

Lesbian Hollywood

13 Dykes to Watch

curve[®]

THE BEST-SELLING LESBIAN MAGAZINE

Alexandra
Hedison

The L Word's
Breakout Star

Heather
Matarazzo

+

GRETCHEN MOL
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Dylan's Got a New Gig

Her character on *The L Word* broke my heart when she betrayed Helena. But she left many lesbians wanting more. So now I'm looking forward to seeing the *real* Alexandra Hedison in front of the camera.



Frances Stevens Publisher/Editor in Chief

Alexandra Hedison's character, Dylan, broke my heart when she betrayed Helena on *The L Word*. Easy on the eyes, this real-life lesbian left so many fans wanting more, even after her sordid departure from the show. Before her role (or should we say roll?) as Dylan, Hedison took a five-year break from acting, pursuing her career behind the camera as a professional photographer. Now, Hedison's acting career has been rejuvenated.

You probably won't see her again on *The L Word*; Dylan's burned too many bridges for that (though Hedison doesn't rule it out). Instead, you can check Hedison out again as she embarks on her new gig in front of the camera as host of the new reality design show *Designing Blind* on A&E. In this quirky interior design show where her co-host is a blind gay man, Hedison admits that she's able to truly be herself in front of the camera. Which, says celebrity journalist Laurie K. Shenden, is "funny, a bit goofy, conscientious, inquisitive, stylish and beautiful."

In the cover story (page 44), Hedison speaks openly about her new show, her breakup with Ellen DeGeneres and what's truly important to her now. I don't know about you, but I'm really looking forward to seeing the *real* Alexandra Hedison in front of the camera.

On another note, some of you might question why *CURVE*, a lesbian magazine, is covering transgender issues. With so many of our lesbian sisters transitioning, we knew it was important to cover trans issues as they relate to the lesbian community. From one mother's journey as her dyke daughter becomes her trans son, to understanding the etiquette of interacting with transgender people, to profiles of some trans artists and activists, this special section is meant to challenge, entertain and educate you and if it incites debate and dialogue, we'll be happy. In fact, I'm sure that we will receive more letters to the editor about this section than any we've published all year. We look forward to hearing from you.

Frances

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THE BEST-SELLING LESBIAN MAGAZINE

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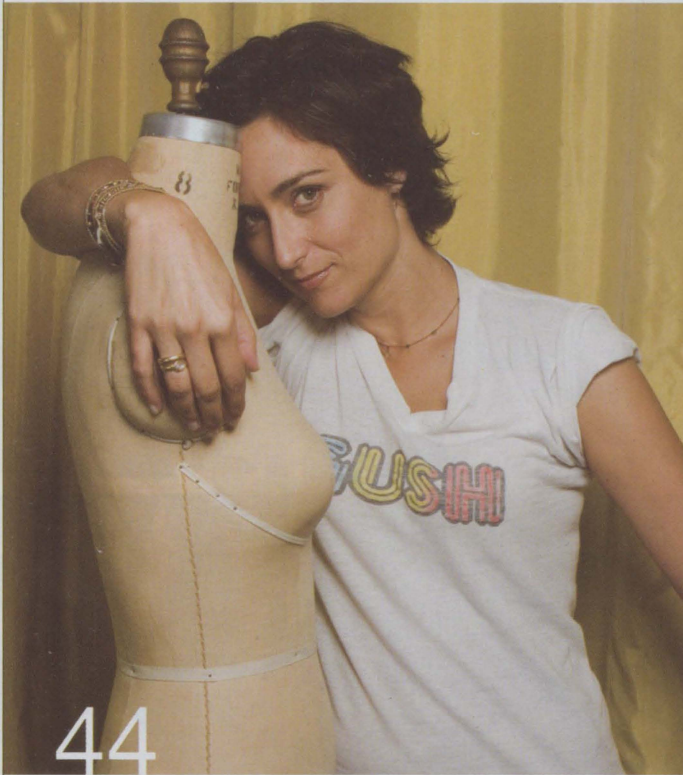


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“Really, everything I’ve been doing, especially in the last couple of years — it’s just like I’m following my instincts on everything. The show is ultimately about following your instincts.”

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Cover photo by Brie Childers



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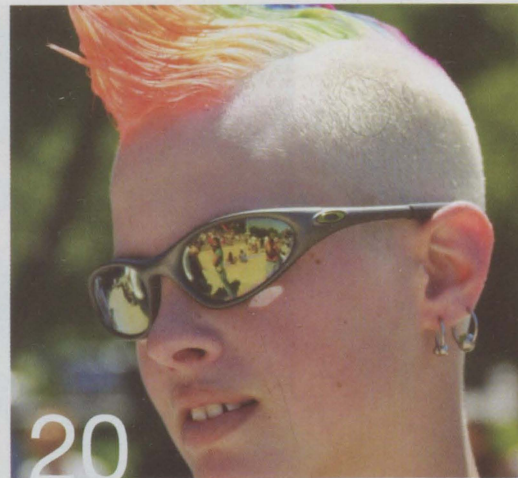
42 Power Broker Roberta Munroe After five years of programming at Sundance, this power player goes solo in Hollywood. *By Laurie K. Schenden*

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BRIE CHILDERS (HEDISON), ELISA SHEBARO (BURKE), RHODE ISLAND BOARD OF TOURISM (CITY)

“You can be picky about your prospective partner’s looks, morals, finances, or sexual orientation, but you can’t be picky about *all* those things unless you’re a wealthy, virgin supermodel. I fall short in a category or two.”

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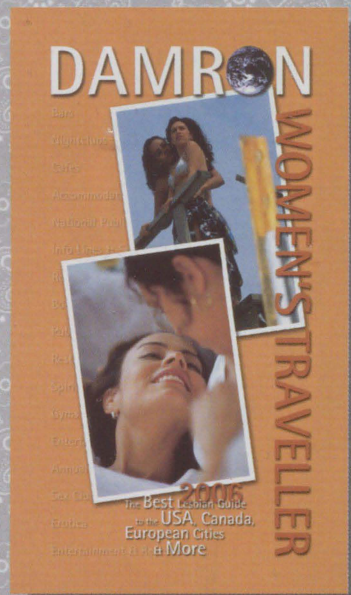


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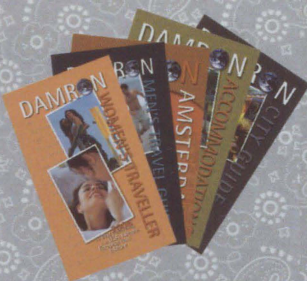
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Contributors



"Blue-eyed soul is one thing, but the diminutive blonde rocking the 2005 San Francisco Drag King Contest as Prince was a whole new take on crossover," says **Rebecca Chekouras**, who interviews showstopping winner Jeannie "Jae" Sevelius on page 80. "I had become interested in kinking recently, going to some of the local cabaret," Chekouras explains, "but this was my first drag king *competition*, and I was mesmerized by the level of artistry: extremely professional. The annual contest is one of the best shows the LGBT community — particularly the trans community here — presents." Chekouras, who stuffed herself into a black leather, strapless bustier and screaming pink feather boa for the event, is at work on a novel set in Palm Springs, *The Turquoise Gate*, about two dykes who wander in the desert to escape the disappointment of lives lived too small and who find more challenges, adventures and bizarre characters than they are prepared to face. Chekouras lives in the San Francisco Bay area.



At the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission's San Francisco reception to celebrate Palestinian activist Rauda Morcos (see page 12), throngs of avid fans kept contributor **Ariane Conrad** from sitting down with the woman of honor for a brief interview. "It was almost time for Morcos to give her speech, and finally I had to bust in on a conversation that she and a VIP — who shall remain nameless — were thoroughly engrossed in. Unfortunately, said VIP is a major financial contributor to another project I work with," Conrad notes. "Luckily, I was wearing a name tag identifying me as from *CURVE* magazine, and the VIP didn't recognize me." When she's not writing for magazines like *CURVE* and *LiP*, Conrad works for a national philanthropy organization that encourages charitable giving for structural, systemic change, and builds bridges between activists and community leaders fighting for social justice, donors and funders.



"It's an amazing experience to spend 10 days inside a movie theater watching film after film," says contributor **Ellen Rosner Feig**, who covers the Tribeca Film Festival in this issue (see page 62), and realizes that LGBT films are becoming more and more mainstream. "The ambitious nature of this year's Tribeca Film Festival meant that I saw no sunlight for days at a time, ate a bus load of Twizzlers and drank a tub of Diet Coke." Feig writes on entertainment topics for numerous outlets including *The Hollywood Reporter*, *Hollywood.com*, *Skuaak.com* and *Impose Magazine*. Her nonfiction book, *The Ex Files: Women, Litigation and Liberty*, was published by Adams Media in June 2006.



"As a child of the '60s, I could only dream of a job where you could actually party all night long, while helping people at the same time," says freelance writer **Sheryl Kay**, who interviews fundraiser and party planner extraordinaire Alison Burgos in this issue (see page 12). "That's what we thought we were all about: blasting the music in smoke-filled rooms lit with black lights, talking about how we were going to feed the poor, help minorities and join the Peace Corps." Talking with Burgos made Kay realize the old hippie traditions truly live on — and Kay has been a part of keeping the dream alive. Three years ago, Kay started Tampa Chaverot, the first and only nonprofit social organization for Jewish lesbians in the southern United States. When the girls aren't in a coffee klatch, Kay volunteers with another group along the west coast of Florida, leading dykes deep into palm scrub forests in the hot new sport of geocaching. When she's not partying it up or contributing to several magazines and newspapers, Kay spends her time running after her two awesome kids, Simone and Elijah, and their delicious Dalmatian, Xena.



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Help Them Rock Us

My 19-year-old daughter, Katy Fabula, enjoys your magazine. Being gay in a rural community is hard for her. I think my daughter is pretty amazing. By the age of 17, she was already quite an accomplished singer-songwriter. ...

Unfortunately, on Christmas Eve in 2004, at age 18, Katy suffered a severe right frontal intracranial hemorrhage — in other words, a stroke. For many days, Katy was not able to speak or see; she would use sign language to let us know she was OK. She even made jokes through this terrible tragedy. Now, Katy is back. Initially, her voice was a little weak, but now she's performing even better than before the stroke and composing new material. I want to reward her courage and celebrate her full recovery. I want the world to see and hear what a wonder she is.

— Nancy Fabula-Hevey, Baltimore, Md. (heveyn@mdmildep.org)

I am a 47-year-old lesbian. Nine months ago, I became involved with a woman I have known since I was 11. Maxine is a wonderful human being — creative, intelligent, funny and a talented singer, songwriter and musician. In 2001, she had surgery, and though she has had a remarkable recovery, she still has numbness on one side of her face, lost hearing in one ear and struggles with tiredness and energy levels. Maxine is as talented as ever, and her one lifelong dream is to record her music and be heard. I would love to help her fulfill her dreams.

— Francine Ross, New York (music4maxine@aol.com)

Editor's note: Wow! Tell her to go for it. Talk to dyke musicians, go to Michigan Womyn's Music Festival and, if you struggle with your (dis)abilities or are over 40, talk to lesbian music pioneers like Barb Galloway (gallowayandluckett.com).

"We hate when queers are made invisible, but it's almost like *CURVE* made both these women invisible as mothers. I am rather disappointed that no one thought to include these kids in the obits — especially when one of the women is the founder of *Girl-Mom.com*."

Are We Hard to Read?

Love you guys! Just got my new issue (Vol. 16, #5) and I do appreciate all the extra info and goodies. Just a comment though: I found the font is different and/or smaller. It was a tad difficult to read at times. Other than that, everything else in the issue is fabulous. Keep up the great work!

— J., San Francisco

On the Other Side

I was shocked ... to read Sue's letter (Vol. 16, #5) bemoaning the lack of lesbian atheist magazines or "acknowledgments" in the gay community about LGBT atheists. While I can certainly understand wanting to be represented as a member of a subcommunity, I feel that the LGBT community is significantly more tolerant of atheists than of LGBT people who are religious. When I came out as a lesbian at 15, I expected to have a difficult time with people in my Christian community dealing with my sexuality. What I didn't anticipate was that the friends I would develop in the LGBT community often would have almost the same amount of difficulty understanding, believing or accepting that I was a Christian.

Some of these difficulties are well-founded ... but the fact remains that it was incredibly difficult to be a Christian in a lesbian community, and I have found this to be more than simply my personal experience. So it frustrates me to hear Sue lamenting the lack of articles about lesbian atheists, or her saying that the lesbian community "never" supports LGBT atheists. I wish she would ... consider the other side of the picture, to understand the challenges that her religious LGBT peers face.

— Katherine, Washington, D.C.

Back-to-School Request

I am looking for scholarships for the upcoming 2006–2007 school year; I will be starting as a first-year medical school student this fall. Most medical school scholarships that I have found are created specifically for "minority students." Along with each scholarship should be a little fine print that says, "minority: does not include sexual orientation minority, but all others may apply." Any advice on where a person who is clearly not a minority student by standard scholarship definition can find some much-needed money for med school?

— Megan Wangh, via e-mail

Alix's Undies

Where can I buy the cute little panties that Alix Olson is wearing in the June 2006 issue on page 52 ("Couples That Play Together Stay Together," Vol. 16, #5)? My friends and I are having a fierce competition. Who will be the first to get their hands on a pair of "I'll be your woman or your man"?

— Tammy, via e-mail

Editor's note: Well, Tammy, we checked with Alix, and, actually, those cute little briefs are sold by Pamela Means through her Web site, pamelameans.com. When we told Means that you had asked how to get your own pair, she assured us, "I'll stock 'em up good!"

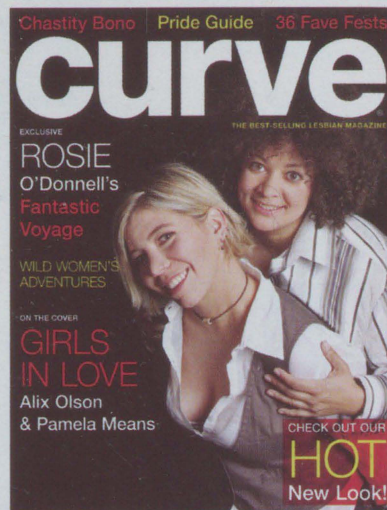
Missing Moms

In the June 2006 issue (Vol. 16, #5), in the obituaries for Allison Crews and Wendy Wasserstein, no mention was made of the children they left behind. Both were single mothers who had children they were extremely devoted to. Other important details of both these women's lives were mentioned, but the most important to either of them would have been their children. In both these cases the prominence of their single mother experience — in Wasserstein's by choice, in Crews' as a result of a teen pregnancy (and therefore the start of her advocacy) — should have been the leadoff, and I was so sad to see that in neither case was their child even mentioned by name. We hate when queers are made invisible, but it's almost like *CURVE* made both these women invisible as mothers. I am rather disappointed that no one thought to include these kids in the obits — especially when one of the women is the founder of *Girl-Mom.com*.

— Rachel Pepper, *CURVE* book review editor

Fan Mail

When I picked up the June issue of *CURVE* yesterday, I couldn't have dreamed of a more amazing, powerful, beautifully written article than what I found inside on me and Fresh Meat ("Queer Poetry in Motion" and "Keepin' It Fresh," Vol. 16, #5). Zak articulated my own work, my vision and my work in the community and Fresh Meat's work, vision and work in the community so clearly, powerfully and compellingly. And I am so excited that these articles will connect my own work, and Fresh Meat's mission and programs, with gigantic new national



audiences. What a wonderful fifth anniversary (of Fresh Meat!) gift.

— Sean Dorsey, Artistic Director,
Fresh Meat Productions

I wanted to thank you for featuring me in Out in Front ("Feminist Firebrand," Vol. 16, #5). It really means a lot to me. I've been interviewed before, but this is the first time that I'm completely satisfied with the story and wasn't misquoted. I absolutely love the piece, especially that the organizations I'm involved with are named and therefore get coverage, and am so honored that you put me in CURVE. It really is one of the best things that has happened to me.

— Miranda Elliot, Chicago

Lesbians and Disability

I am a recently out lesbian and feel 100 percent great about finally coming out. When I came out to my family, it was an awakening — they all had already known but didn't say anything to me. I've lost a lot of friends since coming out — they just don't understand or they are a bunch of prudes or something. I'm 43 years old this May and am

finally free to tell people who I really am! I tell you this because I was born with a disability: cerebral palsy. It is a very mild case and has affected only my lower half. I'm very self-conscious about it and think that this is partly the reason I haven't met anyone to share my life with yet.

I just read your story on lesbians with disabilities. Thanks for writing it. It helped a lot. Thanks too for having CURVE magazine. I guess you could say that I'm undereducated in the area of making love to a woman and having her make love to me. I realized that after reading your December issue. I am a subscriber now. I'm just about ready to renew. Keep the magazine coming!

— Wendy E. Smith, via e-mail

Lesbian Survivors of Rape

I want to thank CURVE for publishing an article in the April 2006 issue about the issue of rape ("Fighting Rape on Campus," Vol. 16, #3). I have worked in the sexual assault and domestic violence field for years and was proud to see CURVE paying attention to this terrifyingly common crime. However, I also was extremely disappointed to see that the article implies that all rapists are men. I

have worked with and personally know numerous women who were assaulted by other women. I was saddened that CURVE printed an article that feeds into the silence lesbian survivors face. Instead of ignoring it, turning a blind eye or denying it, we as a community need to talk about it, acknowledge that women are not perfect, and get to work on prevention.

— Carrie Moylan, Saline, Mich.

Got Something on Your Mind?

E-mail letters@curvemag.com; write to CURVE Letters, 1550 Bryant St., Ste. 510, San Francisco, CA 94103; or fax to 415-863-1609. Please include your name, city and state. Letters may be edited for clarity and length.

Correction

In the publisher's column, Frankly Speaking, of our May 2006 issue (Vol. 16, #4) we incorrectly identified Pandora and Ultra Events; they are sponsors of Aqua Girl and Girls in Wonderland. Aqua Girl is produced by the Women's Community Fund of Miami Beach, Fla. CURVE regrets the error. ■

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Some people need an excuse to party. **Alison Burgos** makes a living by partying.

Go to Miami's South Beach any weekend night, and you'll find Burgos' Pandora and Ultra Events hosting a lesbian bash at some hot nightclub. From the music and entertainment to the food, drinks and decorations, Burgos and her business partners create the entire scene for upward of 500 women each night.

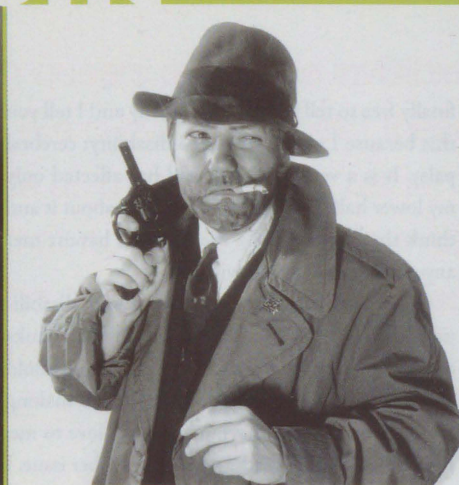
But the real splash Burgos makes is with her Aqua Girl event, now in its sixth year. Thousands of women converge on South Beach for this four-day experience filled with dancing, live music, comedy performances and celebrity appearances.

And the best part? Every penny generated at Aqua Girl goes to the Women's Community Fund, a nonprofit organization founded by Burgos in 1999 that raises funds for a wide variety of women's groups and charities in south Florida. Last year alone, Aqua Girl raised \$86,000 for the Women's Community Fund.

"This is about women having a seat at the table," Burgos says. "Now we have our own organizations for our own specific needs: health issues, political needs, equal rights issues." Organizations that have benefited from the Women's Community Fund include the Mautner Project and the Miami Gay and Lesbian Film Festival.

Some wonder why Burgos spends so much of her time working charity events. After all, it's not like she has endless time on her hands.

"I love it," she explains. "This is really my passion. Once you have a great experience making a difference in someone's life, or in a community, I don't know how you wouldn't want to do it all the time." — *Sheryl Kay*



Star of the Stage

She's been called deaf, insane, a writer, a performer and a lesbian, but **Terry Galloway** truly defies any attempted labeling.

Born to a mom who had taken antibiotics that interrupt normal neurological fetal development, Galloway lost her hearing as a child and experienced terrifying hallucinations. Her early memories include "being fitted with Coke-bottle glasses and a hideous, radio-sized hearing aid that fit between my boobs like a third one."

On more than one occasion, she was marginalized because of her deafness, with people consistently ignoring her desire to act. "It royally pissed me off," Galloway says, but it was just enough to push her to make things happen on her own.

She co-founded a cabaret in Austin, Texas, started writing and performing in her own shows, and landed gigs at WOW, the New York women's theater collective, and P.S. 122, a multidisciplinary art center also in New York. "Not a bad trade-off if you don't mind eschewing money, fame, power and influence," she says.

Despite the lack of money and power, Galloway's influence on queer theater and on theater for the disabled has been profound. She has performed everything from Shakespeare to her own highly acclaimed drag act as Jake Ratchett, Short Detective. Now she produces queer theater in Tallahassee, Fla., with her partner, Donna Nudd, and the Mickee Faust Club, which they co-founded.

When Galloway looks for meaning in her work, she says, "I think of myself and all the other people I've known who have similar stories about being disregarded, thrown away, rejected — or, miraculously, rescued by love. Those are the people whose company I keep, with whom I work and create. If I matter, it is only because they matter, too." — *Sheryl Kay*



Voice Amplifier

Palestinian poet and activist **Rauda Morcos** (above right) was recently honored with the 2006 Felipa de Souza Award from the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission for her work on behalf of Palestinian and Arab lesbians living in Israel and the Occupied Territories. Morcos leads ASWAT (Arabic for "voices"), an advocacy group based in Haifa, Israel, that provides meeting space for its members as well as public education on their behalf.

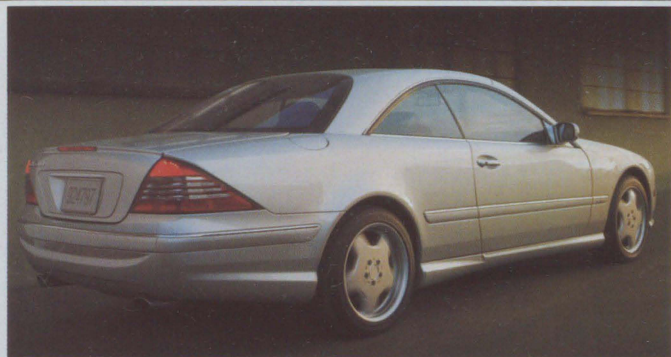
Lesbians in Morcos' homeland face discrimination on three fronts: as women in a male-dominated society, as Palestinians living under Israeli rule and as lesbians in a culture where the consequences for expressing their sexuality are often severe. After Morcos mentioned her orientation in a newspaper interview, her car windows were smashed, she received threats, and she lost her job as a teacher.

At the IGLHRC award reception in San Francisco last May, Morcos insisted that all the women of ASWAT shared the honor with her: "An organization is meaningless without all the people who make it up."

Morcos said she feels disappointed that the global LGBT community has not connected to the struggles of other oppressed minorities. She called on the LGBT community in the United States to put more pressure on the government to change racist laws as well as "to bring an end to the war in Iraq and the war against Palestine, which your taxes are basically underwriting."

She also urged the gay community to "take a more intentional stance, not just liberal, and to demand a change from the patriarchal system in which we live. We need rights as individuals, not just as married people or as parents." — *Ariane Conrad*

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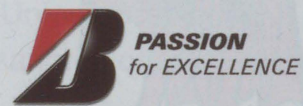
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GAY PETS ON PARADE

Lesbian author and former *Playboy* playmate Stephanie Adams was a bit over the news, after she was allegedly assaulted by New York policemen. But no strife was in sight at the Rubyfruit Pet Pride Pageant last June, where she and Liza Minnelli were celebrity judges who had a barking good time. The lesbian-owned Rubyfruit hosted the fundraiser for the Mayor's Alliance for NYC's Animals, which featured a cutest dog and pet and person look-alike contests and a butch/femme showdown. The winning pet got to ride in the New York LGBT Pride Parade.

— Diane Anderson-Minshall

Get Your Ticket to Hell

Good girls gone bad, campy musical theater, an ambiguously queer boyfriend and a real-life easy-on-the-eyes lesbian couple are just a few draws of *One Way Ticket to Hell*, writer Drew Taylor's pulpy cautionary tale (in the vein of *Reefer Madness*) now making a West Coast debut at the Marilyn Monroe Theatre in West Hollywood.

The lesbian couple who sings together, stays together in this production starring Kristen Howe, in a part written specifically for her, and real-life girlfriend Erin Stoddard. Howe plays Cassandra Leigh, a gal on a wayward path to reefer, heroin and eventually an asylum, while Stoddard camps it up as Cassandra's troublemaking-hooker-with-a-heart sidekick, Cindy. This over-the-top show culls material from the film of the same title and features music by Robert Cioffi and the direction of Richard Hochberg.

One Way is rife with homage to 1960s-style musicals and can easily be described as a mix of *Grease*, *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* and *Hairspray*. Besides playing Cassandra's bad-girl gal pal, Stoddard morphs into a host of roles, including a nameless Asian character, a randomly Slovakian prison matron and Cassandra's nosy neighbor from across the fence.

"I get to show off some comic chops," Stoddard admits. The plot revolves around Cassandra's journey, which includes a shameful spiral into relationships with the wrong kind of men — a greaser named Chico and another who "doth protests too much" about his purported homosexuality — family problems, her stepfather's questionable morals and, eventually, the needle and "junk."

"She's a good girl gone bad and she never goes good again," Howe says.



For Howe and Stoddard, who drove from New York's Lower East Side to Manhattan Beach, Calif., their cats in tow, to star in the show, working together is a breeze. Their love story emulates the plot trajectory of all great American musicals, in which the lead couple sings and dances their way into each other's hearts. Somewhere between the footlights and the offstage costume changes five years ago, Howe and Stoddard discovered that they were in love.

Stoddard, who took her dancing shoes to the stage in the 2001 Broadway revival of *42nd Street*, says there's no jealousy for these lesbian thespians and jokes that there have so far been no *Showgirls*-style career-wrecking moments when one of them tosses marbles at the feet of the other. But what happens on-screen may be a different story. — Tracy E. Gilchrist

Visit onewaytickettohellthemusical.com for more information.



BATWOMAN
5'10" TALL

Is It a Bird? A Plane? A Lesbian Bat?

Just who is that gorgeous, 5-foot-10-inch redhead in the knee-high red boots with spiked heels? Yes, it's true: After her 27-year hiatus, DC Comics is reintroducing Batwoman to its legendary lineup of superheroes. And she's not just coming back. Batwoman is coming out.

This summer, DC Comics announced that Batwoman is being reincarnated as her old alter ego, socialite Kathy Kane. But this time, when the pearls and fine dresses come off and the tight-fitting leather goes on, Kane becomes a lesbian crime fighter.

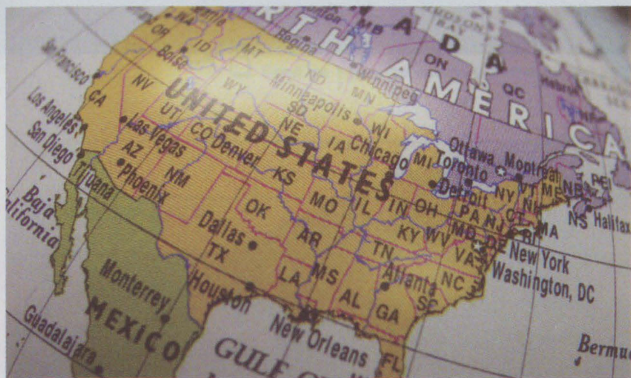
While the announcement may have come as a surprise to some, DC Comics has been on the vanguard of inclusion by featuring women as superheroes for decades, as well as pushing for African Americans,

Latinos, Asians, blind fighters, wheelchair warriors and more. Some comic book aficionados are guarded about this recent development, wondering why DC Comics made such hype about Batwoman's sexuality.

"There's no objection from my corner about featuring a homosexual as a main character," says Chuck Dixon, who wrote many of the Batman comics from 1990 to 2001. At the same time, he says he hopes the new Batwoman is "an interesting character with honest emotions and motivations who also happens to be gay, rather than a lesbian — capital 'L' — Batwoman who is nothing more than a shallow promotional ploy."

Until the verdict is unmasked, watch out, Clark. Lois might be next to join our team. — Sheryl Kay

COURTESY OF MARVELOUS; A. LANGE FOR NBC'S ANIMAL PARADE; BARBARA PARSONS (ONE WAY); JOEY CHUNG (MAP); WIREIMAGE.COM (TOMLIN AND WARD)



Ohio is off the Map

What does reproductive justice have in common with rights for the LGBT community? A lot, according to a recently formed coalition consisting of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Health Collective, and Ipas, an international organization working to advance women's reproductive and sexual rights. These three groups collaborated to create Mapping Our Rights, a new interactive online tool that helps navigate discrimination against women, men and families, at mappingourrights.org.

"We find in our work that political opposition to one set of human rights, such as women's access to contraception and abortion, creates the space for opposition to other kinds of human rights, such as the rights of LGBT people," says Loretta Ross, National Coordinator of SisterSong. "The same constituency is fighting against all of our rights, but in response to them, we've historically divided ourselves by separate social justice issues. We realized we needed to start working together."

One thing that organizers had lacked was comprehensive, up-to-date data on different states' stances on sexual and reproductive issues — and so the map was born. Intended as a tool for researchers, journalists, activists and others, this interactive U.S. map ranks each state by its policies on issues like abortion, same-sex partnership and access to birth control and sex education. The most progressive areas in both reproductive and sexual rights turn out to be New England and the far western seaboard, as well as New Mexico; the least hospitable are Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana, and North and South Dakota. The site also offers some handy information in each state's snapshot, including doctor-to-patient ratio, racial breakdowns and stats on wealth distribution, access to health care, infant mortality rates and more.

Ranked close to last, Louisiana's page includes the story of Elizabeth and her pregnant 19-year-old daughter, duped by an anti-choice activist named William Graham, who masqueraded as a doctor at a "clinic" with a name confusingly similar to a nearby, legitimate reproductive health care facility. It wasn't until it was too late that mother and daughter realized he wasn't for real.

