO MAKE MISTAKES.**

So what if you misquote and/or misprint the number of Lesbian Socialists commuting between Florida and Sri Lanka! So what if you don't have a star dyke's brand of coffee available before her benefit concert! So what if you mail all 13,000 letters of protest to the wrong administrator in the wrong building in the wrong state for the wrong cause. Will these mistakes cause you loss of life, limb, liberty, or lover? Apologize, then ask for assistance.

## **3. YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO BE THE FINAL JUDGE OF YOUR FEELINGS AND TO ACCEPT THEM AS LEGITIMATE.**

You wept at viewing the departure of Ron and Nancy from the White House. You feel that Armageddon is precisely three weeks, five days, seven hours, twenty-three minutes and nine seconds... eight seconds...seven seconds away. You begin to store canned goods (light syrup, of course). You don't have to explain to nobody!

## **4. YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO HAVE YOUR OWN OPINIONS AND CONVICTIONS.**

The latest lesbian guru states that air is addicting since we must have it despite its many proven contaminants. It is fine for you to continue to breathe without assistance from a five-step support program. And how about busing to the Animal Rights rally in your leather Birkenstocks—and that beautiful pheasant-feather medicine bag around your neck? What writ requires human consistency 100 percent of the time? If you have such a writ in your possession, burn it.

## **5. YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO CHANGE YOUR MIND OR DECIDE ON A DIFFERENT COURSE OF ACTION.**

You have volunteered to plan the next dykes' organizational meeting. You ask Buffy if the women can gather at her condo and use her spa afterwards. Buffy loves the idea. But a week later, you decide to hold the meeting in your one-room basement apartment with the broken sewage line as a point of class consciousness-raising. No problem!

## **6. YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO PROTEST UNFAIR TREATMENT OR CRITICISM.**

You've just finished an hellacious week of coalition-building. You get home and your honey is mad at you because you've been late for dinner one time too many. She jumps on your case without mercy, then flies off into the bedroom and slams the door. Go to the bedroom door, scream nonsense syllables at the top of your lungs until you are spent, then go heat up what she had cooked. Have a great dinner while watching TV or playing the album she hates and you love.

## **7. YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO INTERRUPT IN ORDER TO ASK FOR CLARIFICATION.**

A Nigerian feminist is lecturing at a local bookstore. In several places during her talk, she speaks in Yoruba and does not translate. You cannot gain her meaning in context or anything else! Do you sit in silence, dear activist, or do you attempt to gain the full richness of her message by getting her attention, then asking what she just said? Or do you wish to try repeating the Yoruba to her later for translation? Or are you simply a cultural imperialist who will either negate the language through silence or misinterpret the entire lecture in your article? The worst thing that could happen is you'll be ignored. And that has happened before, right?

## **8. YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO NEGOTIATE FOR CHANGE.**

Your regional political organization has just acquired its first Anglo member. Everyone is excited by the possibilities for the future, and are happy to see such positive results of their networking efforts. You want two more Anglo lesbians involved, but everyone else feels



enough has been done for now. Do what you do best to convince them that the organization would benefit by more Anglo involvement.

### **9. YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO ASK FOR HELP OR EMOTIONAL SUPPORT.**

It is absolutely fine to ask for help in carrying those twenty-six boxes of pamphlets, distributing the 6,000 latex dental dams, setting up the sound equipment, typing (yes, typing!) the list of demands, digging the trenches, building the speakers' platform in the west field, and attending that program where you plan to "come out" in front of your legislator brother, your Catholic priest, your favorite hairdresser, and your father's employer.

### **10. YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO FEEL AND EXPRESS PAIN.**

Any time and anywhere you damn well choose!

### **11. YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO IGNORE THE ADVICE OF OTHERS.**

And this goes for oat bran instead of pork chops (for your health), the single gold earring instead of the plastic pair (for your class standing), monogamy instead of non-monogamy (for your social standing)...

### **12. YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO RECEIVE FORMAL RECOGNITION FOR YOUR WORK AND ACHIEVEMENTS.**

Eliminate the phrase "I don't deserve..." from your language. No need to campaign for "equal pay for equal work" and then do *ninety times more* than the most inept fool for free or in total obscurity, unless you choose this path. You are no power monger for not wanting to be taken for granted. So, next time you write a brilliant tract and everyone wants to read it out to the masses, make sure you are acknowledged as well as the woman who sold the most T-shirts for the fundraiser.

### **13. YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO CHOOSE NOT TO RESPOND TO A SITUATION.**

A flaming Moral Majority member affronts you verbally during the last sixty seconds of your speech to the Lesbian

Nation. No need to be "nice" or "fair" or "civil" by breaking up your message with comments to this person. A show of indifference is by far more painful to (and effective against) a heckler. Bursting a blood vessel in your neck from screaming button slogans at this idiot would please no one but the heckler. So, just chill the sucker.

### **14. YOU HAVE A RIGHT NOT TO JUSTIFY YOURSELF TO OTHERS.**

Just because you do not have an empirically tested and approved reason for your emotional outburst, you do not have to stand before the ninjas for the [you fill in the blank] with an explanation! An inability (or lack of desire) to articulate why you do not wish to solicit money door-to-door or trash the S/M lesbians does not mean you are somehow socially dysfunctional and in need of therapy, ya'll. It simply means it's no one's business!

### **15. YOU HAVE A RIGHT NOT TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR SOMEONE ELSE'S PROBLEM.**

If a women's movement worker stalls out in a blizzard sixty miles north of town and you are the only person with a 4x4 truck, hook and chain, in no way does this obligate you to leave your hot tea, your Gloria Swanson movie and the promise of a highly erotic night with a new love for a rescue. And even if you are doing absolutely nothing (*big sin* in this society!), you need not take on the troubles of the world. There are always lies that sound perfectly honest. Use those should all else fail to deliver you from unwanted responsibility.

### **16. YOU HAVE A RIGHT NOT TO HAVE TO ANTICIPATE THE NEEDS AND WISHES OF OTHERS.**

Let someone else sharpen the pencils, make the coffee, give an unsolicited neck-rub or hug, or welcome the silent stranger in the far corner of the room. Rather than being a presumptuous caretaker, be bossy and have others take care of you.

### **17. YOU HAVE A RIGHT NOT TO ALWAYS WORRY ABOUT THE GOODWILL OF OTHERS.**

Constant genuflection can be fatal. And there are some women who are indeed big-time pains in the butt! Why do

you have to clutter up *your* life with being the socially-acceptable female who is pleasant under all conditions? No need to take courses in anthropology in your attempts to understand some people. Chuck these folks and move on with the real business of living. It can be fun and liberating to be the bitch!

### **18. YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO BE ALONE, EVEN IF OTHERS WOULD PREFER YOUR COMPANY.**

Reread items #1, #3, #11, #13, #14 especially, and #16. Besides, others may want your company only because they could then use your personal computer. Or maybe they could convince you to pay for everyone's burritos...again. You can say you are working on your co-dependency issues!

### **19. YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO SAY "NO."**

Didn't Nancy chisel that catchy little word into our brains?! "Just say no" to the dolphins, the Nicaraguans, to recycling, Perrier water, Native American "lore," anti-racism workshops, abortion rights, women's music, anti-poverty measures, womyn-made language, aerobics, "call-waiting" and answering machines, "Women-don't-need-balls-to-play," global thinking/local acting, surviving incest, substance abuse, pornography, nuke harassment, and the monumental stresses many of us know of as "daily life." Just... say...no... and give yourself a long-needed rest, activist. ●

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*ABOUT THE WRITER: Terri L. Jewell is a Black lesbian feminist activist currently co-editing a Black lesbian literary anthology; editing the 'DreadWoman/LockSister' book; and working on her first poetry chapbook, '....And They Counted Our Teeth.' She will again co-ordinate the Women of Color conference at the National Women's Music Festival in 1991.*

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# THE RETURN OF FERRON TO WOMEN'S MUSIC

an exclusive interview as told to Laura Post

*In listening to Ferron's music, we are allowed to acknowledge the passage of time, people, memories, and hopes through her poetic metaphors. Her familiar vernacular, direct statements, enlightened associations, warm husky voice, and engaging stage presence have permitted us to identify with her experiences and her process, her struggles and her wisdom, our own anguish and strength. Beginning in 1986, however, many of her followers began to wonder at and mourn her absence from recording and touring.*

*Born on June 2, 1952, Ferron grew up in a semi-rural suburb of Vancouver, British Columbia, the eldest of seven children in a working-class family. After leaving home at fifteen, she scrambled financially, supporting herself by driving a cab, waitressing, shoveling gravel, and packing five-pound bags of coffee in a factory. From her basement, she recorded and distributed 'Ferron' (1977) and 'Ferron Backed Up' (1978). Since both albums are now out-of-print collector's items,*

*Ferron has decided to re-release much of their material on subsequent albums, as she has begun to do with "Rosalee" and "Who Loses" on 'Testimony' and "White Wing Mercy" on 'Phantom Center.'*

*In 1978, Ferron was "discovered" by Gayle Scott, an American living and working in film production in Vancouver who became Ferron's first and only manager and business partner. Ferron and Gayle collaborated on Ferron's next two studio albums: 'Testimony' (Lucy Records, 1980) and 'Shadows On A Dime' (Lucy Records, 1984), on which she continued to convey her polished messages of raw truths, through sharply lyrical, soothingly melodic music dealing with the cyclicity of relationships, questions of survival and identity, and optimism amid fear. Despite a small budget dependent on loans and contributions, in the absence of organized promotion, 'Shadows On A Dime' received wide distribution and praise, garnering a four-star rating from 'Rolling Stone' magazine.*

*In October of 1985, Ferron received a Canada Council Arts Grant, enabling her to take a much-needed year off: ostensibly to write and take voice lessons but also to recover a long-neglected personal life.*

*Recognizing that she would need more time than a year to fully heal from the hardships of the road and the vagaries of the business, Ferron remained withdrawn from the spotlight. After the grant money ran out, she earned a living by laboring as a carpenter's assistant and a bartender, by doing day care. Having reconnected with her physical and spiritual roots, having reaffirmed and redefined her own needs, Ferron has returned to the studio and the stage with a fresh body of work, manifest in her newest release, 'Phantom Center' (Chameleon 1990), having come to a remarkable new peace.*

*This interview was conducted in two parts: during the final production stages of 'Phantom Center' in July 1990, and during the Celebration 90: Gay Games III and Cultural Festival in August 1990.*

The *Testimony* and *Shadows* era was good for me, but there was a transition after *Shadows*, with people telling me what I was, what I wasn't, what I would never be, what I could have been. I was in my middle thirties and having to sit down and figure out what I cared about, what I absolutely could not live without, what was worth everything.

I wasn't sleeping well. I was always in a different city. How could I get down to finding out what I was doing when everything was changing all the time? There were several people around me who said that it was not a good time for me to stop touring because I was getting attention, and you're supposed to dive after it. Luckily, Gayle, my manager, agreed with me. So, hell or high water, fame, or whatever, I just had to stop doing the music the way we had been because I wanted to know about something else; I wanted to test me, to find out what I was made of.

So I stopped touring for a while, for a year really stopped, and that was interesting, and difficult. I would get an invitation to come down to San Francisco to do a show, and I was ready to go, ready to get away from me and get back into performing full-time. And, I tried to remember that I was quitting something that wasn't good for me: there was something in the work that had kept me going—a new person, a revelation, a new face—and I just got lost.

Then I started to calm down. For one thing, I didn't have to pay attention to time six months in advance. I needed to pay attention to my body, to me. Of course, the danger was—and what happened was—that I loved it, and I never wanted to come back again. I had a couple of years of really doubting whether I would come back again. At the time, I thought I could have made a decision not to, but I didn't know what else to do; I don't like anything else as much, and I'm

not good at anything else the way I seem to be good at this.

After deciding that I wanted to have time, I lived in a smaller area; I lived on an island, in British Columbia, then I went to Santa Fe for a while. What I wanted was to separate from urban life and to have time for me. For a while, I was caught up in myself. I had hidden from a lot of things, and I had to first learn that I was hiding, and then I had to figure out what I was hiding from, and whether I wanted to hide any more, and what it was going to cost me.

When I was in Santa Fe, I started to see that my actions were really hurting me. It finally hurt so much that I had to change. One of the ways that I was able to experience some kind of discipline in my life was to not consume alcohol any more. I had been hiding my feelings with alcohol, and that little act of self-love—stopping drinking—opened up a huge door for me. I'm really happy that I have been



able to do that, but the stopping drinking is not what's interesting; what's interesting is what led up to stopping drinking.

That had to do with victimization. This probably sounds really contradictory. I mean, I'm a writer, I get to go on the stage, I have people who love my work and everything—what kind of victim am I? But, I have my own set of memories of things, and I felt that something used to hurt me. When that thing stopped hurting me, I started hurting me. I wanted to stop the process of creating something negative that I was used to. I finally got to a place where I could no longer live with what I knew. No, there is a whole other way I'd like to tell you the story.

I got worried that I wasn't good enough at anything, and that my life was kind of gray. As a matter of fact, the most intense that that feeling got was through the months of February and March, 1986, in Vancouver, when it was raining all the time. I'd stopped touring. I stopped trying to steer my life. Well, when you wait and see what life's going to give you, life can only respond to what's going on inside.

I took a job taking care of kids, working in a group home. These kids were pissed off, and they were kind of a drag to be around. It was very intense. So, the next thing I knew, my job had me working out in Richmond, British Columbia, where I grew up, near a house where we had lived that held a lot of bad memories.

After a while, I found that I got in my car, and I drove toward this house, and I sat in the car, and I looked at the house. I'd look at the address, and I'd look at the house, and I'd get more and more numb. As I was still working with these disturbed kids, it all started to collide—but I didn't know that. Then, someone came up to me and told me that somebody in Jalapa, Mexico, wanted to meet me. I'd never been to a Third World country. I was in rainy Vancouver.

I called up Gayle and said that I wanted to go to Mexico. Well, to tell you the truth, I wanted to go anywhere, but I didn't know that, either—I wasn't knowing, I was living. Gayle told me that I had a show in Hawaii and that I could go to Mexico afterward. So, in a matter of weeks, I was scooped out of the bummer that I was in, I got second-degree burns from the sun because I'd never been in sun, and then I went to Mexico. There's more, and I want to tell you about what

happened before Mexico, before the drinking stopped.

In December of 1985, Gayle invited me to do a meditation. So we went on a ten-day Vipassana meditation where you don't look at each other, you don't talk. In the meditation, you do a thing called storming; I stormed like crazy, and I thought I was having a breakdown. I think it was really the release of negative stuff. I couldn't sleep. I thought I had bugs crawling on me. I mean it was just the worst. I had one rough night. But then it got better and better, and by the time I left there I was, to quote my friends, a "shimmering love object." When I came out of there, I had been opened; my heart chakra had been opened.



Susan Wilson

**Ferron: "I had to first learn that I was hiding, and then I had to figure out what I was hiding from, and whether I wanted to hide any more, and what it was going to cost me."**

After the meditation, we were driving home in the car, and Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young singing "Teach Your Children" came on the radio, and I started crying. I couldn't stop crying, and Gayle kept saying, "What is the matter?" and I didn't know. I knew that there was this whole direction everyone was going in the 1960s, and it was all fucked. I was crying because I saw the end of a dream.

We did that in December of 1985. By the following May I was still wild. The world wasn't enough anymore. There was some big new feeling of gratitude, of love; it was so big, and it wasn't in my life. And so then I went to Mexico, and things were beautiful and exotic and hot and the colors of the earth. I went into my senses; I partied for about six months, and then it was over. I got hepatitis and

had to stop drinking. But what it was that I had wanted with the drinking was the intensity of life that I knew existed, that I, in fact, experienced in the meditation.

I think that after I meditated I realized that I had been on a bummer all my life, and that life was to be enjoyed and loved and celebrated, and I went too far. I just kept celebrating and celebrating and celebrating. And I see now that's it's another kind of celebration.

That was more than three years ago, so it's really steadied out. It's really sweet—I mean I have what I wanted. It is a celebration, but it's a kind of slow celebration. My life's more peaceful now, and everything around me makes sense.

You know, there are people out there who have given me responsibilities; they can't go over the edge, they can't afford to. I think my job is to go a little bit near the edge and come back and talk about it, but I don't have to put myself over the edge. I can just live, and it'll be okay. That's what I started to learn and what I wanted to report. I wanted to absolutely try something out and learn how to live a calmer life with juice in it. I was afraid that there would be no more art, no more music, no more poetry, wit, sarcasm, that there would be nothing good, just an austere life. But, that's not true.

I don't know how public I want to be about not drinking. I just don't know. It's my life, and I don't want to be on a bandwagon. But I'm alive, I'm committed. So, on that level, I want to talk about it everywhere.

I do have a bitch about alcohol: as gay people, our love of ourselves is not very developed because of our culture; and then being gay, we have gone into dark rooms. Since I was nineteen years old, I have been going into dark rooms with black walls so that I could be with people like myself, and there was always liquid between us.

There's a song on *Phantom Center* called "Stand Up" that talks about taking our pride a step farther—not being burdened down in dark places but coming out and being with ourselves. I don't mean out as in, "I'm gay, I'm gay" only, but as we are completely. And so it has occurred to me that not drinking was a revolutionary act.

This is a nice year for me. It's the twelfth anniversary of working together with Gayle and doing the dream, and the record is coming out.

I spent five years being asked for another album. That attention kept me

trying, trying to come through in this big relationship. Recording made it real. I didn't make *Phantom Center* because of other people's desire, but that expectation helped.

We learn, in affirmative thinking, that without visualizing in a personal, active way, things can't come. Last fall, before we had even signed with a record company, Gayle and I saw an ad in the *Ladyslipper* catalog about my "upcoming album," date unknown, title unknown. I knew then that I would do another album. Some rumor went out, some desire went out. Things happened out of desire, and it was an honor—I was really touched—to hear that desire.

I have been working since 1985 and up to the present on music for *Phantom Center*. The first song was "Stand Up." I wanted to make a statement about wanting to have integrity in the world, to not be afraid of others, to have more self-esteem, to be myself. Because of the writing I do, which is a form of exploration, the next song was "Indian Dreams," about wondering how come I hadn't had self-esteem in the past, why it has taken me such a long time to make my own emotional analysis.

I got the grant in October of 1985, and stopped touring. I had lived on a rural island of 200 people on and off from 1970 through 1986, and it was there that I did all the stuff from the grant. On the island, I had written "White Wing Mercy" in 1978 for *Ferron Backed Up*, though I re-recorded it in 1990 for *Phantom Center*. "Heart of Destruction" I wrote in 1982, and "Phantom Center" was done in 1986. I performed it that year at Bloomington, right after Mexico.

"Harmless Love" I wrote while living in Vancouver. I had run into some old friends, some kids I'd gone to school with who were, when I saw them again, a couple and in love. I realized that I wanted to write "harmless love" into my life, that I wanted to bless those people in their tenderness. I was moving to Santa Fe the next morning, and I stayed up until 5:30 a.m. writing the song. That was in January of 1987.

Five or six weeks later, in Santa Fe, I wrote "Sunken City." I was going through a lot of changes and doing a lot of writing. As I went through more changes in my life, I kept making music.

In my twenties, I tried to define who I was in relation to authority, to aloneness, to self-esteem, to love. On *Testimony*, I wrote "Ain't Life a Brook." That

song wasn't about a particular person, it was a metaphor for the connections between people. It is interesting how a relationship with another is about letting them be who they are, how very opposite from the idea of romance and wanting people to be a certain way.

*Shadows* came in my thirties, when I was trying to find my place in time. You know the line "who would I be if I didn't sing?" [from *Shadows on a Dime*] is really a study in interdependence for me. On the same album, "Proud Crowd/Pride Cried" hinted at what was beginning to happen to me. I was connecting with other people and aware of the darkness of being spiritually bankrupt. I used the idea of crawling in a back alley metaphorically, and began to understand that nothing could happen unless I surrendered to that darkness. In the song, I did that, allowed light to shine on me, felt cool about the light. Then, of course, the light went away.

"Proud Crowd" was really my first awakening. Part of that song came out of hiking alone, when I was twenty-one, on a rigorous trail, on a day off. I saw a field of mountain flowers, Baby's Breath, in a strong wind. It was truly beautiful, and I cried. "Proud Crowd," written when I was thirty-two, is about the idea that in my darkest moments I can recapture those flowers, that there is beauty and strength everywhere, even in me. When I started writing the song, I was focused on a relationship not working, the language between us broken, and I wanted to study that breakdown. I remembered the flowers and their gift from life. I put "Proud Crowd" on *Shadows* for me, to be finished with it, to be able to listen to it. I didn't perform it for years, because I didn't think that people would be really interested in it.

On *Phantom Center*, "Inside Track" took up where "Proud Crowd" left off. I was in my late thirties and in Santa Fe when I wrote "Inside Track," six months after "Harmless Love" and "Sunken City." That part of New Mexico had no flowers and was dusty, but there was soft beauty in the clouds. "Inside Track" came at a time when I was merging parts of my identity and dispelling ideas about other parts of me. I went back to Santa Fe to visit, in May of 1989—right after I'd gotten my green card, and moved back to the coast, to Seattle—and met a loneliness that I had not known that I had had in New Mexico.

In Seattle, I bought an electronic

keyboard and a computer and wrote a lot of music. What the keyboard has allowed me to do is to be private, to create without having to have other people hear it. "The Cart" was the last song to be written for *Phantom Center*. Actually, the first verse was written in 1973 and the rest of it in April 1990, after signing the record deal and moving to Provincetown.

I think that what has been important to me about *Phantom Center* is to have the courage to go after what we wanted musically. Gayle and I took a step in a particular direction, and it was a logical next step. It's a big sound, and I need that sound, I want that sound. Recording technology is incredibly different than it was in 1984. Some of these songs have forty tracks. I couldn't do it alone.

I eagerly awaited the opportunity to work with intense musicians and to take a song to its ultimate musical conclusion. If that meant I was going to be rock-oriented for some passages of the song, I meant it. I have always wanted to take the music where it wanted to go, and I hope people will accept that. Even though Gayle and I signed a record deal, we were very much participants in the process.

I'm excited about this album, and I'm excited to think about people listening to this album and completely accepting that what's on the record I wanted to be there. That I was present.

*Phantom Center* will show that I am a woman, a gay woman, a cultural survivor, alive and kicking. Women's music is not only about women opening up, it's about all people opening up to women. When I think of the first women's music, I think of the mid 70s, of early Olivia, of women learning that we could be women together. I wasn't then performing in women's music; I was doing folk music up in Vancouver, playing to men and women, some gay, some of them straight.

Someone asked me recently, "Does it make you feel proud to live in gay Provincetown?" It makes me feel proud to be gay in the world. I want our sensibilities to be out there. The original thing was

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that women's music was to change consciousness. And it did.

