# HOT WIRE

THE JOURNAL OF WOMEN'S MUSIC AND CULTURE

#### HUMOR

ALISON BECHDEL
FABULOUS DYKETONES
KATE CLINTON
LINDA MOAKES
ROBIN TYLER

#### MEDIA

MICHELLE PARKERSON WOMEN'S FILM FESTIVAL 'BITCH' ROCK MAG 'SOPHIE'S PARLOR'

'2 in 20' SOAP OPERA

CRIS WILLIAMSON
MARY LOU WILLIAMS
WOMEN'S PRO
BASEBALL

ROBIN FLOWER
'KWAN YIN BOOK
OF CHANGES'
PRISON GIGS
SAPPHO

Donna Binder

STEREO RECORDING INSIDE

## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

#### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

With this issue we begin printing letters received [see "Soapbox," page 6]. If you write, please indicate whether your letter is for publication or not. Please keep letters short and to the point.

#### READERS' CHOICE

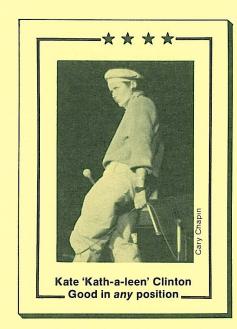
The results of the Second Annual Readers' Choice Awards can be found on page 43. Thanks go to all readers who sent in nominations and ballots. The results of the "favorites" survey are also on page 43.

#### ATTENTION WOULD-BE SNAPPY DRESSERS

HOT WIRE sweatshirts and available as a fundraiser for the journal. They feature an original design by Alison Bechdel [on the cover of this issue]. Please look for the ad in this issue to order yours today!

#### **CONTEST NEWS**

Do you think you know what's what and where it's happening in women's music? A free subscription goes to anyone who can list, in order, the five cities that receive the highest number of HOT WIREs (85% of the copies are shipped the day they come back from the printer; the figures include individual subscribers, bookstore accounts, libraries/archives/ radio stations, and distributors/ producers who sell at concerts). Another free subscription goes to anyone who can similarly name our top five states. You can use the sub as a gift or an extension of your current subscription. Previous winners are not eligible. How do you think your city and state measure up?



#### BASEBALL UPDATE

Since the article by Yvonne Zipter on the All-American Girls' Baseball League [page 20] was pasted up, we have learned that the AAGBL will have a permanent exhibit at the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York as of sometime in 1989.

#### PLEASE NOTE

At the eleventh hour, the feature article on women's comedy was drastically reduced in length due to space constraints. The original scope of the article was broader and covered the viewpoints of several other women. This article does not intend to be representative of all points of view.

#### ON THE COVER

Alison Bechdel's first collection of cartoons, <u>Dykes to Watch Out For</u>, was published in fall, 1986 by Firebrand Books. Her cartoon strip appears in several regional and national publications.

#### **'CONTRIBUTORS'**

Sylvia Stallings and Merle Shapera also worked on this issue; they will appear in the next masthead. "Contributing" writers, artists, and photographers are women whose work appears in at least three of six consecutive issues—not necessarily in each issue.

#### **FINANCES**

Finances are always precarious at best for small press and alternative publications. We thank the readers who have sent donations and encourage others of you to do likewise. We specifically need money to support the following: (1) payment of contributors, (2) free subscriptions to archives and libraries, (3) free subscriptions to women in prison, (4) production of the stereo soundsheet recordings in each issue, and (5) to offset increased postal rates. Additionally, we are donating money to the soap opera Two in Twenty [see page 24] in the name of HOT WIRE (this means you), and will be listed in the credits as a supporter. Please indicate which of these projects you "favor"—if any when making a donation.

#### **MOBILE WOMEN**

Our subscribers move to new locations at an incredible rate. If we are not notified in writing of address changes prior to our mailing of the magazines, there is no way we can guarantee delivery. Magazines are never returned to us; they are lost forever. HOT WIRE cannot assume responsibility for lost magazines. If you have moved in the last four months, please let us know!

**Toni L. Armstrong**Publisher/managing editor

# HOT WIRE The Journal of Women's Music and Culture July 1987

Publisher & Managing Editor
Toni L. Armstrong

**Production Coordinators** Chris Crosby & Annie Lee

#### **Production Staff**

Dawn Popelka Jean Durkin Cindy Anderson Lynn Hull

#### Soundsheets

Joy Rosenblatt & Karen Kane

#### Advertising

Lois Parsons & Joan Eichler

#### Staff

Tracy Baim
Joan Eichler
Dawn Eng
Sharon Fuller
Betsy Godwin
Pat Walsh

Lyn Salmon
Angie Schmidt
Sarah Shaftman
Starla Sholl
Margles Singleton

#### Columnists

Kristan Aspen Jorjet Harper Lucy Diamond Janna MacAuslan Suzette H. Elgin Karen Kane Kay Gardner Joy Rosenblatt Paula Walowitz

**Contributing Writers** 

Kate Brandt
Ellen Elias
Debbie Fier
Robin Fre
Gerri Gribi
Celia Guse
Jorjet Harper

Betty MacDonald
Pat Parker
Rosetta Reitz
Catherine Roma
Susanna Sturgis
Connie Smith
Rena Yount

## Contributing Artists and Photographers

Toni L. Armstrong
Alison Bechdel
Jill Cruse
Sandi Forrest
Marcy J. Hochberg
JEB (Joan Biren)
Deborah Jenkins
Quasar
Nancy Seeger
Ellen Spiro
Lucinda Smith
Vada Vernee
Susan Wilson
Irene Young

#### Printer

C & D Print Shop, Chicago

#### **Founders**

Toni L. Armstrong Ann Morris Michele Gautreaux Yvonne Zipter

SUBSCRIPTIONS: (U.S. money equivalents only): \$14/U.S., \$17/Canada, \$19/institutions. Countries outside of North America require extra postage charge. BACK ISSUES when available are \$5.

HOT WIRE: The Journal of Women's Music & Culture (ISSN 0747-8887) Published three times yearly in March, July, and November by Empty Closet Enterprises, 1417 W. Thome, Chicago, IL 60660 (312) 274-8298. Unless otherwise noted, all material including photos, cartoons, and artwork is copyrighted by 'HOT WIRE.' Do not reproduce without written permission.

## **Volume 3, No. 3, July 1987**

reatures	
'Dykes to Watch Out For' Cartoonist Alison Bechdel	
An interview by Jorjet Harper & Toni L. Armstrong	2
'Sophie's Parlor' Radio by Nancy Seeger	18
The All-American Girls' Baseball League	
by Yvonne Zipter	20
'Two in Twenty' Soap Opera by N. DeLuca & D. Granik Michelle Parkerson: Filmmaker, Activist, Writer	24
by Annie Leveritt & Toni L. Armstrong	26
'I Love Women Who Laugh': Comedy in Women's Cultur	
Kate Clinton, Robin Tyler, Linda Moakes, Trudy Wood	
by Toni L. Armstrong	32
The Fabulous Dyketones by Char Priolo	36
Robin Flower: Two Audiences by Kate Brandt	38
Mary Lou Williams by Shanta Nurullah	40
'BITCH: The Women's Rock Mag With Bite'	4.4
by Cheryl Cline	44
Reclaiming a Past by Judy Sloan	46
Festivals	
Winter WomynMusic I by Retts Scauzillo	29
7th Annual Women's Film and Video Festival	
By Annie Leveritt	30
Departments	
Soapbox letters to the editor	6
Hotline by Joy Rosenblatt	8
On Stage & Off by Gerri Gribi	
"The Captive Audience: Playing in Prisons"	10
Noteworthy Women by Janna MacAuslan	
"D'Zama Murielle: The Musical Vagabond, part 1"	12
Láadan by Suzette Haden Elgin "About Music & Religious Language"	14
The Tenth Muse by Jorjet Harper	14
"Sappho: Image, Legend, and Reality"	16
The Woman's Aspectarian by Paula Walowitz	23
Mulling It Over "Music and Life"	
by Cris Williamson with Cindy Anderson	50
Re:Inking by Diane Stein	
"Writing the Kwan Yin Book of Changes"	52
Behind the Scenes by Lucy Diamond	
Pokey Anderson, Merle Bicknell, and Tam Martin	54
Freestyle by Kay Gardner	
"Travels: Mexico and Living Room Concerts"	56
Soundsheets by Joy Rosenblatt & Karen Kane	
Stereo recordings by Laura Anderson, Jasmine, Heather Bishop, and The Fabulous Dyketones	64
THE STATE OF THE PROPERTY OF T	-

## 'Dykes to Watch Out For' Cartoonist

## ALISON BECHDEL

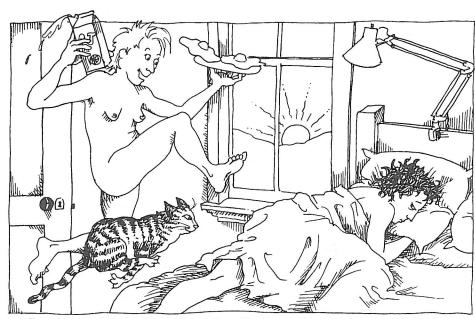
An interview by Jorjet Harper and Toni L. Armstrong

Alison Bechdel has rapidly become the foremost cartoonist of lesbian-feminist culture. A native of Pennsylvania, Bechdel attended Oberlin College, majoring in Fine Art. Her first published cartoon appeared in 'WomanNews' in 1983, and her first collection of cartoons, 'Dykes to Watch Out For,' was published in the fall of 1986 by Firebrand Books. A second collection is in preparation. The 26-year-old Bechdel pokes good-natured fun at the lesbian community in what is unquestionably humor by a lesbian for lesbians-humor that laughs with us, not at us. Her cartoons are currently seen in several publications, including 'HOT WIRE,' 'off our backs,' 'Windy City Times,' and 'Gay Community News."

**HOT WIRE:** Tell us about your personal background.

ALISON BECHDEL: i grew up in rural Pennsylvania in an average neurotic nuclear family. My parents were both high school teachers. They were kind of liberal and groovy on the surface, but underneath they were apolitical and uninformed about the world. I grew up with absolutely no political awareness, unless you count my strong Catholic, goody-two-shoes sense of right and wrong. I also had a kind of instinctive feminism, but it was confused by all the misogynist information I was getting from the outside world.

I always resented being a girl because there was so little you could do. I was very sensitive to the inequity. I don't know if I was so sensitized because I was a little dyke or if I became a lesbian because the system was totally unacceptable, but I always wanted to be a boy. Women are despised and humiliated — it's a horrible life for a woman. I know that's very strong language, but it's how I see it. It's a very complex and deep topic.



TWYLA IS APPALLED TO LEARN THAT IRENE IS A MORNING PERSON.

After a soul-crushing stint in public high school, I went away to a pretty progressive college where I finally came out. It was an instinctive coming-out—I was still very unaware politically. But after I started hanging out with other dykes, my slumbering feminist sensibilities kicked in, and my real education began. By coming out I had stepped outside the sphere of polite society, and suddenly all the psychoses of that society jumped out at me in a very sharp focus, as if I'd put on 3-D glasses or something. Ever since then I've been very thankful that I'm a dyke. To me it's a real privilege.

**HW:** What about your professional background and art training?

**AB:** I've wanted to be a cartoonist since I was little. I always drew a lot and it was the thing I did best. I was an art major in

college, but as a cartoonist I'm pretty much self-taught. The emphasis in college was on "serious" art. Professors generally tried to steer me away from my cartoony style of drawing to more conceptual, abstract stuff. I also did a lot of classical figure drawing in school, which I liked a lot. But it was always a very separate kind of activity from what I consider my real drawing—that is, the cartoons that come out of my head.

**HW:** How did your cartoons change as you became more politically aware?

AB: In the first place, I went through a long phase of really taking exception to the word "cartoon." There's no way I can deny now that my drawings always had a very cartoony flavor to them, but I thought of myself more as a drawer than a cartoon-

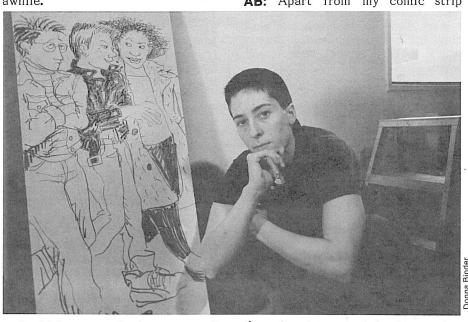
ist - they were my drawings. At the time I became politically aware...it's kind of hard to pinpoint because it's not exactly when I came out, and I'm still becoming politically aware. But what happened was this: in my childhood I always drew men. I used to worry about it a lot. And my mother used to worry about it. She'd ask me, "Why do you always draw men? Try to draw a woman." So I would try. But it felt as if I were drawing with someone else's hand-there was absolutely no connection there. So I kept drawing men. I came out when I was 19 and I was still drawing men; it struck me that this was silly. I didn't want to draw men, and I couldn't draw women. I couldn't reconcile those things, and I stopped drawing for awhile.

When I came out, I started taking all the sexism and all the misogyny personally again, like I did when I was little and fresh in the world-I was seeing all this injustice before I learned to separate myself from it and suppress and internalize it. So my process of coming out and being politicized is connected with the process of realizing I'm a woman.

My coming out was a very intellectual one. It was this whole gigantic sliding into place of everything in my life, like putting the last piece in a puzzle. Everything fit together so well. I had a tremendous sense of satisfaction and completion.

**HW:** Do you do other kinds of art in addition to cartooning?

AB: Apart from my comic strip



I think part of the reason I drew men is because men are "neutral" and women are "other." To draw a woman you put a person in drag. That's not true only of drawing but of femininity in this culture. It's that kind of sexual dissociation that all girls go through. So I don't think it was that unusual that I just drew men, but it was very disturbing to me after I came out.

And then one day it occurred to me: why don't you draw a lesbian? And somehow, when I did try to draw a lesbian, that connection was there-I was drawing with my own hand.

I'm also interested in illustration and graphic design. I haven't had any formal design training, but I've picked up some basic stuff from doing production work on newspapers. The thing that cartooning, illustration, and graphic design have in common is that they are ways of combining pictures with the written word. You can communicate so much with it—there's something very powerful in the space between the image and the word. I think a lot of humor happens there. Neither the text alone nor the picture alone completes the joke-it's the balance or the tension between them.

**HW:** Your strip appears regularly in several publications. Do alter-"syndicate" native publications cartoons like mainstream publications do?

AB: No. My strip is basically selfsyndicated. It takes a lot of work, and I don't promote it nearly enough. One of the problems I encounter in the gay and feminist press is readership overlap. For example, you can have two local mainstream newspapers which both carry Peanuts or Garfield, but a small women's paper often won't carry a strip of mine if it appears in another women's paper. They want an exclusive, even if they're from different cities. This is really a drag.

**HW:** How does the pay compare between mainstream and alternative presses? Are you willing to work for less? What are the economic realities?

AB: The economic realities for almost any cartoonist-let alone a lesbian one-are pretty grim. It's not a lucrative field. Many women's papers don't pay their contributors anything. Gay papers generally have more money, but still don't pay enough to even begin to compensate for the work I put into each strip. But it's not some kind of moral imperative or noble sacrifice on my part that I do lesbian art for little moneyit's just that I won't, and in some ways can't, draw the stuff that would sell in the mainstream. I certainly wouldn't object straight people suddenly started reading Dykes to Watch Out For, but I'm not holding my breath. Maybe there is a way to do more mainstream work that I could reconcile with my lesbian-feminist analysis of the world. But I haven't hit on it yet.

**HW:** Where do you get inspiration for your characters? Are they based on people you know?

AB: I listen to dykes' stories a lot. I like asking questions and listening to people, so I'm always gathering lots of material. I especially love to gossip. I think constructive gossip is a wonderful thing, because it's a way of learning from other people's experiences. I steal most of the ideas from the lives of women around me, and from my own life. I've never really based a character on a real person, except sometimes I use myself. There are lots of women I know whom I'd like to put into my strip, but I'm not good enough. One day I want to be so good I can create a character as complex and contradictory and wild as a real woman. You have to generalize a lot in cartoons. Characters have to be very easily-identifiable and consistent-more consistent than real people usually are.

**HW:** Do you have any personal favorites among your characters?

AB: I've only recently begun using the same set of characters repeatedly in my comic strip. I used to invent a whole new format with new characters each time. I didn't feel confident enough to develop any of them in depth. It was easier to use someone once and throw her away before I had to get to know her. It was also easier to represent a bigger variety of women when I was constantly drawing new characters. Now I'm working with just a few women - Mo, Clarice, Lois, and their friends. It's fun because they kind of develop themselves after awhile. I don't have a favorite yet, but I feel closest to Mo because she's sort of the "angst-ridden Everydyke," as a friend of mine calls her.

**HW:** Do you know all about Mo right now, or does she keep surprising you?

**AB:** It's really funny the way things come up. For instance, I didn't know that Clarice and Mo were ex-lovers when I started. I finally just realized that.

**HW:** When did you start doing strips rather than single drawings?

AB: I started doing the single frame cartoons in 1983, and I did a bunch of them and then my first strip, the one about the Midtown bank, about the woman getting mistaken for a man in the restroom). When I look back at it, it was so crude and simple. But it was a big step for me to

just do more than one frame. The first strip wasn't long after, but then I reverted to the one-frames. And maybe within a year after I started with the one-frames I started the strips.

**HW:** How long does it take you to do one of these strips? Do you work on more than one at once?

AB: I would like to work on more than one at a time. I would like to be able to write up scripts for three or four strips at once. But as it is I'm deadline to deadline. How long does it take? Sometimes I'll write them and they'll come fully formed, just pour right out. Sometimes it takes forever to come up with anything funny. I write them first-it's very verbal initially, so that can take either a couple of hours or a couple of days. Once I have them written I start drawing the boxes and putting in the words, and I decide who's saying what where and when.

**HW:** So you sketch out a little rough draft?

AB: Yes, I do a really crude draft with the words, sketch in what's going to go where, then I use it as a guide and I start over. I draw clear boxes, and write the words out so I know how much room they're going to take up. The format I use doesn't give me a lot of room for the drawings themselves. It's rare that I have enough room to draw full head-to-toe persons. It's often just torsos, busts, or heads. I'd like to work bigger but to do that I'd have to write shorter scripts. I'm not willing to make them shorter.

**HW:** How did you come up with "Dykes to Watch Out For"?

AB: I was writing letters to a friend from college — she's the woman I dedicated the book to (because she made me think of it). It just seemed somehow appropriate to the kind of humor we shared. I was drawing these crazy women in the margins of the letters, and I just labelled them. I pretended I had a whole series of them, so I numbered them, "Dykes to watch out for, #72" or something. And then I

liked that, so I would send her other dykes to watch out for.

**HW:** How has the publication of your book with Firebrand influenced your career?

AB: The book has legitimized me. When people ask me what I do, I say I'm a cartoonist, and it's really true. The book has also given me a sense for the first time that being a lesbian cartoonist is not a volunteer job. I don't make much money from syndicating my strip in newspapers, but when Firebrand collects my work and sells it in a book, then I start to get paid for my efforts. I'm also getting commissions for illustrations and cartoons from gay people and organizations, partly as a result of the publicity the book has brought me. But the main thing the book has done has been to get my work much more widely distributed. People are reading the book who've never heard of me before. That's thrilling to me.

**HW:** Do you ever plan to do mainstream cartooning? And why did you choose lesbian-feminist themes?

AB: I don't really have any interest in mainstream cartooning. I think it's great that Sylvia and Doonesbury have made it, but most of the stuff out there is pretty bland. Underground comics is a more interesting prospect to me, but from my lesbian-feminist vantage point, even the underground scene is kind of mainstream. Underground comics is a male-dominated field, and the content is frequently sexist-if not downright pornographic. But while mainstream comics are aimed at pleasing, or at least not offending, as many people as possible, underground artists don't care as much. Nor, I might add, are they paid nearly as much. But because of this there's more room for progressive ideas, even though most of it reflects a white, male, nihilistic, heterosexist bias. But there is some really wonderful work being done. Underground publications like Wimmin's Comix and Gay Comix have been around for awhile now. I'm getting stories published in both of those soon, and I'd like to do more comicbook format work.

I don't feel like I "chose" lesbian-feminist themes any more than I "chose" to be a lesbian. I write about my life, and my community, and the way I see the world, just like any other cartoonist. I can't help it if the lesbian lifestyle isn't a big seller.

HW: Are there any aspects of your work-other than economicthat you are dissatisified with?

AB: I would like to see more constructive criticism of lesbian artists and writers and performers. It's hard to do your best work when people are satisfied with lesser efforts. I get very little real criticism of my work because most dykes are so happy to see lesbian cartoons at all...we're that

cards of my work, and doing freelance illustration jobs. I also do the production for Equal Time, the [Minneapolis-St. Paul] Twin Cities' gay and lesbian newspaper. That's about a one-third time job.

HW: What do you see as the current state of lesbian-feminist politics? Culture? What trends do you see in the lesbian-feminist community nationally?

AB: In a general sense, I think the Reagan Era is wearing on us. This country has been steadily regressing for the last seven years, and it's taking more and more of women's energy just to get by. In a lot of cases people don't have the kind of time to devote to political work that they used to. Maybe it's just my particular age group, but it seems like a lot

community has become. Issues like S/M and pornography have really split people up. I read Lesbian Connection as a kind of barometer of what's going on in the community, and there's always a couple of letters in there that shock me by the intolerance they express toward some issue or other. It upsets me to see women so hard-line politically correct that they shut out the people on their own side. In terms of the possibilities of the women's community-it's hard for me to talk about my political vision, but I'm a feminist. We're making a lot of progress. The girls who are growing up today see so many more options, and that can't fail to have an effect over a couple of generations.

I definitely think that the future is female.



Alison Bechdel: "Sometimes I feel like a

lesbian Norman Rockwell." ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Joriet Harper writes fiction and non-fiction. She is a regular contributor to 'HOT WIRE' and 'Windy City Times,' a Chicago newspaper. She is the National Coordinator

> ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Toni L. Armstrong reports that she lost the battle against her Type A tendencies throughout the spring, but has high hopes for a more restful summer. She is working on finishing her second masters degree.

of the Feminist Writers Guild.



LILLIAN: OWNS

STOCK IN GE.

DORIS: HAS A THING ABOUT MARIA: HAS A THING ABOUT BEING THE BUTCH.

ABOUT BEING THE BUTCH. desperate to see representations of ourselves. It's hard trying to do work that's not sexist, racist, classist, ageist, etc. etc. and still have anything of any substance left over. Sometimes I feel like a lesbian Norman Rockwell. Like most people, I have a hard time accepting criticism, but I know I need it to get better. It would also be good to see more lesbian cartoonists publishing their work.

HW: Do you make a living from cartooning?

AB: I make most of it from cartooning, selling mail-order post-

HESTER: IS COMMITTED TO THE
DESTRUCTION OF THE MILITARYINDUSTRIAL COMPLEX. of women are getting serious jobs, going to professional school, buying houses, and otherwise getting "secure." I think the Baby Trend is part of this, as is the apparently dwindling number of separatists. In a way it makes me angry to see women assimilating and buying into the system like this, but on another level it's a way of entrenching, of digging in for the long haul. I think we're all storing up our energy for when we're really going to need it. I am particularly worried about the backlash to AIDS.

- VICHYSOISSE

Something that frustrates me is how fragmented the lesbian

## SOAPBOX

#### Dear HOT WIRE,

I produce a three-hour women's music radio program on KAOS in Olympia, Washington. I recently picked up my first copy of HOT WIRE and was much impressed, particularly with the soundsheet, which went over well on the air. I'm writing for information on back issues—please tell me the Ferron issue is still available!—and distribution. I think I can get together enough promoters and producers in my area who are interested in receiving HOT WIRE so that we can subscribe in "bulk."

Morgan Seattle, WA

Dear Morgan,

Be still my heart, we have copies of the following back issues: Nov. 1985 (Alix cover); March 1986 (Kay cover); July 1986 (Ferron cover); and occasionally others. We are considering reprinting the March 1987 issue (Charbonneau cover) because by mid April we could no longer fill orders for it.

Individuals who wish to bulk order 'HOT WIRE' may do so at the following rates: 5-9 copies, 20% discount, 10 or more copies, 40% discount. We will set up a standing order and automatically bill you. We appreciate prepayment of the first bulk order.

#### Dear HOT WIRE,

My favorite thing about HOT WIRE is that it consistently presents so much info and variety. The scope of the vision of the magazine has amazed me from the beginning. Side by side in the last issue: Maida Tilchen/Liz Karlin viewpoints; Kay Gardner's "Startripping" commentary/Readers' Choice survey; "Aliens"/"Desert Hearts" (oo-la, that Patricia cover!); dykes through the ages—Sappho to Naiad Press; sound engineering/Láadan... HOT WIRE captures and documents the diversity of women's music and culture. Mainstream media always tries to make us look like we're a bunch of narrow-minded, manhating folk musicians.

I feel so fired up and proud after reading each issue—thanks so much for being one of the few things in this country that contradicts the Big Lie that the feminist movement (and women's music) has died. My only complaint about HOT WIRE is that it's so hard to get here in the Big Apple.

Tina Hernandez New York City, NY

SOAPBOX: the musings, opinions, and comments of 'HOT WIRE' readers.



MARGIE, IS THAT YOU?

#### Dear HOT WIRE,

I've been a long-time fan of Margie Adam and have missed seeing her perform at festivals. Do you know if she will be returning to women's music? What is she doing now? I found this ad in a newspaper and wondered—could it be?

Kitty Milhaud Maine

Dear Kitty,

Marg assures us she has not traded her piano in for a career as a diet-product model. She is busy gardening and working on her music.

Dear HOT WIRE,

Greetings from the LAs! Last night I was in San Bernadino for a gig—so were 50 Campus Ministry Prayer Vigil Folks—and [record distributor] Karen Merry was covering the concert. She had, prominently displayed, the newest issue of HOT WIRE. I want to thank you for the beautiful, professional, interesting—okay, it was Patricia Charbonneau too—issue. I'm proud to be associated with what you cover. I am not brain damaged if I don't follow Láadan completely, am I? Thank you for all your work.

Kate Clinton Los Angeles, CA Dear HOT WIRE,

I would like to make some comments on your Readers' Choice Awards Survey. You say the point is not competition, but appreciation. To me this survey is competitive in that it asks us to place one woman above another. It does ask us to choose a "best," when in actuality we are all pouring our souls and spirits into our art, and we are all beautiful in our own way. I don't find this kind of voting "fun." I feel that it perpetuates the "one is better than another" syndrome, and is in fact not healthy. Speaking for myself, it feels oppressive, and I don't want to take part in it.

I do appreciate and support the way you have given awards to individuals and organizations "who have made outstanding contributions to women's music and culture" in the March 1987 issue of HOT WIRE. I am able to respond positively to this because you explain something about each woman/organization, letting us know why you have given them their award. It is not just a popularity contest. There is substance and depth in recognizing women in this way.

Karen Beth Bearsville, NY

Dear HOT WIRE,

Here's your Readers' Choice ballot and survey back. I thoroughly enjoyed it and think it's a great idea. Giving awards for outstanding contributions to women's music and culture is long overdue—we all work hard at it, but some women have truly dedicated their lives to the advancement of women's culture and feminist/lesbian vision. I loved reading the nominations and participating in voting.

The survey was a lot of fun, too. I appreciate your stressing that we should vote for our personal "favorites" rather than trying to decide who's "best." It gave me a chance to walk down memory lane looking through my record collection and bookstacks. As I mail this in, I am overwhelmed by the sheer amount of cultural material WE have created in 15 short years. I take it for granted in my everyday life now—but your survey renewed my appreciation of ALL of our efforts.

Margaret Bix South Pasadena, CA

Dear HOT WIRE,

The Patricia Charbonneau interview/cover is fantastic...we love it so much, and her. Please sign us up for subscriptions.

Many, many new subscribers Coast-to-coast, USA

#### Dear HOT WIRE,

Thank you for printing the article on Naiad Press. There are two things I wish to point out. First, an editorial change in the article made it appear that I have been working at Naiad for several years. I was not hired until July, 1986, and several other women worked in this position before me.

My second point is a sensitive one between a writer and an editor, as both play a crucial role in the finished product. In general I do not like the way in which the Naiad article was edited. Paragraphs and entire sections were moved around, giving a very different flow, making it not the flavor of my own writing. These were large changes made without my consultation. I know you all work very hard on HOT WIRE, as well as all the other things packed into your lives. I, and so many other women, really appreciate your work. However, as a creative writer I need to say it doesn't feel right to me that such large changes be made in a person's work without their consultation. I hope this will be taken into consideration with future issues.

> Sue Gambill Tallahassee, FL

Dear Sue.

We regret the error and are working on ways to have time to work more closely with the writers. We do edit the articles and agree wholeheartedly that when large changes are made, the writer should be part of that process. The problem is one of time rather than our choosing to be editorially cavalier.

To the many readers who have written inquiring how we selected the name *HOT WIRE* for our journal: it comes from this inspiring poem by Yvonne Zipter, one of the *HOT WIRE* founding mothers.

'FINDING THE HOT WIRE' There is a tension between us, physical as potential energy, a high voltage, untapped. Take this test: touch me. Not sexually, but with the flat of your hand, with the tips of your fingers, touch me: arms and shoulders; the bend where shoulder meets neck; my cheekbones; the hair above my ears; my shoulder blades; the ribs in my back; and the small of it; my waist: elbows, forearms, wrists; and hands.

If you can do that and not want more, closer, harder, if you can do that and not want the press of hip bone on abdomen, breasts against breasts, my hand firm at the small of your back, then we will know that you are not drawn—like an electromagnet—to my charge.

Will you take the test?

Dear HOT WIRE,

I was in the front row, right side aisle, last seat next to the wall, at T. Trull's Feb. 15 performance at the Warner Theater in Washington, D.C. She came out to the edge of the stage and flashed her moonbeam come hither look at me twice.

Tanka
When her eyes kissed mine
I felt Venuses voltage
flash through my vitals
I yearn to stroke her sleek lines
and woo her to fine tune her
P.S. I'm HOTWIRED!

Susan

Dear HOT WIRE,

I was especially interested in the "Lovers of the Stars" article by Q.W. Bloch [November 1986]. It was obviously written from the perspective of someone who's in a settled-in longterm relationship. Is it possible to have a second article written from a different slant?

Many of us have-or have had-lovers who are "on the road" (or at least "in the public eye") a lot—and not all of us are "married." We often have open (non-monogamous) relationships of various types. Some of our relationships thrive under these conditions, some can't. We are involved with our lovers' careers by choice or by chance or even basically against our wills-and that creates a constellation of stresses that would be interesting to consider. With the women's music network being composed of relatively few people nationwide, it is not uncommon to have both partners be "celebrities"...it gets spicier and spicier. There is also the very real pressure of homophobia on our "public" relationships. Would Q.W. consider writing "part 2" to her article, under the same confidential conditions?

Name withheld

Q.W. Bloch wrote her article based on personal interviews and confidential, anonymous questionnaires. 'HOT WIRE' is interested in printing a second article from a different perspective. Women who have—or have had—relationships with women's music "celebrities" are invited to participate in the research for this second article. Write to obtain a survey form (which will again be completely confidential and anonymous). QW Survey/HOT WIRE, 1417 Thome, Chicago, IL 60660.'