Jason Cianciotto, research director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute, insists, "One thing that the map effectively accomplishes is to depict how geography affects our civil rights and how same-sex couples are forced to search out and relocate to places with the most accepting conditions and best protections." His hope is that the Mapping Our Rights project will help break down artificial barriers among Americans. — Ariane Conrad



Lily Tomlin



Sela Ward

"The right wing realized that gay marriage was as emotional an issue for some people as abortion, and they pushed it forward, and we let them do it. And then we got suckered into it — and said, 'Oh, yes, sure, we should be married,' and then we fell right into their hands." >> [Rita Mae Brown to *Between the Lines*](#)

"Superskinny women really irritate us. We hate when they say, 'Sometimes I just forget to eat.' Now, I've forgotten my anniversary and where I parked my car. But I've never forgotten to eat." >> [Sela Ward to *Esquire*](#)

"One of the failings of the old feminist movement was that it didn't make room for homemakers. And it should have. We've swung back another way now. There's the whole biology-is-destiny thing. This is where you say to me, 'Rap on, sister.'" >> [Lily Tomlin to *Time*](#)

"I didn't want to be there. No one banned me from being there. But I didn't want to stand up and cheer." >> [Mary Cheney to ABC's *Primetime Live* on why she refused to attend President Bush's 2004 State of the Union address, in which he defended the "sanctity of marriage"](#)



Jocelyn Nevel

| ARTIST |

You will never look at underwear the same way again. Artist **Jocelyn Nevel** stitches together feminine garments such as bras and pantyhose to create massive installations that challenge gender traditions. In her piece *Crotches* (above), Nevel cut out crotches from pantyhose, stitched them together and stretched the fabric in embroidery hoops, creating the unique wall hangings displayed at the Riverside and Hyde Park arts centers. She has constructed a quilt out of bra cups, stuffed stocking feet to create phallic orbs clustered around the ceiling, and lined entire walls with black panty liners. Nevel says that the goal of her work is to challenge the traditions of art and gender and to create something that can be seen as both attractive and repulsive. Though she specializes in these installations, her work ranges from photography to sculpture to performance art. In her series *Hair* (left), she scanned clumps of her curly red hair and displayed the images in a grid. "I want my work to provoke," she explains. "I want to make people question the surface." — *Dana Kaye*

The Other Side of Gay Science

Throughout my teens and into my 20s, I endeavored to be gay. Children emulate those parents they adore, and I revered my lesbian mom. Never mind her lectures on how homosexuals have it rough and how she'd be happier if I could save myself — and her — some grief and just *be* straight. She was my idol. In vain, I tried to muster up lust for others of my sex.

"Molly Ringwald in *The Breakfast Club* is hot," I'd tell my mother and her girlfriend. "Don't you think Madonna is a babe? I do."

My mother lost custody of me in the late '70s when she came out as a lesbian. Faced with my attempted interest in the fairer sex, she panicked. "Actually," she replied, "I prefer Willie Nelson."

In high school, much as I would have desired otherwise, my eye went to the bespectacled yearbook editor — male — rather than the pretty ingénue in the senior musical. I enrolled in college as a liberal studies major; still, try as I might, I could not be gay. Humiliated, I introduced boyfriend after boyfriend to my mother. I moved in with a man around the time of Matthew Shepard's murder.

"Good to meet you." She clasped my new boyfriend's hand in hers, palpably relieved. "When's the wedding?"

Buoyed by my mom's acceptance of my sexual identity, I made my peace with it, too. If I was straight, then so be it. I attended PFLAG meetings and marched in Gay Pride parades — out and proud. This year, I even got married. My mother blessed our wedding site with a prayer for our marriage and its longevity, and she cried joyful tears postceremony.

But recently, my old mortification has flared up again. The May 2006 issue of *The Journal of Biosocial Science* includes an article titled "Children of Homosexuals and Transsexuals More Apt to be Homosexual."

Once more, I have failed.

The author of the article, Paul Cameron, bases his research on interviews with 77 adult children of homosexual parents who volunteered for three investigations. Cameron is chairman of the Family Research Institute — a Colorado-based think



Melissa Hart and partner

tank working to preserve the "traditional" family. He found that 30 percent of his interview subjects are homosexual. The article abstract concludes that these findings suggest that parents' sexual inclinations influence their children's.

Somehow, he forgot to interview most of the queerspawn I know (yes, we children of gays and lesbians call ourselves *queerspawn*) who identify as heterosexual. He forgot to interview me. Apparently, he never spoke with my lesbian friend Wendy, daughter of a ramrod-straight Baptist preacher. He neglected to talk with my transsexual friend Caitlin, who grew up with her conservative grandma and great-grandma in a Phoenix trailer park.

Do our parents' sexual "inclinations" influence us, as Cameron's article suggests? Try as I might, I cannot love women as my mother does. A marriage certificate sits framed on my mantle, granting my husband and me a wealth of benefits that are still, unfortunately, denied to same-sex couples.

Still, some of my mother's influence has stuck. I'm committed to helping those oppressed by fear and hatred. And maybe that's more important than who is in my bed.
— Melissa Hart



RIGHTS ADVANCE ACROSS EUROPE

Last spring the Czech Republic became the first former Eastern-bloc country to legally recognize same-sex partnerships. Despite President Vaclav Klaus' veto of the bill in February, a majority vote by members of Parliament overrode him. The new law gives same-sex couples the right to inherit a partner's property and raise children, although it does not allow adoption. Belgium now grants lesbian and gay couples the same rights to adoption as straight couples. Elsewhere in Europe, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, England and Wales permit gay couples to adopt children. The Danish government has finally passed a law allowing lesbians access to artificial insemination, a practice banned since 1997.

— Ariane Conrad

Snatching Those Awards

"The women around here are not only good listeners, they also know their way around a snatch! I've never been more relaxed," quipped openly bisexual Megan Mullally (right) at the 17th Annual GLAAD Media Awards in San Francisco this June. Hundreds turned out to celebrate media-makers for their accurate and sensitive representations of LGBT lives and to, well, see what emcee Mullally and curvaceous honoree Jennifer Tilly would wear. (For the record, Mullally, who was promoting her new NBC talk show, was breathtaking in low-cut black satin.)

Mullally also spoke in favor of same-sex marriage and asked pointedly, "Don't you wish that George Bush would just come out of the closet? Who but a homo would be that obsessed with homos?"

Meanwhile, in her acceptance speech, giggly Golden Gate Award recipient Jennifer Tilly said, "GLAAD is an amazing organization. They do such a great job of standing up and saying, 'This is not right. This is a negative stereotype. We refuse to be marginalized. We refuse to be treated like second-class citizens.'" — Ariane Conrad



The More Things Change ...

We can never get enough of Whitney or Angelina, can we? | By Jocelyn Voo

Watch your toes, ladies. This month, girls are coming out in droves. Which ones are legitimate is still up for debate. Word from the wise: Open your eyes and guard your hearts.

Hell to the No!

R&B legend **Whitney Houston** not only likes to partake in the white, according to sister-in-law **Tina Brown** — she also likes to dip into the pink. Along with selling photos of what's allegedly Houston's bathroom (outfitted with crack pipes and other drug paraphernalia) to the *National Enquirer*, Brown tells the tabloid that Houston was involved in multiple same-sex affairs, and that the Grammy winner's husband, recording artist and penitentiary regular **Bobby Brown**, knew all about it. "It's no secret," Tina says. "I've seen her with a woman a couple of times. They were walking around without shirts on when I came in the house."

A Sordid Affair

Celebrity journalist Chauncè Hayden told the *New York Post* that exotic dancer and former **Howard Stern** radio show regular **Debbie Roach** — known on-air as **Debbie Tay**, the Space Lesbian — died of a drug overdose in 1995 after **Jenny Shimizu** allegedly asked Tay to acquire heroin for Shimizu and **Angelina Jolie**, whom she met while filming *Foxfire*. "Debbie told me, 'Jenny gave me her ATM card and wants me to buy \$200 worth of heroin and ship it to the *Foxfire* set,'" Hayden told the *Post*. "Jenny later called me and said how sorry she was for what happened. She said she'd pay for the funeral, but she never paid a dime. She didn't even go to the service." However, Hayden himself isn't really one to talk about good taste. According to IMDb.com, he once brought Tay's cremated ashes onto Howard Stern's morning show and "played with her ashes over the air."

Bring on the Ladykillers

Years ago when *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* was still on, every girl you knew was hoping **Alyson Hannigan** might be queer. Who else could execute lesbian character Willow so perfectly? So maybe that's why **Iyari Limon** — slayer-in-training and Willow's lover, Kennedy — flew underneath the real-life gaydar. Limon, who was briefly married to *Napoleon Dynamite* actor **Efren Ramirez**, came out publicly in April and is now dating **DJ Sandra Edge**. "I loved how she was just in her own little world,

"It was me, him, Linda and 2,000 lesbians. Apparently there was speculation about whether I was wearing underwear. Look, I've been wearing short skirts onstage forever and obviously I wear panties. Christ!"



Angelina Jolie



Courtney Love



Whitney Houston

and she was so cute," Limon told *AfterEllen.com*. "I love androgyny, androgynous women. You know, short hair, really don't have to wear a lot of makeup, pretty face, just cool and confident and know who they are." Iyari, consider yourself officially welcome in the land of lesbians.

Underneath It All

At the benefit for the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Community Center at the Henry Fonda Theater last April, singer and perpetual rehab queen **Courtney Love**, Smashing Pumpkins frontman **Billy Corgan** and songwriting legend **Linda Perry** all belted it out onstage in a one-time-only performance. "It was me, him, Linda and 2,000 lesbians," Love tells *NME.com*. "Apparently there was

speculation about whether I was wearing underwear. Look, I've been wearing short skirts onstage forever and obviously I wear panties. Christ!"

Natural Disaster Warning

Put **Eva Longoria**, **Jessica Alba**, **Jessica Simpson** and **Eva Mendes** within a 5-mile radius of each other. Watch the neighborhood implode under their hotness. Longoria recently says of her three "special" neighbors to *GQ*, "They're my crushes. I have intense love for these women." The *Desperate Housewives* starlet (who, alas, is dating San Antonio Spurs point guard **Tony Parker**) says the trio often comes over to her place, adding, "That's our crew. That's our gang." Don't say I didn't warn you about the impending apocalypse. ■

Your Favorite Lesbian Movies

In the wake of *Brokeback Mountain*, Curvemag.com asked visitors to tell us which lesbian movie should go down in history as a pure classic. The hands-down winner? *Desert Hearts*. But don't think there weren't another 79 movies that gave it a run for its money, including *Bound*, *The Hours*, *If These Walls Could Talk 2* and runner-up, *Tipping the Velvet*. Writers from around the globe shared movie stories like this from one reader: "If These Walls Could Talk 2 was one of the first lesbian movies I viewed as a teenager, that made me feel comfortable in my own skin and not ashamed of who

I was. The three different stories each had a special meaning to me, because as time passes I can keep returning to this film and relating parts of my life. Hopefully certain aspects of each woman's perseverance will have certain representation in my life as it continues."

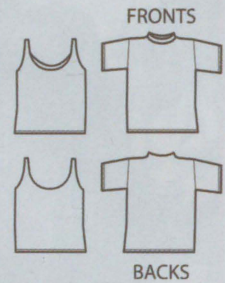
While Judy voted for *Desert Hearts*, she adds, "but for guts



and artistic style, there was a movie that was on PBS back in the '70s. It was called *The War Widow*. It was about a woman whose husband was at war, and she ended up having an affair with a woman photographer and is disowned, I think, by her mother. It was so hard back then to ever see anything done artistically and in a positive light toward lesbianism, and I was in my late teens just coming to terms with the fact that I was different. I think that anyone who ever saw it was shocked at the boldness of it for its day and time. I remember

gathering at the apartment of a group of my first real lesbian friends to watch it. Gosh, that sure brings back memories that I haven't thought of in years."

Guess what, Judy? You can finally relive the days of your lesbian youth: *The War Widow* is now available on DVD through Ladyslipper Music at ladyslipper.org. ■

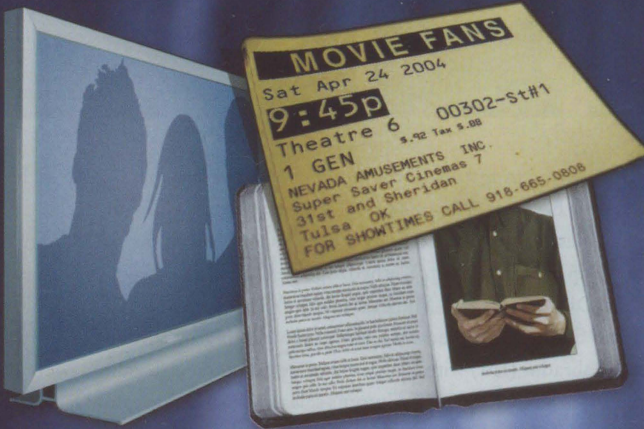


"NOT THAT KIND OF LESBIAN"

— Kiyoko E. Lopez's winning slogan for CURVE's T-shirt contest. If Hallmark had also been a sponsor, Lopez would have had our vote for best new greeting card, too, with "Beware of those who admire your relationship. Next thing you know they're kissing your girlfriend." Good advice indeed.

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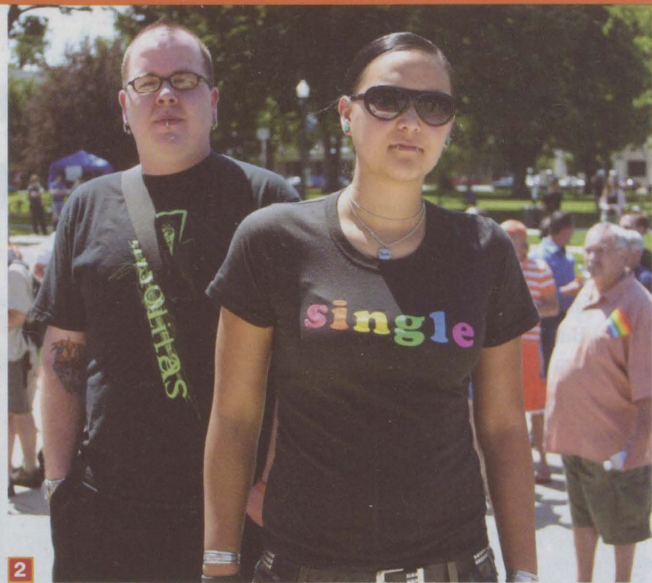
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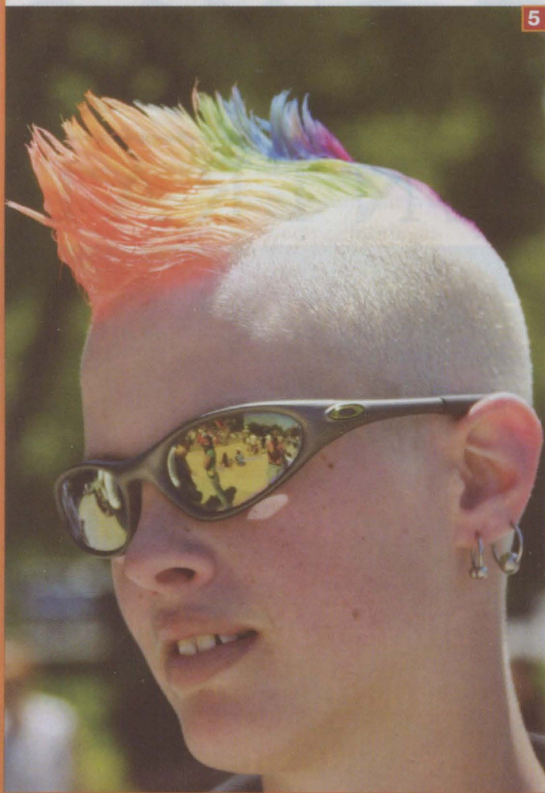
Scene



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7

1 Doria Roberts and her adoring fans at the Girls in Wonderland pool party in Florida
2 A sexy singleton struts her stuff at Boise's LGBT Pride **3** CURVE's executive editor, Diane Anderson-Minshall, takes over the Idaho State Capitol steps as keynote speaker for Boise Pride **4** Lipstick and Dipstick columnists Kathy Belge (left) and Gina Daggett (second from right) flank Jacob and Diane Anderson-Minshall (center), and writer and SF LGBT Center staffer Catherine Plato **5** Finally a rainbow we aren't sick of seeing, on this lovely lass in Boise **6** TV hottie Honey Labrador (left) with Daggett and CURVE's associate editor, Malinda Lo, at the San Francisco Pride VIP reception **7** CURVE's sales and marketing team Danie Belfield (left) and Sara Jane Keskula flank hot-shot photographer Kina Williams at Portland Pride

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COMING OUT TO YOUR KID'S TEACHER

Back-to-school season can be a time of excitement for children but a time of uncertainty for lesbian parents, because every September means a whole new round of coming-out stories. It may be tempting to remain silent until situations force us to come out, but if we expect the adults in our children's lives to treat us with respect, then we must tell them who we are. Sharing information in an introductory letter is a great start. Here are some tips:

Do it sooner rather than later. If, on the first day, a teacher says, "Please bring this note home to your mom and dad," your child is already off to a rocky start.

Keep it brief. One page is enough; your goal is simply to let your child's teacher know how "out" you and your child are.

Be clear. Be sure to use the word "gay" or "lesbian" so there's no ambiguity.

Name names. Is there a Mom and a Mommy? Is there a dad in the family? Include a family photo if you're comfortable doing so.

Urge the teacher to share the letter with all the adults, such as the music and art teachers, who work with your child. It's helpful if everyone's in the loop.

Don't expect a reply. The beginning of the school year is an extremely busy time for teachers. Just know that you have put the first building block of communication in place.

Offer to provide more information. Be available for phone conversations, or come in for a meeting as needed.

Keep your tone professional, upbeat and positive. You are neither apologizing nor demanding; you're simply introducing your family so that teachers can connect positively with your child.

— Mary E. Cronin

X Marks the Spot

Dear Fairy Butch: I am a recently out 25-year-old and I am loving life. My partner and I have an awesome relationship. We are so happy and so much in love. My issue is that one of our friends, a lesbian, is not supportive of our relationship. She talks behind my back, lies to my partner and makes really horrible comments about our relationship. To top it off, she and her partner don't have a good relationship, and she often calls me to complain and bitch. Her attitude toward my partner and me is strange, because she is the one who hooked us up in the first place. How can I make it known that I don't appreciate her attitude, while still maintaining a friendship with her? — **Confused Chick in Charlotte**

Dear Chick: Well, first off, mazel tov to you, dear girl. It sounds like the world is your oyster! I don't know why your friend makes these hurtful comments and tries to harm your relationship. Maybe she's jealous of you and your relationship with your partner. Maybe she misses the greater amount of time that you spent together before your relationship began. Maybe she's jealous of your partner and yearns to sample your cupcakes. Who knows what's causing her bad behavior? But she's responsible for it, and it needs to stop. Just be clear: Lay it out for her. Often people act like this because they don't have anything interesting to say. Be upfront with her and tell her this kind of horse-hockey is just not going to fly, and that if it continues, it's going to affect your friendship with her. Meanwhile, you'll want to make sure your own house is clean, hon, and that you check your own behavior to ensure you're doing everything you can to make things copacetic.

Dear Fairy Butch: OK, I've been around the block a time or two, and I still can't seem to get the skinny on this thing they call the G-spot. I can't seem to find it, and I'm a bit embarrassed that I don't know more. I would like to explore it with my girlfriend; can you help me out? — **Foraging in Flint**

Dear Flint: Well, sugar, let me see if I can give you a little insight; pardon me if I get a little technical. The urethral sponge, or G-spot, so named in tribute to gynecologist Ernst Grafenberg, is located 2 to 3 inches inside the vagina on its front wall toward the hair-covered mons pubis. It is sized somewhere between a dime and a half-dollar in circumference; has a moist, spongy, corrugated texture; and is wrapped around the urethra to protect it from injury during penetration. When a woman becomes aroused, it swells with fluid and protrudes out a bit from the rest of the vaginal wall, thus becoming easier to locate.

Here are two simple ways to find your girl's G-spot, pumpkin. The first method places her on all fours with her back



arched, enabling you to reach in with palm facing downward, since you will naturally want to approach the G-spot with your sensitive fingertips rather than with your fingernails. The second technique places her in a squatting position where she can readily bear down with her PC muscles, or the muscles of the pelvic floor (she can easily locate them by stopping the flow of urine midstream). As she presses down with these muscles, her G-spot will be pushed toward her vaginal opening and will be easier to reach, by either you or your gal. In either case, the latter technique is particularly helpful to folks with short fingers.

While many women relish direct stimulation of their G-spots, some find it irritating, especially if they are not sufficiently aroused. When you penetrate your partner's vagina, avoid immediate intense contact of the G-spot, instead moving toward direct stimulation as her arousal mounts. You will find that the texture and sensitivity of the G-spot will change with sexual excitement, and its location will be affected by the position of your gal's body. Since the G-spot is wrapped around the urethra and is adjacent to the bladder, many women feel an urge to urinate when this spot is touched, especially if too much stimulation is given too soon. The person being stimulated can become more comfortable with this sensation by emptying her bladder before sex and putting a towel underneath her prior to being penetrated. You can also help her to feel less self-conscious about this process by assuring her that indeed, into each life some rain must fall, and it matters not should this be such an occasion. ■

Gentle Readers: To submit your queries regarding the finer points of lesbian life, sexuality, romance and other matters of the heart, send a note to fb@fairybutch.com.

All Cried Out Over a Girl



Dear Lipstick and Dipstick: My girlfriend of two years just dumped me, and I feel like my life is coming apart. When she broke up with me, in her e-mail she said she “can’t handle a relationship right now.” We still live together, but our lease will be up in a couple of months, and I’m going through hell. I find myself sobbing at my job, at home and in the middle of Wal-Mart just at the thought of her. I need my life back. Lately, all I do is think about her and how she popped this on me right after our anniversary, a night when we gave each other presents and made love. It just doesn’t make sense. Please help me. I’m tired of crying. — **Bawling Baby in Boston**

Lipstick: You’re better off without the bitch — I have no use for cowardly women, and neither should you. Her e-mail bomb drop simply reveals what I bet you knew all along: that she not only likes to eat it, but she’s a pussy, too. This is gonna

hurt, but it’s for your own good. Let me translate “can’t handle a relationship” for you. What it really means is that she’s fallen out of love with you and has met someone else. Now, I bet you’re bawling even harder, aren’t you? That’s OK, let it all pour out. When your soul’s done detoxifying (it will stop crying on its own), put this girl behind you, close the door and lock it. In order to get your life back, you must get away from her. This is the first step, which means moving out stat, even if you have to sleep on a friend’s couch. Being around the spineless wench will only sabotage the healing. Pack it up.

Dipstick: Boston, don’t listen to Lipstick. She has no perspective. She’s always been the leaver. What you’re going through is normal. I remember when my first true love broke up with me. What a sight I must have been, wandering the suburban streets at my pathetic door-to-door canvassing job, trying to save the environment when I could barely save myself. Dear child, allow yourself this time to mourn. If you’re still pining over her in a year, then get to therapy. Or, better yet, do what scores of other shattered lesbians have tried — have a rebound affair. Nothing like good sex to take your mind off heartbreak.

P.S. What the hell are you doing shopping at Wal-Mart? If you really want to get depressed, educate yourself on how Wal-Mart treats its female workers.

Dear Lipstick and Dipstick: I have an intense obsession with Melissa Etheridge. Ever since I got tickets to her upcoming show, I haven’t been able to think about anything else. I wonder if she’d ever leave Tammy. Maybe I could convince her that we’re soul mates? Any idea how I can get backstage to meet her? — **Yes I Am in Love with M.E.**

Lipstick: Whoa! I just got off the phone with Melissa and she’ll be beefing up security for her summer tour. Listen up, Brave and Crazy, if she and Tammy ever call it quits — which I doubt they will — you can bet she won’t be combing her concert venues for a wild-eyed fanatic to date. For your own good, you need to put her CDs away, take down the posters and, for dyke’s sake, hide your vibrator! Seeing her in your fantasies is only fueling the fire. Do all this and then — only then — *maybe* you won’t make an ass of yourself at the concert. And even better, when you’re not fixated on M.E.’s adorable pixie cut, you’ll be able to zoom in, on the hottie seated two rows in front of you who *is* within reach.

Dipstick: In a weird way, I can relate, M.E. fan. When Madonna’s *Truth or Dare* came out, I watched it over and over, imagining myself on tour with the virginal one. I didn’t want much — just to carry her bag to the tour bus or help her into her cone bra before the show. I was sure if we only met, we’d have so much in common. We’d sit around and make fun of Kevin Costner together; I’d whip up delicious vegetarian meals and she’d give me shoulder massages. We’d be two pals on the road.

Fortunately, I never took my fantasy any further. I didn’t write Madonna love letters or try to sneak backstage to slip her a red rose, and neither should you. Besides, I’ll bet that Tammy is quite the street fighter, so I wouldn’t mess with her mojo, if you know what I mean.

I suggest that you get to the back of the line with all the other crazed fans, and keep your little secret to yourself. ■

Ask us anything about sex, love or lesbians at lipstickdipstick.com.



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Look Before You Leap

Virgo (Aug. 24–Sept. 23)

Sex: Relationships have their ups and downs. Good — you were getting too complacent and boring.

Career: Co-workers plant a few surprises in your morning coffee. Oh, goodie. Look before you sip.

Libra (Sept. 24–Oct. 23)

Sex: Your sex life may be quieter than usual. Maybe that's because you've been told that you are too noisy. **Career:** Just when you thought that your job was boring, someone moves your cheese. So what? Change your menu!

Scorpio (Oct. 24–Nov. 22)

Sex: Lesbian Scorps find love in new, exotic places — the more exotic the better. But will it result in a rash? **Career:** Your career path is blocked. This is temporary but frustrating nonetheless. Grease a few wheels that rev your engine this September.

Sagittarius (Nov. 23–Dec. 22)

Sex: Create havoc in every sexual encounter. Not only will ladies talk about you, they might even want to see what all the commotion is about. **Career:** Even though you have pissed off the bosses in the past, they are willing to forgive and forget. Will you?

Capricorn (Dec. 23–Jan. 20)

Sex: Lambda Caps may have a few false starts in love this September. But keep your chin up; false starts are better than no starts at all! **Career:** There will be so much frenzied activity in your career now that you may forget to bathe. Don't forget to bathe.

Aquarius (Jan. 21–Feb. 19)

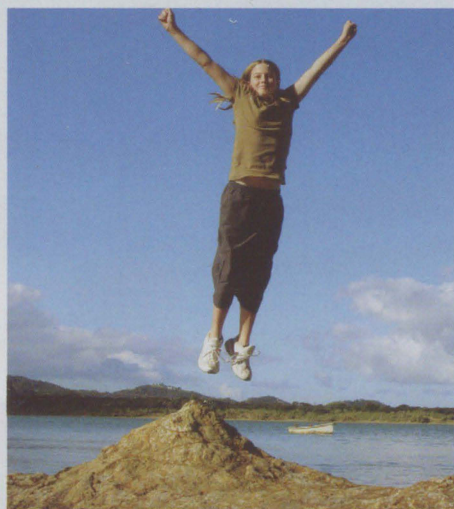
Sex: Relationships hit a few snags, but the two of you will happily kiss and make up once the dust settles. Start cleaning! **Career:** Aqueerians have all the luck in their careers this September. Don't waste it by hanging around the copy room pushing your paperclip.

Pisces (Feb. 20–March 20)

Sex: Seek romance in faraway places. Not only are you especially attractive, you also have the energy to go the distance. Hurry before you are too pooped to pop. **Career:** Forget about your quest for the perfect job. They call it "work." If it were fun, they would call it "fun."

Aries (March 21–April 20)

Sex: Who is it that tickles your fancy this month?



Won't you be surprised! Does she have a friend? **Career:** Lambda rams find love on the job ... er, on their desk, actually. Work late and clock those hours!

Taurus (April 21–May 21)

Sex: Sapphic bulls are footloose and fancy free. But don't trip on your hooves because of your wandering affections. **Career:** There is someone trying to deceive you on the job — you know who. Take a vacation and escape.

Gemini (May 22–June 21)

Sex: Love may follow you everywhere, but keep the bathroom door closed. Maintain the mystery with your miss. **Career:** Expect a few corporate kabooms through the month. The top will topple, and it's about time!

Cancer (June 22–July 23)

Sex: Is love a trip to the moon on gossamer wings or one of those crazy things? You decide. **Career:** If you've been feeling unappreciated on the job, September is the month to make your best moves. Move up, move out or quit complaining.

Leo (July 24–Aug. 23)

Sex: Are you able to overlook all her flaws and fall head over heels in love? Yes. But can she do the same for you? Brush up your act, sister. **Career:** Don't let them rain on your Pride parade around the office. You've got that *je ne sais quoi*. Give them quoi for! ■

For more advice from the stars, visit our astrologer, Charlene Lichtenstein, online at thestarryeye.com.

Erotica for Us

If you enjoy truly sexy lesbian erotica...then I think you'll really love this place. They manage to capture that mystical "something" that makes all of the action seem more desperate and seductive than a simple blatant hardcore film that you could see anywhere else.
-www.janesguide.com

They are presenting erotic films that are more honest and deal with the conflicted emotions of the protagonists, something that is ultimately far more erotic and satisfying because it rings true.
-www.pornhater.com

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and from the members:

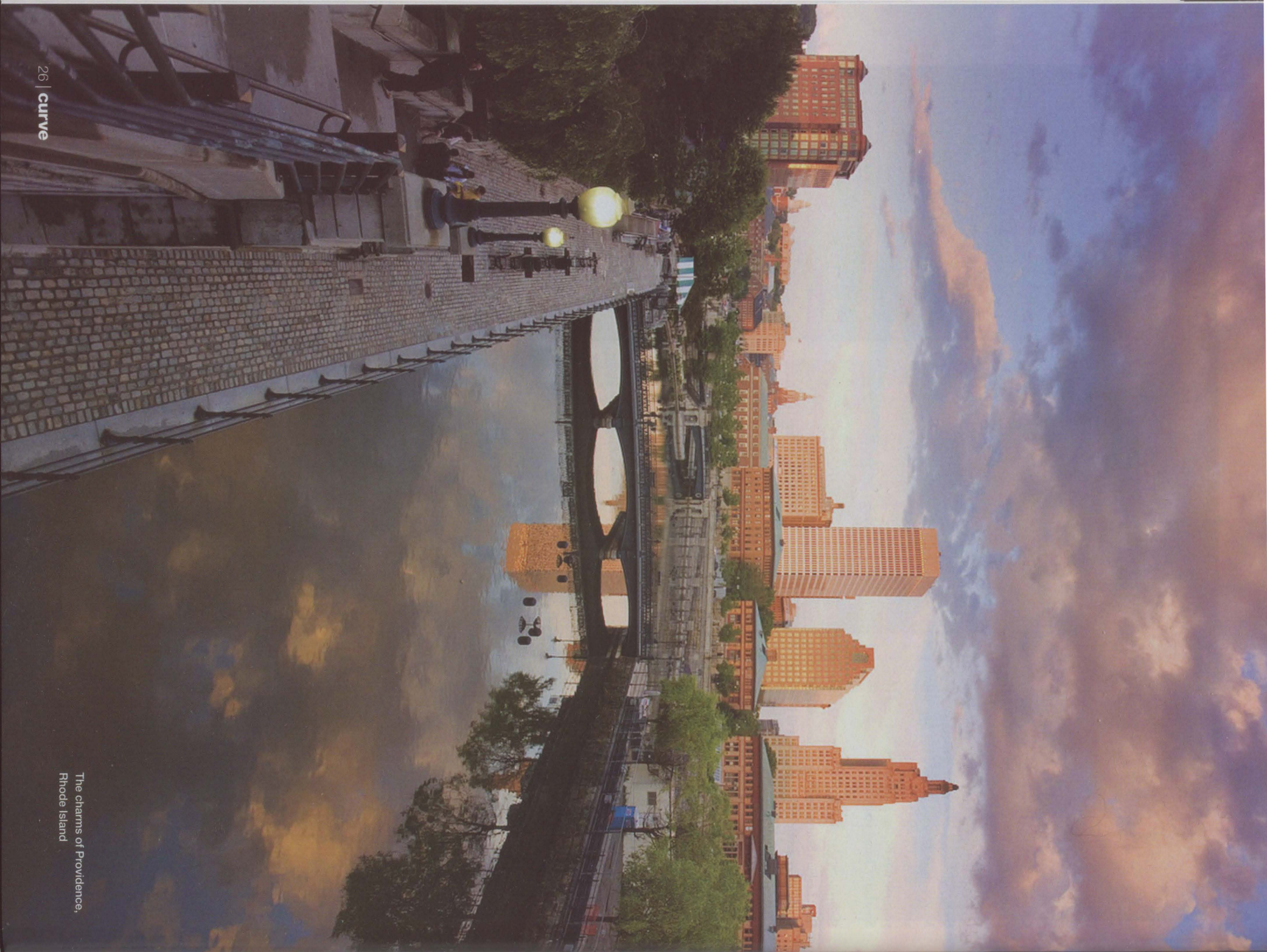
"What really strikes me here is that the women are beautifully natural in their appearance and expression of love or eroticism."