It's great to be back in Vancouver for me, since I have a lot of friends here. The opening ceremony of the Gay Games was really powerful. I felt part of it. I was proud to be here, and I need this contact. In 1990, the Gay Games took out a full-page ad in the Vancouver newspaper. Ten years ago, you couldn't put the word "gay" into the paper. Being here gives me strength and conviction to be a gay woman in the world. It's an interdependency because I think that people also get strength from me, since I have decided who I am, and I am myself in public. Being a gay woman and playing to audi-

ences, I think that I do give other people strength.

*On August 11, 1990, Ferron was the featured performer at the sold out Gayla! A Celebration of Women's Culture, the women's finale of Gay Games 90 in Vancouver. Ingenuous and engaging, Ferron acknowledged her Vancouver beginnings: "When I started here, twenty years ago, I had two songs, one of which was 'O, Louise'...[applause, a few chords]...How does it start?" Through the anthemic "It Won't Take Long" and the well-loved "Ain't Life A Brook," Ferron continued to be relaxed and focused. Singing against the sound track, she performed for the first time publicly the album*

*versions of three new songs: "Stand Up," which she dedicated to the memory of Harvey Milk and to Svend Robinson, the openly gay British Columbia M.P. who had spoken so forcefully and with feminist awareness at the opening ceremonies of Gay Games III; the bold "Sunken City"; and the bouncy "Heart of Destruction," while playfully exchanging dance steps with emcee Kate Clinton who was lambada-ing in the background. Coaxing "a big voice and long harmonies" from the audience on "Harmless Love," Ferron graciously returned for the proud "Testimony" with the entire cast and crew of Gayla, singing to the audience then merging into the swaying line of performers and producers.●*

## TWO NICE GIRLS from 17

of people I know, to not shy away from it. I don't want to cave in to any sort of notion of being palatable in order to be successful."

Gretchen agrees. "You really have to do what pleases you, what is interesting, and what you think is important, because you are going to have to listen to yourself every night, whether you have a record contract or not. There are a lot of lesbian artists, or homosexual artists in general, for whom it is not necessarily the thing that they want to say. They do not want to crusade to homosexuality. Well, "she says, "we do."

We live in a world that spawned and created John Denver, M.D.C. (Millions of Dead Christians/Millions of Dead Cops), Cris Williamson, and Patti Smith at the same time. Rarely are artists able to straddle these enormous contradictions. Stripping traditions and lyrical content bare of embellishment and adding choice speed rock elements, Two Nice Girls are able to capture such diverse outgrowths of their generation. They use the abandon and intensity of hardcore without letting its inherent consumptive energy dissolve the more acoustic emotional dynamic range. This band also holds fast to the punk manifesto "Get up on stage and let the audience revel in the consequences."

These four women have an unusual sensibility: Austin country mixed with a defiant charisma and an adolescent flair, hippie because of the acoustic instruments (including mandolin), and punk because of the chutzpah and dedicated arrogance that demands their work be

taken seriously. Two Nice Girls transcends the Ozzie and Harriet backyard barbecue version of American reality, where our musical leaders are bought off by the highest bidder. This band is a marked difference. "In punk, people are used to saying what they think," says Gretchen. "Punk thinking has been a lot more embracing of difference, including differences of sexuality."

The group is well aware of their hybrid sound. "The country comes from deep inside of Gretchen's soul," says Kathy. Gretchen's affinity for the mandolin keeps the songs grounded in bluegrass and country, yet the sound draws on other influences as well. "My Heart Crawls Off" (from the first LP) is pure Carpenters and Partridge Family pop. "I like the screaming electric guitar sound, and it is represented in my music," says Gretchen. "The combination of acoustic guitar and electric guitar is such a cool sound."

Laced with a serious and dry humor, *Like a Version* is a psychedelic reworking of five cover tunes and their original composition "I Spent My Last \$10 (On Birth Control and Beer)." The song [on the September 1990 soundsheet in *HOT WIRE*] is a remix of a Two Nice Girls hit of last spring. Given all of the "lesbians-are-going-back-to-men" hype of this past year, "Last \$10" crystallizes the humorous sentiments that poke fun at stale and inflexible definitions, with lines like "I spent my last ten dollars on birth control and beer/my life was so much easier when I was sober and queer."

Four of the cover songs selected were originally made into gold records by the 1970s AOR radio station machinery

that spit out the likes of REO Speedwagon, Toto, and Foreigner. This "sound" was ever-present, and *Like a Version* finds something meaningful in these memories.

Two Nice Girls' effort to revive this material (which was vapid and almost dead-on-arrival the first time through) actually works in a strange and perverse way. This collection of songs either transcends or is a tribute to Wonder Bread; Swanson's Hungry Man Dinners; Meatloaf (the performer or the meal); sugar for breakfast, sugar for lunch, and sugar for dinner—those amazingly empty calories that we grew up on. Covers on the EP include "I Feel Like Makin' Love" (Bad Company) and "I Feel Love" (Donna Summer) done as a medley; and "Top of the World" by Karen Carpenter. (The sheer feat of pulling off the quintessential straight version of this song is a sure-fire way to expose and bring to the surface all of this song's inherent incongruities. I can't help recalling Karen and Richard Carpenter on the White House lawn with Richard Nixon. I will also not forget that Karen Carpenter was a pioneer, a drummer when few women were behind a kit. She is also an ever present reminder of patriarchy's self-inflicted deaths, having died of anorexia nervosa.)

"Speed Racer," on the other hand, is a cover of the cartoon theme song, revised to have the main character drop some speed (the drug) and tow the karmic line, an appreciated dose of reality superimposed over the cartoon character. In the end speed racer cracks up, which is a nice ideological twist—yet another effort at making inconsistencies more ap-

*continued on page 47*

# CONFESSIONS OF A CLASSICAL DYKE

By Leah Zicari

It was one of the first warm days of spring, which come quite late to western New York. People were swarming the campus playing frisbee, heading for the creek, picnicking, generally hanging out. It was just after 5 p.m., so most classes had finished for the day. Since it was very possible that tomorrow it could be snowing again, the students were taking advantage of the long-awaited beautiful weather.

Except me. I was in my seven-by-eight-foot practice room, watching these events from the long, narrow window which did not open. I was diligently hacking away at my Segovia Scales, Arpeggios, Giuliani Right Hand Studies. It was my first year of college and I was majoring in Classical Guitar Performance. I had chosen the life of a music major, and knew that my summers would be spent differently than most students' from now on.

Life for a music major is not quite the same as for other students. While we go to classes and do homework as others do, we must also devote an additional three to six (or more) hours a day practicing our instruments. In addition, there are rehearsals with other large and small ensembles in which we are required to participate. It is this extra time dedicated to our studies which distinguishes between a student of the Arts and an average college student.

Many students devote similar time in non-Arts fields to such requirements as science labs, internships, student teaching, and medical rounds. But for these students this type of time commitment generally doesn't begin until the final year of their bachelor degrees, or in graduate school. But the musician has already been doing this kind of work for years, usually since childhood. A person who wishes to major in music has already achieved a certain degree of proficiency on her instrument; she has been taking lessons for many years and has always

set aside time for practicing, even in grammar school and high school.

The potential music student must pass an audition to display the technique and ability she already possesses. Several faculty members observe the audition and the decision must be unanimous.

Some people may wonder why a person would go through all this. Why would someone miss out on many things in life to practice an instrument?

For me, it was what I loved to do. I got into music at the age of five when my parents—who had noticed musical abilities in me since infancy—found a community music school which had classes for young children. They enrolled me at the Hochstein School of Music (Rochester, New York), where I was a student on and off until age fourteen. While there were times in my childhood when I wasn't taking music lessons of some sort, I was always doing something musical. It was no surprise to people when I decided to continue my music training on the college level.

Nonetheless, I did not decide to study music right away—which gets me back to the question of why anyone would want to sacrifice other things in life for her art. I didn't think I wanted to. I'd begun to feel that I'd given up enough and now wanted to do other things. But even after taking a year off following high school to have fun and experience new things, I went head-first into a music program because I knew I had the talent to excel as a guitar player. I loved the instrument. I loved music.

My parents excluded, everyone said, "What are you going to do with a music degree? How will you make a living?" (Remember, this was 1982, the beginning of Reaganomics and Yuppieism.) I didn't know, I didn't care. I had a passion for music and knew that I could make it work. My life wasn't going to be controlled by tax bracket status. I wasn't going to be one of the millions who come home daily bitching about the job they've

hated for the last twenty years. I was going to give up a little time now doing something I loved so I wouldn't have to give up the rest of my life working a miserable job.

So on I went. My dream at the time was to be a great jazz player and studio musician. But my budget would only allow a state university, not Berklee or Miami. At the time, no state college had a jazz guitar program, so I chose Fredonia State College because of its reputation and because the teacher there was a woman (always had my priorities straight, so to speak). She was—and is—a great teacher, too. The following year, when she left Fredonia to teach at the University at Buffalo, I went too.

Over the next three years my growth as a guitarist (and my friendship with and loyalty to her) influenced my decision to pursue the classical style.

I was granted scholarships based on musical aptitude. I was developing into a polished classical guitarist and was, by my senior year, considered number one in the department. Since all was well, the next obvious step was to apply for UB's Masters program and continue my guitar studies. I wanted to be one of the few female classical guitarists performing in the circuit, and to run my own guitar program at a university. The music school must have wanted the same for me, since they accepted me and gave me a Teaching Assistantship, whereby they waived tuition and paid me a biweekly stipend to attend school as a graduate student. My life was great. I was happy. Things couldn't have been better.

Then came 1986, the year from hell. Three weeks before I was to give my senior graduation recital in April (you cannot receive a degree without giving this performance), my father died. Denial and shock did their job and I presented a successful, musically sound concert to a packed hall. That's about as good as it got, too. Whatever could go wrong that year did, including the breakup of a rela-



tionship. By the end of August, shock and denial began to wear off, grief set in, graduate school started, and I was a basket case.

At this time my friendship with my guitar teacher also began to get strained. My undergraduate school years had been filled with intense political activism, which included just about every cause you could think of. I was a radical dyke with energy enough to save the world several times over. I was active in the school's Gay and Lesbian Alliance, serving as president in 1985-86. I sang and played my guitar at every school rally I could. I did the work of ten people at times, and my art would "suffer"—meaning I had not improved according to my ability during a particular week. This was the root of the problem between my teacher and me.

was time to, in her words, "shit or get off the pot."

To explain, professors have an entirely different attitude toward graduates than they do undergraduates. (At least most of the ones in my department did). They don't take you too seriously as a student until you tell them that you want to study your field more intensely at a higher education level. Once you're in graduate school, they relate to you in a "you-want-this-to-be-your-career, well-prove-it" sort of way. The requirements are highly structured and rigid, with no room for digression as they define it. While I understand why many espouse that philosophy, I think it's bullshit. Graduate school for me was the most stifling, uncreative experience of my life. There was no room for diversity or different and opposing ideas. This sup-

interaction with me was the minimum she was required to give: our one-hour lesson per week. No more extra lessons, no lunches together, no more nights out. Barely a "hello" when I passed her in the hall. Her input of ideas to the pieces I was working on was as limited as she could make it. I was being "punished." I'd known her long enough to know that she was thinking, "Why should I waste my time if she's not committed?" Coming from her graduate-school-professor mentality, I understood this.

I also understood, though it was never said, that she was very hurt. She had given me a great deal of her time and energy, and here I was telling her I was thinking of flying the coop. Teachers spend their entire careers waiting for "the one student" whom they know can go places and "do it." We worked six years together for the same goal, then I let her down (from her perspective).

But I had to be true to myself, as I had been when I decided I was going to study music in the first place. The classical world was not a place where a flaming dyke like myself could be comfortable. As my feminist consciousness and political perspective developed, I found I could not cater to an audience of white, elite heterosexual men whose wives were clad in fur coats and whose biggest world concern was that it was going to rain on golf day. In addition, I did not want to become another narrow-minded college professor, perpetuating the non-creative study of music.

So, when I presented my final solo Master's degree recital in April, 1988—which was passable, but marginal at best for my standards and ability—I performed my last classical concert to date. I still love the instrument and its style, and have worked on classical pieces and techniques since to keep my chops up, but I have a block (somewhere in my second chakra) about practicing religiously, and certainly about performing classical music. Over the last two years, I've been trying to unblock and reframe the whole experience a little at a time.

In the meantime, I have begun a  
*continued on page 57*



D. Maveen

**Leah Zicari: "As my feminist consciousness and political perspective developed, I found I could not cater to an audience of white, elite heterosexual men whose wives were clad in fur coats and whose biggest world concern was that it was going to rain on golf day."**

"What are you, a lesbian or musician?" she'd begun to ask me. I tried to explain that I was both, that they were integrated and could not, by my own identity, be separated. She had always been supportive of my lesbianism, but could not understand that because of my lifestyle, the personal was political. She didn't mind my being a lesbian; the problem occurred when my lesbian politics interfered with my musical progress. She was just doing her job, but by the time graduate school started, she'd lost her patience with my "wandering" ways. It

posedly creative art had become nothing more than a daily left-brained exercise in self-discipline. It's no wonder that my two years in graduate school were very unproductive, and my art stagnant.

So it came to surface that maybe I didn't want to be Ms. Classical Guitarist USA after all. These doubts made school even more difficult. One day, in a rather hard discussion with my teacher, I very reluctantly confessed these feelings to her. I didn't want to tell her because I knew there'd be consequences with no chance for absolution. After the disclosure, her

**ABOUT THE WRITER:** Leah Zicari says her twelve years of Catholic School helped shape her rebellious nature. She began writing petitions in sixth grade (for the right to become an altar girl), and is proud of the fact that she never dated a boy throughout high school.

# REPORT FROM THE 1990 WEST COAST WOMEN'S MUSIC & COMEDY FEST

By Dell Richards, Former Festival Virgin

Picture this: a festival virgin. Forty-two years old, fifteen years gay, and never been to a women's music celebration. Her musical tastes are pretty esoteric. She goes for performance artists like Laurie Anderson—and not much else.

But she took the plunge, packing a backpack, hiking boots, and long underwear to be ready for those rugged days and cold nights in the woods. Then she drove five hours into the Sierra Nevada mountains to a private campground near Yosemite National Park for the West Coast Women's Music and Comedy Festival.

She didn't know what to expect. She'd heard horror stories about festivals: two hour lines for food that was inedible or showers that were cold. Mosquitos larger than dragonflies. Political battles that made the back rooms of Tammany Hall look like a picnic.

As if that weren't bad enough, there'd been a major forest fire in Yosemite two weeks earlier. The roads had been closed for days. Maybe there'd be nothing left but blackened hills. But Camp Tawonga's secluded valley had been spared. None of the oaks, pines, or incense cedars had been touched.

What greeted her were 2,000 women, many bare-breasted. She'd seen tits before, but the woman usually wanted her to look and touch. This was different. She didn't want to stare, but she could hardly get her eyes off the cornucopia of shapes, sizes, and colors. She found herself repeating a mantra: "Look at the eyes, the eyes!"

But whether she stared or not, a new sense of the world—of what it *had been* like and what it *could be* like—began to dawn on her. For four days, she was going to live in a world where women did not have to cover their breasts or be ashamed of their bodies, no matter what kind of breasts they had. For four days,

she was going to be free of the heterosexual conventions seemingly accepted by everyone: constant male ridicule, sexual harassment, and being treated like an object.

Despite the scenery, she wasn't in the best of moods when she arrived. She was recovering from a sore throat and still taking antibiotics. She was hot, tired, and dirty—and this city slicker hadn't been camping in years.

Plus, 2,000 lesbians were great in theory, but most were couples and she was there alone. She felt like a spiny starfish in a shimmering sea of couples.

And as she unpacked, she realized she wasn't used to relaxing. Being one of those modern American women who does nothing but work, she had little appreciation for leisure. Sex, jogging in the foothills, and the occasional Saturday night movie after another long day at the office was about as much recreation as she ever took.

She began to wonder as she lay down to rest on her bunkbed if this inability to relax wasn't a phenomenon that sometimes marred women's music festivals. After all, if you're organizing protests or fighting about politics, you don't have to deal with the anxiety that comes from having time on your hands and nothing to fill it with.

But once she got to the stage and began to listen to the music, she perked up. The music wasn't anything like she'd imagined. It ranged from the new lesbian folk satire of Jamie Anderson with her "Why Do Straight Girls Look So Butch To Me?" to the contemporary Japanese music of Rakugaki with koto and *shakuhachi* flute.

When Altazor, four women from Central and Latin America who play songs of their native countries, spoke against the fiasco in Iraq as an introduction to an anti-war song, she began to

feel really at home. It was the first time she'd heard anyone say anything publicly about the U.S. involvement in Iraq—or such highly suspect issues as flag-burning or playing dominance games with the world. She knew Republicans were using these patriotic issues to keep everyone's minds off the problems of homelessness and drug abuse that they can't begin to fix, but it was the first time she'd heard anyone say it publicly.

By the time the rhythm-fusion Blazing Redheads took to the Main Stage that night with their blend of jazzy salsa, she was rarin' to go. The music had made her blood boil and her body want to move. She began bopping to the beat, by herself. The music was so hot, she didn't even care if she had a partner. All she wanted to do was dance.

After it was over, she walked back to her cabin in the dark. As she was rambling along, she became aware of someone behind her following her. Her heart began to race. She should turn around and confront the person or run. But then she realized she didn't have to wonder who it was; it was a woman following her. Being in a place without men, she didn't have to worry about the violence toward women that underlies heterosexual society—the constant threat of assault, rape, and murder.

For four days, she would be living in a version of Old Europe 10,000 years ago, a time when there were no weapons, no fortifications around the cities, and no war; a time when women had total sexual and economic freedom; a time that's only recently been reconstructed from archeological evidence by Marija Gimbutas. In other words, a lost matriarchal paradise that we can only envision—and re-create for short periods of time at events like this.

The next day, she woke up exhausted. A night trying to stay warm in a



sleeping bag had left her stiff, cold, and grouchy. So much so that she'd had it. She told herself that if she didn't feel any better by lunch, she'd get in her car and head back to civilization. To heck with the past!

Luckily, the hot showers did more for her mind than her body. She stood under the spigot and let the water wash away her aches and pains. A couple of extra vitamin C's and she could make it through the day.

The first workshop she went to was one on butch-femme roles by Jeanne "Kicking the Habit" Cordova, which turned out to be more of a comedy routine than a lecture. Cordova had created this classification system that was so complicated even she couldn't follow it. Butches were divided into fourteen categories, including: "True Grit"—the strong-but-silent John Wayne one; "Corporate"—that wear earrings and the traditional female drag to seventy-hour-a-

owned retreat for all-women events. They say the events discriminate against men. Tyler currently is battling the city, arguing that people who are discriminated against need to have a space of their own to see what kind of culture they would create without the oppressor there to dominate them. [See the interview with Robin Tyler in the March 1988 issue of *HOT WIRE*; also "The Fight to Save the Southern Fest" in the September 1990 issue.]

And Tyler is right. For our virgin the feel of the world was already changing. She no longer noticed women's bodies. She no longer felt like an object, looked at and measured against an outwardly imposed Twiggy-type standard. Although she had not taken off her shirt, the casualness of the nakedness was beginning to make her feel more in tune with her own body and even with the earth.

And there were other, even more profound differences. She already knew

before—some ten years later, the peace and love of Woodstock degenerated into the death and destruction of Altamont. By comparison, women's music festivals have been going on for nearly fifteen years and there hasn't been any violence yet.

The only battles are verbal—arguments about racism, sado-masochism, and the necessity of excluding adolescent boys is as violent as it gets.

The S/M controversy that surfaced at the Michigan festival this year did erupt at dinner that night. Author Margaret Sloan-Hunter questioned its validity for feminists while Jeanne Cordova argued for the freedom of sexual expression. During the discussion, our virgin realized she should go to the S/M workshop. She knew almost nothing about it and felt she should be more informed if she was going to have an opinion on such an emotionally charged subject.



June Parlett



June Parlett



June Parlett

**Music to boil the blood at the West Coast Women's Music & Comedy Festival. (From left: the politically inspiring Altazor; She-Ra, Princess of Power; and the rhythm-fusion of the Blazing Redheads.)**

week jobs; "Stone Butch"—a 1950's term for a vanilla "top." There were also ten types of femmes, ranging from femme-fatales—which are generally known as "Lipstick Lesbians"—to "Leather," "Sporty," "Androgynous," and "Granola."

Festival producer Robin Tyler came on the stage later to talk about the ongoing problem she has renting land for a lesbian festival. Even the city of San Francisco—one of the most liberal cities in the world—has refused to let her use a city-

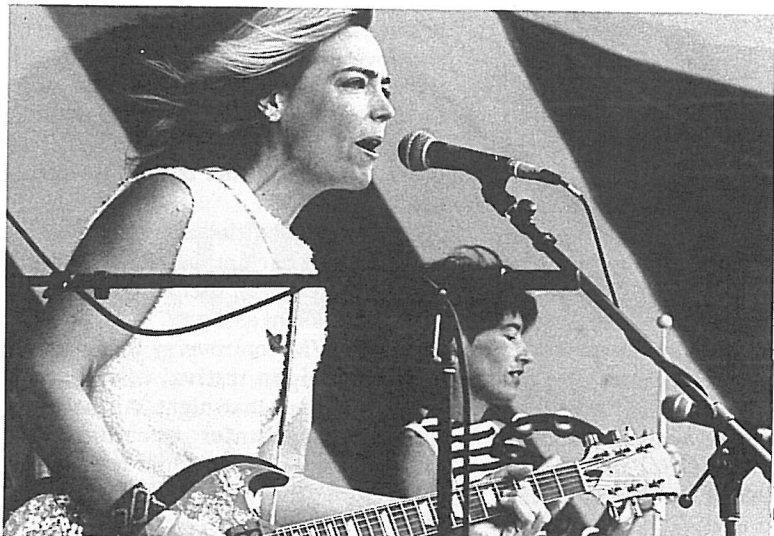
intellectually that women could do anything men could do, but when she saw women building stages, and setting up tents, and driving trucks full of musical equipment, she felt an emotion much stronger than pride. She felt robbed of a strength that could belong to every woman if she weren't conditioned into foot-bindingly tight roles.