#### 'PAID MY DUES'

Back issues of historic women's music journal from the 1970s now available through 'HOT WIRE.'
Original Milwaukee as well as later Chicago volumes.
Send SASE for price list on these collectors' items.

Dear HOT WIRE,

I don't know how it took me so long to find HOT WIRE. It's fantastic. I am glad it didn't take me any longer than 37 years to do it. The reason I am writing is to find out if you have any back issues available for sale? If so, please let me know so I can send for them. Thanks and keep them coming!

Marlene Powers Lake Luzerne, NY

'LAYERS' jazz concerts pack layers of coffee into the blood.

suddenly you are seen parading down Grand Avenue your eyes, a calling to the wonder within. your grin fixed on the woman in the slick top.

blood is suddenly revitalized not by jazz or by coffee, but by life itself.

Donna Dimaulo Berkeley, CA

Dear HOT WIRE,

I really enjoyed doing the [Readers' Choice] ballot. It cheered me up on a gloomy day of staring at my tax forms.

I thought the new issue was terrific—it really uplifted me. The article on audience sizes ["The 'Shrinking' Audience" by Liz Karlin] made a nice companion piece to mine ["A Lesson From History"]. Although I was fascinated by her research, and glad you ran it, it was kind of a perfect example of what can happen when you divorce your values from women's music, so you end up making audience size the priority and get so obsessed with it that you lose sight of what it is besides a way to fill a hall. I do think that kind of statistical info is very useful, especially so people don't feel like such failures if they understand it's a larger problem than any one performer or producer.

I really want to commend that piece about musicians and jobs ["Making Our Dreams Our Jobs: Making Ends Meet Through Music" by Toni L. Armstrong]. I've been exploring my own work issues lately, and that was such a great piece for me to read-I felt better about my own work history and felt hopeful about the future. I think it also breaks new ground in women's music journalism, because there has always been a real boundary about writing about the private lives of the musicians—i.e., one never sees a People-type story about their love lives. This is one feminist principle that has really held up! However, as a result their lives are a mystery, and that's the only piece I can think of that gives a peek into the realities, and it does so without violating their privacy. I wish you'd have a regular column on this—not just musicians but anyone who wants to talk about how they "get by" with both basic needs and self-actualizing ones met.

Keep up the great work!

Maida Tilchen Boston, MA

## HOTLINE

#### By Joy Rosenblatt

#### FILM-TV-THEATER

Kay Weaver gave the Los Angeles premiere of  $\underline{\text{Take the Power}}$  (the sequel to  $\underline{\text{One Fine Day}}$ ) at the Connexxus  $\underline{\text{Women's Center Founding Celebration Dinner Dance II}}$  on May 15.

Timothy Near, Holly's older sister, will be directing Ibsen's A Doll's House at Atlanta's Alliance Theater, reports The Southern Feminist. She's the first woman to direct a play on their mainstage.

Sue Fink has released a two-hour concert video. According to Ivy-knot Booking, she is also in negotiations for a TV sitcom to be called The Sue Fink Show.

Judy Sloan has produced a video documentary, <u>Reclaiming the Past</u>, featuring her character Sophie.

According to Naiad Press, more than 900 copies of the <u>Desert Hearts</u> video have been sold. Vestron, the makers of the video, are continually out of stock.

#### **PUBLICATIONS**

The anthology This Bridge Called My Back (Kitchen Table Women of Color Press) is in its second printing and now has 35,000 books in print, reports Feminist Bookstore News.

The International Women's Guesthouse Registry is the first such networking service, providing upto-date, confidential listings of women-owned and operated Bed & Breakfasts, inns, and camp-

HOTLINE announces upcoming events in women's music and culture, presents capsule reports of past happenings, and passes on various tidbits of information.



The Washington Sisters have signed to do an album with Icebergg Records.

grounds in the U.S. and abroad that cater to the lesbian traveler. Foundation Institute for Women, P.O. Box 700 HW, Rego Park, NY 11374. (718) 478-9654.

Plexus, the Bay Area women's newspaper, stopped publishing in December 1986, but may resume operations under new management by this summer. Meanwhile, Susan Thompson has started The Bay Area Women's News, according to Feminist Bookstore News.

#### **HONORS**

Jill Godmillow won top prize at the U.S. Film Festival at Park City, Utah, reported Facets Features, with Waiting for the Moon, starring Linda Hunt as Alice B. Toklas. The film is loosely based on the lives of Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas in Paris.

Sweet Honey in the Rock won in the women's music category at the National Association of Independent Record Distributors awards; Sue Fink received honorable mention. Other NAIRD awards: honorable mention to Beth York in best New Age category; nominations to Casselberry-DuPreé for best album design and best Reggae album.

Cleis Press's The Little School:

Tales of Disappearance & Survival
in Argentina by Alicia Partnoy was
a Writers Choice Selection of the
Pushcart Foundation, according to
Feminist Bookstore News. Also,
Cleis's With the Power of Each
Breath won a recognition of special merit from the Media Access
Project of California.

Congratulations to Alix Dobkin and Ladyslipper on receiving the 2nd Annual HOT WIRE Readers Choice Awards for outstanding contributions to women's music and culture.

Hunter Davis was nominated as an outstanding recording artist by the San Francisco Cable Car Awards, as was Teresa Trull (who won). Trull was also nominated for outstanding recording artist and entertainer of the year.

Linda Tillery, Holly Near, and Meg Christian were presented with Lesbian Rights Awards by the Southern California Women for Understanding in March.

Holly Near was honored by the San Francisco Women's Foundation as a "Woman of Note," one of eight musicians honored for outstanding achievement in music.

#### **ANNIVERSARIES**

Congratulations Redwood Records on 15 years. The label was started by Holly Near in 1972 with the album Hang In There.

#### **TOP SELLING ALBUMS**

LADYSLIPPER TOP 6:

Holly Near & Ronnie Gilbert, Singing With You; Michigan Live!; Casselberry-DuPree, City Down; Sweet Honey in the Rock, Feel Something Drawing Me On; Kay Gardner, Rainbow Path; Lucie Blue Tremblay.

MIDWEST MUSIC TOP 6:

Holly Near, Don't Hold Back; Casselberry-DuPree, City Down; Lucie Blue Tremblay; Jasmine, Wild Strings; Heather Bishop, A Taste of the Blues; Michigan Live!

#### **NEWS**

The National Museum of Women in the Arts opened in April in Washington, D.C. It is the first women's museum in America, according to Sojourner.

Billboard reported that Redwood Records is negotiating with Capitol and EMI for the distribution of Holly Near's Don't Hold Back.

According to a new biography of Jacqueline Susann written by Barbara Seaman, the author had affairs with designer Coco Chanel and Broadway star Ethel Merman. reports Philadelphia Gay News.

The Washington Sisters have signed a contract with Icebergg Records to release their first album in the fall of 1988. They will be in the studio this summer, and photos have been taken by Irene Young.

#### WOMEN

Nancy Vogl has signed with Olivia Records and will be producing her Fight Like The Dancer album over summer with an exciting Nashville sound, states Olivia.

Kay Gardner's Rainbow Path has been released on compact disc.

On October 10, 1987 Susan Faupel will begin a 600-mile walk to raise funds and consciousness regarding the plight of battered women. The walk, called "Off The Beaten Path," is endorsed by the Illinois, Missouri, and Arkansas state coalitions against domestic violence. Off The Beaten Path, 505 W. Green, Urbana, IL 61801.

Beth York played at the Athens Jazz Festival and also at the National Women's Studies Conference, reports Ladyslipper.

Davita Shanklin, formerly of Hurricane Productions in Milwaukee, is now with Icebergg Records as the booking agent for Casselberry-DuPreé. lasmine, and Heather Bishop.

Musica Femina announces plans for a new album of compositions by women. It is their third release (but the first on vinvl).

Adrienne Torf's solo album was released in Japan in February; U.S. distribution is still pending. Her LP is part of a new line offered by Nippon Phonogram, which also includes Mary Watkins' Spiritsong.

#### **GATHERINGS**

The National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights will occur in Washington, D.C. October 11. The rally following the march will be produced by Robin Tyler, and the event will include a large celebration of ongoing lesbian and gay relationships. National March on Washington, P.O. Box 7781, Washington, D.C. 20044. 783-1828.

"Womyn & Witchcraft: Toward a Definition of Dianic Wicca (part 2)" will be held Sept. 3-7, 1987 in central Wisconsin. RCG, Box 6021, Madison, WI 53716. (608) 838-8629 (Wednesday evenings).

Multiple-artist concerts are making their appearance. Olivia hosted a showcase concert May 2 in the Bay Area featuring Cris Williamson, Tret Fure, Lucie Blue Tremblay, and Nancy Vogl & Band. In Chicago on April 26 Icebergg held an extravaganza starring their artists Casselberry-DuPree, mine, Heather Bishop, and Judy Gorman-Jacobs. This concert included Kate Clinton as emcee and a surprise appearance by the Fabulous Dyketones.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Joy Rosenblatt is one of the concert producers at Mountain Moving Coffeehouse in Chicago. In her spare time, she works for the State of Illinois as a welfare counselor.

#### **NOW AVAILABLE**

**Fundraising** for 'HOT WIRE'



#### T-shirts

\$8.00

colors: black, teal blue, ecru, heather grey

#### **Hooded Sweatshirts**

\$20.00

colors: black, heather grey, white, royal blue

sizes: S,M,L,XL,2X

#### Order now -

'HOT WIRE' 1417 W. Thome

Chicago, IL 60660
T-shirts @ \$8
plus 70¢ shipping
size(s):
color(s):
Sweatshirts @ \$20
plus \$1.25 shipping
size(s):
color(s):
Total cost of order:
Ship to:
Name:
Address:
City:
State/zip:

## ON STAGE & OFF

### **Performing in Prisons**

#### The Captive Audience

By Gerri Gribi

In 1983 I heard about a program called the Postsecondary Re-Entry Program (PREP), which provided college-level courses in prisons. Administered through the University of Wisconsin Center System, PREP enables residents to earn a two-year Associate of Arts degree, and assists them in acquiring bachelor's degrees via correspondence courses through other UW campuses.

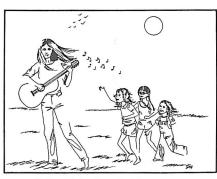
When I learned that PREP offered courses in Women's Studies, the same types of courses for which I regularly perform during the normal academic year, I offered to present a program at Taycheedah Correctional Institution for Women. Nine prison concerts later, I want to share my experiences in the hope that other performers, artists, and writers will consider taking their talents "inside."

#### **GETTING IN**

Because correctional philosophies vary widely among administrators, it can be difficult to get in even if you are trying to donate your services. Prisons are society's stepchildren and scapegoats, overcrowded and understaffed. At one end of the spectrum there are prisons which are merely holding tanks, using drugs to control and not too concerned about humane conditions; the philosophy here is that these people are criminals who should be punished, not pampered.

Even at the other end of the spectrum, in the prisons that try to live up to the name "correctional facility," you are likely to run into administrators who are defensive about permitting out-

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



Artwork by Laurie Bembenek

siders in. So the simplest way to approach a prison is through a group which has already gained access and established a rapport.

One such group would be a college program like PREP, which has sponsored my concerts at Taycheedah and also at a men's prison, Kettle Moraine. I'm sure that other state university systems offer similar programs.

There are also numerous private and non-profit organizations which sponsor outreach programs. AMICUS, for example, is a Minneapolis-based group which matches residents of Shakopee Correctional Facility for Women with "friends" on the outside who visit, write, and generally provide a support system for the resident; some even help ex-offenders find work continue their education. AMICUS sponsored my concert at that prison after they read about my work for Taycheedah. You can find groups like AMICUS listed in a state directory of non-profit organizations, probably available at your library.

I was terribly nervous before my first visit to a prison because it was a totally new environment which nothing in my experience had prepared me for...or so I thought. "I can just see the headline if you get killed in there," one of my friends teased. "Polly-

anna Gets Popped in Slammer!" She, like I, had visions of Attica, of the Manson Family. The media and politicians do a thorough job of stereotyping law-breakers for us, and consequently the word "prison" conjures images of crazed psychopaths.

Not that there aren't crazed psychopaths in prison. But most of the approximately 500 people I've met in medium and minimum security prisons are just regular people whose lives have gone haywire. This was driven home to me first visit to Kettle on my Moraine. A good-looking young man came up to me before my performance and shook my hand, saying, "I am so thrilled to meet you! I hear you all the time on Wisconsin Public Radio." Then he asked if I would play his favorite song of mine, "Hills of Kentucky." As we chatted pleasantly about folk music, I completely forgot where I was; I could have been at any college campus.

I later learned that this softspoken young man had killed his wife and children while out of his head on drugs and booze, an act he claims not even to remember. Several years before my prison trip, a friend of mine was raped, strangled, and thrown from a second story window in a similar incident. The pain, hatred, and fear had nearly consumed me; all of it came back to me as I drove home from the prison after the concert, thinking of that young man. I pulled off the road and sobbed for 10 minutes, then decided to get on with life. What else can you do? But people who work in prisons had better be ready for confusion, soul-searching and attitude analysis.

Female offenders are a diverse group, though as a whole their crimes are less violent than

men's. While I have met a few hardened, repeat offenders, many of the women I've met were convicted of things like welfare fraud or check-bouncing. Some are victims as well as offenders, victims of the Prince Charming complex that raised them to be doormats for men in the mistaken belief that they would be "cared for." Some are in prison because they couldn't say no when a lover involved them in a crime. Others were left in poverty when their them abandoned husbands their children, and they turned to prostitution for support. Still others are serving time for continuing a cycle of family lence. As one resident told me, "A lot of women come in here as conservatives and go out as feminists, because they've learned the hard way that life isn't Leave It To Beaver." Many are alcohol drug abusers who dreamed their habits would land them in prison one day.

I've also met some unique cases. One middle-aged woman was serving a life sentence for murdering her husband; he had been horribly mutilated in a farm accident, and with great anguish she yielded to his pleadings for death. (I'm happy to say she's been paroled.) Another woman, Laurie Bembenek, claims she is innocent of the murder for which she was sentenced. A former police officer who had acquired the reputation as "one of the pain-inthe-ass women's libbers" with the Milwaukee Police Department, Laurie was convicted with circumstantial evidence even though the only witness to the murder swears killer wasn't Laurie, even though the MPD violated at least 10 standard procedures when they processed the murder scene, and even though a contract-killer later confessed to the crime. Laurie is a feminist activist even in prison, filing lawsuits over parity issues and working to secure more humane treatment for the women in addition to her own battles.

Be forewarned: it is difficult to perform in prisons and not get involved. For example, I have been actively working to get a retrial for Laurie. I keep in touch by mail and take action on concerns raised by the women. I write letters to public officials

regarding parity issues and trial motions, and use my advantage as a "public figure" to get publicity about living conditions, drug treatment abuse, etc. I recycle my issues of HOT WIRE, Ms., Sojourner and other feminist publications by sending them to the prison library through one of the women.

#### Prison Projects -

#### Wisconsin Women's Network

Task Force on Women in the Criminal Justice System, c/o Atty. Victoria McCandless, 819 N. 6th St. 9th floor, Milwaukee, WI 53203.

#### AMICUS

Support group (not necessarily feminist) that sets up partnerships between inmates and partners on the outside. 100 N. 7th #413, Minneapolis, MN 55403. (612) 348-8570.

• A Woman's Place Bookstore Provides free books to prison women. 4015 Broadway, Oakland, CA 94611.

• Feminist Writers Guild FWG Prison Project packet (\$2) includes contacts, letters, and advice re conducting writing workshops in prisons. FWG, Joyce Goldenstern, P.O. Box 14055, Chicago, IL 60614.

• Gay Community News Prison support project. 167 Fremont St. 5th floor, Boston, MA 02111.

• Inside Out Publishers
Pays inmates \$20 per short story or poem. GPO Box 1185, New York, NY 10116.

• Prison Writers Review
The COSMEP prison project. RD 1
Box 80, Greenfield Center, NY 12833.

Prison Match

Programs for inmate parents. 1515 Webster St. #403, Oakland, CA 94612.

Bulldozer

Prison reform. PO Box 5052 Sta. A, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5W 1W4.

#### THE GIG

So what exactly does one perform in prison? Anything! They seem to prefer the uplifting and humorous to the serious and "cathartic" because, as one woman put it, "It's depressing enough in here as it is."

When I performed at Shakopee, the event was a party for residents and their AMICUS friends. I chose music that was uplifting and entertaining, with a lot of sing-alongs. It was all women's music. It speaks so powerfully to women; it also provides good role

models, showing that women can create their own culture rather than just passively watching men's culture.

At Kettle Moraine, a medium-security prison for men, I performed as part of a social studies class through PREP, so I did a program I call "American History in Folksongs." This program uses traditional songs to tell the history of people usually left out of the history books, i.e., women and minorities. But we also did a little goofing around because the men wanted to hear me sing some golden-oldies like "Puff the Magic Dragon."

Having performed in the men's prison three times, I've decided that performing for male inmates is frighteningly similar to performing for junior high school boys. There are those who are mature and interested, who ask good questions; there are those who sit and stare into space; and there are those who want to test my mettle by being rowdy and by trying to embarrass me with questions. In one such situation I instinctively responded the way I would with junior high schoolers. When someone asked an obnoxious question ("How much do they pay you to come in here and pester us with this stuff?"), I responded with an equal answer ("Oh, usually \$3,000 per hour"). The guy was shocked-he momentarily believed me. The look on his face made us all laugh, including him. He didn't trouble me any more. I ignore the rowdy ones and they

attention.

If you're wondering what I get paid...it depends. When I work through PREP, I receive the standard lecturer's honorarium, at first \$50 but now \$75 plus travel expenses. This is obviously not a money-maker. When I performed for AMICUS, the group had a budget for special events, and I received \$275 for my performance. We were able to arrange a date when I was already percontinued on page 62

soon tire of trying to grab my

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Gerri Gribi is a Wisconsin-based performer who specializes in collecting and performing traditional woman-positive songs. She has written music for several video productions about women's issues, and is writing a mystery novel with friends.

## NOTEWORTHY WOMEN

## D'Zama Murielle: The Musical Vagabond

By Janna MacAuslan

Last fall Kristan and I were in the home of Dr. Jane Bowers, one of the world's leading scholars in the area of women in music. We were sitting around her dining room table with books and notecards scattered about, planning a tour. I was truly in awe of this woman and of the wealth of information she has in her files.

It had all started months earlier when Kristan wrote a grant to the Oregon Committee for the Humanities for sponsorship of an Oregon tour. We were funded to give seven concerts and make a video, with Dr. Bowers, who teaches at the University of Wisconsin in Milwaukee, as a visiting Humanities scholar.

So there we were in Jane's dining room in Milwaukee, planning the upcoming tour. We were discussing how to bring women's music home to Oregonians, and Jane mentioned D'Zama Murielle—a woman in the 1930s who started a women's symphony in our home town of Portland. She suggested that I go to the Oregon Historical Society and see if I could find a picture of D'Zama, and possibly a copy of her autobiography.

I was excited about this assignment, and hurried to the library as soon as we returned from our trip. Lo and behold, there were two books by D'Zama Murielle right there at my fingertips. I was so eager to get home with them that I could hardly remove the library card from my wallet.

Sitting down in my overstuffed chair in the corner of our kitchen that we call a living room, I began to read. D'Zama's Autobi-

NOTEWORTHY WOMEN is devoted to reclaiming and celebrating the talent and accomplishments of our lost and denied musical foremothers.



D'Zama Murielle: vagabond spirit.

ography: From the Womb to the Worm, self-published in 1978, confirmed my suspicions about her being a rough and tumble tomboy. When her family moved from Boston to Seattle, her father developed a habit of taking off on journeys without necessarily leaving the family with grocery money. D'Zama may have inherited her love of travel from him. She apparently dropped out of high school, the highlight of her academic career being the period of time she played in the high school orchestra. Then, after a series of dead-end jobs such as gift-wrapper for a department store and telephone switchboard operator, she landed a position in 1920 in the Seattle Civic Symphony.

After this organization folded, D'Zama answered an ad for a "girl violinist wanted for traveling road show." Being the only one

who answered the ad, she was hired on the spot, and off she went with the "Ireland: A Nation" show. Since the name D'Zama Murielle didn't sound very Irish, the manager of the show gave her the new name Evelyn Olcott. For the sum of \$50 per week she played every night, sold buttons and music in the lobby, kept the books, wrote letters, mended costumes, and packed the boss's trunks. (Sounds a little like a Musica Femina tour.)

The second leg of the "Ireland" tour began in winter, but the show went bankrupt in Minneapolis after several nights of playing to an audience of one. D'Zama was out of a job and had to fend for herself in a strange city. She got hired in a department store for \$15 per week, but after working in the baby department she went to the manager and said, "Thank you, but one week of selling rattles and diapers has convinced me that show business is more to my liking, even though I starve for it."

It was five years of rolling from one job to another before she got her feet on the first rung of the musical ladder. She had been "gigging around the south end of Boston" before enrolling in the New England Conservatory of Music in 1922. Around this time she also managed to buy a 1922 Ford Coupe, which enabled her to better get the engagements that paid her rent. It was in Boston that D'Zama first decided to become a conductor, after watching world-famous conductors at Boston Symphony Hall. Like most women at the time, however, she was advised to enter music education. And when it was discovered that she had dropped out of high school, she had to go back and complete her junior and senior

years. She worked all hours after school which, she reports, left "no time to study and less time to sleep—except in English class."

After her graduation she did a variety of teaching and conducting jobs. Here is the account of her not-so-warm reception by conductor Ethel Leginska:

"One spasm after another makes life worth living," says D'Zama. "So I attended a rehearsal of the Boston Women's Symphony. Ethel Leginska, the internationally-known pianist and composer, was the conductor.

"After the rehearsal I said, 'Miss Leginska, I'd like to have you coach me.' Then with a disdainful look she grunted, 'So?' Because of that grunt, my tongue dangled with my tonsils, yet I managed to ask, 'What is your fee?' 'Ten dollars, but call my secretary for an appointment. I'm too busy to talk to you.'

"When the time came to see her, I took a long ride out to Commonwealth Avenue to her apartment. Shortly after her accompanist answered the bell, she said, 'Miss Leginska is lying down, but come in and sit down.' Presently, after I saw Miss Ethel cross the hall and drag herself into the music room, I suspected that she was in no mood to coach me. Now, since the Women's Symphony players were working on Schumann's Symphonie No. 1 in B flat at that time, Miss Leginska said, 'Sit down and play the first page of the score.'

"In such a tense atmosphere my brain refused to function and my fingers couldn't move. So she told her accompanist to take over, and for me to swing the stick. Then, before I could beat out the first few measures, she said, 'Stop! My Gawd! You conduct as if you were constipated.' I might have been, but I wasn't aware of the fact, so with that non-aesthetic exclamation, we closed my first and last baton lesson with Miss Leginska."

[See <u>HOT WIRE</u>, March 1986 for more information on Ethel Leginska.]

It seems that D'Zama didn't let Leginska's cutting comments hold her back. In 1929 she organized the Massachusetts Tercentary Orchestra—a women's symphony orchestra which did both radio

broadcasts and public concerts. According to D'Zama, ensembles from the orchestra played for any occasion, from the "ultra ultra to the dowdy dowdy," including stag parties. "Since musicians had to eat and stag parties paid well," she said, "we never refused those dates." D'Zama also played viola with the MacDowell Club Orchestra under Arthur Fiedler, who later conducted the Boston Pops concerts.

After the Wall Street crash and the advent of the motion picture "talkies," life was harder for everyone, and there was a marked decline in the use of pit musicians. D'Zama lost her job conducting an "all girl" pit orchestra for the vaudeville acts that played on the outskirts of Boston.

Since things were looking slow, she decided to buy a bicycle. At the age of 31, D'Zama Murielle made a trip alone from Boston to Savannah, Georgia. The sign she painted on the side of her bike read: "Will Conduct Bands and Orchestras for any worthy cause while en route."

Her first offer to conduct along the way was in Barre, Massachusetts, for the Veterans of Foreign Wars' Band from Marlboro. Her wardrobe consisted of a white shirt, tweed jacket, black boots, breeches, and a beret, attire in which she intended to conduct. On the night of the big event, the regular band leader showed no signs of relinquishing his baton to her. So D'Zama jumped up on the podium and, when a trombonist accidentally tipped over his music stand, loudly asked the conductor if she might conduct the last number. Since all in attendance had heard, he couldn't very well refuse. The men of the ensemble were clearly staring at the bicycling woman conductor. But after she led them in a rousing rendition of John Phillip Sousa's "Stars and Stripes Forever" the summer audience of 10,000 broke into a loud rumble of applause. Apparently she impressed them not only with her conducting but by simultaneously whistling the piccolo part.

After that performance she went to Springfield, Massachusetts where she arrived at 1 a.m. and couldn't awaken anyone at the YWCA. She subsequently chained

her bike to a lamppost and spent the rest of the night on a bench inside the Penn railway station. The next day she rode all over town trying to get a job conducting the city band. But according to D'Zama's analysis she had three strikes against her:

"One, I was a stray woman riding a bicycle. In 1931 that was a no-no. Two, no woman could possibly conduct, and three, how could an impoverished musician grease a politician's palm if she weren't a bleached blonde with a 36-24-36 measurement?" One wonders how much things have changed.

While most of D'Zama's experiences on the road were positive, with many people offering help along the way, she did have a "close encounter of the crude kind" with a farmer who offered her a lift from Petersburg to Allentown, Pennsylvania. When he parked his truck in some bushes she got worried, but he was going off to drink moonshine. When he returned hours later, and she retrieved her bike (which had been locked in his truck), he went north and she went south.

She was totally off the main road, but she came across a "dope shack" which, she explains, was what Coca-Cola stands used to be called. Finding herself in line for yet another crude encounter, she escaped with the help of a rifle that she found leaning in the corner. Then, only 35 miles from Savannah, where she was to visit some friends, her bicycle broke down. Thus ended D'Zama Murielle's first long-distance bicycle trip.

The story of D'Zama Murielle continues in the November 1987 issue of 'HOT WIRE.'

ABOUT THE AUTHORS: Janna Mac-Auslan and Kristan Aspen make up the flute and guitar duo Musica Femina. They tour nationally and are currently raising money to do their first LP of music by women composers. The group has recorded two cassettes.

## Put your money into women's music

## LÁADAN

## **About Music and Religious Language**

#### By Suzette Haden Elgin

In the early 1980s, Suzette Haden Elgin became aware of the feminist hypothesis that existing human languages are inadequate to express the perceptions of women. It further occurred to her that if women had a language adequate to express their perceptions, it might reflect quite a different reality than that perceived by men. The story of the construction of such a language—Láadan can be read in the November 1985 issue of 'HOT WIRE' or in 'A First Dictionary and Grammar of Laadan' (published by SF3). 'HOT WIRE' has been publishing translation lessons since March 1986. We hope to return to lessons (featuring songs in Láadan) in our November 1987 issue.

Meanwhile, here is some background information on music and linguistics excerpted from Elgin's newsletter, 'The Lonesome Node'. The publication includes fascinating information and discussion of women and language, the linguistics/music interface, language and the brain, language in health care, religious language, the linguistics/science fiction interface, and much more. The spring 1987 'Node' is a special music/religious language issue.

I've been mulling this over for the past half dozen years, trying it out in various settings and contexts, reading the opinions of all sorts of Experts & Authorities & Eminences Grises, and trying to achieve a synthesis. Slow, but — eventually — sure. And here is my current perception of the situa-

LÁADAN: "the language of those who perceive," a language constructed to express the perceptions of women. This column presents translation lessons as well as comments about linguistics. Suzette Haden Elgin welcomes correspondence from women interested in further development of Laadan. Route 4 Box 192-E, Huntsville, AR 72740.



Suzette Haden Elgin: "People do not want to accept responsibility for the consequences of their language, whether spoken or sung."

tion: if music can be deliberately and systematically and reliably used to control human emotions, this has profound religious implications. Even for the non-religious individual, it has profound ethical implications.

Two factors make this especially true: (1) that almost all religions use music extensively in worship and ritual; and (2) that with the development of music synthesizers we suddenly have a degree of control over the musical stimulus that was unimaginable in the past. (There is much evidence that even when a synthesized musical stimulus lacks some element that it usually contains, most people hear it as if that missing element were there. Just as, when you flash four groups of dots for people, with a corner dot missing in one group, most will "see" the missing dot as if it were there.)

An assortment of factors relevant to my thesis have been assembling themselves in my head and dropping into pigeonholes, including at the least the following 10:

(1) For English, at least 65 percent of all the information

transmitted in a language interaction is carried not by the words but by the nonverbal communication (NVC) channel. And ordinary people—as opposed to mimes, ballet dancers, etc.—have far more control over music than over any other form of NVC.

(2) When transmission of information is effective and efficient, always outranks Matching NVC to the words is the most powerful technique we have for avoiding the "But that isn't what I meant!" phenomenon in our lives. NVC can be used to override even the most factual sort of data...you can tell someone "Come back at three" in a way that clearly transmits the message "Don't come back at all" or "Come back as quickly as you can."

The model (3) of musical meaning developed by Manfred Clynes (the SENTICS model) proposes that particular musical sequences will reliably evoke particular emotions, because the musical waveform causes the brain to respond with a matching waveform that "belongs" to that emotion. That is, just as a piano string will sound without anybody hitting the corresponding key, if the right note is sounded near it from another source by resonance, the right musical waveform will cause the brain to "sound" same waveform, also by a kind of resonance. He proposes that this is hard-wired in the brain, and has presented substantial evidence for it across a variety of different cultures and peoples.

(4) The model of musical meaning developed by George Mandler proposes that although emotional responses to music evoke <u>roughly</u> reliable emotional interpretations in listeners, this is highly dependent on the con-

text. That is, context can cause the usual response to be replaced with some other response. And there is substantial evidence for this model also.

(5) Research shows that singers can very reliably transmit the message "This musical sequence is intended to mean..." with the blank filled in by a given emotion; people have no trouble deciding if the notes—even when they are not attached to any words—are intended to convey joy or rage or grief. And it is proposed by various scholars that this is because singers "translate" their body language into sound.

(6) People will sit and listen, often for very long periods of time, to <u>sung</u> language that they would never tolerate if it were spoken. You don't need scientific research for this—your own experience will bear it out. People will listen to words that are utter slop or utter drivel if those words are sung rather than spoken; people will listen to a protest song who would never allow you to <u>say</u> the very same protest message.

(7) Information that is sung is more easily learned than information that is spoken, and such information is more reliably retrieved from long term memory—as with alphabet and times tables

(8) There is evidence now that music can reduce the need for painkillers, can speed postoperative recovery, can accelerate healing, can increase tolerance for unpleasant procedures that are not specifically painful, and so on. And this evidence is coming from conservative medical sources as well as from music therapists.

(9) The neuropsychological and neurophysiological research upon which Muzak bases its tapes has proved extremely reliable as a method for controlling the pace of work. (You might be astonished at how detailed this research is, and how thoroughly Muzak incorporates it into the music.)