"I started watching and ended up being riveted...what a lovely story being told here."

"Thanks for offering this type of film for those who enjoy bringing the mind into the action."

"It's about time someone created a quality site for us!"

twilightwomen.com
Seduction and Hopeless Resistance



Take the Long Rhode Home

One lesbian discovers the
secret treasures
of our smallest state's **biggest city.**

I'll admit it. I'm one of those people who refer to New York City as "The City." I grew up in Jersey, and all the years of telling people I was from "right outside the City" really ingrain themselves in a person. I'll also admit that I agree with Edward Norton's character in *Keeping the Faith* when he says that anyone who does not live in New York City must be, to some extent, joking. I guess I've been joking for some time now. I've lived in Providence, R.I. — affectionately known to locals as "Little Rhody," the "Biggest Little," and other nicknames that include the word "little" — for almost 10 years. In those 10 years, I've come to love the Ocean State with a fierceness previously reserved for New Jersey.

I'm sure I don't need to tell you that the Garden State is the butt of many jokes. If you've ever driven down the Jersey Turnpike, you understand why many call New Jersey the armpit of the East Coast. My use of the phrase "right outside the City" artfully dodged any need to count myself among those who live in the armpit. But soon I began to feel I was betraying my home state. New Jersey is home to 810,000 acres of farmland, not to mention Albert Einstein, Frank Sinatra and Bruce Springsteen. I grew up in a town where I could walk to school and knew my neighbors, yet I was only 15 minutes from Manhattan. And though I would never have *chosen* to live in Jersey, the fact is, that's where I am from.

So I began to say it proudly. "I'm from Jersey." My voice was feeble at first, but it slowly gained in strength with practice. And while I do love New York

City — to this day, I would probably prefer to live in Brooklyn than anywhere else — the truth is, New York City doesn't need me. *Everyone* loves New York City. If other people were going to talk trash about New Jersey, I was going to love it double in order to compensate. Yeah. I do ♥ NJ.

Which brings us to Rhode Island. At 1,045 square miles, Little Rhody is the smallest state in the Union. The whole state is only slightly larger than the acreage of farmland in New Jersey. For many, the Biggest Little is nothing more than a 40-mile stretch on the road from New York to Boston, or the place where you turn off 95 to head east toward Cape Cod. We have 39 cities and towns, one area code, and no major-league sports team. But what we don't have in size, we more than make up for in personality. Perhaps you've heard of our former mayor Vincent "Buddy" Cianci? He was mayor for 10 years before serving a five-year suspended sentence for beating his estranged wife's lover. He was then re-elected and served as mayor for another 10 years before being convicted of conspiracy to run a criminal enterprise out of City Hall. He's now four years into his federal racketeering sentence in Fort Dix, New Jersey. Despite these transgressions — or perhaps because of them — Rhode Islanders love Buddy.

**By Beth
Schwartzapfel**



Take your dog down the back roads of Rhode Island

Buddy symbolizes the scrappiness that Rhode Islanders are famous for.

I moved here in 1997 to attend college. What a random place to move to. But it is precisely its randomness, in part, that makes Rhode Island lovable. The longer you live here, the more you understand about the place and its many quirks. You start to accumulate stories that exemplify Rhode Island, stories that could only happen here. You start to feel like you're in on a secret. Like the time we went to drop my girlfriend's car off at the mechanic. One of the garage's employees was writing her name on the little yellow tag that attaches to her keys. My girlfriend began to spell out her last name as he wrote. "M-O-H-I-U," she said. "M-O-H-R-U," he wrote. "No," she said. "I-U." He looked up at her like she was crazy, and wrote the letters over again. R-U. "No," she said again. "I-U." Finally he put the pen down. "I don't know!" he roared. "Am I?" You see, in Rhode Island, "I-U" and "are you" sound the same.

Boston may be only 50 miles up the road, but it might as well be a world away. I have a friend who jokes that she gets a nosebleed when she crosses into Woonsocket, a city that abuts Rhode Island's border with Massachusetts; it's

buildings, which have been converted into loft space, galleries and studios. We can bike to downtown in less than 10 minutes, and to most other neighborhoods within 20 minutes. And while the retail establishments haven't settled quite as thickly as I hope they will one day, they are much cooler than comparable places in other neighborhoods because everyone is so excited to be a part of the West Side. Some of the bars have teams in the neighborhood's summer kickball league. When one of the restaurants needed extensive renovations to meet fire code, other bars and restaurants actually held fundraisers to help the owner get back on his feet again. The West Side is a microcosm of the small-town feel that pervades the rest of the state.

I may have mentioned that I love cities. My girlfriend, on the other hand, loves the country. If it weren't for me, she'd live on a farm in the middle of nowhere, delivering calves and riding horses. (Remember how I said I'd rather live in Brooklyn than anywhere else? Did you wonder why I don't live there?) Providence is a nice compromise, because although our neighborhood feels relatively urban, we can be in the middle of nowhere in less than an hour. Rhode Island isn't called the Ocean State for nothing.

We have over 400 miles of coastline, which includes some of the most beautiful beaches I've ever seen, and none is more than an hour away by car. On a summer day, we can drive down to one of Newport's famed beaches, spend the day swimming and sunning, go to Flo's Clam Shack for a fried shrimp dinner, for dessert stop by a farm stand that makes its own ice cream and still be home by sunset. Much of the state is rural, which means that outside the state's six largest cities the population thins out considerably — so there are many places to go for scenic walks.

My favorite hiking guide is called *Walks and Rambles in Rhode Island*, and it's true, we have more in the way of walks and rambles than we do in the way of hikes. (Our highest point is Jerimoth Hill, elevation 812 feet.) But the walks and rambles are beautiful. The North-South Trail runs the length of the western part of the state, starting at the Connecticut border and continuing through

We can drive to Newport's famed beaches, spend the day swimming, go to Flo's Clam Shack for dinner, for dessert stop by a farm stand which makes its own ice cream and still be home by sunset.

just too far north. And though my heart has long pitter-pattered for the City, I'll take Providence over Boston any day. Boston, as the biggest city in New England, is home to more museums, bars, music venues and educational institutions than any other nearby city. But it's too proud of itself. And when I'm deciding whether a city meets my expectations, I always pull out my handy city yardstick: New York. And Boston, I'm afraid, is so not New York. Rhode Island, on the other hand, makes no claims. If you don't like it, don't come.

My girlfriend and I live on the first floor of a big old Victorian house on the city's West Side. The West Side is what real estate agents would call "up-and-coming." Our discomfort at being a force for gentrification notwithstanding, we love our neighborhood. At the Hudson Street Market, the neighborhood corner store, the owners are in a band and they know everyone by name. They'll write your name on a *New York Times* for you and put it aside if you're not going to be there early enough to snag one on Sunday.

The neighborhood is built around a big park, and in the park is a dog run. There is no better way to get to know your neighbors than to hang out in the dog run. Well, sort of. We have a growing handful of fun, hipped-out places to hang out — restaurants, bars and coffee shops — and we have old mill

woods, past stone fences and rocky outcroppings, lakes and streams, and over old dirt roads all the way to the Massachusetts border (it's only 40 miles, but still). In the fall, the leaves are magnificent, and in the winter, these same places are perfect spots to throw down your cross-country skis.

And so, we radiate Rhode Island pride. We have Providence posters in our apartment, Rhode Island sweatshirts, hats, and T-shirts. My best friend has a tattoo of the state seal. (The state motto is "Hope," but for a moment, she considered changing it to "Home.") My girlfriend and I are moving next year. She has applied to medical school, and we're waiting with bated breath to find out in what direction we're going to be pointing the old U-Haul. She's applied to several New York schools just for me, and while I'm thrilled about the possibility of finally living in the City, I think we'll be back here before long.

My love for the Ocean State is more pure than my love for either New York or New Jersey. It's not cool to live here the way it's cool to live in New York. You don't get any points for being from here. But unlike my love for New Jersey, I don't love Rhode Island in defiance of its naysayers, either. I don't love it because I need to overcompensate for those who don't. I love it because it is what it is. Home. ■

Performers: CHAMADE trébuché urbain
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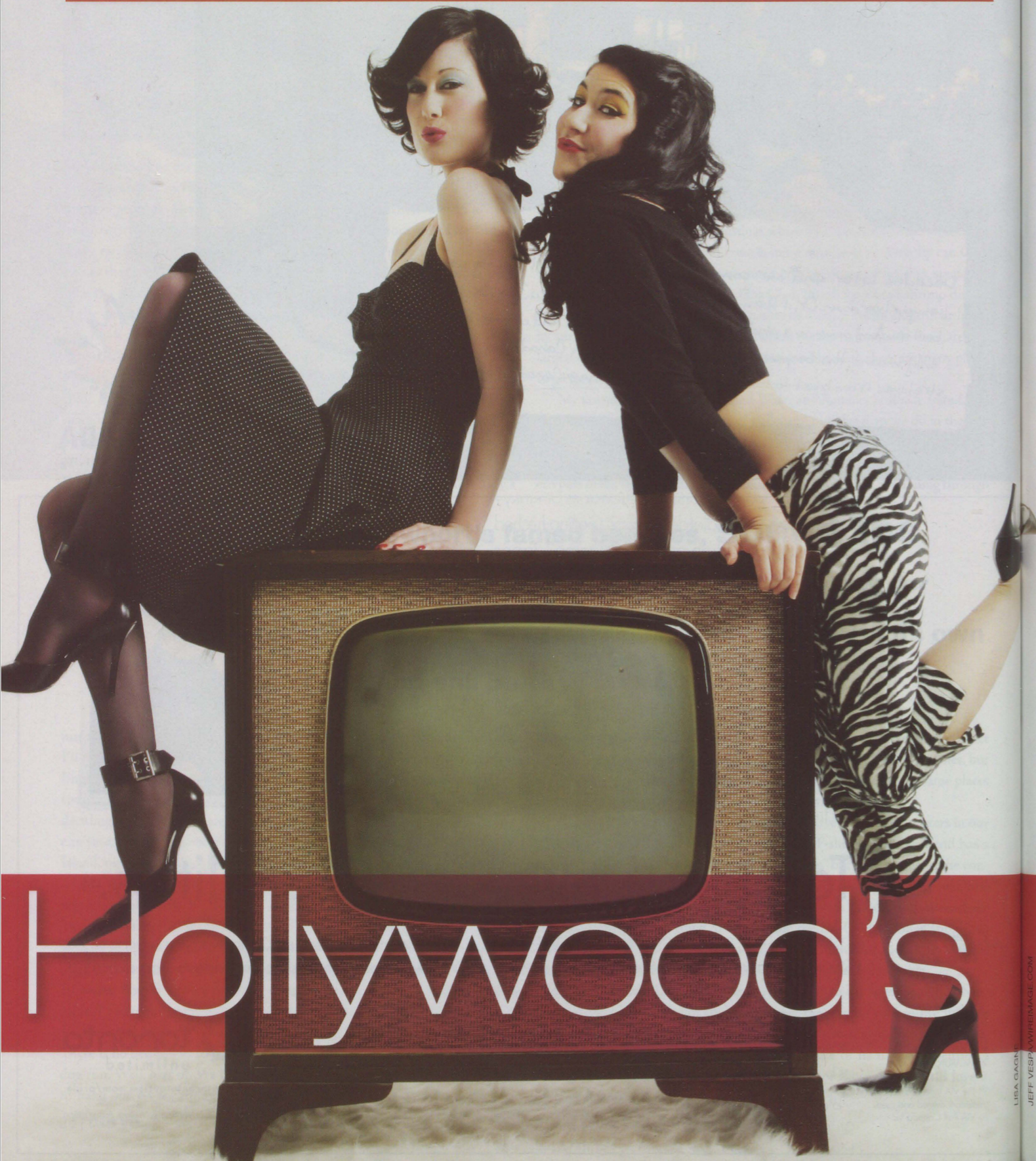
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All the world's a stage when you're a lesbian — or a thespian — but these women are using their time in entertainment to buck conventions about what it means to be a chick in Hollywood. From power brokers to day players, we've rounded up 13 of the not-so-usual suspects to take us behind the TV screens, inside the cinemas and around the globe for a look at the dykes of showbiz today.



1

HEATHER MATARAZZO

Going from Wiener Dog to lesbian hottie in a few key years put her in a perfect position to star in Logo's hot new lesbian TV show, *The Rules*.

By Shauna Swartz



It's been more than 10 years since Heather Matarazzo played the painfully awkward middle-schooler Dawn Wiener in *Welcome to the Dollhouse* who was saddled with braces and headgear and got pummeled by schoolmates who taunted, "Lesbo! Lesbo!" At the time the young actor didn't even know what the word meant, but as soon as she found out, she went around the set ecstatically proclaiming to anyone who would listen that she was indeed a lesbian. She may have been too young then to be taken seriously by her limited audience, but just two years ago she casually used the feminine pronoun to refer to a love interest in a press interview, and she's been realizing the positive effects of that action ever since.

Now 23, the New York native has appeared in more than 20 movies — among them *Saved!*, *Home of Phobia*, *Scream 3*, *Devil's Advocate* and both *Princess Diaries* films. She is also a veteran television actor, with roles in made-for-TV movies and in numerous episodes of popular series.

Matarazzo stars in the upcoming film *Believe in Me*, based on the true story of a long-shot girls' basketball team reaching for a championship in 1964 Oklahoma. And she is especially excited about taking part in *The Rules: A Lesbian Survival Guide*, a new Logo series she refers to as "the definitive lesbian *Sex in the City*."

We recently checked in with Matarazzo to talk with her about coming out, discovering her spirituality and moving forward with her career.

Since coming out in a *New York Daily News* article in summer of 2004, have things changed for you professionally and personally?

Well, personally I feel so much more comfortable in my own skin. And I love when people come up to me and say, "Thank you so much for coming out." That just warms my heart. And the thing is, it was kind of a God shot. It wasn't planned and I really didn't think it was going to be such a big deal. Professionally it's been amazing. I'm doing a show now for Logo, working with the most amazing women, and it was

one of the most spiritually transforming experiences of my life so far. It's kind of like meeting my sisters, because I don't know where the lesbians are in New York; they're nonexistent. But when I was in L.A. — oh my God, it's like Candyland. Lesbians, lesbians everywhere!

But seriously, to be with talented women that are lesbians that are fans of my work — there's an added bonus. And there's a comfort level I've never felt before. Because I think no matter how out you are, there's that hidden shame, where at the end of the day you think, "What's going on? I don't like that I'm not accepted. I don't like that I get stared at and I get called a 'fucking dyke' when I walk down the street." And now I really don't care.

Tell me about the new show.

There's a line I love from *Spiderman*: "With great power comes great responsibility." And I feel that. I've come out, and I'm still working, and I'm still being hired. People are still fans of my work. And now that I've been given all these gifts, how am I going to contribute back into the community? That's part of the reason why I decided to do this new Logo show. It's called *The Rules: A Lesbian Survival Guide*. We just shot the pilot presentation and we all had this feeling like it's going to be this amazing, amazing show. It really is the new, definitive lesbian *Sex in the City*.

Do you gravitate toward comic roles?

I just enjoy doing the work. I really miss the drama of some of the parts that I've played. But whatever God, higher power, Buddha, whatever you want to call it, puts in my path, I'm going to look at and consider.

You were raised Roman Catholic, but did you consider yourself religious growing up?

I think that shift happened where I was against religion and God, and that's actually when I really kind of came to terms with my sexuality. I was hearing again and again that it's wrong, and I thought it was extremely unfair. Why am I going to go to hell just because I like who I like and I can't help it?

Hollywood's Must See 13

LISA GAGNÉ
JEFF VESPA/WIREIMAGE.COM

So I went on my own spiritual journey and today I have a relationship with my own view of God that suits me.

You've said — in reference to gay and lesbian youth — that we're all outsiders at some point, especially when we don't know why. What did you mean by that?

It's that discomfort that we have, still not feeling comfortable in our own skin and not knowing why. I look, talk and dress the same as you, but I don't feel the same way as you. A lot of people don't know how to identify that — especially when they're children — but they just know that something's wrong. It's like everybody else has been given this handbook on how to relate with other people, and we haven't. And you feel awkward and you feel shy, and the only thing you want to do is connect, be a part of. But the more you want to be a part of, the more you are apart from. It's almost like we're dealt this burden. How crazy is it that I'd be attracted to women but know I shouldn't talk about it? To just innately know that it's not talked about. Where do we even learn that?

Did you feel isolated after leaving the set of *Dollhouse*, where you were first becoming aware of being a lesbian?

Well, yeah. Because it's not like I could be, "Hey, Mom! Let me tell you about all the girls I like." So while I had these experiences, they were very few and far between. And in the meantime what do I do with this information? Because with *Dollhouse* you hang out with adults for months at a time, then you go back to being a 13-year-old kid, and it's really difficult. It's really hard to communicate, especially when you don't have the words for the feelings and your head is going all the time. So it was incredibly difficult but I wouldn't change that experience for anything in the world, because it got me to where I am now, and I'm so incredibly happy.

Was it hard going through that while being in the public eye?

I really didn't think about it. I know I went through this phase



“With *Dollhouse* you hang out with adults for months at a time, then you go back to being a 13-year-old kid, and it's really difficult. It's really hard to communicate, especially when you don't have the words for the feelings and your head is going all the time.”

of entitlement where all these people were doing all these things, and I just wanted this and I wanted that. And meanwhile I'm sitting on my butt and doing nothing.

When was that?

My teen years. Even after I graduated high school and was living on my own, when I went to premieres I still brought guys. I still felt as though I had to hide. I was told by so many outside people: "Don't come out. You're going ruin your career."

Do you feel sort of vindicated, because you made this decision and it's been good?

Yeah, but not vindicated at all. One's sexuality isn't anyone's business. We're not politicians. We're not saving the world. We're doing our part and contributing. If you just see yourself in movies and contributing in that way, then that's great.

Everybody has that different sense of responsibility. Some people are more comfortable about it than others. But I'm not specifically defined as a lesbian or an actor or a woman. Each and every one of those things is a part of me but it's not all of me. It's not like, Heather Matarazzo is a lesbian so she can't play straight.

Do you feel like you've encountered anything like that?

No, not really. I think I'm in that special class where I'm not that pretty girl next door. And I never claim to be. So the scripts that I get are very "Oh, this is Heather Matarazzo." They're just interesting characters.

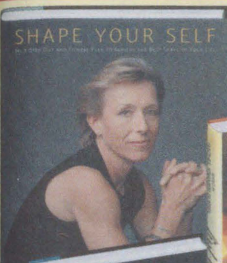
Would you say you get typecast?

Well, I guess that's to be determined. I feel like in a sense I'm starting over. I made it through the *Dollhouse* phase. I made it through my teens and now I'm a woman. I'm going into my 20s and then I'll start again in my 30s. And I kind of have a feeling I'm going to hit my peak in my 30s or 40s. So for right now I'm focusing, like I always have, on just doing good work. ■

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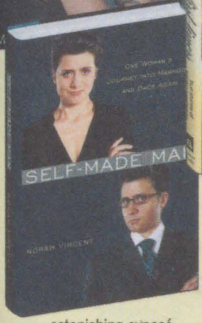
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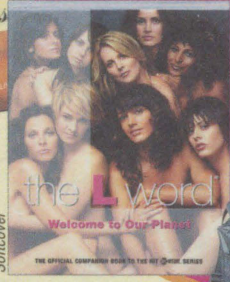
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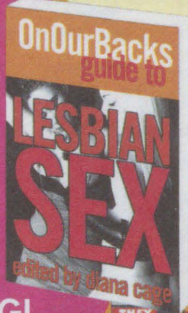


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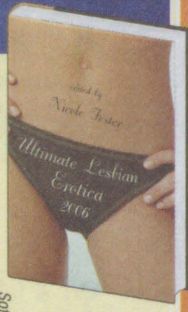


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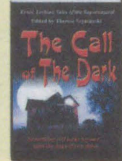
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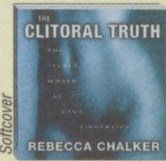
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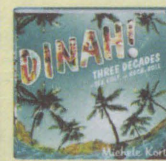
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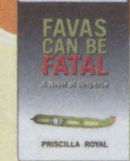
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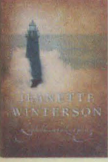
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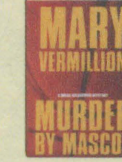
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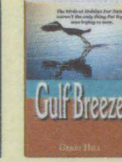
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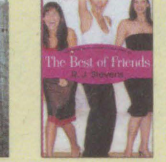
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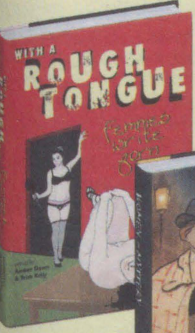
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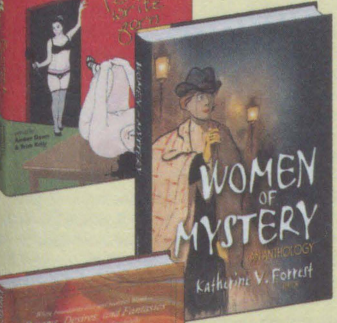
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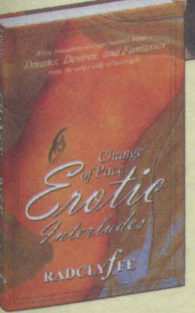
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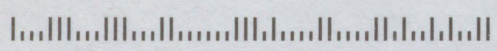
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2

CHERIEN DABIS

L Word scribe and Arab-American filmmaker Cherien Dabis casts her spell on us. By Tracy E. Gilchrist



During the past year, filmmaker Cherien Dabis' career landed her at an Israeli border crossing, awaiting clearance to enter the Palestinian city of Ramallah, and then half a world away in Los Angeles with a writing staff hashing out the finer points of the next plot twist for Bette, Shane, Alice and the rest of the hyperglamorous *L Word* gals. An openly gay, Arab-American writer and director, Dabis wears her many hats with élan, parlaying her personal experience into her work on the page and behind the camera.

Over the past several years Dabis has garnered herself a reputation as something of a gay and lesbian film festival darling with her short film *Memoirs of an Evil Stepmother*, a queer take on Snow White, starring Jane Lynch — which Dabis wrote and directed. And she put a kink into another “fairy” tale when she penned the script for *Little Black Boot*, a charming crowd-pleaser about a baby-dyke Cinderella, which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in 2004.

Between commutes from her home in New York City to Los Angeles as a staff writer for the third and fourth seasons of *The L Word*, and an extended trip to the West Bank where she began production on her short film *Make a Wish*, she keeps busy raising funds for her sometimes funny, sometimes poignant and always personal film projects. At one point during the year, she took a temp job in New York to defray the costs of producing *Make a Wish*. The short focuses on a young Palestinian girl whose search for the perfect birthday cake reveals the complexities of living in an occupied territory. The Royal Jordan Film Commission worked with Dabis to support the production.

And if that's not ambitious enough, she somehow found time to hone the script for her feature film *Amreeka* — about a Jordanian single mother who immigrates to the United States in search of the elusive American dream — during the five-day-long Sundance Screenwriters Lab, and she was accepted into the Mediterranean Films Crossing Borders Program at the Cannes Film Festival.

“I’m a neurotic workaholic,” admits Dabis, who holds an MFA in film from Columbia University.

Dabis' humorous, gay-themed re-imaginings of fairy tales and her contributions to *The L Word* might seem incongruous with her current, subtly political projects, but she culls her stories from her experiences as a gay woman born to a Jordanian mom and a Palestinian father — and from growing up in Ohio.

Though she was born in the United States, Dabis spent nine months out of the year in Ohio and summers in the Middle East while growing up. “I felt like I had one foot in Ohio and one foot in Jordan,” she says.

Last fall, for the first time since 1985, Dabis trekked to her family's homeland to make her short film. While aspects of her return trip echoed a 20-year-old memory of her harried, 12-hour journey to travel 44 miles from the Jordanian city of Amman to Israel's Jerusalem — a memory rife with a proliferation of flies and also with rifle-bearing soldiers who strip-searched her family — Dabis eventually made it to her destination, camera equipment in tow. Although her time at the border crossing was again lengthy and frustrating, this time soldiers skipped the strip search. She says that the flies were still there though.

Despite the two-pronged nature of Dabis' career as a contributor to gay pop culture and an ethnographer of her Jordanian/Palestinian roots, she discovered during her trip to the West Bank that her worlds had converged, a little.

While Dabis says she knew before to returning to the Middle East that Jordan had a small but determined, burgeoning gay community, she gained some notoriety when women who'd seen the first two seasons of *The L Word* were shocked to discover that a Jordanian had contributed to the story lines. She says she learned that the show's Jordanian fans had smuggled in the first season and downloaded the second one.

For a woman who admits that when anybody Googles her, a host of gay-themed articles pop up, Dabis isn't completely out back in the Middle East. But she says it's a non-issue because “In the Arab world females don't have sexuality. It's so taboo.” She says she never felt out of place as a lesbian in the West Bank, since women's sexuality isn't discussed on any level.

Having faced armed soldiers and intense border-crossing scenarios where guards picked apart her luggage, Dabis admits, “I was scared to write on *The L Word*.” She says that writing for the show is a collaborative effort with several other writers in which the writing staff work in concert with the show's creator Ilene Chaiken, and Dabis' partner — director and producer Rose Troche.

Dispelling the myth that couples shouldn't mix business with pleasure, Dabis says of collaborating with Troche, “We worked really well together.” She hopes to write a script that Troche would direct — possibly a lesbian comedy.

But first, pending enough funds raised, Dabis intends to head back to the West Bank to begin production on *Amreeka* in September. ■

3

BROOKE THOMPSON

VH1's *Pumpkin* joins our team.

By Catherine Plato



Best known as the feisty "Pumpkin" from VH1's *Flavor of Love*, Brooke Thompson has been rocking the game show and reality TV circuits for years now. On *Flavor of Love*, Thompson and 19 other single ladies competed for the love of Flavor Flav of Public Enemy.

As it turned out, love was simply not in the stars for Thompson and Flav, but it's all good: At *Dinah Shore* 2006, Thompson came out as queer.

How has your life changed since you came out?

My friends don't care either way, and a few of my family members are cool with it. My mom, on the other hand, hates it. But, at the end of the day, you have to make yourself happy and live your life the way you choose to.

Do you expect it to have any affects on your career?

I don't think so, because before *Flavor of Love* I was the same person I am now. ... Hollywood is so accepting. I do not think they care what you do on your own time as long as you are good at what you do and keep the viewers wanting more.

Do you have any plans to break into mainstream acting?

I am open to that as my next move. I love reality television, but that's all I know at this point. I would love to branch out into movies eventually, but right now I am just trying to extend this 15 minutes of fame I have been given. *Pumpkin* might remain as a memory, but America has not seen the last of Brooke.

If you were in Flav's position, who would you have chosen?

I would have picked Hoopz. She is not only gorgeous, but she has the personality to go along with it. She also knows how to be romantic and take care of her partner. ■

4

NANCY RANCOURT

Rocker Nancy Rancourt took on Tommy Lee. By Renée Westbrook

Nancy Rancourt says what's on her mind, and she doesn't care who's listening. She publicly lambasted CBS's *Rock Star: Supernova* and called out rocker Tommy Lee for his comments about women. (Earlier this year, Lee said to MTV News, "Why is it that the hot chicks never can sing?") The 30-something, Canadian-born singer also turned down a major label deal because they suggested that she conceal her sexual orientation from the public. No matter what comes down the sometimes sleazy pikes of the music business, Rancourt is determined to make it on her own terms.

How did you get started in music?

I started singing when I was about 3 years old, and by the time I was 11, I was songwriting and doing vocal sessions for hire in studios. When I was 14, I received an indie label offer, but I declined because I was concerned about becoming the next Tiffany or Debbie Gibson. From there I took some engineering courses, started doing more demos, started playing live with different people and eventually started releasing my own material.



"I'm not going to embrace an opportunity to further my career by having to deal with those schmucks."

Which artists inspired you most?

This is going to be a really strange combination: Tina Turner and Billy Joel.

That is an odd combination. Why those two?

They're both very emotive when they sing. There's a lot of substance to what they're saying and how they say it. I mean, Tina Turner just rocks. She's got the very soft, sultry thing, and you can see the emotions and the vulnerability. Then she's got the fuck-you-and-your-little-dog-too thing happening. I relate to that.

You were asked to audition for *Rock Star: Supernova*, but it didn't turn out so well. What happened?

They called and invited me to a private audition. I sang "Skin & Bone" and it was cool to see the reactions of the audience. As I walked off the stage I got mobbed by news cameras. No one had prepared me for that, but I dealt with it. A few days later I found out who the band was. Now, if it had been Queen I would have been jumping for joy, but my first concern was Tommy Lee. At first I thought, I'll give him the benefit of the doubt and we'll see where this goes. When I saw the quotes happening, I said I want nothing to do with this. I'm not a sellout. I'm not going to embrace an opportunity to further my career by having to deal with those schmucks.

Did you get called back?

No, but I think they kind of knew my opinion before they were making their final choices because word gets around very quickly. I'm sure they were well aware that I wasn't too happy with Mr. Lee's behavior. I also e-mailed Tommy Lee and told him he was a schmuck, and if wanted to save his career and his dignity he should rescind his comments to the press. I never heard back from him.