What the city doesn't understand is that we already know what music festivals with men are like. We've seen it

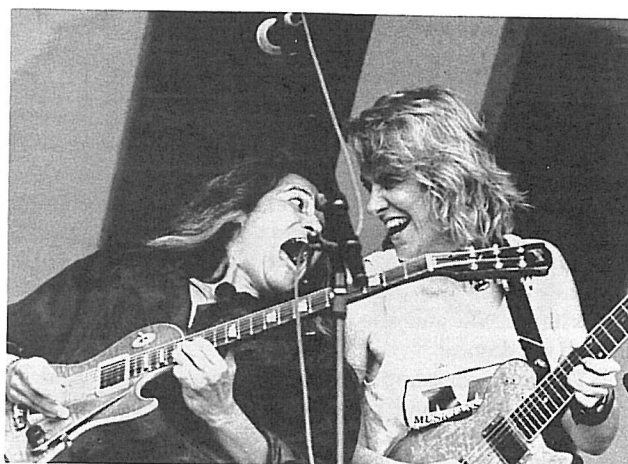
At the workshop the next day, she got more than she bargained for. She had an icy, almost academic response—until one of the speakers looked right at her as

*continued on page 47*

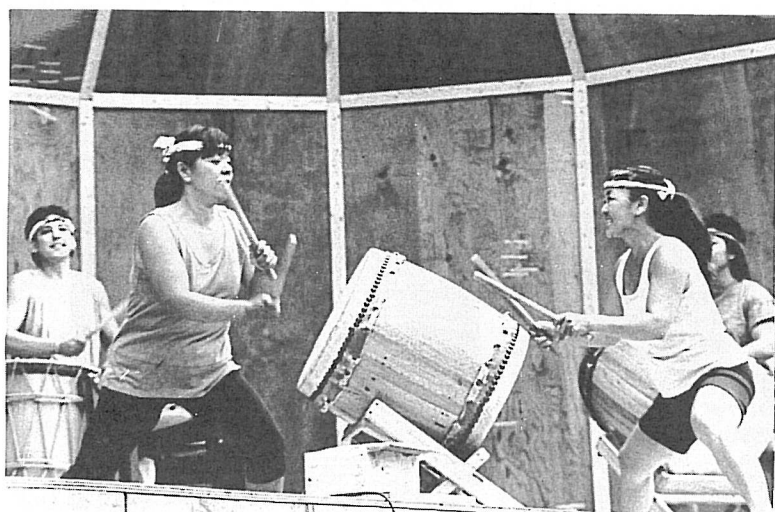
**ABOUT THE WRITER:** Dell Richards is a syndicated journalist whose book 'Lesbian Lists' is available nationwide. This article was written in the genre of "New Journalism"—fact written as a fictional piece.



Helen [Deadly Nightshade] Hooke returns to women's music



Rock veterans June Millington and Sherry Shute jam together on the Michigan festival day stage



Sawagi Taiko: precision drumming, dance, and martial arts



Rhiannon entralls the Michigan crowd with stories of her mother's dying (with ASL interpreter Sherry Hicks)



Judy Grahn uses voice, keyboards, and synthesizer in her Virtual Poetry performance art

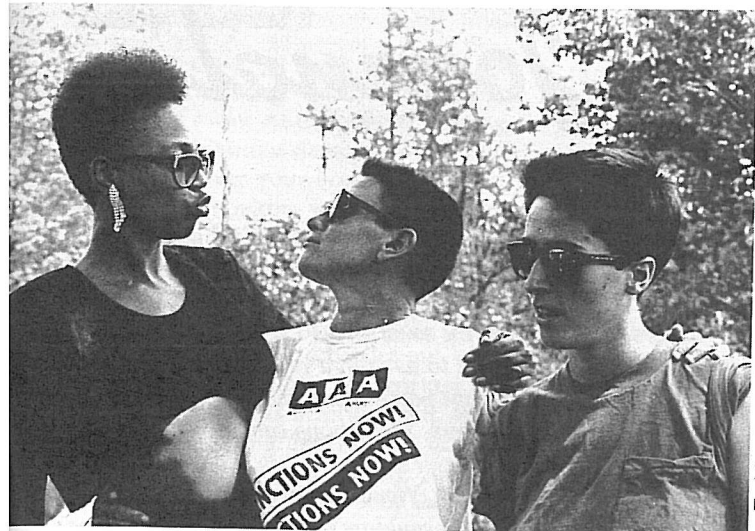


ASL interpreter Susan Freundlich, performing with Holly Near



The Michigan Festival Concert Band, conducted by Sharon Still, is fast becoming a traditional way for festi goers who play instruments to enjoy performing at the festival





From left: Comic Karen Williams and singer Phranc with 'Dykes to Watch Out For' cartoonist Alison Bechdel

Toni Armstrong Jr.



Double your pleasure, double your fun: The twin Washington Sisters on apartheid, peace, feminism, and relationships

Toni Armstrong Jr.

## 1990 FESTIVAL PHOTOS



As she juggles, she tells stories: character actress Judith Sloan

Toni Armstrong Jr.



Nana Simopoulos: instrumentalist, vocalist, and composer of world music and jazz

Toni Armstrong Jr.



Assar Santana, leader of the Montreal-based Chamel No. 6 band

Toni Armstrong Jr.

# 1990 Michigan Journal

By Liza Cowan

This was my eighth or ninth trip to the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival. I started at the second annual festival as a general festie-goer; after that I always went as a craftseller, selling my postcards and buttons, and sometimes making photo buttons. My first time as a festival worker (in 1987), I went for ten days and worked in Oasis, which is the emotional care center for festival-goers. In 1989 and again this year I returned with the job of Worker Support, a team of workers who do much the same job as Oasis, but for festival workers. We listen to, talk to, and—to a limited extent—provide counseling to workers who come to us with a range of problems and issues: overwork, guilt, problems with lovers, incest issues, panic, work related problems. We arrange peer support meetings and 12-step meetings. We mediate disputes between crew members or between coordinators and crew members. Mediations can be between two women or entire crews, sometimes up to twenty women.

Whatever issues women come to the festival with seem always to be intensified during this time. Women often think of the festival as "safe space," as indeed it is in many ways. Emotionally, however, the festival seems to function as a cauldron for our stew of emotions.

There are many hard things about being a Worker Support worker. We mainly hear yucky things about women's festival experience, and it is hard not to have this affect our own perceptions. We are living with, eating with, showering with, and sometimes sleeping with the same women whom we are counseling, mediating, and providing support to. Boundaries become mighty blurry, if they exist at all.

There are 8,000 stories in the naked city. This is mine, colored by my feelings and experiences from the green and white striped Worker Support tent, the one just over there, next to the massage tent—the one with the view of all downtown and its activities.

## Thursday, July 26

Alix and I arrived at suppertime. I've never been here so early in the year. Only two tents are up—the worker kitchen (minus equipment) and the office. Supper is cooked over the fire. I found a secluded place to set up my tent. I love my tent. Showers are still cold. My Worker Support co-worker Deborah Lea is already here.

## Friday, July 27

The Worker Support tent is still not up so I helped in the office, the big yellow and white striped tent. We laid carpet. I filed festie-goer attendance forms. Supper over the fire again. AB, a newcomer, told me how excited she is that she will be working with all women, excited to be working in non-hierarchical formations. I warned her it may not be the way she imagines. My first worker support.

## Saturday, July 28

More women arrived. Tents went up, including the Belly Bowl, a big red and white striped tent which will serve as our dining room and our living room. The weather is beautiful. It's beginning to look more like the worker village. And we have hot water. The shower area is becoming beautiful.

## Sunday, July 29

Women arrived in droves. Registra-

tion started. We checked everyone in, put hot pink bands on their wrists, gave them orientations. I took Polaroid photos all day, which will go on the big photo board. I am greedy to be the photographer. Reminds me of my old work in Crafts. I get to see everyone and say hello. I consider it a bonding experience. I offered them lipstick and a hairbrush if they complained of looking road weary. I see who finds this amusing, who is horrified.

## Monday, July 30

Where to put the Worker Support tent this year? [Festival Producer] Boo, [Worker Support coordinator] Moka, and I had to decide. It's exciting to see women pounding tent stakes. Moka's a dedicated stake pounder. I could have had a try, but declined. I prefer to lift weights in my aerobics class. What a gal! We had our first workers' meeting. I ran it. The women were rowdy and I loved it.

## Tuesday, July 31

We began to get our Worker Support tent in shape. We have carpet this year, castoffs from the office. We laid it jute side up, so we can sweep off the everpresent dirt and dust. I have brought bright sheets from home to section off a little conference room. The fabric gives the illusion of privacy. Privacy is always illusory at Michigan. Newcomers' meet-

ing tonight. Moka and I talked too much, but it was good. They wondered about safety, what it's like to be here alone, what's expected.

## Wednesday, August 1

Pissing down rain and thunder all day. Thank goodness some of the big tents are up. Not much outdoor work got done. We continued to get Worker Support in shape. Community meeting in the Witches clearing. The issues are compost and making sure we remember that many women are from abroad and are speaking English as a second language. Speak slowly. In the Belly Bowl I struck up a conversation with L from New York. When it was time to say goodnight we kissed. I didn't expect this.

## Thursday, August 2

Spent the morning with IG, who had passed a horrible night paralyzed with fear of the thunder and lightning. Took her hours to recover. We set up a network of her neighbors to check in on her next time there is a storm. The carpenters finished building the floor of the Main Stage. Flowing, coordinator of the Land Crew, lead a tour of the land. After "the great fire" in Chicago, a zillion trees were cut down in this part of Michigan to rebuild the city. Long walk with L, after which we go back to my tent. Fade to black.



### *Friday, August 3*

Some cows got stuck in the swamp early this morning. I could hear them mooing far away. At the general meeting Moka did a hilarious demo of how to pull your shorts over your breasts when you hear the cars honking warning that there are men on the land. Continuous rain. Ugh. A woman came into worker support tonight in the depths of an incest memory "spin." I worked with her using the blackboard and chalk, she drawing out what was going on for her. We worked for quite a while. It was helpful to her, and I found it fascinating. My Jungian teacher says that the most useful thing you can do with a client is to accompany their unconscious.

### *Saturday, August 4*

Papoosa led cultural diversity/anti-racism workshops. All the workers had to go. It was very emotional but I don't think I learned very much. I liked that she said "It is not our differences that separate us but our inability to recognize and celebrate difference."

### *Sunday, August 5*

This evening was the San-O-Tation parade. Second annual. Each crew dresses and makes props and even transportation according to a theme. A great deal of secrecy and scurrying about all day in preparation. The Worker Support gals dressed all in white, and made up a co-dependency chant with choreography. "I won't be happy till you're happy, too." We modeled "doo rags," a head garment that co-workers tell you to wear when you are impossibly bitchy. I modeled the new 1990 version, the "ooh baby do me rag," which was made of dental dams, matching my latex rubber gloves. I carried Safe Snoopy who was wearing a life preserver with a condom stuck in his belt. Snoopy is the Worker Support mascot. He makes overnight house calls. Things are getting hard between Alix and me. We are not lovers but our lives are entwined, and when I get a lover I tend to ignore her and we get awful with each other. I can't seem to get out of it. I hate this.

### *Monday, August 6*

Today was the camp's official day off. Lots of women went to a place nearby to swim and eat. L and I stayed in my tent all day, then went to a nearby town to have dinner. Do I want to hang out with everyone on my day off? No way! I

am getting desperate for privacy! I hated to come back to the land after being out for dinner in a place where no one knew us. Everyone knows everyone's business here. Great to have a day off when no one is working. It's hard to take time off and feel okay about it when everyone else is working. This is a big issue we hear lots about at Worker Support.

### *Tuesday, August 7*

Today I facilitated a crew meeting. They had terrible communications problems. The coordinator basically just wanted to get the work done, the workers wanted to be let in on decisions and to have some group process. One thing that came out was that the crew, which was all first-year workers except for one woman who just arrived yesterday, had thought that the festival was run as a collective and that all decisions about their work were going to be made by the group. They were surprised to find out that the festival is run as a hierarchy, that it is a business, and that they had relatively little to say about how things were run. They were relieved, anyway, to be clear about it. They were also relieved to finally be talking to each other. I love mediation.

### *Wednesday, August 8*

A's Grandmother died today. She got word on the phone. She lives too far away to go home. She and I spent many hours today talking, lying in the hammock. Three people in my family have died, and it's relatively easy for me to talk to other people about deaths in the family. I relive it somewhat each time, but there's healing in that for me, too. Sado-masochism is coming up as an issue in the worker village. The SM workers are feeling alienated. Sometimes it's hard to figure out exactly what festival policy is. Is there a dress code? I don't think so, but I wonder what would happen if someone dressed for work in all leather. Some non-SM women are planning a safe sex workshop for workers. The SM women want to do a safe SM demo and are not clear if that's allowed. This comes under the heading of Worker Support. I will talk to Boo tomorrow.

### *Thursday, August 9*

Had a chat with Boo about safe SM demo. She said, "Fine, lets have it in the meeting tent." I was relieved. I hate for anyone in our community to be alienated. We sometimes get women in Worker Support who are upset by the SM presence

here, and we have learned to ask them what it is they are responding to. What upsets them? Not always, but a lot of times women are either ignorant or are responding to issues about their own sexuality. My thinking on this issue is not without confusion, but I am becoming friends with some of the SM women, and my opinions are changing. I do know I hate to have women disenfranchised. Like in the novel *Animal Farm*, "All animals are equal but some are more equal than others."

I'm having some drama with L. This stays on my mind and in my heart. There's nowhere to get away from The Fishbowl, which is what I now call the worker village. I see everything, everyone sees everything. This place is taxing me deeply. Last year I counted the days till I could leave. I still have two-and-a-half weeks.

### *Friday, August 10*

Getting laundry done here is a constant problem. This afternoon Mary and I took my car to town to do some loads. We had a nice chat over ice cream sodas. It's very hard for me to be on the land. Came back and went to Denslow's pop-up trailer for an Alix pre-birthday tea. Many years ago Denslow and I were both lovers with Alix and had our share of festival drama. Alix and I are still having a hard time, but today I needed to be with her just a bit to remember who I am in real life.

### *Saturday, August 11*

150 women arrived today. The ten-day crews. I was depressed most of the day, mainly about my relationships, and I guess it showed, because Sue took me aside and told me to get an attitude adjustment. I decided she was right. I swigged some Rescue Remedy and ordered myself out of my funky mood. Took photos of the new arrivals and put a smile on my own face. Huge community meeting, took forever with intros of all the new women. Then we had a barter market. A woman had brought a strapless black dress that she made for herself but decided to sell. She asked me to model it for her and I did. Wow! What a response I got including two dinner invitations, one in Amsterdam. Amazing what a difference a little black dress makes. I simply had to buy it for myself. The SM safety demo took place around ten o'clock. About forty women attended.

I led the demo, displaying accessories and discussing techniques. The rules were no demos on live bodies, so it was sort of weird and sort of amusing that she had to show whip techniques on an empty leather jacket that someone held.

### *Sunday, August 12*

Today Margaret Sloan-Hunter led two cultural diversity/anti-racism workshops for the workers. Everyone who hadn't been to Papoosa's had to go. There are hundreds of workers here now. Food lines are long and women are cranky waiting for their meals. Why are they not nicer to the food servers? Outland tents are going up fast. The landscape is changing. They did soundchecks on the Night Stage this afternoon. Tapes.

### *Monday, August 13*

I took a day off today. L and I went to Ludington to the beach. Then out to dinner. Sat by the water watching boats and drawing maps of our neighborhoods in NYC. Are we homesick or what? I dreaded going back to camp. I hate facing everyone. The workers had a No Talent Show in the evening on the Day Stage. We missed it.

### *Tuesday, August 14*

The festie-goers started arriving today. I hung out with [ASL interpreter] Sherry Hicks; we walked to the main gate to watch them come in. Balloon arches. Hot sunny day. Long car lines. Women seemed happy to arrive.

### *Wednesday, August 15*

Intensive Workshops today. We decided to close Worker Support for the afternoon so we could attend some. I went to Kay Hagen's "The Wilderness of Intimacy." Kay's a friend and I always enjoy her classes. I discovered that I am wildest when I am alone. I love the Intensive day. Learning excites me much more than music. I wish this whole festival were a school rather than a series of concerts. What's so great about being entertained? Even by women? Promotes passive consumer "culture" rather than active participatory culture.

### *Thursday, August 16*

Today was a day I barely could deal with. First of all, a worker was kicked off staff. She had snuck someone on the land and given her a worker wristband. This is clearly not to be done. But I think it could have been handled better. It was handled through the office, not Worker Support so

I didn't know about it till it was done. The members of her crew were livid; they had not been informed and they needed her work. Many questions being asked here now. What recourse do workers have? Do workers get to participate in decision making? How? What time frame? Tough questions, tempers are hot, and it's the first day of the festival. I wished I could float out of my body and just not have to deal. It's all so complex and difficult. Alix turned fifty today. She performed on the Night Stage, first solo then with Kay Gardner and Toni Armstrong Jr.—a Lavender Jane Reunion. They sounded fabulous. During the third song, I saw SueTree beckoning me. I walked over to her and she told me L's brother had died, and she was in the trailer on the phone. Oh my Goddess.

### *Friday, August 17*

Drove L to the Grand Rapids airport so she could go to the funeral. Sad. We managed to have fun, anyway. Back to the land by mid afternoon. During the festival I have to work in the office four hours a day. This is the worst job because everyone has a question, a different question or request, and I don't know the answers. "How can I get a truck?" "Where do I sign up for shuttle?" "Where are the forms for xeroxes?" The night concerts were amazing. Vicki Randle gets better all the time, and Linda Tillery is so powerful. Image to remember: ASL interpreter Dora Lynn Folsie interpreting Billie Holliday's *Strange Fruit* as sung by Judith Casselberry. I spoke to Dora Lynn later back at the Belly Bowl and she was still kind of in trance from it.

### *Saturday, August 18*

There's a zillion women here. It's so strange to step out of the worker village and be in the midst of everyone. Went over to the Acoustic Stage and hung out in the sound booth with my pal Karen Kane. Rhiannon was blowing everyone away.

### *Sunday, August 19*

A festival moment: I'm at the crafts area in the booth of Sudie Rakusin, one of my favorite Lesbian painters and illustrators. In walks Alison Bechdel, my other fave. Apparently this is the first time they've met. They begin asking each other questions about work: "Do you work all day? You do so much it seems like you must. I hate to even have to say this, it seems so obvious, but I love your work,

you are fabulous." I was overwhelmed at what seemed to me an historical moment. I left them alone. The image stays in my memory.

### *Monday, August 20*

Festival's over. Came and went so fast. Worked in the office today, then to Grand Rapids to meet L at the airport. We decided to stay overnight at a hotel. Goddess. A real bed, and a bathtub. We are so used to tent life that we whisper when we are alone in our room.

### *Tuesday, August 21*

I dread going back to The Fishbowl. Why am I doing this? Got back in time for the end of the wrap up meeting. Many women are leaving today; it's the end of the ten-day crews.

### *Wednesday, August 22*

Another crew mediation. Tempers wear thin as these two co-coordinators want to get work done, and done their way, while workers want more autonomy in planning their own work. Is this a structural problem? A control issue? Is it a communications problem? I watch women saying all the wrong things to each other. We managed to patch it up, but today it's just a bandaid.

### *Thursday, August 23*

Alix is leaving tomorrow with the car. I packed up most of my stuff to send back with her. It's a day off day and many women went off land to a big dinner. Deborah Lea and I drove to town to a restaurant.

### *Friday, August 24*

Things are getting quiet. Many women have left. There are only about a hundred of us left, and it doesn't even feel like that many. I'm supposed to leave next Wednesday, but there's very little left for me to do, and I don't know how much more of this place I can stand. I decided to fly out Monday morning.

### *Saturday, August 25*

Kim and I began to pack up the Worker Support tent. Put inventory in boxes and cleaned. At night there was a workers' meeting at Worker Support. About fifty women showed up and discussed workers' rights, collectivity, a workers' union, the history of workers at the festival. Could the workers share the profit and be part of the decision-making process? Can it ever happen here? I'm sorry that so many workers have already gone home, but glad that this meeting



took place. I feel like I'm seeing some of these issues for the first time this year. At last year's final community meeting I suddenly saw that Michigan existed primarily as a hierarchical business with a kind of overlay of community. This year, I'm beginning to listen to women who are challenging the rightness of that. Why do most of us work so hard for free, and why is this expected of us? How much say do we have in festival policies? Is this feminist? These tough questions leave my head spinning and my heart a little sore. L and I spent our last Michigan night together. I, for one, will not miss the confines of the tent and The Fishbowl. If I never hear another tent zipper again it will be too soon.

### *Sunday, August 26*

Kim and I finished packing up Worker Support. I packed up my belongings and my tent. Kerry and I went to Ludington for dinner. It's our last time together this year. Soon she will be going home to Australia. When we got back, there was a big ritual bonfire, but I couldn't face the crowd. I read and

chanted over and over, "I'm not in Michigan anymore!"

My dear friend Arya picked me up at the airport, took me back to her house in Woodstock for dinner. Jumped in her pool for a ritual swim. Then home. Finally.

### *Afterword*

Each Michigan experience is different. It's not just the festival, but who we are, what issues and needs we bring to it, how we respond to it. This year was the most difficult festival I've ever had. I've been home three weeks now and I feel like I'm still recovering. As usual, I learned a lot. This year I learned about myself, community, boundaries. I don't think I'll go back next year, but I've never gone more than two years in a row anyway. Who knows how I will change and grow in the next few years, and how the festival will. I will probably hear it calling to me again. Maybe I'll even have an easy time. Meanwhile, someone else can bring the lipstick. ●



**Day twenty-five: "Went over to the Acoustic Stage and hung out in the sound booth with my pal Karen Kane (left). Rhiannon was blowing everyone away."**

listened to music and slept my last night in Kerry's tent, which is really my tent that I lent her. I'm so glad it's my last night. Finally, I removed my wristband.

### *Monday, August 27*

9 a.m. shuttle to the Grand Rapids Airport. I was so happy to get on the plane. Slept all the way to Chicago. O'Hare Airport looked grand to me, and the flight to Albany was pure joy. I

*ABOUT THE WRITER: Liza Cowan is the former editor of 'DYKE, A Quarterly.' She is a Trainer of Neuro-Linguistic Programming, works as an art therapist, and writes freelance for lesbian and gay publications.*

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*a new attitude, a new festival*

# RHYTHM FEST 1990

By Marcy J. Hochberg

I confess. It all began with The Rumor: there was this new festival beginning this year called Rhythm Fest, happening somewhere down in Tennessee or Georgia or Alabama—you know, one of those Southern states—and Melissa Etheridge was going to be there. That was what friends of mine claimed upon returning from "Southern" (the Southern Women's Music and Comedy Festival). And this wasn't just hearsay. This was presumably coming from people in-the-know, women with connections.

I vacillated for awhile. Actually I totally put off making a decision until the week before Labor Day weekend, when Rhythm Fest was being held. On the one hand, I couldn't believe that Melissa Etheridge was actually going to be at another women's music festival, now that she had a mainstream record label and did world tours and that sort of thing. On the other hand, some of the women organizing this new fest supposedly knew her personally, and if there was any chance at all that she might be there, I was certainly willing to go the distance to see it.

Melissa was there. And she did play. But Rhythm Fest was much much more. Aside from being able to boast some of the most impressive first-year entertainment of any new women's music fest, it was organized differently than other festivals, and it showed.

Rhythm Fest was produced by a five-woman collective comprised of Mandy Carter, Michelle Crone, Susan Fuchs, Kathleen Mahoney, and Barbara Savage. It was billed as a festival of women's music, art and politics. I liked that they included the "politics" part, in writing, on the logo. It seems like it's a fairly common underlying element of lesbian culture anyway, but we don't always put the word down so openly.

