

## Here's to you, Mr. Robinson

"Sing if you're glad to be gay; sing if you're happy that way."

BY DR. TANTALUS

Every so often one has the yearning for some music that is, for lack of a better term, politically correct. It seems to be an inevitable side effect from *And the Band Played On*, the filing of the petition to repeal the governor's executive order, community opposition to an AIDS clinic in Queens and other similar incidents. Finding challenging musical fare to counter the mood of these events, however, is problematic.

For all their supposed credentials, the

## Music

Communards are still releasing tired retreads of disco hits. And while Morrissey of The Smiths still sings of the gay experience, his viewpoint tends to be internal rather than external. This musical void provides a perfect excuse to discuss one of the best gay rock-and-rollers of all time, Tom Robinson.

OK, it's admitted, opera stars need not apply. Nor gay folkies or instrumentalists, or Broadway moguls, dancers, waiters-singers-actors, trombone experts or Diana Ross impersonators. Just plain, simple, honest rock-and-roll, just like mother told you.

And OK: it's also admitted that a new Tom Robinson album has not been seen in these parts in some time, at least not by this scorecard. Some record stores no longer have a bin with a piece of cardboard with Robinson's name on it — a sure sign of fading fame if ever there was one. But the Doctor can't help that; the quality of his music hasn't changed just because the albums may be out of print.

Finally, the Doctor confesses that the typical Tom Robinson album sounds a bit rough — like your neighborhood garage band — and that Tom's voice will never be compared to that of Placido Domingo, but that's hardly the point.

Tom Robinson, of all our modern gay rockers, spoke to the gay experience that he found out on the street, not in his head. Perhaps he is best known for his gay anthem, "Glad to be Gay," in which he takes a sweeping view of the political scene faced by persons whose sexual orientation is in the minority:

Read how disgusting we are in the press,  
The *Evening News* and the *Sunday Express*.  
Molesters of children, corrupters of youth.  
It's there in the paper; it must be the truth.

In his live performance of this song during the Secret Policeman's Other Ball, a benefit for Amnesty International, Robinson noted that it's not necessary to be gay to sing this song, "but it helps."

Although "Glad to be Gay" has been perceived in some quarters as a gay anthem, the song is less an anthem about the rights of gay persons than about the wrongs that have been perpetrated against them:

The British police are the best in the world,  
I don't believe one of these stories I've heard.  
About them raiding gay bars for no reason at all.  
Lining their customers up on the wall,  
Picking up people, knocking them down. . . .

Written about nine years ago, Robinson's observations seem no less true today. Have you read about the recent raids on Los Angeles bars?

His first two albums, *Tom Robinson Band* and *TRB Two*, focused not only on the rights of gays but on political rights in general. But all is not as bleak as this sounds. Included in *TRB Two*, for example, are humorous songs such as "Black Angel" and "Crossing Over the Road," the quintessential coming-out song.

These albums are but a prelude to the apocalyptic vision contained on Robinson's third album, *Sector 27*. Here he grabs the gay experience in Britain by the throat and throttles

it for the entire length of the album. In "Mary Lynne" he recalls a beating he received from a gang that forced him to call himself "Mary Lynne" as the violence ensued. As he describes himself as "overweight," "blubbering" and "out of bounds," he summarizes the experience: "The face of failure takes a bit of burying; / Face to face to face to face with Mary Lynne." It's impossible to hear this song without feeling a sense of outrage — or to reflect on the recent murder in Couch Park.

In the world according to *Sector 27* the time is always five minutes after midnight, the forces of evil are always alert, and the certainty of tomorrow is under considerable doubt. Yet Robinson's clear refusal to concede comes through in song after song. It is that inner strength that gives this album its power and force and draws the listener back time after time.

Nor does Robinson spare himself in this process as he describes his own inner turmoil at operating in a gay world forced underground. "Invitation: What Have We Got to Lose?" "Not Ready" and "Can't Keep Away" by title alone give clear images of his struggle. In "Not Ready" he seems to pose (?) as a hustler trapped in his own vices: "It pays to be hard and it's hard to be paid, / I'm not ready, I'm not ready."

And in "Looking at You" a case of mistaken identity places him in the path of an angry pimp in a black limousine:

Electric window rolled down and somebody pulled  
out a knife;  
The woman just hissed and said: "There ain't no  
commission on this one tonight."  
I'm scared as a cat and it's just another Saturday  
morning on the Lower East Side. . . .

Later albums were to continue this same sense of struggle, but with the emotional volume turned down a notch. The 1982 release *North By Northwest* is less forceful, but still contains the pulsating "Now Martin's Gone" as well as the first version of "Atmospherics," which also appears on the 1984 album *Hope and Glory*.

As the title indicates, *Hope and Glory* finds Robinson in a more reflective mood, and the dialogue becomes increasingly internal. "Murder at the End of the Day" is about the tiny murders that we commit against our mates; the British hit "War Baby" is about resolving the dilemmas of modern relationships; a cover-version of "Rikki Don't Lose that Number" seems to pick up where "Crossing Over the Road" left off: "You tell yourself you're not my kind, / But you don't even know your mind / And you could have a change of heart. . . ."