Overall, do you think the show is positive?

With the first season, I thought its intentions had promise; it had potential. If it did go to a second season I thought we might see that potential. I'm thoroughly disappointed that there's no potential shining through at all. It's not about the music. I was hoping it would be. ■

5

MICHELE BALANThis veteran lesbian comic cracked us up on *Last Comic Standing*. By Laurie K. Schenden

It's the fourth week of NBC's *Last Comic Standing*, and Michele Balan, one of our favorite wise and witty lesbian comics, is gathering with friends and fellow comics at the Gotham Comedy Club in New York to watch her televised performance. "It should be a hoot," says Balan, whose *Neurotic by Nature* was recorded at the Los Angeles Improv in 1999. "Of course, I hope I look good or the audience will watch me cry!"



What was it like for a veteran like yourself to get thrown into the comedy gauntlet with comedians of all levels?

I am sure there are people watching *Last Comic Standing* thinking, "Who is this Michele Balan? We never heard of her, maybe she is new." I want to tell them, yeah, I am a 20-year overnight success!

How did you get selected for the show?

I had to audition like everyone else. The good news is that I did not have to wait in line with thousands. If I did have to, you probably would not see me on the show. I don't even wait in line for a sale!

Any noticeable impact yet from the show?

A family ran up to me yesterday in midtown Manhattan — I thought I was going to be mugged by a middle-American family. The two young girls screamed, "Are you on *Last Comic Standing*?" I was shocked they recognized me. They were from Cleveland and said I was the first celebrity they saw in New York and I thought ... how sad.

So how did the show itself go?

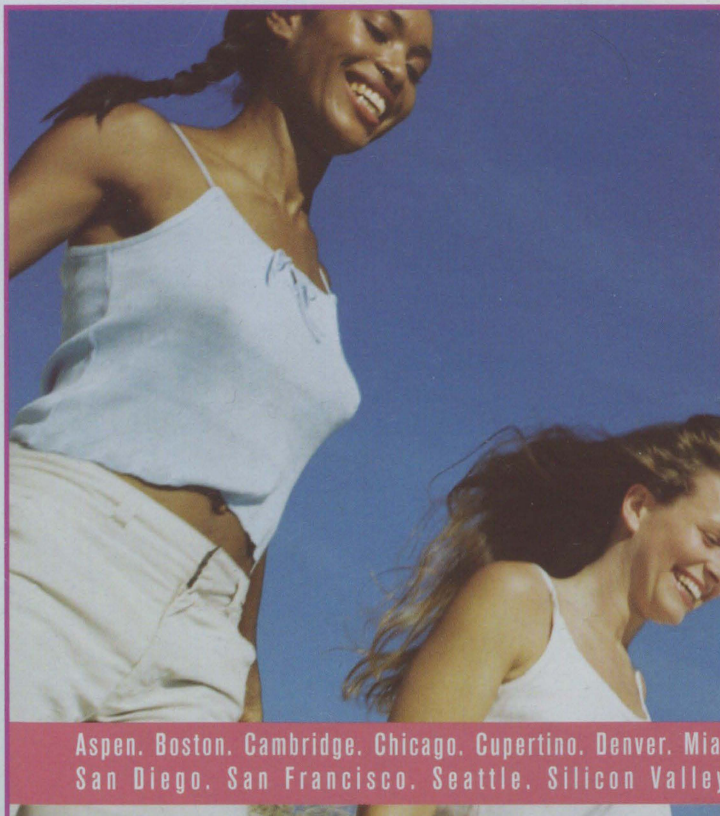
There was the afternoon audition with the two judges, Bob Read and Ross Mark. If you pass through that you go onto the night show at Caroline's on Broadway where the audience votes. I was shocked to get my little red slip that I was going to Hollywood. I felt like Clay Aiken on *American Idol*!

Was the show a typical comedy scene — mostly men? Any lesbians?

Of course this is comedy so there are always a lot more men, but I was pleased to see how many women they did pick for the semifinals in L.A. I am very proud of NBC for doing that. As far as lesbians, I think there could have been more, but since I didn't sleep with any of them, I'm not sure.

What makes you laugh?

I have to be honest that I still enjoy the older type of comedy, like the Borscht Belt one-liners of Buddy Hackett, George Burns, Bob Hope, Freddie Roman, etc. Maybe that's why people tell me I remind them of a female George Burns. ■



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CARLEASE BURKE

You might recognize this veteran actor — and out lesbian — from TV, movies and Pizza Hut commercials.

By Laurie K. Schenden

Sprawled over a front-row seat in a small downtown theater in Santa Monica, Calif., actor Carlease Burke passes a bag of cookies to the person behind her. She's "on-book," casually following the script as two fellow actors rehearse a scene. The play, *Dialectics of the Heart*, opens in less than two weeks, yet Burke is about as calm and carefree as the tourists strolling down Main Street on this warm winter day.

Then again, after playing opposite Cameron Diaz and Toni Collette in last year's big-screen hit *In Her Shoes* and befriending Tom Hanks in *The Terminal* the year before, what does Burke have to be nervous about?

Rehearsal ends and Burke plops down at a table in the courtyard with her backpack and bike helmet. She lives only a few blocks away, so she rides to rehearsals. With a head of thick cornrows and a solid, nearly 5-foot-9-inch frame, the African-American actor is not hard to notice. She laughingly tells of a man who recently thought he recognized her. "He said, 'You look familiar; do you work for the Department of Rehab?'"

Her commanding presence has won her numerous woman-in-uniform roles, including police officers and authority figures. But in real life, Burke is open, easy going and laughs readily.

Her acting success didn't happen overnight, but then, neither did coming to terms with her sexuality. "I used to get really turned on by female wrestling!" she says in a confessional tone

indignation. To appease her parents, she studied pre-law at New York City College, but hung around with performing arts students. Performing "is what I did well and I knew at an early age, but no one else seemed to know it," she says sarcastically.

Her mother did enroll her in dancing classes, "but that was more to teach me poise and how to be a lady." She adds with a laugh, "That hasn't worked."

Ironically, her parents inadvertently cracked open the stage door by taking her to see Melba Moore in the hit Broadway musical *Purlie*, based on the segregation comedy *Purlie Victorious* written by Ossie Davis (he played Bette and Kit Porter's dad on *The L Word*). "From that moment I was hooked," Burke says. "I bought the album and wore the grooves out, singing 'I Got Love' over and over again."

The dancing lessons paid off when she got a job singing and dancing on a cruise ship that brought her to the West Coast. Within a few months, she moved to Los Angeles permanently.

Since then, Burke has appeared in dozens of films and television shows, including *The Toolbox Murders*, *The Out-of-Towners* and *Get Shorty* on the big screen; *Desperate Housewives*, *ER*, *Judging Amy*, *Malcolm in the Middle*, Pizza Hut and Verizon commercials on television; and, of course, the occasional theatrical production.

Her sexuality affected her career only once, she says. "A very

"I started sneaking around to gay clubs; I'd get all kinds of books and publications. ... I loved *Playboy*. I would fantasize about women — not anybody in particular, just faceless white women with perfect bodies. I didn't know anything about airbrushing at the time."

of voice. "And we're not talking about women who are hot and gorgeous. [In the 1970s] it wasn't like glamorous, lipstick lesbian, hot babe wrestling."

What was a young, church-going, African-American New Yorker who likes girls and loves to perform to do? "I started sneaking around to gay clubs; I'd get all kinds of books and publications. ... I loved *Playboy*. I would fantasize about women — not anybody in particular, just faceless white women with perfect bodies," she says, laughing. "I didn't know anything about airbrushing at the time."

But she did know — or thought she knew — that she didn't "have the guts to become a lesbian." Instead, she threw her energy into acting — with the occasional foray into the base-mont costume department to make out with another girl.

Her sexuality, however, wasn't her biggest worry. Her race, and her parents' opposition to her acting career, posed the primary challenges. Few African-American faces were seen on film or television while she was growing up.

"There was Motown ... and this black guy on *The Lawrence Welk Show*. One black guy!" she says, with humorous

shallow stage manager purposely did not include me in an audition. It seems he had a problem with me being out." While she's only been cast once as a lesbian, Burke does stand-up comedy and emcee work for Olivia Cruises and emcees an annual Dinah Shore Weekend party in Palm Springs, Calif.

Burke still feels her big break has yet to come, and her ultimate goal is to win an Academy Award. "My smaller, short-term goal is to be a series regular on a great episodic show."

Like *The L Word*?

"Yes! Like *The L Word*. They need more lesbians and women of color," she insists.

As she collects her things and prepares to leave the courtyard, Burke reflects on what has been the best year yet in her acting life. "I spent a lot of my life trying to figure out where I fit in, trying to find my place. Now it's, I know who I am, now what fits me?" she explains. "I decided that at this point in my life I don't want to spend a lot of energy doing something that's not my No. 1 passion. I don't know how long I'm going to be on this earth ... and I want to keep the momentum [going]. Whatever it is I'm doing, I don't want to stop." ■



GRETCHEN MOL

Hollywood's hot starlet strikes a pose as Bettie Page.

By Laurie K. Schenden

Gretchen Mol looks angelic sitting across the table. She's Sunday-school rigid, her blond hair swept up in a conservative do, and a virginal-white, high-collared blouse shrouds her delicate figure.

Whether this chaste image was calculated, I'm not sure. The look is 180 degrees from the ball-gag-and-black-bondage garb that Mol modeled to near perfection as the title character in the recent film *The Notorious Bettie Page*. But it was Mol's ability to maintain a fresh-faced innocence in the midst of fetish poses that earned her the part of the famous 1950s pinup queen, says director Mary Harron.

Harron, who co-wrote the script with Guinevere Turner (*Go Fish*, *The L Word*), has a pretty good idea why Bettie Page appeals to lesbians — beyond the obvious appeal of Mol's looks.

"There's definitely lesbian subtext in all the bondage photos because it's all girl-on-girl," says Harron, who was also behind the lens of films such as *I Shot Andy Warhol* and *American Psycho*.

But the lesbian subtext in the photos was purely accidental. Studio owner Irving Klaw simply "didn't want any men in the photos," Harron says. "He was afraid they would look like sex photos and get him in trouble," because of America's puritanical attitudes about sex in the 1950s. "He thought it was safer just to have girls."

So the "fighting girlfriend films," as Harron calls them, fulfilled fetish fantasies with women restraining and spanking each other, crafting a "kind of naughty, pajama party feel," with a "sort of '90s lesbian subtext all through it."

"The thing that makes Bettie's images so powerful is that she was so healthy about it. She didn't have the shame attached to the nudity or the bondage ... whatever she was doing she had that twinkle in her eye."

The photographs of both Mol and the real Page show sweet-faced young women who could be just as easily flipping flapjacks as snapping a whip.

"She's not who you think she is," Mol says of Page, who grew up in the South and was devoutly religious, even during her pinup heyday. "I felt something in her had sort of halted by [traumatic] early experiences in her life. When she was in front of the cameras she was able to ... go to that other place where she could just be purely alive and herself, you know — sensual and sexual — but it was innocent."

Eventually the playful pornography became the centerpiece for a Senate investigation, putting an end to the same-sex frolicking before photographer Paula Klaw's camera lens — and to Page's career. Klaw, who photographed the women and supposedly treated them like family, is played in the film by the consistently fab Lili Taylor.

"The thing that makes Bettie's images so powerful is that she was so healthy about it," says Mol, who plays a bisexual woman in the upcoming *Puccini for Beginners*, directed by Maria Maggenti (*The Incredibly True Adventure of 2 Girls in Love*). "She didn't have the shame attached to the nudity or the bondage ... whatever she was doing she had that twinkle in her eye."

Mol continues, "I think she was the most comfortable — especially posing — when she was out in nature, naked, loving the sun and the way it felt, and I think she felt confident about herself. I loved looking at [Page's photographs] myself. I was sort of flabbergasted by her ability to be so proud and healthy about her own nudity." ■

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Margaret Hertel



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MARIA MAGGENTI

Maria Maggenti challenges our ideological agenda. By John Esther

Eleven years after writer and director Maria Maggenti showed up at Sundance with her breakout lesbian film *The Incredibly True Adventure of 2 Girls in Love*, she's back with her latest film, *Puccini for Beginners*.

The film follows Allegra (Elizabeth Reaser), a bright, young woman living in Manhattan, who has just lost her latest love, Samantha (Julianne Nicholson), and while on the rebound switches teams to date Philip (Justin Kirk). Allegra pushes the envelope even further when she starts dating Philip's ex-girlfriend, Grace (Gretchen Mol). Allegra's friends disapprove, but that doesn't stop Allegra from landing in a lot of trouble before film's end.



After Maggenti cemented her fame in the lesbian community with *Incredibly True Adventure*, she went on to write other screenplays including *The Love Letter*, starring Ellen DeGeneres. I recently spoke to Maggenti about her film, Sigmund Freud and cleavage.

"I am definitely trying to turn some things upside down such as: What is a typical heterosexual relationship? For gay people marriage is transgressive."

It took you seven years to make the film. Why was it important to you to make this film?

I wanted to direct another movie. I had this story in me for a long time, and I needed to get it out of me so I could move on.

How autobiographical is the story?

It's autobiographical in that I was a lesbian who fell for a man. Things got topsy-turvy after that.

What do you think you have in common with Allegra?

Head-feeling and not heart-feeling right away.

I understand it was difficult to cast someone in the role of Allegra. Why was Elizabeth Reaser the right person?

The character has to be intellectual but the actor who plays her has to be intuitive. She has to be adorable without being cute. She needed to have some comic timing. She needed to be sexy in a way that would be appealing to a man and a woman. That poor character had to have so many things go right, and I felt Elizabeth — who came to me literally a week before shooting — was the right woman for the job.

What do mean by "She needed to be sexy in a way that would be appealing to a man and a woman"?

She had to have just a little of that current butch energy.

And she had to be sexy without the cleavage.

Yes indeed. The majority of American cinema is filled with

woman who are sexy simply because they have big boobies and flat tummies.

The Sundance program said that with this film you have ushered "in a new era of lesbian cinema free from an ideological agenda." What do you think of that? Can a film be free of that?

Well, we're all a product of our historical moments, so there's no way you can be free of a particular point of view. Do I carry a cudgel on a lot of issues? Personally I do. In my film I don't; I try not to. I was more interested in gender stuff. I don't know if you would call it ideological, but I am definitely trying to turn some things upside down such as: What is a typical heterosexual relationship? For gay people, marriage is transgressive.

There are quite a few films out right now, such as *Imagine Me & You* and *April's Shower*, where sexual orientation is blind when it comes to love. Is that the best way to get over the divisiveness with regard to sexual orientation and love, by making it perfectly natural and without comment?

No. I think the best way for lesbians, gay men, transgenders, and whoever the hell else, to be safe, is to work toward political justice. I don't think it really has to do with movies. Movies come way later than what we deal with on the ground and in the communities. They're helpful I guess, but I don't think they are necessarily a route towards liberation.

You do not think a movie can reach a much larger audience than a political movement?

I don't think you can have one without the other. I only exist because I'm a product of all that hard work lesbians and gay men did, starting in the 1950s, to allow me to say what I want to say. The LBGT (*sic*) community needs to continue to work on the ground and in their communities to make the world a safer place.

You invoke Freud quite a bit in the film. What do you think about him and his work?

I think Freud is one of the greatest thinkers of all time. I've read every single thing he's ever written.

What do you say to those who accuse him of being a homophobic misogynist?

You just have to leave that stuff behind. He's a product of his environment. I'm interested in ideas of the unconscious and how they play themselves out.

There is a bit of German philosophy in the film as well.

Who are your favorites?

I studied 19th-century German philosophy. There is an obscure little guy named Johann Fichte. I've read all of Immanuel Kant and Friedrich Nietzsche.

The people who you just mentioned have also been accused of being misogynists. How do you negotiate their philosophies with their prejudices?

You take what's useful. I always felt that to not be well educated does not assist one in one's liberation. If there is indeed a "Western canon," I want to know everything about it so I can fight against it. ■

9 **ARIELLA BEN-DOV & REBECCA MCBRIDE**

Two dykes celebrate 10 years of one of the country's most irreverent film festivals. **By Laura K. Cucullu**

10 Once the fledgling brainchild of a 23-year-old who noticed a need for it, MadCat Women's International Film Festival celebrates its 10th anniversary this month, and continues to bring experimental, avant-garde films made by women to audiences in the San Francisco Bay area and around the country.

Now I bet you're wondering, is "women" code word for "dykes" in MadCat, as it so often is in other festivals? Well, the leading ladies behind MadCat are its founder and executive director Ariella Ben-Dov and her partner of eight years (on and off the job), photographer and associate director Rebecca McBride. And sure, Ben-Dov says "probably 90 percent of MadCat's staff and volunteers are dykes and transys," and queer ladies certainly submit their fair share of films to MadCat. Nevertheless the event provides a forum for women filmmakers from around the globe.

"What's so great is queers can tell their stories in many different ways," she says. "There are lots of filmmakers who are queer, but it doesn't necessarily come out in their movies. And women's issues are so much bigger than reproductive rights."

What she looks for most in festival selections are films that "are challenging the way stories are told."

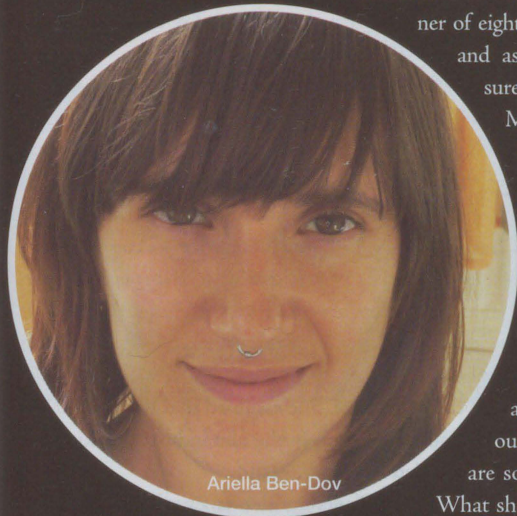
She has no shortage of material to choose from. In the first year, when MadCat received more than 200 submissions, she could review every one herself; now with more than 1,300 submissions, review committees handle much of that process. Ben-Dov then groups the chosen few into themes,

"There are lots of filmmakers who are queer, but it doesn't necessarily come out in their movies."

which aren't planned before the call for submissions. "The great thing about the [curating] process is how organic it is. Themes are developing and becoming known to me, and I hope to put the films together in a way that does them justice."

Still, Ben-Dov, now 33, says if she'd known then what she knows now, she might have never started the MadCat film festival. In the midst of what should have been a resurgence of support for MadCat's lasting contributions to the women's art community, the San Francisco Arts Commission denied this year's grant application. "You have to prove yourself every time," Ben-Dov says, adding that it's definitely been hard without the grant but she respects the commission's decision; it became an opportunity to reach out to audiences to fill the \$18,000 gap before the September main event. "There's been a great response from the community, people really digging into their pockets," Ben-Dov says. "And it's given us a really nice connection to our audience."

MadCat 10 is scheduled to run Sept. 12-27 in San Francisco, then tour various other locations around the country. Visit madcatfilmfestival.org for details or to make a donation. ■



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As the short film programmer for the Sundance Film Festival the past five years, Roberta Munroe has watched thousands of films — more than 4,500 last year alone. It's no surprise then, that her own short, *Dani and Alice*, would make the cut at 60-some film festivals over the past year, even though the story of “two black lesbians trying to negotiate their love” is Munroe's first attempt as a writer and director.

A lot of changes are afoot in Munroe's life. She turned 40 this year, quit a 25-year smoking habit, and left Sundance to take on new challenges in the film industry. She's in the midst of writing a book, *Memoirs of a Sundance Programmer*, and recently started her own consulting company for filmmakers, RMM Consulting.

“I know what goes into a great short and what people are looking for to show at festivals versus what they're looking for to show online versus what they're looking for to show on television,” Munroe says. In her book and in her consulting business, she gives filmmakers “the cold hard facts that they're not getting from their friends and film schools and a paid staff.”

Nothing is more frustrating to Munroe than watching a film and seeing how much effort went into it, “and it sucks,” she says. “Often it's the story, or if it's not the story then it's the performances, because you hired your girlfriend who can't act and never could, but you can't say no and there she is, ruining your movie.”

Although Munroe doesn't tell people what films not to make, she does have definite opinions about things to avoid. “I do talk about the top cliché moments like [when] the protagonist walks away from the light and into her dark, dank apartment, and drinks straight from a Jack Daniels bottle. ... It's like, oh brother!” she says.

Munroe also rolls her eyes at the glut of coming-out and breaking-up stories.

“Experimental footage with your whole story of the breakup with voice-over ... I see that a hundred fucking times a year too,” she says. “Unless you're coming at this story that we've seen a thousand times and it's very fresh and very innovative and ingenious, it's probably not going to get out there.”

With *Dani and Alice* (featuring Lisa Branch and Yolonda Ross in the title roles, along with veteran actors Guinevere Turner and Honey Labrador), Munroe tackles a subject rarely seen on film: domestic abuse in lesbian relationships.

“I know so many women who are in relationships — you know, it's a movie so someone's head [is slammed] into a car door. But in real life, lots of people get shoved into a wall or are stopped from leaving a room or getting out of a car or called a ‘fucking bitch.’ Those are all levels of violence that we employ in relationships when we can't negotiate the love that's there.”

Upbeat, funny, intelligent and down-to-earth, Munroe admits a fondness for Scotch but a resolve to “stay close to home” and avoid the whole Hollywood cocktail party scene she calls “the game.” She also has a rapid-fire flair for verbalizing her opinions, so that even the F word sounds less like an obscenity and more like constructive criticism.

While telling it like it is, her heartfelt advice — covering each stage of filmmaking from script and casting to the rough cut and end result — is meant to save filmmakers from at least some of the agony that comes with putting their heart, sweat and money into making a movie.

And Munroe can empathize. She assumed that with all her expertise, resources and connections in the film industry, making her own film would be easier. It wasn't.

Even though she won a PlanetOut drama award and the film is screening at festivals all over the country, “I can't imagine doing another no-budget short film again, [even] with all those resources,” she says. “I'd rather shoot myself in the fucking head than do that again.”

In the midst of shooting she had to fire a producer, change the script, carefully budget her limited amount of film and, at the last-minute, change a hospital location when a source at the hospital got fired.

“It was crazy,” she remembers. “The one thing that saved me was that I had one of the best DPs [director of photography] in the world [Geary McLeod]. It was really an exquisite group of people who came together.”

With all the grief involved in making a short film, it seems just as easy to make a feature so that's what Munroe will do next. She's working on the script now for *Michael and Alice*.

“It takes a lot of work in this medium. Even that shitty, shot-on-home-video with so-and-so's friends, you know, bad lesbian porno movie, took a lot of time and effort and people and headache.”

But along with the hard truths Munroe so bluntly delivers to filmmakers — for their own good — are the optimism and love she has for the movies.

“It means so much to me; that's why I'm so passionate about it,” she says. “I work so hard with filmmakers ... and this probably sounds a little [sappy] but I think that everybody can make their dream come true. Maybe you won't rule the film world, but at least you can feel accomplished.”

And her parting advice as she continues her drive toward the West Coast sunset? “What I want to tell filmmakers, particularly women filmmakers, is to don't just tell the story you want to tell [or] make the film that people want to see. Try to do both.” ■

Get more of Munroe's advice on filmmaking at robertamunroe.com.

12 13

NIKKI WEISS AND CAROLE ANTOURI

Lesbian power couple Nikki Weiss and Carole Antouri build a better entertainment business.

By Dana Kaye



Carole Antouri (left) and Nikki Weiss

Behind every great female impersonator ... are two lesbians?

Nikki Weiss, a well-known celebrity representative, opened her own agency when she was 22. At first she mainly represented filmmakers and producers, but when Weiss visited the Baton, a Chicago-based female impersonator cabaret, she was fascinated by the women and their stories. She began going every week and hanging out with the girls after the show.

"It's one of the oldest, most successful venues of its kind," Weiss says. "I just had to tell its story."

Weiss and her life partner, Carole Antouri, envisioned a series based on the Baton and its transgender performers. With Weiss' background in theater and film and Antouri's experience as a much sought after makeup artist and photographer, they made a great team, and produced and directed the series pilot themselves.

But although they were represented by Endeavor, one of the best talent agencies in the country, their pilot was not picked up.

"The networks were too scared," Weiss recalls. "They were afraid to target a mainstream audience."

The transgender performers portrayed on the series live mainstream lives as women and have been embraced by their parents.

"We're complete opposites. But that's a good thing. We just synch."

Mimi Marks, one of the Baton performers, has a family very supportive of her transition who, according to Weiss and Antouri, "just let her be the person she always was." Weiss and Antouri feel that many of these performers are very relatable to mainstream audiences; they have husbands and mortgages, living quite a "normal" life.

But the networks wanted none of it; they wanted broken homes and lots of struggle. But this was before the groundbreaking and critically acclaimed *Transamerica* hit the big screen. While Weiss and Antouri were producing their own series, they had no idea the film was even being made.

"Hey, it took *Desperate Housewives* how long to get on the air?" Antouri asks. "Timing is everything."

They have not given up on their Baton series, but they've put it on the back burner for now. From their experience at the venue and their relationship with its performers, they began managing Mimi Marks as well as Candis Cayne, whose one-woman show just debuted in New York. Weiss has also judged numerous transgender pageants. "I'm on a panel with two gay men and two drag queens," Weiss says, "and people approach me thinking that I'm male-to-female!"

After talking with Weiss and Antouri, it's clear why they work so well together, even though they are

in a relationship — a situation that often leads to more conflicts than successful collaboration. "We're complete opposites," they both agree. "But that's a good thing. We just synch." Weiss' sales skills combined with Antouri's creative talents make for a solid business relationship.

"We met in L.A. five years ago," Weiss says. "And as soon as I saw her, I hid. I knew she was dangerous." Weiss thought at first that Antouri was straight.

"I shook her hand," Antouri recalls, "and it was like holding a dead fish."

But by the end of that night, Weiss had learned that Antouri was gay, and her perspective on Antouri changed. She went home with Antouri's number in her pocket, and the rest is history.

"My siblings call for her now," Antouri says. "They don't even talk to me, just say 'Put Nikki on the phone.'"

The two admit that because there were no strong lesbian role models when they were growing up, it took longer for them to come to terms with their sexuality and come out.

"This was before Ellen came out on her show," Weiss says. "*Basic Instinct* was my first exposure, and I thought to myself, 'Huh, this is

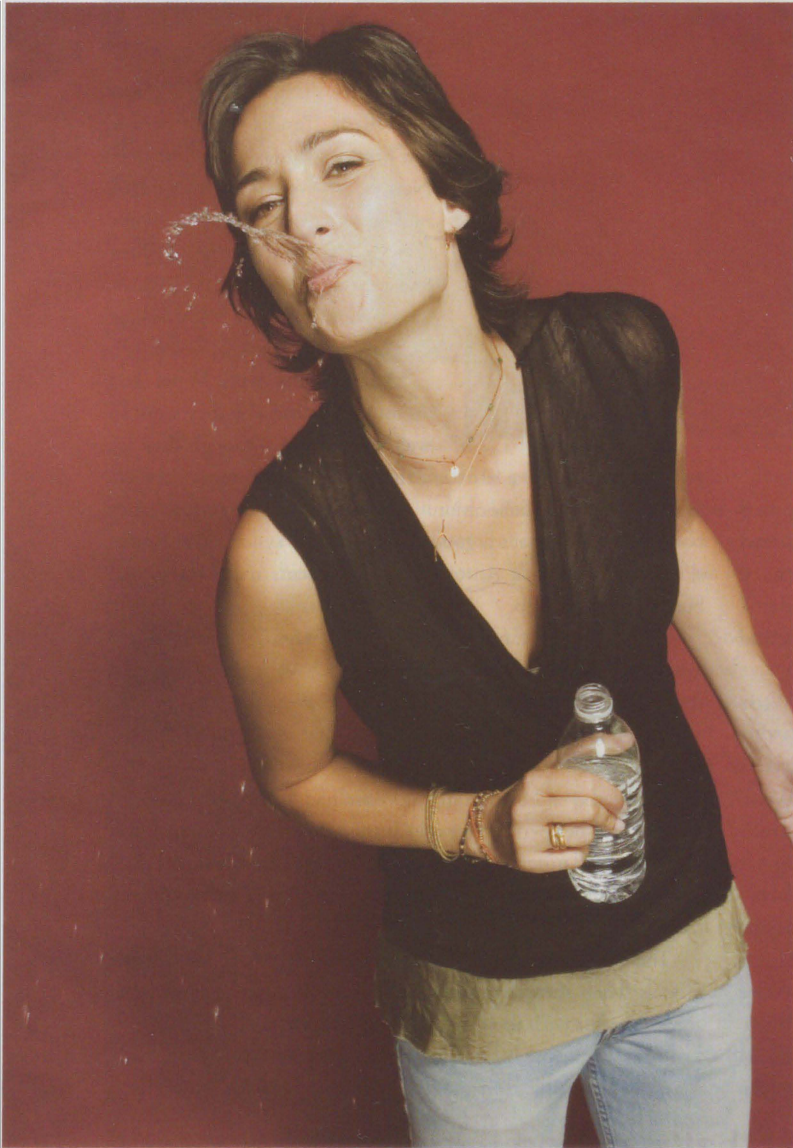
possible.'" She was married at 22, but didn't consider the possibility that she was gay until the age of 24. For Antouri, coming out was an even lengthier process. Even though her older sister came out when Antouri was in her teens, she didn't realize her sexuality until her late 20s.

Now they are comfortable with and proud of their lesbian identity, and were even a featured couple in the Valentine's issue of *O* magazine. And although the Baton pilot has yet to be picked up, they continue to embark on new endeavors while waiting for timing to be on their side. ■

NIKI WEISS AND CAROLE ANTONI TORRINI ATTORBO

81 12

Head Over



Hedison

After her hot role as Dylan on the third season of Showtime's *The L Word*, Alexandra Hedison heads back to TV this fall with a new show and a renewed zest for life. She recently talked with us about why she's going back in front of the camera after years of working behind the scenes, and what kind of woman she'd like to date.



Alexandra Hedison sidles up behind a shapely female figure, wrapping her arms around the sweep of the waist and running her hands over the breasts. It might sound like another seduction scene from her recent stint on *The L Word*, but on this hot summer afternoon, Hedison is playfully promising her undying love to a headless mannequin that she finds during her *CURVE* photo shoot at a Los Angeles studio.

"This is the closest I've gotten to a girl in a long time," she jokes, with one arm around her new squeeze.

After working behind the camera for the last five years as a professional

photographer, Hedison is now out in front, hosting the new reality design show *Designing Blind* on A&E. Although she is considerate and accommodating during the photo shoot, she admits she's used to being behind the scenes. She apologizes for her wardrobe, which is a simple assemblage of jeans, T-shirts and sentimental jewelry, including a beaded bracelet from India and a lovely old woven belt she picked up in Peru.