Unlike other existing festivals, the goal was to put on a festival without a hierarchy, without separations, with as

few divisions and differing privileges as possible. As Michelle explained, the idea was to create a festival without "attitude." In keeping with this sentiment, very few areas on the grounds were off limits to anyone, and organizers, workers, entertainers and festi-goers mingled quite easily and comfortably.

I could clearly see that this collective was not new to this sort of work. They obviously took advantage of their years of previous experience working other festivals, incorporating into Rhythm Fest what they liked and improvising where they needed to. Pulled together on a shoestring budget, relying on word of mouth and limited advertising, you could see women from every corner of the lesbian community here—working as well as attending. The lack of attitude came in handy—women worked together focused on a task, not on what someone was wearing (like makeup, or leather, or a sundress...).

We could feel it as soon as we entered. My friends and I checked in, unloaded our car and then parked and waited for a shuttle onto the campground. Rhythm Fest was held on the grounds of a horseback riding camp, atop Lookout Mountain. I'm still not exactly sure what state we were actually in, we kept crossing time zones and state lines so often, but the view was incredible. The tourist signs for Lookout Mountain claimed you could see seven states from the top. I couldn't tell you whether I saw all seven; only that the outlines of grey-blue mountains against the eastern sky giving way to the sensuous curves of deep green valleys was spectacular.

We dropped our gear, signed in and got our cabin assignments, and I went to the office to check in as a festival photographer while my friends signed up for their work shifts. I tried to contain my surprise and look cool and nonchalant while a short, smiling woman handed me a release form to fill out—it was Melissa, doing her part working in the office. We

heard she'd been helping out, answering the phone and confirming that "yes, Melissa Etheridge will be here, she will be playing on Saturday night...."

We'd arrived in time for dinner, which included a chicken entree along with the more usual grains, beans, and vegetables. It was another little thing which stood out, another consideration of diversity. I don't have a problem eating vegetarian meals for a long weekend, but I've heard many of my carnivore friends complain bitterly about the food at other festivals. I thought of them as I took that first bite of chicken, munching it down along with tabouli and hummus, pitas and soup. In addition to the three meals provided daily (some of which were entirely vegetarian and some of which were not), you could also buy food from concession stands throughout most of the day and evening, including burgers and hot dogs, chicken, tempeh burgers and tofu dogs, as well as snacks and sodas.

Many things that have worked well at other festivals were incorporated here. Concert seating and cabin spaces were set up with spaces reserved for "clean and sober," "chemically free," and "accessible/disabled" to accommodate women's special needs. There was a medical cabin with the familiar blend of holistic, herbal, and traditional therapies available, message boards for sharing and communicating information, areas for childcare.

My favorite juxtaposition was the tent set up near the crafts area—a combination of rumor control, political networking, and sexual awareness. Mainly it seemed to be a place for meeting, writing questions and comments in the notebooks left on the front table, and picking up information and literature. It was these unlikely combinations of purpose that helped set Rhythm Fest apart for me.

As the opening paragraph in the schedule mentioned: "Some things will be near perfect while others will be a bit bumpy, so we ask for your understanding and cooperation. We would like this festi-



val to be a true community effort that will grow with input from everyone. If you see something you like let us know. If you think something should be different, please don't hesitate to speak up."

Quite a bit was near perfect. The only real problem we encountered the entire time was the water shortage. Evidently the campground had never handled more than 300 people in the past, and sufficient water supplies were an ongoing concern. We missed the first drought, arriving on Friday afternoon after the showers had been restored by diligent women plumbers. But the hot temperatures and limited shade increased the demand again and knocked water pressure down to a trickle by Saturday afternoon; on Monday morning I was still washing up with a cloth and a coveted jug of bottled water given to me by a friend. But hey—the first time out there's always something.

There were a couple of small lakes on the grounds; the one which was closer to the front gate had a few canoes and rowboats available, and a roped-in area in which to swim. There was Day Stage music happening from 10 a.m. until late afternoon, dinner theatre pieces, and a number of facilities designed for leisure. It made for a very relaxed weekend.

And then there was the music. It was quite a lineup for a first year fest. The official "head lesbian," Alix Dobkin, was there. As Michelle Crone mentioned when she introduced her, Alix was the first entertainer signed to appear at Rhythm Fest. She'd heard about the collective's efforts to create an event that was as open and egalitarian as possible, and she wanted to be a part of that. Other noted musicians soon followed.

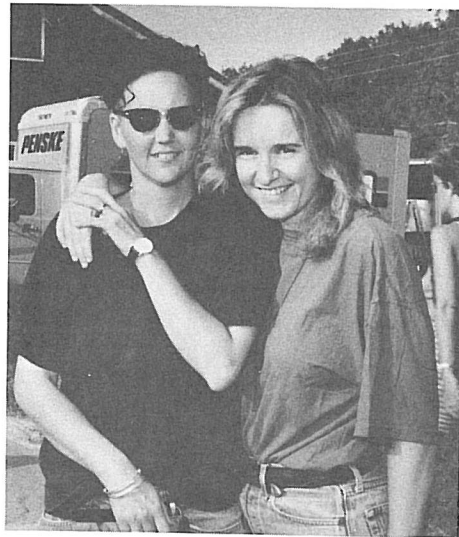
Thursday night's show presented Laura Berkson, Marjy Plant, and Jaque & Joyce. Alix emceed Friday's show, introducing Mary Gemini, the very brash comedienne Renee Hicks, the Reel World String Band, and the very tight rock & roll band Yer Girlfriend. Alix opened the Saturday night show, which continued with the very funny and charming Marga Gomez, who ended her routine, assisted by a pair of dancers, with a rap called "Do the Dyke Thing."

Michelle took advantage of the full audience waiting anxiously for Melissa's set, and used the time during the set change to talk about the National Lesbian Conference which she is involved in helping organize. [It's scheduled to take place in Atlanta in April 1991.] As she spoke,

security women went through the crowd with open garbage bags collecting money; they raised \$2,300 for the cause.

And then it was time. I've seen Melissa Etheridge perform with her band a number of times, but it didn't prepare me for the raw intensity of seeing her solo. When she's up on a stage alone—torn blue jeans, boots, dazzling smile, and her guitar—this woman gives a new meaning to the word "powerful." But it also felt *different*, happening here at a women's music festival. She seemed comfortable, happy almost—certainly less tormented than her lyrics and usual stage persona seem to project.

In addition to doing material from her two albums she sang a few new songs which had their performance debut before this crowd. It could have been the



Louise Zepp

**Rhythm Fest producer Barbara Savage (left), the Barbara mentioned in Melissa's song "You Can Sleep While I Drive."**

music, the women in attendance, her mood, or maybe just the calm clear summer night, but she talked easily to the audience, explaining where some of the ideas came from, describing what she's been going through lately. The new tunes—"From Where I Stand," "Place Your Hand," "The Letting Go," "Blue Lights on the Runway," "The Changer," and "Fill It Up, Joe"—ranged from sweet sentimental ballads to bluesy boogie-woogie. By the time Barbara Marano joined in on saxophone for a few tunes towards the end of her set, the stage was cooking. She impishly dedicated "Bring Me Some Water" to Michelle Crone, referring to the water shortages plaguing the fest, and closed her set with "Let's Get It On," which the audience requested.

Melissa agreed to sign anything and everything the following morning, and for almost three hours a line stretched from the rumor control tent down past the crafts area as women waited patiently for her signature on T-shirts, tapes and CDs, souvenirs, body parts, and anything else they could find. Cameras clicked furiously as she'd pause for a moment, glancing up smiling and surveying the seemingly constant stream of women.

Sunday's show was another tour de force. Holly Near began the night with Adrienne Torf's gifted fingers accompanying her. The two blended effortlessly. They were joined on one number by Sarah Crowell (formerly of Dance Brigade), whose graceful body movements and physical interpretation added visual beauty to the song. But the most striking moment of Holly's set for me was when she tried to convey to the audience what it would be like to "hear" the concert through one of the sign language interpreters. For a full minute I watched her lips move silently as she swayed in time with the unheard music, and I watched a signer's hands move quietly and intently. It brought a feeling home more poignantly than a thousand words ever could.

Toshi Reagon's Band followed Holly's set with non-stop rollicking rock & roll, and then we jumped into the Lesbo A Go-Go, Lea DeLaria's hysterical performance piece. Casselberry-DuPreé finished up the night with their beautiful melodies and vocal harmonies.

Each night after the Main Stage entertainment, the happening place to be was the Hip Sway Cafe, where you could catch a little more music, dance with the gals and nosh a bit. Some women, seeking calmer forms of connecting in the evening, hopped on the back of a tractor-drawn flatbed for a hayride.

But aside from Melissa and the rest of the music, what I remember most is the graffiti. Remember, Rhythm Fest took place on the grounds of a horseback riding camp, a *girls* horseback riding camp. So all over the cabins, the shower barn, the bathroom stalls, were young

*continued on page 59*

**ABOUT THE WRITER:** Marcy J. Hochberg is a freelance writer, photographer, and sound engineer. She also makes one of the best cups of coffee in Chicago. When she isn't dedicating her life to promoting lesbian culture, she can be found on tour following the *Grateful Dead*.

# THE DOUBLE BILL

fantasies compiled by Toni Armstrong Jr.

*The women's music and culture industry has always differentiated itself from the mainstream entertainment world by emphasizing and promoting cooperation rather than competition between women celebrities. Despite the occasional, inevitable personality conflict, mutual respect and admiration are the norm within our subculture. The following artists were asked, "If you could perform on a double bill with any other women's music and culture act—musician, writer, comic, speaker/lecturer, film-video presentation, etc.—who would it be and where would you perform?" These are the wonderful shows we could see if our talented sisters had the universe their way.*



Rixanne Wehren

Julie Homi: returning with her band to the Great American Music Hall, co-starring Linda Tillery.

## LEE LYNCH

Lee Lynch's latest is the novel 'That Old Studebaker' (Naiad Press). Her novels and short stories collections include 'Toothpick House,' 'Old Dyke Tales,' 'The Swashbuckler,' 'Home in Your Hands,' 'Dusty's Queen of Hearts Diner,' and 'Sue Slate, Private Eye,' plus 'The Amazon Trail,' a collection of her syndicated columns. In the late 1960s, she began submitting lesbian stories and poetry to 'The Ladder,' then edited by Barbara Grier. Her column appears regularly in publications around the country. She lives in Southern Oregon where she

works in the social services.

I have two performance wishes. The first is to do a Recovery Evening with my lover, singer Akia Woods. She's completing a tape of recovery songs right now, and I would add stories I have written out of my experience with alcoholism, such as the Jefferson series in *Home In Your Hands*, and sections of *Dusty's Queen of Hearts Diner*, and/or some of the "At A Bar" stories from *Old Dyke Tales*. I've seen the enormous gift Akia has given audiences by singing her story and I'd love to be part of that at a concert/reading in a recovery-supportive setting,

such as a festival with sober services, a recovery event, or a gay recovery facility.

My other wish would be to appear with Bonnie Zimmerman, whose book *The Safe Sea of Women: Lesbian Fiction 1969-1989* has just been released by Beacon Press. I'd be proud to be on a panel of writers she's discussed, like Jane Rule, Elana (Nachmann) Dykewomon, Becky Birtha, or any number of others, perhaps reading passages she's found significant while she talks about our literature. Because her book and ideas are accessible to more than an academic audience, such a panel could be presented not only at a National Women's Studies Conference, but also at gay pride celebrations, writers' conferences, and festivals. I appreciate that Bonnie takes lesbian writers and writing seriously.

## KAREN WILLIAMS

Stand-up comic Karen Williams is also a writer, poet, and lesbian mom. She was nominated for the 1989 Cable Car Award for Outstanding Comic of the Year and was a finalist for three years in the Bay Area Black Comedy Competition. In addition to performing and emceeding at festivals, Karen appeared this year in 'Dolores Street,' a light comedy about lesbian life, at San Francisco's Theatre Rhinoceros. She is currently planning to produce a comedy tape.

I would like to say: Lillian Allen at the Great American Music Hall in San Francisco. I got her tape a few months ago, and my children and I chant it around the house. Today I was par-



ticularly frustrated about my comedy career and I heard her voice urging me to "Hold on, sister, sister, hold on. Why should we have to fight for what is our natural right?" This echoes in my brain on most good days as I watch the human race struggle for the smallest amount of justice in our society. I love her poly-rhythms, the reggae rhythms of my first-born American, West Indian/Brooklyn roots that resound beneath her poetry... and I eagerly await her "love" tape she mentioned while onstage in Michigan. I'd like to open for her anywhere in the universe, backed up by her band (smile)! This is one sister to whom Lillian Allen speaks—and I listen.

enjoyed working with Linda; she's great with an audience, and is so spontaneous on stage. I also love her voice, and never get tired of listening to it!

Linda and I have similar musical influences and tastes. We've had countless conversations about music we love and musicians we admire, and I know we share some common ground. I think she is a very strong presence on stage, and I enjoy her spontaneity. I remember times she would begin a "rap" about "getting down" and wouldn't quit until she had convinced the entire band to lie down on stage, while continuing to groove intensely. Sometimes when she and I worked as a duo, Linda would spring a



Karen Williams: adding her unique way of communicating "Hold on, sister, hold on" to that of Canadian dub poet Lillian Allen.

Toni Armstrong Jr.

*Conference at the National Women's Music Festival and is currently working on three book projects, including an anthology on women with dreadlocks and an anthology by, for, and about Black lesbians. She is a staff writer for 'HOT WIRE' residing at the moment in Lansing, Michigan.*

I have dreamed of performing poetry with Ntozake Shange (*n-toe-ZAH-key SHAHN-gay*), a writer and dancer whom I have respected for almost twenty years. She gained a national audience in 1976 when her choreopoem *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When The Rainbow Is Enuf* played Broadway. I saw her play then and experienced for the first time a Black woman's vision I could swear by. She brings her perceptions unaltered and undiluted to the page, and makes the realities of Black life everyone's truth by sheer force of content. I try to do these things in my own poetry. We both want our audience to shout and holler, suck their teeth in derision, understand the work bone-deep. Ntozake is bold and demands that her readers be, too!

We would perform on the street corner at 32nd and Young in the West End of Louisville, Kentucky. This area of housing projects is considered the most violent and impoverished, some say, within the entire state. I was raised there during a time when Black people knew who they were and where they fit within the scheme of things.

Ntozake and I would wear our colors—red, ochre, gold, royal blue, deep green, lots of purple, and tan—and our gold jewelry. She would have long scarves wrapped around her neck and beads in her dreadlocks; I would be barefoot and my do would be picked out and twinkly with oils. We would read to the mothers and to the women on General Assistance, help them regain some memory of freedom for themselves and their pretty brown babies. We'd return the music to them and mirror the tragedy and ecstasy. We'd read about loving the sun and the waters within us, the dance and the laughter, about touching one another and our legends, living as the full-blown Black women we were all born to be.

Ntozake and I would use nasty language that means precisely what it reports and highly improper grammar that anyone could immediately comprehend. I know the audience would never see or hear

## JULIE HOMI

*Julie Homi is a keyboardist who has toured extensively with women's music artists Holly Near, Linda Tillery, Teresa Trull and others, and in the mainstream music world with Robert Palmer and Angela Bofill. She is currently working on an album of original music. Julie's band performed at the '89 and '90 Michigan Womyn's Music festivals.*

There are many women's music artists I admire, but thinking of one that would work well on a double bill with my instrumental band narrows it down quite a bit. I'd love to do a double bill with Linda Tillery at the Great American Music Hall in San Francisco. I've always

completely unrehearsed song on me onstage, and it was "sink or swim." I found this challenging, and I think it was exciting for the audience as well.

My reasons for choosing the Great American Music Hall are largely nostalgic. I have had some very enjoyable shows there, and it is also one of my favorite places to hear music. It seats about 400, which is an audience size I feel comfortable with. The management and staff are very nice, and the sound engineer is cooperative and competent. What more could a musician want?

## TERRI JEWELL

*Terri Jewell is a writer, editor, and poet. She co-ordinated the 1990 Women of Color*

anything like us again, and it would be sweet!

## ALIX DOBKIN

*Alix Dobkin has been a folksinger since the mid '50s, and has been writing and singing music specifically for women since the early '70s, when she and Kay Gardner produced the first internationally distributed lesbian album ('Lavender Jane Loves Women'). Other albums include 'Living With Lesbians' (1976); 'XX Alix' (1980); 'Never Been Better/We Are Everywhere' EP (1985); and 'These Women/Never Been Better' (1986). Alix's latest album—'Yahoo Australia: Alix Live from Sydney'—was released in time for her fiftieth birthday, which she celebrated at the 1990 Michigan Womyn's Music Festival. She is an unrelenting advocate for global indigenous lesbian culture.*

There are several people I would do a series of double bills with if I could. In each case, we'd sing and say "lesbian"



Toni Armstrong Jr.

**Alix Dobkin: a series of shows, with Phranc, Faith Nolan, Andrea Dworkin, and Karen Williams. (Pictured with her daughter Adrian Hood at Michigan 1990.)**

and be fun, affirming, and educational. I'd love Michigan as a venue, of course. If the shows didn't happen there, I'd want to perform in smallish (300-350 seats), comfortable, non-alcoholic clubs with good sound and visibility.

I would like to double-bill with Phranc; she's a wonderful performer whose work I admire and respect. She's an out-front lesbian taking on the hostile

mainstream. I like that! Also, Faith Nolan—I love her humor (usually) and her politics. She's a good folkie whose material feels comfortable and familiar (my commie past). Andrea Dworkin is courageous, brilliant, and 100 percent devoted to women. She's a splendid, galvanizing speaker. Finally, I'd enjoy performing with Karen Williams, who's thoughtful, honest, and wonderfully funny. She does a great show, and she does not make jokes at women's expense.

## JEWELLE GOMEZ

*Jewelle Gomez is the author of two collections of poetry, 'The Lipstick Papers' and 'Flamingoes and Bears.' Her first novel, 'The Gilda Stories' will be published by Firebrand Books in Spring of 1991. She has written book reviews for 'Belle Lettres,' 'The New*

musician she is extraordinary. She plays a guitar like no contemporary rock star—male or female—that I know. She isn't afraid of her power nor does she ignore the subtlety the guitar is capable of. As a composer she's brilliant—which she doesn't mind telling you! Her lyrics are poetry, and as someone fascinated by the use of language I'd never tire of listening to hers. They're eloquent but they also acknowledge the complexity of human relationships. Like her melodies, they are rarely unified concepts that finish off neatly. They are quirky, like human beings are.

At a time when most women performers in the mainstream use sex rather than talent as their selling point, it's exciting to see a Black woman with subtle sensuality who accentuates her music. But unlike many women who worked to avoid the sexual stereotyping, Joan has not denuded herself of sensuality. She simply recreated it on her own terms.

I'd love to work with Joan in a kind



C. Clarke

**Writer Jewelle Gomez: doubling up for a hot show with Joan Armatrading.**

of fantasy situation—all working class women, women from correctional facilities, mothers on public assistance. In front of women who are struggling for their existence and know a lot about the world and how it works, but who rarely have the chance to experience their own power articulated. Armatrading's supple voice would ring out like a siren. A call to arms.

*York Times,' 'The Village Voice,' and Wellesley's 'Women's Review of Books,' as well as having been a guest on the 'Sally Jesse Raphael Show' and 'Our Voices,' the weekly show on Black Entertainment Television. She is one of the subjects of a documentary produced by Pop Video called 'Lesbian Tongues.'*

More than anyone I'd love to share the stage with Joan Armatrading. As a



# SUEDE

Suede began playing the piano at three and the bugle at five. She was one of three finalists for Best Female Jazz Vocalist (Manhattan Association of Cabaret Awards) in 1988. She has toured nationally and performed at several women's music festivals. Her version of the song "From A Distance"—from her debut album 'Easily Suede'—was on the 1988 'HOT WIRE' soundsheet.

How can I pick just one!? For comics I'd love to do another show with Kate Clinton. Her timing, political sense, and stage presence are unmatched in my opinion. Also I just discovered the hilarious Maggie Cassella in New England—very sharp, quick wit with a lot of class. A double bill with my performance style would be a full balance of wild fun and passionate intensity.

Musically speaking I'd jump at the opportunity to perform with Adrienne Torf. Her attention to detail, stylistic versatility, and emotional expression through her music have been admired and highly respected by this performer for many years. I would be honored to share music and a stage with an artist of her quality.

How about getting JEB to put Katherine V. Forrest's *Daughters Of A Coral Dawn* on film with the music written and performed by Lucie Blue Tremblay and yours truly? This would of course be available on video for all festivals and home enjoyment, but would be released at the magnificent Senator Theatre in Baltimore. What potential for love song heaven!

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# AUDRE LORDE

Audre Lorde, one of the most eminent lesbian poets/essayists of our generation, has been widely published in feminist and progressive periodicals. Among her books are 'The Cancer Journals,' 'Zami: A New Spelling of My Name,' 'Chosen Poems Old and New,' 'Sister Outsider,' and 'A Burst of Light.' Her life, work, and related topics were the focus of a conference last fall in Boston. She presently resides in St. Croix and is involved with the nonprofit Sojourner Sisters—a five-woman organization dedicated to education and supportive programming for women and children in the Virgin Islands.

I would want to be on a double bill with drummer Edwina Tyler and A Piece of the World, and do poetry and music together to thousands of women with poet Joy Harjo and her music. I love their vitality and spirituality. I would also like to do "Need" as a Black Women's Chorale with two other Black women. Are you going to make it happen? ●

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— Kate Clinton



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## CORRECTION FROM LAST ISSUE

Due to a last-minute editorial decision, the ending portion of Laura Post's article about the Olivia cruise in the September 1990 issue was deleted without her knowledge. She feels this omission changes the entire tone of the piece. For this we apologize. Here, then, is the original conclusion of the article.

Looking back, as I finally regain my "land legs," I see some things more clearly. The cruise offered a good time, but to whom? I recall very few women of color—perhaps five black women in addition to Deidre McCalla and Donyell Carter; Marga Gomez was the only Latina I saw. Speaking of seeing, none of the concerts were ASL-interpreted, and there were few deaf or hearing impaired women that I knew of. Also few visible differently-abled women—i.e., in wheelchairs—though there was a small elevator on the ship. There were only four 12-step meetings, one per day, and little recovery consciousness was evident to me.

One might argue that a cruise is not the place to go looking for the feminist awareness found commonly in the rarefied atmosphere of my Bay Area home or in the lesbian cultural network that we have created in other settings. Nonetheless, I felt perturbed by and concerned about the apparent financial/racial/ableist homogeneity of the women on board. I wasn't necessarily searching for intense political discussions over every meal, but I would have preferred more holistic, feminist awareness.

Perhaps in learning to better define my own lesbian identity, I feel uncomfortable at the idea that our lesbian community is not even a "community," loosely defined. Instead, it seems to be enclaves of woman-identified women with some enclaves striving for anti-ism, struggling for mutual understanding and acceptance while other enclaves live as if in the mainstream except that their couples are same-gender.