(10) Finally, and perhaps very tangentially, there is the claim by Marshall McLuhan—still controversial—that what matters is not the words that are said within some medium (such as television) but the fact that the transmission of those words is in that medium. This seems to me to have a bear-

ing on the studies of musical timbre—the quality that tells you whether you are hearing a violin or a guitar or a trumpet, and that makes it possible for you to recognize people's voice, including their singing voices, as belonging to them and not to somebody else.

This brings us to the crucial question: can you override the link between the musical unit and the emotional response? Which is the correct model for musical meaning- Clynes or Mandler? You cannot, by manipulating context, cause people to see red instead of blue. This is independent of naming; that is, people whose language uses a single term for blue and green will still sort chips of blue and chips of green in the same way as people whose language has separate words for them. Can you, by context, cause people to perceive an intended "rage" unit of music as meaning joy instead?

At first this looks like a win/ lose situation...one of the models has to be Right and the other Wrong. But I think they can be much more nearly resolved than is at first obvious. One of Clynes' principles is that the more perfectly the stimulus waveform (the line of the melody, for example) matches the hard-wired pattern form in the brain, the more reliably-and the more powerfully-it will evoke that hard-wired form. I would say, therefore, that how easily you can override an emotional response to a sequence of music depends on the skill behind that sequence. If every possible parameter of a musical sequencepitch, loudness, rhythm, quality, etc.-is set to the "rage" waveform pattern, I do not believe any amount of fiddling around with the context will cause a listener to interpret it as meaning joy instead. (A waveform is a waveform is a waveform-the brain doesn't care. A sequence of pitches that forms a melody can trace a particular curve on a graph; so can a sequence of beats that forms a rhythm, or a sequence of degrees of loudness, of nasalness, etc. Whatever the stimulus, it can be plotted as a waveform.) If that is correct-if it is possible to use music systematically to evoke desired emotional responses—then learning to control your own musical output becomes worthwhile in ways that have nothing to do with earning a degree in music or getting a job performing in a nightclub. And while the implications for getting full control of your cello or your synthesizer are clear, not everyone has a cello or a synthesizer. But almost everyone has a voice.

Finally, we come to something awesomely obvious. To wit: this can't be hard, or I wouldn't have been able to figure it out. Why, then, hasn't it been settled long ago? Because: people do not want to accept responsibility for the consequences of their language, whether spoken or sung. If you discuss this with people, they will begin by telling you, "Oh, of course, everybody knows that!" and by citing examples of dictators using martial music to stir up the rabble. Not only will they claim to agree with you, they will be irritated that you've wasted their time proposing anything so self-evident.

But those very same people will do a complete 180-degree turn when you make it clear to them that this means they are responsible for their language and their body language. This responsibility would be extremely inconvenient. It would be work. Judges emphatically do not like to learn that the tone of voice with which they read their instructions to the jury can determine to a very significant degree whether that jury convicts the defendent or not. Doctors most emphatically do not like to learn that the tone of their voice can keep people from getting well, even when their words are entirely proper-even more, they do not like to learn that it can make people sick. Teachers do not want to know that their NVC-for which they have essentially no training-can keep students from learning. A clergyperson may be delighted

continued on page 58

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Suzette Haden Elgin is a Doctor of Linguistics. She has taught at the University of California, specializing in Native American languages. She has written numerous linguistic texts in addition to 'The Gentle Art of Verbal Self-Defense.' Her 11 science fiction novels include 'Native Tongue.'

## THE TENTH MUSE

## Sappho: Image, Legend, and Reality

By Jorjet Harper

This is the fifth of a series of articles on Sappho of Lesbos: her life, her work, her loves, her historical influence, the controversies surrounding her, and how her work was lost and some of it rediscovered.

Very few words and images which show women expressing feelings for each other have been recorded down through history. This is particularly true for the ancient world. Certainly we have images of goddesses as well as gods, nymphs, naiads, and other mythological creatures of the female sex. But when it comes to accounts of real people, the images of women are few, and they fade and disappear next to the exploits of the males whose recorded stories were told for other males. We have many many accounts of how men felt about each other, what men thought about everything and anything, and what great deeds they accom-plished. The images we have of women in the ancient world are almost all through men's eyes, through men's desires: primarily as prostitute or concubine or dancing girl or slave, sometimes as mother or wife. Since women's thoughts and feelings were not considered valuable or interesting except insofar as they related to information about what women themselves felt-particularly about their relationships with other women-is quite rare.

So the poetry of Sappho which has survived is all the more pre-

THE TENTH MUSE: Who was Sappho of Lesbos, praised by Plato as "the Tenth Muse"? This column explores the facts, speculations, and controversies surrounding the world's first famous Lesbian.



A rare image of women's love: Stele of Krito and Timariste, c. 440-420 B.C.

cious to us for its singularity. Here is a female voice from a distant past which speaks to us of love between women, of hope and despair, of sweet youth and of growing old—a voice that sings with directness, immediacy, and freshness despite the expanse of 2,600 years.

Throughout the ancient world Sappho's poetry was acknowledged as genius, but Sappho the woman, the historical figure, was subjected to character assassination by the fiercely misogynistic Greeks themselves — primarily the Athenians — in the centuries immediately after her death. Consequently, her "image" has suffered some incredible distortions and

reversals in the long ages between her actual lifetime and the present. These distortions are ultimately attributable to the same source as the other distortions of history: women seen only through the eyes of men.

The accumulated lore surrounding Sappho is called "the biographical tradition" since it is almost entirely based on "traditions" (including everything from studied opinion to the most blatant, unverifiable conjecture) rather than on firsthand information. This biographical tradition is full of contradictions about every aspect of Sappho's life, and can be thought of as the "legendary fringe." The two most tenacious myths—myths that sometimes still crop up as though they were factual-are that there were two women named Sappho who lived on Lesbos, one a great genius, the other a "notorious courtesan"; and the other, that she died a suicide by jumping off a cliff, after being spurned by a handsome young ferryman.

Suppose a movie were made 200 years from now in which Gertrude Stein never met Alice Toklas, but instead was a high-paid Paris courtesan with an insatiable lust for men. Not only that, but she commits suicide by jumping off the Eiffel Tower because Ernest Hemingway spurned her. Further, make it a musical comedy, and you have some idea of the way in which Sappho's fame underwent a radical change beginning about 100 years after her death.

#### A STOCK CHARACTER

"Our tradition about Sappho, as transmitted by late antiquity, is distorted and literary," says Sappho scholar A.D. Burns. At the

end of the Peloponnesian War, Athenian writers began to make historical figures of renown the subjects of their entertainments, in the presentation of "comic history."

"And among the characters, safely dead, who could be caricatured, none were more popular than the figures of literature best known through their own works," says Burns. This new artistic movement, labelled Middle Comedy, was initiated by Aristophanes play The Frogs. Archilochos, a satirist who lived even earlier than Sappho, became stereotyped as "the first drunken, truculent, Braggart Soldier of the Greek stage...Sappho naturally lent herself to presentation in a dramatic tradition which had not quite lost its connection with a religious carnival..." Consequently, in the hands of Athenian playwrights Sappho became what might be described as a stock character, a woman who had various loversmale lovers, of course.

Athanaeus and other ancient writers mention a number of plays in which Sappho was the leading character. Between 425 B.C. and 300 B.C., at least seven plays entitled Sappho were written by different playwrights, and a character "Sappho" appeared in a number of others. None of these actual plays has survived, but we have some descriptions of a few of them. Aristophanes represented her as someone who told riddles. The playwright Diphilos portrayed her as the mistress of two poets, Archilochos and Hipponax-though the real Archilochos lived a century earlier than Sappho, and Hipponax lived a generation after her. Science fiction had not yet been invented, but clearly the legendary fringe was at work in such dramas, as, observes Burns, "figures from different fairy tales may be mixed in a pantomime." Sappho's reputation was remolded in the hands of these writers.

The real women of Athens at this time were sharply divided into the roles of wife (a virtual prisoner in her own home), prostitute, and concubine. Literacy for women was discouraged if not forbidden. Since "virtuous" women were not seen in public, it is probable that the audiences for these plays were entirely, or cer-

tainly primarily, composed of men. Needless to say, there were no women playwrights whose names or works have survived, and perhaps none existed.

Male playwrights were not the only offenders. The poet Hermisianax, writing at the time of Alexander the Great (356-323 B.C.) composed a poem in which he represented Sappho as beloved of the male poet Anakreon—but Anakreon was only a child when Sappho died.

There were those who continued to admire the historic Sappho through study of her work, since her poetry was widely known. So, concurrent with the stock Sappho character that had been built up in Athenian "vaudeville" theater, there were also a number of scholarly books and serious commentaries about her poetry. But all of these works by ancient authors, except for scattered references, have also been lost.

So in the ancient world (as figures like Albert Einstein and Marilyn Monroe in our own day have been "written into" new works that build a "persona" for them and obscure or distort their own works - the source of their original fame), Sappho became legendary as, of all things, a licentious woman, something which must certainly have struck many Athenians as humorous-at least until the joke became another layer of commonly assumed mythology associated with her name. Well-informed members of these Athenian audiences would have known that these portrayals were fictitious, but, says Burns, "the character Sappho in the common imagination of late antiquity came, in the absense of serious biography, to be the Sappho of lewd farce; just as for us, with slightly better excuse, the character of Richard III is the Richard III of Shakespeare."

#### THE "OTHER" SAPPHO

"It seems clear that from the first her memory was held in the highest respect, in spite of whatever scandals were attached to her name," says Sappho scholar Arthur Weigall.

But the "scandals attached to her name" by the playwrights of the Middle Comedy (and further, the persecution and destruction of her work by the early Church [see <u>HOT WIRE</u>, March 1987] led to a curious backlash: the idea that the Sappho who wrote poetry could not be the same person as the Sappho of legend.

The historian Aelian wrote, around 200 A.D., "I understand that there was in Lesbos another Sappho, a courtesan, not a poetess." The myth of the "other" Sappho has also come down through history.

"It was really not necessary for her later apologists to invent another Sappho, the courtesan of Eresos, to whom to transfer the stories about the poetess which they did not think worthy of her," comments Weigall. But these apologists argued for the existence of two Sapphos, to remove the stain of immorality they perceived connected to her name. And here a new legend arose, that of the tarnished, wronged poetess, mistakenly mixed up with someone who happened to have the same name and a bad reputation.

Lending credence to the idea that there were two women with the name Sappho was the confusion about her place of birth. Scholars are still not certain whether she was born in the city of Mytilene, the dominant cultural center of Lesbos, or in the smaller city of Eresus. So it became convenient to argue that women named Sappho were born in both places.

#### SAPPHO AND PHAON

Nobody knows when or how Sappho died. But by the nine-teenth century, Sappho's image was one of a tragic woman of genius who had a "chaste" love for her women "friends," who was misunderstood because of the unfortunate coincidence of having been mixed up with a disreputable woman of the same name, and who died by leaping off a cliff because of her unrequited love continued on page 61

Copyright 1987 Jorjet Harper

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Jorjet Harper writes fiction and non-fiction. She is a regular columnist for 'HOT WIRE' and book editor of the 'Windy City Times' in addition to being the National Coordinator of the Feminist Writers Guild.

# "Sophie's Parlor" On the Air

#### By Nancy Seeger

Did you know that Meg Christian and Cris Williamson came up with the idea for what would become Olivia Records at Sophie's Parlor? Or are you aware that Bernice Johnson Reagon makes a habit of coming to Sophie's Parlor about once a year to chat and to let people know what she's been up to lately?

You may be asking who is this Sophie—and why is her parlor a meeting place for some of the giants of women's culture?

Sophie is actually not just one woman. She is and has been the many women who have comprised Sophie's Parlor Media Collective since 1972. The collective broadcasts the feminist radio show "Sophie's Parlor" from 8:30-11 p.m. every Tuesday night on WPFW, 89.3 FM in the Washington, D.C. area. "Sophie's" provides an invaluable service to the women's community by airing music and public affairs issues from a decidedly feminist perspective. There is no other radio program, public or non-public, like it in the Washington-Baltimore area.

Sophie's roots start deep in the social struggles of the early 1970s. The show, founded by a group of female Georgetown University students, was originally called "Radio Free Women," and consisted of two programs. The first, "A Woman's Story," was made up of public affairs, interviews, phone-ins, and poetry readings; the second, "Sophie's Parlor," consisted of women's music. The show aired on WGTB, the university's progressive station, for several years. However, the station and show began to present radical issues which, to say the least, did not please the Jesuits who ran Georgetown. One of the problems which directly led to the demise of the station was Sophie's decision to do a benefit for the Free Clinic (a birth control clinic). That particular show was cancelled and the station manager fired. The station was kept on the air during the basketball season to air the games, but when the 1977 season ended, so did WGTB.

Luckily for "Sophie's Parlor" and many others from WGTB, Pacifica Radio was then establishing WPFW to serve the greater Washington, D.C. area. Karen McManus of Sophie's calls the Pacifica Foundation "the NBC of alternatives." It pioneered public radio.

"In 1946," says McManus, "Pacifica began to see the concept of listener-sponsorship as a way to provide for two of the most fundamental policies underlying the First Amendment's guarantee of free speech in the area of broadcasting: access to the media and diversity of programming."

Today Pacifica is a national, non-profit radio network which offers a wide range of cultural and informational programming. It consists of five community stations located in California, Texas, New York, and Washington, D.C. In addition, it runs a national and international news bureau, radio archives with more than 22,000 sound recordings available to the public, and a program service that distributes the tapes to other radio stations throughout the country. It seems only fitting that its youngest offspring, WPFW, dedicated progressive change, should pick up "Sophie's Parlor" and many of the other orphans from WGTB.

Sophie's main purpose, in 15 years of operation, has been to train women to do radio. More than 100 women have undergone the extensive, elaborate training process which Debbie Morris (a

former member of the collective) devised. Trainees are taught about miking techniques, sound, setting up, and putting together a show. A significant benefit of "Sophie's Parlor" being taken over by Pacifica is that the collective now has access to excellent facilities in which to do their broadcasting and training.

There are as few as two or as many as 12 collective members at any given point. Any interested woman can come to Sophie's to learn. Though no previous experience is necessary, some women have worked in radio before, usually in college or with public radio. At one time the collective included a couple of women with radio experience, a baker, two government employees, and a journalist. The amount of time spent in the collective varies, and many of the collective women move on to other jobs in radio. For those interested in such a pursuit, the experience gained with Sophie's is an invaluable asset. There aren't many other places where a woman-in many cases a total novice—can learn all about the various aspects of radio while broadcasting a show.

For others, radio may not be a life-long career goal. These women want the excitement of meeting new and interesting people, the satisfaction of working together with other women for a worthwhile goal, or they do it, as McManus says, "[for the belief in] getting women's words and music on the air, at least once a week, at least for two and a half hours."

Collective member Liz Buchal, also with National Public Radio, stresses the idea that there is much more to doing the show than simply spinning records. "A lot goes on behind the scenes,"

she says. "We are gathering information all the time about what's happening where and who's doing what, making calls, and meeting with poets, authors, and musicians who are in town." Depending on the number of women in the collective, each member works on a show about every one to two months. It requires approximately one hour to plan each minute of air time. The woman "doing" the show must prepare the program, perform the bulk of the research and calling, and then broadcast the show over the air.

traditionally known as "women's music."

Even though each program is primarily the product of the particular woman doing the show, certain common values are always considered. The collective has made an effort to inform listeners about as many "democratic rights struggles" as possible. Programs have been done on the Chilean, Cuban, and Palestinian struggles. They also like to deal with how people must be prepared to build coalitions, and how coalitions might be built between progressive



Sophie's Parlor Media Collective 1987: Suzanne Kubota, Liz Buchal, June Thomas, Karen McManus, Audrey Sartin, Robin McCall, Laura Garrett.

The format of the show is similar to that of the early days: the first hour is interviews, public affairs announcements, and poetry; the second half is music. Ever since "Sophie's Parlor" moved to WPFW they have had to abide by the station's jazz music format. This has forced the women of Sophie's to dig deeper into various kinds of music and to be more creative in how they select and present the material. As Morris says, "'Sophie's' is unique because it plays jazz, blues, and gospel music performed and/or written by women." It exposes listeners to women musicians and composers just starting out as well as to those who have not yet had enough exposure. Buchal points out that collective members occasionally "sneak in" some what is

groups. The collective is hoping that by presenting these issues within a feminist framework, the connections between all these problems will be recognized by the listeners.

Other collective members feel that "Sophie's" has built bridges between groups of women by demonstrating that feminism is not simply a white, middle-class movement. "Sophie's Parlor" attempts to educate, inform, and hopefully foster change by dealing with the problems and issues of women of color, of varying lifestyles, and of different economic backgrounds. The limits of feminism are stretched. Buchal is especially proud of her piece on lesbian nuns, which took nine months to prepare.

Poets like Audre Lorde and

Michelle Parkerson always seem to garner intense reactions from listeners. According to McManus, the show receives more donations during the poetry readings than during the musical interludes. Not all reactions are positive, however; callers have rushed to their phones on more than one occasion to demand that those "sick people" get off the air.

Despite this occasional negativity, "Sophie's Parlor" could not exist without its listeners. During the show the collective depends on those listeners for their reactions and donations. McManus expressed regret that "Sophie's Parlor" does not seem to be receiving as many calls now as it did in past years. Also, less money is being pulled in during the fundraisers. Since each show is evaluated on the amount of money it raises, this is a concern.

One problem may be inadequate promotion of the show. Much of the community may be unaware of the existence of "Sophie's Parlor," though efforts have been made to increase visibility through distributing flyers in bookstores and advertising in alternative publications. Possibly listeners are out there but are taking cues from the generally repressive political and economic climate. Maybe they are just not as vocal or as free with their wallets as they have been in the past. As with so many worthwhile cultural endeavors, there is the inevitable "catch-22": should Sophie's spend its precious time publicizing itself or putting together quality shows?

WPFW seems very pleased with "Sophie's Parlor." They recently increased the time by a half hour and moved the show to a better time slot. They have shown a trust which is encouraging. Collective members see the show becoming more of a public service to the community. In addition to local people using the show to announce their causes and services (as do the D.C. Rape Crisis Cencontinued on page 58

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Nancy Seeger is a librarian for the federal government in Washington, DC. She has written various arts reviews and articles for 'The Washington Blade,' 'Unicorn Times,' and 'Talkin' Union.'

# The All-American Girls' Baseball League

#### By Yvonne Zipter

Alix Dobkin says, "Softball is the single greatest organizing factor in lesbian society." And based on research I've been doing for a book on lesbians and softball, it does indeed seem to be the case that softball is a universal meeting ground (in this country) for lesbians. There is almost no community, no matter how large or small, urban or rural, that does not have a healthy number of softball dykes. For some, softball is primarily a social event. For others, it is an intense and aesthetic game of skill as well.

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

No matter how skilled they are, however, women's teams—lesbian or otherwise—don't make the

news much. Exceptional women's teams, from the amateur Raybestos Brakettes of Connecticut to our professional basketball, softball (both defunct), and volleyball teams, have gotten scant media attention. The few isolated women involved in the more "ladylike" sports of tennis, gymnastics, and figure skating who have gotten so much attention in recent years might give one the misleading impression that media coverage of women athletes has improved. But the fact is, with the exception of the excitement generated by women's Olympic volleyball a few years ago, there is very little media coverage of women's team sports. What there is of it is often denigrating or patronizing.

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

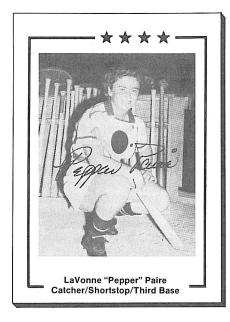
Once upon a time, women were paid twice the average national weekly salary to play baseball; a million fans came out to see them in one season; they were featured in national magazine

stories and Movietone Newsreels; daily box scores and league standings were published in newspapers throughout the Midwest; they played ball in Wrigley Field, Comiskey Park, and Yankee Stadium.

Sound like a fairy tale? The product of an overactive feminist athletic imagination? It's not. It's all true. From 1943-54, there existed in this country a professional women's baseball league, whose skill level and attendance figures frequently surpassed the men's semipro teams popular in that day, and occasionally competed with the men's professional leagues. Generally known as the All-American Girls' Baseball League (AAGBL), they are all but unknown today.

But thanks to the pioneering research and writing in the last decade by women like Merrie A. Fidler and Sharon L. Roepke, and subsequent efforts by Sports Illustrated's Jay Feldman, the AAGBL is once again, slowly, being brought to national attention. Re-







gardless of whether you are a sports enthusiast, the AAGBL is a fascinating and important chapter in women's history—not just sports history but our social and cultural history as a whole.

Though most of us may never have heard of them, the women of the AAGBL started a path for us to follow. Not only did they break ground for building a positive image of the athletic woman, for physical strength and dexterity, but they also served as early role models of financial and mental independence in women. Who were these women? How did they get started? What was their experience of being "lady ball-players"? Where are they now? What do they have to teach us?

#### THE BEGINNING

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

At its inception, the AAGBL was set up as a nonprofit organization governed by a board of trustees: Wrigley, Paul Harper (an attorney for the Cubs), Branch Rickey (general manager of the Brooklyn Dodgers). Arthur Meyerhoff, a principal advertising agent for the Wrigley Company, was also enlisted to help with the league. The stated purpose of this organization was to build morale, raise money for war bonds, develop youth programs, and visit service hospitals. Originally, Wrigley intended the league to play in National League ballparks on offdates, but black-out regulations and other complications prevented him from carrying this out. The AAGBL did manage, however, to play at some of these ballparks for exhibition games.

Four Midwestern towns, war production centers where men's and women's softball had been popular in the 1930s, were selected as league team sites: Racine and Kenosha, Wisconsin; Rockford, Illinois; and South Bend, Indiana. At its height, the league had as many as 10 teams, all in the Midwest.

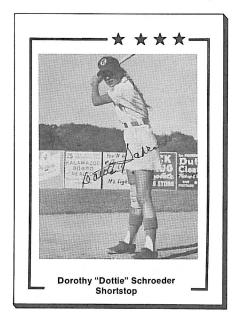
Its players, however, came from across the country and Canada. Thirty scouts had searched baseball and softball diamonds for outstanding athletes. Tryout camps

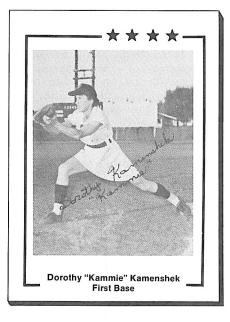
were set up, to which hundreds of women flocked. Seventy-five women were selected from these regional tryouts to attend final tryouts at Wrigley Field. Sixty of them were selected to staff the original four teams.

Initially, the league was known as the All-American Girls' Softball League, though the game was actually a baseball-softball hybrid, with its softball-sized ball and expanded diamond size and baseball rules. From there, the game evolved rapidly, the ball becoming smaller and harder, the diamond larger, the pitching faster and, by 1948, overhand, until it was not much different from regulation baseball. In 1945, the league officially changed its name.

Attendance figures, especially from 1943-49, attest to the popularity of this brand of major league ball. In 1948, for instance, the Racine Belles and Rockford Peaches both outdrew the populations of their cities. And as former player Pepper Paire said in a 1985 Sports Illustrated interview, "People may have come out the first time just for laughs and to see the legs, but they kept coming back—and that was because we played good baseball."

For women such as Paire who would "rather play ball than eat," the AAGBL was a dream come true. And for some it was more than that: it was a way off the farm, out of the small town, out of poverty. And just for these reasons, the women were willing







to put up with the stringent regulations imposed on them by the league: no short haircuts; dating only with a chaperone's permission; no shorts, slacks, drinking, or smoking in public; and strict bedtime rules. The uniforms were somewhat impractical dresses with flared skirts, and players were required to attend charm school for lessons on hairstyling, makeup, and deportment.

Though such restrictions and requirements seem ridiculous and sexist today, the players looked at it all very pragmatically. At the time, it was what they had to do to play ball. So they did it. Today, most are firmly convinced that the success of the league owed much to this stress on "femininity" - a view clearly shared by the league's administration at the time. Seeming to bear in mind the variety of accusations leveled at the Boston Bloomer Girls (a team of women ball players who toured the country around the turn of the century), Wrigley sought to develop an image of propriety for his league. He was also concerned that no one mistake his players for men wearing dresses and that no one accuse them of lesbianism. While I wish I could say that Wrigley's concerns are now outdated, the issues of gender identity and sexual orientation still plague women athletes today. And, looking at it pragmatically as the former players do, it seems likely that the image of the ball players did contribute to the success of the

## WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE AAGBL?

- Jay Feldman, "Perspective," Sports Illustrated, June 10, 1985.
- Merrie A. Fidler, "The All-American Girls' Baseball League, 1943-1954," in *Her Story in Sport*, ed. Reet Howell (West Point, N.Y.: Leisure Press, 1982).
- Sharon L. Roepke, Diamond Gals (1986). Available from author for \$1.50 plus 50¢ postage/handling. AAGBL Cards, 18971 Church St., Marcellus, MI 49067.
- Sharon L. Roepke, *The Other Major League* (1981). Available from author for \$3 plus 50¢ postage/handling.
- Sharon L. Roepke, AAGBL Baseball Cards (two sets). Available from author for \$10 plus 50¢ postage/handling, each set.
- Janis Taylor's video documentary of the 1986 reunion; scheduled for June, 1987 release. Janis Taylor, R/TV/F Dept., 1905 N. Sheridan Rd., Northwestern University, School of Speech, Evanston, IL 60201

league. The women of the AAGBL were, after all, a reflection of—as well as a changing force in—society, mirroring the culture's insistence on "feminine" values while at the same time demonstrating to women and men alike that women were capable of much more than previously believed.

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

#### THE END

But this de-emphasizing of women's participation in occupations historically defined as masculine was only one factor contributing to the demise of the AAGBL. Other factors included drastic cuts in the promotional budget, reduced game attendance because of changing recreational habits (more TV, travel, etc.), the reduction of the talent pool because of the switch from softball to baseball, administrative changes and changes in league structure, and the loss of key players due to injuries, retirement, and recruitment by semipro women's softball leagues. In 1954, the women of the AAGBL turned in their uniforms and went home for good.

The period following the end of the AAGBL was a time of ambivalence for many of the women. Certainly, they were all glad to have had the opportunity to play major league ball. Many were also appreciative of the opportunities and experiences they would never have had without the AAGBL. And for many, the taste of independence the AAGBL had given them inspired them to goals uncommon for women in those days. Many started their own businesses or went to college. Others pursued professional careers in other fields of athletics, such as golf. Former AAGBL pitcher Joanne Winter, for instance, toured with the LPGA for awhile.

But most of the women were sad and somewhat disillusioned as well. Some of those who had been signed late in the league's history

barely got to play-or didn't get to play at all. The accomplishments of those who had played were quickly forgotten by the public, and soon the whole league was such a distant memory that the women were often not believed when they talked about their major league baseball days. Consequently, many of packed their scrapbooks away and stopped talking about their years as baseball players. Many of them stopped talking, as well, because they were made to feel ashamed of their athletic prowess. In those years when the weak, vulnerable women of the 1950s and 1960s were so highly prized, any admission of strength, agility, intelligence, and independence was often perceived as being tantamount to declaring oneself a freak.

#### TODAY

Luckily for us, as the late 1970s and early '80s ushered in the beginnings of an era of pride in the athleticism of women, the women of the AAGBL began talking again. And in 1982, an AAGBL reunion was held in Chicago. Another was held in September, 1986 in Fort Wayne, Indiana-an event I was privileged to attend. If I had been impressed by what I had read about their youthful feats and accomplishments, I was doubly impressed by these living, breathing women, now in their 50s, 60s, and 70s. Their spirit, energy, and enthusiasm were refreshing, and I watched with rapt attention as these women (in some cases literally!) threw themselves into a fast-paced volleyball game at a picnic-this after they had spent the morning either playing golf or bowling. I stood in awe at being in the presence of heroes and role models I never before knew I had, feeling a little cheated.

The next day, as I watched these women play a four-inning baseball game, I wished (for the first time in my life) that I had been born 20 years earlier so that I could have seen these women continued on page 59

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Poet Yvonne Zipter, a regular columnist for the 'Windy City Times' and one of the founding mothers of 'HOT WIRE,' is currently working on a book about lesbians and softball for Firebrand Books.

## THE WOMAN'S ASPECTARIAN

#### By Paula Walowitz

A lot of people read their daily horoscopes in the newspaper and are occasionally amazed by how accurate they can be. They can hit the nail on the head so clearly and specifically at times because a good horoscope astrologer chooses one significant transit to focus on for each Sun sign. But each zodiac sign contains 30 degrees, and an angle formed by a transiting planet usually has an effect only within a 2-degree orb.

For example, let's say that Mars is in Leo at 26 degrees. If an astrologer was looking at a chart that had the Sun at that same degree and sign, she might predict problems with anger and possibly advise a good physical workout to work off excess energy. If a horoscope astrologer offers advice on the basis of that transit for all Leos, the advice will astound anybody whose Sun is in 24 degrees through 28 degrees Leo, and will not apply at all to any other Leo.

Therefore, even the best horoscope astrologer can be accurate no more than 17 percent of the time (5 degrees out of 30). Add to that the complexity of other factors in a chart that can override the Sun sign, and you've got an even lower accuracy rating. Many newspaper astrologers have probably already figured out that pure fiction can do as well.

Aspectarian astrology is something different. It evaluates the energies available to everyone on a given day, and it is based on aspects that are formed between the planets in the sky on that day. Of course, some folks will be influenced more strongly than others, especially if angles are also being formed to their natal planets. But even people completely unaffected by a current



aspect can notice what people around them are experiencing.

I've chosen a few holidays and festivals to highlight: the Fourth of July, Michigan, NEWMR, the West Coast fest, the Autumnal Equinox, and Samhain (Halloween). Hopefully, this information will give you some hints about how to make the most productive and enjoyable use of planetary energies at these special times.

## Independence Day July 4

The night before the Fourth will be an excellent night to party or travel or talk until the wee small hours (Sun/Mercury conjunction). Self-expression of all kinds is favored and a restless energy will predominate. The Libra moon on Friday and Saturday accentuates partnership and artistic endeavors. With six planets in cardinal signs, there should be powerful influences toward beginning something new. Combined with the fact that seven planets are in water (emotions) and fire signs (will and inspiration) with the moon being in Libra, it might be just the right time to start a new relationship or to liven up an old

#### Michigan Womyn's Music Fest August 12-16

Eight planets out of 10 are in fire signs at the beginning of the festival, which should provide high energy, inspiration, and possibly some tension. However, aside from a little spaciness on Wednesday afternoon and some argumentativeness on Sunday, this festival looks as if the best side of fire energy will be showing itself. The Aries moon forms easy aspects with six different planets on Thursday, which should activate opportunities for just about anything all day.

Late Thursday night, the Mercury/Saturn trine could add a serious tone to activities, but do not let it worry you; since it's a trine, it is unlikely to deteriorate into depression. Just let yourself be serious if you feel like it. The moon enters Taurus on Friday morning, which could ground some of the fiery energy and make it more usable. Friday Moon/Pluto opposition could make for some hurt or jealous feelings, so be especially kind to your girlfriend if she's there.

Saturday and Sunday, the Sun/ Uranus trine should electrify the air with a lively and unpredictable tone. The few hard aspects with the moon will pass quickly, so don't be concerned about some mood swings. Focus on meeting new people, learning new things, and trying out new ways of looking at yourself and others. This energy is just right for a festival.