The photographer looks skeptically at Hedison's baggy jeans with ripped-out knees, so Hedison pulls out two more pairs of pants from the pile of clothes she brought from home. "I have these Levi's, or I have these older Levi's," she

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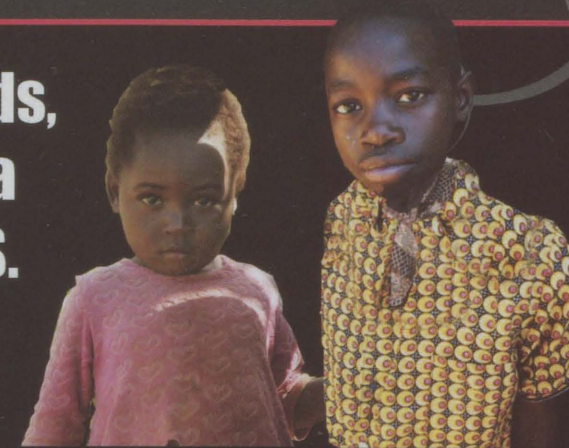


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*Project Concern Photos By: Dana Bessenecker



Hedison doesn't show as much skin on *Designing Blind* as she did on *The L Word* but viewers will finally get to see her being herself. "It's about as *me* as I've ever been on camera," she says.

says, eager to help. Though her duds may not be geared to glamour, once she slips into the faded T-shirt and jeans they transform into something utterly chic. The clothes may make the man, but in this case the woman makes the clothes.

A lanky 5-foot-10-inch woman with striking, beautiful features, Hedison may look like a model but she takes a simple approach to fashion, even cutting her own hair. When the stylist hired for the shoot pulls out a handled blade, Hedison grabs the "new toy" and, moments before her photo shoot, begins snipping her own locks. "This is like a crack pipe for an addict," she says gleefully.

Since she took on the role of co-hosting *Designing Blind*, Hedison has been able to combine her sense of humor, her acting skills and her love of architecture, composition and line — all the things that inspire her photography. The new reality show, which at press time was set to premiere on Aug. 6 and run for 13 weeks, teams Hedison with designer Eric B., a blind man who creates amazing spaces.

While the show might strike reality TV skeptics as a peculiar gimmick, it's captivating to see B. at work. A gay man who lost his sight due to complications from HIV, he takes a room and creates something beautiful *and* functional, assisted by an astute intuition and some nifty tools, such as a talking tape measure and a tool that reads blueprints with the help of bar codes.

"It's not a typical show, and they weren't looking for a typical host," Hedison says, explaining what drew her to the project. "Really, everything I've been doing, especially in the last couple of years — it's just like I'm following my instincts on everything. ... And I just really liked him; I immediately felt a connection to him and I like what he's doing. The show is ultimately about following your instincts."

Hedison's instincts for keeping things simple inform many aspects of her life. You can see it in her clothes, her environment and her attitudes about people. "Don't get me wrong," she interjects. "Luxury is a lovely thing. But when your entire life is about all these things that you've accumulated, it's really depressing. I've certainly been around people like that. They are constantly consuming because they are desperately searching for what's going to make them feel better."

Although Hedison willingly left a successful acting career several years ago because she wasn't happy in it, she decided to return to acting last year when Showtime's *The L Word* offered her a chance to audition. She knew several people connected to the show, but another reason for pursuing the role was to get a little relief from the publicity over her split with Ellen DeGeneres.

The set of *The L Word* was "a healthy environment," and the cast members, especially Rachel Shelley (Helena), were an inspiring and supportive

group. "I wasn't in great shape emotionally when I started working on that show," Hedison says. But not only was she embraced by the tight-knit cast, her popularity in the role of hot documentary filmmaker Dylan Moreland, who spins Helena's head and rocks her bed, put Hedison back on an acting track.

Near the end of her time on the show, she had a big decision to make. A producer friend who was aware of Hedison's eye for design, as well as her keen comic timing, asked her to audition for the hosting job of *Designing Blind*. Hedison had been a regular on the series *L.A. Firefighters* in 1996, had a recurring role on *Prey* with Debra Messing, and had roles on numerous other TV shows, but it was photography that inspired her. However, after hearing her producer friend describe *Designing Blind*, Hedison was intrigued and decided to audition. She got the part, and her ad-lib humor and sexy sidekick persona are a great complement to B.'s designing talents.

"It's James Bond," Hedison says of the oddly authoritative voice that comes from B.'s tape measure, adding: "It also comes in Beyoncé [Knowles]." In one segment of *Designing Blind*, Hedison talks about the importance of trust with a female participant who, like all the show's homeowners, remains blindfolded throughout the selection of materials and other design choices, forcing her to use her non-visual senses. "I trust you," the woman says sweetly — and rather naïvely — as Hedison waves a sculpture at the woman's head. "As you should," Hedison deadpans.

"Someone's gotta make jokes about the fact that a blind man is doing the interior design, my God!" Hedison exclaims. "I mean, if he wasn't so damn good at it, I probably couldn't." Hedison doesn't show as much skin on *Designing Blind* as she did on *The L Word* (unless the producers come up with some sort of hot tub edition of *Designing Blind*), but viewers will get to see her being herself: funny, a bit goofy, conscientious, inquisitive, stylish and beautiful. "It's about as me as I've ever been on camera," she says.

The "real" Hedison might seem to be a series of contradictions. Raised in the shadow of Hollywood, her father, David Hedison, is an actor from the popular 1960s television series *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea*, and more recently a soap star on *Another World* and *The Young and the Restless*. But her upbringing wasn't all about spotlights and glamour.

Her youth in the 1970s was spent in a tiny, one-bedroom beach house in Malibu. "This was when Malibu was — this is the only time you'll hear me say this word — magical!" Hedison says. "It wasn't overly developed. We had a pullout couch where my parents slept at night. My sister and I had the bedroom. And there was a round dining room table. At night they would have the



"I seem to be attracted to blondes. I'm not sure what that's about, but when I look back that does seem to be the case. Maybe ... after all this internal examination all of a sudden I won't be attracted to blondes."

most raucous, fun dinner parties." She remembers Roger Moore, Joan Collins and Ursula Andress among the guests. Later they moved to a modest home in Beverly Hills, where her parents still live. Her mother instilled in her the notion that "you don't bring a lot of attention to yourself," Hedison says. "And the quality of your life comes down to your friends and your family. Not that job or how many famous people you know."

A chance meeting with Lauren Hutton on a plane to New York solidified this attitude in Hedison. Hutton was dressed simply in jeans and a white T-shirt. "She was so beautiful," Hedison recalls. "She was also beautiful because she's traveled all over the world and she's interesting and she's interested. She's thinking about a whole lot of things other than just the jeans and white T-shirt that were on her body that morning."

While Hedison emphasizes that she does like nice things, she tries to make an effort to focus on what's real and what's important in life. That's why she chose the home she bought more than a year ago. "At the time I was looking it was only like two months after my breakup with Ellen and I was living in a hotel, so I didn't have anywhere to live. I was needing to put myself somewhere. I made the decision to look for a place. It was the right decision."

What she found was a little house in the hills that was built in 1955 by an artist who lived there until he died about four years ago. "It's almost like an artist's studio. If nothing else it's authentic," she says. "When my parents came to see the house, my dad looks around and sees the cracks in the walls and he says, 'Well, these cracks are authentic.' He was horrified that I was buying it."

But the house is a good fit for Hedison. "There's nothing sleek or modern or flashy about it at all," she says. "It's very practical."

And she doesn't plan to share that home anytime soon. In fact, throughout our day together, every time she mentions a friend with whom she did this or that — any friend — she clarifies, "Not a 'special friend.'"

After I bring this to her attention, she says, "See how resistant I am?"

"I'm not kidding," she insists. "I am literally not dating. ... I don't think I'm ready. I feel like I really am kind of working on the relationship with myself."

Later, when we chat over tofu vegetarian burgers she recommends at a nearby restaurant ("I'm really not that healthy," she claims), she's comfortable talking about what qualities she will be looking for when she does date. "I seem to be attracted to blondes. I'm not sure what that's about, but when I look back that does seem to be the case," she says with a laugh. "Maybe all the work I'm doing will somehow change that ... like, after all this internal examination all of a sudden I won't be attracted to blondes."

Though she isn't attracted to a particular physical type, "I really, really love someone who knows how to communicate." She also likes people who can get things done. "Someone who is helpless — that's an unbelievably unattractive quality for me. Whether it's where to park or making a reservation somewhere, making a decision — a lot of people, especially women sometimes, they just don't know how to take initiative or just make things happen. I find that I do that a lot, so it's nice when someone can do that for me."



And, she adds, "It never hurts when someone is really sexy."

Hedison, while still cautious, appears to be in a good place. She has her own space, a TV show, close friends and family who love her, and another photography show in the planning stages. She's even open to a return to *The L Word* — if she's asked and her time permits. There were definitely some loose ends between her character, Dylan, and Shelley's Helena. Hedison notes that since Dylan turned Helena's life upside down, Helena has been a much more likable character.

"My character sort of redeemed her," Hedison says, laughing. "My character made her look nice!"

When I ask her if she and DeGeneres will ever be friends, she answers thoughtfully, "I hope so. If I ran into her right now, I'd be like, 'Oh my gosh, hi!' You know, I'm sure she'd make me laugh. ... Truly, if we saw each other right now, we would make each other laugh, I'm sure. A big part of our relationship was friendship. ... I don't know, we'll see."

Other than the projects already in the works, I wonder aloud if she has a "plan for life." She answers readily, with her typically dry sense of humor. "Yes! It's to come up with a really good plan." ■

Photo: www.vegiephoto.com Hair: Louise Alcon Makeup: Jimmy Todd Stylist: Selma Towers

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My

life is an open book. Anyone who reads can find out more about my sex life (yes, I threw up the first time I went down on a woman), my crimes (yes, I stole a car when I was 18), my political mistakes (uh, once there I was a Republican). As a writer I divulge everything from the minutiae of daily life to my most private intimacies, and as an editor I expect nothing less of my writers.

But coming out as a lesbian with a transgender husband has been hard for me. After 15 years of having a wife, I was worried that suddenly having a husband instead would render me invisible — both to other dykes and to the rest of the world. So for the first six months of my partner's transition, I followed every comment about him with the phrase, "But I'm a lesbian." The grocery store clerks I sprung this on have never looked so baffled. I also struggled with all the strange questions that came from our friends and family and even those that popped into my head from time to time.

I struggled, and still struggle, to maintain my identity as a lesbian (or a lesbian-identified bisexual) without invalidating my partner's identity as a man. In those first few months of our transition — because we did it together — my partner and I negotiated down to the last detail what kind of man he was allowed to be (chest hair-free metrosexual Ryan Seacrest became a model) in order to allay my concerns about "maleness" in my lesbian household, and I spent endless hours online and in theaters and libraries learning all I could about trans lives and FTM wives. What I learned was that lesbians and other queer girls are increasingly finding themselves in relationships with transgender people. Since a sizable portion of the FTM world is comprised of men who at one time identified as lesbians, it's no wonder our worlds are intertwined. As more FTMs come out, formerly women's spaces are now becoming gathering grounds

Gender 101

for gender minorities, advertising their events as being "for women and trans people."

As we went to press on this issue at the end of June, transgender people and their allies in New York filled Chelsea Park for the Trans Day of Action for Social and Economic Justice, to talk about immigration, living wages, the war on terror. In San Francisco, lesbians and transfolk gathered at Transforming Communities — an event meant to look at the tensions between the L and T worlds — and thousands walked from San Francisco's Dolores Park to City Hall in the largest Transgender March ever. Many dykes I know were chief among the marchers.

Now, nearly 30 years after lesbian author Janice Raymond's *The Transsexual Empire* decried MTFs as rapist tools of the patriarchy and FTMs as deluded and homophobic lesbians, transgender women and men are finding a place at the lesbian table. But despite our growing alliances, we must admit that lesbians sometimes feel at odds with transgender people; we demand male-to-female transsexuals prove themselves worthy of entry to our club, and endlessly question just how feminist female-to-male transsexuals can be if they've rejected female-hood. We debate, we worry, we secretly whisper things to our best friends because we're not sure whether they are acceptable questions to ask. That's because, like me, a lot of queer girls simply know very little about this new gender frontier.

CURVE offers this tiny glimpse at gender identity and the trans world in this cursory (but by no means comprehensive) guide, in the hope that we can start a dialogue about the issue, too. Let us know what you think. — *Diane Anderson-Minshall*

Losing a Lesbian

Having a gay daughter was easy. Having a son took some getting used to. | By Jo Eager

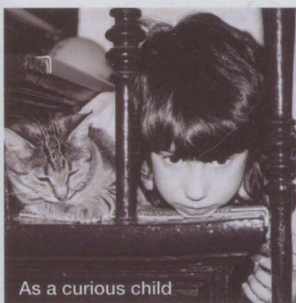
At age 15, my daughter came out as a lesbian. No surprise there. When 19 rolled around, she informed me she was changing her name to some off-the-wall name I'd never heard of — Caoinlean Caleb. "Is it a male or female name?" I asked. "Unisex," she replied. As a female named Jo, I'm not sure why I bothered asking. Maybe subconsciously, I saw what was coming.

"I wanted to choose my own name, something that has meaning to me," she told me. She's part Irish and said she picked Irish names because she wanted to get in touch with her roots. Caoinlean, she told me, means "of beautiful shape" and Caleb stands for "faithful." (I didn't take the name change personally, but I was responsible for the beautiful birth name of Rachael.)

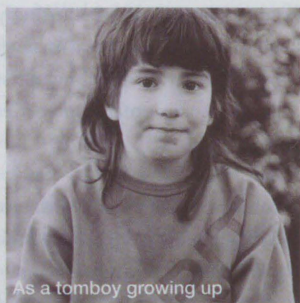
Less than a year after the name change, I received an e-mail from my daughter, whom I now refer to as Caleb. We live in different states and sometimes don't see each other for several months. It was a short note but by the time I finished it, I was reading through a blur of tears.

"Hi Mom,

I need to tell you something and I thought it would be best to e-mail you so that you could process it before we talk. I know you've always said that you want your children to be happy, and there is one thing in particular that I need right now in order to be happy.



As a curious child



As a tomboy growing up

You know I've always been a tomboy, but it is more than that. I was born into the wrong body, and I need to fix that now. I hope you can understand that. If you have questions about it, you can ask me. Love you."

Agony is the word that comes closest to describing how I felt in that moment. Tears flowed for a few seconds before the sound of pain escaped my throat. The next few days were consumed with heartache and more tears. I went online and started researching in an attempt to understand. I read that up to 30 percent of the transgender population deals with this issue by committing suicide. At least my kid had the courage and strength to do what she felt was necessary to be true to herself — which could be keeping her alive. Or should I say him? It took a few days before I responded to the e-mail from "my little girl."

"Dear Rachael,

I'm struggling right now and feeling a lot of pain. It's a grieving process; a loss. I do have many questions and in trying to understand I went online to do some research. I will wait with my questions until we talk. You know I love you no matter what. I hope you can understand how painful and difficult this is for a mother. We are not our bodies; we are souls.

Love, Mom

When we talked a few days later, she told me she'd already been living as a guy for close to a year — a standard part of the process in order to obtain male hormones.

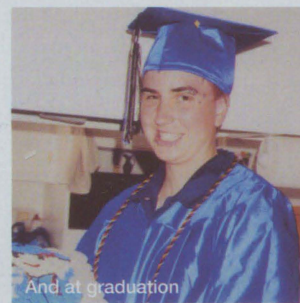
A few months after the e-mail, s/he started taking male hormones and went to San Francisco to have chest surgery; removal of her large D-cup breasts. And here I am lucky to fill an A cup. Life really is ironic, isn't it? He has a large scar from surgery. Hair is growing on his chest. He has new nipples. He shaves his face instead of his legs.

In the interest of keeping things humorous, he gave me a greeting card for newborns: "Congratulations! It's a boy." It was a sweet card with his recognition that I had a lot to deal with, too, in this decision he'd made. "Thanks for all of your support. I'm really proud of how you've been handling everything," he wrote.

It's still a rough transition trying to remember "he" versus "she," to see my former daughter now as a guy with a beard sitting at the breakfast table without a shirt on. It's difficult trying to explain things to my other child, who was 7 when all of this started. His nickname for Rachael was "sissy."

Sometimes I'm in the middle of telling a story from years ago when he was a she and I wonder: Do I refer to my son or my daughter? He was a she back

Sometimes I'm in the middle of telling a story from years ago when he was a she and I wonder: Do I refer to my son or my daughter? These things aren't covered in Parenting 101.



And at graduation

then. I'm talking to someone and can't remember if they think I have a daughter or a son. These things aren't covered in Parenting 101. It can be confusing. Whom in your life do you share this information with?

Questions pop in my head and even if my new son thinks they're weird, he's kind enough to reply.

"Is your sex drive now like that of an 18-year-old guy versus a 20-year-old woman?" Yes.

"Did you take a sudden interest in sports after starting hormones?" No.

My younger son asked if Caleb is better at playing catch now.

Of course my transgender child is the same person, with the same soul. While he seems to have completely transitioned, I'm not quite there. There are times I tell people I have a daughter.

Although heartbroken when I received the e-mail from my then-daughter, I knew I had only one choice: acceptance. There are times when "hey, girl" slips out of my mouth. It's a conscious effort still to say "he" and "him." I assume someday it'll become second nature. Yes, I have a son now, but I see pictures of what was once my baby girl. While I'm still adjusting, my love is constant. I loved her as my daughter; I love him as my son. I *do* want him to be happy, even if it means a sex change. I admit, though, that I do have occasional moments when I still wish my son was a lesbian. ■

How to Respect a Transsexual Person

Face it, we can all use a little respect these days. The basic facts about transsexual and transgender people aren't taught in classrooms or at lesbian clubs, so here's a handy guide from the queer, nerdy girl and linguistics buff behind Kisa.ca. | By Sonja Elen Kisa

What is transsexual? Transsexual people are people who desire to have, or have achieved, a different physical sex from that which they were assigned at birth. There are many other flavors of genderqueer and transgender people out there, and sometimes there exists cultural overlap between trans people and drag performers. Much of the information below — written in the voice of a trans person — refers to transsexuals, but some can be applied to transgender or genderqueer folks as well.

The Basics

- Accept me as a full-fledged person of the gender I identify as.
- Always use the language that corresponds to my gender identity, even if my body doesn't seem to match and even when talking about my past.
- If you are still adjusting, it's normal to make mistakes. Don't draw attention to it by saying "sorry." Just correct yourself and carry on.
- If I identify as male, never use female-marked words (like waitress, breasts, vagina) to describe anything about me, and vice versa. Don't call me "female-bodied," unless I use that term myself.
- Gender identity has nothing to do with sexual orientation. Whether I am attracted to men, women, both or neither is a totally separate thing from whether I am male or female. For example, if I am a trans girl who likes girls, treat me no differently than any other lesbian.
- Don't expect me to conform to the stereotypes of my gender. I'll wear whatever clothes I like and have whatever interests I have. Being masculine or feminine (i.e., having mannerisms or interests that are seen by society as stereotypical of one gender) has nothing to do with being male or female (i.e., identifying as a certain gender). Butch trans women and feminine trans guys exist, just like they do among nontranssexual people.
- I am a person foremost. If you must use the word "transsexual" (or "trans"), use it as an adjective to describe people, not as a noun unto itself, saying "trans people," "trans folks" or "trans guys" as opposed to just "transgenders."
- The preferred term for somebody who is not transsexual in most circles nowadays is "nontrans." Many people find terms like "bio boy" or "genetic girl" insulting, because trans people also have biology and genes.

About My Transition

- Use the word "transition" to describe what I am going through or what I went through.
- Don't openly talk about my genitals any more than you would with a non-trans person, unless I bring up the topic myself.
- Don't immediately assume that genital sex reassignment surgery is my priority. Every person is unique and chooses different steps during their transition. Not everyone wants or can afford sex reassignment surgery.

Social Situations

- Please don't tell anyone I am transsexual without my permission — even if they are, too. Just talk about me like any other normal guy or girl,

according to my gender identity.

- Don't introduce me as your "transsexual" friend. Don't ask me to explain my life story or my gender situation to people I just met.
- Don't refer to people who are out as trans as "honest." Being out may be honest to whom they are, but being stealth is just as honest for those who do not identify with being trans. There is nothing deceptive about not disclosing one's trans status.

The Nature of Gender

- Gender comes from the way our brain, mind and/or soul are configured, not from the body. Chromosomes, hormones or upbringing do not determine or change a person's gender.
- The only person who can know about one's gender is oneself. No external "clues" can prove or disprove somebody's true inner gender. Some people knew it their entire lives. Some manage to deny it for a long time. Some always knew there was something different.
- Don't call a nontranssexual woman a "real girl."

About Labels

- Do not confuse transsexuality with cross-dressing. Cross-dressers simply enjoy wearing clothing typically associated with the opposite sex, sometimes for sexual or fetishized reasons.
- Do not confuse transsexual people with drag queens or kings. Drag performers wear elaborate and often stereotypical clothes to perform a particular gender, often for stage or show or to do impersonations.
- The term "transgender" is an umbrella term that includes any and all gender variant people: transsexual people, cross-dressers, drag kings and queens, intersex, genderqueer and bigender people, and many other types. Be careful when using it. For example, many transsexual people don't like to be associated with cross-dressers.
- The short form "trans" can mean either transsexual or transgender.
- The term "tranny" is slang. Many feel that it is offensive, on a par with the N word. As such, use it with much caution, if at all.
- The term "she-male" is always offensive. It is used by the porn industry to objectify and fetishize pre-operative transsexual women.
- If we're getting intimate, ask me about my boundaries or if I have any specific terms I prefer to use about parts of my body. For example, many trans guys call the organ between their legs a dick, regardless of whether it's been operated on.

If I Just Came Out

- If I have just come out about my gender, you should use my new name and pronouns with me and anyone who knows about me, especially with people who are still struggling to adjust to my correct gender.
- Allow me to tell people about my gender identity and my transition at my own pace. ■



Kate Bornstein

Kiss Me, Kate

Kate Bornstein, author, performance artist, playwright and transsexual trailblazer, released her fourth book, *Hello, Cruel World: 101 Alternatives to Suicide for Teens, Freaks and Other Outlaws*, this July. Her other books include *Gender Outlaw* and *My Gender Workbook*. — Dana Kaye

What inspired you to write *Hello, Cruel World*?

The book is payback to the dykes and fags and drag queens and S/M players who welcomed me and kept me safe when I was a 45-year-old baby freak. I'd [wanted] to write the book for some time, but my tipping point was the death of Jake Barker, 22-year-old son of Dragon Xcalibur, a matriarch of today's Seattle dyke community. What a sweet, good guy Jake was; everyone loved him ... and he killed himself. A child — a child of our loving community — feeling so much pain that there's no choice but death? I was living on the East Coast and I felt so helpless. So I started writing. I figured, I'm an elder and a published author; I have a voice. I decided to be mama lion and make sure these children of our community are welcomed and safe.

For the form of the book, I took radical beat poet Tuli Kupferberg's comedic Zen socialist text *1001 Ways to Live Without Working* and I wrote *101 Alternatives to Suicide*. Listing out the alternatives was easy; but reliving the times I needed them to save my own life was more difficult. My editor and publisher were phenomenal, directing me to continually open the book up to teens and other freaky, outlaw readers who might not be LGBTQ. How does the lesbian/dyke world speak to the outside world? It was a challenge to write in a language that can describe and unite our diverse lives.

I understand you have an upcoming memoir project?

It's a book and a solo show about daddy ... being a daddy to my estranged daughter, being a son to my daddy. It's about the "Good Daddy" archetype that only butch dykes and a few men, like Gregory Peck, seem able to pull off. My father was a good man, but he wasn't "Good Daddy." It's called *Kate Bornstein Is a Queer and Pleasant Danger*. I'm doing my best to write from a space of "Good Daddy," with love for love.

For more information about Kate Bornstein, go to hellocruelworld.net.

So Your Best Friend Is Now a Dude

Maybe it's your friend, your muff buddy or your wife of 15 years (trust me, it happens), but suddenly a woman you know quite well reveals that she's really a man. Coming out as an FTM is hard work, but it can be equally difficult for the lesbians left behind. You've got questions, but you're not quite sure if it's even OK to ask them (it is, by the way).

You may turn to the Internet — that liberated bastion of information — for advice. Unfortunately, when it comes to transgender issues, navigating the Web, which is chock-full of misinformation, can be dicey. Here are a few handy Web sites that will help you understand what's going on.

FTM International (ftmi.org) is the leading organization for female-to-male transsexuals and offers a wealth of info through its newsletters, publications, and monthly meetings and events. The Web site is aimed at folks all along the transgender-transsexual continuum (post-op, pre-op, non-op, don't even know what op is) as well as their supporters, and for good basic info to send to your mom, this site is your best friend.

Some of the biggest questions about transitioning that FTMs often get (well, their partners get it) are about their new bodies: Will he have surgery? What kind of surgery? What will that look like? It's rude and intrusive, but it's the honest-to-God first thing a lot of folks want to know. If you want to know the difference between a chest reconstruction and a gender mastectomy, or a metoidioplasty and a phalloplasty, **Transster.com** and **Loren Cameron's Man Tool** (lorencameron.com/mantool) both offer real photos and real surgery information. Transster is a photo repository of FTM gender reassignment surgeries that's password-protected to weed out the fetishists. Man Tool, from acclaimed photographer Loren Cameron, is actually an e-book that addresses the pressing and intimate questions that we have about plastic surgery options for female-to-male transsexuals. More than 40 lovingly collected photos from Cameron, an FTM himself, offer up more than just surgical body modifications but also first-person stories about the subject's experiences, surgery and sexual sensation. It's graphic and not for kids, but it helps you quickly adjust to what some FTMs experience.

TheTransitionalMale.com is an education support site for transmen and their families, as well as butches and genderqueers. It offers photos and information on transmen on TV, legislation that affects FTMs and other trans resources, like a Big Brothers Binder program.

And if the just-out transgender person in your life happens to be a lesbian-identified male-to-female? Well, resources are a little scant, but try **GenderTalk.com**, the Web site of Nancy Nangeroni's Gender Talk Radio — a trans activism tool and info archive for all aspects of gender, from cross-dressing to transfeminists to plain ol' queers. — Diane Anderson-Minshall

Going Under the Knife

As more transgender folks gain visibility, some people wonder if medical transition is always the best option. | By Allison Steinberg

“Gender identity is the sense of belonging that one feels for a particular sex, not only biologically but also psychologically and socially. This is independent of one’s biological sex which is simply decided on the basis of the organs between the legs.” — Andrology.com

Almost 30 years after Stonewall, “T” is becoming a stronger letter under the LGBT umbrella. Increased visibility has set the stage for a transgender community that now has its own organizations, health care facilities, meeting places and even parties, though the struggle for equal treatment in society at large is still in its infancy. One uneasy discussion that never seems to make it to the dinner table yet is whispered about among even supportive dykes, is about those who may have misidentified. With the visibility of transgender identity gaining momentum, are there some who mistakenly undergo medical transition?

The lack of research available is symptomatic of the plight of transgender individuals overall; little research in any field offers a comprehensive study about the lives of those whose gender is different from their birth sex, much less those who identify in different places along the gender spectrum. The American Psychiatric Association estimates one in every 30,000 biological males and one in every 100,000 biological females are transgender, but no comprehensive survey has ever been conducted to paint an accurate landscape.

“Being born a transsexual is not a choice any more than being born with blue or brown eyes is a choice. The only choice in the matter is whether to transition or not. For many of us, including me, such a decision is truly a life-or-death choice,” says MTF Jill Jay, a member of Trans-Academics.org, which offers a list-serve where transgender people exchange academic discourse. The decision to transition for most people is intrinsically the correct one, though some find themselves on the other end of a sometimes irreversible mistake.

But, “It is possible to be influenced with a therapist encouraging you to transition. There is also peer pressure, and people do a lot to fit in,” says Robin Dea, M.D., a psychiatrist and regional director for mental health services at Northern California Kaiser Permanente.

Dayna Kravitz, born and raised in Queens, N.Y., came out as a loud, proud lesbian at age 14. Just before her high school graduation, she cut her

hair very short and for the next few years, people often mistook her for a guy.

“When I went into the woman’s bathroom I got, ‘Sir you don’t belong here,’ so I started hiding my breasts and using the men’s bathroom,” Kravitz says.

At age 20, Dayna became AJ and asked close friends to switch to masculine pronouns when referring to her. Kravitz went to intake at Callen-Lorde, a health care facility that caters to the LGBT community, and met with a therapist about starting hormone treatment to begin transition into a man. Though she ultimately decided against hormones (and again prefers female pronouns), Kravitz underwent an emotional transition and began to self-identify as a transgender man.

Kravitz’s mom — a far more understanding woman than many parents of transfolks — even signed her child’s 21st birthday card, “With love to AJ.” Though the transition made it easier for Kravitz to face both the mainstream world and most of her friends in the trans world, she still didn’t feel safe or comfortable.

From Thinking to Doing

Most who wish to transition first go to a therapist for

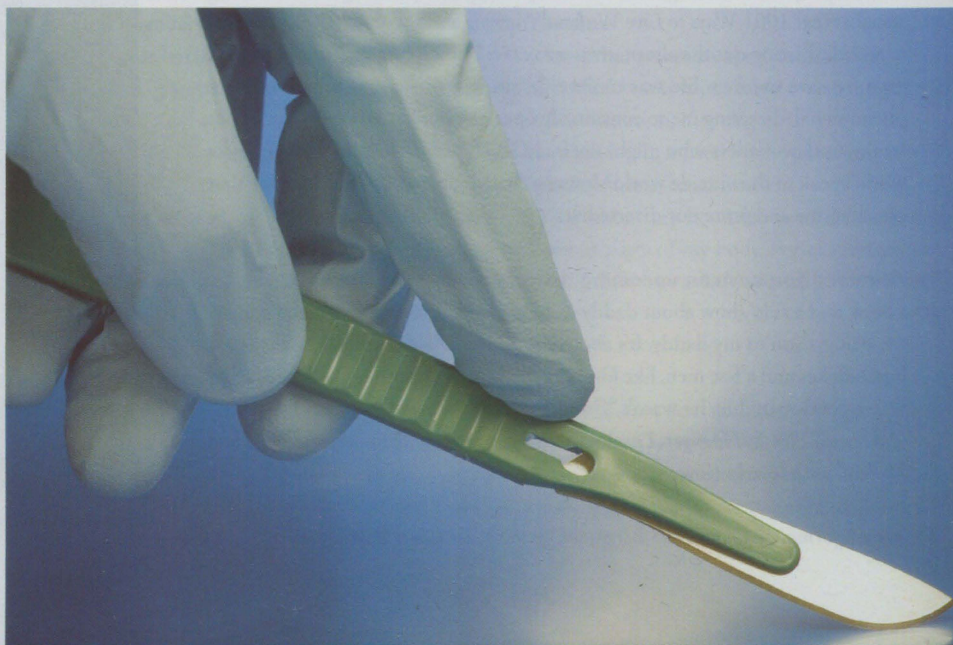
evaluation. The therapist, ideally, will be an objective party who helps the candidate decide whether transitioning is really for her. Though transitioning is not a simple process, for some people it can be easier to do than one may think.