Throughout the entire cruise, we lesbians succumbed to many prescribed heterosexualist rituals (Captain's Reception, wedding, obsequious service by staff who were mostly men of color, competitive games) with little apparent reluctance. The trip did provide tourist delight, indeed, but I felt catapulted backwards in my path of coming out as a lesbian, as a feminist, as an egalitarian, antiracist, antiageist, antiableist, anticlassist woman.

I am left with a faint tan and with many questions and only the stirring of answers: how do we keep our thinking thriving in all contexts? How do we prevent isms in our community? Can we, having established viable, alternative, radical lesbian cultures, expand our lesbian selves into heretofore oppressive patriarchal structures for our own use and benefit without ourselves remaining oppressed or becoming oppressive?

celebrating women's world music

# LIBANA

By Martha Rounds

I've been an avid fan of Cambridge, Massachusetts-based Libana ever since I first heard the group in 1982. I've joined the standing ovation of numerous Libana audiences, and have found that the group's music and performances grow better every year.

Libana's performances routinely blow its audiences away, but it's hard to say exactly why. The group performs music that most people have never heard before. They rarely sing a tune that audiences go away humming to themselves. In fact, most of their songs—sung in any of a dozen or more languages—are intensely challenging on first listening.

Libana is a group of women who have devoted their lives for the past ten years to finding, performing, and recording women's world music. Their songs reflect women's experience in traditional cultures and offer contemporary expressions of women's lives around the world.

Libana performs women's work songs, love songs, dance songs, and ritual music from around the globe. "We're drawn to unusual vocal and instrumental timbres," says Artistic Director Susan Robbins. "We're drawn to singing together, and creating all the different sounds and textures we can, simply with our voices. We do music that reflects women's experience, either cross-culturally, thematically, or archetypally."

Libana concerts open their listeners to the intense harmonies of Eastern Europe, the languid, sensual melodies of the Middle East, the piercing whistle-tone of Bolivia, and the drums of West Africa. Libana presents them all with vigor, affection, and humor.

Over the years, Libana has featured a wide range of traditional songs that illuminate women's cultural vitality: "Thugamar Fein'An Samradh Linn," an Irish song sung by processions of women on the morning of the feast of Beltane; "Zeto Zeli," a Croatian women's harvesting song; "Vorsghan'akhper," an Armenian mourning song; "Sovev galgal

Rehaim," a Yemenite Jewish wheat grinding song; "Lili'ue," a traditional Hawaiian chant and hula praising Liliukolani, last reigning queen of the islands. The group has also explored more contemporary music through the songs of the Latin America-inspired Sabia and through the music of Djurdjura, a contemporary Algerian feminist group banned in their native country [hear "Ad Cethent Tulas" on the soundsheet in the May 1990 issue of *HOT WIRE*].

plex and constantly changing music itself. Maybe it's the performers' intensely cooperative performing style and their obvious affection and respect for one another. Maybe it's that the audience always gets to learn and sing one of the group's haunting rounds and chants. Or that the audience sometimes gets to dance during a concert.

"Most people don't come to our concerts because they're in love with ethnic music," says Susan Robbins. "We open



**Libana: reflecting women's experience in traditional cultures, offering contemporary expressions of women's lives around the world.**

In a world constantly bombarded with one-sided news and the colorless reports of wire services, Libana provides insight and authentic perspective on cultures which are ignored by many Westerners.

But a Libana concert does more than take listeners on a musical world tour. Maybe it's the performers' passion for their unusual music. Maybe it's the com-

people's hearts and ears to listening to music in a cultural context, and help them realize that art and culture are essential to women's identity. As a community of women, when we perform the music of the women of the world, we become, for that moment, a mirror of a larger community of women. Through our songs, we and the audience experience the differences *and* connectedness of

Susan Wilson



the larger world community. The music lifts us out of our own individual realities of the moment and connects us to more universal experience."

Group member Marytha Paffrath agrees. "It took talking with quite a few audience members, often with tears in their eyes, to understand that in some ways we *become* the community we're singing about, a global women's community. And our audiences are part of our community. They're part of our larger sphere. They're part of us," she says.

Libana concerts also reflect the members' extraordinary musical skill and diversity. Over the years, audience members have marveled at the range and complexity of vocal colors achieved in a single performance. Libana draws on Western vocal style infrequently. Instead, the group focuses on recreating the distinct sounds of other cultures: the close harmonies of Bulgaria; the intense nasality of Greece; the lyricism of the British Isles.

Most Libana members play at least one instrument in addition to singing. Concerts generally require twenty or more instruments. Group members have been inspired to learn most of these instruments over the years in order to capture a particular regional style.

Concerts typically include twenty or more songs from a dozen different cultures and language groups, all performed from memory. The artistic director provides only a quiet pitch or a down beat before a song; even the most complex, multi-part choral music is performed without obvious direction.

Everyone helps research and choose the music. All music is transcribed, note by precious note, from field or commercial recordings. All instruments, to the greatest extent possible, are authentic. The meaning and pronunciation of the language for every song is painstakingly researched, always with native speakers or singers. Originally, Libana made almost every decision collectively, but the group has evolved so that much of the business now takes place without members' day-to-day involvement. However, they still spend hours every month on decision-making, planning, and mutual support. "Libana operates on a fine line between being a collective and operating with a leader," according to Susan.

"Libana members have maintained outside professional careers and mothered several children in addition to

their musical life. This group and individual caretaking, in Libana's view, fosters the quality of music they are able to achieve.

Group members have gone to extraordinary lengths to ensure the authenticity and purity of their sounds. While Libana was performing Hungarian music, Linda Ugelow, Lisa Bosley, and former member Beth Cohen traveled to Hungary during their annual break from Libana to study traditional instruments and dance music styles. Jane Goodman, just before her return to Boston after a two-month music research stint in Paris and Algeria, spent ten hours one day on a train to southern France in search of a quality 'ud. [A Middle Eastern stringed instrument].

Libana has produced four recordings and two songbooks in the last six years. Two of these, *Handed Down* (1985, Spinning Records) and *Sojourns* (1989, Shanachie) feature the traditional music that has been the cornerstone of Libana's growing national reputation. These recordings come with detailed explanations of the origins and translations of each song. The group's other two recordings, *A Circle Is Cast* (1986, Spinning Records) and *Fire Within* (1990, Lady-slipper) are made up of simpler rounds and chants that Libana teaches audiences during concerts and at Libana-sponsored community sings. These songs are also used for the spiritual caretaking of the group itself. *A Circle Is Cast* has enjoyed remarkable success since its release, selling thousands of copies throughout the U.S. and in Europe.

"The open arms with which *A Circle Is Cast* was received by the world really took us by surprise," says Susan. "What makes this recording different is that although some of the music comes from other cultures—other centuries even—it is approachable and singable music."

What are Libana's goals? To recreate the music of women from around the globe, and through this music to encourage solidarity among all women. To reveal women's vital but often hidden or ignored contributions to the cultures of the world. To lend perspective to little-known regions around the globe.

You're never going to see anything like Libana anywhere else in the world. That's a fact, plain and simple. ●

**ABOUT THE WRITER:** *Martha Rounds is a Boston-based freelance writer and music lover.*

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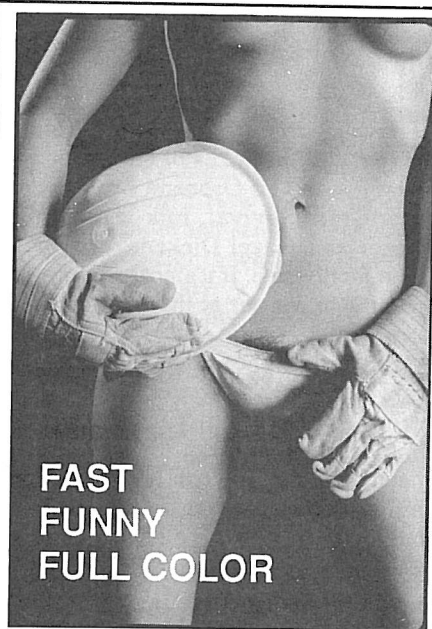
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# "Feminist Hillbilly Music"

## THE REEL WORLD STRING BAND

By Bev Futrell and Karen Jones

The Reel World has just completed its thirteenth year of playing traditional and contemporary "feminist hillbilly" music. The core presently consists of Bev Futrell, mandolin, guitar and harmonica; Sue Massek, banjo and guitar; and Karen Jones, fiddle. (The band originally included Sharon Ruble on bass and Belle Jackson on guitar.) Elise Melrood, a dynamic blues and honkey tonk piano player, has also appeared with the band at various events, including the 1990 National Women's Music Festival and at RhythmFest in Georgia. The youngest member of the band is Stacy Futrell, Bev's fourteen-year-old fiddling daughter, who accompanied the trio to Italy last year for a two-week, twenty-four concert tour.

The band certainly has had its share of traveling through the years, kicking up its feet with the likes of such bluegrass notables as The Osborne Brothers and New Grass Revival, folk legends Pete Seeger and Hazel Dickens, and rocker Ellen McIlwaine. If it's not a folk festival or summer concert at the Lincoln Center, then it's a picket line or a "Take Back the Night" rally at home. But full-time gigging is a youthful enterprise, with the stress of traveling, financial underemployment, and the distaste of commercial hustle. The trio has now carved out a comfortable compromise of music and real life.

The "reel" life—our musical world—now consists of short tours, primarily over long weekends to women's music festivals, folk festivals, community-oriented concerts, and conferences, where we present our songs and occasionally call a dance. Some of our most exciting moments have been spent in workshops, sharing songs and experiences: at Highlander Center in New Market, Tennessee with Sara Ogan Gunning, The Daughters of Mother Jones, and Sweet Honey in the Rock; at Winnipeg, Canada with Patsy Montana and Elizabeth Cotton; and at



Sharon Ruble

**Reel World String Band, a difficult band to pigeonhole. If it's not a folk festival or summer concert at the Lincoln Center, then it's a picket line or a "Take Back the Night" rally at home.**

women's music festivals when we hold workshops where performers and festi-goers jam together. And, late night one night at the Hudson River Clearwater Festival in 1985, we played every Emmy Lou Harris and Hank Williams song we knew—along with some we did not quite know—with Ferron singing lead. Lending a hand and a tune to community-based groups concerned with environmental issues, women's rights, and working people's struggles keeps us grounded.

In "real" life in Lexington, Kentucky, Bev is a custom computer software developer; Karen is an attorney with Protection and Advocacy, representing residents of psychiatric hospitals; and Sue is a naturalist at Lexington's Raven Run Wildlife Sanctuary.

Our music is difficult to pigeonhole. Often the band is labelled as just another bluegrass or string band from one of those Southern mountain states. Two

strikes; oh, and did you say they are all women—*STRIKE THREE!* A very difficult sale sometimes.

Actually, we do not play bluegrass music. We are folk musicians and storytellers: Sue's clawhammer style of banjo picking is the old-time way: pre-bluegrass, very rhythmic, and just made for dancing. Karen's fiddle oftentimes can be heard in a duet with the banjo, leading the dance on, or maybe weaving a haunting melody around the stories.

The stories in our songs are told in three part harmony—but none of them are traditional tunes where the woman gets stabbed in the heart and tossed in the river or tied up in her apron strings. Instead, we choose to perform herstories of strong mountain women, such as Florence Reece who wrote "Which Side Are You On" during the days of 1930s Bloody Harlan; West Virginia's Hazel Dickens; Memphis Minnie; and Janis Joplin.



Our latest album, *Appalachian Wind*, shows off the writing of Bev and Sue. Bev's "Mama Used To Dance" reflects the story of many women we all know who never got the opportunity to express the music within them; Sue's "Appalachian Wind" speaks of the winds of change that must nag the powers that be.

Sue grew up in the Flint Hills of Kansas, with her mother's lullabies of country melodies accompanied by the guitar. Little did her mother know those beginnings would soon send her off hitchhiking to the festivals of Virginia and West Virginia, seeking the sounds of the old-time banjo players. Karen attended Berea College in Berea, Kentucky—"where the Bluegrass meets the Cumberland"—and was a country dancer. She started her own dance troupe of youngsters after finishing college, and studied with a fiddler from Metcalfe County, Kentucky so that she could accompany the dancers with live music. Bev moved from Texas to Kentucky just about the same time Sue and Karen were planting their feet deep into the Southern mountain culture. A guitar from Sears was one of the first purchases she made

once she had finished high school and got a job. Many years that guitar hung on the wall while she was raising a family, but in 1977—The International Year of the Woman—she tuned it up and found a way to sing her song.

Politics, a way of life, and a lyrical tour de force have thrust the Reel World into settings that mix the daily struggle with the nightly dancing and harmonizing. For us, there is no better mix.

We have managed to stay together as a band for so long because we love the music and the tradition from which it comes—to sing with your heart and soul, and entice everyone else to join in. And, with an occasional hug from the real stars, we will keep playing until we are the old-timers.

We have also diversified. Sue often performs as a solo artist. Every Sunday evening, Karen, Bev, and their radio show "Wominsounds" are a "voice to be heard" throughout Central and Eastern Kentucky. The two-hour radio show of music, readings, and announcements of upcoming women's events is aired over WEKU-FM 88.9, WEKH-FM 90.9, listener supported radio from Eastern Kentucky

University in Richmond, Kentucky. The show began more than twelve years ago, hosted by Sky Hedman, who was looking for a way for the new women's culture that was bursting forth in the late 1970s to be heard. Women's production groups, record companies, distributors, and all-women bands were springing up everywhere (including The Reel World).

Karen and Bev have co-hosted the "Wominsounds" for about four years. Any Sunday evening from 8 to 10 p.m. one may hear The International Sweethearts of Rhythm, Alive!, Memphis Minnie, and Jean Ritchie along with tapes of new women artists we first hear at festivals (or that are sent to us for their first exposure in Central Kentucky). If you are ever traveling down I-75 or across on I-64 through Kentucky on a Sunday night, tune in. This is the reel world. ●

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**ABOUT THE WRITERS:** *Reel World String Band* has recorded four albums and they appear on the 'Sisterfire' anthology (*Redwood*) and 'They'll Never Keep Us Down: Women's Coal Mining Songs' (*Rounder*). *Reel World* and the 'Wominsounds' radio show can be reached at P.O. Box 1972, Lexington, KY 40593.

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## WEST COAST *from page 31*

she said she'd seen this woman so beautiful she'd do *anything* for her. The rush our virgin felt at that moment knocked her right off base. So much for intellectual analysis. No one had ever offered to do "anything" for her, much less in front of people! She was so turned on, she was ready to go home with the woman on the spot!

Only later—after she practically ran out of the workshop to escape her raging impulses—did she find out that the woman was a professional dominatrix. She would do anything all right—as long as the person paid!

That night, after a set by the band Jane Doe, she went to a birthday party for

a woman she didn't know. While she was talking to the woman, she suddenly had an idea. Maybe it was the dominatrix, maybe it was being around so many beautiful bodies for so many days. But she wanted to offer the woman something really special, something quite out of the ordinary. She wanted to offer herself.

As a lesbian, she came from a long line of women whose sexuality has never been tamed. As a lesbian, she is the daughter of non-monogamous tribal Amazons and temple prostitutes.

The perfect gift, she thought, would be to offer to do anything the woman wanted—for free. After four days of uninhibited physical freedom, four days of belonging to an extended tribe of

Amazons, she had become so free that she could think of giving herself a gift.

She could suddenly see that in a more utopian world, sex could be an extension of friendship. In a woman's world, sex could flow naturally from affection without the sense of ownership and property rights we have inherited from heterosexuality.

But like so many fleeting thoughts, fantasies are often better than reality—excitingly pure and safe, much less threatening than reality. Even as it flashed through her mind, she knew she'd never have the nerve. That evening, she would go back to her cabin alone and spend the night dreaming of electric blankets.

After all, she was a festival—not a vestal—virgin. ●

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## TWO NICE GIRLS *from 27*

parent. "Cotton Crown" (written by Sonic Youth) betrays Gretchen's reverence for screaming electric guitar parts, as well as the fact that both she and Meg kicked around with social and musical dynamite for a while as members of Meat Joy (Austin) and the Neo-Boys (Portland) respectively.

Two Nice Girls have been living off of inspiration for a long time, with the work as a business just starting to come

together. For all of 1989, the members were holding down full-time jobs as well as practicing and gigging at every possible opportunity.

"From the beginning we have never made money off of this band," says Gretchen. "Everything has gone into a band fund that we use to buy more strings and pay for a rehearsal space. We don't ever pay ourselves. We really need a van so that we can tour, and if everybody who read this sent us a dollar we could

do it. We hope to sell a lot of records and do well in that way—not because we are money-hungry sluts, but so we can keep doing it. We want this to be our job."

Kathy feels the band is constantly improving. "We are just getting better and better. The pace is perfect; we are steadily moving along, and we hope the next album will give us the opportunity to tour more nationally," she says. "We are ready."

The vanguard just does not get any better than Two Nice Girls. ●

# POETRY AT WOMEN'S MUSIC FESTIVALS: OIL AND WATER

By Pat Parker

*This article originally appeared in the November 1986 issue of 'HOT WIRE.' We are reprinting it to commemorate Pat's life, to celebrate her birthday (January 20), and to be sure her ideas continue to live on in this new generation of women dedicated to women's culture.*

My presence at the National Women's Music Festival surprised many women. As I walked the grounds during the day prior to my performance, I was often met with, "Oh, how nice to see you," followed in rapid succession by, "What are you doing here?"

I was neither surprised nor angered by this response, but somewhat disappointed that the battle I have been waging for the last twenty years is still not finished.

It seems that there are people who believe that the combination of poetry and music, like oil and water, simply cannot mix, and to carry that combination to a concert stage is unfathomable. The belief carries with it certain unsupported conclusions: that poetry cannot stand alone as a performing art, and will be automatically overwhelmed by any music (with perhaps the exception of light classical); that audiences will not come

and sit on hard, straight chairs and supportless sofas to listen to poets: young brash poets, old alcoholic poets, women in long skirts with straight long hair. They were almost always white and almost always men.

less she has given birth. I want to lay them in a deeply buried tomb out of our existence. It is not difficult to understand the resistance to the idea of poetry as a performing art. For years our concept of poetry and its presentation has been dominated by male academic ivory towerites. We have been conditioned to find poetry isolated and secluded from the masses of people, a pursuit only to be understood and especially enjoyed by those who possess trained minds and favored breeding. It has long been touted as an art form to be admired for its stylistic machinations with severe limitations on its concepts and subject matter.

Many of us sat in classrooms across this country and were told by balding men in tweed jackets, sisters in black habits, or high-collared women exactly what poetry was and how it was to be read. We were forced to memorize poems of bloody but unbowed heads, multifaceted love, and mothers' hopes for their sons. We left those classrooms for the most part turned off by the clinical dissection of words to the point of sterility.

Some of us left those rooms and have never since looked between the

and sit on hard, straight chairs and supportless sofas to listen to poets: young brash poets, old alcoholic poets, women in long skirts with straight long hair. They were almost always white and almost always men.

In the 1960s, things began to change. Hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets and began voicing other concerns. Concerns that touched our lives: a war in a far-away place with an unknown people; the separateness of America's ethnic minorities and the inequality of her perceptions of them; the role of women and the rape of our minds and bodies.

The poets and poetry also changed. The concerns voiced by people in the streets appeared on pages clutched by angry hands. The audiences and the forums also began changing. Women poets started leaving the university reading rooms and coffeehouses and began going to women's centers. The move toward consciousness had created a different need and a new way to approach poetry and its presentation.

Women's centers—which in many instances were represented by a single night allocated to women in the backroom of a coffeehouse or YWCA—started

*"It seems that there are people who believe that the combination of poetry and music, like oil and water, simply cannot mix, and to carry that combination to a concert stage is unfathomable."*

out in large numbers for poetry; that even the audience that does come out can only tolerate a small amount of poetry in a sitting—definitely no more than fifteen to twenty minutes.

For more than twenty years I have been fighting to destroy these myths, lay them like so many others women have struggled against: women become unstable when pre-menstrual, and thus cannot be placed in positions of authority and power; a woman is not complete un-

covers of a book of poetry or crossed the threshold of a room where poetry was being read. Some of us, in spite of the antiseptic approach to the art, developed and retained a love for poetry; we were able to get past the archaic rituals and see the beauty and power of honing thought to its bare essence.

Yet we also took with the art form the trappings that surrounded it. We were content to go into sterile university poetry centers and dimly lit coffeehouses

sponsoring poetry reading.

Women began applying the lessons learned in consciousness-raising to their work and to their approach to other writers. The competitiveness and the on-upmanship of the male poetry scene was replaced by a joyful sharing of ideas and a commitment to sisterhood. The antagonistic discussions between poets regarding who was published and who was not and by whom; how many chapbooks poets had to their credit; and who should



read last (the honored position) in a reading were replaced by discussions about the need for more presses, feminist publishers, and women's spaces to promote the work of all as opposed to a few.

Yet even as we moved away from the past, we still refused to let go of all the rituals. Our poetry readings were all women poets and all women audiences, yet we still believed poetry to be a quiet, passive art form to be read in small rooms with other poets. On occasion the sets would be shared with musicians—and then only one musician, usually playing a guitar.

In the early 1970s, I convinced a bar owner in San Francisco—actually a local bar owner's girlfriend—to bring poetry into the bar, but not before hearing all of the usual objections: bar women would not sit still for poetry; bar women would not give up their junkboxes and pool tables for poetry; and so forth. But eventually a compromise was struck that would alter my life.

We agreed to have the shows on Sunday afternoons, a historically slow time for the bar. We also agreed to four twenty-minute sets: two poetry, two music. Finding the musicians was easy; finding poets who were willing to stand on a pool table covered with plywood and read to a bar of dykes while strictly adhering to a twenty-minute time limit was almost impossible.

The first Sunday was met with curiosity, and the audience was more one of place and circumstance than of desire to view the performances—but word spread. Soon Sunday afternoons became one of the more popular times to attend that bar, and I became convinced that the fusion of women's music and poetry was a powerful combination that would do more to the raising of women's consciousness than either poet or musician could hope to accomplish singularly.

In the mid '70s, poet Judy Grahn was approached by the women of Olivia Records to record an album. She asked me to record with her, and *Where Would I Be Without You* was completed in August of 1976. This opened up another door.

The women of Olivia wanted to produce shows featuring their recording artists, and Judy and I were Olivia artists. So negotiations were begun. One major snag was over the performers' fees. Someone put forth the idea that since musicians had to rehearse they should be paid more than the poets. The poets put forth

that they had been rehearsing their entire lives for those poems. The matter was settled, and the combination of poets and musicians took to the auditorium's stage.

"Women on Wheels" produced several concerts, and the *Varied Voices of Black Women* show took to the road during 1977 and 1978. Thousands of women saw and felt the experience. It had been proven successfully that the combination worked. Women who had convinced themselves that they hated poetry were reintroduced to the art form and loved it. Women who loved poetry but were totally unaware of women's music heard it and loved it.

Even with the evidence before us we still tried to deny the feasibility of the two forms co-existing on stage. Women's music festivals were flourishing across the country, and there was one very large absence: poetry. The same arguments that were voiced fifteen years ago were being repeated.