#### NEWMR, West Coast Fest Labor Day Weekend September 4-7

The good news is there will be lots of down-to-earth, practical energy with four planets in continued on page 49

#### Lesbian soap opera on cable TV

## 'TWO IN TWENTY'

#### By Nancy DeLuca and Debra Granik

"Statistically they say gay people are one in every ten. It's 'Two in Twenty' because 'one in ten' sounds lonely."

—Laurel Chiten 'Two in Twenty' producer

On October 15, 1986, lesbians throughout the Boston suburb of Somerville, Massachusetts gathered around their TVs to witness an important moment in American television history - the airing of the first episode of the lesbian soap opera <u>Two in Twenty</u>. Women from all over the country will have an opportunity this summer to see the completed five-episode soap opera. Plans are being made to show the soap at women's music festivals as well as at public screenings and private house parties. The soap opera, which follows the complex lives of two lesbian households, was created at a community cable station in Somerville. More than 30 women worked over the past two years with producer Laurel Chiten and associate producer Cheryl Qamar to produce Two in Twenty.

The project is generating tremendous excitement for a variety of reasons. The production of lesbian and gay video and film is a crucial part of the expansion of gay culture. We have created our own women's music and theater traditions, but have yet to assert our influence in the powerful broadcast media. Although there is a gay character featured in the sitcom <u>Brothers</u> (on the national cable network Showtime), there is no regular television programming which portrays the lives of lesbians. When made-for-TV films such as My Two Loves are shown, we are presented with onedimensional "lesbian types." Fed up with network programming that either misrepresented or totally

excluded lesbians, the creators of  $\frac{Two\ in\ Twenty}{a\ television\ program}$  decided to develop a television program by lesbians for a lesbian audience.

After exploring a variety of TV forms they decided to try a soap opera. There are a variety of reasons, both pragmatic and artistic, for this decision. Above all, the soap opera is an accessible format. Most viewers are familiar with the formula of stock characters, melodrama, and chintzy sets

pital have been replaced by a cast of characters that we have seen in our own communities. We can immediately recognize the lesbian feminist therapist, the spacey and spiritual tofu-eating tarot card reader, the fledgling "baby dyke," and the lesbian rock star. The soap opera format allows these recognizable characters to be presented without explanation of the characters' pasts, motivations, or backgrounds. When we tune in to a



The "baby dyke" (Sydney Isaac) getting a splash of blue in her hair during a '2 in 20' production weekend. The soap opera presents "real issues."

seen in the daytime soaps. The formula is well-known, and fans of the genre quickly recognize the traditional representations: the conniving women, the manipulative businessmen, the saintly do-gooders and the sleazes. Two in Twenty also uses stereotyped characters, but there is a big difference—the ultra-suave male doctors and cheating husbands of General Hos-

soap, we neither need nor expect deep psychological insights into a character's behavior.

Although the basis of Two in Twenty's characters lies in stereotype, this soap opera has a twist in that the characters grapple with real issues. As the world turns in Two in Twenty, life is not always idyllic—as when a lesbian mother struggles with her teenage daugh-

ter's inability to accept her mom's sexuality. Unlike the majority of soaps where almost everyone is white and wealthy, in Two in Twenty issues of race and class are presented as difficult struggles which we confront with varying degrees of success. Because Two in Twenty is not intended to "educate" straight audiences, the producers of the show did not have to dilute or avoid issues that the general public can't handle. In this soap, characters deal with complicated issues such as child custody and parenting, AIDS, substance abuse, racism, coming out, monogamy/non-monogamy, disability, and bisexuality. Thus, <u>Two in Twenty</u> addresses issues of importance to lesbian communities that are never included in any network television program.

The choice to produce a soap opera is also directly linked to the producers' desire to create a world in which lesbian characters exist in a fully established community. In contrast to mainstream film and television where lesbians and gay men are depicted as living in isolation, denying that visible lesbian and gay communities exist, in Two in Twenty the community is as established as Port Charles is in General Hospital. In the world of Two in Twenty, there are lesbian households, elaborate gay networks, and lesbians are present

everywhere: in political events, union organizing, the PTA, and in many different occupations. In this world, we can enjoy seeing openly gay characters on television without explanation or apology for their lifestyles. In addition, the insular nature of the traditional soap opera—where everyone knows everyone else—especially lends itself to the lesbian community. In our communities, as in the soaps, some of the most private aspects of our lives often become public knowledge.

The series, while utilizing and exploiting aspects of the soap opera format, also ridicules it. This is most evident in the commercials which are imbedded in the show. Some of the commercials satirize the perverse misrepresentation of women in real commercials; others advertise fictitious services and products (like Tuna and Squid Helper) designed with the lesbian in mind. The producers of the commercials experimented with creating new and diverse representations of lesbians and feminists. In these commercials, women have power, clout, and their own credit card companies. In sharp contrast to corporate advertising that depicts women as being consumed by waxing floors, cleaning toilet bowls, dieting, or talking to invisible "janitors in the drum," Two in Twenty's ads show women



Producers Cheryl Qamar and Laurel Chiten: creating a world in which lesbian characters exist in a fully-established community.

fixing cars, making movies, enjoying their bikes and sports—being the active, competent, clever, funny, strong women that we are. One commercial features women bikers, celebrating the tradition of women and motorcycles rather than reducing women bikers to the leather stereotype that was so common in the "Gungirl" films of the 1950s and is still prevalent today.

In addition to providing an opportunity to experiment with creating new images of women on television, the commercials provided a chance to comment on certain aspects of mainstream hetero culture. As political rights and social conditions for gays and become increasingly threatened by the new right, the involved with women Two in Twenty used the commercials to lampoon recent events such as the Supreme Court's peculiarly zealous interest in criminalizing sodomy. Thus, beyond the laughs and entertainment value of the show and its commercials, the creation and distribution of this lesbian show has political significance as well.

Entertainers like Holly Near, Teresa Trull, Barbara Higbie, Alix Dobkin, and Sandra Washington have taped promotional commercials for the show ("Two in Twenty will be right back..."). Plus, original music by Sherry Pedone and Mary Watkins with lyrics by Jill Rose is featured; the music was produced and engineered by Karen Kane.

With the expansion of community access TV, groups who have been systematically excluded from commercial television have the opportunity to produce their own programming, voice their political views, and experiment with their own forms of entertainment. Based on its commitment to giving community members airtime, the accontinued on page 60

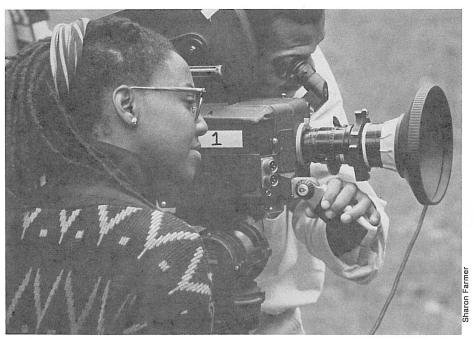
ABOUT THE AUTHORS: Nancy De-Luca is a Boston-based freelance writer who contributes regularly to 'Gay Community News.' Debra Granik produces video and has been involved in the production of '2 in 20.'

All correspondence or questions regarding '2 in 20' can be directed to Debra Granik at the '2 in 20' office: Media Action, 175 Elm St., Somerville, MA 02144. (617) 625-7882.

### Filmmaker, Activist, Writer

## MICHELLE PARKERSON

By Annie Leveritt and Toni L. Armstrong



Director/producer Michelle Parkerson

Michelle Parkerson, a native daughter of Washington, D.C., was 10 years old when she began performing in community theater. She became involved with film and video as a college student while attending Temple University in Philadelphia. Her films, distributed by Women Make Movies, the Black Filmmakers Foundation, and the Museum of Modern Art, include 'But Then, She's Betty Carter' (1980) and 'Gotta Make the Journey: Sweet Honey In The Rock' (1984), both of which have been aired on PBS. In addition to filmmaking, she is a teacher and writer ('Waiting Rooms,' 'Hemlines & Handkerchiefs'). Michelle Parkerson serves as co-chair of the National Coalition of Black Lesbians and Gays, the non-profit advocacy organization.

For information on Michelle Parkerson's films: Eye of the Storm Productions, 1716 Florida Ave. NW #2, Washington, DC 20009. (202) 332-7977.

Michelle Parkerson focuses her work on black women artists. "As a black woman who is interested in the arts politically, as a personal and spiritual process," she says, "I am interested in what other black women artists have done, in what they do. Through their work they give the world a larger sense of a political self, a larger sense of who women are, what we do, and how we do what we do."

She feels she will never have a lack of subject matter. "By focusing on the history and stories of black women alone, I have thousands of films to make," she says. "That is the guide for my work. I usually focus on black women artists who are 'unsung' or unrecognized outside of their own particular audience. But sometimes I cross over; [jazz singer] Betty Carter is an inter-

nationally recognized artist. Sweet Honey is, too, though not to the degree of Tina Turner or Sarah Vaughn."

Parkerson films aspects women's culture other than music, such as the upcoming film on writer Audre Lorde that she has been asked to direct. "We need a visual record of Audre Lorde," she says, "in as much as she has left us a treasury of literary works that we can all use as our Bibles, as catechisms in life." Also, her new film, Stormé: A Life in the Jewel Box, views the interracial Jewel Box drag revue through the eyes of Stormé Delarverie, the company's emcee and only woman. The Jewel Box Revue started in 1939 and performed 1983. Stormé notes the until Jewel Box's challenge to racist segregation: the female impersonation troupe traveled together as an integrated group during the 1940s and '50s, a highly repressive

"There was a pivotal need for me as a black lesbian to document this event in the black gay and lesbian experience," Parkerson said in an Advocate interview. "For many ahead of me the Jewel Box was their first exposure to cross-dressing and homosexuality." Parkerson was eight years old when she overheard her mother telling her aunt about the revue. "My mother was a middle-class, devout Catholic, but she was exclaiming how fantastic were these men who looked just like women," Parkerson recalls. "Then she saw me and shut the door. From that moment my curiosity was piqued. I had to make a film about them."

Stormé explores femininity as well. "When you see how the Jewel Box transformed into art those aspects of women that are

standardized and exploited, then you have a politically fascinating study in how we deal with stereotypes," notes Parkerson. "And it says human existence is not defined as strictly male or female. A tremendous creation grows out of those freed energies."

Parkerson says the younger generation of black lesbians and gay men inspires her. "When I was looking around for support in my own coming out process," she recalls, "there was nothing there—or very little there—in terms of historical base. We have contemporary figures like Audre Lorde and Barbara Smith, of course, who in literary form have begun to tackle the issues and concerns of black gays and lesbians. But nothing in the visual form.

"We've seen in the '80s a rise in terms of films and gay and lesbian history, like <u>Before Stonewall</u> and <u>Silent Pioneers</u>, but nothing that begins to address the history of people of color who are lesbian or gay. I hope that <u>Stormémakes</u> a beginning towards that kind of dialogue."

She hopes that if Stormé is a success it will help open more doors in Hollywood for independent filmmakers. "If the formula works this time," she says, "they will be looking for a few more independent producers. In terms of a new kind of visibility for

"We've got to attack that. I think Storme is a coming out film for me, in a way, even though I've been out politically for some time. Some of the subjects in my films have been lesbian women, but this is the first time I'm going to deal with a subject that is straight on about this."

If raising consciousness is an important goal for Parkerson, so is "demystifying" filmmaking. "If you can do that," she says, "and get people involved in becoming film and video makers, you can separate people from the idea that filmmaking is something that happens on the West Coast with only white males. Getting them to think about the process, about media and how it is involved in our daily lives, how we can use media. You can produce and direct your own film. Of course, it takes a willingness to take those risks and get the money for it," she notes. "You can do that if you're willing to get out there and struggle. You can edit, you can put films together and communicate messages to people."

Financing film projects is a constant struggle. The Corporation for Public Broadcasting has been a major investor in Parkerson's work, especially with Storme and Journey. "In the case of Sweet Honey," Parkerson says, "the other half of that budget was covered

Sweet Honey will be the largest budget film I will have done. The projected budget for the Stormé film is \$84,000, but it's probably going to end up in the \$70,000s. The major investor is again the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, but I've also received grants from the DC Commission on the Arts, which is our local arts agency. The Gay Education Fund for Washington, DC—we just got a grant from the Women's Project."

Looking for money is an ongoing part of Parkerson's life as a businessperson and filmmaker. "I'm still looking for money. If you're not looking for money for what you're doing right now, you are looking for grant applications and money for what you're getting ready to do after this is finally done," she says.

Successful filmmakers concentrate as much on the business aspects of their craft as they do on the artistic considerations. "Filmmaking is a business," Parkerson says, "and I think people need to understand that. So much of the public views only the glamorous edge of what the media is about. It's a business, and you've got to cut it. The cost of making our productions is going up. Roughly it costs about \$2,000 per minute to produce a broadcast quality independent production,

# "If you can get people involved in becoming film and video makers, you can separate people from the idea that filmmaking is something that happens on the West Coast with only white males."

black independent producers, we haven't had the kind of media attention that Spike [She's Gotta Have It] Lee's been getting since, say, Sweet Sweet Back in the early 1970s during the black period when blacks were making independent or studio-funded productions."

Parkerson sees racism in the feminist film community and feels that this needs to be addressed. Also, "black independent film productions suffer a great deal from sexism and homophobia in terms of subject matter," she says.

by WBTA, the local PBS station in Washington. They have a minority grant called Minority Producers Laboratory. They give a \$30,000 grant to a minority producer in the Washington area, usually with a Washington, DC focus for subject matter. I got that grant first for Journey, then I went after the program funding money to get the matching half of the budget, and that fell together." Thus, the Sweet Honey film.

The funding for <u>Stormé</u> has been a little more precarious, according to Parkerson. "I think

and the prices are rising. The latest technology is very expensive to incorporate into a production. But it's very important," she says, "because our audiences—American audiences—are very sophisticated in terms of media. Even if the message is politically right on, if people can't hear it well, or if it's out of focus, you've blown the process. Some filmmakers are still in that world where they think, 'Oh, it's about the issue' and 'We'll get with the guerilla school of film production' and get the message across. But I think that you have to draw people in.

I'm concerned about the production elements," she emphasizes. "I'm concerned that each time I do another production, that the quality of what I do and the technological approach to what I do expands."

In addition to concern for her individual film projects, Parkerson would welcome the development increased cohesion between black women filmmakers. "I'd like to see us Afro-American women coming together in some sort of fashion, above and beyond meeting at conferences and giving phone calls of support to each other," she says. "Coming together in a tangible way, pooling our skills and experiences with some sort of organization and, hopefully, with productions that would bring us together. I really think we need that now," she says. "We need to harness the momentum that's around now. Our numbers are growing, slowly but surely. There are roughly about 20 black women across the country who are filmmakers or videomakers. I mean women who are making third or fourth productions, who stuck through. We need to rely on each other. I know that we're independent producers, but there's a certain amount of interdependence that would really be wonderful for us all. I think that kind of interdependence could also pay in terms of gay and lesbian film producers, women film and video producers, and black film and video producers."

Parkerson believes in interdependence in the National Coalition of Black Lesbians and Gays political work as well. According to



Parkerson, black lesbian coalition membership has increased by 100 percent since 1985. "We want to reflect that our membership is not about separatism," she says, "that the issues that we're concerned about-racism and homophobia in the black community and racism and homophobia in the community at large-have to be addressed. We can't do that as separate entities, as women separated from men. The issues are so large and consuming that it's going to take a long time. You will always see gay men and women working together on these concerns. We're very proud as black people to be gay and les-bian. The fact that we do exist within the larger gay and lesbian community must be seen. Most people just think gays and lesbians are white-they don't see the gays and lesbians of color," she says.

Parkerson would like to see "cross-pollination" among women, gay/lesbian, and black film and video producers. "There's a line of liberation and struggle that unites us all here," she says. "So why not harness that and really take it to heart and make it work for us? Rather than limiting ourselves to this or that category, we could do some cross-pollinating here instead of narrow casting the people that we want in our productions and narrow casting the kinds of people that we want to work with us. That's a political part of what you do - who you work with, who's on your crew."

Parkerson encourages audience members to exert their influence on behalf of independent filmmakers, particularly by contacting PBS and expressing interest in films such as Stormé. "If people persuade their public television stations on the local level to exhibit more works by independents, that's a very important showcase for us. It gets our work out to a larger audience, and it exposes the audience to another range of film and video making," she says. "PBS has been a major venue for those productions in terms of getting massive numbers of people all over the country seeing [the films] for free. That's important to me-that people have access to the productions."

Getting quality films to a maximum number of viewers is



Stormé: The Lady of the Jewel Box

a high priority for Michelle Parkerson. She wants her films to have maximum impact. "I want people to be moved by them," she says. "It's got to move people to do something, to change an attitude, to be angry, to go out and make their own film. If that happens, then I think I've been successful."

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Annie Leveritt is one of the production coordinators for 'HOT WIRE,' in addition to being a photographer, printer, and avid filmgoer.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Toni L. Armstrong reports that she lost the battle against her Type A tendencies throughout the spring, but has high hopes for a more restful summer. She is working on finishing her second masters degree.

# GIVE THE GIFT OF 'HOT WIRE' TODAY

#### **MOVING?**

Please, please, please write to us!
It costs us a lot of money if we mail
HOT WIRE to the wrong address.
Let us know today if you've moved
within the last four months.

## Winter WomynMusic I

By Retts Scauzillo



Lucie Blue Tremblay, Debbie Fier, and Alix Dobkin

When I called Robin Tyler, one of the producers of both the West Coast and Southern Women's Music and Comedy Festivals, and asked her for advice, I told her I wanted to produce a two-day indoor women's music festival in Charlotte, North Carolina. She said it sounded great but warned me: "If you call it a festival, women may take their clothes off." Well, we called it Winter WomynMusic I and nobody disrobed. But everyone had a good time anyway.

Let me backtrack and give a little herstory on how this festival came about. When a Charlotte fundraising group last fall tabled a proposal to hold a women's music festival, Billie Rose kept the idea alive. Craftswomen Billie and her partner Samis Rose are jewelers who attend festivals using the company name Two of a Kind. Samis is also a singer who has performed on many festival showcases. Billie and Samis wanted to bring the women and the music that are so important in their lives to Charlotte. And they

wanted to do it when women who love women's culture have little else to do. Billie found the perfect institutional partner: the Women's Resource Team at UNC-Charlotte. Thus when D.W. King agreed to provide financial assistance in December, Winter WomynMusic I was born.

Hera Productions, the company I am with, has been in existence slightly over a year. Armed with a good sense of the women's music industry, good friends, and partner Pam Martin of Atlanta's Granny May Productions, Hera took on the challenge of producing our first festival. We decided that in addition to the night stage we would also produce a showcase on Saturday afternoon, featuring women mostly from the South who are on the rise in women's music and who need the exposure playing a festival can bring.

The staff of workers for WWM was primarily made up of local women who volunteered their time. The festival was planned so quickly that there was no time for planning exhibition and sales

space, which are traditionally important aspects of women's culture festivals. The producers expect women who make and sell goods for women to be part of subsequent Winter WomynMusic gatherings.

The University of North Carolina's McKnight Hall was the site for the February 27-28, 1987 concerts. The Friday night festivities began with Debbie Fier. Her warmth and good energy put us all at ease. Lucie Blue Tremblay was next, and her love songs and wonderful presence had the Charlotte women wanting more. Finally, Casselberry-DuPree rocked the crowd with reggae music, winning them two encores. Alix Dobkin emceed the night, keeping the audience amused with her funny stories and clever wit.

Saturday morning we were up bright and early as Michele Crone treated us to a film on communities. The performer showcase followed a workshop given to stimulate interest in the October March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights.

Local favorites Holly Harper and Samis Rose brought the crowd to its feet, and Suede was nothing short of spectacular. Hers is a name I'm sure will be appearing more and more in the women's circuit. The showcase ended with JEB's presentation of her wonderful, powerful, beautifully done slide show "Out of Bounds." Talk about lesbian pride—the slides and music brought chills to my spine and tears to my eyes. JEB herself is an incredible woman whose photography has documented the continued on page 58

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Retts Scauzillo founded Hera Productions of Long Island, NY. She broke into the women's festival circuit as a craftswoman and more recently as a stage crew worker.

#### The 7th Annual Women in the Director's Chair

## Women's Film & Video Festival

#### By Annie Leveritt

You say you've worn your copies of <u>Desert Hearts</u> and <u>One Fine Day</u> down to the reel? So where do you go to satisfy that craving for strong, positive images of women? Images made by women?

One place is the annual film and video festival sponsored by Women in the Director's Chair. The Chicago-based group celebrated its Seventh Annual Women's Film and Video Festival this past March.

According to festival coordinator Ellen A. Meyers, "The WIDC festival has gained a reputation among independent women film and video makers as a prestigious showcase for their work." While most festivals use requirements regarding such things as format (film vs. video, 35mm vs. 16mm, ½" vs. 1"), subject and length to subtly discourage women independents, WIDC does active outreach to bring women's work to its audience.

Selection of films and videos to be shown takes place in two ways. One is by contacting artists with works in progress. Since the membership of WIDC is composed of women active in film and video, the festival producers have a good idea of what established film and video makers are currently working on.

The second way is through an open call for projects directed or produced by women. The cutoff date for this is usually early fall.

This year 250 entries were received through solicitation and open call. At this point, the work is viewed by a jury of WIDC members. The 1987 jury spent more than two months viewing the submissions.

Special effort is shown in the festival selections to bring films and videos to Chicago that might not otherwise be seen. At this

year's festival, 43 out of a total 64 selections were Chicago premieres.

The theme for this seventh festival was "Honoring International Women's Day." And this year's selections reflected WIDC's commitment to cross-cultural representation and work by women of color.

Films and videos from Australia, England, Canada, Germany, Northern Ireland, Jamaica, China, El Salvador, Namibia, and India were shown, along with many others representing the diverse experiences of people from the United States.

Among the selections were Made in China by Lisa Hsia, a film about a young woman from the Midwest who travels to China in search of her roots; Invisible Citizens: Japanese Americans by Keiko Tsuno, which explores the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II and its aftereffects; and Stormé: The Lady of the Jewel Box, by Michelle Parkerson [see interview on page 26], a film that documents an interracial female impersonation revue that worked the black theater circuit in the 1940s, '50s, and '60s and which included a male impersonator who served as emcee for the troupe.

The selections also included more light-hearted looks at life in America as well. Seer of Seers by Rhonda Richards takes a look at Groundhog Day in the "weather capital of the world," Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania. And Drive-In Blues by Jan Krawitz brings back waves of memories for anyone who has watched a double feature "in the comfort of their car."

Other festival favorites, as indicated by audience reaction and festival-goers' survey responses, included Change of Heart and For

Love or Money. Canadian Anne Wheeler's Change of Heart is a drama about the disintegration of a loveless marriage and a woman's struggle to regain her sense of self-worth. For Love or Money, produced by Megan Murch, Margot Nash, Margot Oliver, and Jeni Thornley, documents the history of women's work in Australia.

Other favorites included the U.S. premiere of <u>Under the Health Care Service</u> by Marilyn Hyndman, which examines the effects of living in Belfast, the second most deprived region in Western Europe, and talks with women who are organizing to improve conditions. The changing role of nurses as they organize to grapple with the crisis in America's health care system is portrayed in <u>Prescription for Change</u>, directed by Tami

Also shown was Mary Filice's No Place Like Home, a melodrama that explores a day in the life of a rural Midwestern couple when the longings of the wife unexpectedly come true. This film has since been shown at Creteil, a prestigious women's film festival in France which, unlike WIDC's, is financially supported by the government. Only two or three U.S. films are chosen to be shown at Creteil out of a total of 15 to 20.

A clear festival favorite was Cowgirls: Portraits of American Ranch Women by Nancy Kelly. This look at modern day women who ride, rope and tough out the elements is sure to bring a smile to any feminist's lips. Look for this film—you will enjoy it.

This year Women in the Director's Chair paid a special tribute to Women Make Movies, which is celebrating its fifteenth anniversary this year. WMM was a pioneer in women's media. During

the 1970s, WMM helped to produce more than 40 films and videos, and initiated the first distribution network in the United States devoted to women's film and video.

Currently, Women Make Movies maintains the largest collection of feminist films and videotapes in the U.S. Many of the materials screened at the WIDC festival are distributed by WMM.

An important aspect of the festival is the networking that occurs between established and aspiring film and video makers. This seemed especially evident at the panel discussion entitled "Women and Media Into the '90s." Debra Zimmerman, executive director of Women Make Movies, as well as Tami Gold, Sylvia Morales, and Michelle Parkerson were participants on the panel which was



'The Flapper Story' (1985), examines the provocative "New Woman" ideal of the Roaring '20s. Directed by Lauren Lazin.

moderated by WIDC member Mary Filice.

Tami Gold has produced and directed award-winning documentaries including Prescription for Change, which premiered at this festival. Gold teaches documentary and video production at NYU. Sylvia Morales is executive director for the Latino Consortium at KCET in Los Angeles. Morales has produced and directed award-winning and nationally recognized programs. Her narrative film Esperanza premiered at this festi-

val. Michelle Parkerson is a film-maker who has received international attention, and her Stormé: The Lady of the Jewel Box also premiered at the festival. (Because of funding difficulties Parkerson's film was shown in its rough cut version.) Mary Filice is an independent Chicago film-maker who has produced and directed two award-winning narrative films, No Place Like Home and Our Father.

The lively exchange between the panel and 40-some audience members—many of whom are involved in film and video themselves—raised several points.

Michelle Parkerson talked about incorporating our politics into our workplaces. An example of this would be making an effort to have film crews that include people of color, women, lesbians,

rate media, though perhaps at a large cost of time and energy spent in seeking investors. It could also mean a loss of vision as the artists seek to satisfy these investors. On the other hand, will audiences respond to political works that lack polish? This is an important issue with independent films currently costing about \$2,000 per minute to produce. It's a question that individual artists must answer; there seems to be no clear-cut answer.

Tami Gold discussed the sexism that pervades film and video programs in academic settings. Sylvia Morales encouraged writers to work out deals with independent filmmakers who are often in need of scripts. And panel members encouraged women who are just getting started in film and video to seek out women mentors who are



'On Guard' (1984), directed by Susan Lambert and Sarah Gibson. Four lesbians conspire to sabotage UTERO, a reproductive engineering facility.

and gay men. Parkerson also stated the need for women in film and video to do more networking, especially women of color. Starting name and resource banks nationally would be one step in that direction.

Several panel members discussed whether the rising technological costs of producing movies and videos means that political film and video makers should seek larger budgets. Larger budgets would allow artists to compete with the polished look of corpo-

established in the field.

This is perhaps the true importance of the WIDC festival. Not only is it a place to see work by women, but it is a meeting ground for independents to share their work and thoughts with each other. It is a place for aspiring women film and video makers to see what is possible.

continued on page 63

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Annie Leveritt is one of the production coordinators for 'HOT WIRE,' in addition to being a photographer, printer, and avid filmgoer.

## I Love Women Who Laugh

## Comedy in Women's Music & Culture

By Toni L. Armstrong

A decade ago, the comedy trend that is now sweeping the country was beginning to cook. At that time, there were fewer than a dozen comedy clubs in the U.S. Saturday Night Live was just beginning to launch the careers of the Not Ready For Prime Time Players, including Gilda Radner and Jane Curtin (currently of Kate and Allie).

The early days of women's music included a little bit of lesbian comedy—notably Ivy Bottini, Robin Tyler, and the stand-up routines of Maxine Feldman. When Tyler released her comedy LP Always a Bridesmaid, Never a Groom in 1978, there were no "out" gay or lesbian comics earning a living at it.

This spring, however, Tyler booked six comics for the Gay and Lesbian March on Washington to be held next October. She was able to make her selection from almost two dozen "out," political comics. And currently there are 200 full-time mainstream comedy clubs, with more than 800 other venues (hotels, airport lounges, saloons) presenting comedy on a recurring basis.

Comedy as popular entertainment has exploded.

Tyler, who broke ground in the 1970s as half of the mainstream feminist comedy duo Harrison & Tyler, has been producing the West Coast Women's Music and Comedy Festival since 1980. She started the Southern Women's Music and Comedy Festival in 1984. She deliberately called her festivals "music and comedy" because she likes to promote comics.

"I didn't want to be eliminated or lumped into women's music when, in fact, it would be like saying you're white if you're black," she says. "It's a totally different culture." Comics have, over time, become a standard part of almost every women's festival line-up.

Why is comedy so popular?
"It's a release valve like nothing else is," says Tyler. "The country is so pressured today. You

need that kind of release valve."

Trudy Wood, manager for Kate
Clinton, thinks it has to do with
the political climate. "A lot of
it has to do with Reagan," she
says. "Reagan, really, has been
so repressive; this has made comedy come up."

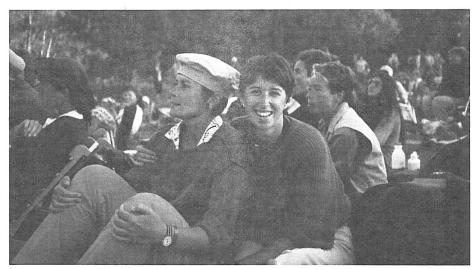
Kate Clinton agrees. "It will be interesting to see with the demise of Reagan if there will continue to be such an increase in comedy," she says, noting that it used to be less accepted to openly make fun of the President. "One of the most telling things was when Doonesbury did the trip inside Reagan's brain. There was no outcry. Before, everyone had protested, and wouldn't print it in their papers. This time it was like, 'Yeah.' That's the first sign of his ending. I heard him do the State of the Union address, and

afterwards a commentator said there was a sense that they were laughing at [Reagan] in the hall. Now that we're free to laugh at him," she says, "it will be interesting to see how the cutting edge of comedy goes."

Wood doubts that comedy will fade as a more moderate, post-Reagan era comes in. "Comedy's in now," she says. "People are used to it and look for it. I think it came in because of Reagan, but I don't think it will die out."

Despite the rise in the general popularity of comedy, most media attention still goes to males. Kate Clinton notes that male comics and comedians generally advance faster than women in the mainstream. "A lot of men are catapulted right into movies, but for women that really isn't there," she says. Look, they don't even know what to do with Whoopie Goldberg. It's horrible mismanagement."

Whoopie Goldberg, nominated for an Oscar for her dramatic performance in the film version of The Color Purple, is extremely



**Trudy Wood** 

political in her material. Her Broadway show, which can be seen on the Whoopie Goldberg: Direct From Broadway video, includes characterizations of a Valley Girl who gives herself an abortion; a male junkie with a Ph.D.; a little black girl who longs to be white; and a disabled woman commenting on her love life. Her monologues delve into the Holocaust, racism, sexism, human values, and stereotypes of many kinds...very political stuff. Yet most audience members know her through movies like Burglar.

What women in the mainstream do has tremendous impact. Lily Tomlin's one-woman show, The Search For Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe, was a hit on Broadway and in Los Angeles. Written by Jane Wagner and now available in book form, the show



**Kate Clinton** 

is expected to tour the country. playing to sold-out rooms.

