

# Rocking Into a Man's World

Local women rock musicians overcome obstacles in a male-dominated field.

In the '60s there were the "girl groups" like the Ronettes, the Shangri-Las or the Supremes; in the '70s we saw bands like Heart, Suzi Quatro or Jefferson Starship fronted by "tougher" women; and in the '80s bands like the Go-Gos or the Bangles, featuring all-women lineups have come more into prominence. But today, as always, the popular music scene, especially rock, is dominated by men.

Locally the story is largely the same. Women who have been involved in rock music have run into countless obstacles — some blatant, some subtle — but have asserted themselves and have been gaining increasing support and respect among club owners and audiences as well as from their male peers.

"People are so unused to seeing women musicians that they think either there's something wrong with us or that we're going to bring out some men in the second set," says Dana Vion of the all-woman band, Transister. "That's because there aren't many role models around. Maybe we're the beginning of a new thing. Women have music in them just as much as men do, and that's what it's about. It's not about taking any political stand. We like to play music and we're women."

The main problem encountered by women locally is in dealing with club owners. "I feel like they think I'm here today, gone tomorrow because I

won't have the organizational ability to keep the band together or something," says Cam Hauk, the leader of None If Any. "I don't know what the reasoning is, but I feel like I'm not taken seriously by the club owners."

Hauk says the problem hasn't been nearly as great with male band members as with club management. "I'm lucky I have the respect of the musicians I'm with because they are helping almost force people to respect me."

Transister's Paula Jo Voden agrees. "As long as I've been playing music in this town the men (in bands) have always been extremely supportive," she says.

Even the "macho" heavy-metal community supports the efforts of bassist Rica Wright from the metal band Mystress. "Ability as a musician is what matters," she says, "not whether it's a guy or girl." She adds that "rock and roll is kind of 'rebel music,' and I feel like I'm a rebel for playing it. I guess I've always wanted to do what I wasn't supposed to do."

Not all situations have been positive, of course. Kathy Ozanich of Single Mary says she was once in a band with a man she found impossible to work with because he refused to acknowledge her or her ideas, but she says, "I'm not sure it was because I was a woman." She was, however, the only female in the band, and she says the guy didn't have the same

problem with the other male members of the group.

Hauk says she also has run into problems where she "couldn't put my finger on what was wrong. I've had to chalk it up to my being a female because I've seen the same people give more respect to male musicians I've worked with."

"When a woman goes into a situation, nine times out of 10 it's all men, and she has to prove she's worthy of respect," Vion says. "But they will automatically give that respect to each other until they're proven wrong."

Vion doesn't believe that this has been a real problem most of the time, but that it is something women have to cope with. "It is an issue that women are dealt with differently," she says, but thinks it is more likely "fear of the unknown instead of people going out to be sexist."

Hauk says she runs into the attitude "only as much as it would affect the rest of my life. If you're a girl you just learn that you have to speak twice as loud as the guy next to you."

Single Mary, Mystress and Transister all focus mainly on original material, while None If Any plays a wide range of cover songs. Ozanich, keyboard player Laura Rathbun and guitarist Jon Wallace all write songs for Single Mary, with Wallace contributing a bit more than the two women in the group. "I don't think it has anything to do with us being

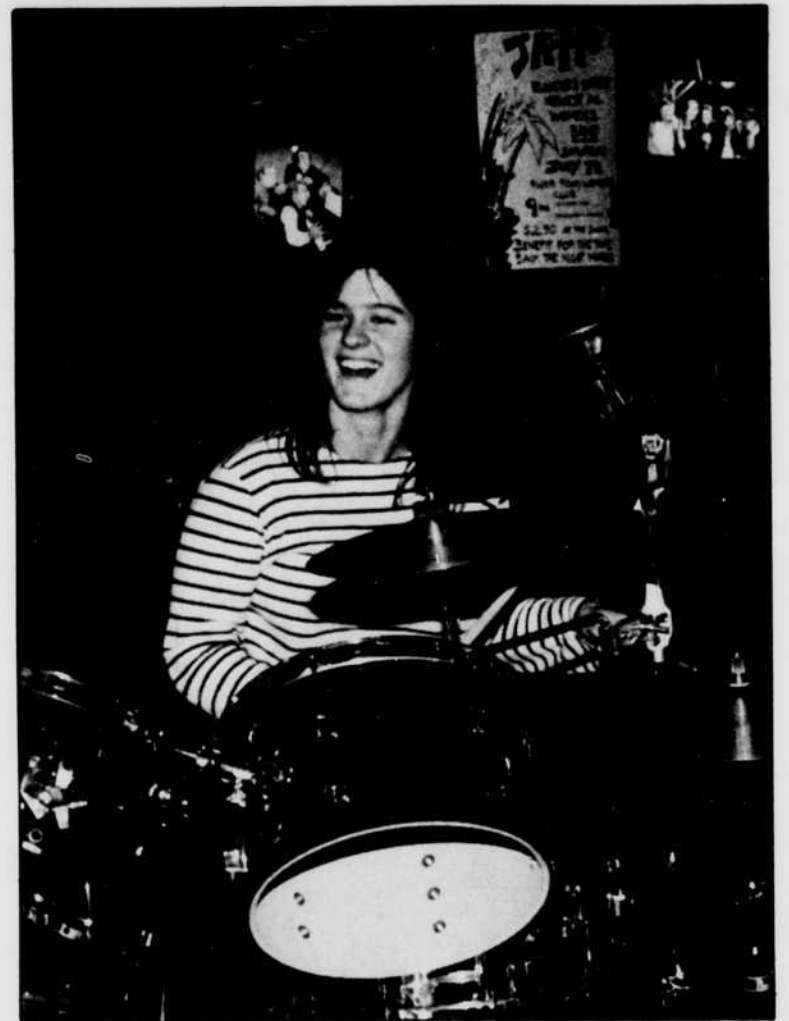


Photo by Marty Schwarzbauer

Dana Vion drums for the band, Transister. "We're not breaking tradition for the sake of breaking tradition," she says.

women," says Rathbun. "He's just more experienced and developed as a songwriter."

Ozanich agrees. "He's been playing rock music since he was a teenager," she says, "so he comes up with more rock songs."

The original material Mystress performs is mainly written by guitarist Joe Weber and vocalist John Tejada, but Wright says she composes her own bass lines.

Vion, Vaden and lead guitarist

Margo Girard all write for Transister, with Girard composing the majority of the band's songs.

When choosing songs by other artists for her band, Transister's bassist Cheryl Camelio says, "It doesn't matter whether they're by men or women."

"We just pick songs we like," Ozanich agrees.

"I sing 'guy songs,'" Hauk says. "I think it's a real advantage that I can do the macho songs" without changing the gender of the lyrics. "I got that

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