Thus I was not surprised by the reactions of women in Bloomington this year to a poet in their midst. There has not been enough experience for them to realize and feel comfortable with the idea that poets and poetry belong at women's festivals.

It is not easy even with consciousness to discard the environmental trappings that accompany most art forms. Most of us still expect to see classical musicians in white blouses and long black skirts—but we are changing and growing.

I was also not surprised by the reactions of women following my performance in Bloomington. One woman in the stage crew ran up to me and exclaimed, "They're standing up; they're giving you a standing ovation!" The surprise in her voice told me that she had never seen a poetry performance; she had never felt the energy reverberate through a room with the Audre Lordes, Adrienne Richs, and Judy Grahn of this world. The glow in her face also told me that she would do so in the future.

Many women approached me in the days following my performance, wanting to know why I hadn't been at this festival before, and when I was coming to that one. The answers to those questions do not lie with me. We still have many myths to bury and many biases to change. Producers feel—and rightfully so—that they have an obligation to provide entertainment that women want and will like, and

the last they checked, we "didn't like poetry."

So, to those who would still doubt the mix of poetry and music, I would remind them of the ingredients needed for Good Seasons salad dressing mix: spices, vinegar, oil, and water. ●

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**ABOUT THE WRITER: 'HOT WIRE'** staff writer Pat Parker—Black lesbian poet, feminist medical administrator, mother of two daughters, lover of women, softball devotee, and general progressive troublemaker—passed on June 17, 1989 of breast cancer at the age of 45. She was born in Houston in 1944, and had been writing since she was a child. *'Movement in Black,'* her signature collection, is back in print thanks to Firebrand Press. Pat is sorely missed by all who knew her.

## LESBIAN HUMOR from 51

poems, essays, and cartoons. We finally pulled together what we felt was a great collection, ranging from some contemplative, wryly amusing essays and poems to some real gut-busters.

Little did we realize the hardest part was still before us—choosing a title. We wanted a funny title for a humor anthology. We tried using puns or taking clichés and twisting them a bit. Unfortunately, everything I thought was funny Carole thought was stupid, and everything she thought was funny, I thought was awful. We came up with eight pages of clever titles that neither one of us could stand. Finally, inspiration struck—what had we done with this book but pick what *we* considered the best? It was no absolute judgment, just our choice—so we decided to call the book *Silverleaf's Choice: An Anthology of Lesbian Humor*.

From there, it was about three months of paperwork (corresponding with authors, contracts, permissions, etc.) and production (typesetting, paste-up, and the never ending proofreading). Distribution was already set up for Silverleaf's other books (Inland and Bookpeople distribute to the bookstores, and mail order to individuals). Two months at the printer's gave me a breather to work on publicity.

And in-May 1990, *Silverleaf's Choice* was hot off the press. ●

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# THE MAKING OF TWO BOOKS

Renee Hansen's *Take Me to the Underground*  
and Silverleaf's *Lesbian Humor Anthology*

## IN SEARCH OF LESBIANS (and other intelligent signs in the universe)

By Renee Hansen

When I was in New York someone told me about the bar where Chastity hung out, and so on a walk through the village I stopped in there to take a look. No Chastity.

But later I thought about that. Why do I spend so much time kicking around, wondering about and searching for lesbians? Recently, with Greta Garbo's death, I've spent time speculating on why Garbo wanted to be left alone. They put it so adroitly in the *Chicago Tribune*, stating her new biography will mention the women who fell in love with Garbo (but not, it seems, that Garbo fell in love with them). Was Garbo a dyke?

And why do I get all hyped trying to figure it out?

And need I mention the secret watching and hoping that goes on around k.d., Phranc, Michelle, Tracy, and Melissa? I read between the lines of every interview. We all "know." But why, I ask myself, I ask you, *why are we so eager to know?*

As a literature teacher, I have scanned every biography section looking for the clues to the big question: which writer was a dyke? I have biographers such as Judy Grahn to thank for naming the names. Those full-time and part-time lesbians (Grahn calls them), such as Gertrude Stein, Virginia Wolfe, Violette



**Renee Hansen: "My search for my story led me to the women's bookstores and finally to the process of writing a book myself."**

LeDuc, Collette, Natalie Barney, Djuna Barnes, Amy Lowell, H.D., Margaret Anderson, and Renee Vivien. After much studying and guessing I have a few more names to add to Grahn's list, women that I speculate about: Willa Cather, Carson McCullers, Lorraine Hansberry, Katherine Mansfield, and Emily Dickinson.

And still the question: *Why this search?*

Someone told me recently that she went to the Virginia Slims tournament, had a pair of binoculars, and began the evening by following the tennis ball from Martina to her opponent. But then she started going through the audience looking for other lesbians, and noticed quite a few women who appeared to be doing the same—going through the audience with their binoculars. As it turned out, my friend soon noticed that the women with binoculars appeared to be lesbians looking for other lesbians. It seemed by the end of the evening that all the lesbians had spotted each other with their binoculars and no one was willing to pass the binoculars down.

And still the question: *why am I so determined to uncover the lesbians?*

What am I trying to get to here? What am I looking for? What are we all looking for? The woman who told me about searching the stands with her binoculars has a life partner, is very happy in this relationship, went to the Slims tournament with her life partner, and definitely was not cruising the stands for women. What was she searching for?

We kid each other about cruising, about looking, about checking the women out as they walk past us down the street. But is that what it is? Cruising? Curiosity? Something for gossip? Or is it a greater search we're involved in, and almost compelled to take part in: the search for lesbian images?

The next time you walk down the street checking out the lesbians, consider this: The search that every lesbian goes on is a search to see her own image reflected back to her from society. We are looking for our mythology, our story, ourselves. And we are looking for our mentors, our heroines. For some of us it is a search for

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



the one woman who seems to have accomplished what we want to accomplish. Some of us are searching for that lesbian artist, doctor, spiritualist, actor, or writer. For other women it is a search for lesbian society. Looking through the binoculars at the Slims tournament, attending festivals, checking women for "dykeness" as they walk past on the street—all these are part of our search for our society, our culture. We are looking for the lesbians who will validate and breathe life into our own existence. Finding these women runs parallel to our own process of discovery.

The search is for lesbian culture, and we create it by searching for images.

Yes, as an author and ex-literature major I know Faulkner, I know Hemingway, I know Tolstoy, I know Dickens, and

Milton, and Dryden, and Pope. I know all about their story. I know that story so well, too well. But it isn't my story. No, it isn't my story. Where is my story? That's the question that runs through my mind all the hundreds and thousands of times I have read their story.

My search for my story led me to the women's bookstores and finally to the process of writing a book myself.

When I sat down to write my novel *Take Me To The Underground* (1990, The Crossing Press) I wrote it for one reason: I needed a story. My story was one of always being in a relationship and always falling in love with a woman I was not in the relationship with, with someone who looked better. My story was one of affairs. My capacity for passion was beyond my

capacity to control it. My story was one of same-sex melding and an internalized belief that she would be "the one." My story was one of love obsession which grew to the point where I couldn't function in the supermarket or at the laundromat unless I was thinking of *her*. I don't see this story as unique in the lesbian community. Because of homophobic pressures from society, we might have a stronger desire

*continued on page 55*

*ABOUT THE WRITER: Renee Hansen is currently a Professor of Literature at Columbia College in Chicago. She was the recipient of the 1986 Illinois Arts Council Award in Playwriting and is currently co-chair of the Gay and Lesbian Caucus of the Modern Language Association.*

## LESBIAN LAUGHTER Comes Out of the Closet

By Ann E. Larson

"A lesbian humor anthology?" When I first floated the idea, skeptics were everywhere.

"Lesbians take themselves too seriously," they said.

"That's why we need this book," I replied.

"It will never be politically correct," they said.

"That's why we need this book," I replied.

Having convinced myself and co-editor Carole Carr of our need to laugh at ourselves, we set out to find that elusive lesbian sense of humor. We sent out a press release announcing our call for submissions in January of 1989 to everybody we could think of, using lists of lesbian, gay, and women's publications. We also sent the call to Women's Studies Departments at colleges and universities. We set a tentative deadline of October 1989, nine months from the mailing, sure it would stretch into a year. We figured that sending the call to the widest possible range of publications would give us a diverse pool of contributors. We also trusted that from our initial mailing, word-of-mouth would spread it even further. This appeared to be the case, as we eventually received

contributions from as far away as Australia and New Zealand.

Carole and I had worked well together on Silverleaf's first publication, and we became friends. That project led to a wonderful collection of short stories called *Crossing the Mainstream: New Fiction by Women Writers*. They were great stories, but mostly very serious. When she heard that I was going to do a humor anthology, she couldn't pass up a chance to see what the mail would bring in this time.

I think the most crucial element in co-editing an anthology is for both editors to share a common vision of what the project will be. If you don't have that, you won't be able to agree on anything else. Also you must trust your own judgment as well as that of your co-editor. Carole and I worked by consensus, both of us having to like a piece for it to be seriously considered.

We found that the humor anthology was a harder project—we seemed to have more difficulty deciding what was funny than what was good writing. The most important criteria for both books turned out to be how well a piece held up after repeated readings. Was it still good/

funny after we had read it two or three or four times, or did it lose its luster the second time around? We also wanted to make sure that we didn't include any pieces that were mean—we didn't want any that put somebody down. That's not funny.

We tended to agree on most things, although obviously we each liked some pieces more than the other one did. We had a third party read a few pieces about which we couldn't decide. One of the hardest things about doing an anthology is having the patience to keep at it for a year, believing that enough contributions will come, that you will be able to eventually get enough with real quality to do a full-length book.

By the end of March 1989, the contributions had started trickling in. They were good. Funny. Interesting. Some went over our heads (what is it about lesbians and cats, anyway?). By summer, they were coming in fairly steadily. Funny, diverse, some a bit off-the-wall. Baby dykes to RV dykes, lesbian dating to (gasp) lesbian weddings. Lesbian intellectuals to bar dykes to the real Statue of Liberty. By fall, it was a flood of stories,

*continued on page 49*

*ABOUT THE WRITER: Ann E. Larson is the founder/publisher of Silverleaf Press in Seattle. She has edited (with Carole A. Carr) 'Silverleaf's Choice: An Anthology of Lesbian Humor' and 'Crossing the Mainstream: New Fiction by Women Writers.'*

## FREESTYLE

# ARE WHITE SPIRITUAL FEMINISTS EXPLOITING NATIVE AMERICAN SPIRITUALITY?

By Kay Gardner

*Editor's note: The word "Indian" as used in this article refers to Native American people rather than those from the country of India.*

At the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival in August, I sat with my partner at her quilt booth one afternoon as distant drumming and sounds of shouting wafted toward us. "Nothing unusual," I thought. "This is Michigan after all."

The drumming got closer. It wasn't the annual march of the girls' camp. No richly costumed children with faces painted in many colors paraded through the crafts area. Instead it was an organized group of womyn of color, angrily shouting something like "Stop spiritual exploitation. We are not for sale," and handing out position papers entitled "Indian Spiritual Abuse."

The shouting was not aimed indiscriminately. The group of women stopped at the booths of particular craftswomyn and yelled at the proprietors. We were next to a booth of womyn selling frame drums, rattles, and Southwestern incenses, and across from another booth selling only multi-sized frame drums. Nearby was a well-known feminist jeweler who uses feather imagery and shield-like forms in her work. The parade stopped at each of these booths, shouting their slogan and, in two cases, violently shaking their fists at the craftswomyn. Though I knew the protesters had a right to their anger, the violence was disturbing.

I read the handout, a copy of Andrea Smith's position paper that had been included in the materials of the 1989 National Women's Studies Association conference. The points which touched me the most were: 1) that New Age interest in Native American spirituality has trivi-

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

alized it through romanticization; 2) that some white feminists, having no genuine understanding of Native American spiritual practices, are exploiting Indian spirituality by commercializing events such as sweat lodges and sacred pipe ceremonies; 3) that some white writers (Lynn Andrews was mentioned specifically) destroy Native American spirituality by making themselves heard—through the white privilege of access to marketing—at Native American expense. ["Our voices are silenced as a result," writes Andrea. "Consequently, the younger generation of Indians who are trying to find their way back to the Old Ways become hopelessly lost in this morass of consumerist spirituality."]; and 4) white feminists who wish to act in solidarity with their Native American sisters must not buy products which exploit Native American spirituality, whether they're books, records, sacred ceremonies, workshops, or (as evidenced by the protest at Michigan) crafts items. ["Promotion of this material is destroying the freedom of speech for Native Americans by ensuring that our voices will never be heard. Feminists must make a choice: will they respect Indian political and spiritual autonomy, or will they promote materials that are fundamentally racist under the guise of 'freedom of speech?']

Every Michigan festival has a major issue. This year—even with the dramatic leafleting by a low-flying airplane suspected by some to have been hired by certain ousted and furious S/M womyn—the march by the womyn of color in support of the Native American womyn's position paper seemed to me the most important. It was an extension of last year's major issue: racism (though in 1989 it was more concentrated on the relationships between African-Americans and whites).

I recalled that one of the booths in the crafts area had a pamphlet by Amoja Three Rivers. I immediately went over to buy one. *Cultural Etiquette: A Guide for*

*the Well-Intentioned* was put together by the womyn of the festival's Womyn of Color Tent, including those whose ancestry is African, Asian, Pacific Islander, Latina, Middle Eastern, Native American, and "mixed." [*Cultural Etiquette* is available for \$5 through Market Wimmin, Box 28, Indian Valley, VA 24105.]

Though later I read the entire booklet, finding it clearly and lovingly presented, I immediately turned to the chapter "How Not to Talk to an Indian," and in five pages had received an education in "trigger" words such as: "squaw"—a French corruption of a Native word meaning "male genitalia"; "Ten Little Indians"—a song used to count dead Native bodies during the invasion of the West; "scalping"—a custom introduced by the French, Dutch and British; "illiteracy"—in which language...the invaders? or their own?

All of this reminded me of an incident that happened last year at the Acoustic Stage. There was a beautiful tribute to the late Black poet Pat Parker. I was at the top of the hill under the big oak tree and overheard some white women saying that Black women could be racist too. I interjected, "How can people who are part of an oppressed group be racist?" These womyn acted as if I had offended them, and they clammed up. An African-American woman nearby nodded in resignation, or disgust. I tearfully asked her, "What can we do about our racism? How can we learn?" She said, "It's up to you to deal with your own racism. We cannot be teaching you." And I recalled how I used to feel years earlier when asked by straight friends to educate them about their homophobia. At first I was okay about it, but soon I got tired of it and wanted them to leave me alone and examine their attitudes themselves.

So, yes, it is far beyond time for us to take action and unlearn our racism. The world is changing fast. We white people are in the minority and have much

to learn about cultures other than our own. This does not mean that we must romanticize them, becoming "wannabees" by aping their cultures, but we must look to our own backgrounds—our own roots—and discover what the good parts are, the parts that celebrate life and diversity and healing.

I learned much from the action that was taken by the womyn of color in support of the Native American position paper. I know that I, and white womyn in general, have a whole lot more to learn, living as we do in a white ethnocentric society. I'm glad that womyn such as Margaret Sloan-Hunter are out there presenting "Unlearning Racism" workshops, and that Amoja Three Rivers took the time to put together her important booklet (a booklet that should be reread often as part of every womyn's library).

There are two things, though, that bothered me about the Michigan protest. I wish that rather than such a violent confrontation, the offended womyn had demanded a meeting with the craftswomyn, especially those whose wares they felt were exploitative, so that a constructive dialogue out of sisterly concern could have begun. By coming at them so violently, the womyn of color created alienation among some womyn who have been very open to dialogue. To me, violence should have no part in relationships between feminist womyn.

My second concern is that there are certain ritual objects that are common to many earth religions on many continents. As a Wiccan priestess of European and Middle Eastern descent, I know that the frame drum is an instrument indigenous to ancient Ireland and Greece as well as the Native American cultures. If these instruments are built by white womyn and

sold as Native American drums, the exploitation issue is valid. If, on the other hand, they are presented as frame drums, the craftswomyn should not be attacked for creating ritual objects that come from their own innate spirituality. As for the use of feathers or shields in artworks, again, if these are presented as representations of Native American ritual objects, then, yes, they are exploitative—but feathers, shields, and depictions of sun, moon, and stars are also sacred to pagan cultures throughout the world. We must *all* be very careful not to presume that any one culture owns any of Nature's gifts. The *intent* behind the making of these crafts and the spirituality of the craftswomyn should be considered.

We are so lucky to have Michigan and other venues where we may share our issues and our concerns as feminists and as spiritual womyn. We can do nothing but learn from the incidents that arise as we grow through both joy and pain into a true womyn's culture.

I leave you with some of the closing words from *Cultural Etiquette*: "Our ultimate challenge and our ultimate goal is to love and nurture one another and all things in creation. Peace and love to all the children of the Earth." ●

**ABOUT THE WRITER:** *Kay Gardner is a composer/performer, teacher, author, priestess, and broadcaster. Her book 'Sounding the Inner Landscape: Music as Medicine' (Caduceus Publications) and its companion tape are now available at feminist bookstores everywhere.*



Adrienne Torf hopes the storms will hold off until her performance is done

Toni Armstrong Jr.

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## MULLING IT OVER

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# RUTH BARRETT: TASTING OF MYSTERIES

By Robin Fre



**Ruth Barrett: "The spiritual *is* political. What you believe is a reflection of your values in the world."**

How can we move forward if we don't know where we've been? How can we envision the future when the past remains unfocused? We have a rich women's culture that has been growing over thousands of years—changing, evolving, becoming ripe with women's wisdom.

Ruth Barrett shares her love of women's mysteries in her songs and teachings. Rich in texture and melody, her music stirs the memory, tickles the senses, and lets us vision the world as a healthier and more womanly place. In this world, it

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

is possible to give birth to oneself. Ruth Barrett's albums, including her latest release *Parthenogenesis*, capture the magic and strength of women's collective memories.

"I visualize matriarchy as a system where women's values are dominant, life affirming, and peace loving," says Ruth. "Men are taught reverence for women from birth, and the culture reinforces respect for women's values. The path to matriarchy has to start with women creating a different world by eradicating internalized patriarchy. The first step is to do healing work with women, to get rid of patriarchy as a thought-form both internally and externally."

Ruth sees music taking us on that path. She says she sings about things that she feels very clear about, visions that she can see. One of these is parthenogenesis. "Legends tell us that women could give birth without intercourse with men," says Ruth. "One way that the ancient women knew how to do it was to go into the ocean, enter into a meditative state, and allow the ocean waves to rush up the birth canal to pierce the ovum. This is all that was—and is—needed to get the cells to divide and grow into a parthenogenetically-produced child. I'm using the image of parthenogenesis not just literally but also as the image of women giving birth to ourselves spiritually. Biologically it happens more than we think, but that's not the point of how I'm using it. We have been giving birth to a whole new spirituality in the past twenty years, and that's really what my new album is dedicated to—this rebirth of spirit and our ability to heal ourselves."

Ruth believes that her music reflects her woman-identified values and the importance of restoring the image of the goddess to human consciousness. "For example, in patriarchy the worst thing a woman can do is to age," she says. "In my song 'Crone'—which is about the old woman I will become one day—I have some lines:

*I raise my eyes into my eyes  
And there I see you beckoning  
Conspirator, adventurer  
Upon the spiral way  
Whose approach is creamed  
away in lies,  
You are not refused in me.*

I'm not resisting her, I'm not afraid of her in me. I welcome her as the wise woman I will become. Also the crone is part of the life cycle that is ending so that other things may begin. The crone energy is the destruction that makes way for new life."

Ruth asserts that the culture we live in is completely youth-obsessed. "Youth is

so eroticized that the only thing that is erotic is a certain age group. It's very dangerous because it perpetuates self-hatred in women, and puts pressure on us to do such things as have face lifts and tummy tucks and breast lifts. My intent is always to bring in other choices through my imagery," she says. "Replacing images that are oppressive with new images is really important. The chorus to 'Crone' is an incantation: 'Untie a knot, tie a new knot, bind it and set it free...' The knot represents the thing that is fixed, so when the knot is *untied*, we're undoing reality as it is, and we're tying a new knot: bringing in a new reality and binding it, setting it, and releasing it so that it will become true. In other words, we are creating a new reality."

On the cover of Ruth's new album *Parthenogenesis* is an Amazon, a strong woman, done by Sudie Rakusin. Ruth asked her to match the lyrics of the title song with one of her paintings. She sent back many choices, and Ruth liked the one where there is a woman surrounded by many, many animals in the water and yet she is focused internally. It differs from her other album covers, which have a medieval look.

"Yes, the Renaissance-girl days are over," says Ruth. "It's my growth. Because I began in traditional British Isles folk music, the album covers reflected that, and I was also trying to please the folk music audience. Now I'm not covertly slipping in pagan philosophy anymore; I'm coming out with it, not hiding behind anything. I've been ostracized from certain segments of the folk community because of my sexual orientation and my spirituality."

Ruth sees a clear connection between spirituality and politics. "The spiritual is political," she says. "What you believe—your religion or spirituality—is a reflection of your values in the world. If your values are for protecting the earth, loving women and children, you are probably not going to go out and murder or pollute. If your spirituality is of the earth, then you'll do everything you can to protect the earth. The Jerry Falwells of the world use their religions to 'holy roll' against the earth, against lesbians and gays, against anything that isn't them.

"I feel that the function of spirituality is very deep. If I'm a feminist activist during the week and I go to church on Sunday to worship a male god that hates women, that doesn't reflect

what I'm doing in the world. I believe that spirituality has to reflect your values—how you see yourself, how you see the world, how you want the world to be."

Ruth intends *Parthenogenesis* to be a collection of imagery about a new world, restoring value and sacredness to the world. "It's my hope for saving the earth," she says.

If asked, what would she pick from *Parthenogenesis* as her feminist "holy roll" song? "I would pick my 'Invocation to Free Women,' a song which puts out a continuum—where we've been, where we are, and where we're going," she says. "It's rooted in traditional music, but yet it has a more modern setting. It contains an ancient feeling but has contemporary words."

A wide range of feelings inspired the songs on *Parthenogenesis*. "I believe in the power of women's anger; I believe it's a healing force that needs to be facilitated and not pacified," says Ruth. "Righteous anger is an appropriate and healthy reaction to atrocity; women's anger is important for changing the world. There are things to get angry about, that we *must* get angry about or we're dead people. I get angry about the rape of children, the rape of women, and the threat of nuclear annihilation. I know that we can change the world; it's already happening.

"*Parthenogenesis* conveys a full range of feelings aside from anger, like love and my reverence for women, as in the song, 'Kadistu (Holy Woman),' a sacred lovesong [on the soundsheet in this issue]. The kadistu were originally sacred 'prostitutes' in ancient temples. They were the gateway to the divinity. Human beings would connect with these sacred priestesses, later called 'prostitutes' by the patriarchy, and through the process would connect with their own divinity. The kadistu would be the guides. Sexuality was sacred. Kadistu is in all of us.