After 1984 the Doctor lost track of Tom Robinson. Maybe there's been another album out there somewhere that hasn't been found, perhaps a single on some independent label that hasn't been uncovered. But until these records are discovered, or until someone else comes along who can address the dreams and nightmares that exist only after midnight, there is no choice but to pull out those time-tested records to remind ourselves that there's more to being gay than keeping up with the latest hits. I hope that some of Robinson's contemporaries will take note.

### Join the Chorus!

The Portland Gay Men's Chorus seeks to increase its size by several singers in each voice range for the last major concert in its 1987-88 season.

Rehearsals are held from 6:30 to 9:15 pm on Mondays in Room 453, Cramer Hall, at Portland State University, starting April 18.

The next concert will be a lively program of songs from the movies and will be performed jointly with the Seattle Men's Chorus on June 18 in the Intermediate Theatre of the Portland Center for the Performing Arts. Auditions may be scheduled by calling the conductor, David York, at 235-4231.



"Flowers ... so sweet, the sense  
faints picturing them."

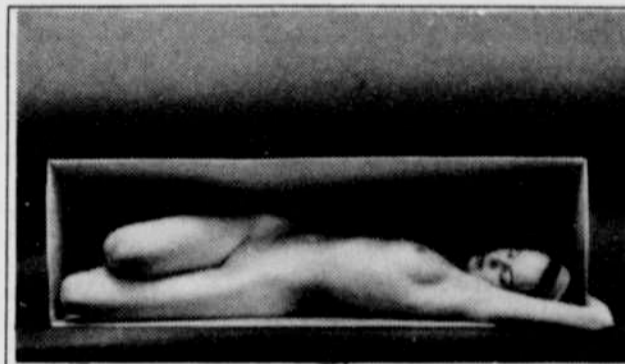
Shelley



DESIGNING  
WOMAN

Imaginative Floral Design

ORDER NOW 233-7335



### Ruth Bernhard The Eternal Body

For the first time, a collection of Bernhard's finest nudes in a single elegantly bound monograph . . . A unique and personal vision of the human body that is as breathtaking as it is profound.

### Photographic Image Gallery

208 SW First, Portland, OR 97204  
503-224-3543

• Art Gallery • Books & Posters • Custom Framing

COLUMBIA THEATER COMPANY  
Presents  
Arthur Miller's  
**THE CRUCIBLE**  
Directed by:  
A. Nannette Taylor  
2021 S.E. Hawthorne Blvd. March 18 - April 23, 1988  
Reservations 232-7005 Thursday, Friday, Saturday - 8 p.m.  
March 27 and April 10  
Sunday Matinees - 2 p.m.

I offer peer support to people who are committed to self-respect, self-empowerment and self-expression.

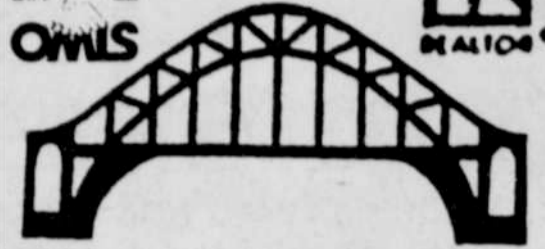
My healing intent is that those who work and play with me, using creative self-expression and art media, will experience insights, deeper feelings of self-worth, joy and satisfaction.

We work together to co-create a healing environment and atmosphere of self-acceptance, curiosity, courage and a willingness to experience life.



"Draw Yourself Out!"

Ann Hinds  
art medium  
274-9591



## Bridgetown Realty

1431 N.E. Weidler  
Portland, OR 97232

Scott Bottaro 230-0429

Specializing in

- Customer Service
- Residential
- Duplex/Triplex

Now's the Time to List Your Property!  
Call Now for your Free Home Analysis.

A Member of  
the Oregon Multi-Listing Service  
and the Portland Board of Realtors.

•••••  
**\$64,500 Art Deco Great Neighborhood**  
3 Brms, 1 Bath. All new stunning Kitchen. New Plush Wall-to-Wall Carpeting. Vertical Blinds. Interior Paint Tastefully Redone. Fireplace in Living Room. This Home is Ready to move in and enjoy. You'll Love to Go Home!

**\$62,500 Gardener's Delight**  
One-owner home. Two Finished Levels, 1844 sq. ft. 2 Brm, 1-2/3 Baths. Large Family Room with Wet Bar, 2 Fireplaces. Daylight Basement. Garden Area and Fruit & Vegetable Stand for Possible Added Income.

**\$110,000 Newer N.W. Tri-Plex**  
Four Year Old, One 3 Brm 1-1/2 Baths Townhouse Style and Two 2 Brm 1 Bath units. Always Rented — Excellent Condition. Assume Approx. \$76,900. No Qualifying. Monthly Payment Approx. \$1116.00. P.I.T.I Rents Per Month come to \$1295.00. The only utilities the owner pays are water and garbage.

LOU HARRISON  
LA KORO SUTRO  
VIOLIN PIANO PERCUSSION  
U.C. BERKELEY CENTER FOR ETHNOMUSIC

la koro sutro  
LOU HARRISON



new albion records

\*\*\* ON SALE \*\*\*

compact disc- \$ 13.99  
cassette- \$ 6.99



**MUSIC  
MILLENNIUM**

32nd & E. Burnside 801 N.W. 23rd  
231-8926 248-0163