In some areas, a person can get a prescription for hormone treatment after three months of psychotherapy, though there are exceptions in which a therapist may approve hormones earlier. And sometimes, people fall victim to unlicensed therapists or those who are out of touch with the needs of their transgender patients.

Dea reveals that she “had an FTM patient who clearly felt she was a lesbian who, at one time, got romantically involved with a transgender person.” The patient started seeing her partner’s therapist (whom she later found out was not licensed) who misdiagnosed her. The patient then went on to get a bilateral mastectomy only to regret it months later and went back under the knife to receive an augmentation mammoplasty (breast augmentation) to undo the original surgical work.

“For people who are midway in that gender continuum, neither male nor female, one has to be very careful with time spent, therapy and investigations of the body,” Dea says.

Generally, after a year of living full time in the new gender role, the candidate can be approved for surgery — or denied. But being denied is not the end of the story. Not all doctors are as scrupulous as the Callen-Lorde staff. Trans questioning patients can often find a surgeon who will perform sex reassignment surgery if the price is right.



"As long as you've got money, you can have all the surgery you want," Josef Kirchner says. Kirchner, 42, is an extreme case. Since December 1983, Kirchner has shelled out roughly \$100,000 for therapy, hormone treatment and surgery to make Josef into Judy.

"Things were good for some years as I chased the dream of fitting into society as a woman," he says in an online diary he created to document his journey. However, in late 1998, Kirchner realized that he didn't feel right living as a woman. Dealing with the ramifications of the indelible body alterations and psychological trauma of his decision, Kirchner is now back to living as a man.

The path toward sex reassignment surgery is long and somewhat complicated. First and foremost, it involves the strong personal belief that it is indeed physical alteration that would make the person feel right in his or her own body. But that is not as easy to determine as it may sound. Cultural constructs of gender can cause a serious case of mistaken personal identity.

Dea offers three criteria that therapists should follow when helping patients decide whether surgery is the right way to go. Make sure the person is transsexual and this is not just another gender issue; make sure the person is motivated and prepared for the transition; and make sure the person is psychologically stable, so that she or he can withstand the stages of transitioning.

Changing standards that have made surgery easier to obtain, misdiagnoses of doctors, and social pressures from gay and transgender peers can make judgment difficult. Any of the three can create utter disillusionment. The combination of all three can result in an irreversible mistake.

According to a survey by Trans-Academics.org founder Eli R. Green, "Battling the Trans-Enough Blues," 62.8 percent of 238 people surveyed answered "yes" to feeling "not trans-enough." When asked what they thought might contribute to such feeling, 81.2 percent cited "Comparing yourself to other people in the trans community"; 62.1 percent cited "Not being on hormones"; 55.4 percent cited "Not having had top surgery." In addition, 20.8 percent responded that they felt pressure from the trans community to undergo surgery.

Of those who were not happy with their current gender identity, 12.5 percent have re-evaluated their hormonal or surgery choices. These results are indicative that some people, especially transgender youth, may feel pressure to act on transitioning, whether it is right for them or not.

One of the anonymous survey respondents admitted feeling frustrated by "the impossibility of

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Beth Burkhart



Prado Gomez leads the choir

I'm a Believer

When lesbian producer Beth Burkhart set out to make *The Believers*, her new documentary about the world's first all-transgender gospel choir, with director Todd Holland and executive producer Nicole Miller, none of them had made a feature-length film before. Funding, she says, was the hardest part. After its premiere at San Francisco's Gay and Lesbian Film Festival, *The Believers* is now in search of a distributor. *CURVE* caught up with Burkhart, transgender choir member Prado Gomez and his lesbian partner of 13 years, Mariah Sparks, to talk about gender, lesbian politics and, oh yeah, the movie. — *Ariane Conrad*

Did you have a lot of connections to the trans community before you made this film?

Sparks: No, I didn't. I think there is a lot of commonality between lesbians and gays, who are still marginalized, with the trans community, which is *really* marginalized.

Who was your first transwoman crush?

Burkhart: My first real crush on a transgender person was — I met her through the film too, because we interview her in the film — Shawna Virago. Oh my God, she's so hot.

Sparks: She is. I want to be Shawna.

Are there any people in the choir who identify as lesbian?

Gomez: Yes. The founder of the choir, Ashley, is male-to-female, and she's lesbian. The musical director is lesbian, too, although she's not trans. Some choir members really don't like those labels, though, and you can find just about any sexual preference and everyone goes every which way.

How have lesbians responded to the film?

Burkhart: I guess, across the board it was shocking how uninformed people were about gender identity issues. People consistently asked us to step back and define things and explain basic things about transitioning and identities. And the director, Todd, he was clear that he didn't want to make it so much of a, he calls it a "Trans 101" film, because there are enough films now out there doing that. ... Instead, we really wanted this to be a film about the humanity of these people in the choir. How they're complex and ordinary people just like anyone else, just like straight people and just like lesbians.

Mariah, you and Prado talk about your relationship in the film.

Sparks: Well, we had a six-year relationship as a lesbian couple.

Does the world perceive you as straight now?

Sparks: Oh, yeah, it really pisses me off. Yes, he reads as male, and yes, I read as female; how convenient for everyone to just assume we're heterosexual. I identify as queer. I feel like that invisibility piece is something that's really frustrating for me. It always has been, as a femme. And now it's even more so. I haven't lost queer identity; people have lost it on me. But I assert myself as I always have had to as a femme. ... I can't shock people by saying "my girlfriend" because that doesn't work. What's been hard and, frankly, the most hurtful is when people in the queer community take away my queer identity. Sure, yes, we now have straight privilege and I recognize that. There are sacrifices that you make to be whole and happy, and being identified as queer is one that we made.

What do you hear from other queers about their concerns?

Gomez: Of the other fears I've heard from butches is that ... everyone's going to transition and butches are kind of like an endangered species. And I feel like that's a totally legitimate concern. There have been other times in queer history when butches have been pushed back into the closet. Butches have been under the radar — butches and femmes together — because ... being extremely feminine is not feminist; being extremely masculine is not feminist. ... If people think I became a man to escape homophobia as a butch, I can tell them, the homophobia I experience now that some people think that I'm a fag is so scary. ... The homophobia I experienced as a butch compared with what I experience as a perceived fag is like night and day. It's all dangerous, it's all scary. ... It's not fucking fun. And so in the end, I escape from nothing. ■

It Takes a Femme

Two lesbian filmmakers tackle a different kind of gender identity in their new film

FtF: Female to Femme. | By Heather Boerner

When Elizabeth Stark came out as femme around 1989, she was going against everything her feminist mother had taught her. She had wanted Stark to play football, grow out her leg hair and not wear makeup — in not so many words, be butch.

“For me, it was a form of rebellion,” recalls Stark, now 35. “I remember being drawn to very traditional presentations of femininity.” Today, she wears a faux-wrap top in earth tones that compliment her shoulder-length dark hair. But for Stark and for many other femmes, they come to their skirts and heels and makeup (or boots and close-fitting jeans and tattoos — or some combination of the two) after careful thought about their gender presentation. Femme isn’t just a great way to catch a girl’s eye at the bar. It’s a gender, and, for Stark, becoming femme is just as thoughtful and complicated a process as coming out butch or trans.

Stark’s own experience, as well as those of some famous femmes like actor Guinevere Turner, author Jewelle Gomez and musician Bitch, are the centerpiece of *FtF: Female to Femme*, a documentary that had its world debut at the Frameline LGBT Film Festival in San Francisco in June. Co-directed by Kami Chisholm, *FtF* asks femmes to discuss their gender presentation using the language of transition. It’s one of the first of its kind, the filmmakers say.

The results, they say, are fascinating.

“Our documentary is a documentary in the same way a femme is a girl — yeah, that’s where it starts, but it does a lot more with it, and goes to more interesting places,” Stark says, grinning. “And like femmes, I think the documentary has to teach its viewers how to watch it, how to understand it.”

But it’s not all identity politics; Chisholm jokes that it’s “tits and theory,” since the documentary is full of burlesque as a form of femme expression and sexuality. And while it’s not about femmes in relation to butches, Chisholm, who identifies as butch, says her butch friends are as excited to see strong, interesting femmes as femmes are to see themselves in the film.

“What I hear from butches is a lot of excitement about the film because they love femmes. What I hear is, ‘Femmes, yes, I want to see anything having to do with femmes. Femmes are gorgeous. I love femmes!’” she explains, chuckling and hunching forward slightly. “For me, this documentary is interesting. On the surface, it seems like I’m making a film that isn’t about me. But ... what this film is doing is talking about gender issues that are so central to my being walking through the world. I’m not femme, but the issues of who assumes who is what gender and how, all feel very relevant to me as a butch.”

Indeed, the documentary is meant to open a new dialogue in the discussion of gender in the lesbian community. Both Stark and Chisholm felt the documentary was long overdue as the valorization of female masculinity has rendered female femininity all but invisible. Both women hope the film will start a discussion and inspire more documentaries about what it means to present oneself as femme.

Stark and Chisholm are great women to tackle this issue. They love



Feisty femmes head to the silver screen

femme, both in its personal and political forms. Stark is a novelist and author of *Shy Girl*, which came out in 1999 and was a Lambda Literary Award finalist. Stark teaches writing and has performed from New York to San Francisco. In fact, she got the idea for the documentary three years ago, when she convened a panel of “phenomenal femmes” for a one-night-only performance and discussion of femmeness. Currently finishing her second book, Stark has started on a third. Her next book, she says, will play with the line between autobiography and fiction, and was prompted in part by her experience making *FtF*.

Chisholm, a filmmaker who is receiving her doctorate in history of consciousness from UC Santa Cruz, teaches about gender, sexuality, and queer

“I’m not femme, but the issues of who assumes who is what gender and how, all feel very relevant to me as a butch.”

and feminist studies at San Francisco State University. In 2004, they made the short documentary *Conversations with Elizabeth’s Father*, about Stark’s father’s failing health. After *FtF*, Chisholm is setting her sights on making a short fictional film about butch and trans identity. She’s drawn to that, she says, because so many documentaries have plumbed the depths of butch or trans experiences, but few films have tackled the subject together.

“I’m interested in what isn’t getting explored and what isn’t getting documented,” she says.

As for *FtF*, Chisholm says she hopes people will think it’s funny and sexy and makes them think.

Stark adds, “Kind of like a femme.” ■

10 Must-See Gender Documentaries

Transamerica got filmgoers talking about the New Trans Cinema of recent years. But beyond must-see features (*Boys Don't Cry*, *Soldier's Girl*) are some trans docs that are worthy of note.

Enough Man: Luke Woodward's fearless and compelling trans porn documentary explores body image, relationships and sex from the perspective of nine transmen and their partners. (lukewoodward.net)

Audrey's Beard: Almost anything from Native, trans filmmaker Alec Butler is worthy of note, but *Audrey's Beard* succinctly captures the transition from butch dyke to transman in two minutes. (E-mail madlobster@rogers.com for more information.)

Detached: Gentry McShane's four-minute film features a young genderqueer named Adrian who discusses his/her experience with the intersections between sex work and gender identity.

Boy I Am: Sam Feder and Julie Hollar's compelling new doc features FTMs in various stages of transition as well as lesbians who question



whether transitioning from female to male is congruent with feminist principles. (boyiam.com)

TransGeneration: This eight-part series about four transitioning college kids is now on DVD. (sundancechannel.com/transgeneration)

The Aggressives: Although the people in this documentary are not technically trans, this illuminating film about New York lesbians living as "aggressives" says much about gender in America. (image-entertainment.com)

100% Woman: This adrenaline-fueled doc follows MTF bike champ Michelle Dumaresq as she becomes the first transgender athlete on a national team. (100percentwoman.com)

Transparent: Jules Rosskam's riveting film features female-to-male transsexuals who struggle with the challenge of raising their children while transitioning. (transparentthemovie.com)

Sir: Just a Normal Guy: Melanie La Rosa follows Jay Snider over the course of 15 months during his transition from female to male. Interviews with Snider's ex-husband and lesbian partner are remarkably moving. (octopusfilmvideo.com)

A Boy Named Sue: This fascinating doc chronicles the transformation of Theo from a woman to a man over the course of six years, including the effect of his transition on his lesbian lover and their friends. Easily one of the best films on the FTM experience. (wmm.com) — Diane Anderson-Minshall

Most Frequently Asked Trans Questions

Do any insurance companies cover sex reassignment surgeries?

Unless you have a nontrans reason to pursue surgeries such as a mastectomy or hysterectomy, you'll need an insurance policy that specifically covers sex reassignment procedures. Until recently, it was basically unheard of for private insurers to cover SRS. Then in 2001, the city of San Francisco passed its groundbreaking transgender health benefits package for its employees, and within a few years all of its insurance carriers were on board. That means more insurance companies now offer employers plans that include SRS coverage for eligible employees. But not all insurance companies that offer SRS plans will offer them to every employer. Similarly, an employer may decide against an SRS-inclusive plan if one is available. And even plans that cover SRS may require patients to use in-house or recently trained doctors rather than surgeons already widely known and respected in the community.

Are FTMs buying into our culture's hatred of the female body? If a lesbian transitions to male and then dates only guys, it's hard not to feel he's rejecting femaleness.

"The feeling of being a boy happened before I

understood anything about bodies, differences between them or social hierarchy based on them. I was barely able to talk and [was] declaring that I was a boy," says Lynn Breedlove, former lead singer of the dyke punk band Tribe 8 and author of the novel *Godspeed*. Breedlove — who identifies as a feminist and dyke as well as a man — chose not to medically transition, but did attempt to get rid of female curves by "doing a lot of drugs. As I grew older, I didn't like my curves and neither did mass media. Was I just trying to make my insides match my outsides? And if so, where did that inside image come from? A little nature and a little nurture." Far from rejecting femaleness, Breedlove actually "hesitated to go by 'he,' because of what so many hes have done to so many shes."

David is a women's college graduate, feminist and former dyke who is now a gay man. He describes his female role models as strong and his upbringing as supportive of his gender expressions. As a dyke, he says, "I met, dated and fell in love with several interesting, smart and dynamic women," but never learned how to be one, "because I wasn't one." Transitioning, he says, "was never about rejecting womanhood — it was about learning about myself." As for dating men now, "I think I'm just basically oriented to be homosexual ... I have a preference for people who are the

same sex as I am," says David. "It's definitely about who I do want in my bed, not about some theoretical act of repudiation."

My partner is transitioning from female to male. Can we marry legally?

Changing gender on legal documents is a process that, depending on where one was born and now lives, can range from needing a doctor's note to securing a court order. Some states only require a driver's license for a marriage license, while others request a birth certificate or other documents. Legally changed gender markers on these documents, therefore, are necessary when you're outside of Massachusetts and need to be an opposite-sex couple to get married. But LGBT advocates caution that it's not just the license itself that makes a legal marriage, but rather, the license's ability to withstand later challenge. "Thousands of trans people across the country are in marriages," says Chris Daley, director of the Transgender Law Center. "In a couple of states, the validity of those marriages has been legally challenged, and we've gotten mixed rulings." In Kansas, for instance, the State Supreme Court ruled against recognizing marriages where both partners were born as the same sex. Other states like

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Q+A

Lipstick Conspiracy

| By Jenny Sherwin

You enter the club ready for an extraordinary musical experience. But no one prepared you for Lipstick Conspiracy, America's only all-trans band. Giant women — Shawna, Sarafina, Marilyn and Tori — stand before you, dressed in tight tops and short skirts, a big flaming ball of lipstick and hair and rock and attitude. These are the girls your mother warned you about.

What makes Lipstick Conspiracy different from any band on the planet?

We have been able to incorporate sounds from every decade, 1960s on, creating our own unique sound that is both modern and hip.



Have you played with other trans bands?

There are no other working, touring, recording all-transgender bands in the States. We have ... played with other transgender and gender-queer artists, and we all feed off of each other.

Is there a message behind the music of Lipstick Conspiracy, or is it all just plain fun?

The message is exactly that: just plain fun ... and embracing the journey of self-discovery.

What's the craziest thing that's happened at one of the shows?

At the end of a recent show, our drummer fell off the back of her stool and ended the song with her legs in the air. It was as if she was in slow motion. Half of us didn't even know it had happened. She was able to recover while we kept the music going. She made it back, right side up, and finished the last bar of the song with us. I believe most of the audience thought it was planned.

Is your audience mostly queer?

We've had fans as young as 2 rock out, along with quite a few octogenarians. The majority of the positive feedback we receive, however, comes from queer women of every age. ■

For more information, visit lipstickconspiracy.com.



Full Katastrophe Living

Find out why lesbians have gone gaga for queer hip-hop's

emo dude. | By Page McBee

"I get e-mails from people all of the time who have problems with me because of who I am — a white transsexual man making hip-hop," Rocco Kayiatos (aka Katastrophe) says, with his trademark mix of staccato urgency and charm. "A lot of people have problems with all three of those things ... especially if a white transsexual is making hip-hop."

The 26-year-old musician, equally famous as writer Michelle Teas' partner, has had a lot of exposure lately. Crowned Outstanding Producer by the Outmusic Awards in 2005, he's a key figure in the burgeoning queer hip-hop community. Featured in *Pick Up the Mic: The (r)Evolution of Queer Hip-Hop*, he's also the focus of a forthcoming doc from filmmakers Angela Cheng and Sharon Barnes, *State of Katastrophe*. He collaborates regularly with underground queer-positive music scene staples as diverse as hip-hop artists *Scream Club* and *Juba Kalamka* of *Deep Dickcollective*, and the tongue-in-cheek dance remix group *Lesbians on Ecstasy*.

Recently, he's been touring to promote his second album, *Fault, Lies, and Faultlines*, released on the new lesbian-owned label *Cherchez La Femme*. Kayiatos composes his own music, and his tracks are a collage of hum-along pop hooks, emotional excavation and layered, intricate beats. His latest CD is simultaneously danceable and thought-provoking.

Lyrical, intelligent and compassionate, Kayiatos is part sensitive-boy sex symbol (replete with "Hope" tattoo and a gaggle of lesbian fans wherever he goes), part loner with a cause and part troubadour. At a recent show, he dealt with an onset of insecurity by asking the audience to give him, and each other, a group hug. "I like to use my time as a performer to deal with my issues in ridiculous ways," he

explains. "I'm a giant paradox — a queer person making hip-hop, a ladies' man in a seven-year relationship. There is such little stability in life, I can't be concerned with what's status quo."

Tattooed and curly-haired, Kayiatos is all smiles, and his heart resides pretty permanently on his sleeve. His love life figures heavily into his music, as do his personal philosophies on identity, sex and pop culture. "I'm really influenced by what's going on in my life, my emotional landscape, other people's feelings about me."

On being an out trans hip-hopper, he is enthusiastic, but also slightly weary. "The one place I do feel like I fit in is the queer hip-hop community. However, I feel like a lot of times people end up working out their own issues about identity, gender, race and class out on me. I'm sure my identity is provocative to some people, and being in the public eye allows them to dissect me like an academic project. For me, it's always been about justifying to people — gay and straight — why I have a right to be anywhere."

Kayiatos' music saddles many different worlds. "Underground queer hip-hop is like any underground scene, in that it's inherently separate from the mainstream, but queer people have been involved in hip-hop for as long as it's been around."

And anyway, when it comes down to it, Kayiatos makes music you and your girlfriend can dance to, regardless of how you, or she, identify — and that's fine by him. "My album is about human struggle," he says. "I just want it to be something everyone can relate to." ■

For more info, visit katastropherap.com.

Making Waves

Six trans activists every dyke should know about.

By Ariane Resnick



Trans people behind the scenes include (clockwise from top left) Shannon Minter, Shawna Virago, Judith Halberstam, Debra Davis, Matt Kailey and Calpernia Addams.

Shannon Minter: Noted for his role representing transgender Michael Kantaras in a televised custody case and as recipient of Ford Foundation's 2005 Leadership for a Changing World award, Minter is also an adviser, mentor and lawyer who fights for anti-discrimination laws. Legal director of the National Center for Lesbian Rights and founder of its Youth Project, Minter co-authored the book *Transgender Equality: A Handbook for Activists and Policymakers*. He transitioned on the job and helped NCLR convince thousands of dykes that trans issues are our issues.

Calpernia Addams: Anyone who has seen *Soldier's Girl* knows of Addams. An elite combat-trained "Devil Doc" during the first Gulf war, Addams came home from the war and became a showgirl. After her military boyfriend was murdered, she became a trans rights activist. Today, she runs Deep Stealth Productions and, with partner Andrea James, is one of the few consultants helping Hollywood bring compassionate depictions of trans lives to audiences, working on films like *Transamerica*. Honored at the the GLAAD Media Awards, Addams is also an actor whose upcoming short film *Casting Pearls* will comically portray the auditions a trans actor endures.

Shawna Virago: This Trannyfest director and 2002 San Francisco Pride Parade grand marshal became the first trans woman on the board of directors of San Francisco Women Against Rape and is a founding member of TransAction; she's also an indie film star, director and musician. Her band has performed at numerous Pride events and

she made her directorial debut with the film *Almost Human*. Not enough? She's also co-chair of the Transgender Political Caucus and has served on the Transgender Human Rights Task Force.

Matt Kailey: When he transitioned from a straight woman into a gay man, Kailey became a voice for gay female-to-male persons by authoring *Just Add Hormones: An Insider's Guide to the Transsexual Experience*. Rather than dealing with only the logistics of changing genders, Kailey offers a personal look into the emotional situations that arise when transitioning. From lack of assistance offered for a flat tire to nervous mothers, Kailey pushes for FTMs to be as vocal and political as their opposite-sex counterparts.

Judith "Jack" Halberstam: An English professor and director of the Center for Feminist Research, Halberstam authored four books including *Female Masculinity* and *The Drag King Book*. Heavily involved in drag king culture, Halberstam strives to teach students that "anatomy is not destiny." She currently teaches courses in queer studies, gender theory, film, art and literature, and is at work on a film called *Long Live the Kings*.

Debra Davis: Winner of the 2005 Pride Award and executive director of the Gender Education Center, Davis became a pioneer by coming out publicly at the public high school where she worked for more than 30 years. Davis first spent 28 years as a male librarian before spending her final three years of employment as a transgender female. Now retired, Davis travels to give presentations on gender. ■

New Trans Lit

In the emerging trans market, novelists are braving new paths, while other new volumes help introduce lesbian readers to experiments with gender.

***The Testosterone Files: My Hormonal and Social Transformation from Female to Male*, Max Wolf Valerio (Seal):** This new transsexual memoir focuses on testosterone's role in the author's transformation and his belief that it is hormones, not surgery, that make the change from one sex to another. (sealpress.com)

***From the Inside Out: Radical Gender Transformation, FTM and Beyond*, ed. Morty Diamond (Manic D Press):** Over 30 short stories, essays and poems explore gender identity transformation and provide an engaging insight to the diversity of today's female-born, genderqueer community. Ranging from teens to middle-aged, Hispanic to African American, the writers provide a significant contribution to the study of queer theory, gender politics and cultural studies. (manicdpress.com)

***The End of Gender: A Psychological Autopsy*, Shari Thurer (Routledge):** If you've ever had difficulty understanding the opaque writing style of queer theorists like Judith Butler, this is the book for you. Thurer deciphers postmodern tenets for the general reader, illustrates that queer theory can enhance traditional Freudian psychoanalysis, and argues that queer theory fails to recognize the psychological suffering individuals undergo due to unstable identities. (routledge.com)

***The Transgender Studies Reader*, ed. Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle (Routledge):** This indispensable collection of 50 influential historical and contemporary articles engages the politics of gender identity, with contextual introductions by the editors. (routledge.com)

***Transgender Rights*, ed. Paisley Currah, Richard M. Juang and Shannon Price Minter (University of Minnesota Press):** The first comprehensive work on the transgender civil rights movement, this invaluable book offers legal analysis and critical essays that move beyond media representations to grapple with the real lives and issues of transgender people. (upress.umn.edu) — Jacob Anderson-Minshall

For more great books, go to curvemag.com.

Lesbians Go Mainstream

Queer films come of age at the Tribeca Film Festival. | By Ellen Rosner Feig



EDITOR'S PICK

Red Doors (Blanc de Chine Films)

When the film version of Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* premiered in 1993, it set a standard for films about Asian-American families. There are always daughters, Americanized but yearning to be filial; mothers who are superstitious and carry a deep connection to the old country; and fathers who are always reticent, hiding an unmistakable pride for their American children. Now in theaters, Georgia Lee's first feature-length film, *Red Doors*, contains all of these stereotypical qualities, but those similarities are only superficial. Yes, there are Chinese-American daughters in this family drama, but one of them plants bombs in the locker of the boy she has a crush on, while another falls in love with a female movie star. The father, played with incredible agility by veteran actor Tzi Ma, is not your typical Chinese-American dad. He tries to commit suicide multiple times, and when he does not succeed — repeatedly interrupted by his youngest daughter, who doesn't even bat an eyelash — he abandons his family for a Buddhist monastery. *Red Doors* does indeed contain a coming-out story, but it is more than that. It is a new kind of Asian-American film, one that doesn't deal with immigrant identity issues but focuses instead on how these damaged individuals come to terms with each other and their imperfect, but loving, family.

(reddoorsthemovie.com)

— Malinda Lo



Putting on a brave face in *Follow My Voice*

One thing was crystal clear at this year's Tribeca Film Festival: The portrayal of lesbians on film has become mainstream. A majority of the films screened at the fifth anniversary celebration have LGBT characters, including the provocative *Kiss Me Again* and the inspiring documentary *Follow My Voice*.

Kiss Me Again (M.E.G.A. Films)

In William Tyler Smith's sexually charged *Kiss Me Again*, hot young Brooklyn photographer Malika (Elisa Donovan of *Clueless* fame) is seeing Tara, a vulnerable rock 'n' roll singer. Malika shares an apartment with her best friend, Chalice (played wonderfully by Kathryn Winnick), who is married to Julian (Jeremy London). But when Julian brings another woman, Elena (Mirelly Taylor), into their marriage to spice things up, it soon becomes clear that Chalice has been hiding her own sexuality for years, repressing both memories of her earlier relationship with Malika and her newfound love for Elena.

At times the film is uncomfortable to watch; the sexuality is so openly displayed it is almost raw and even in the greater context of love, betrayal and exploration, there is a sense of stinging or awkwardness between the actors. As Elena and Chalice begin to explore their desire for one another (and their need to exclude Julian from the mix), their interactions are hesitant and shy in one scene, aggressive in another. Their realization that they are falling in love and betraying a man they both love causes them to pull away from each other. Malika and her girlfriend Tara provide what is probably the most honest relationship in the film. They fight, they have sex, they argue, they make up. Smith's intent in *Kiss Me Again* is to take a hard look

at what it means to love someone, warts and all, and at times he actually succeeds.

Follow My Voice: With the Music of Hedwig (Rainlake Productions)

The wonderful, heartbreaking and hopeful documentary *Follow My Voice* follows a group of four young lesbian and gay students as they journey through the halls of New York's Harvey Milk High, the first public high school for LGBT students in the country. Director and producer Katherine Linton follows record producer Chris Slusarenko, songwriter Stephen Trask and actor John Cameron Mitchell as they record a benefit album, with several well-known recording artists, for the Hetrick-Martin Institute (the home of Harvey Milk High), using the songs of *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*. *Follow My Voice* weaves together the lives of several high school students including Mey, a 17-year-old Chinese-American lesbian and runway model; Tenaja, a 17-year-old African American who is excommunicated from her Jehovah's Witness family when she tells them she is lesbian; and Angel, a transgender woman who lives in the heart of Spanish Harlem.

Follow My Voice allows us to enter the world of these brave young people who proudly stand by their convictions. As I watched a unique orchestral band, the Polyphonic Spree, record the song "Wig in a Box" over one weekend, my heart was filled with a sense of spirit and hope in humanity. *Follow My Voice* is truly film at its best — entertaining while it educates, educating while it changes the world. (followmyvoice.com) ■



Nan Kinney

| FOUNDER, FATALE MEDIA |

When Nan Kinney first searched for lesbian alternatives to the stereotypical girl-girl images of mainstream pornography 21 years ago, there were none. Determined to offer authentic images that lesbians could relate to, Kinney and Deborah Sundahl founded Fatale Media, Inc., to create porn made by lesbians, for lesbians. Since then, Fatale Media's popularity has expanded into the straight community, mostly through *Bend Over Boyfriend*, an instructional video that teaches straight women how to strap it on for their men. We recently talked with Kinney about her experiences and how lesbian porn has come of age. — *Janel M. Lynch*

What changes have you seen in lesbian pornography?

The Internet has made huge changes, in that ... you don't have to go through the mainstream distributors to get your images out there. You can reach your target audience much more directly, so it really has expanded; [there are] more small lesbian companies involved in it now.

Do you have a favorite video or project?

Hungry Hearts. I loved doing that video; we had some really funny moments with that one. We rented this beautiful room up in Timber Cove. ... We set it all up with the lights blaring ... and we're shooting a scene in this sunken Japanese tub right next to these big windows that looked out over the coast, and I swear to God, there was ... the Von Trapp family hiking outside the window. It was just unbelievable. They literally had lederhosen on and big walking sticks and little hats and everything. We had to have one production person just standing at the window to keep an eye out for the Von Trapp family, and we had to stop whenever they'd come again.

How do you feel about Fatale Media being best known to the general public for *Bend Over Boyfriend*?