*Raven haired Kadistu,  
full lipped and spicy wet,  
circle my body in your radiance...  
Queen of Love whose kiss is Life.*

In addition to performing, Ruth does workshops called "Reconciling Feminist Politics and Spirituality"; "Our Sacred Bloods" (a workshop on our bodies and our rites of passage); and "Introduction to Women's Mysteries." She also views her music as teaching. "Young women want women who have had

hands-on experience to come and share with them," she says. "They read a lot, but meeting someone with more experience brings everything they've read to life. My job is to go and blend the intellect with the emotional. I do it by talking about feminist philosophy and feminist spirituality. After talking about the concepts, we do ritual work. Hands-on ritual work. When I see young women who have learned to hate themselves get a sparkle of *maybe-I-could-love-myself...maybe-I-could-look-in-the-mirror-and-not-hate-mybody...I know that my work is important and has to be done. That's why I'm here.*"

In Ruth's experience, the young women she meets are begging for the information. Ruth wants to tour more with combinations of workshops and concerts. She would also like to do a song and chant tape as well as theatrical productions with music, dance, and acting—ritual theater performances where audiences walk out changed.

If Ruth Barrett's visions come true, we women will be stronger not only in body and mind but in spirit as well. We will cultivate a world-changing anger. Future generations will reap the harvest from seeds planted by such visionaries and teachers as Ruth Barrett. ●

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**ABOUT THE WRITER:** *Robin Fre* has written for 'HOT WIRE' under the pseudonym Q. W. Block. She wrote the song "Thyme" that appears on Kay Gardner's 'Fishersdaughter' album, and currently lives on the coast of Maine with her partner and her cat Isis.

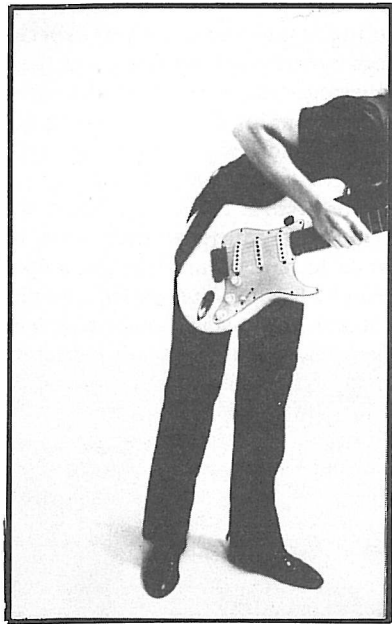
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## RENEE HANSEN from 51

to retreat into the safety of another woman.

*Take Me To The Underground* is a uniquely lesbian love story. It is the story about a high, incredible kind of love. It is also the story of growth as the main character realizes it's okay to let go, to go out into the world alone. In this sense it is a nontraditional love story.

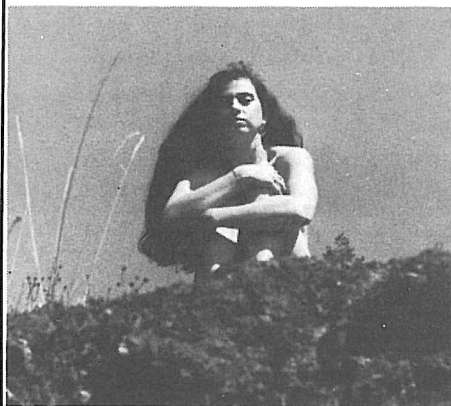
I suppose all writers are driven to tell their story, the one that flashes up in images and dreams. It is a wonderful experience right now to be a lesbian author, as we are just beginning to give voice to the lesbian characters that have lain silent within us for so long. In this way we will re-engineer our myths, create new archetypes, and keep alive our search for the lesbian. ●



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## ZEINABU DAVIS from 19

Unlike *Cycles*, *A Powerful Thang* is done in color, although there are some black and white sequences. Color combinations were very important in the design of this film, and I worked extensively with my art director (Christina Springer) in choosing what color schemes we would use on the set. On a very basic human level, I find that color sets the mood for sensuality, and this film toys around with the status quo's perceptions of what eroticism and Black sexuality are.

Connected with concerns around color was the invocation of a goddess to guide and nurture this particular film. The Vodun goddess Erzulie was heavily referred to in *Cycles*. As my production crew began to plan the "look" of the film, the colors of blue and white seemed to stand out most in our minds in terms of lighting patterns. "Bing!" All of a sudden, sea shells and a Black madonna seemed to appear on the set, and then we knew Yemaya was with us. The crew was taught to call names of goddesses for scene numbers, and names from Aida Wedo to Isis were ritually evoked.

Although *A Powerful Thang* is much more traditional in structure than *Cycles*, typical Zeinabuisms will be done, meaning I will play around with the form as much as possible so that my film can reflect an African American woman's perspective and aesthetic.

My work process is generally very collaborative, and my crew was mostly female, with a fairly even balance between professionals and students. It was important to have my students from Antioch College work on this production, as there are not many opportunities for them to gain actual production experience.

I truly enjoy teaching. It gives me the chance to give back to others the training I received. Graduate education is getting out of the reach of many students, especially people of color. I have over \$40,000 in student loans that I have to repay. Why make other people go through those hoops, when I can demystify the process of filmmaking much earlier on in their education? This attitude toward filmmaking is popular with my students, and I am very proud to say that I have attracted a number of women of color to my classes.

Currently, *A Powerful Thang* is just in the beginning stages of the long process of post-production, but I am very excited

about the possibilities for women's music in this film. I plan on using some women jazz instrumentalists from Ohio, but I'd also like to include a woman rapper as well. Master drummers Edwina Lee Tyler and Linda Thomas Jones perform in the film and provide Afro-Haitian drum and percussion rhythms. For years I have wanted to utilize the talents of master drummer Edwina, and the fact that I was able to secure grants from the Ohio Arts Council and Apparatus Productions made this dream finally come true.

My plan is to release *A Powerful Thang* in September 1991. I teach full-time during the academic year, which limits my availability to work on the film, but I also must fill my spare time with additional grantwriting and fundraising to support the post-production phase. (The total cost for the film is near \$50,000, so if I'm not finished by next September, please don't kill me, just send more money!)

I know that I don't have the money to be Hollywood, and I have consciously rejected their standards and conventions. What I am searching for already exists in the vast arena of African-diasporic culture that spans the globe. Personally, I look to the conventions and techniques of early cinema and adapt them to my film style.

What independent filmmakers need from an audience such as *HOT WIRE* readers is financial and administrative support. We need more women supporting each other as film investors, accountants, producers, and publicists. Filmmaking is a business, but it is also a collaborative venture that can be shared and enjoyed by a multitude of women. As artists, filmmakers need to let go of the "director syndrome" that forces people to be individualistic and paranoid of others, especially when sharing grant information.

Julie Dash—an illustrious Black woman filmmaker and the director of the soon-to-be-released *Daughters Of The Dust*—predicts the '90s will be the time for women filmmakers, particularly women of color. The gradual interchange and infusion of women's culture, music, and art is particularly exciting to me, and I hope this saturation of artistic form is manifested in my work. ●

"THAT OLD CLOSET CANNOT HOLD ME AGAIN."  
 —Meg Christian, "Can't Turn Back"



## FINAL VINYL *from page 15*

Let's look at some actual numbers for duplicating costs to demonstrate the different costs involved.

1,000	CASSETTE	LP	CD
Duplicating/Printing	\$1500	\$2500	\$3200
Shipping	\$50	\$150	\$75
Mastering type:	Digital	Lacquer	Glass
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$1550</b>	<b>\$2650</b>	<b>\$3275</b>
<b>PRICE/UNIT</b>	<b>\$1.55</b>	<b>\$2.65</b>	<b>\$3.27</b>

Now let's assume that you are selling your cassettes, LPs, and CDs at the going rate: \$10 for cassette/LP and \$16 for CD (this price varies, but \$15.95 is the most common price throughout the Lady-slipper catalog). The cost difference between a cassette (\$1.55) and a CD (\$3.27) is \$1.72, or about the cost of an additional cassette. Women with limited resources often choose to release cassette-only, or even cassette *and* LP, because CDs were more than twice as much each.

There are trade-offs. Though the initial investment is higher for CDs, there's a better profit margin if they're selling for more. Here are some comparisons:

	CASSETTE	CD
Selling price	\$10.00	\$15.95
Manufacturing cost	\$1.55	\$3.27
Gross profit	\$8.45	\$12.68

As you can see, your gross profit margin\* is about thirty percent higher when selling CDs.

## SO WHY AREN'T WE ALL FILTHY RICH?

A few important disclaimers: First, the costs of musicians, arrangers, producers, studio time, engineers, graphic artists, printing, and more are not included in the above cost. These costs get added into the cost of each unit, and the gross profit margin falls considerably. It's not unusual for a small company to have a net profit margin\* of 25¢ to \$1 on the first run (accounting for all costs on the initial order). In addition, all of the prices quoted are based on the average of several manufacturers. Some companies make "deals" based on large volume, repeat business, etc. so these costs can vary greatly.

Keep in mind that when selling to a distributor, your selling price is going to be about forty to fifty percent of retail, which in some cases means that you break even or actually lose money every time you sell to a distributor. (There are

many reasons why you still want to do that, but that is another article altogether...).

Women wanting to contact me directly about any of the issues discussed in this article can write c/o Tsunami Records, P.O. Box 42282, Tucson, AZ 85733-2282.

*\*DEFINITIONS: (1) Target market: the people you think would be interested in your music. (2) Gross profit margin: the amount of money you make after the cost of production is deducted. (3) Net profit margin: when you subtract all your costs—like studio time, musicians, copyright fees, etc.—from the gross profit margin, you end up with the amount of money you actually make. This is net profit. ●*

## LEAH ZICARI *from page 29*

whole new life as (what else) a lesbian folksinger. After taking the summer off to regain my health and to take a three-week Eastern States motorcycle trip, I became one of the gainfully self-employed and began supporting myself as a freelance teacher and performer. Last year, I started working on my first recording, *Wouldn't That Be Fun?* which was released this past May. [Hear the title cut on the soundsheet in this issue of *HOT WIRE*.] The debut of this tape has been extremely successful, with major distributors of lesbian/gay and women's music picking it up. Also, at the time of this printing, I will have finished my first tour with Romanovsky & Phillips.

My life has taken a major turn from its classical roots.

Becoming a singer of lesbian and gay music was the perfect and natural way to integrate my music with my politics. I am now playing music that speaks a message relevant to me while performing for the people I feel most comfortable with—people who can truly understand where my message comes from. I don't regret a minute of my classical training, since it has given me a great ability and was the very experience which guided me in this direction. I learned excellent skills that are helpful in other areas of my life, and are useful now as I learn to play other styles of guitar. And as I work to get my right brain back into my music, I see a whole new musical growth happening. It's exciting to experience—but more importantly, I'm doing it the way that works for me, according to my own rules.

And there's no penance for that. ●

## WOMYN WORK *from page 21*

print "SISTAH" appeared on the cover of *Aché* in November of 1989. Several other pieces of my work have appeared on the covers of *Matrix*, *The Black Scholar*, *Spare Rib*, *OUT/Look*, *The Literary Xpress*, *Gay and Lesbian Nation*, *San Diego Lesbian Press*, and *HABARI-L.A.G.A.D.U.* [Editor's note: with this issue, Laura Irene Wayne joins *HOT WIRE* as a staff artist.]

I have also entered slides in art shows that pique my interest, and have been chosen to exhibit. I act as my own agent, and only solicit galleries I feel are appropriate to exhibit my work.

Last July, my exhibit "Womyn Work" was held at STUDIO 856, a womyn-only space located in the art district of downtown San Diego. It is open for womyn to exhibit their work, as well as hosting other womyn's functions. The works in my exhibit were large, expressive paintings of a lifestyle seldom seen. Generally I choose alternative gallery space run by womyn, and I do womyn's arts and crafts shows. I will be exhibiting and selling my work at the 1990 Women's Building Art Fair in San Francisco in December. ●

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**THE CLOUD-BURST** 94

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WILL OUR LACHRYMOSE HEROINES MANAGE TO OVERCOME THIS SOGGY STATE OF AFFAIRS? ADDRESS KNOWS...UNTIL OUR NEXT POIGNANT EPISODE!

BMAAAH!

NAIL!!

I'M NOT I'M NOT!

SPLAT!

I WANT YOU-HOO-HOO! -SNORT-

TAKE IT BACK! I AM NOT A LIBERAL, YOU BURGER-LICKING BONE HEAD!

OH, HARRIET, JEEZIE! I'M SO SORRY! I'LL CLEAN IT UP! I'LL NEVER DO IT AGAIN! I'LL GET YOU ANOTHER ONE!

I DON'T WANT ANOTHER TOMATO!

HARRIET! DON'T CRY!

GET OUT OF HERE! NOW! GET OUT AND LEAVE ME ALONE!

**Outrageous Fortune** 95

© 1990 BY ALISON BECHDEL

LET ME SEE THAT!!

YOU WILL DISCOVER AN EXOTIC NEW SEXUAL-TECHNIQUE WITH THE HOT LESBIAN WHO JUST STARTED WORKING IN YOUR OFFICE.

MAKE NEW INVESTMENTS CAPTIVIOUSLY, OH, GREAT.

A-MEN, I KNOW THERE'S TONS OF ADVICE WE COULD GIVE YOU, BUT THESE NO-ONE SECRET TO SUCCESS, IF YOU WANT EASY ANSWERS, CHECK OUT YOUR COOKIES!

HEAR, HEAR!

A TOAST! TO MO AND HARRIET! MAY THEY LIVE LONG AND HAPPILY TOGETHER, AND MAY THEY HIRE MORES, SO I DON'T HAVE TO HAIR THEIR SHIT UP THREE FLIGHTS OF STAIRS!

NO KIDDING! WELL... CONGRATULATIONS! HOW, OH EXCITING!

TELL US YOUR SECRET, YOU'RE OUR ROLE MODELS, YOU KNOW!

SPARE US! I DONNO HOW WE DO IT, WE JUST LIKE BEING WITH EACH OTHER, WHICH ISN'T TO SAY IT'S ALWAYS BEEN EASY...

HARRIET, JEEZ! D'YOU HAPTA SHARE OUR INTIMATE CONCERNS WITH DR. RUTH HERE?!

ANYHOW, WE WERE WONDERING IF YOU TWO COULD TELL US YOUR SECRET. I MEAN, YOU'VE BEEN INQUARED FOR EIGHT YEARS, YOU'VE LINED TOGETHER FOR SIX... AND YOU'RE STILL IN LOVE!

## ALICE WALKER from page 5

community, or these people or that people, but the whole thing and how it is connected. How it's connected not only geographically but also in terms of time and so forth. So your responsibility as an artist is to having the vision, bearing the burden of the vision, and manifesting the vision for the healing that it can bring to everyone who can deal with it.

## AND WHEN LIFE JUST STARTS WEARING THE CREATIVE PERSON DOWN?

Well, a certain degree of wearing down is, I'm afraid, the life of the artist. All I can say is we're all worn down, but you have to learn ways to rejuvenate. Dancing all night is one way; swimming until you're silly is another way. It may be just dropping out totally, or, I don't watch television myself, but maybe just spacing out in front of the television set. By all means learn to take care of yourself, because if you don't learn that then there's not much point in learning anything else. You'll never be able, really, to help other people take care of themselves. That's why in *Temple* there's so much emphasis on things like massage and exercise and food. It's essential that we understand that taking care of the planet will be done as we take care of ourselves. You know that you can't really make much of a difference in things until you change yourself. You can do it simultaneously; you can work on both the outside, the planet, and the inside, yourself, at the same time. But I think one of the old ways of artists was for the artist to not only live in a garret but also be self-destructive. You know: drugs, alcohol, late nights, men, women, horrible relationships with people—and I just think that's not necessary. We have to have faith that we can create as healthy people as well as we can create as unhealthy people.

IN YOUR ESSAY "SAVING THE LIFE THAT IS YOUR OWN" YOU WROTE: "BLACK WRITERS AND WHITE WRITERS SEEM TO ME TO BE WRITING ONE IMMENSE STORY, THE SAME STORY FOR THE MOST PART, WITH DIFFERENT PARTS OF THIS IMMENSE STORY COMING FROM A MULTITUDE OF DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES." WOULD YOU SAY THE SAME IS TRUE FOR WOMEN OF VARIOUS RACES, CULTURES, AND BACKGROUNDS?

I think so. I was struck by a book that I just read by an Indian woman writer named Rohini, called *To Do Something Beautiful*. It has a very fine exploration of relationships between women—very supportive relationships between very poor women in India. What was so remarkable is that even though the culture—it's set in Bombay—is quite different from San Francisco or whatever, here—I had no difficulty understanding what the struggle was because it is the same struggle women around the U.S. are engaged in. Each woman was trying to be free, trying to be independent, she was trying to relate to the people she loved in ways that were not self-destructive. So it's the same story wherever you go, and it is one immense story that women are writing. But it looks different because we come from different cultures; we come wearing whatever or cooking whatever that's different from what other women may know. But when you get right down to it—because the human heart is the same, the human spirit is the same—there are many different characters, but there are basic urges that people have (and that women have in particular, since we're talking about women) that are identical. And that's one of the reasons that one feels at home in world literature, and why the Chinese people think that *The Color Purple* is a Chinese story, or that I read something from Zimbabwe and I think, "This is very American." Because it's about a woman who's trying to preserve her self-respect and to live in integrity and joy.

## ARE THERE ANY PUBLICATIONS THAT YOU WOULD ESPECIALLY RECOMMEND TO WOMEN OF COLOR?

I think *Spare Rib* from England is really superb. It started out as a more middle-class feminist magazine, but they took a sharp left turn and now it includes women from everywhere. It's often Third World, and almost all the recent covers have women of color on them. There's very good reporting on places like Ireland. It's refreshingly straightforward, hard-hitting, and world-oriented. It's one of my favorite publications. I also admire the new *Ms.* I read *In These Times*. There's also a new magazine for Black lesbians and (presumably) for womanists of whatever orientation called *Aché* that I like. I subscribe to *Sojourner* out of Boston, and *Woman of Power*, which is sometimes beautiful and deep beyond belief.

## WHO HELPS US KEEP GOING?

I believe that at every point in life we have spirit helpers—other people or beings who help us grow and be clearer and be strong. Not all of these helpers are dead, though of course true spirit helpers apparently never die, and that is the way you can identify them. Sometimes, often, these helpers are philosophers, like Mary Daly and Susan Griffin, women I often think of as the smartest women in America—and they're both of Irish descent! (I just realized.) Which pleases me, because I think the old Irish blood is very powerful and knows its connection to more worlds than one. Sometimes they are musicians: for instance, my spirit has been completely invigorated recently by African music by Youssou N'Dour, Salif Keita, and Baaba Maal. They are playing and singing some of the most soul-enlivening music on the planet. Then there are activists like Angela Davis and Gloria Steinem, whose radiance is at least as striking as their political work—and as inspiring. Or Winnie Mandela and Bob Marley who, between them, have carried me over many a rough spot over many a year. Or Sweet Honey in the Rock!

Spirit helpers are sometimes movie producers, even. The true reason I trusted Steven Spielberg and Quincy Jones to make *The Color Purple* was that when they dropped out of the blue to see me and ask my permission, I saw the Goddess/the healing, caring life force in them. And loved them, easily. I could not have said yes under any other conditions.

It is a risk to connect. But the artist—the one the Creator shows—does so. With the understanding that connection itself is simply the expression of her or his being, and that not to at least make the effort is to die. And to encourage the people to die also.

*Special thanks to the very busy Alice Walker and Joan Miura for providing great photos, and for the care and attention they gave to the initial interview and subsequent editorial process. ●*

## RHYTHM FEST from page 39

girls' scribbles about their favorite horses. "Delta Blue is my favorite." "Apples is the best." "I love Amber." All that young, displaced, adolescent sexual energy. It was pretty amusing, and oddly appropriate, that a little lesbian energy was left behind here as well.

Good energy, great music, a mountain view, 1200 women and *no attitude*—what more could you want? ●



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Toni Armstrong Jr.

At festivals, it's not uncommon for performers to invite friends and audience members to participate. Pictured here: part of June and Jean Millington's "choir."

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**LADYSLIPPER CATALOG.** PO Box 3124, Durham, NC 27705. World's most comprehensive catalog of records/tapes/CDs/videos by women; free but stamps appreciated. Annual.

**LESBIAN CONTRADICTION: A Journal of Irreverent Feminism.** 584 Castro St. #263, San Francisco, CA 94114. Commentary, analysis, humor, reviews, cartoons by women who agree to disagree. Quarterly; \$6/year, \$1.50/sample.

**THE LESBIAN NEWS** c/o Pat Sampson, 1025 Coronado, Long Beach, CA 90804. A digest of information from Southern California and beyond. Monthly; \$12/year.

**MAMARROOTS.** Asungi Productions, 3661 N. Campbell #108, Tucson, AZ 85719-1524 (602) 327-0987. Dedicated to Afrocentric Spirituality and Cultural Awareness. [See also AFRAGODDESS SPIRITUAL & CULTURAL SISTAHOOD NETWORK in GROUPS section.]

**OF A LIKE MIND.** PO Box 6021, Madison, WI 53716. A leading international network and newspaper of women's spirituality. Quarterly; \$13-33 (sliding scale)/year, \$3/sample.

**OUTLINES.** Editor Tracy Baim, 3059 N. Southport, Chicago, IL 60657. (312) 871-7610. Free in Chicago; \$25/year by mail. Lesbian/gay newsmagazine; extensive women's music & culture coverage. Midwest and national focus.

**TRIVIA, A JOURNAL OF IDEAS.** PO Box 606, N. Amherst, MA 01059. Publishing radical, creative feminist thought in the form of essays, reviews, translations, and experimental prose.

**VISIBILITIES, THE LESBIAN MAGAZINE.** Dept. HW, PO Box 1258, Peter Stuyvesant Station, New York, NY 10009-1258. Interviews, features, columns, cartoons—all by, for, and about lesbians. Publishing since 1987. \$15/8 issues (\$US 23 Canada and overseas). Sample copies/\$2.25 (\$US 3 Canada and overseas). SASE for writers' guidelines.

## RECORDINGS

**AVALON: Solo Flute Meditations,** Kay Gardner. Ladyslipper, PO Box 3124, Durham, NC 27705. 7 pieces, each channelled at a different holy site in what once was Avalon.

**BACK AND FORTH,** Ann Reed. Turtlecub Productions, 3857 Harriet Ave. So., Minneapolis, MN 55409. The best of Ann Reed's first two albums plus three new songs.

**BRACE YOURSELF,** Marjy Plant. Jargot Records, PO Box 41023, Nashville, TN 37204. Conversational country lyrics about classical everyday themes.

**CLOSER TO HOME,** Jamie Anderson. Tsunami Records, PO Box 42282, Tucson, AZ 85733. Women's music with strength & humor. Includes "Wedding Song," "Straight Girl Blues," and "Nothing."