"It has an enormous effect whenever something happens in the mainstream that helps to encourage people to accept something new," says Trudy Wood.
"Lily pushes barriers, and that
makes more room for everybody that is in the same genre. For instance, a woman doing a onewoman show and selling out night after night-this puts it in people's minds, 'Oh, a woman can do a one-woman show' or 'Oh, a woman can take a one-woman show to Broadway.' Lily was one of the first women to put out comedy records and get away with it. The

thing is, Lily decides what she's going to do and she does it. She doesn't wait around for somebody to say, 'Oh, do you want to do this?' She and Jane have worked long and hard building up her career, and they are finally getting the recognition they deserve. They did it themselves. They certainly have encouraged a lot of women."

She also cites other women who have demonstrated strength and independence. "Goldie Hawn, Bette Midler, and Jane Fonda have started their own production companies. There are maybe four women who have done that. These are all intelligent women who I'm sure have not gotten what they think they deserve in the larger industry, so they've just started their own production companies. It's for the same reasons that we



**Robin Tyler** 

had to start our own record companies, production companies, and magazines."

Kate Clinton points out that many women become writers, having impact through their behind the scenes influence. Television is a medium that reflects our society's infatuation with comedy. Based on average Nielsen ratings since the start of the season in September, 1986, 11 of the toprated 15 shows were comedies. It is important that women's influence be felt in the TV indus-

"They get their message out that way, through writing," says Clinton. "Like Emily Levine, who

is a creative consultant on a number of TV shows. Women are really behind the scenes on a lot of sitcoms, like The Golden Girls and My Sister Sam. Frequently found as creative consultants, they are saying things like, 'No, you can't say that, it's sexist,' or 'No, you can't say that, it's racist.' Where movie roles are not open to them, the women comedians will do that kind of writing, which is encouraging to me."

Robin Tyler, who earned a living for 20 years as an "Establishment comic," says, "Making it in the establishment is not the dream that everybody thinks. There's still no guarantee of the future past your first two shots on Carson or 13 weeks in a sitcom. You're lucky if you even get that far," she says.

"We get a lot of letters to the festivals saying, 'Why aren't the musicians more political? Why aren't they doing only women/les-bian songs? Why are they trying to go back to the mainstream? I think they have to ask the musicians that, but I do think that a lot of musicians-who are probably tired of the poverty of the struggle-are trying to earn a living by being able to cross both the establishment and the womenonly thing.

"I earned far more money doing feminist and lesbian humor in clubs. But what did earn a lot of money was television. [Pat Harrison] and I were offered our own show on ABC, but in the end we turned it down," she says. "As comics, we couldn't go through the watering down of our material. Television is a collective art. It's not even an art-it's a collective commercial. It would be like having Michaelangelo paint for television: 'We want a white stroke here, a pink stroke there'."

The traditional watering-down of material for network TV is one of the reasons Tyler cites for the rise in the success of comedy clubs. "Comedy is one thing you can't put on TV in its entirety," she says. "Maybe on Showtime, or on HBO. But your real material cannot go on television. So in order to see this kind of thing, you have to go to a club."

Clubs are, without a doubt, tremendously on the rise. Clubs now have "chains," such as the three Tommy T's in the East Bay area, Zanie's (Chicago, Nashville, Kalamazoo), Improv's (New York, L.A., San Diego, Dallas, Vegas), and the Funny Bone string of 12 clubs.

Cable's pay channels—primarily HBO, Showtime, and Cinemax—have no network censors, so the comics have virtually free rein in content and language. Comedy concerts were a hit, so comedy shows like Showtime's Brothers and HBO's 1st & Ten and Not Necessarily the News followed. A major breakthrough for women's comedy came when Kate Clinton premiered May 2 on cable TV.

Kate Clinton and Robin Tyler are famous for bringing hard-core political and lesbian issues to the women's music audiences, paving the way for countless aspiring next-generation performers [see Hilary Harris's article, "The Second Wave" in the March 1987 issue of HOT WIRE]. The question arises, is comedy more political than music—in and out of our circuit?

Clinton doesn't think musicians and comics can be compared. "It's like comparing apples and oranges," she says. "It's two different forms. I think there is a chance to mull over problems and put them in a song. There's a condensation and gestation period that goes into a song that doesn't necessarily go into a joke. There's a kind of synthesis that goes into a song, whereas a good one-liner is a real quick analysis that people can take with them. It's the nature of the material. The form of comedy allows you to update it faster. Once you've committed yourself to a lyric, chorus, and a drum machine..." she says. "It's easier to write comedy faster. I can stay more current."

Robin Tyler says, "The reason why the comics are so political is because I think we can't help it. There's no way to hide; comedy is the truth. It's a razor, it's the sharp edge of the truth. As the truth, it's anger made funny. Don't mistake anger for hostility, anger is a healthy emotion. We're willing to take our anger and make it funny so that other people can hear it. That's why when guys do anti-woman jokes, they mean it," she says. "Comedy is based on the truth; there's no

such thing as 'just kidding.' You know, like my album [Just Kidding] suggests."

Tyler claims she is not saying there can't be a truth to music, "but you get the option. You can sing a love song and not necessarily put the woman in it," she says. "But when you're a comic, you can stand up there and, well, we're the brass in the class, we're the bad girls. When they started telling me that we [at the music festivals] had to be all vegetarians-and I knew that 80 percent of the women who came ate meat-I started to talk about it on stage. When they started saying, 'You have to shave your

there are so many lesbian comics out there now." Tyler has done everything she feels she can do to promote them, including booking, recommending, encouraging and keeping them on the road.

The "sane comedian" Linda Moakes, on the other hand, is not so convinced that comics are always so "out there" and political.

"In my view," she says, "politics are deeply connected to vulnerability and honesty. To operate from one's humanness and one's heart is an amazing challenge. While I agree that many musicians 'play it safe' and do not risk, many comedians do also. Just because a comedian speaks the word



Linda Moakes

head' or 'downward mobility is noble and desirable'...when I knew it was just bullshit, I had to talk about it on stage," she says.

"You realize as a comic you'll become controversial within the women's community, but you can't help but call the bullshit. It's easy to call the bullshit around Ronald Reagan, or the Pope, but you turn around and start calling it around the ludicrousness of our own sorority-like ways...the comics are very important," she says.

"The comics of our movement are the truth meters. Not just the truth-sayers, but the meters, the ones that are there to stop the bullshit. I am really happy that

lesbian does not mean that she holds herself or anyone else with love or respect, or that she is being open and vulnerable. Singing peace songs about Honduras, about the Holocaust in Germany, or talking about lesbian rights anywhere places the artist in a very vulnerable place. Speaking in any genre about what we feel and who we are at our core is vulnerability. I appreciate people who are saying how they really feel and are working spiritually. I don't see that in many places," she says. "In a certain way I think a lot of the comics are very clever, but I don't see them being out there with themselves. I sometimes don't see them changing; it they're angry, then they're al-

ways angry."

Moakes agrees with Tyler that evokes truth. "There's comedy something about it," she says. "If it's good, it cuts through barriers and juxtaposes ideas. It jolts people into new consciousness; it's very jarring. Some of it's very painful and hurtful-it can be real racist and bigoted, but even that jolts people around. I think people want to know more. They want to be at a higher consciousness level and be happier and healthy. Comedy can speak to some sort of heartfelt need for people to be whole," she says.

Moakes does not understand why people spend money to watch comedy that is abusive. "There's one type of comedy club performance that to me is a lot like professional wrestling-really abusive and violent," she says. "None of these people are real; they aren't speaking about their experiences. They're lying, they're not vulnerable. You can't believe that anything they're saying is anything they ever did in their lives. They make it up. They abuse the audience, saying 'fuck you' and 'you're assholes.' There is also a more sophisticated level of stand-up comedy more like you see on TV-they're just nicer. But they're not necessarily saying anything important. It's difficult for comedians to say anything that's serious."

Moakes says she thinks the comedians in the women's music circuit are trying to speak to serious issues. "Unfortunately," she says, "I find a lot of them very uninspiring. So what if I hear the same bad jokes, but this time about lesbians? I don't necessarily feel that they're speaking about my life. If they want to tell me how horrible lesbian experiences are, or what assholes lesbians are, that doesn't make me feel like anything's better just because it's lesbians doing it."

Moakes says she understands the desire to see more performers who are political, lesbian and out. "My wish," she concludes, "is to see more of us be 'in' — internal, inner-directed, inwardly divine. From the willingness to know our inner truth, our outer expressions

will make ever greater emotional, artistic, and spiritual contributions to our culture and to the world."

Whatever approach the comics take, they are here to stay as a staple in the diet of the women's music audience. "Women basically have a sense of humor and want to laugh; we're superior human beings and it's as simple as that," says Trudy Wood, laughing. "Women are drawn to laughter and having a good time; we're life-givers. We want us <u>all</u> to have fun."

Thanks to Heather Bishop for the loan of this article title [from her LP I Love Women...Who Laugh].●

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Toni L. Armstrong wishes to thank her mother, Antoinette, for the lifelong gift of laughter.





### ATTENTION MOBILE WOMEN

Our subscribers move to new locations at an incredible rate. If we are not notified in writing of address changes prior to our mailing of the magazines, there is no way we can guarantee delivery.

Magazines are rarely returned to us. If they are, subscribers can get them re-mailed (by us) for a postage & handling fee. Most often, the 'HOT WIRE's are lost forever.

'HOT WIRE' cannot assume responsibility for lost magazines if we were not notified in advance of address corrections.

Thanks for your cooperation!

### 10 years of '50s "rock & role" music

## THE FABULOUS DYKETONES

#### By Char Priolo

The scene is Dyke High in the 1950s. The gals in the band are sportin' '50s drag, each portraying a butch in one set and a femme in the next-roles that lesbians were typically required to choose in that era. The music is great and danceable, the comedy patter is rehearsed and fun, the harmonies are tight. The show, subtitled "The Education of America," is not full of in-jokes intended solely for a gay/lesbian audience. According to one journalist, "The group's routine is so lovingly packaged and so carefully presented that they receive enthusiastic praise from adherents of all the major gender affiliations-and that's entertainment."

As part of the show you can buy a raffle ticket, a chance to become a "dyketone for a night." If chosen in the drawing, you get to sing lead and back-up vocals on one dyketune with your own (butch or femme) costume, and your own Dyketone name. And yes, men are eligible too — to be a "dicktone for a night."

The band, a spin-off of the gay/lesbian Ursa Minor Choir in Portland, Oregon, was started by Naomi Littlebear Morena (of Izquierda fame) and me in 1977. Originally called The Dyketones, the band was renamed The Fabulous Dyketones in 1984. We play eight weeks in Provincetown every summer, and entertained aboard a lesbian cruise ship this summer.

I'm Char Priolo. I play the characters of Chukki and Cha-Cha Linguini as well as Mother Inferior, the nun "from the girls' school down the street." I am proud to be the leader of The Fabulous Dyketones, a title it took me years of changes to get through to be able to wear. In addition to my performing roles, I am the booker, agent, and busi-

ness manager for the band-roles I would happily relinquish to another competent professional.

People have asked me for years how we started, what it has been like being so "out," what we see as our purposes and so forth. I'm happy to share my memory and experiences, though doubtless there are former members who have different recall, emphasize different details. When you tell five people a story, you get five interpretations. So, this is my interpretation of the saga of The Fabulous Dyketones.

Our debut show was on New Years Eve 1977 in the upstairs of an old warehouse. Our eight members knew six songs, and the show was produced by Everywoman's Company, a women's social club born out of A Woman's Place Bookstore. The '50s costuming was done via old closet treasures, one member's collection, and thrift stores.

The time was easily one of the P.C. eras—the late 1970s. We didn't even have to think to know we were a "collective." Most of the band members were poor, none of us knew if the presentation we'd created through fun and laughter (as a release from the daily rigors and tensions of trying to make enough money) would be accepted or vehemently rejected by our own community.

We passed the tube of Brylcream around in the tiny bathroom that was our first "dressing room," the butches slicking back our hair and going through alternately silent then vocal identitycrisis freakouts, each seeing the likeness of a male relative in the mirror, and collectively questioning, "Do you think they'll think we're trying to be guys?" "Do you think they'll get it?" "Are they

going to hate us?" "...forever?"

Then we heard it. Over a microphone: "The Dyketones!" Out we ran. We sang our first song, "At The Hop." They loved us! We could see our friends, hear them saying our real names. The audience members were screaming and swooning just as they would have as (straight) audience members 20 years before. We played another, "Locomotion," and they kept screaming. We kept singing.

Then came the comedy pattermy cue to run back to the bathroom and leave my butch persona (Chukki) for her femme counterpart. Cha-Cha's cameo tune was "My Dyke," a well-received takeoff on the Mary Wells classic "My Guy." Then, more characterizations, more patter, Chukki returned, two more songs, and we were done. They were still loving us. We bowed. They began to look up and scream, pulling on our pants legs. We came back and were cajoled into repeating the entire set. Audience-friends so in the groove they asked for our autographs. Some became self-appointed go-go dancers at the side of the stage and soon were nearly naked.

By the time we had done the set the third time through we were emotionally and physically exhausted. We needed to become our everyday selves again.

But we'd done it. We'd taken something that was creative fun using music and theater from idea to performance. We were excited. We were proud of ourselves. We were nervous. Our friends/community had not only received us but loved us, wanted more. What now?

Several months passed and Portland was chosen as the locale for the second annual Pacific Northwest Women's Music Festival. The Dyketones were remembered and featured as the Saturday night dance band. I remember we followed The Lesbarados from Eugene, Oregon and that the audience packing the Jefferson High School (Dyke High) gym didn't want us to leave.

By then, three of the original eight members were no longer with us, and three new members had joined. We were doing things that no one else had done. This was comedy poking fun at our own lifestyle, at the era we represented, and at folk culture. We created subtitles for each particular constellation of band members singing any given tune, i.e., Little Lyla and The Lemmings sang "I Will Follow You," and Patsy Decline and The Inclines sang "I Fall To Pieces" (The Inclines singing

High and instructed students to "duck and cover" under their desks. (We were actually told as children at the time that this precaution would ensure our safety in the case of atomic attack from Russia). This piece elicited an incredibly high recurrence of audience unrest and negative—as well as positive—feedback. Although we were often asked to delete or change it, we left this routine in the show for a long time.

We re-exposed the blatant hostility and harrassment of lesbians and gay men in describing how our drummer, Frankie Mac Aroni, got caught in a sudden raid at the queer bar and had to reveal that she was wearing at least three articles of feminine clothing, "...So she showed 'em her bra and her two bobby socks...all the



Yarrow Halstead (Penny Loafer/Buck Naked), Brenda Lyons (Bobby Sox/Candy Cane), Abby Shearer (Patty Cakes/Barb Wire), Char Priolo (Chukki/Cha-Cha Linguine), Gloria Cortez (Holly Peño/Louie Luwy).

the entire tune of back-ups listing at a 45° angle until the last note of the song when we fell over on top of each other).

We also targeted in the act some of the not-so-pleasant aspects of the era: blind patriotism, McCarthyism, communist baiting, inequality of opportunity, the false economy. We sang "Get a Job."

We interrupted the ballad "Tears On My Pillow" with a discomforting siren sound to announce an air raid drill at Dyke

while shaking in her boxer shorts."

Although there are usually some professional (their music-making pays their rent) musicians among us, the general musicality of the group has not been our claim to fame. We have become known for the re-creation of an era and, even more, for changing its recipe. The oppression of women is turned around via the gender pronoun switching we do. From the earliest days, we have sung all that sappy and sexist

stuff to ourselves and each other: "You Don't Own Me," "She's So Fine," "Great Breasts of Fire." Eventually, we became the sheroes: "Jenny B. Goode." We transported the audience from now to then and reclaimed the power of the times for ourselves-I can still hear Betty Anglo (Kristan Aspen) and Sally Sweetwater electing to join the F.D.A. (Future Dykes of America) in an earlydays comedy routine, and them opting to wear the school ring of their P.E. teacher over that of the captain of the football team. And no early fan could forget the persona of Mama La Boca, the Italian-speaking president of the P.T.A. who would tirelessly come to the assemblies to lecture us on being careful when out with a date in the back seat of a Chevy and it came time "...when she [the date] pulls out the turkey baster from her pocket."

It was through Mama La Boca that we learned about regional humor. True story: 1983 was the first summer we played P-town (Provincetown, Massachusetts). At this time many dykes I knew of in Seattle, Portland, and San Francisco (and, I'm sure, in other places) had done artificial insemination and were having children. Audience members from the Midwest and East Coast largely did not "get" this part of the show. They didn't seem willing or ready to get it. We left it in anyway, and before long the clerks in the P-town True Value store were perplexed as to why the sudden off-season rush for turkey basters. They couldn't keep them in stock!

There have been more than two dozen women in the band over its 10-year life. I am the only original member left, and as business manager am primarily responsible for hiring musicians and keeping the band going from year to year. Dyketones contract for a one-year commitment, which includes a heavy tour schedule. Although former band members are missed, I think the annual changes serve to increase the band's popularity and freshness.

This year's characters include guitarist Abby Shearer as Patty Cakes and Barb Wire; drummer Brenda Lyons as Bobby Sox and Candy Cane; keyboardist Yarrow

continued on page 63

### **Torn Between Two Audiences**

## **ROBIN FLOWER**

#### By Kate Brandt

"I got rhythm, I got music, I got my girl, who could ask for anything more?"

Well, now, not so fast. What kind of rhythm? What kind of music? And you say you've got your girl?! Well, then you must be in WOMEN'S MUSIC.

Categorization of music may make life easier for record store owners, but labeling a performer can limit the size—and makeup—of her audience. In the case of Robin Flower, one of the best-reviewed "nearly famous" (according to her lapel button) musicians working today, this insistence on labeling has left her stranded between two audiences — each of which, she feels, should complement the other.

"Our natural markets are women's music and folk music...We fit equally, I think, in both of these places," explains Robin. This is a logical conclusion, given Robin's personal and professional background. A daughter of musical parents who recognized and encouraged her ability, Robin learned to play violin and then folk guitar as a girl.

"I was attracted to folk music because it was political, and I watched 'Hootenanny'," she says. "I was very much drawn to the women, but I was always disappointed that there was no woman playing a lead kind of role as an instrumentalist. I always saw myself growing up as being the lead guitar player in a folk music situation."

When Robin left her hometown of Cleveland and went west in the early '70s, she played at the first lesbian conference in Los Angeles, then moved to Oregon where she "fell in love with a banjo player," and developed an interest in bluegrass and old-time music. This led to a gig as back-

up player for Alice Gerrard, Hazel Dickens, and octogenarian Elizabeth Cotten, which she says gave her "a sense of the kind of generations of women playing music."

From playing mandolin and fiddle for Hazel and Alice in Portland, to playing electric guitar for BeBe K'Roche in Berkeley; from her debut album More Than Friends with its cover photo of Robin wearing a labyris to her bluegrass-flavored follow-up LPs on the "folkie" Flying Fish record label—there is an apparent split to Robin Flower's musical personality. This has in turn split rather than doubled her audience:

"Because [women's music] is pigeonholed as lesbian music, the straight world in general is not going to accept it. We have that problem...we are as good as many many many folk bands, instrumentally, you know, we're strong as horses. And we write great songs, we have politics; a lot of times lefties and folkies are intermingled. Why aren't we accepted in the folk music circles as much as we think we should be? Why don't we get that kind of airplay? Why don't we get those kinds of festivals all the time? Well, the fact of the matter is we are four lesbians. And I think that people are nervous about us. People are nervous...unless they know they can make a bundle of money-then, all of a sudden, their nerves go away."

So, Robin Flower is a "women's music" musician, right? Not necessarily.

"Five years ago, our trio was myself, Nancy Vogl, and Barbara Higbie. And we were very well-embraced. Now, five years down the road—or six or seven or however long it's been since I've played with them—we don't have

that women's music following," Robin says. "We are a ton better known in folk music. Why we aren't having a strong women's following is pretty much beyond me. And it's something we're trying hard to figure out, because I personally have a real strong identification—I've been a lesbian forever."

Damned if you do, damned if you don't. Yet to Robin the most troubling aspect of this dichotomy is that these two apparently antithetical audiences have much in common and should find each other—and, in the process, find her as well.

"Sometimes I just think the women's community just doesn't know about it if we play a folk music club," she says. "They don't naturally look to see who's playing at the folk music club, and so who we get are the folkies...we don't get our natural women's music audience...Then, it's exciting when we do go to a town and our audience is the women's music audience. We say, 'All right! Here we are!' It's like having a welcome from our natural community. [But we] need both of them to make it happen for us...it's the perfect coalition. The perfect combination, because folk music people are generally lefty and generally more open to alternate lifestyles because they have been that, as hippies generally. And the women's music community, especially in smaller towns, can use the support; they can both support each other politically and socially in the smaller towns. That is the ideal production environment for us, because we bring a natural community together. And so we kind of serve a purpose, not only in the musical sense of providing a show. We're serving the purpose of gathering a community together that would maybe not naturally gather together, but should for political reasons. And if people can just relax, you know, relax! and appreciate that we're all together, all here to dig this music...We are who we are, too, on stage—we don't change our 'who-we-are'-ness for whatever audience we're playing. Women can really get behind the womanidentified songs; the folkies, now this is not exclusive, but the folkies are generally more ori-

does happen, it's ideal. All the way around—the combination is what we need to make it really happen both artistically and financially."

But can this "ideal" audience coalesce if women are reluctant to attend a co-sexual event?

"Sometimes we'll go to a town and the women there are going to think that they will have a hard time with the men in the audience," Robin says. "And we have almost never had a hard

polities are generally more ori- have almost never had a hard lear I'll the how I'll she ing. som the wor per sud I to ope

Robin Flower (holding mandolin) and her band, the Bleachers.

ented toward the technical abilities of the band, like the picking since a lot of them are pickers. Then some of those cross over—you get the lesbian pickers and the folkie politicos, and when that happens, it's the ideal audience for us," says Robin. "Getting the whole thing to mix is like sometimes pulling teeth. But when it

time from the men in the audience."

In fact, Robin's experience in the folk music milieu has led her to conclude that it's a safe environment for lesbians, and even perhaps a mutually beneficial one for women and men.

"Maybe in some cases women are more open," Robin says, "but

I don't think that's necessarily true. I think it depends on the kind of music that you're playing. When you go to folk music festivals, people are amazingly open, into amazingly showing you things. See, the women's music thing is not just a musical experience-it's a cultural thing, whereas a folk music festival is a folk music festival...I've learned a lot from the people I've played with who have been women. I have learned a lot from men, because I'll take lessons, or I'll listen to them on the record and say, well, how's that guy doing that? And I'll sit down and figure it out," she says.

"I also think times are changing. I think that men, I would say some men, at least know that they ought to be more open to women and more open to women performers. You know, all of a sudden, 'Hey, that girl can play!' I think they've got to be more open."

With the recent release of her fourth album, Babies With Glasses (Flying Fish), Robin Flower may find that her audience is multiplying—and her "labeling" problems along with it. While "Midnight Touch" will keep her solid with women and "Nine Cats from L.A." with the bluegrass/folkie crowd, there may also be "New Wave" fans behind the title song, and country-rockers favoring "I'm Fine Without You," and nuclear freeze activists for "The War Song," and, yes, "The Thing About Ginger" does have a little salsa beat to it...

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Kate Brandt is a born-again San Franciscan who's working on developing the 30-hour day. She thanks Toni Langfield for introducing her to Robin and for "making sure we watched 'Desert Hearts' first!"

### 1987 Index-Directory of Women's Media

Extensive listing of resources, primarily mainstream feminist: radio, TV, video, cable, film, presses/publishers, speakers bureaus, library collections, etc. Extensive international listings, including feminist periodicals.

A steal at \$12. Fully endorsed by 'HOT WIRE.'

Women's Institute for Freedom of the Press 3306 Ross Place NW, Washington, DC 20008.

#### Portrait of a Jazz Great

## MARY LOU WILLIAMS

#### By Shanta Nurullah

When Mary Lou Williams sat at the piano she could trace for you the history of black music in America in three minutes or 30. She lived and played through much of this history, and it was beautiful to hear her relate it. Her performances often began a historical presentation, opening us to the strengths of the music and the strength of Mary Lou Williams in this music. Mary Lou's playing was smooth, exciting, subtle, swinging. Live or on record, hearing her was an experience to be cherished.

More has been written about Mary Lou Williams than any other female instrumentalist in black creative music. This is as it should be, for she wrote more music (hundreds of compositions), arranged for more bands, and was productive for more years than any other woman currently or previously working in the jazz idiom. Mary Lou Williams was a living history of this music, frequently credited with her ability to grow, develop, and change as the music was changing, rather than getting locked into the style of any particular era.

Born in Savannah, Georgia, in May of 1910, Mary Lou started playing the piano when she was three years old. According to an article in the April, 1977 issue of Intermezzo: The Magazine of Carnegie Hall, "She first heard the Spirituals and Ragtime from her mother who played an old fashioned foot-pumped organ. While practicing, her mother used to hold little Mary Lou on her

lap to keep her out of trouble. One day the three-year-old child's fingers beat her mother's to the keyboard and picked out a melody. By the time she was six years old, she was known as 'the little piano girl'." People would often pay her to play for their private parties, so that at a very early age Mary Lou Williams was making reasonably good money for her music.

Self-taught, this child prodigy was said to be professionally competent by the time she was 12. As a teenager she toured in vaudeville with the band of alto saxophonist John Williams, whom she married when she was 16. In the early 1930s, Mary Lou joined her husband in a band led by Andy Kirk that played primarily in Kansas City. She very quickly became one of the most important members of that band-Andy Kirk and the Clouds of Joy. As solo pianist and arranger-composer for approximately nine years, she helped create the sound and style that would earn her and the band quite a reputation. Tenor giant Dexter Gordon, in a February, 1977 issue of Downbeat, recalled that in writing parts for tenor saxophonist Dick Wilson, "She was about the first one I ever heard using the tenor to lead the section.'

Mary Lou Williams' arrangements came to be very much in demand. The bands she arranged for included those of Duke Ellington, Benny Goodman, Tommy Dorsey, Bob Crosby, Earl Hines, Glen Gray, Louis Armstrong, Cab Calloway, and Jimmie Lunceford. In addition to arranging, she was composing, and had written more than 100 songs by the early '40s.

In the 1940s she left the Kirk band and embarked on a career as a soloist and leader of her own

groups. During this period she was married to trumpeter Harold "Shorty" Baker, but was divorced a few years later. In 1945 she had her own radio show in New York City, "The Mary Lou Williams Workshop." During this same year she introduced her 12-part composition, "Zodiac Suite," at a concert in New York's Town Hall. The following year this work was performed by the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, at a time when such orchestras were simply not venturing into black creative forms.

This was also a time when black music was undergoing some very vibrant and significant changes through the innovative energies of musicians such as Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Bud Powell, and Thelonious Monk. Mary Lou Williams was right in the forefront with these giants of bebop. She influenced these greats and was influenced by them. Of her New York home she told me, "All of 'em used to come-this is a famous apartment. This is where Thelonious Monk, Bud Powell, Miles, Dizzy Gillespie, and all the bop era musicians came...Oscar Peterson, when he first came here, used to hang out here. I had a white carpet on the floor and we'd sit around every night. Monk wrote a lot of his things here."

Toward the end of the 1940s, musical activity decreased, and consequently there were fewer concert and club appearances for Mary Lou Williams and other musicians. In 1952, however, she embarked on a very successful tour of several European cities. While in Paris during a very lucrative engagement, she became totally frustrated with the corruption and decadence that she saw throughout the music business. She de-

NOTE: This article originally appeared in the November 1984 'HOT WIRE' (Volume 1, Number 1), which is out of print. Due to popular demand, we have been reprinting selected articles from that volume.

scribes the incident that precipitated her abruptly quitting the music life:

"When I stopped playing, the queen's cousin had given a party for me...I was there, and there was one GI, a black kid. He says, 'You seem to be nervous. Why don't you read the 91st Psalm. My grandmother always told me to read the 91st Psalm.' Well, I read all the Psalms because I've never been able to drink. I had

to resume her career," according to <u>Current Biography</u> (November, 1966). "Convinced that she could give purpose to her life only by helping others, she brought into her small New York City apartment demoralized and down-atthe-heels musicians, provided them with food and shelter, and helped them to find jobs."

During this period, she joined the Roman Catholic Church (her family had been Baptist). She says scene, making numerous appearances and once again building a large following.

After resuming her musical career, she established the Bel Canto Foundation in an effort to aid musicians suffering from alco-

of 1957 she returned to the music

career, she established the Bel Canto Foundation in an effort to aid musicians suffering from alcoholism, drug addiction, and other self-destructive traps. Her goal was to accomplish their recovery by encouraging and helping them to help themselves. This foundation was financed by benefit concerts given by Williams, royalties from her recordings, and funds from sales at the Bel Canto Thrift Shop which she opened in New York City.

Another very important move in the direction of self-help was Williams' creation of her own record company, Mary Records. For years it stood as one of the oldest musician-owned companies. Although she recorded on other labels as well, the Mary Records catalog boasts several fine recordings of hers.

The late 1960s seemed to bring another lull in this veteran musician's career. During this time she devoted a lot of time and energy to helping black children by going out on the streets of Harlem and teaching them about their cultural heritage.

She says that in 1970 Father Peter O'Brien, a young Jesuit priest she had known for a number of years, encouraged her to resume her performances. She recalls him saying, "You better come out and do something about jazz." She told him, "Well, okay, if you go out with me," and says, "What happened is he came in from school, the Jesuit priests never stop going to school. He came in and says, 'Okay, let's go!' We started at The Cookery and in about three months, people began to open up jazz clubs. The musicians were dropping in and everything. Nobody was playing jazz...nor was there anyone on TV."

Mary Lou Williams believed that the Catholic Church and the priests were responsible for keep-

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Shanta Nurullah is a freelance writer and storyteller, and has been a performing musician since 1972. She has been with the group Sojourner, and is currently developing a record label.



a couple of scotches and I got so high, I thought he meant read all the Psalms. From that day on—it was about 1953—I began praying and I dropped everything, stopped and prayed. I cancelled work and everything until I came back to America. And it's a good thing I did that, because now I'm able to see more or less the truth of things. I think I would have been completely lost or in Bellevue crazy because I'm highly sensitive."

When Mary Lou Williams returned to the United States in late 1954, she still "felt no desire

that the denomination of the church was not important at the time. "I felt good there," she said in the December 20, 1977 issue of Newsweek. "I felt at peace, like half the time I was in heaven. I used to go to 6 a.m. Mass, and I made Bud Powell and Harold Baker and Thelonious Monk come with me."

It was a Roman Catholic priest, Father John Crowley of Boston, who convinced Williams that because music was a gift from God, she should return to the music life, offering her music as a prayer. During the summer

ing jazz alive, and that she was one of the few people who could still play it. This appeared to be her singular opinion, for even Peter O'Brien, when asked if he agreed, said that priests "had a lot to do with Mary's career, but there are a lot of other people working, too."

In conjunction with her belief that younger musicians are unable to carry on the jazz tradition, Mary Lou Williams maintained that the evolution of this music stopped a number of years ago. Of the music, she told me, "There are four eras of it, and each era became more modern than the other, than the last era. And when it reached bop, the Dizzy Gillespie era, it stopped...That's the reason why the priest called me to come out and try to save it."