Bend Over Boyfriend fit into Fatale Media's general mission in that we've always tried to portray and present images of sexuality that aren't out there, that other companies aren't doing for whatever reason. ... We knew that straight couples were into this and nobody was really approaching it, especially in an educational manner, and we thought, well, if anybody's going to teach straight women how to strap it on, it's going to be lesbians. ■

DVD PICKS



Queer Duck: The Movie

(Paramount): From the writer of *The Simpsons* and creator of *The Critic* comes this hilariously irreverent movie about a flaming foul (played by Jim J. Bullock!), his queer clan (including Openly Gator and Bi-Polar Bear) and a scary conservative minister who turned Anne Heche and half of Hollywood straight. Plus, there's a RuPaul theme song, several shorts (*Queer as Fowl*, *Fiddler on the Roofie*) and the featurette *How to Find a Partner If You're Bi, Um, Coastal*. (paramount.com/homevideo) — *Diane Anderson-Minshall*

God's Waiting List (Visual Entertainment)

Gorgeous Nicki Micheaux plays Teresa, who becomes a paraplegic in an accident her brother Solomon (Roger Guenveur Smith) is responsible for. Devastated by her disability, Teresa breaks up with her hot but troubled poet girlfriend Rachel (Nian Aster). While Teresa goes on a spiritual journey assisted by a quirky group of fellow churchwomen, Solomon and Rachel hook up only to immediately spiral downward together at Mach speed. Before she can save the two people she loves most, Teresa has to come to terms with her own religious arrogance. Set in a convincingly hip and tough urban environment, the movie is a weird but charming mix of clichés and originality. It managed to annoy, dazzle and truly amuse me simultaneously. Look forward to a drugged Teresa's hilarious vision of the Virgin Mary as well as powerful voice-over poetry. (codeblackentertainment.com) — *Ursula Steck*

Project Runway: The Complete Second Season

(Weinstein Co.): Are you in or are you out? Lesbian designer Zulema — who made it to the final three in this fashion-industry-meets-reality-show catfight — is out. And we love her all the more for it. Cast audition tapes, extended scenes and *Wear Are They Now* featurette, and if you buy the set you get a free tee. (projectrunway.com/pr2shirt) — *DAM*

Strangers With Candy: The Complete Series (Comedy Central)

This awesome DVD box set comes in a faux Trapper Keeper with director's cut episodes, messages from cut ups (Will Ferrill), a PSA ("A Trip Back"), a blooper reel and scribbled dirty doodles. Oh, and six awesome discs with Amy Sedaris as Jerri Blank, the 46-year old former user, boozier and loser who can't get enough of the ladies. (paramount.com/homeentertainment) — *DAM*



How to Lose Your Lover (New Line)

This wickedly witty comedy was a smash at Tribeca and no wonder. Though at its heart it's the story of trashy biographer who decides to break up with his life but instead finds the girl of his dreams (*Kissing Jessica Stein*'s Jennifer Westfeldt), he's got a hilariously acerbic bisexual best friend (*Without a Trace*'s pulchritudinous Poppy Montgomery), and she has an L.A.-primed lesbian girlfriend (played over the top by Tori Spelling). A must-see. (newline.com) — *DAM*



Big Valley: Season One (Fox)

Victoria Barkley (the seriously kick ass lesbian actor Barbara Stanwyck) is a widow circa 1878 who runs a huge ranch in California's San Joaquin Valley with the help of her four kids including a pre-*Dynasty* Linda Evans as unmarried Audra, and a pre-*Bionic Man* Lee Majors as the illegitimate son who always makes Stanwyck launch into a "because you're a Barkley" strong arm that could make any dyke melt. (fox.com) — *DAM*

Barnyards and Carnivals

Lesbian farmers and sideshow entertainers, oh my. | **By Rachel Pepper**

This month, two new books invite us to explore ways we can challenge ourselves. Catherine Friend's funny new memoir, *Hit by a Farm*, chronicles two urban lesbians' attempts to build a sheep farm from the ground up, while Ariel Gore's *Traveling Death and Resurrection Show* illuminates the complexity of spirituality and family.

Hit by a Farm: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Barn, Catherine Friend (Marlowe and Company)

What happens when you take a city dyke and plunk her down, along with many high hopes and her partner of 12 years, on a Minnesota farm? The answer can be found in Catherine Friend's enjoyable, enlightening and even laugh-out-loud hilarious *Hit by a Farm*. Friend is known primarily as a children's book author, but she's clearly found her niche in humorous nonfiction, for this account of going back to the land with her partner, Melissa, and their growing menagerie of goats, dogs, ducks, sheep, llamas and the like was a great read. Ever want to know how to grab a ram's testicles? Shear and birth sheep? Plant a field of grapevines upside down? Raise chickens humanely for slaughter without getting attached? Or even how to balance your partner's dreams of farming with the growing realization that working 24/7 in the mud and the cold may not be for you? It's all here, as Friend and her partner transform barren farmland into a real, working sheep farm with a large adjoining vineyard thrown in for good measure.

Is it beautiful? Yes. Is it satisfying to have your own business and watch the land slowly turn into a real farm? Of course. Yet Friend's story is hardly pastoral, as she takes great care to point out repeatedly that our perceptions of the "country" don't always mix with the reality of being an actual farmer. Animals die or are killed, and crops sometimes wither or fall prey to pests and weeds. Tractors break, fences fall, and machinery causes damage — sometimes to people. Not surprisingly, Friend and her partner find that not everyone supports their decision to risk everything they owned on a farm: "When I'd come out to my parents years ago, they'd been upset and concerned, but had eventually got used to the idea, and were very cool. But now, my news was almost more earth shattering. Being a lesbian was one thing, but being a farmer? Man, oh man, that was going to take some getting used to." The reactions range from shocked silence to outright laughter and jokes. But the two women dig in, if only to prove they can do it. "They thought they

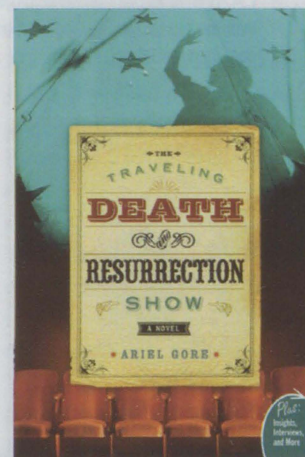
knew me," Friend writes. "They thought I was just a pathetic bookworm. I was much more than that. I was strong, I was tough. I was a problem solver. I was a lesbian, damn it. I'd show them." By the book's end, Friend has found that even though she may not be meant to be a full-time farmer, she has embraced her rural life, even if, as she herself says, she was hit by a farm.

(hitbyafarm.com)

The Traveling Death and Resurrection Show, Ariel Gore (Harper San Francisco)

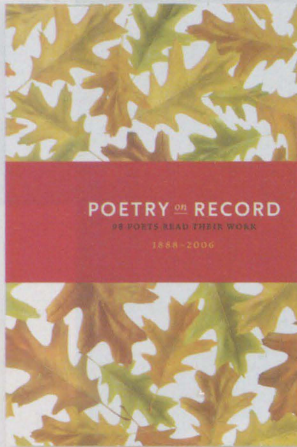
Ariel Gore has written a first novel that will surprise many of her most ardent fans. Known in the literary underworld mostly for her autobiographical writings and for publishing *Hip Mama* magazine, Gore stretches her wings a bit here and produces a first-rate literary novel about a traveling sideshow. The novel's main character, Frances Catherine, known as Frankka, is able to perform the stigmata (bleeding from her hands) a remarkable "trick" that lands her in the forefront of a ragtag group known as the Traveling Death and Resurrection Show.

The other performers in this troupe include a trapeze artist, a psychic single mom with baby in tow, and a levitating Mother Superior drag queen known as Madre Pia. A family of misfits thrown together by coincidence and circumstance, the group performs a show loosely based on religious themes, the climax



of which is Frankka's bleeding hands.

Eventually this ability, which began in her childhood as she sought attention from her ardently Catholic grandmother, generates the kind of media attention that money can't buy — along with an ever more strident group of religious protesters. Ultimately, Frankka must flee the group to find herself. When she reemerges, Gore leads us to an expansive definition of family and spirituality, and how we can continue to find hope in our collective future. (harpercollins.com) ■



EDITOR'S PICK

Poetry on Record: 98 Poets Read Their Work, 1888-2006, ed. Rebekah Presson Mosby (Shout! Factory)

Three cheers for this four-disc audio collection of poetry from the dawn of sound recording to the current day. Lovers of queer and queer-inflected poetry will find plenty to enjoy here. You'll hear the fiery voice of Walt Whitman reading from "America" in a recording believed to have been made by Thomas Edison around 1889; H.D. reading from her feminist epic *Helen in Egypt* in sonorous, honeyed tones; Langston Hughes' meticulous performance of his Harlem Renaissance poem "The Weary Blues"; and the incomparable Elizabeth Bishop's startlingly nonchalant delivery of "The Fish." Other discs include recordings by Black Arts giant Gwendolyn Brooks, feminist icon Adrienne Rich, "poem to my uterus" author Lucille Clifton and Native American visionary Joy Harjo. Poetry purists may have a problem with this candy-colored, flashily illustrated box set, but if the collection inspires listeners to seek out more work by Audre Lorde, of whom you get only a brief taste here, it has succeeded.

(shoutfactory.com)

— Julia Bloch

Q+A



Kate Braverman

| AUTHOR |

Author Kate Braverman has the polished but messy look that only a true artist can pull off. Since her literary debut in 1979 with *Lithium for Medea*, a controversial tale that Joan Didion described as "jumpy, kinetic, and finally very powerful," Braverman has written five books, including the recent *Frantic Transmissions to and From Los Angeles: An Accidental Memoir*. With a sharp wit and impassioned convictions, Braverman speaks with authority. — Allison Steinberg

Where do you see your place in the world of literature?

For 34 years of my publishing life, I have fought for the right of women to inhabit the page. My battle has been to write as a man would. I have always felt patriarchal oppression. I have to fight this in every story, every essay, every novel. This is my contribution to what we used to call sisterhood. The page is its own kingdom and what you can get away with. We autopsy, we reveal, we confess.

Who, in literature, has been influential to your writing?

Sylvia Plath was the first female voice in literature I ever heard. Most people only remember her for her suicide, but who can quote a stanza of her poetry?

Has your outspokenness ever gotten you in trouble?

I went for a job interview at San Diego State College. I was asked what I thought about the women's movement, and I said, "I don't want my women waving brooms; I want them waving M16s." I didn't get the job.

Why have you found yourself in LGBT circles?

I am, in sensibility and lifestyle, much closer to gay people than I am to straight people. When I got to San Francisco four years ago, the first place I went was to the gay community. I read in the gay bars in San Francisco. It doesn't pay anything, but it's so much fun — the kinetics, the rawness of the audience, it reminds me of [Los Angeles] in the '70s. Gay men really get me; lesbians really get it.

How has the publishing landscape changed since you first started writing?

When I started writing, I used K.P. Braverman because it was extremely difficult for a woman writing about women who don't behave to get published. I embraced risk. There is a constant struggle between the story you want to tell and the accommodation between you and the page. ■

PAGE TURNERS

Pin-Up Grrrls: Feminism, Sexuality, Popular Culture, Maria Elena

Buszek (Duke University Press):

Buszek takes us on an academic journey through 150 years of saucy, socially aware images and their repercussions on the mainstream. For those of us who thought that reclaiming sexuality in the name of feminism was a fairly new concept, this is a great introduction to the revolutionary beauties of the past. (dukeupress.edu) — Catherine Plato

Circles in the Sand, E.J. Samadhi

Whitehouse (Trafford): This deeply personal and engaging memoir documents one woman's journey through the Middle East in a quest both spiritual and political. Her struggles to come out as a lesbian are mirrored back to her by witnessing other women she encounters struggling with their own oppression. (samadhiwhitehouse.writerswebpages.com) — Diane Anderson-Minshall

Sleeping Upside Down, Kate Lynn

Hibbard (Silverfish Review): The resilient and richly detailed poems in Hibbard's first book sing with lesbian desire and intelligence. In "Precious Eyebrows," each couplet bursts with life: "The way a woman's hair gathers/rain, as you kiss beneath pines in gray light./You were always in so much pain,/I mistook it for something quite holy." There is a mature confidence here that never loses sight of humbling emotional detail, as in the garden meditation in the prose poem "Perennial." "I want mint ambush, flung out subterranean runners that throb the lawn with promise and sweetness. Maybe I'm afraid that death won't have its way with me." (silverfishreview.press.com) — Julia Bloch

The Doctor Wore Petticoats:

Women Physicians of the Old West, Chris Enss (Globe Pequot

Press): From Susan La Flesche, the first female Native American doctor, to Lucy Hobbs Taylor, the first woman to receive a doctorate of dental science, *The Doctor Wore Petticoats* showcases 12 frontier female physicians who were pioneers not only of the West but also of the medical profession. Illustrating both the freedoms and the difficulties these women faced in the Wild West, this is a must-read for any feminist or frontierswoman. (globepequot.com) — Lauren Marie Fleming

Jada Pinkett Tegan & Sara Sarah Bettens

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EDITOR'S PICK

8 Inch Betsy (Self-Released)

Think of this EP of '80s-influenced, Social D-era post-punk (a sort of Hole meets Le Tigre meets MySpace-era dykey brashness) as your introduction to an incredible, all-girl, Chicago-based band whose special brand of fierce rock and catchy hooks make their fans slavish with devotion.

Since the trio formed in 2004, the chicks of 8 Inch Betsy — vocalist and guitarist Meghan Galbraith, bass player Liz Burke and super foxy drummer Stephanie Levi — have opened for the Gossip, toured with Amy Ray and headlined Estrojam. Even better: They're about to release a brand-spanking new, full-length CD, and we can't wait to rock out to it. (8inchbetsy.com) — Diane Anderson-Minshall

More Than Girls With Guitars

These girls sure pluck our strings. | By Margaret Coble

Yeah, I know — isn't this just about the theme of every column? It's true that there's a never-ending supply of guitar-based female folkies and rockers constantly shuffling across my desk, but Doria Roberts, Divine MAGgees and KT Tunstall stand hands above the crowd this month, moving well beyond the girls-with-guitars cliché. So if you haven't already, take notice.

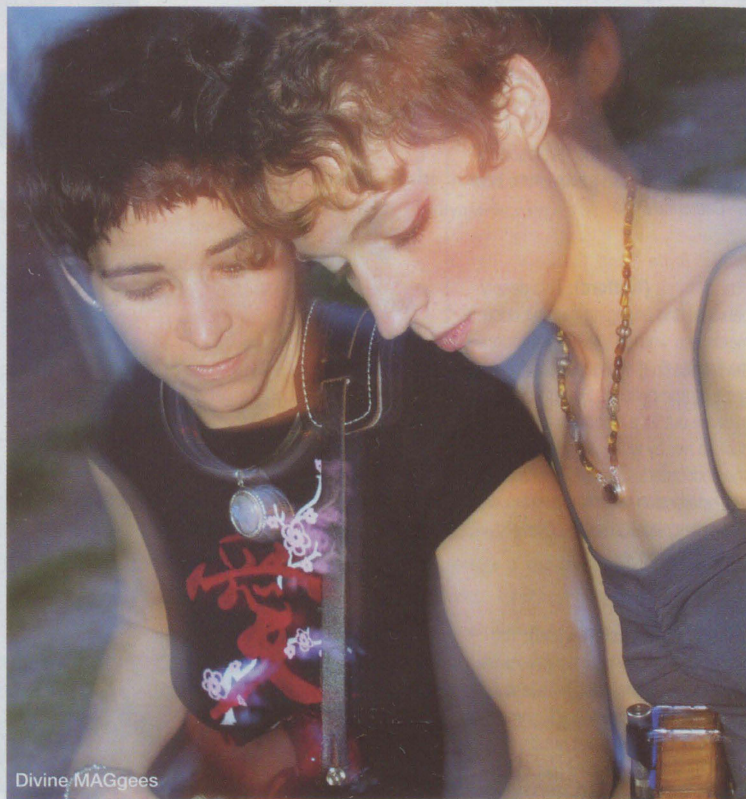
Woman Dangerous, Doria Roberts (Hurricane Doria Records)

Three years in the making, this new 12-track set from the brilliant and beautiful, out lesbian Doria Roberts was definitely worth the wait. Every single song on *Woman Dangerous* is a winner; there's no filler here. Lyrically, the Atlanta-based singer-songwriter mines her own emotional landscape, tackling topics of love, relationships and self-esteem. It's nothing terribly new, but Roberts does it well and in a very accessible yet poetic way. Musically, however, this set gels in a way that very few contemporary folk-pop albums do. Her acoustic guitar-based compositions are now

fleshed out via layered and looped vocals, sweeping strings, textured percussion, tight drumming, sly bass and the occasional electric guitar. There's even a ukulele and flute on the final track, "Horizon." It's an exquisitely well-produced — but not over-produced — album, which hopefully will get her some well-deserved wider exposure. The sweet pop of "Honey Jar" is my fave, while the rocking "Simple Life" and poppier "Perfect" are probably the most radio friendly. (doriaroberts.com)

Love Me Like the Roses, Divine MAGgees (Self-Released)

If you haven't heard or seen this duo, currently based in Asheville, N.C., who are partners in both music and life, make it your business to do so. Named for the cats they each owned, separately, before meeting each other, Cregan Montague (fiddles) and Danielle Tibedo (guitars) make sweet, dreamy alt-folk rock that draws on everything from bluegrass to punk to jazz, intertwining acoustic and electric guitars and fiddles with their perfectly matched, harmonious vocals. The 11 songs on the album vary widely from the country twang of "Bridges" and the Southern-drenched swing of "Riverlady," to darker, swirling rock numbers such as "Trouble" and "Hole in the Wall," to their hard-to-categorize, haunting reinterpretation of Cole Porter's "Begin the Beguine." But despite the variation, the album has a mesmerizing cohesion that's apt to make you hit "repeat"



Divine MAGgees

over and over again. One part Cowboy Junkies, one part Po Girl, with just a smidgeon of Indigo Girls (due largely to their vocal harmonies and the fact that they are lesbians), Divine MAGgees deliver one of the best albums I've heard all year. (divinemaggees.com)

Eye to the Telescope, KT Tunstall (Virgin)

Also in the alt-folk rock category but with more commercial appeal, this Scottish singer-songwriter started making waves in the United Kingdom in 2004. Now she's become a bona fide worldwide star with the release of her debut album in the United States, as well as the success of her peppy, bluesy rock single "Black Horse and the Cherry Tree" and the mellower follow-up "The Other Side of the World." A skilled multi-instrumentalist, Tunstall not only plays guitar on the album's 12 tracks, but also bass, piano, organs and various percussion, and she also wrote or co-wrote every song. Lyrically, Tunstall delves deep into often dark emotional terrain, yet musically, she manages to maintain a fairly upbeat vibe due to her strong melodies, even on sparse cuts like "Silent Sea" and "Heal Over." It's her vocals, though, that really draw listeners in. She's unique and memorable like Edie Brickell or Rickie Lee Jones, but with more guts and raw emotion, like PJ Harvey. Give it a spin — I dare you to *not* like this album. (kttunstall.com) ■

OTHER LICKS



Drama, Bananarama (The Lab): Two of the original members of the 1980s U.K. girl group known for delicious pop classics like "Venus" and "Really Saying Something" return with a new and remarkably fresh 13-track release featuring the Euro smash hit "Move in My Direction." (bananarama.co.uk)

Thank You, Mark, Danielle Howle (Valley Entertainment): Moving smoothly from Americana, honky-tonk country, and bluesy jazz to pop, R&B, and straight-up folk, this South Carolina singer-songwriter's latest offering is a masterpiece of style and content destined to be a classic. (daniellehowle.com)

Amarilla, The Vibration (Sink & Stove/U.K.): More soulful and sedated than Sleater-Kinney, this four-girl indie rock group has generated quite a buzz on both sides of the pond; "87" is my pick, but really, all 10 tracks deserve a listen. (the-vibration.com)

Mythologies, Patricia Barber (Blue Note): Reinterpreting classic Greek mythology in a rock-infused jazz context, out dyke piano genius Barber offers her most ambitious composition to date, thanks to a Guggenheim fellowship. Heady, but never boring. (patriciabarber.com)



Nightlife, Erase Errata (Kill Rock Stars): A tighter yet still quirky trio after the departure of guitarist Sara Jaffe, these Bay area noise-pop queers shine a critical light on the government, consumerism and political apathy on this third album effort. (eraseerrata.com) — MC



Tammy Hall

| JAZZ PIANIST |

Jazz pianist Tammy Hall has been playing piano since she was old enough to (barely) reach the keys. She has been touted as a "best kept secret" in music, but her recently released CD, *Blue Divine*, and DVD, *Reflections*, may have let the proverbial cat out of the bag. — *Andy Wright*

You say you see the color blue when you play. Is music a visual art form for you?

Yes. I would almost give my left hand to be able to draw. I love art and painting. The color blue is my favorite color, and it makes me feel good, and it's a color that signifies divinity, spirituality, calmness, groundedness.

What do you think your music is saying?

I think my music expresses the gratitude I have for being able to play, the gratitude I have for the audience who listens and appreciates. I'm very grateful for this gift, and it is a gift.

You lived in and worked in Brussels. What was that like?

It was fabulous. I was with my partner at the time, who had been hired as a guidance counselor at the International School at Brussels. I was at home and after about eight months, she said, "Why don't you come over? There's a scene happening, there are no women, and you have a niche to fill here." I went over and in three months I had put together a quintet. She played the saxophone. I hired some local guys and we played. And we were successful.

Animator Tim Schallar created special effects for the DVD. Did working with an animator make you see your work in a different way?

It did. I just put the music out there, and I can't tell you that you're supposed to feel a certain way. I know how I'm feeling and if that translates, that's great. But there [are] no rules. As long as I'm able to put something positive out there, that's all I want. I want people to feel good when they hear my music. Or feel healed, or relieved or eased somehow. That's my only objective: to comfort. ■

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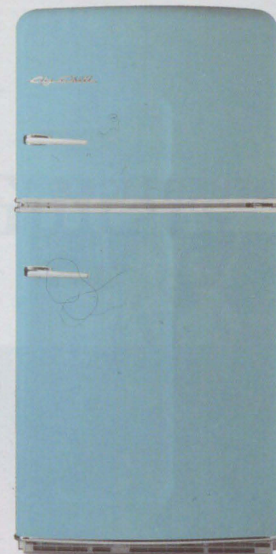


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Kitchen Gadgets Galore

Get cookin' with these nifty new tools. | **By Diane Anderson-Minshall**

The words "high tech" may conjure up images of LCD TVs and robotic instruments, but as the Jetsons once predicted, technology now affects the kitchen, too. Bored with Sub Zeros and talking refrigerators, we look to the lower end of the tech boom to find out just how modern kitchens have become.



Clockwise from top left: Tassimo's hot beverage machine, Soda Club's home soda maker, the Big Chill fridge, Kyocera's ceramic peeler, Emily the Strange heat-sensitive mug (shown cold) and Miam Miam's mushroom bowl.

The Soda Secret Is Out

Got those lesbian friends who rail about the downsides of the big two soda makers? Love soda, hate canned drinks? Soda Club's Gourmet Home Soda Maker is the answer. With fizz (from the Alco 2Jet Carbonator) and flavor (SodaMix tempts us with 25 flavors), you can turn ordinary tap water into fresh, tasty soda in seconds. This environmentally friendly alternative to store-bought sodas also lets you make drinks with less sugar, less sodium and fewer carbs. (\$119 and up, sodaclub.com)

If Bettie Page Were Cooking

In a day and age where stainless steel is the hottest kitchen color, the Big Chill retro refrigerator — in colors like beach blue and pink grapefruit — is for chicks who don't want to camouflage their appliances (is that cabinet or a fridge?) but want more of a '57 Chevy-type style. But, it's still modern inside and requires none of that old-school defrosting. (\$2,700, bigchillfridge.com)

Goth Girls Need Coffee, Too

Is your girlfriend all Laura Ashley and Kate Spade in the kitchen? Time for a mood change. Buy her a set of these new Emily the Strange heat-sensitive coffee mugs, which feature Emily holding a skull-and-crossbones mug on the front. When hot liquids are in the mug, spooky steam appears on the side; when liquids are cold it goes away. Add a box of Emily's new candy bar assortment (a cigar-style box of strangely dark and goeey treats) for the perfect back-to-school gift for your roommate. (\$15 and up, darkhorse.com)

Kick That Starbucks Habit

So, your friends are still mocking your non-PC double latte habit? Try the Tassimo, a hot beverage machine where you insert your choice of discs (coffees, mochas, teas), select the right cup for your drink and press a button. In a minute you'll be having cappuccino, hot chocolate or whatever your heart desires without the mess, the wait or the public embarrassment of spending \$8 a day on coffee. No wonder it has an almost cult-like following among gays now. (\$169, tassimo.com)

Straight From the Set of Logan's Run

The future is here and it's in our dishware: The new Miam Miam mushroom series features fun and funky, rounded serving dishes that are elevated and tilted on their sides. No matter what's in them, these Orb bowls make your food seem like it's looking back at you from an alien spaceship. (\$6–\$80, unitedbrands.us)

Like an Onion, I Have Layers

OK, kitchen peelers are hardly high tech, but the Kyocera Advanced Ceramics Perfect Peeler — which rotates to vertical, horizontal and 45-degree positions, and has an ergonomic nonslip handle that lessens hand fatigue — certainly seems as modern as it gets. Unlike traditional peelers, this Japanese peeler is made of zirconium oxide, a highly advanced ceramic that is razor-sharp. The Perfect Peeler's blade lasts much longer than average peelers and because ceramic is chemically inert, it won't alter the taste or smell of food. Plus, the Perfect Peeler won't rust and is dishwasher safe. (\$20, surlatable.com)

A Nation Under Attack

Forget Osama bin Laden. Queers and immigrants are the new villains.

It may be September, but the November elections are just two months away — which explains why the right wing is exploiting ignorance and fear on the campaign trail. This season, the targets are what Sen. Rick Santorum, R-Pa., fighting for his political life in a tight Senate race, called “a bigger threat to America than terrorism”: same-sex marriage and immigration.

Yes, it's the Bush administration's newest war: the war on difference, on otherness. We are being Swift boated. We can't catch Osama bin Laden, but we *can* turn minorities — in this case, queers and immigrants — into villains.

The rhetorical run-up began during the primaries last May and June. Anti-immigration sentiments erupted on May Day when hundreds of thousands of undocumented workers from among the estimated 11 to 13 million in the United States took to the streets around the country, declaring their simultaneous love for America *and* their desire to be respected, legal citizens. Those demonstrations prompted an anti-immigrant response from the right, with President Bush's “base” of conservatives demanding deportations.

Like the May Day marches, queer Pride celebrations also had a clear focus this year. Last June 5, the Senate held hearings on a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage. Sen. Russ Feingold, D-Wis., called the proposal — which had languished on the back burner since it had been used to generate conservative support during the 2004 presidential campaign — an outrageous, partisan political move to win conservative votes in November.

This election season, two issues that are on few Americans' top 10 lists of concerns — same-sex marriage and immigration — have become focal points of the election in an effort to distract voters from those issues that really concern them: the war, health care and the economy.

What's more, these are not just “issues” but matters of civil rights. So these broadsides from Bush and his cohort are homophobic and racist. The *people* involved, queers and immigrants, have dissolved into rhetorical stereotypes and as that occurs, the civil rights elements of these issues are bled out, supplanted by the fear of the Other that is constantly being stoked by the right wing.

The message is clear: Difference is scary and dangerous to America.

Within a week of delivering a Saturday radio address on why English should be the official language of America, Bush gave another radio address calling for a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage because marriage is under attack — just as he claimed our borders are under attack by illegal immigrants from Mexico.

Queers and immigrants are, for the purposes of the upcoming election, the new terrorists. We threaten a value system in which all marriage is between a man and a woman and all workers are American, a system in which families can be only heterosexual and people can speak only English. Such political rhetoric makes us queers and immigrants seem dangerous to American society — like millions of lesser bin Ladens out to destroy the American dream.

I'm so tired of these battles over equality, civil rights and justice. I want to ask these right-wing voters: How can equality ever be damaging to someone else? How does my right to marry my same-sex partner denigrate your



marriage to your husband or wife? How does granting citizenship to people who already live here, work here, pay rent and participate in all the other aspects of American life damage anyone else? We are all — queers and immigrants — already living our lives right here in America, next door to you and you and you. Why can't we have the same civil rights everyone else does?

And the answer is: because there is an election looming. Because the war, which over three years ago was declared over, still rages. Because the economy has

tanked. Because a June 2006 Gallup poll says 64 percent of Americans disapprove of George W. Bush, but only 51 percent disapprove of same-sex marriage — which means that queer civil rights are actually more popular than the president. Because one in six Americans doesn't have health care.

So there must be a deflection from reality, and *we are it*. Somehow, the biggest threat to American society is not that this administration has favored the wealthy so much that the middle class is going bankrupt and the poor are poorer than ever. Somehow, *we* are the threat. Well, us and the Mexican immigrants stealing all those \$3-an-hour jobs with no benefits that *real* Americans are lining up to do.

The anti-queer, anti-immigrant rhetoric of the past few months is, of course, just that. Rhetoric. Legislation isn't exactly around the corner. A constitutional amendment requires approval by a two-thirds majority of Congress and three-quarters of the states. There hasn't been a constitutional amendment ratified in more than 14 years, the most recent being the 27th Amendment, which was actually first proposed in 1789 and deals with salary for Congress — not exactly a hot political or social issue. But this does not mean that queers and immigrants have nothing to fear, just that the process of deporting 13 million people and savaging the civil liberties of one in 10 Americans might take a bit more time.

In the interim, it is essential that we see this political maneuvering for what it is: cold-blooded, calculated, craven politics in which *we* are the pawns and, ultimately, the victims. People like Santorum, who regularly equates same-sex marriage with pedophilia and bestiality, are reaching out to a constituency that fears change, that wants someone to blame for the state of the union, and queers and immigrants are increasingly the scapegoats.

We have a date with destiny in November, but the stakes are up now. *Now* is the time for all of us to remind people of the real issues and redirect their attention from debating *our* civil rights to considering their own. We can and must refocus the argument onto the failures of the Bush administration to fulfill its obligations to the citizenry.

From now until November, we must work to vote the right wing out. We are *not* the new terrorists that Bush and his cohorts have made us. Rather we are, like 13 million immigrants, part of America's diversity. For too long *they* have set the agenda, and *we* have lost. We have till November to turn the tide, and turn it we must. It's time for the exclusionary tactics of the right wing to cease — or at least cease using us. ■

What Not to Say to a Woman

Some women will say anything to get some action. Take my advice: Don't.

“Yes, I love menudo.” Tripe is a white, rubbery, ridged, nasty part of a cow's stomach. Actually, there is no part of a cow's stomach (or is it *stomachs*, as I seem to recall from that one day of high school biology when I accidentally paid attention) that is not nasty. But tripe is stomach lining. Mexican menudo soup would be fine if it didn't have pieces of tripe in it.

I was hoping she would fix some menudo without cow stomach in it, but my hopes were crushed when I saw her ladling stew with very visible stomach chunks into two bowls. I got through the experience by swallowing one piece of tripe whole and chasing it with lots of broth ... and beer.

There was no other option: If I wanted the woman, I had to choke down her homemade innard stew. I was running my own personal *Fear Factor* challenge. Did I mention her claim that menudo turns her into a sex machine? When she was distracted and quite drunk — which took a lot longer than I thought it should have — I dumped the mess at the bottom of my bowl into the trash, and then I claimed my prize.

I am not going to complain about the drunken sex. I ate a friggin' cow organ; I wasn't about to go home empty-handed. When a girl came along a while later and claimed to be an expert in the art of soul food, I bit my stupid tongue just before I was about to rave about how much I loved chitlins.

“Just stay here for a while.” Did I mean the night? Or the weekend? I know I didn't mean the year, but that is what happened. Yes, it ended ugly, but I didn't care. I just wanted my apartment back.