**A DUCK IN NEW YORK CITY,** Heather Bishop. Mother of Pearl Records. Woodmore, Manitoba, Canada ROA 2M0. Ten fun songs for kids. Lyrics included.

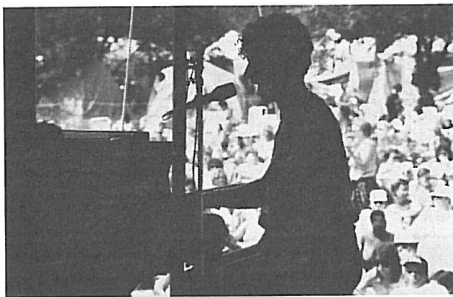
**DRUM DRAMA,** Edwina Lee Tyler. Percussion Piquant, Inc., 2 Ellen St., Ringwood NJ 07456. Intensely dramatic, meditative; African drums and percussion.

**GARDEN OF ECSTASY,** Kay Gardner. Ladyslipper Records, PO Box 3124, Durham, NC 27715. "These compositions describe the colors, fragrances, and sounds which have greeted me since I composed 'A Rainbow Path.' Rather than re-explore a meditative path, my muse this time took me on a different, more active journey." (All women musicians/techs.)

**HEARTBREAKER BLUES,** Elaine Townsend. Hands in FLIGHT Music, 3871 Piedmont Ave., Oakland, CA 94611. Original songs in styles from samba to bluegrass—reggae to rock.

**IN SEARCH OF THE HAMMER/RETURN OF THE HAMMER** by Cappy Kotz, lyrics by Phrin Prickett. Friends of the Hammer, 5445 26th Ave SW, Seattle, WA 98106. Two lesbian musicals performed by lesbian-feminist theater group Front Room Theater Guild.

**IT'S A MIRACLE,** Alice Di Micele. Box 281, Williams, OR 97544. Heartfelt songs about today's politics and environment.



Toni Armstrong Jr.

**JUMP FOR JOY,** Koko Taylor. Alligator Records, PO Box 60234, Chicago, IL 60660. Modern-day blues queen Koko Taylor's latest.

**LADY OF THE SERPENT SKIRT,** Barbara Borden and Sheila Glover. Cloud 9 Music, 21 Manzanita Ave., San Rafael, CA 94901. Electronic music and world-beat drum stylings blend in this evocative instrumental tape.

**LIVIN' ON DREAMS,** Judy Fjell. Honey Pie Music, PO Box 1065, Davis, CA 95617-1065. New release; songs with violin and piano accompaniment.

**OVERCOMING STAGE FRIGHT,** Karen Beth. Stardance Recordings, Box 371, Bearsville, NY 12409. Help for performers through guided imagery and affirmations.

**RAINBOWS IN MY MIND,** Carole and Bren. RR1 Box 1420, Vergennes, VT 05491. Songs of love, spirituality, and activism blend into a joyful affirmation of life.

**RETURNING THE MUSE TO MUSIC.** Musica Femina, PO Box 15121, Portland, OR 97215. Flute/guitar duo; \$10 cassette/\$15 CD, plus \$1 postage. Available summer '89.

**SINGER IN THE STORM,** Holly Near. Chameleon Records, 3355 W. El Segundo Blvd., Hawthorne, CA 90250. (213) 973-8282. Strong songs of peace and social change, some in Spanish. Mercedes Sosa, Melissa Etheridge.

**SOJOURNS,** Libana. PO Box 530, Cambridge, MA 02140. From Bulgaria to Bolivia, Libana intertwines the sounds and rhythms of the world's women.

**SONGS YOU CAN SEE.** Peggy Lipschulz & Becky Armstrong, 1122 Seward, Evanston, IL 60202. (312) 475-7269. Contemporary songs plus full-color live drawing.

**THE SPIRIT WHO SINGS,** Andrea Lyman. PO Box 135, Sagle, ID 83860. Songs of Spirit, honoring the sacredness of all life.

**TO EACH ONE OF US.** Karen Beth, Stardance Recordings, PO Box 371, Bearsville, NY 12409. Songs of the heart & spirit, blending folk and New Age.

**VERSE-ABILITY.** Helen Hooke, Montana Blake, PO Box 888, Hoboken, NJ 07030-0888. Helen Hooke, of Deadly Nightshade fame, on lead vocals, guitar, and violin.

**THE WAY YOU MOVE,** Melanie Morrison. CB Productions, 2514 W. Carter Dr., Tempe, AZ 85282. A funk/rock bluesy album with some jazz mixed in.

**YAHOO AUSTRALIA,** Alix Dobkin. PO Box 727, Woodstock, NY 12498. (914) 679-6168. Recorded live during Alix's 1990 "Down Under" tour.

## PUBLICATIONS

**ALL WOMEN ARE HEALERS** by Diane Stein. Crossing Press, PO Box 1048, Freedom, CA 95019. Stones and crystals, reiki, Chinese healing, acupressure, reflexology, pendulums, kinesiology, vitamins, minerals, herbs, homeopathy, flower remedies, gem elixirs.

**ANTHOLOGY OF LESBIAN HUMOR** edited by Ann E. Larson and Carole Carr. Silverleaf Press, PO Box 70189, Seattle, WA 98107. (206) 784-2834. Cartoons, short stories, essays, and poems from 27 writers and artists.

**BERRIGAN** by Vicki P. McDonnell. Naiad Press, PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. By the author of the Nyla Wade series; a charming memoir of the turbulent '70s.

**THE BEVERLY MALIBU** by Katherine V. Forrest. Naiad Press, PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. Third mystery in series featuring lesbian policewoman Kate Delafield. This time: murder of an old-time Hollywood director.

**CHOICE CENTERED TAROT** by Gail Fairfield. Newcastle Publishing, PO Box 7589, Van Nuys, CA 91409. The Tarot presented w/simplicity and clarity as a tool for personal empowerment, introspection, clarifying issues, making choices.

**THE CHESAPEAKE PROJECT** by Phyllis Horn. Naiad Press, PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. Jessie works the Chesapeake Bay with her father until he is murdered, then she and her lover Meredith are pursued by both killers and federal agents.

**CHRIS** by Randy Salem. Naiad Press, PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. A classic early novel when love between women was a shadowy forbidden adventure.

**CLUB TWELVE** by Amanda Kyle Williams. Naiad Press, PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. Fast-paced international espionage thriller.

**CONFESSING CONSCIENCE: Churched Women on Abortion.** Abingdon Press, 201 8th Ave. So., Nashville, TN 37202. Christian women share different perspectives on the abortion debate.

**DEATH DOWN UNDER** by Claire McNab. Naiad Press, PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. Murder and movie-making in the third mystery featuring detective Carol Ashton.



**DOC AND FLUFF** by Pat Califia. Alyson Publications, 40 Plympton St., Boston, MA 02118. (617) 542-5679. *"The dystopian tale of a girl and her biker"—a futuristic S/M lesbian novel.*

**'DYKES TO WATCH OUT' FOR 1991 CALENDER** by Alison Bechdel. Firebrand Books, 141 The Commons, Ithaca, NY 14850. *A year of fun with Mo and friends by favorite lesbian cartoonist Alison Bechdel, recipient of the 1990 'HOT WIRE' Readers' Choice Award.*

**ENTER PASSWORD: RECOVERY** by Elly Bulkin. Turtle Books, PO Box 9141, Albany, NY 12209-0141. (518) 463-4811. *Transforming the self thru language; memory as catalyst; dyke origins; sexual abuse; feminist politics; radical Jews.*

**THE FABLESINGER** by Judith Woolcock Colombo. Crossing Press, 22D Roache Rd., Box 1048, Freedom CA 95019. *A girl without confidence develops into a powerful woman who can control the forces of nature.*

**FINDING THE LESBIANS** edited by Julia Penelope and Sarah Valentine. Crossing Press, PO Box 1048, Freedom, CA 95019. *Personal accounts from around the world.*

**IN HER OWN RITE: Constructing Feminist Liturgical Tradition** by Marjorie Procter-Smith. Abingdon Press, 201 8th Ave. So., Nashville, TN 37202. *Addresses the benefits of dialogue between the feminist and liturgical movements.*

**LESBIAN LISTS** by Dell Richards. Alyson Publications, 40 Plympton St., Boston, MA 02118. *A look at lesbian culture, history, and personalities. 129 lists in five categories, including 'HOT WIRE' editor's favorite lesbian songs.*

**LESBIAN PHILOSOPHIES & CULTURES** edited by Jeffner Allen. State University of New York Press, Albany, NY 12246. *Essay, fiction, autobiography on lesbian culture.*

**THE LESBIAN SURVIVAL MANUAL** by Rhonda Dickson. Naiad Press, PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. *Laughs, lust, and the lesbian police!*

**LESBIANS IN GERMANY: 1820s-1920s** by Lillian Faderman & Brigitte Ericksson. Naiad Press, PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302.

*Translations of turn-of-the-century lesbian documents available for the first time.*

**LETTERS FROM A WAR ZONE** by Andrea Dworkin. Sacher & Warburg Ltd., Michelin House, 81 Fulham Rd., London SW3-6RB. *Collection of writings spanning 1976-1987.*

**LIFTING BELLY** by Gertrude Stein. Naiad Press, PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. *Erotic poetry by the acclaimed experimental lesbian writer.*

**LIFESTYLES** by Jackie Calhoun. Naiad Press, PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. *Kate Sweeney; Pat Thompson; Kate's brother, ill with AIDS; a lakeside cabin.*

**LOVE, POLITICS & RESCUE** by Diana Rabenold. Her Books, PO Box 7467, Santa Cruz, CA 95061. *Booklet on co-dependency in lesbian relationships; offers tools for identifying and resolving problems on our own.*

**MEMORIES & VISIONS: Women's Fantasy & Science Fiction** edited by Susanna J. Sturgis. Crossing Press, 22d Roache Rd., PO Box 1048, Freedom, CA 95019. *Stories about women who travel, fight, and celebrate together across times and cultures.*

**MONTANA FEATHERS** by Penny Hayes. Naiad Press, PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 10543. *Young and pampered Elizabeth Reynolds discovers Montana and Vivian Blake on her aunt's ranch.*

**MOVEMENT IN BLACK** by Pat Parker. Firebrand Books, 141 The Commons, Ithaca, NY 14850. *Pat Parker—Black lesbian poet, feminist medical administrator, mother of two daughters, lover of women, softball devotee, and general progressive troublemaker—died of breast cancer on June 17, 1989 at the age of 45. Long before "coalition" became a political watchword, Pat's life and work embodied its principles. Back in print again is her signature collection.*

**MURDER AT RED ROCK RANCH** by Dorothy Tell. Naiad Press, PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. *Sixty-five-year-old investigator Poppy Dillworth returns in this murder mystery.*



Tom Armstrong Jr.

**Robin Fre (left) and Kay Gardner enjoy a tabloidal moment with the September issue of 'HOT WIRE.'**

**MURDER BY THE BOOK** by Pat Welch. Naiad Press, PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. *Meet Helen Black; accompany her on her first homicide case in the debut of this new mystery*

**MURDER IS RELATIVE** by Karen Saum. Naiad Press, PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. *Dramatic murder investigation reveals shocking family secrets.*

**NINTH LIFE** by Lauren Wright Douglas. Naiad Press, PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. *An animal rights activist is murdered in the second Caitlin Reese mystery.*

**NOTE BY NOTE: A GUIDE TO CONCERT PRODUCTION** by Joanie Shoemaker. Redwood Cultural Work, PO Box 10408, Oakland, CA 94608. (415) 428-9191. *288-page step-by-step guide.*

**PAPERBACK THRILLER** by Lynn Meyer. Crossing Press, 22D Roache Rd., Box 1048, Freedom, CA 95019. *Psychoanalyst Sarah Chayse is drawn into a bizarre case involving medical ethics and murder.*

**PLAYERS** by Robbie Sommers. Naiad Press, PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. *A novel of romantic complications by the author of 'Pleasures.'*

**PRIORITIES** by Lynda Lyons. Naiad Press, PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. *Adventure tale of the future. First in the Controllers series.*

**RAPTURE AND THE SECOND COMING** by Wendy Bergstrom. Alyson Publications. *Collection of lesbian erotica; follows nurse Gwen as she acts out her sexual fantasies.*

**RICE & BEANS** by Valerie Taylor. Naiad Press, PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. *Story of women struggling to find their place in a world of uncertain attachments.*

**A ROOMFUL OF WOMEN** by Elizabeth Nonas. Naiad Press, PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. *A novel of contemporary lesbian life by the author of 'For Keeps.'*

**ROSE PENSKI** by Roz Perry. Naiad Press, PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. *Warm story about a long-time lesbian couple dealing with breast cancer.*

**SCUTTLEBUT** by Jana Williams. Firebrand Books, 141 The Commons, Ithaca, NY 14850. *Enter the world of Navy bootcamp in this novel about female recruits.*

**THE SECOND WOMANSLEUTH ANTHOLOGY: Contemporary Mystery Stories by Women** edited by Irene Zahava. Crossing Press, 22D Roache Rd., Box 1048, Freedom, CA 95019.

**SILVERLEAF'S CHOICE: ANTHOLOGY OF LESBIAN HUMOR.** Silverleaf Press, PO Box 70189, Seattle, WA 98107. *Laughter: a gift for yourself or a friend. Writing, drawings, fun.*

**SUE SLATE, PRIVATE EYE** by Lee Lynch. Naiad Press, PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. *Delightful romp through a mystery, feline-style.*

**TAKE ME TO THE UNDERGROUND** by Renee Hansen. Crossing Press, 22D Roache Rd., Box 1048, Freedom, CA 95019. *Novel of obsessive love between two women.*

**THERE'S SOMETHING I'VE BEEN MEANING TO TELL YOU.** Naiad Press, PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. *Collection of true stories about honesty between lesbians/gay men and our families.*

**THREE WOMEN** by March Hastings. Naiad Press, PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302. *One of the best novels to come out during the "golden age" of lesbian publishing (late '50s).*

**TRESPASSING AND OTHER STORIES** by Valerie Minor. Crossing Press, 22D Roache Rd., PO Box 1048, Freedom, CA 95019. *Short stories which examine the quiet shifts in relationships and an individual's sense of self.*

**WHO WEARS THE TUX?** by Julia Willis. Banned Books, PO Box 32380, Austin, TX 78764. *"The Original Great American Dyke Quiz." Trashy and hilarious lesbian humor.*

**THE WOMANSLEUTH ANTHOLOGY: Contemporary Mystery Stories By Women**, edited by Irene Zahara. Crossing Press, 22D Roache Rd., Box 1048, Freedom, CA 95019.

## GROUPS

**AFRAGODDESS SPIRITUAL & CULTURAL SISTAHOOD NETWORK.** Asungi Productions, 3661 N. Campbell #108, Tucson, AZ 85719-1524 (602) 327-0987. *Membership includes subscription to Mamaroos quarterly, dedicated to Afracentric Spirituality and Cultural Awareness. Seeking \$\$ contributions and submissions: articles, reviews, short stories, rituals, events, correspondence, resources. Membership/subscription: \$18-\$25/year.*

**THE NEW DAWN.** PO Box 1849, Alexandria, VA 22313. *Large, reputable correspondence club for gay women; hundreds of members; memberships for individuals & couples. Since 1980. Confidentiality maintained. Directory (30+ pages) mailed 4x/yr in discreet envelope. SASE for membership information. ●*

# SOUNDSHEETS

By Joy Rosenblatt

## KADISTU

**WRITTEN BY:** Ruth Barrett  
**PERFORMED BY:** Ruth Barrett (vocals/dulcimer); Kay Gardner (flute); Cyntia Smith (dulcimer); Su Livingston; Caroline Asplin (vocals/synthesizer/guitar); Melena (percussion); Scott Fraser (synthesizer); Ed Willett (cello).

**FROM:** *Parthenogenesis*  
 Ruth Barrett c/o Aradia Music  
 P.O. Box 1608  
 Topanga, CA 90290  
 (213) 455-3684

Ruth Barrett's first solo album, *Parthenogenesis*, is a collection of original songs of powerful woman-identified mythic imagery expressed in a unique blending of modern synthesized sounds and traditional acoustic instruments. Ruth is an internationally known dulcimer artist and vocalist who has previously recorded three albums as half the duo of Ruth Barrett and Cyntia Smith. Ruth describes "Kadistu (Holy Woman)" as "a sacred love song."



RUTH BARRETT

## INSIDE TRACK

**WRITTEN/SUNG BY:** Ferron  
**FROM:** *Phantom Center*  
 Ferron c/o Chameleon Records  
 3355 W. El Segundo Blvd.  
 Hawthorne, CA 90250  
 (213) 973-8282

Ferron's two independently produced records—*Testimony* and *Shadows on a Dime*—received across-the-board critical acclaim and gained her a nearly fanatical following. Now, nearly six years after *Shadows* garnered a four-star rating and was nominated for best album of the year by the *Boston Globe*, Ferron returns with *Phantom Center*.



LEAH ZICARI

## CHILDREN'S SONG (WOULDN'T THAT BE FUN?)

**WRITTEN/ARRANGED BY:** Leah Zicari  
**PERFORMED BY:** Leah Zicari (vocal, guitars, bass); Bob Schulz (drums); The Child-Within Adult Choir (Children's voices): Kathy Moriarty, Jr.; Michele Keffer, Jr.; Patty Herkey, Jr.; Friedrich, Jr.; EMD, Jr.; Cathleen A. McGuire, Jr.  
**FROM:** *Wouldn't That Be Fun*

Leah Zicari c/o Gender Bender Music  
 P.O. Box 164  
 Buffalo, NY 14207

Leah wrote this song in response to her twelve years of Catholic school training. She says as the mainstream Catholic religion continues to reject women as anything other than "mindless breeders with no real aspirations of our own," and as they continue to repress a woman's right to make her own life decisions, she wrote this for all the little girls who are sitting in Catholic schools today being taught the outdated social mores of a patriarchal culture. This is her attempt to offer them other options.



FERRON

Susan Wilson



FAITH NOLAN

Toni Armstrong Jr.

## NAOMI

**WRITTEN BY:** Alice Di Micele  
**PERFORMED BY:** Alice Di Micele (vocals, acoustic guitar); Leah Hinchcliff (bass); Debbie Fier (keyboard, congas, percussion).

**FROM:** *Too Controversial*  
 Alice Di Micele  
 Box 281  
 Williams, OR 97544  
 (503) 846-6837

The recent release of Alice Di Micele's third recording, *Too Controversial*, has been met with much excitement and encouragement. One reviewer called it "the hardest hitting, smoothest sounding album I've heard in a long time" (Shane, *Talking Leaves*). "Naomi" is a sweet song that celebrates a woman's love for another woman. "I wrote this song for Naomi," says Alice, "but I sing it as an affirmation of lesbian loving. It's scary to be 'out' in such a homophobic world, but if it helps one woman accept and love her lesbian-self, it's worth the risk!"



ALICE DI MICELE

## I, BLACK WOMAN

**WORDS & MUSIC BY:** Faith Nolan  
**FROM:** *Freedom to Love*/Redwood Records  
 Faith Nolan c/o Encore Productions  
 P.O. Box 69494 Station K  
 Vancouver, B.C. Canada  
 V5K 4W6  
 (604) 327-5422

Faith Nolan is a singer/songwriter/guitarist who hails from Nova Scotia. She embraces jazz, folk, reggae, and funk with a resonant voice nurtured in the blues tradition. "I wrote this song to say I will fight against the racist/sexist ways we as Black women are forced to live," says Faith. ●





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Third Annual

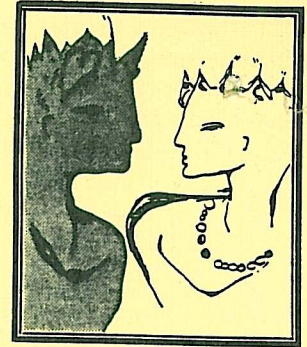
# EAST COAST LESBIANS' FESTIVAL

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Wheeler & Carol, Diane Mariechild & Shuli Goodman, and many others.

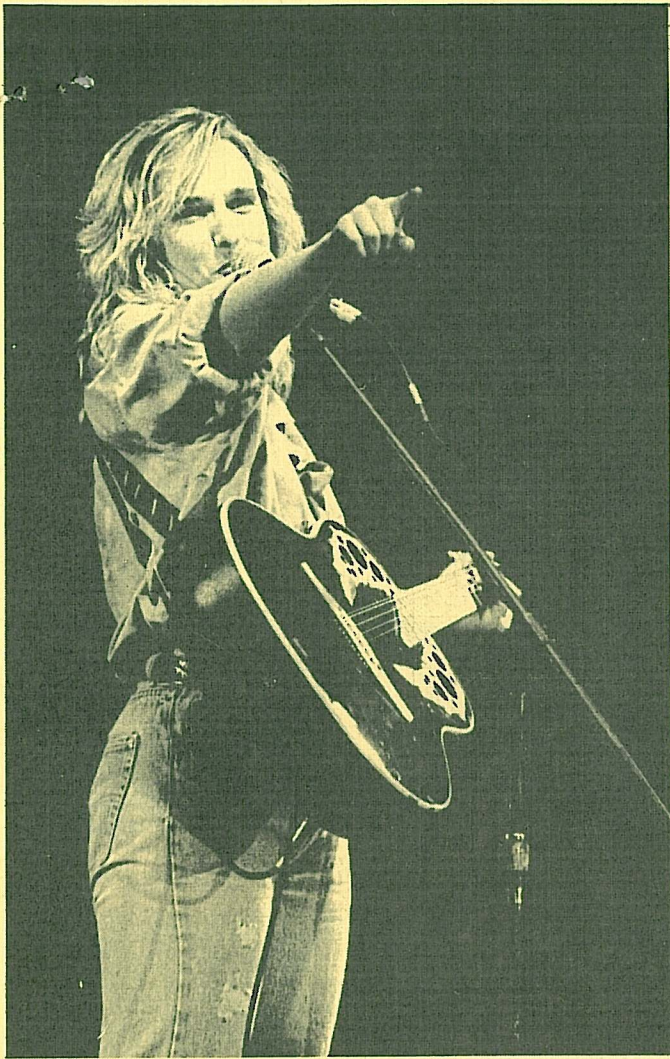
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## SOUNDSHEETS

Material is recorded on both sides in stereo. Do not crease the soundsheet. Place it on turntable at 33-1/2 rpm. A coin placed on the label where indicated prevents slipping. If your turntable has a ridged mat, placing the soundsheet on top of an LP may be advisable. Questions and comments about the soundsheets? Recording specifications and other details will be sent upon request.





Marcy J. Hochberg



Toni Armstrong Jr.



Toni Armstrong Jr.



Toni Armstrong Jr.

## TO HOLD YOU THROUGH THE WINTER UNTIL THE FESTIVAL SEASON STARTS AGAIN

This issue includes twelve pages of festival coverage. Clockwise from upper left: Melissa Etheridge returned to women's music (Rhythm Fest '90); Holly Near celebrated her new autobiography; Rachel Bagby engaged crowds with storytelling; Vicki Randle and Nydia Mata pulsated (as always).