Musical evolution was not the only thing Mary Lou Williams felt ended with the bop era of the 1950s. From the early days of jazz through that time there had been a very close, sharing, supportive network of relationships

among musicians that can now only be found in isolated instances with certain individuals. There is no longer the constant exchange, the love that was so essential to the world of music. Williams felt an absence of love also in the music coming from younger musicians.

It is the musicians' love that should be coming through the music at all times, said Williams. Music has a healing power, an ability to make people feel better and change for the better. She felt that younger musicians especially are not approaching the music from this perspective, thereby contributing to the problems of the world, rather than helping to ease them.

In her efforts to increase the public understanding of jazz, Mary Lou Williams distributed hundreds of copies of two handbills. One was an impassioned appeal for people to save jazz by supporting it themselves and by contacting record stores and radio and television stations to urge their increased support. The other handbill was a tree tracing the history

of jazz. In this diagram and in conversation Williams steadfastly maintained that this music is rooted in the suffering of black people.

Until her death in 1981, Mary Lou Williams was actively involved in music. During her later years she was artist-in-residence at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina, often traveling on weekends to engagements throughout the country. In addition, she performed at music festivals in Europe and made television appearances in the U.S., including a segment on Sesame Street and a 30-minute special with some of her students at Duke, "Christmas Eve With Mary Lou Williams."

A very special honor was awarded this gifted woman when, in early 1978, a street in Kansas City was named after her. Mary Lou Williams attracted a lot of well-deserved attention during several periods of her life. Her personal triumphs and numerous recordings and compositions can serve as a special source of inspiration for women in music.

Grin, giggle and guffaw your way through

### Dykes To Watch Out For

Cartoons by Alison Bechdel



#### Firebrand Books

141 The Commons Ithaca, New York 14850 (607) 272-0000

\$8.20 including shipping Free catalog on request

## KAREN KANE RECORDING ENGINEER/PRODUCER



Dedicated professional with more than 50 album credits to date.
Unbiased advice about recording.

### AVAILABLE FOR STUDIO WORK AND/OR CONSULTATION.

Reasonable, negotiable fees. Will travel to your city.

ALBUM CREDITS INCLUDE: Kay Gardner, Alix Dobkin, Debbie Fier, Betsy Rose, Maxine Feldman, Ruth Pelham, Labrys, Marcia Taylor, Cathy Winter, Catherine D'Amato, Susan Graetz, many others.

KAREN KANE, 396 BROADWAY, SOMERVILLE, MA 02145 (617) 628-6469 or (312) 274-8298

Write or call for more details.

#### The Second Annual

## READERS' CHOICE AWARDS

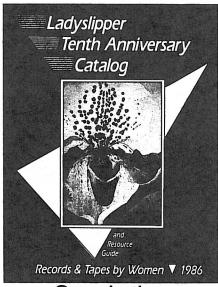
In the November 1986 issue we asked our readers to nominate women who have made outstanding contributions to the women's music and culture network. In the March 1987 issue we printed the names/accomplishments of every nominee readers submitted, asking readers to vote. Plaques were awarded at the AWMAC Music Industry Conference (at the National Women's Music Festival in May) to this year's Reader's Choice Award winners.

#### -Favorites -

Here are the results of the writein "favorites" survey from the March issue. Women are listed in order of most write-in votes received; ties are indicated by a slash (name/name). Comments and additional suggested categories are included.

- Vocalist: Rhiannon, Cris Williamson, Holly Near, Teresa Trull, Sue Fink/Alix Dobkin.
- Bass player: Carrie Barton, Diane Lindsay, Jan Martinelli, Tracy Riley, Toshi Reagon.
- Percussionist: Carolyn Brandy, Edwina Lee Tyler, Barbara Borden, Nydia 'Liberty' Mata, Annette Aguilar.
- Electric guitarist: Tret Fure, Sherry Shute, Jacqueline Stander, June Millington, Terry Garthwaite.
- Acoustic guitarist: Meg Christian, Lucie Blue Tremblay, Nina Gerber, Heather Bishop/Nancy Vogl, Barbara Higbie.
- **Keyboardist:** Adrienne Torf, Mary Watkins/Debbie Fier, Barbara Higbie, Margie Adam, Julie Homi.
- Instrumentalist: Mary Watkins, Kay Gardner, Jean Fineberg, Robin Flower, Debbie Fier.
- Wind instrument player: Kay Gardner, Jean Fineberg, Ellen Seeling, Michelle Isam, Sapphron Obois.
- Comic/comedienne: Kate Clinton, Linda Moakes/Lily Tomlin, Whoopie Goldberg, Robin Tyler, Maxine Feldman.
- Emcee: Kate Clinton, Therese Edell, Sue Fink, Robin Tyler/Maxine Feldman, Alix Dobkin.
- All time favorite performer: Alix Dobkin, Cris Williamson, Meg Christian, Holly Near, Ferron.
- Current song (last two years)—as performed by: "Rosalie"—Teresa Trull, "These Women"—Alix Dobkin/"The Magic of Love"—Lucie Blue Tremblay, "For Those Eyes"—Lucie Blue Tremblay, "Wake Me Up Gently"—Deidre McCalla, "Tight Black Jeans"—Tret Fure.
- All time favorite song—as performed by: "Spirit Healer"—Alive!, "Sweet Woman"—Cris Williamson/"Waterfall"—Cris Williamson, "Leaping (Lesbians)"—Sue Fink, "Testimony"—Ferron, "Sweet Darling Woman"—Diane Lindsay.

### Ladyslipper



#### Organization

LADYSLIPPER for maintaining the most comprehensive catalog of recordings, videos, publications, and other resources by women.

- Current (last two years) album: Lucie Blue Tremblay—Lucie Blue Tremblay, A Step Away—Teresa Trull, These Women/Never Been Better—Alix Dobkin, Don't Doubt It—Deidre McCalla, Harmony-Hunter Davis/A Taste of the Blues—Heather Bishop.
- All time favorite album: The Changer and the Changed—Cris Williamson, Blue Rider—Cris Williamson, Shadows on a Dime—Ferron, Meg & Cris at Carnegie Hall—Meg Christian/Cris Williamson, Face the Music—Meg Christian.
- Album cover: Big Promise—Sue Fink, Rainbow Path—Kay Gardner/Blue Rider—Cris Williamson, Firelight—Deb bie Fier, Deuce—Deuce (Fineberg & Seeling), Lesbian Concentrate—Olivia Records anthology.
- Fiction book: Curious Wine—Katherine Forrest, Wanderground—Sally Gearhart, Patience & Sarah—Isabel Miller, Handmaid's Tale—Margaret Atwood, Native Tongue—Suzette Haden Elgin.

### Alix Dobkin



Individual

ALIX DOBKIN for her continuing commitment to building lesbian communities and for prioritizing lesbian vision and integrity.

- Non-fiction book: Another Mother Tongue—Judy Grahn, This Bridge Called My Back—ed. by Moraga & Anzaldua, Lesbian Nuns—ed. by Curb & Manahan, Our Right to Love—ed. by Ginny Vida, For the Record—Irene Young.
- Periodical: HOT WIRE, Sojourner, Lesbian Connection, Sinister Wisdom, Windy City Times.
- Author: Katherine V. Forrest, Jane Rule, Audre Lorde, Lee Lynch, Pat Parker/Judy Grahn.
- Cartoonist: Alison Bechdel, Nicole Hollander, Quasar, Signe Wilkinson/ Lynda Barry.
- Photographer: JEB (Joan E. Biren), Irene Young, Toni L. Armstrong, Tee Corrine, Susan Wilson.
- Movie: Desert Hearts, Aliens, Personal Best, Lianna/A Question of Silence, JEB's current slide show.
- 'HOT WIRE' article: Patricia Charbonneau interview, Sappho columns, Musicians & Careers, Lovers of Stars, Immigration feature.

continued on page 63

## 'BITCH'

### The Women's Rock Mag With Bite

By Cheryl Cline

A reader writes in to Bitch: "Aesthetics aside, feminist theory aside, Madonna has spawned her unimaginative clones, the Madonna Wanna Bes. Following her through their own lack of imagination and inability to be original, these obnoxious plastic sluts are everywhere, willing to do anything to get attention. Does Twersky approve of that?"

To which Twersky, one of the editors, replies: "Why should I care? What's wrong with wanting attention, and why should I grudge them a desire for it? What's the moral obligation to be original? I prefer originality, and these Wanna Bes bore me, but I don't consider boring me to be a crime. For that matter, I consider 'slut' to be an antique '50s concept derived from the Good Girl/Bad Girl dichotomy, not applicable to any discussion of women as people."

weight has little to do with musical talent, and that by the time a performer achieves as much as Sheila E. has, she should be considered on her own terms.

Bitch is another link forged in the growing chain of what I'll call "women's rock culture." Publications, like Bitch and the excellent book Signed, Sealed, and Delivered (Sue Steward and Sheryl Garratt, South End Press, 1984), are emerging that deal with all of women's experience in rock music, from the stars to the women who work in the record pressing plants. But there has always been, in feminist circles, a distrust of rock music, a tendency to dismiss it as an extension of machismo, as "men's music." Much of the male rock press seems to think of rock as men's music as well. Too many rock critics take to heart the old saying about dancing dogs and women: it's

Wanna Bes, if it's women, and it's rock & roll (or close), then it's worth looking at, listening to, and mulling over.

Bitch wants to see women rock musicians get the recognition due them; to expose sexism in the music and in the industry; to let women just starting out know they have precursors; to explore the links between women, fashion, and rock music; to talk about what it's like to be fans, together and each with her separate scrapbooks; to chronicle the struggles of new bands and to preserve the history of older bands; to provide women with a place to talk about our music-the music we like to play and the music we listen to and love.

That's not so much, is it?

Women's music and rock music sometimes overlap like a Venn diagram in unexpected ways.

### 'Bitch' thinks women musicians are more than dancing dogs, and believes rock music is central enough to women's lives to be taken seriously.

This is what I like about Bitch, and that's why I write for it. Here we have two of the canons of mainstream rock criticism, Unoriginality is a Sin and Women Are Really Just Sluts, neatly wrapped up and sent off to the trashbucket. Don't you get tired of reading how much of a bimbo Madonna is? Don't you get tired of reading about how fat Alison Moyet is? Are you still waiting for Sheila E. to come out of Prince's shadow?

Get a copy of <u>Bitch</u>, which happens to think that "bimbo" is not a musical term, that body

enough that they can do it at all, so one doesn't expect them to do

Bitch thinks women musicians are more than dancing dogs, and believes rock music is central enough to women's lives to be taken seriously. Bitch takes all rock music seriously, from the mixed-gender heavy metal band Blacklace, to mainstream artist Kate Bush, to folksingers Ruth Barrett and Cyntia Smith, to the technopop Sue Fink, to the neopunk-psychedelic Pandoras. From unsigned bands to ultra-super-Madonna to megastars, from

Editor Twersky says, "Our readers often surprise us; the Heavy Metal crew like the Ladyslipper catalogue (which carries no Metal) because every true Runaways fan knows that Lita Ford was inspired by Fanny, and the catalogue has discs by ex-Fanny members.'

As in women's music, there is great diversity among the musicians and audience members in rock. "I don't think you could drag all of our writers into the same concert by any means possible," says Twersky. "Their tastes are so diverse. The various scenes have become polarized, and it has

#### FROM 'BITCH'

"...if you come out in leather, people are gonna say, 'Oh, they're a bunch of dykes!' [laughs] And then you come out in these outfits, and they call you a bunch of sleaze-bags. So either way, you lose! It doesn't matter how you come out, someone's gonna cut you down...So we went sort of towards that image-especially when we toured with Wendy O. Williams... and she would run into the same problems. obviously, because she barely wears anything on stage. We weren't that extreme!... the weird thing about Wendy is, we were never asked, by Joan Jett, Lita Ford, none of those girls would ever tour with us. We had opportunities. They didn't want us along. It was like, 'An all-girl act? Forget it!' Wendy heard the tape, and immediately wanted us. Because she was for women.' Shauna of the Heavy Metal band

"...whether you ask a Motley Crue audience or a NOW convention, 'women in Heavy Metal' was just not supposed to happen. A phenomenon that equally freaks hardcore sexists and hardcore feminists is worth checking out for that alone; women like this are cutting through preconceptions

most people don't even know they have."

Lori Twersky 'Thrash Queen,' issue #4

the Hunted, issue #10

"What on earth is this obsession with role models instead of people? It's too much like, 'All women should live solely to be good examples to their kids.' Well, I am not my sister's role model. I promise I won't be your role model, if you promise you won't be mine."

Lori Twersky "Why BITCH?" issue #1 "A lot of bands, girl bands in particular, come out on the scene and get everyone psyched. These are the bands that always seem to get massive amounts of attention...then all of a sudden you wake up one afternoon and the band no longer exists...Leathur Panteez is one step ahead of the game, though. They are aware of the sad fact that it is female bands that tend to throw in the towel more often. And being 'aware' is half the battle."

Danise, 'Leathur Panteez Raid Your Tupperware Party,' issue #11

"As a vernacular, oral tradition, Spiritual music was uniquely available to black women. The story of Sarah Hannah Sheppard illustrates: To be sold 'down South from relatively mild Tennessee, Sheppard determines to kill herself and her infant daughter rather than endure the forthcoming separation...An old woman, a 'mammy,' reads her intentions, stops her, and prophesies a great future for the daughter. Sheppard is so impressed that she abandons her planned murder/suicide, gives up her daughter Ella and goes South. Out of all this comes two hymns, 'Before I'd Be a Slave, I'd Be in My Grave' and 'Swing Low Sweet Chariot.' Ella Sheppard grows up in Tennessee, becoming the Fisk Singers' pianist. After the Fisk's great tour, Ella scours the South, finds her mother and brings her home to Tennessee. Clearly, a Spiritual could be born and survive in such circumstances where any other expression would be lost or impossible.

Book review of 'Black Gospel' by William B. Abbott IV, issue #7

bothered me. I have to say it's weird for me, being hetero, to have ended up doing what is sort ambassadorial work between lesbians in women's music and in Heavy Metal, who seem mostly unaware of each other's existence. In fact, I had a great conversation with a 22-year-old HM headbanger (and lesbian) who was visiting when I received issues of WIRE. She examined the HOT issues carefully, and it went like this:

She: "But what is women's music?

How come there's no Metal in here? Is it all lesbian or part? Is it all acoustic? How old are they?"

Me: (trying to explain roots in folk music.)

The: "But what is folk music?

How can it be women's music if it doesn't include Joan Jett?

Joan Jett is totally a real woman. And who is Holly

Near? What is separatism?"

Me: (trying to explain separatism.)

She: (horrified) "You mean they never, ever listen to The Who?! You mean if the Rolling Stones asked Holly Near to join, she'd refuse?! What do you mean, you don't know? Is she lesbian?"

Twersky also says, "I don't know why this is so, but many HM lesbians are militantly in favor of 'co-ed' bands. The HM female bands are more likely to be hetero, and the 'co-ed' ones to contain lesbians."

The editors of <u>Bitch</u> are seeking women who are familiar with both women's music and rock to write for <u>Bitch</u>. They are especially interested in a "What Is Women's Music?" piece for the totally ignorant. In correspondence with <u>HOT WIRE</u> editor Toni Armstrong, in which the aforementioned article was being discussed,

#### 1987

#### Women's Music Plus

### Directory of Resources in Women's Music & Culture

Extensive listing specifically compiled for the use of women interested in the women's music and culture industry.

Producers, WILD record distributors, coffeehouses, festivals, bookstores, record labels, performers, writers, organizations, publications, more.

Women's Music Plus Empty Closet Enterprises 1417 W. Thome Chicago, IL 60660

\$5 includes postage & handling

## If someone you love has a drinking or drug problem...So do you!

Help is available thru professional counseling. Evaluations, education, interventions, therapy, relapse prevention.

### Chemical Dependency Counseling

Mary Jane Soller, M.A., CAAC By appointment only: (312) 698-7771 24 hour answering service Insurance accepted Two offices in Chicago area

Twersky wrote, "[Whether or not you want to write the article], I hope you are as entranced as I am by the image of Holly Near joining the Rolling Stones. I like to imagine her and Mick dueting on 'Beast of Burden.' Meanwhile, imagine the puzzled Joan Jett fan in my living room, muttering, '...the most well-known sign language artist in women's music. Huh? SIGN LANGUAGE?' Poor dear...(but imagine a sign language artist at a HM concert!)."

Readers interested in obtaining sample copies of <u>Bitch</u> should send \$2. Subscriptions are \$15/U.S., \$30 foreign (checks made out to San Jose Face). Back issues are also available: \$5 each for issues #1, #2, and #3. Issues #4-15 are \$2 each. Send to: <u>Bitch</u>, c/o San Jose Face, Suite 164, 478 W. Hamilton Ave., Campbell, CA 95008.

## Reclaiming a Past

### A Search into Jewish Identity

With Judy Sloan and Sophie



#### FIRST...A LITTLE HISTORY

Letting go of Sophie, my portrayal of an elderly Jewish grandmother, and knowing people would be viewing her in their homes on their own VCRs (without me!@#!) is a little like letting go of my oldest child. When I gave birth to the character of Sophie, I was 23 years old, and was performing many other roles and styles of theater-comedic, dramatic, and vaudeville. I had not expected or intended to see her become so popular to a general audience, that is, to an audience that is altogether Non-Jewish. In fact, I did not know what my exact intentions were, only that something very deep had been cracked open, that I was questioning most aspects of life, that my intentions were not evil, and that the work with Sophie was both painful and healing at the same time.

In 1983 I began a formal oral history project, interviewing older



"I have been stretched as an actress, a woman, and as a Jew—stretched so far and deep that at times I felt myself literally breaking apart, and I wondered if I would be strong enough to continue to present Sophie."

European Jews, working with rabbis and historians and old age people. It was a project that took me into the hearts of many different people, and a project that took over my life for more than three years.

I first introduced Sophie to a lesbian/feminist audience at a women's music festival in 1981. and have continued to do her in festival settings ever since. Each time I brought Sophie to a festival performance I would do small bits of her in addition to other characters, and would always discover something new. I would encounter a huge range of audience reaction. Sophie requests a strong emotional response. I have been an actress, writer, and Vaudeville artist, combining movement, song, voice, music, and juggling in my

work as a solo performer and in ensemble and partner work. I was part of introducing not only Jewish art, but the theatrical arts to a women's music audience. The work not only embraces an old tradition of Jewish thought and ideas, but also an old theatrical tradition based in revered disciplines.

Having had a lot of time to think about the experiences at women's music festivals, I realized that most of the audience has only seen bits of Sophie, excerpts from longer scripts. So, it has been with great conflict that I cut her up and continue to perform her when I am allotted a short amount of time. Given the choices of either doing a little of Sophie or not doing her at all, I choose to keep her alive at the

festivals. I wish everyone could come see the whole script, but alas! I'd have to be very famous, and have ideal theatrical conditions, so...I do bits of her with great conflict and pain, just like a lot of life in 1987 USA. I also do her with a tremendous amount of joy. It is because many other Jewish women have told me how important it is to see her, and because I have been hired, and because non-Jewish women have supported my work that I continue. It is because HOT WIRE kept asking me to write these thoughts down that I am sending this article. I am lucky to have had all that encouragement.

#### **INSPIRED BY LOVE...AND LOSS**

Sophie has been one way for me to travel through different worlds of thought and feelings. From the oral history project and from the creation and performing of this character, I have been stretched as an actress, a woman, and as a Jew-stretched so far and deep that at times I felt myself literally breaking apart, and I wondered if I would be strong enough to continue to present Sophie. Time is what teaches me to pace myself, and teaches me that I do have the strength to go even further.

During the past two years I argued with myself daily, back and forth: Should I keep doing Sophie, or go back to lighter material? While I was in the middle of the big "indecision" I had lots of time on my hands between performances. Being a creative artist, and being very angry, I won a grant from the Connecticut Commission on the arts and collaborated with several musicians for rock & roll rap tunes for a new character (Rheba), the lead singer of The Beauticians. The work is very far from Sophie, is wild and a lot of fun, although the details of recording are exhausting. I needed that balance, and in some ways all of the new pieces and characters I am writing are the glue that kept me from falling into one of the gaps that Sophie opened up.

Sophie represents that which is most precious and fragile to me, and also that which is horrif-

ic and frightening. Through writing the script and taking oral histories, I slowly-over the course of seven years-uncovered the details of my father's and grandmother's lives, and their deaths. Their deaths had haunted me since I was a little girl. The work forced me to deal with the Holocaust, to look at the old pictures of my father's family, my cousins and aunts and uncles who were killed, murdered by Nazis. It is scary stuff, painful, volatile, and it has taken years to find the words to express feelings that have gone untouched for so long.

### THE HOLOCAUST WHY TALK ABOUT IT NOW?

This is a question that many women have asked me at festivals. At first I was shocked into silence. Several times while performing Sophie at women's festivals, I was confronted by mixed reactions. Two conversations specifically stay clear in my memory.

At one festival, I got off the stage and a couple of hours later was talking to a woman on a work shift. Someone started talking about Sophie, and a woman looked at me and said, "Oh, you're that old lady...I heard that and thought I had woken up in the middle of <u>Jew</u> dream." The tone of her voice was so biting and cutting that I shrank away. I am not proud of that.

Another woman came right out and said, "You Jews, you are all alike, always taking things." And another comment: "Why do you have to talk about the Holocaust? You're supposed to be funny." Needless to say, being ill-equipped to argue at the time (I was younger then), I would find myself bursting into tears. I know Sophie is not for everyone, that no artist's work is for everyone. But to meet anti-Semitism at the women's festivals in that way was a huge disappointment. To ask me (or Sophie) not to talk about the Holocaust is like asking an incest survivor or survivor of child abuse to be silent about experiences that are real for her. I know information takes a long time to sink in, and I also know that I didn't know how to present the information myself. Who can be

sure exactly when you'll know as an artist, what and how to present painful information?

I believe that it is easier to "love" Sophie when she is embracing her lesbian granddaughter, or commenting on humorous details of everyday life; part of why Sophie can embrace her granddaughter is precisely because she has seen so much destruction in her life. Because she knows what it is like to be killed for who you are.

I credit the women in the women's movement who have made room for this discussion. Women who are teachers, who are Jewish, who are black, are writers and thinkers, my friends and the audience who allow these conversations and discussions. To cut out the painful and deep parts of Sophie would be doing a huge disservice to the hard living of many generations that have gone before me, and as an artist I hope to pass on some of the essence of those lives to (hopefully) many generations who are yet to come.

I am fully aware that there are people in the world who hate Sophie as much as I love her, and some people who love her as deeply as I do. Maybe even more. Out of the fog of my own confusion about what I was doing and why, as things have become more clear in my own mind and heart, I am strengthened by all my experiences, and strengthened in my choice to continue performing not Sophie but other Jewish characters as well, while still in a theatrical world of non-Jewish life. I am also finding it easier to portray non-Jewish characters, and to make them believable as I understand what is universal to us all.

This is all part of understanding how the pieces of the puzzle that go together to make the pic-

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Judy Sloan has been acting/performing for the past 15 years. She has a one-woman show, 'Responding to Chaos'; is recording songs for her band The Beauticians; and is writing a new play called 'When the Gear Shift Breaks...Stop Clutching.' She is also looking for a booking manager.

For information on the documentary video: The Sophie Project, P.O. Box 1867, New Haven, CT 06508. (203) 782-2587.

ture that is Sophie on stage come together. Making a documentary video about the work gave me this opportunity.

#### CHOICES FOR THE FUTURE

It is important for me as a Jewish writer and actress not to be blinded by the Holocaust, or to be blind to it. Nor can I be blind to the limitations of my own personal life, or to the capacity to unfold something new. After a long time of considering laying Sophie to rest, I decided (with the help of a good therapist) that it was a better choice to lay my personal losses to rest, and chose instead to rewrite Sophie, to let the art live.

Once again, Sophie changed before my eyes. All of the questioning, the conflicts, the criticisms, the good reviews and praise have sunk in (sometimes like a lead weight). After digesting a great deal of information in the past few years, I have written several new scripts and characters who go beyond Sophie, and who take me to yet another place.

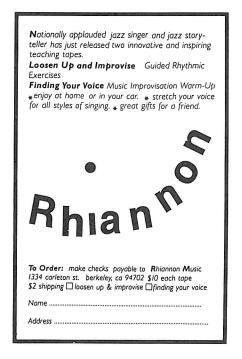
I spent a lot of time in Israel, performing in Jerusalem and talking with people. I have recently written two new pieces inspired by those experiences. I am continuing to write new characters who live with the Holocaust with-

in a contemporary society. Sophie has created the process; I am slower about the pace of the work, allowing these new characters to live inside me before giving birth. I am continuing to take oral histories, and have kept the project alive. The umbrella for the work is called, quite simply, The Sophie Project.

#### SO...NU...WHAT NEXT?

This is a critical time for Jews, with the immensely complex situation in the Mid-East escalating, with Jews in the U.S. learning to be critical of the Israeli government and aware of the necessity for a Jewish homeland. The generation of people who survived the Holocaust is beginning to die out, and conservatism (including the Nazi party and the Ku Klux Klan) is on the rise. I write this in an effort to keep Sophie alive in the pages of the women's cultural community, to encourage other performers to write and talk about their experiences as Jews (as Debbie Fier, Alix Dobkin, Maxine Feldman, and Robin Tyler do), and to express my gratitude for the support from women who have written me letters and hired me in venues appropriate for my work.

As I write these new scripts and embrace my Jewish soul continued on page 63



## Freelance Video Gossany in Performed Arts

#### presents

#### Cool Gleam

A dynamic new music video featuring the music and dance of the Emerald Art Ensemble, with a romantic story line between women. Just the thing for your video library of feminist and lesbian culture.

Written, performed, and produced by women in Northern California.

available at Women's Music Festivals this summer or...

Send \$22.95 plus \$1.50 shipping to:

Rixanne Wehren Star Route Redway, CA 95560

1987 all rights reserved. 5 minutes.

#### **PERIODICALS**

of interest to our readers

• Bitch: The Women's Rock Mag With Bite. c/o San Jose Face #164, 478 W. Hamilton, Campbell, CA 95008. Opposing, clashing viewpoints aired, ranging from heavy metal headbangers to New Age Wiccans.

• Broadside. PO Box 1464, New York, NY 10023. 'Broadside' publishes current songs/poems/articles on political/topical ideas. Monthly; \$20/year,

\$2/sample.

• Common Lives/Lesbian Lives. PO Box 1533, Iowa City, IA 52244. We print the experiences and ideas of common lesbians. Quarterly; \$12/year, \$4/sample.

• Golden Threads. PO Box 2416, Quincy, MA 02169. A contact quarterly for lesbians over 50. Nationwide, confidential, reliable. Quarterly; \$5/sample.

• HOT WIRE: The Journal of Women's Music & Culture. 1417 Thome, Chicago, IL.60660. Each 64-page issue includes stereo recording, festival coverage, interviews, articles, more. 3x/year; \$14/year, \$5/sample.

• Lesbian Contradiction. 584 Castro Street #263, San Francisco, CA 94114. We print the works of lesbians who have been kept silent and invisible. Quarterly; \$12/year, \$4/sample.

• The Lesbian News. c/o Pat Sampson, 1025 Coronado, Long Beach, CA 90804. A digest of information and opinion from Southern California and beyond. Monthly; \$12/year.

• Of A Like Mind. PO Box 6021, Madison, WI 53716. A leading international network and newspaper of women's spirituality. Quarterly; sliding scale \$13-\$33/year, \$3/sample.

• SAGE: A Scholarly Journal on Black Women. PO Box 42741, Atlanta, GA 30311. Interdisciplinary forum for discussion of critical issues facing black women. Biannual; \$5/sample.

• Sagewoman Magazine. PO Box 1478, Hillsboro, OR 97123. Feminist, grassroots, women's spirituality; 40 pages, art & articles. Quarterly;

\$13/year, \$4.50/sample.

• Southern Feminist. PO Box 1846, Athens, GA 30603. Newspaper covering women's rights activities in 12 Southern states. Quarterly; \$1/sample.

• TRIVIA: A Journal of Ideas. PO Box 606, North Amherst, MA 01059. Radical feminist visionary writing. Fall 1986: Sonia Johnson, Sarah Hoagland, Anna Lee, more. 3x/year; \$12/year, \$5/sample.

• The Wishing Well. PO Box G, Santee, CA 92071. Established 1974. Women who love women write/meet. Confidential, supportive. Quarterly; \$5/

sample.

#### **HOROSCOPE** from page 23

Virgo, and the festivals will be building all weekend to Labor Day Monday's Full Moon, which should add significance and intensity to everything. There are also favorable lunar aspects all day Saturday and Sunday.

The bad news is that there are quite a few hard aspects as well, two of them involving planets that don't move as quickly as the moon, so their effects may linger for a few days. Things to watch out for are: being over-critical of yourself or your lover on Friday and Saturday (Venus/Saturn square) and feeling torn between duty to others and your own needs on Sunday and Monday (Sun/Saturn square). If you feel the need to be by yourself, go ahead. And try not to take on too much responsibility because you may find yourself resenting it.

One additional tip: in any monthly cycle, what is begun at the New Moon manifests itself at the Full Moon, so take special care with your actions (and your motives) from August 24 through Labor Day, and your holiday is likely to go more smoothly.

#### Autumnal Equinox September 23

Fall begins just following a New Moon period with four personal planets (Sun, Moon, Mercury and Venus) in Libra, the balanceseeking sign. Last night's favorable aspect between Mercury and Uranus will still be having an effect, mostly as a boost to communication and new ways of understanding yourself and others. Stay flexible today, since rigidity is the only way to negate the positive influence of this aspect. It's a good time to look closely at the way you're handling relationships; making changes in that area should be easier and more productive if you begin them on the 22nd or 23rd.

continued on page 58

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Paula Walowitz is a singer, songwriter, astrologer, computer programmer, and all-around nice girl. She writes a weekly astrology column in Chicago's 'Windy City Times.'

The New England Women's Musical Retreat is back!

### NEWMR VII

**Labor Day Weekend, Sept. 4 - 7** W. Alton Jones Campus, URI, W. Greenwich, R.I.



ampus, om, w. Greenwich, m.i.

Performers - Night Stage

DEUCE ● Deidre McCalla ● Linda Moakes ● Edwina Lee Tyler and a Piece of the World

Ronnie Gilbert ● Linda Tillery & Band ● Riannon ● Lucie Blue Tremblay

Kit McClure Big Band

MC's: Linda Tillery, Alix Dobkin, Linda Moakes, Yaniya Pearson (Opening & Closing Ceremonies).

#### Performers - Day Stage

Bougainvillea • Catherine D'Amato • Infinite Womyn's Percussion Ensemble Marathon • Molly Ruggles • Sapphire • Linda Sheets Adrienne Waddy with Clarise Thompson • Aiku Williams

MC's: Linda Moakes, Yaniya Pearson.

Workshops • Women-Made Crafts • Childcare for all girls and boys under 10
Women with Disabilities Welcome • Concerts Interpreted for Deaf Women
Taped and Large Print Programs

Price includes: concerts, workshops, parking, veg. meals and camping

#### TICKET ORDER FORM NO PERSONAL CHECKS, PLEASE

Bank Checks or Money Orders Payable to **NEWMR**. For ticket return, please enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Orders postmarked after Aug. 20 will be held at the gate.