“I love to travel.” No, I don't. I like being in new places if they have air conditioning, clean water and chocolate. I don't like packing, airports or flying.

I found out recently that I like cruises for about a day. It's too good. Nothing to do on the ship but drink, eat, sunbathe and gamble. It's like vacationing in Sodom and Gomorrah. I can take train travel for about an hour. It's not quaint; it's slow. And yes, I can feel the train moving and no, it is not comforting.

If I can get there without packing or going to an airport, dock or station, and if I can be assured of four-star accommodations when I arrive, I am there. I guess time travel is the kind of travel that suits me best.

“There are all types of love. Sex is not that important.” Ha! Just whom was I kidding?

“I am friends with all my ex-lovers.” I guess I spoke too soon, and she didn't feel like being one of the gang. To that end, she decided to set herself apart by alienating my friends and family, issuing ultimatums and squawking obscenities whenever we were in public. Now I am forced to admit that I am friendly with most of my exes ... except one.

“I don't date bisexuals.” Was I ever this naïve and pious? Did I really think I



could spot a bisexual at 50 paces, walk the other way, and avoid heartbreak?

Of course, I did date bisexuals. Some of them I knew about before we went to bed, and one didn't tell me until she invited me to her “traditional” wedding. (Some pillow talks are more enlightening than others.) I probably would have slept with all of them all over again, even the bachelorette party girl.

You can be picky about your prospective partner's looks, morals, finances, or sexual orientation, but you can't be picky about *all* those things unless you're a wealthy, virgin supermodel. I fall short in a category or two, so I decided to dispense with my rule about AC/DC chicks in exchange for a robust sex life.

I cringe when I hear homos schooling other queers about evil bisexuals. My advice to those about to take this plunge is to ask the bi girl what being

KATHERINE STREETER

bisexual means to her; I have found those conversations to be illuminating. You're likely to hear everything from "I have never slept with a man, but I have always been curious about it" to the exact opposite. Which creature is more dangerous? There is no way to tell. Listen carefully, and you might hear that women are for flings and men are for commitment. Or she might divulge that occasionally, a woman is what she needs to clear her head. I met a looker from Saudi Arabia one night who told me that staying married to a man kept her from losing the family fortune and her life. I thought her reasoning was sound.

There's no need to keep guessing about her back story — just ask. A woman is a much better source of information about herself than you are. What if she lies? Well then, being a bisexual isn't really the problem, is it?

"You can pay me back whenever." I am still waiting.

No matter how much or how little of the green stuff you have, it causes trouble when lent to friends, lovers and those in between. In fact, it causes lovers to become *just* friends and friends to go AWOL.

I don't really have a lot to say about borrowing except, pay it back, and if you can't, just leave town. Don't *act* as if you've left, do it right: Slide out in the middle of the night without telling a soul, and don't leave a forwarding address. When you get where you're going, assume a new identity and never look back.

As for you lenders out there, stick to the old adage about never lending more than you can afford to lose. I think of lending money to friends like pulling the arm of a time-delayed slot machine. It may pay off somewhere down the road, but, most likely, I will never see a dime.

And don't assume that telling your (girl)friend how bad you need the money back will make her more likely to pay on time. It will make her feel guiltier when she fails to pay you back, but it won't get you the bucks. With

the exception of con artists, people intend to pay you back when they ask for a loan. Whether they use the loan to buy a car, food or crack, they really need the money. It's up to you to decide if you can really afford the gift.

A special note to those of you who would lend money to lovers, be they casual or long-term: Getting a check is great, but it has never made me as happy as getting laid. Know your priorities and do not hassle a lover for cash back unless you're tired of her intimate company.

"A three-way might spice up our relationship." My spice blend turned out to be a dash of jealousy with a dollop of resentment that left the bad taste of insecurity in our mouths.

Your relationship has to be either very strong or weak as water to make a three-way a worthwhile risk. Suggesting a three-way to a lover just means pitching the idea of you both having an affair with the same woman at the same time. You don't want to have a new experience with your woman; you want to experience a new woman without having to sneak around.

It didn't work for me. I was glad I tried it early in my dyke career when I was more resilient. However, if you're a solo unit, you happen to meet a young lady, and on your way to a destination together you two chance upon another lass who is game, then I can promise you an experience you will remember long after you have gone senile.

"I write for CURVE." Some women felt slighted because they didn't get a mention. Others became furious when they read about themselves. More than a few thought that as a writer, I should be much more clever and interesting in my personal life than I turned out to be. With my current (and only ever) wife, I worry for nothing. She assures me that no column could ever make me seem clever or interesting. ■

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Texas, Florida, Illinois and Ohio have similar rulings which act as legal precedents but are not necessarily codified as law. Still, as a result of one court's ruling, some Texas courts have ceased issuing change-of-gender court orders at all, "so it does have some real effect," Daley says. There's also a flip side to the negative court rulings: Ironically, they may be interpreted to mean that a transgender person can marry if he or she is in a same-sex couple, resulting in some lesbian marriages outside Massachusetts.

My partner's sexual orientation is queer. Will it still be queer now that he's FTM?

Whether one's sexual attractions can change is a loaded question, particularly as ex-gay "conversion" movements argue against LGBT equality by contending that sexual orientation is a "choice." Many people attest to branching out sexually after discovering new parts of their identity or becoming more comfortable in their bodies. Hormones also play an undeniable role in sex drive, and there is at least anecdotal evidence to suggest that satisfying an increased appetite may coincide with increasing one's available options. Still, many who choose "queer" do so specifically because it describes their cultural identification in a multi-gendered community, and also allows for numerous nuanced attractions and a self-identity that is not reliant upon the gender(s) of their partners. Thus, there are FTMs who date only women who still consider themselves queer, just as there are bisexuals who refuse to be labeled as straight simply because they are in an opposite-sex coupling. The more flexible the queer community is, the more likely it is to have room for people with a variety of self-defined, not

straight, sexual inclinations.

My partner gets hormones off the street. How dangerous is that?

It's impossible to know exactly what's inside street compounds, and sharing needles and vials is a quick way to spread dangerous diseases. Using hormones is safest with regular medical checkups to monitor the physical and emotional effects of transition. If someone must take street hormones, the Web site TheBody.com recommends that they be taken orally to "avoid the difficulties of having to obtain, use and clean injection equipment."

Are transgender people covered by the Americans with Disabilities Act regarding employment, housing and public accommodation protections?

There are no transgender protections in the federal ADA, but some state disability laws have been interpreted to cover trans people and many governments and business have adopted nondiscrimination protections. Advocacy group GenderPAC lists 120 major corporations that have added gender identity and expression to their nondiscrimination policies. GenderPAC also points to 23 states that have either enacted specific gender identity protections or had court or administrative rulings in favor of such protections.

How can I welcome people who move toward transition but haven't come out to me as transgender?

As more people embrace "transgender" as an umbrella term to describe their identities and/or

take physical steps to transition, many dyke circles express a willingness to adapt to the community's changing needs. When embracing friends who may be examining their paths, let them know that whatever they decide, their identity and their friendship will be honored, says J.J., a genderqueer, trans-identified individual from New York. If there is a question about someone's pronouns, ask in private.

Transgender-friendly language goes a long way toward being inclusive, as does a strict "no gender policing" policy, meaning everybody's self-declared gender is truthful and correct regardless of appearances. But use trans-inclusive language with caution; lesbian venues that welcome "women and FTMs" for instance, can be seen to invalidate transwomen or men who don't want to be distinguished from nontransgender men. Calling something "queer" or "all genders" rather than "lesbian" or "women only" is a good bet. If you exclude men, extend that exclusion to transmen and make self-identity the guiding principle in gendered spaces.

I'm attracted to an MTF lesbian who hasn't had bottom surgery, and I'm uncomfortable around penises. What should I do?

It depends, largely, on what you both like doing, MTF lesbian Valerie notes that long-term estrogen therapy has a shrinking effect on the penis, and many MTFs "keep it tucked away" anyway. Many MTFs will be "just as uncomfortable" with it, she says, while some lesbian couples treat it simply as "an enlarged clitoris."

But most of all, says Valerie, negotiating sexual comfort requires open communication. "It requires, like anything else, some planning ahead," she said. "But a big part of any type of sex is communication." — Zak Szymanski

Going Under continued from page 57

a genderqueer or third gender identity ever being recognized or respected, the impossibility of passing without medical intervention; just not being sure who I am yet."

"It's hard to fit into society without a label, and I was forced into a box that didn't quite fit," Kravitz says with disdain. "I never fully saw myself as a man; I just thought it was where I belonged."

Kravitz is part of a generation of lesbians for whom the label "butch" is a dying term that's becoming increasingly interchangeable with the "transgender." Many young, butch lesbians are identifying with the trans and genderqueer scene. Kravitz, feeling awkward and unsafe in her own body, felt like transitioning was the right choice at the time.

The day Kravitz realized that she identified more as a non-gendered butch lesbian than as a transgender man came more than two years later, when she attended a group at the LGBT Community Services Center in downtown Manhattan called the Butch/Femme Society. The group consists of about a dozen women, mostly in their 30s and 40s,

who meet monthly to discuss everything from the political climate to the city's best margarita.

"I looked around the room and found that there were other women sitting like I do, talking the way I do." At that moment, Kravitz realized she wasn't the last butch out there. "All I kept thinking was, why am I doing this? This is who I am."

Few Regrets, Though

Few studies have been conducted on regrets. A 2002 study published at the University of Liege in Belgium, "The Transsexual: What About the Future?" reveals that serious and long-lasting regrets are rare, but suicidal attempts sometimes happen after surgery. A 1998 Cambridge study deals more directly with what it calls "Factors Associated with Satisfaction or Regret Following Male-to-Female Sex Reassignment Surgery." Researcher Anne A. Lawrence found only 15 cases of post-operative regrets, a mix of both male-to-female and female-to-male, from a variety of causes. There were "doubts about the correctness of the diagnosis, doubts about the feasibility of the role reversal,

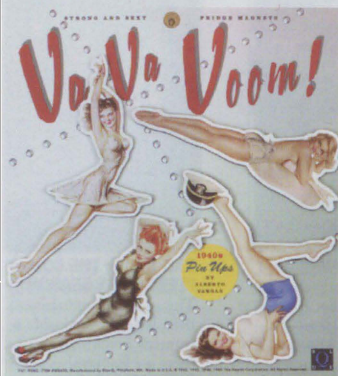
and the quality of the surgical interventions."

Transgender and genderqueer people are becoming ever more visible. In conjunction with that visibility is an increased sense of community. Community can create an "us versus them" phenomenon and may cause gender-questioning people to rush into medical transition as a way to find solidarity with the closest community.

"All people are a mix of feminine and masculine qualities. Recognizing that mix in oneself does not necessarily mean that medical, social, legal, etc., steps must be acted upon," says one respondent to Green's survey.

Psychotherapist Lin Fraser says, "When it comes to gender identity disorder, [we] diagnose the condition and treat the stigma."

For questioning folks, especially those who don't fit a binary system, there's little dialogue on the possibility of mistaken diagnosis, leaving LGB and transgender communities unaware if this phenomenon is legitimate. Perhaps most importantly, though, it leaves those who are victims of mistaken identity feeling as though they are alone. ■



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Five new stickers for your bumper, your tool box or whatever you like to adorn. Girl Jock 30012; Sun 30013; Dragon 30010 \$2.00 EACH



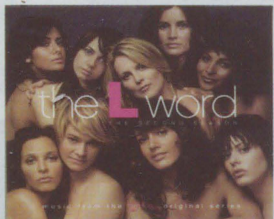
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If you love rock 'n' roll, you'll love this Joan Jett T-shirt. Buy one for your girlfriend, too! This 100% cotton, cherry-red T-shirt rocks out by asking "What Would Joan Jett Do?" 29001 S, M, L, XL \$16.95



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Time to bust a move with Showtime's *The L Word: The Third Season* soundtrack CD. Here to help you get your groove on are Tegan and Sara, D'Angelo, Nona Hendryx, Sleater-Kinney and more. This two-CD set includes 24 songs. 44022 \$22.95



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With *The L Word: The Second Season* CD, you can dance the night away with Dusty Springfield, the Organ, Ladytron, Heart, Le Tigre, Jane Siberry, Pam Grier, BETTY, Shawn Colvin and more. 15 songs at one low price. 44033 \$13.25

DVD of the Month



April's Shower

How far will we go for true love? Alex is hosting the perfect bridal shower for April, but it soon becomes clear that Alex and the bride-to-be have some unresolved feelings. One by one, an eclectic array of guests arrive (including super hot Honey Labrador). When April finally shows up, it becomes clear that the secret Alex is hiding will affect the course of her life. DVD 30020 \$ 19.95

BUCKLE UP AND HOLD ON!

Let the ladies follow the signs as you liberate your lap with a Route 66 belt buckle. 30016 \$19.95



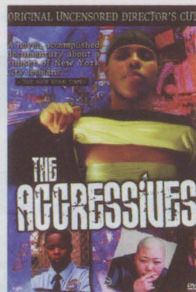
Hold up your jeans with pride by wearing this metal rainbow belt buckle. 30015 \$19.95



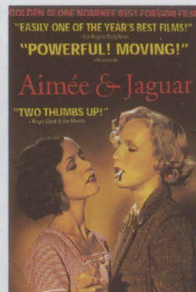
CURVEMAG.COM



A FAMILY AFFAIR
This charming romantic comedy about finding and losing love is a bit like *My Big Fat Jewish* and *Lesbian Wedding*.
DVD 30023 \$19.95



THE AGGRESSIVES
The documentary that leads you through a secret subculture of tough, butch, African-American lesbians in New York.
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AIMEE & JAGUAR
A dangerous love affair blossoms between two European women in the darkest days of World War II.
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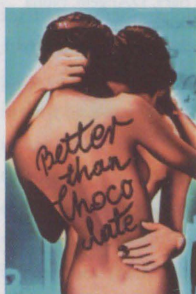
AMOUR DE FEMME
When Jeanne meets a pretty dancer at a party, she must choose between a happy family life and her new attraction.
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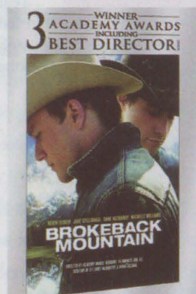
APRIL'S SHOWER
A lesbian comedy about a chef hosting her friend's bridal shower. Crazy guests, mini dramas and lots of laughs.
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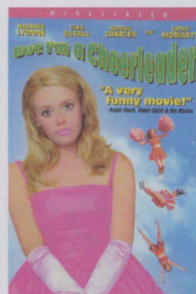
BAD GIRLS: THE COMPLETE FIRST SEASON
The addictive, seductive British drama set inside a women's prison. Of course there are lesbians!
DVD 30021 \$26.95



BETTER THAN CHOCOLATE
Maggie meets the woman of her dreams — just as her mother and brother move in with her. Quirky and sexy.
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BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN
Is it a cowboy story, a gay love story, a tragedy? Yes. This award-winning epic love story is great for people of all orientations.
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BUT I'M A CHEERLEADER
A comedy of sexual disorientation! Being ex-gay has never been sweeter. Clea DuVall co-stars.
VHS 27340 \$7.00
DVD 27341 \$12.95



CHO REVOLUTION
Bisexual comic Margaret Cho's triumphant return to the screen offers up more of her no-holds-barred humor.
DVD 27911 \$21.95



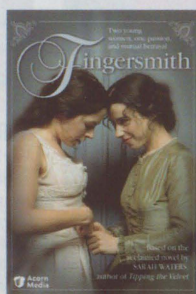
CLAIRE OF THE MOON
10th Anniversary Special Edition of the classic lesbian love story. Claire awakens to new possibilities of love.
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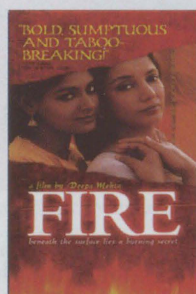
DO I LOVE YOU?
A British dyke cycles through London and encounters friends and ex-lovers as her relationships falter.
DVD 30022 \$19.95



EVERYTHING RELATIVE
Seven college friends reunite for a weekend in this "lesbian *Big Chill*." Unforgettable lesbian drama.
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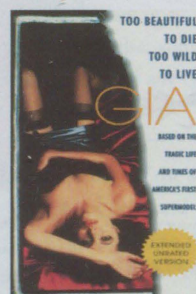
FINGERSMITH
From Sarah Waters, the author of *Tipping the Velvet*, comes this intense and romantic Victorian thriller.
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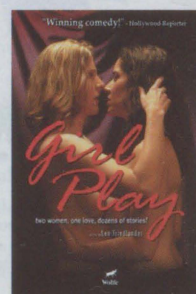
FIRE
This controversial film depicts two women who defy cultural prohibitions to express their passion for each other.
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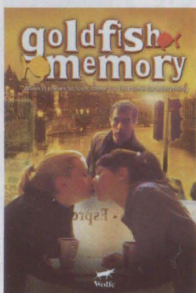
FUNNY LADIES
Four DVDs of 32 of the world's funniest women, including Ellen, Rosie, Janeane Garofalo, Margaret Cho and more.
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GIA
Angelina Jolie is a sexy lesbian supermodel in the true biography set in the drug-hazed days of Studio 54.
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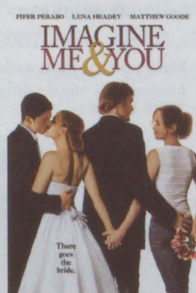
GIRL PLAY
Love scenes sizzle in front of and behind the curtain when two lesbians in a play blur their thespian boundaries.
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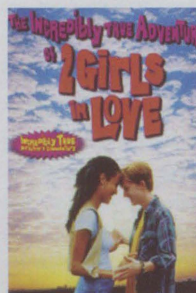
GOLDFISH MEMORY
A romantic comedy about the dangers and delights of queer dating in contemporary Dublin offers a delightful lesbian romance.
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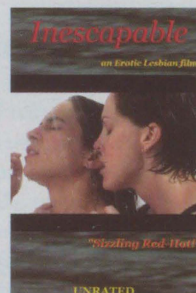
IF THESE WALLS COULD TALK 2
Chloë Sevigny, Sharon Stone and Ellen DeGeneres play lesbians in different decades.
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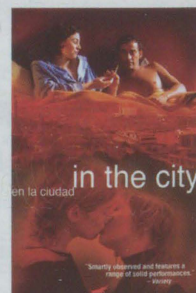
IMAGINE ME & YOU
At the altar a bride falls in love at first sight — with a female guest in the crowd. What will she do now? Piper Perabo stars.
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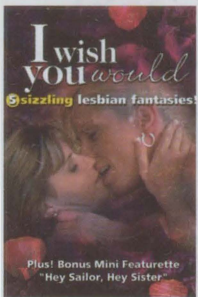
INCREDIBLY TRUE ADVENTURE OF TWO GIRLS IN LOVE
First love between teen girls. *The L Word*'s Laurel Holloman stars.
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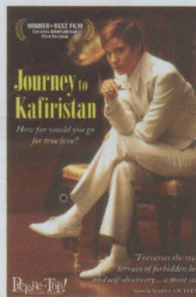
INESCAPABLE
When exes Beth and Susan plan a reunion, an intense attraction develops between their current lovers.
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IN THE CITY
Married Irene finds herself attracted to her friend Silvia. Emotions spill over when they come together for a meal.
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Five very different women are connected in provocative lesbian fashion in these erotic vignettes.
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A woman enrolls in a night class that changes everything including her sexuality. Starring Lili Taylor and Courtney Love.
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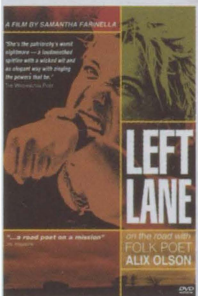
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Don't miss this astonishingly erotic tale about former lovers and the passion and obsession that reunites them.
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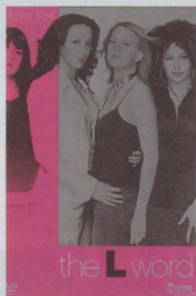
LATE BLOOMERS
Utterly romantic and comic gem about unexpected lesbian love in midlife.
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DVD 27106 \$29.95



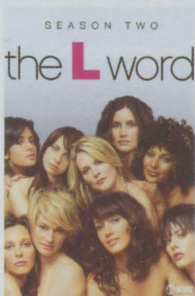
LAUGHING MATTERS
Dyke comics Marga Gomez, Kate Clinton, Karen Williams and Suzanne Westenhoefer get their groove on.
DVD 27086 \$19.95



LEFT LANE
Alix Olson, the acclaimed dyke spoken-word artist chronicles life on the road as she tours the country with her incendiary poetry.
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THE L WORD: SEASON ONE
Here's what started it all! Set in Los Angeles, this series explores the lives of a group of lesbian friends.
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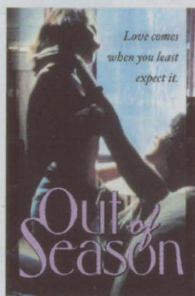
THE L WORD: SEASON TWO
Major life changes mean great lesbian drama as Jenny leaves Tim, Shane meets Carmen and more!
DVD 10010 \$69.95



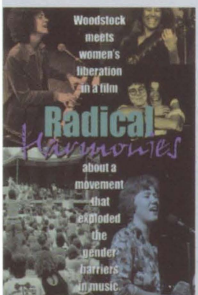
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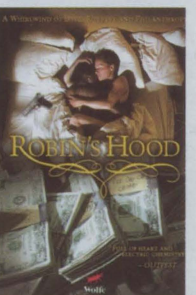
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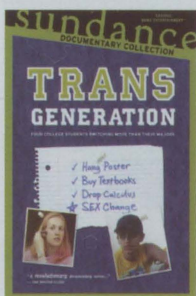
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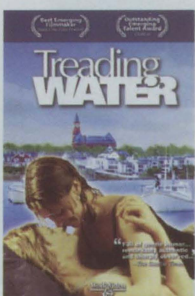
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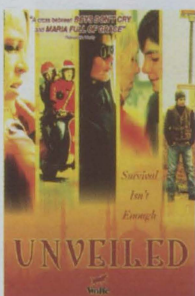
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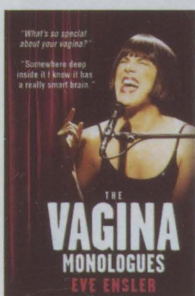
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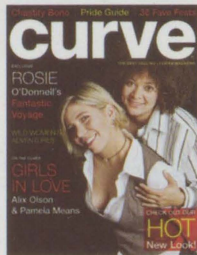
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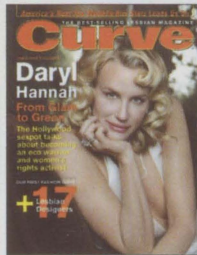
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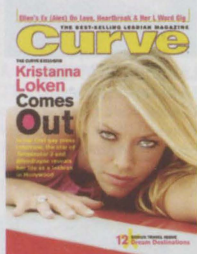
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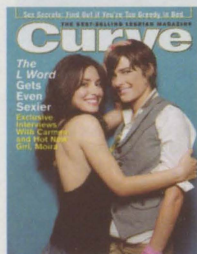
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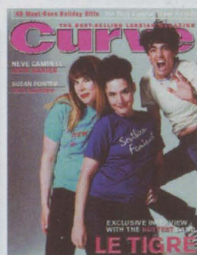
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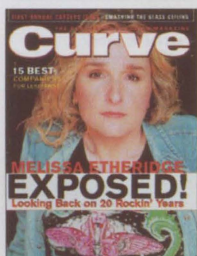
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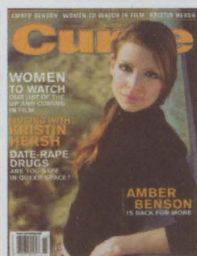
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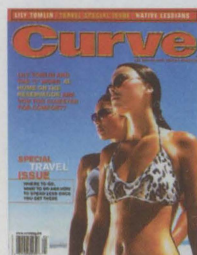
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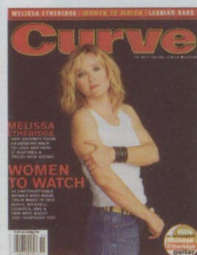
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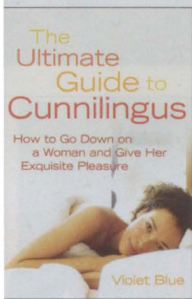
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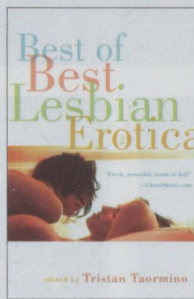
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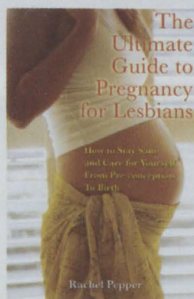
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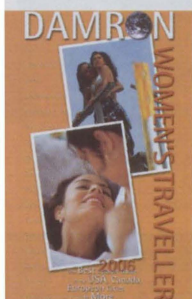
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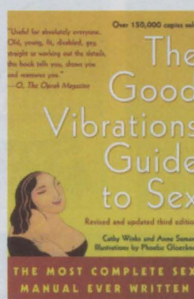
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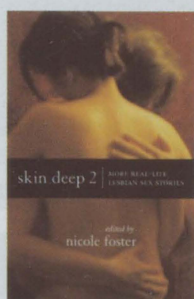
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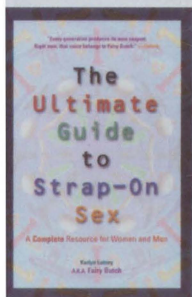
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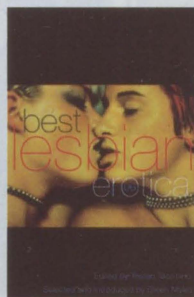
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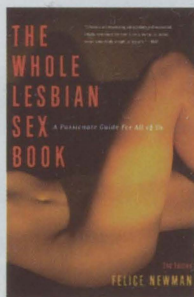
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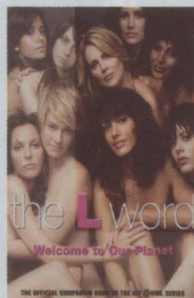
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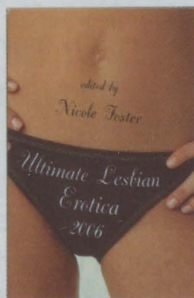
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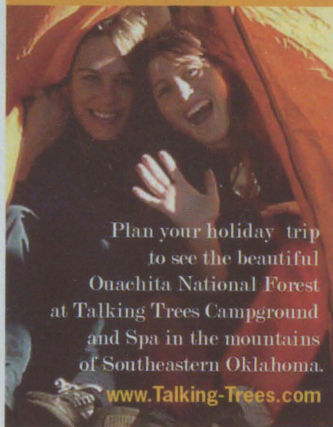
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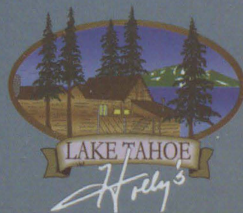
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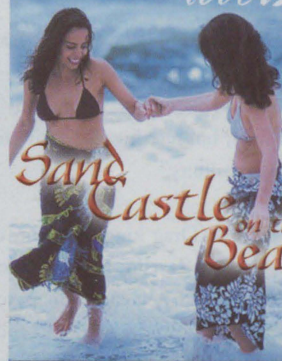
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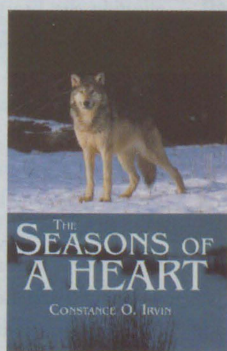


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Top Ten Reasons We Love Jeannie "Jae" Sevelius

If you think drag kings are so last decade, think again. Kinging has evolved into an increasingly popular form of cabaret, and the best drag kings push the gender identity envelope while using a lot of smart showmanship. Think backup dancers, elaborate costumes and, yes, plenty of sex appeal. San Francisco's Jeannie "Jae" Sevelius, who rules the kinging stage as his alter-ego Jay Walker, took home the crown at the 2005 San Francisco Drag King Contest, which recently celebrated its 11th anniversary. But Jay Walker's seductive stage presence isn't the only reason we love her. Did we mention Sevelius is a doctor? Yum. — *Rebecca Chekouras*

1. She's got unmistakable stage presence.

Sevelius knows a good show is all about the energy level she can create, and she doesn't hold back. Jay Walker's winning performance was a roof-shattering (and purple-draped) medley of Prince songs. "It's the best adrenaline rush ever," Sevelius says of being Prince for a day.

2. She likes to strip down to the basics.

"Kinging is about being who I am," Sevelius says. "No inhibitions." Kinging is not about pretending to be a man, but "getting in touch with my own natural masculinity."

3. She's a pro.

Drag king by night, clinical psychologist by day, Sevelius is a professional at both. As she developed her career in psychology, her drag identity followed apace, and today the two inform each other brilliantly. Gender issues, which accommodate the full spectrum of "self," play out on stages and podiums wherever she performs or speaks at national conferences.

4. She understands gender both onstage and off.

Sevelius, who earned her Ph.D. at the University of Missouri in St. Louis, is an outspoken advocate for a more fluid understanding of gender. "A big passion of mine as a psychologist is raising awareness about gender identity disorder and what happens to kids diagnosed with it."

5. She breaks rules.

At first, Sevelius didn't think she was butch enough to king, but letting Jay Walker evolve changed how Sevelius thinks about herself. "Being Jay Walker has given me more courage," she says. "I have much less concern about what people think of me. I'm trying to challenge expectations about gender."

6. She's a champ.

In 2004 Sevelius picked up the title of Mr. Trannyshack 2004 on her first try,



Jeannie "Jae" Sevelius

"Being Jay Walker has given me more courage. I have much less concern about what people think of me."

winning the hearts of queers who frequent San Francisco's notorious gender-bending club, and in 2005 she won the San Francisco Drag King Contest with her sexy take on Prince.

7. She's hot!

As a man or a woman. Part of her appeal is a double take on everything. Sevelius is a thoughtful, articulate, intelligent critic of social mores and culture. But in addition to a quiet, brainiac appeal, her ferocious onstage masculinity amplifies her femininity.

8. She's out, way out.

A big part of Jay Walker's stage dynamic is her clear message of personal courage and freedom, particularly for transfolk or women who choose a masculine style. The audience response is overwhelming — at times it's so thunderous that Sevelius can't hear her cues.

9. She's always prepared.

A lot of prep work happens before Jay Walker takes the stage, from selecting the songs to designing the costumes, from rehearsing complex choreography (often with a team of backup dancers) to editing video clips for the venue's backdrop. Sevelius even researches the audience she expects to have — and her hard work shows.

10. She gives back to the community.

"The work that I do now is HIV prevention in high-risk ethnic minority and transgender populations," Sevelius explains. "They are living on the street, homeless, drug-addicted; many are sex workers. And I see that I am in a privileged position." For Sevelius, clinical psychologist, lesbian, artist, activist and drag king, kinging is about love, the gift of courage and the pure joy of being. ■



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