One registration form per woman, please.

Mail orders to: NEWMR, P.O. Box 217, New Haven, CT 06513

	(200) 020 - 1200	
Please Print:		
Name		· •
Address		1
	.3	Zip
TICKET PRICES (Advance)	WILLING TO HELP	
Please check one:	I can loan the Festival a:	I have skills in:
□\$130 Please choose a	van with lift	☐ truck driving
\$120 ticket price to	☐ truck or van	☐ health care
□ \$105 match your income.	☐ CB radio	disabled assistance
Please send additional information:	I am willing to:	auto mechanics
women of color	pass out brochures	☐ lifeguard (WSI cert.)
health care	drive shuttle	night shift security
child care	*	child care
Please r	register in advance for child care:	
SAME OF THE RESERVE OF THE PERSON OF THE PER	girl(s), ages	
	boy(s), ages	

ABSOLUTELY NO PETS (EXCEPT EYE / EAR GUIDES)

### MULLING IT OVER

#### "Music and Life"

#### By Cris Williamson with Cindy Anderson

In 1973, Cris Williamson helped to form Olivia Records. Cris's first Olivia release, 'The Changer and the Changed,' is a classic, having sold well over 175,000 copies. The tenth anniversary of Olivia Records was celebrated at Carnegie Hall in November, 1982 with two SRO concerts headlined by Cris and Meg Christian. Born in the hills of South Dakota, the powerful mysticism of the Sioux universe permeated Cris's early childhood. The daughter of a forest ranger. much of her childhood was spent in the wilderness of Wyoming and Colorado, where she gained a reverence for life and nature. Cris has released 10 albums, six with Olivia.

I always let my music speak for itself. I've never really defined my music; I like to stress the interconnectedness between ourselves and the environment and all creatures. I tend to write in the abstract.

Our audience is growing. The world is coming out to my concerts: men, women, children, cats, dogs, the works. I'm very grateful to women for their support and help with my self-definition, but I don't want just to speak to women. I'm interested in speaking to the whole world.

There are women who say that the electric stuff isn't women's music—but why not? I think that Cyndi Lauper is women's music. I love Ricki Lee Jones. I love Joni Mitchell, who continues to grow and grow. I love Judy Collins—always will...and Laura Nyro, who still remains an amazing artist to me. I like Eurythmics; I'm always open to listening to new artists.

We used to say that women's music was certainly a music of

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



Cris Williamson with Tret Fure: "A lot of women like to keep it in their own rooms—but my way of thinking is that it's one room of many in a house that we call this earth."

consciousness and, I think, encouraging people to be well and holistic in their approach, to stand up for themselves and to cry out against injustice. I think Jackson Browne does that music, as well as Peter Gabriel, U2, and certainly Bob Marley. Lots of music seems to come from the underground but absolutely talks about overground issues.

The easy generalization would be to say that it comes from the heart, and maybe we can say that. But I've heard a lot of men's music that moved me equally, and some so-called women's music that didn't move me at all—that seemed to want to partake of this but didn't do anything for me, did not reach down and touch me.

As far as I'm concerned, music is not really gender oriented. We can say that some music deals specifically with women's issues

like birth control. Loretta Lynn did a great song a number of years ago called "The Pill" that was remarkable for country music. A lot of women get airplay in country music, and some of that is still based on traditional values. But at least it isn't always "kick me, beat me, I'll stick by my man."

I think about what it is that makes women strong; where do we see them? We see them at the funerals. Who cleans up? Who's there taking care? Women live longer. They have some kind of endurance that is remarkable, and yet they're just as fragile as probably men are-as we all are as humans. I am particularly interested in the journals of women who went westward. I found my mother's strength in the fact that she survived the tensions of that hard life in the backwoods, the loneliness, not being trained for that kind of life. But then who is? Who is trained well for life?

For years women were not thought to be of any marketable value. Since the men had all the money and would dish out a little to the women to go buy groceries and things—women certainly didn't get any to invest in their arts. Historically women in the arts had to make the choice to not have children because they couldn't get published.

One thing we've helped do is open that up for women a little more, so that one thing wouldn't necessarily have to cancel the other out. Perhaps we could do both; that there would be a place in society for an artist who would also want to be a mother, who wanted to have a husband, to have a life that's traditional in that way. As far as I'm concerned, it's everybody's own business how they want to live their lives; it's im-

portant that they do, and that they feel things and use their full capacities.

The women of the world should stand up: all the bank tellers of the world (who are mostly women); the people behind the cash registers; the people who are processing everybody through; all the nurses, and mothers. When my mother went on strike one day, that set our household to a standstill. The women should say, "We are not going to send our children to war," or "We don't want that nuke plant right by us, no thank you." Women's views must be known.

It's not that they are special views, it's just that women make them and they have that kind of strength. It endures because they hold the keys to the future. That is what the women's movement was about and is about in a continuing way: to remind women of their power, their natural, given power on this earth.

My music is already a flame. What I do is reflect what is already there. Perhaps like a mirror; you would see the candle flame that is burning — and will go on burning for a long time. The world is connected, each thing to another, and that fact is very important. One drop of poison in the water connects to all of our lives. It's so difficult to do anything because you get so depressed about it.

For me to be a happy human being on the earth means that I want that for everybody. But I do not want to dictate that for everybody else—I just think they should struggle for it. It's a worthwhile struggle to be happy on this earth. It's the hardest thing in the world, a minute-to-minute struggle, but I think it's incredibly important.

When I record, I'm performing—I'm just capturing a performance. For a live audience, I know I've got to do it perfectly, as perfectly as I can, on time, right then. But I still think that way when I record. I don't go in with the illusion, "Well, I can fix this later." If I can't do it right the first time I get very frustrated. If it takes me four times to sing a song correctly, then it's probably not going to happen that day. So, I'll let it go. I'll just give it up for the day

and go on to something else.

A lot of the women like to keep it in their own rooms—it's nice to have a room of your own—but my way of thinking is that it's a room of many in a house that we call this earth. The rooms are all connected. You can have a door, and you can close it. But the rooms are all connected, and we must be able to go out into the house, freely, without fear of who we are.

It's like singing to people who already know — like singing peace songs to peaceful people. On the other hand, the other night a woman who does stress workshops for the people who work at TRW [makers of missile components and military equipment] told me that she used "Song of the Soul" there: "I just want you to know that your music is getting to where it belongs." I just lit up inside; that is where it needs to go.

My habits for writing are get-

My habits for writing are getting better—I'm more concise. I'm trying to deliver a feeling, to work on the poetry of it. I love doing the research on the subjects; I could easily have been a researcher in my life. And the older I get, the easier I am with myself; I'm more patient with those dry periods.

If I were to pass a message on to any performer, it would be: relax. You have to practice relaxing from the time you get up to the time you go to bed, so that singing is just another thing that you do—like eating, sleeping, and breathing.

Competition is tough for women. In sports, we have better training—we know where to put it; there's a place for it. But in the business world, where we never had money to begin with, that's where we're seeing a lot of struggles around money and competition. I guess I'm competitive in a certain way, but mostly I'm not. I don't do well with it.

I'm tighter than ever with my company. The kind of commitment I wanted to make with Olivia Records was the kind of commitment they let me make. We're in this for life. We still don't have a lot of money, but we work on it together and I know the value of each album we put out. I don't waste any words—I try to make each song count, because I know

the value of it in dollars and cents as well as emotion.

Olivia has done so much good by starting so much, like a little seed carrier. So many things happened as a result of Olivia's work—there were offshoots of this plant, this ."olive tree," bearing peace into the world. I'm just a part of that—a major part. And I feel that weight in a good way, as I hope that everyone would in whatever job they have.

I'm still involved in peace. It will be my lifelong work; I continue to believe in it. There can be a way...but the way I see it happening is not the way this generation, most of them, sees.

I talk to the babies, the ones that are in grade school, who are worried about nuclear war, who are studying it in class. You can't worry about the ones who aren't worried. You can't engender worry, and I don't want to. Yet we must all be concerned or this world will not be saved. It's such a beautiful place. I would like to live here, in this "strange paradise"—I don't want to live anywhere else.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Cindy Anderson co-edits the Chicago Women in Publishing newsletter and writes for independent publications of social concern.



### RE:INKING

### Writing the 'Kwan Yin Book of Changes'

By Diane Stein

I am 38 years old and have been using the I Ching since 1965 when my sister wanted a copy for her birthday. I bought it for her, a James Legge edition, but she already had one by then so I was stuck with it. What does anyone do with a book but read it, and my first encounter with the I Ching was to read it from cover to cover. It was about a year before I threw my first hexagram. This was the hippie '60s, when flower power, peace, folk music, and marijuana were strong culture, when women wore floorlength flowered dresses and men with long hair were avoiding the draft. Some of these women watching the macho peace movement were the founders of the Second Wave of feminism.

My first reaction to the I Ching was an admiration for its poetry and its inscrutability. I had obtained my first tarot deck the same year, but not yet opened to my own subconscious, and could not relate to it or use it. Being a poet and word-oriented, I could relate to the written I Ching. Almost. In order to make it sensible for a not-yet feminist or consciously lesbian high school student, there had to be some changes, and I made them in my head.

First of all, I was reading to find out about my own life, not about some Superior Man's. I was looking for outcomes that never had anything to do with pleasing the Emperor, but often to do with the "friendship" of whatever woman I was interested in at the moment. "How to succeed at winning her favor," "When will we

RE:INKING articles deal with women's writing as a cultural phenomenon, including individual writers and women's publishing ventures.



"I wasn't sure a divination system could be tampered with, but then look what Vicki Noble had done with *Motherpeace*."

meet again?" and "How should I behave to make her notice me?" were the profound sorts of things I asked. I changed the pronouns as a matter of course.

New Age books were popular and available in my high school and college years. The Tolkien trilogy took freshman year by storm, and books like Doreen Valiente's ABC of Witchcraft and Charles Leland's Aradia, Queen Leland's Aradia, Queen of the Witches were sold in college bookstores. I read them and half of it fit, but much was missing, and I found myself continually changing the pronouns. I liked the idea of goddess, but so much of straight craft is involved with the male aspect, not to mention the male ego. Though I didn't know about feminism until late college, the reactions were instinctive. Women had been my love interests since kindergarten, but I did not come out as a lesbian until 1972. Folksinger, hippie, peace activist, poet, I called myself a witch, not really knowing what

that meant but not entirely joking about it. The Furies' "WITCH Manifesto" in 1968 made sense.

Time passed. From college I went to graduate school and from graduate school into 15 years of being a secretary. I was a feminist, considered myself an atheist, and the intermittent references to goddess and witches in lesbian and women's literature continued to interest me. I wrote and published women's lesbian poetry in whatever small magazines would print it, turning increasingly to radical lesbian (often separatist) views. I read Z. Budapest's Holy Book of Women's Mysteries and Mary Daly's Gyn/Ecology, but read them as literature, not having yet made the connection of goddess and wicca as a women's religion. By the late '70s, the references to wicca and goddess, to the idea of a women's religion, a then lesbian separatist religion, became more frequent and enticing in women's publications and literature.

I read and wrote for Woman-Spirit and Harvest and began to find books. By 1980 or so I was consciously aware of the connections between feminism, lesbianism and goddess; I understood it as religion, but the practice still eluded me. I called myself a lesbian witch. When the time was right, three books brought me into women's spirituality: Starhawk's Spiral Dance, Margot Adler's Drawing Down the Moon, and Vicki Noble's Motherpeace. They started a spurt of intense poetry that brought me further into connection with women's wiccan publications, and thereby into reading more about wicca. I was reading Motherpeace when the then publisher of Harvest, a lesbian wiccan magazine from Boston, came to visit me.

With Brenda I experienced my first guided meditation and first simple ritual, as well as my first healing. I knew I could do it, too, and I connected being psychic for the first time with women's spirituality and the goddess craft. Among the weekend's show and tell, I brought out my I Ching as an alternative tarot and was frustrated that my friend didn't see in it what I did.

"You have to change the pronouns," I told her, "and make the philosophy and goals in it fit." We did readings and line by line I translated the masculine English of the Bollingen Edition I Ching into a reading that made sense and was relevant to women.

She wasn't impressed. "It's too much trouble doing all that," she said. I had been doing it automatically, evolving it that way for 20 years. I didn't realize how far from traditional I Ching I was getting.

"Someone should write a women's version," I told her. "I don't know why they haven't by now. Have you seen the Motherpeace book?"

Brenda's reaction was, "Well, you're a writer. Why don't you do it?"

I thought about it. I wasn't sure a divination system could be tampered with, but then look what Vicki Noble had done with Motherpeace. I wasn't sure I was capable of doing it, either. But I was also losing a job and just couldn't wait for the time to start another book. My books in the past had been poetry, short fiction, novels, politics. It was an idea and a project. When I was out of work and had free time and peace and quiet I decided to try it. I had \$1,800 in savings and it was okay to take three months before job hunting to write a women's I Ching. I had lost the last office job because of computers, which put me into migraine cycles and eventually passing out spells and seizures. I was ready for a rest. I thought I could find an uncomputerized office again fairly quickly, grim thought, but wanted something for myself first. So I started Kwan Yin.

Initially, The Kwan Yin Book of Changes was called The Mothers' I Ching. I worked on it six to 10 hours a day, seven days a week to finish it in three months, and thought it would take two drafts. In the beginning I only changed the he's to she's, but I quickly found out that that wasn't enough. The value system didn't fit. The Chinese calendar fit the wiccan Wheel of the Year I knew from Starhawk, and the Hopi Road of Life matched both (from Frank Waters' Book of The Hopi, which I had read in the '60s and treasured).

When I finished half of the first draft I went to my first Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, came to terms with my own disabilities of spatial dyslexia and spinal curvature, and found at DART [the differently abled women's resource and camping area] the Matriarchy. Of course I had to go home and rewrite my book.

At the same time, I joined a group of other beginners in forming a women's coven. We worked for 13 months at putting some women's spirituality and goddess into practice, mostly from Starhawk's Spiral Dance and Dreaming the Dark. The theories came alive. I cast my first circle and became the woman in the group to cast all the circles, since no one else wanted to, and forced a reluctant group into ecstatic rituals. Among the women of the coven were the roles of the Matriarchy: the woman who understood group process (the Mother), the woman who was wonderful at leading meditations (the Priestess), the "owl of the coven" scholar who knew the mythology (the Wisewoman), and the woman who wanted to learn everything all at once from all of them (the Daughter, myself). We were all sisters, leading the group equally, and some of us (being strong, active, and loving women) were lovers. Of course that meant another manuscript draft.

The she pronouns came in the fourth draft, when it occurred to me that a women's world should be all female, even down to "it." Changing the it's to she's meant virtually a full rewriting of the text, since simply substituting pronouns resulted in mass confusion. I had been denied Unemployment Compensation, since it was judged that refusing to use computers to avoid passing out was a refusal to work. I was taking

in typing by the page, eating on foodstamps, and sending out resumes that never resulted in an interview. I worked at The Mothers' I Ching eight or so hours a day and was happy as a clam.

I didn't need anything else—I just needed to write. I took odd jobs: bookkeeping-from-home jobs, a factory for eight weeks, and finally I began waitressing at night.

The fifth and final draft finished the book in March, 1984 after 10 months. I thought it was done, but went back a few weeks later to do appendix material and tarot correspondences. Women from my almost-ended coven helped me learn enough Motherpeace tarot to do that.

Reading a how-to-do-it book, I drew up a proposal and sent it to several publishers, some mainstream and some women's. A friend who is a psychic said, "Send one to Llewellyn; I think they are going to publish it." I didn't at that time know who Llewellyn was, but they were the ones who wanted the manuscript. I very gingerly told Carl Weschcke that this was a "woman-identified book" and that it had to stay that way. After more correspondence, I sent the manuscript.

Carl's reaction to the book was favorable from the first, supportive in ways I never expected any man to be about a women's I Ching. He asked that I write a preface for the retitled Kwan Yin Book of Changes, explaining why the book is female only and doing that without alienating men from buying it. The idea seemed totally impossible. His alternative suggestion was to have someone else write the preface, and I wrote to Vicki Noble through Harper & Row asking her if she would like to do that job. I began the preface myself, not really imagining Vicki would reply.

It took me six weeks and 30some pages to do what Vicki Noble did neatly and lovingly in three pages. I didn't like my preface, and no one else from my continued on page 62

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Diane Stein is the author of 'The Kwan Yin Book of Changes,' 'The Women's Spirituality Book,' and (pending) 'The Women's Crystal Healing Book.' She is available for weekends of workshops and rituals.

### BEHIND THE SCENES

### Pokey Anderson, Merle Bicknell, and Tam Martin

#### By Lucy Diamond

#### **POKEY ANDERSON**

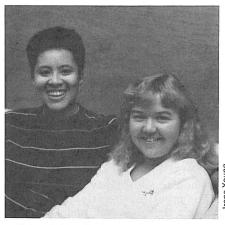
Pokey Anderson has been a familiar name in the women's community around Houston, Texas for a number of years. She is currently producing women's cultural events through Hazelwitch Productions in Houston, and for the last six years has co-hosted a weekly lesbian/feminist radio show on KPFT, a Pacifica Radio station.

Pokey was born in Duluth, Minnesota in 1949. She graduated from high school in 1967, and calls herself "a definite baby boomer." As a young woman, she was a "voracious reader and an enthusiastic—but not overly gifted—athlete." Even though her family was not musical, she played the flute for seven years while in school.

Pokey, who describes herself as a "good student who caused no trouble until college," attended Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, Florida, where she studied anthropology and psychology. College provided Pokey with the opportunity to come into her own; she attended her first "feminist meeting" there, and shortly thereafter came out. She has been a very busy woman ever since.

She moved to Houston in 1972, after college. In 1975 she became involved with N.O.W. and joined a lesbian/feminist publication collective, Pointblank Times. Along with three gay men, Pokey started the Houston gay political caucus. During that same year she helped organize a statewide lesbian campout and produced her first cultural event (a Judy Grahn poetry reading).

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



Independent booking agent Tam Martin (right) pictured here with popular Olivia Records artist Deidre McCalla.



Pokey Anderson: producer, DJ, activist, legal secretary, basketball player.

Pokey produced her first women's music event, Meg Christian in concert, in 1976. Houston's first women's production company was born from that event. Like many women in the mid 1970s, Pokey soon found herself agreeing to distribute women's music albums in her community. She continued to be a distributor until 1982.

In addition, Pokey has served on the board of the National Gay Task Force during Anita Bryant's time (1976-1978), including being the co-chair. She has been active in N.O.W. both locally and nationally. In 1976 she ran as a write-

in candidate in her local district and nearly won. She describes her two proudest political moments, both of which took place in 1977, as (1) participating in the first contingent of gay/lesbian leaders to be invited to visit the White House to discuss gay issues, and (2) representing Texas as an openly lesbian delegate in the International Women's Year convention in Houston.

Pokey has other interests, including traveling to places like Alaska and playing the stock market. She has been known to loiter in women's bookstores, and can't resist chocolate. An NBA fan, she also plays basketball herself.

Though you would think Pokey could not have the time to do even one more thing, she works as a legal secretary in a large Houston law firm which tolerates seeing her picture in the newspaper every once in a while. Like many women who spend most of their lives doing the work they love, Pokey has never been able to financially support herself doing what she calls "the fun stuff." She continues to juggle her life work with the work she does to earn a living, always looking for a quick way to retire.

Pokey has observed that lesbians seem more interested in cultural events that reflect and validate their life experience than they are in hard-core politics. She believes community events can provide "anchor points for a woman's lesbian identity, and can provide strength that can carry over for those times when there aren't several hundred kindred spirits in the same room."

In the future, Pokey would like to see the women's music network broaden its stage. Hazelwitch Productions is producing comedy, slide shows, films, theater, workshops, and dinners in addition to music. For Pokey, this is her challenge for the future of the women's music network.

#### **MERLE BICKNELL**

Merle Bicknell, our WILD (Women's Independent Label Distributors) woman in the Boston area, has been involved in women's music since January 1983. She has always been in the distribution end of the network.

Merle started her life as a distributor by helping Trish Carlinsky, of Women's Music Distribution Company, at concerts and music festivals in the New England area. When Trish decided to move to the West Coast, Merle chose to continue the work. Betsy York, owner of the company at that time, interviewed Merle—who soon became a full-time record distributor.

Merle has taken Horizon Distribution and Promotion, as we now know this company, to new heights. She was honored for her dynamic work at the National Women's Music Festival in 1985, where she received the "Highest Sales Award for 1984" from Redwood Records, as well as the "Best Promotional Work for 1984" award for her work on Ferron's Shadows on a Dime.

Merle considers herself lucky to be working as a full-time distributor doing the work she loves, even though the hours she spends could really be considered two

full-time jobs.

"It's the music, like it was for most of us, that drew me to work in the network," says Merle. With every new release, she says she feels a renewed excitement about the music. What keeps her going is the excitement of doing work to let others know about the music. She enjoys the opportunity to be involved politically in the women's movement and other movements in the New England area. Merle sees a real connection between the music, the performers, the audience, and the vendors, who are all working together in a chain exploring new issues.

To her WILD sisters, who all traditionally meet during the week before the National Women's Music Festival in Bloomington for distributor strategy meetings, Merle is a vital part of the group. She works hard, and her sister distributors can depend on her knowledge and energy to keep discussions grounded and to remind them of where they have been as they discuss where they are going. Along with her hard work, she likes to play, and it is not an uncommon sight at the festival to see Merle throwing a frisbee around between meetings.

Merle was born in 1957 and graduated from high school in 1975. She was born in Bermuda, where her father was stationed in the Army. When her father, who is now retired, began work with the Social Security Administration, the family moved to Maryland, where Merle was raised. She has a younger sister who works in advertising in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Merle says her parents gave her many opportunities as a child to experience different things in life. She played the guitar, rode horses, and had art lessons. She played three varsity sports in high school, was president of her class, and was active in drama. While their daughters were playing allstar softball in Maryland, the mothers of the players discovered that their daughters had taken years of ballet classes together as they were growing up. Merle spent many years studying ballet, and admits she hated it all year until recital time - when she enjoyed being on stage.

Merle attended college on a basketball scholarship and had another opportunity for a field hockey scholarship (which she did not accept). She graduated in 1979 with a degree in psychology and a double minor in theology and business administration.

After a move to the Boston area in 1979, a gift of Margie Adam's Songwriter, Holly Near's Imagine My Surprise, and Cris Williamson's The Changer and the Changed provided Merle with the proper introduction to the world of music to which she now devotes her life.

As a distributor, Merle's job is to get the music into the record stores, to promote the product in the stores so it is played and displayed, and to cover concerts in her territory. She carries not only women's music, but also

New Age, children's, and other political albums. She works hard to get radio airplay and promotion in the newspapers. She says she enjoys giving the necessary support to the artists and concert producers, and she likes the work she does with local and lesser-known artists. She says as she travels she sees the importance of the women's music network. In isolated areas of the country where no women's community exists, it is the music that women can take to their homes that helps make and maintain that vital connection to the community.

One thing that scares Merle is that some people believe our network is still on a borderline, and we need to contine to work hard to keep it together. She asks, "Where would we be without women's music?"

In a time when thinking seems to be more right than left, Merle is amazed by what our network has done—and she is certainly one of the reasons it has succeeded so far.

#### TAM MARTIN

"The only thing I do besides women's music is sleep!" It's a common phrase for many in the women's music network, and a good description of Tam Martin, who also describes herself as "outgoing and chatty." She loves booking performers.

Tam worked at Olivia Records from 1983, when she answered an ad in the Sunday paper, until the end of 1986. Her official title, Booking/Promotions Coordinator, just barely covered her work at Olivia. She booked national tours for Cris Williamson, Tret Fure, Deidre McCalla, Meg Christian, Teresa Trull & Barbara Higbie, and Lucie Blue Tremblay.

Behind the scenes, Tam was involved in publicity and promotion of these tours, along with new album releases; advertising; album production; coordinating jacket, sleeve, insert and label copy; general artist-representative work;

continued on page 60

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Lucy Diamond, aka Linda Dederman, has been involved with women's music since 1974. She has done concert production, artist management, booking, and record distribution.

### **FREESTYLE**

### **Travels: Mexico & Living Room Concerts**

By Kay Gardner

It all began with my wishing to spend a month in L.A. to be near my recently widowed mother. That it was the tenth anniversary of my living in Maine was also impetus for heading south for the winter. And third, what with my being on the road almost constantly, my partner and I needed a long vacation together. We decided to drive to the West Coast and back; I'd work along the way.

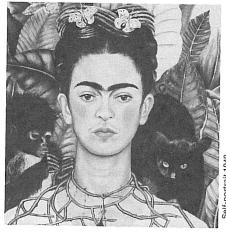
In the November 1986 issue of HOT WIRE I presented the idea of developing a regular women's coffeehouse circuit or regional "livingroom concerts" to supplement performers' incomes and to bring women's culture to communities which might not have large production companies. My vision was that we could reclaim the cutting edge of women's music and culture by returning to women-only concerts in intimate settings, much like those we had in the 1970s.

Report: Livingroom concerts work! When we return home after this four-month tour, we'll have been to 30 states and to Mexico. I will have done 15 livingroom/coffeehouse concerts or workshops (as well as larger concerts, workshop intensives, and benefits).

How did it work? I called a friend, acquaintance, bookstore, or other contact in each city or town along the route, told her the date we'd be there, and asked if she could get at least 20 of her friends into her (or a friend's) livingroom. I asked to be given \$5 of the door charge per woman, with \$100 guaranteed plus supper, breakfast, and a room with a double bed.

These concerts were successful from the sponsors' viewpoint be-

FREESTYLE: the musings of Kay Gardner.



Frida Kahlo: Mexico's greatest woman artist.

cause all publicity was word-of-mouth. No hall or equipment had to be rented...i.e., no expenses.

The most exciting part was the intimacy of each event. We could all be casually dressed (I loved that I could wear my jeans) and be within inches of each other. We could converse and share ideas as they arose. I could get a real feel of what was happening in each local community, and the women could see me as I am rather than the person I become when dressed up and performing on stage.

In every case the sponsor asked that I spread the word to other musicians, poets, slideshow presenters, etc. that there are communities everywhere anxious to have visits and to show hospitality to minstrels.

#### **MEXICO**

While visiting over a meal at the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, I met Myra Lilliane, a Dutch artist and lesbian networker. She was living in a town near Mexico City and was helping

to organize the first Latin American Lesbian Conference (to be held in October, 1987). I mentioned that I'd love to come to Mexico, and she offered to organize some concerts if I'd do them as benefits for L.A.L. Since we'd be traveling through Texas in February, and doing benefits would bypass my having to worry about obtaining a work visa, it seemed ideal. Having no idea how energetic Myra was, I said she could set up as many events as she could within the eight days we'd be there. I also requested that they feed and house us.

We took the train from Nuevo Laredo to Mexico City. It was a 26-hour trip, but cost less than \$10 each. When we arrived, Myra and three Mexican dykes were waiting, waving a "Kay Gardner en Concierto" poster. Myra had set up six concerts in five days! (I learned from this to be quite clear as to how many concerts I have energy to do in a specific period of time.)

The first three concerts were in Mexico City, an immense, very polluted city  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles high in the mountains. Had we not taken the train, which climbed gradually through picturesque desert countryside, we might have suffered altitude sickness. But we remained healthy.

All of our hostesses were Mexican. Only one spoke English. In fact, Alma, a radical Marxist lesbian, insisted that we speak only Spanish with her. I'd had Latin and French in high school and one college semester of Spanish. This wasn't nearly enough for fluency, but somehow we were able to use sign language and to converse haltingly.

Time in Mexico City was scheduled to the moment with an interview on the weekly feminist

radio show, a quick trip to the wonderful handcrafts market, and a quicker trip to the pyramids of the sun and moon just an hour's drive from the city.

When we were able to find bilingual women, we talked of the Mexican women's movement, which is alive and well. Rape crisis centers are well-organized and functioning. Battered women's shelters and incest survivors' groups have not been organized, though interest is strong, especially concerning child abuse.

In the Mexico City lesbian community the issues are separatism and monogamy vs. "polygamy." There was definitely a politically-correct attitude among the women we met, and what I'd define as a political/spiritual split similar to that which our U.S. movement experienced 10 years ago. But the heavily political women were open to hearing my views on women's spirituality and the oppression of women by patriarchal religions. I began saying "Adiosa" ("Go with the Goddess") for goodbye, which amused the women a lot.

Mexico City is still rebuilding from the horrible earthquake of September '85. There are piles of rubble where some buildings used to be, silent screams still hanging in the air. Other buildings loom like skeletons. Workers labor day and night to clean up the mess left in the disaster where up to 300,000 lives were lost. Women told us that they were afraid to go out for months afterwards. Entire families were wiped out as well as the lives of many factory workers who were working when the "temblor" hit at 7 a.m.

There were uniformed men carrying rifles on corners and on roofs. We were told that this was because of the economy (the average wage in Mexico is \$3 per day or less for 55 percent of the people!), and because of the looting after the earthquake.

The high points in the Mexico City portion of our visit were the museums. The Museum of Anthropology is immense and fascinatingly filled with historical information and artifacts from Mayan, Aztec, and other pre-Hispanic native cultures. We needed days to see everything but had only two hours. "Donde es las diosas

(Where are the goddesses)?" we asked in fractured Spanish at each new section.

The Frida Kahlo Museum was exquisite. The revolutionary painter's home, courtyard, and studio were safe behind electric-blue walls in the oldest part of the city. Calla lillies graced pathways, and inside we could get a sense of the environment in which Kahlo worked.

Frida Kahlo had been in a very serious bus accident when she was a teenager. As a result, she'd had many operations, miscarriages, and a life of constant pain. Her wheelchair and the easel-like contraption which enabled her to paint stood prominent in her studio.

Her paintings are mostly extremely graphic descriptions of her physical trials and tribulations. I can't think of an artist whose imagery is more powerful than that of Kahlo, Mexico's greatest woman painter.

My third concert, women-only after two for mixed audiences, was at the Mexico City Women's Center (Cuarto Creciente, Loc. Verdad 11-8, D.F. Centro). It was on the second floor of a building in the center of the city across from a friendly church, Saint Theresa's, and only a block from where a large pre-Hispanic moon goddess icon had been recently excavated. The vibes there were fine! The room was the womanliest space I've ever seen in any women's center anywhere...lovingly, tastefully, and comfortably organized. It had a small stage with a piano, a kitchen, and perhaps 15 tables with red and white tablecloths, candles, and fresh flowers.

It was good to get out of the city, even though we only traveled an hour south to get to Cuernavaca. The women there had arranged for the concert to be held at the Museo Cuahuanahuac, Palacio Cortez (Museum at the Plaza of Cortez). We arrived in town to find large cloth banners spanning the streets announcing the event. As a result more than 200 people came. None of them knew that the proceeds were to benefit the Latin American Lesbian Conference; outside of Mexico City women feel that they must remain closeted.

From Cuernavaca we traveled to the town where Myra lives and works. She set up a concert for local people and tourists on the courtyard of a local hotel. I looked up from the performance area to see a craggy cliff with an ancient pyramid on top. It was very magical and inspiring.

Later that day I did a womenonly concert on the courtyard of a house rented by seven women. These women were dyke artists who were preparing a circus to tour Nicaragua and other Latin and South American countries. With the accompaniment of rooster calls, dog barks, and burro brays, I performed my final concert in Mexico.

Response to these concerts was very open and gratifying, but eight days was not nearly enough time to spend and really get a sense of what's happening in Mexico. My impression is that the work is being carried on there with great gusto and dedication. I look forward to returning soon to visit the many wonderful new friends I met. Next time, though, I'll have studied Spanish.

Performers who are interested in doing livingroom concert tours and women who wish to give financial support to the first Latin American Lesbian Conference can write directly to Kay Gardner, P.O. Box 33, Stonington, ME 04681.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Kay Gardner, M.Mus., is a composer, performer, and recording artist who has been deeply involved in Women's Music and Culture since 1973. She is also in demand as a teacher of the healing properties of music.

### TRAVELING FOR BUSINESS OR PLEASURE? WHY PAY MORE?

You'll be amazed at what a good travel agent can do! Let me help you find the cheapest, most convenient travel plans... or the luxury trip of your dreams. National and international planning.

#### **BRENDA GOLDSTEIN**

(312) 332-7211 Telex 283591

MEMBER AMERICAN SOCIETY OF TRAVEL AGENTS HIGHLY RECOMMENDED BY 'HOT WIRE' STAFFERS





Husica Jemina Flute-Guitar Duo

National Tours & Recording Projects

2 cassettes (\$8.75 each) Record album in process

*Inquire about tax-deductible donations* 

P.O. Box 15121 Portland, OR 97215 (503) 233-1206

#### **%**

#### SOPHIE'S PARLOR from p. 19

ter and the Hassle Free Zone group), Sophie's hopes women will send ideas for future shows and

#### WINTERWOMYN from p. 29

lesbian experience within the women's movement for 15 years. Her famed book, Eye to Eye, is in its third printing. JEB is currently traveling with her new slideshow.

Saturday night featured Linda Moakes as emcee and first performer. She got the night going on a funny note. Next, Beth York mellowed us out with her piano synthesizer; her spiritual energy is unique and calming. Last but not least, the festival-goers were treated to Alix Dobkin. As the crowd chanted, "Alix! Alix!" I thought, "Can I stand any more fun?" Well, Alix was more fun, and she brought the crowd together. As I watched her on stage, I finally relaxed, knowing the festival was in good hands. I knew she would end the event in her usual powerful way. It wasn't hard to predict that one.

ASL interpretation is a standard feature of women's music festivals, which attempt to make the events accessible to deaf and hard of hearing women. WWM interpreters included Elizabeth Fides of Oakland, who has interpreted music and theater since 1983, working festivals including Michigan and Bloomington; Sally Philand Barbara Garrison of Marshville, North Carolina, who are freelance interpreters working for Goodwill Industries; and Gail McKay of Atlanta, who has interpreted more than 100 concerts, including La Boheme for Shreveport (Louisiana) Opera.

Festival organizers consider Winter WomynMusic I a success, and encourage interested women from the South and from other regions in the country to attend Winter WomynMusic II. To be on the mailing list and receive information about next year's festival, contact Billie Rose, P.O. Box 221495, Charlotte, NC 28222. ■

#### **HOROSCOPE** from page 49

#### Samhain/Halloween October 31

They say that the veil between matter and spirit is thinner tonight than at any other time during the year. Astrological influences today could support that contention, since there is so much transformative Scorpio (four planets) during the day and the beginnings of two powerful aspects to Pluto tonight (Moon/ Pluto trine and Sun/Pluto conjunction), which should influence people to look beyond surface appearance in most encounters. Positive lunar aspects all day might emphasize the spiritual side of the Pisces moon rather than the over-sensitive, highly emotional side. But it's never a bad idea to be with people you trust during a Pisces moon, so you won't need to guard yourself so carefully.

#### MUSIC/LANGUAGE from p. 15

that the voice can persuade people to convert to a given faith. But he or she will buck like a mule at the idea that if you say something you think is ridiculous your congregation will be able to tell that from your body language, with serious moral consequences.

The very person who was smirking at you about the triviality of your hypothesis up to that point will now accuse you of proposing "voodoo." (I mean no disrespect here—that is in fact the word they usually use.)

I think much information is available for examination, and the implications are impossible to overlook. But there is a nearly unanimous effort in the professions (and in daily life) to ignore both evidence and implications. I would like to make it a little more difficult to do that.

#### Give the gift of a 'HOT WIRE' subscription

tapes on pertinent subjects from around the country. They are interested in hearing from radio women around the country.

"Come on down and use your

radio," Buchal says. "It is therefor you, and it can be very empowering to be your own media." That's a call few women should ignore.

#### BASEBALL from page 22

during their peak athletic years. Watching Nancy "Hank" Warren, at about age 70, out there on the pitcher's mound, hurling that ball across the plate, I could easily imagine how thrilling it must have been to see these women demonstrate their considerable skills in the 1940s and 1950s. I remembered reading how Wally Pipp, former New York Yankee first baseman, had described Dottie Kamenshek as the best fielding first baseman he'd ever seen, and how "Kammy" and Eleanor Engle both had been offered contracts on minor league men's teams. [Kamenshek reportedly refused the offer, and Engle's offer was withdrawn as a rule was quickly devised barring the signing of women as players.] I remembered hearing about Sophie Kurys' record 201 stolen bases in a single season, about how Dorothy Schroeder had been deemed, by former major leaguer Charlie

Grimm, worth \$50,000 "if she were a man," and about the incredible pitching and batting records of women like Connie Wisniewski, Jean Faut, Betty Weaver Foss, and Joanne Weaver. And I wondered why these women were not represented in the Baseball Hall of Fame.

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

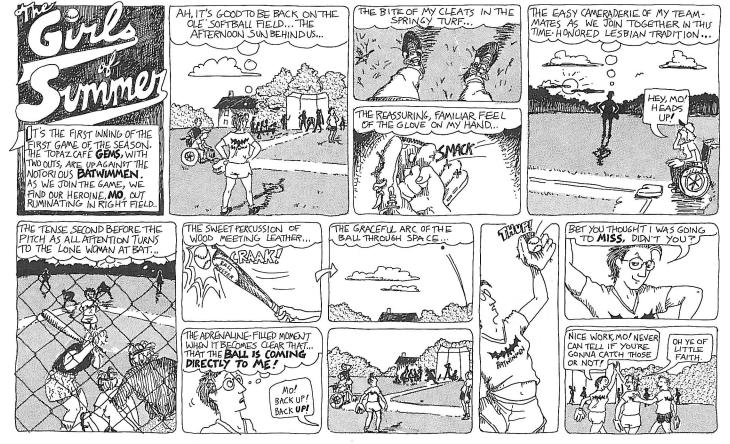
But if young women had role

models to admire, to show them that it is possible to break through the barriers imposed by a sexist society-role models such as the women of the AAGBL as well as those from our more recent professional teams in softball, basketball, and, currently, volleyball-perhaps women would more often find the courage to stay active in the sport of their choice. In any case, sporting women are part of our history and deserve to be recognized for their achievements at least as much as male sports figures are—perhaps more because of the prejudice and obstacles they have had to overcome.

I hope you will join me in encouraging the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York, to recognize the All-American Girls' Baseball League, as they did the Negro League some years ago.

Our history is at stake as well as our future.

#### Dykes to Watch Out For



#### MARTIN from page 55

copyright permission work; and scheduling media interviews.

It all began for Tam at Girl Scout Camp. She was a 17-year-old Counselor-in-Training in 1976 when the director of the C.I.T. program gave her a copy of Cris Williamson's Changer album. Tam says, "I cried when I heard it...it just hit me where I lived." She immediately bought five copies and returned to her Spokane, Washington home, where she gave them to her closest friends. She is still getting warm thanks from those friends today.

Tam was born in 1958 and was raised in Spokane across the street from Manito Duck Pond. She lived in a somewhat "storybook" situation, with a close-knit, happy family in a neighborhood where kids played in the park, had family picnics, and the ducks came across the street in the summertime to run through the lawn sprinklers.

Tam has always had a great interest in outdoor activities, and she enjoys reading and writing. She was a camp counselor from age 18 to 23, and was a Girl Scout for 20 years. She especially likes sailing and canoeing along with skating, swimming, sewing, art, and traveling.

Tam graduated from California State at Long Beach in 1982 with



Merle Bicknell: Sports star turned WILD woman in Boston, Massachusetts.

a bachelor's degree in magazine journalism with a minor in women's studies. While in college, she produced a concert with Meg Christian as part of her work as an intern at the women's center.

The fall after graduation, Tam and a close friend drove from Los Angeles to New York City to see Meg and Cris at Carnegie Hall. The night of the show, their car broke down. They rented another, but got stuck in rush hour traffic in Harlem. So they parked the car, caught a cab, and arrived at Carnegie Hall two minutes before showtime. Little did Tam know that just two months later she too would a part of the group of women who put on that extraordinary event.

Tam says it's the women, especially the artists she has worked with, that keep her involved in women's music. She believes in their work, their talent, and the message their music conveys. The rewards of working in women's music can't be measured, but when Tam has received letters saying, "Thanks, you changed my life," or "Keep up the good work; you do make a difference," she says there is no feeling like it.

Tam believes it is important to keep putting out quality music for those who have always supported the network. She believes the current market is somewhat saturated, and that it is important to keep up high standards. "It's important not to support every artist out there just because she's a woman," Tam says. "We need to be careful to keep high standards so the term 'women's music' doesn't get the 'potpourri' reputation of being mediocre because any woman who wants to hook into this network can. I don't mean not give everyone a chance, but it seems as if there is a glut market of artists, and although variety is very important, producers can only afford to produce so many shows a year. I think it's essential that the women who are the best get the support."

Tam relocated to Columbus, Ohio in January 1987, and continues to work as an independent with Olivia Records. She is booking Deidre McCalla, and spent many months working the AWMAC (Association of Women's Music and Culture) Conference, which took

the place of the annual Music Industry Conference at Bloomington. Her conference contributions included helping with the banquet; coordinating the artist booking and promotion area; doing a workshop, and coordinating the conference packet inserts.

Tam's plans include moving back to California in the spring of 1988, where she will start her own booking agency.

#### '2 in 20' from page 25

cess station in Somerville made its studio facilities available to the producers of Two in Twenty for more than two years. Upon the show's completion, the station will cablecast Two in Twenty to all its cable subscribers. There are already signs that the show will generate controversy throughout the local community, but the access station has pledged its unconditional support to protect the right of Two in Twenty's creators to produce and present their lesbian programming.

For lesbians and other groups who have been excluded from enjoying the power and influence of television, community cable TV is an important step. The cable station can be a great environment in which to develop skills and test ideas. It is also an invaluable opportunity for gays and lesbians to create programming that challenges the distorted and insensitive treatment of gay issues and lifestyles seen in the mainstream media. So as Brothers celebrates its fourth year on Showtime, the producers of lesbian video feel our time to be listed in TV Guide has arrived.

The producers of Two in Twenty hope that as more women have a chance to see the show this summer at festivals, screenings, and through home rentals, it will inspire women throughout the country to create original lesbian film and video programming.

Two in Twenty is available to groups or individuals who would like to organize screenings in their communities. The entire show will be closed captioned for the hearing impaired. For more information, contact Two in Twenty, P.O. Box 105, Somerville, MA 02144, (617) 625-7882. ■

#### SAPPHO from page 17

for a ferryman named Phaon. In fact, the myth of Sappho and Phaon was one also invented by the Athenian comic playwrights. But romantic young men of the Victorian age — and a few even later — promoted it because it fit in with an image of Sappho they wanted to believe.

Like any standard, often repeated folk tale, the story of Sappho and Phaon has a number of variations, but the basic story is this: The Goddess Aphrodite gets a ride across a river from a ferryman named Phaon, and as a reward she gives him a box containing a magic ointment which he puts on his face. In some versions Aphrodite is disguised as an woman who is repaying Phaon's kindness; in others, she is radiant in her goddesshood and Phaon knows immediately who she is. The box containing the ointment is sometimes made of wood, sometimes of alabaster, or some other material. In some versions Phaon is an old man, and in this case, putting the ointment on his face makes him young and beautiful. In other versions the ferryman is young and handsome to begin with, and the ointment merely makes him "irresistible."

At this point, believe it or not, Sappho enters the story. Either by chance or to satisfy an insatiable curiosity, Sappho sees Phaon after his transformation and falls instantly in love with him. Phaon, however, spurns Sappho. She, mad with love, follows him around the Aegean sea, and finally (in desperation) jumps off a cliff on the island of Leucas, halfway between Ithaca and Corfu. In some versions Sappho flings herself from the cliff in the belief that Aphrodite will carry her up on wings to safety while ridding her of her passion for Phaon. But in other versions (particularly in vogue among Sappho biographers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries) she willfully commits suicide to end the torture of her frenzied unrequited love.

The Athenian comic playwrights are also to blame for popularizing this myth. A number of plays were written about Sappho and Phaon, several called Phaon and Leucadius (after the

cliff Sappho purportedly jumped from). Other plays called Sappho apparently included the episode of Phaon. The story certainly seems to have a continuing dramatic appeal: It's known that in 1584 a play by John Lilly entitled Sappho and Phaon was acted before Queen Elizabeth.

But the story itself seems to have originated still earlier than Athenian Middle Comedy, Greek scholar Sir Maurice Bowra, who is a consistent source of intelligent and perceptive insights into Sappho's life and work, points out that Aphrodite-who was Sappho's personal deity, one about whom for whom Sappho songs-was associated with Adonis, a vegetation god who died yearly, and that Phaon was another name for Adonis. "Like Adonis, he was loved by Aphrodite, and, like Adonis, he was on some occasion laid among lettuces. He has the marks of a vegetation-deity who was loved and then died."

Bowra suggests that Sappho wrote some songs for religious ceremonies "in which Aphrodite declared her love for him, and this was misunderstood as being Sappho's love for a living man... The confusion was worse confounded by attaching to the story Phaon another story Sappho flung herself from the Leucadian Rock into the sea. This was probably due to a misunderstanding or misinterpretation of some proverbial phrase in which Sappho spoke of leaping off the Leucadian Rock as the kind of thing that despairing lovers did. So Phaon was located in Leucas and turned into a ferryman there. The truth is that he was a god, probably to be identified with Adonis, and if she wrote words of love for him, they were in all likelihood intended to be spoken by Aphrodite."

Despite its fantastic aspects, the Phaon story has enjoyed such a long run in modern times because it offered a way out to admirers of Sappho who were at the same time homophobic. They were able to put the Phaon story to good use by saying, "Well, yes, Sappho did love women, but see, in the end she fell for a mankilled herself for one." This "redemptive" aspect of the legend of Phaon is no doubt responsible

for its longevity.

Weigall, whose 1932 "biography" of Sappho is full of blatant invention, exemplifies this rationale: "All-conquering passion for a good-looking young sailor, in fact, had swept through her sultry heart like a fresh breeze from the sea, and had purged it of the last lingering traces of its earlier anomalies, so that nothing now remained therein but a normal feminine instinct far more devastating than any perversity."

In reality, Sappho may have died an old woman, peacefully, in her own bed, since there are several references in her poetry to her growing older, getting wrinkled, and suffering the loss of physical strength and energy of old age. When we go back to Sappho's own words, the romanticism and accrued mythology of the centuries falls away and her work speaks for her with eloquent simplicity.

"It has been proved today that there is no historical foundation" for the falsehoods that have become attached to her name," says historian Raymond de Becker, and that "the loves of Sappho cannot be disassociated from the special nature of her genius."

# THE OZARK CENTER FOR LANGUAGE STUDIES

#### Based at OCLS:

The Láadan Group, The Ozark Network, The Lonesome Node, Lovingkindness, The American Syntonics Association, and the Magic Granny Line.

#### **OCLS Topics:**

Women & Language, Ozark English, Verbal Self-Defense, Language & Health Care, Religious Language, Linguistics/Music Interface, Language & the Brain, and Linguistics/Science Fiction Interface.

#### OCLS, Route 4 Box 192-E Huntsville, AR 72740

For more information send us a self-addressed stamped envelope

#### STEIN from page 53

coven did either, but Carl loved it. He decided to use both when Vicki's came a few months later.

Then he asked that I write to women whose books mean a lot to me and ask them for endorsements for Kwan Yin. The contract came as soon as those letters went out—with my clause that the book remain all female. I got very brave and wrote to Mary Daly, Marion Weinstein, Merlin Stone, Diane Mariechild, Margot Adler, and more. Their overwhelmingly positive and supportive, caring welcome and responses still amaze me. I consider many of these women to be friends today.

I lived for 13 months on that \$1,800, and took five drafts to

write a book that I thought would be finished in three months and two rewrites. It was published by Llewellyn 34 months after its beginning, and 21 months after the manuscript was completed. Since its release in December, 1985 The Kwan Yin Book of Changes has sold 10,000 copies and is going into its third printing.

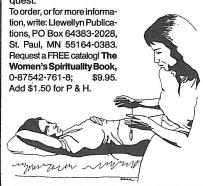
I use the story as an example of what an unemployed, poor, determined, disabled lesbian can do and to encourage other women to follow their own goals, dreams, and projects. I use the story also to thank all the people who helped along the way, to thank the goddess for finally finding me, and to thank all the women who have bought, read, and used my books.

testing me or staring off into space, they are warm and supportive. I like to think it is the power of the women's music we share.

I generally do a two-hour session that incorporates women's history and music, beginning with traditional songs like "When I Was a Fair Maid" (about a young woman who sneaks into the British navy) and ending with contemporary songs. All of the songs I perpositive women's show form images-women taking control of their lives and destinies, fighting for a cause, or even just having a good time on their own terms. I use songs like Peggy Seeger's "Winnie and Sam" because the abused Winnie wins out in the end, and Holly Near's "Mountain Song" combined with Florence Reece's "Which Side Are You On" to demonstrate the long tradition of fighting women. There are fun songs, too, like "Oh Dear, What Can the Matter Be," a suffrage song, and "The Crafty Maid's Policy," in which a woman fends

## WOMANHOOD UNTHINKABLE WITHOUT THE GODDESS EXPERIENCE

Diane Stein births the Goddess experience for ALL women in *The Women's Spirituality Book.* Reclaiming women's herstory and skills brings women closer to the Goddess. Stein recovers healing, crystals, massages, colors, herbs, Tarot, I Ching and more, touching all women and furthering their spirituality quest.



off an attacker and tricks him out of his horse as well.

One of the women sent me some of her original poems dealing with her grief over the anguish her imprisonment caused to her family. I was so haunted by their beauty that I asked her permission to try to write them into a song, which resulted in "Weekends." On my last visit I explained how the song was born and closed my concert with it; there wasn't a dry eye in the house by the time that song was finished. It is their song. I have copyrighted it under the woman's name so that all royalties will belong to her. I think that is the only fair way to do it; I don't want to earn money from the misfortunes of others.

If I have learned anything from working in women's prisons, it is the fact that there is no limit to what women can do for each other.

#### PRISONS from page 11

forming in the area, but it took us two years to do it because each time I was available, they weren't.

I prefer working in women's prisons. At Taycheedah, where I've performed five times, I feel totally at ease. For one thing, the women wear street clothes rather than prison greys like the men. But more importantly, rather than

Womansong 🚜 Gerri Gribi

"A joy for feminist folksong enthusiasts!"
—WLW Journal

Celebrate 200 years of women's history with this lively, uplifting performance of 14 traditional and contemporary woman-positive folksongs. A beautifully crafted album from an award-winning feminist woman!

\$8.75

Specify album or cassette

LILYFERN RECORDS P.O. Bx 8021 Green Bay, W/I 54308



A WOMAN-IDENTIFIED

VIDEO

A Lesbian Love Story

- 54 MIN
- COLOR / STEREO
- \$48.50 ADD \$3.00 FOR RUSH DELIVERY
- VHS/BETA (Specify)

#### SENSUOUSLY EROTIC

• Music By Ruth Barrett & Cyntia Smith

Tri-Image Productions (a Lesbian-owned Company)
PO Box 15911 #D-1, Long Beach, CA 90815-0911

#### **DYKETONES** from page 37

Halstead as Buck Naked and Penny Loafer; bassist Gloria Cortez as Holly Peño and Louie Luwy; and of course me as Chukki and Cha-Cha Linguine and Mother Inferior.

1987 has been a year of significant developments for us. We have been approached to appear on a nationally-syndicated TV show, and fans on our mailing list will receive information "in a plain brown wrapper" regarding the date and time we will appear. We made a music video of the highlights of our show, and are planning to (finally) release The Fabulous D---tones, an album of danceable dyketunes. We are currently seeking investors for the recording project.

Though there have been many hard times over the 10 years, and many times the band has come perilously close to folding, it's been worth it. When audience members enthusiastically come through our reception line at the end of the show, and when fans and friends go out of their way to do special things for us, I know I'm doing the right thing.

[Listen to The Fabulous Dyketones' version of "Let The Good Times Roll" on the soundsheet in this issue of HOT WIRE.]

#### FILM FEST from page 31

Thanks to the work of WIDC and the festival's co-sponsors, the Center for New Television and Facets Multimedia, not only are Chicagoland's audiences stimulated and entertained, but independent women's film and video as a whole is enriched.

#### \*\*\*\*

Women in the Director's Chair is a membership organization which offers regular programs throughout the year focusing on particular artists and their works. For more information, the newsletter, or information about next year's festival, write WIDC, 3435 N. Sheffield, Chicago, IL 60657.

Women Make Movies is a national, non-profit, feminist media center which facilitates the production, promotion, and distribution of independent media by women producers. For a listing of works that WMM distributes or other information, write WMM, 225 Lafayette #212, New York, NY 10012.

#### Readers' Choice from page 43

• 'HOT WIRE' photo: Patricia Charbonneau cover, festival photos (photo spreads by various photographers), Barbara Higbie w/fiddle (T.L. Armstrong), Alix Dobkin cover/Ferron cover/Kay Gardner cover.

#### Other categories suggested by write-in vote

- Women's music reviewer: Maida Tilchen.
- Songwriter: Lucie Blue Tremblay, Annie Dinerman.
- **Drummer (vs. percussionist):** Barbara Borden (suggested by four different readers).
- New performer: Nancy Day (suggested by two readers), Lucie Blue Tremblay, Judy Carter, Tracy Chapman.
- Favorite resource: The Quotable Woman—E. Partnow, Women's Music Plus: Directory of Resources in Women's Music & Culture—T.L. Armstrong/Empty Closet Enterprises.
- Record producer: Terry Garthwaite.
- Recording engineer: Leslie Ann Jones.
  - Mandolin player: Robin Flower.
- ASL interpreter: Shirley Childress Johnson, Elizabeth Fides.
- Group/band: Sweet Honey in the Rock, Party Line Dance Band, The Fabulous Dyketones.
  - Playwright: Jane Wagner.
  - Painter: Mary Tuck.
- Comments: "Put something in about Betsy Godwin—xxoo, her fans in L.A." ... "Too many choices--a nice difficulty-hate to leave Ferron off"... "Always liked Teresa holding her dalmation"... "That Patricia Charbonneau cover--mmmmm!" ... "When does HOT WIRE get an award? You all deserve it!"

#### SLOAN/SOPHIE from page 48 -

daily, I think to myself, "Am I crazy for bringing a Jewish life to the gay world, and a gay world to the Jewish audience?" Am I looking for trouble in two communities that are already in trouble? Or am I lucky to be involved in two worlds rich in humor, love and pain?"

I continue to work consistently in the mainstream, to perform for Jewish audiences, young people, and feminists. The response of both of those worlds to each other through the vehicle of Sophie has been most interesting during the past winter. I am once again writing characters that are pushing the boundaries of stereotypes, pushing what we usually see as "old" or "Jewish" or "lesbian." I have a new character who is a lesbian who is becoming religious. I am frightened about what the response will be.

I have finally grown enough and gotten old enough to get "myself" out of the way, to let the art live on its own no matter what my fears are. I am beginning yet another new controversial journey as my work reaches a broader audience in colleges, in Hillels, and synagogues and oh my! even night clubs in New York City.

I look up in the air and ask, "God, why me?" God says, "Why not?" I say, "All right...you win."

### BOOKSTORES

#### of interest to our readers

- A Different Light. 4014 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90029. (213) 668-0629. Gay & lesbian.
- Antigone Books. 403 E. 5th, Tucson, AZ 85705. (602) 792-3715. Feminist/women's.
- A Room of One's Own. 317 W. Johnson, Madison, WI 53703. (608) 257-7888. Feminist.
- Bookwoman, 324 E. Sixth St., Austin, TX 78701. (512) 472-2785. Feminist and gay/lesbian.
- Dreams & Swords. 828 E. 64th, Indianapolis, IN 46220. (317) 253-9966. Feminist.
- Emma Women's Books & Gifts. 168 Elmwood Ave., Buffalo, NY 14201. (716) 885-2285. Feminist.
- Faubourg Marigny Bookstore. 600 Frenchmen, New Orleans, LA 70116. (504) 943-9875. *Gay/lesbian*.
- Full Circle Books. 2205 Silver SE, Albuquerque, NM 87106. (505) 266-0022. Feminist & lesbian.

- Giovanni's Room. 345 S. 12th St., Philadelphia, PA 19107. 1-800-222-6996. Feminist/gay/lesbian.
- Humanspace Books. 1617 N. 32nd St., Phoenix, AZ 85008. (602) 220-4419. Feminist/New Age/gay and lesbian.
- New Words Books. 186 Hampshire, Cambridge, MA 02139. Feminist with extensive women's music collection.
- Old Wives' Tales. 1009 Valencia, San Francisco, CA 94110. (415) 821-4675. Feminist.
- Oscar Wilde Memorial Bookshop. 15 Christopher St., New York, NY 10014. (212) 255-8097. *Gay/lesbian*.
- Page One Books. 966 N. Lake Ave., Pasadena, CA 91104. (818) 798-8694. Feminist with extensive women's music collection.
- Red & Black Books. 430 15th Ave. E., Seattle, WA 98112. (206) 322-7323. Feminist and alternative.
- Sapphire Books. PO Box 9063, Livonia, MI 48151. Catalog \$1; feminist and gay/lesbian.
- Women & Children First. 1967 N. Halsted, Chicago, IL 60614. (312) 440-8824. Feminist and children's.

### SOUNDSHEETS

#### By Joy Rosenblatt and Karen Kane



**JASMINE** 

"I DID MY PART"

Performed by: Carol Schmidt (vocals, piano), Michele Isam/Lydia Ruffin/Terry Garthwaite (vocals), Bob Luther (drums), Douglas Rayburn (bass), Bill Engel (guitar)

Written by: Naomi Neville From: Wild Strings

"TOO LATE"

Performed by: Michele Isam (vocals, saxophone), Carol Schmidt (vocals, digital piano), Lydia Ruffin (vocals), Bob Luther (drums), Douglas Rayburn (bass), Bill Engel (guitar)

Written by: Carol Schmidt/Michele Isam

From: Wild Strings

Icebergg Records 207 E. Buffalo St. #501 Milwaukee, WI 53202

Jasmine exudes electricity and excitement! These two songs introduce you to the musical variety of Carol, Michele, and Lydia. From the dance beat of "Too Late" to the cool jazz sound of "Come On Home" and the contemporary mellow harmonies of "Where I Belong," you'll want to hear the album Wild Strings again and again.



LAURA ANDERSON



THE FABULOUS DYKETONES

#### SOUNDSHEETS

Material is recorded on both sides in stereo. Do not bend the soundsheet. Place it on turntable at 33 1/3 rpm. A coin placed on the label where indicated prevents slipping. If your turntable has a ridged mat, placing the soundsheet on top of an LP may be advisable.

Questions and comments about the soundsheets? Recording specifications and costs will be sent upon request. Send SASE to *HOT WIRE*, 1417 Thome, Chicago, IL 60660.



**HEATHER BISHOP** 

"SEDUCED"
Written by: Gary Tigerman

"IF YOU LOVE FREEDOM" Written by: Heather Bishop

From: A Taste of the Blues

Performed by: Heather Bishop (vocals), Connie Kaldor/Annette Campagne/Suzanne Campagne/Ilena Zaremba (vocals), Marilyn Lerner (keyboards), Greg Black (drums), Dan Donahue (guitars), John Ervin (bass), Janice Finlay (clarinet), Walle Larsson (sax, flute), Glenn Matthews (congas, percussion)

"Seduced" speaks for itself! "If You Love Freedom" speaks for all of us. Heather has "a voice as big as Manitoba" (says Kate Clinton) with a powerful message to match. Her sixth album, the first on a U.S. label, has a folk/rock sound with a little country and A Taste of the Blues. This pioneer of women's music in Canada will enchant you!

continued on back page

she's politically correct - she's monogamous - she only wears underwear when she visits her mother!

she's

### HILARY HARRIS

Inventive! Invigorating!

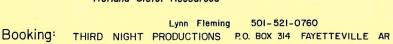
One of the funniest comics to come along in a long time. Mountain Moving Coffeehouse

I laughed until I started coughing, crying and my nose ran...

Herland Sister Resources

Like a warm evening at home with a funny friend.

Wild Pony Productions







#### Ballin Thailand

Leaves December 26, 1987

Write: Sounds of Asia P.O. Box 835704 Richardson, TX 75083

### The Sounds of Asia

#### KAY GARDNER & DON CAMPBELL

Composers, Recording Artists, and Master Teachers of Sound Transformation

Special Classes for Women Only Gamelan Orchestra & Balinese Dance

Join us for a remarkable journey to the East centered on art, music, chanting, and dance.

#### THE FABULOUS DYKETONES

"LET THE GOOD TIMES ROLL" Performed by: Char Priolo (lead vocals/percussion), Brenda Lyons (vocals/drums), Abby (vocals/drums), Abby Shearer (lead guitar/bass/vocals), Gloria Cortez (bass/lead guitar/vocals), Yarrow Halstead (keyboards/vocals)

Written by: Shirley and Lee, 1956 Produced by: Karen Kane

Char Priolo 128 Wellington Drive San Carlos, CA 94070 (415) 595-4570

The Fabulous Dyketones [see page 36] are the 1950's-style "rock & role" band. They are currently seeking investors for their upcoming LP, The Fabulous D---tones.

#### LAURA ANDERSON

"Too Many Teardrops" Performed by: Laura S. Anderson (electric guitar, percussion, vocals), June Millington (rhythm guitar, slide guitar solo), Beth Bryant (tenor sax), Trish McInerney (electric bass), Debbie Lane (drums)

Written by: Laura S. Anderson Produced by: June Millington and Laura S. Anderson

Laura S. Anderson P.O. Box 34 Sunderland, MA 01375 (413) 665-2211 "Too Many Teardrops" represents

a departure from Laura's latin/ jazz-based songwriting world of rock & roll. She has been performing as a guitarist/ singer/songwriter for more than 10 years and as a hand percussionist/conga player for the past six years. She is currently performing as percussionist/vocalist with June Millington and Sue Fink, and has her own five-piece all-woman band called The Groove Queens.



Kate Clinton (above), Robin Tyler, Linda Moakes, and others discuss women's comedy (see page 32-35).