



Sea Turtle Productions presents

# Holly Near

with John Bucchino

Fri., April 18, 8 pm

at the Aladdin Theater

SE Milwaukie at Powell

Tickets: \$14 advance through TicketMaster outlets, 224-4400  
and It's My Pleasure, 236-0505  
\$16 at the door

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## AMAZON TRAIL

### A life in hats

*Like an archaeological record, a hat collection points to the fashions and fancies of a bygone era*

by Lee Lynch

**A**s I packed my gear for a day in town, I grabbed my rain hat, slipped it over my head so it hung down my back, and I dashed to the car. I live in rainy Oregon; this ritual has become second nature. But I've always been a hat person.

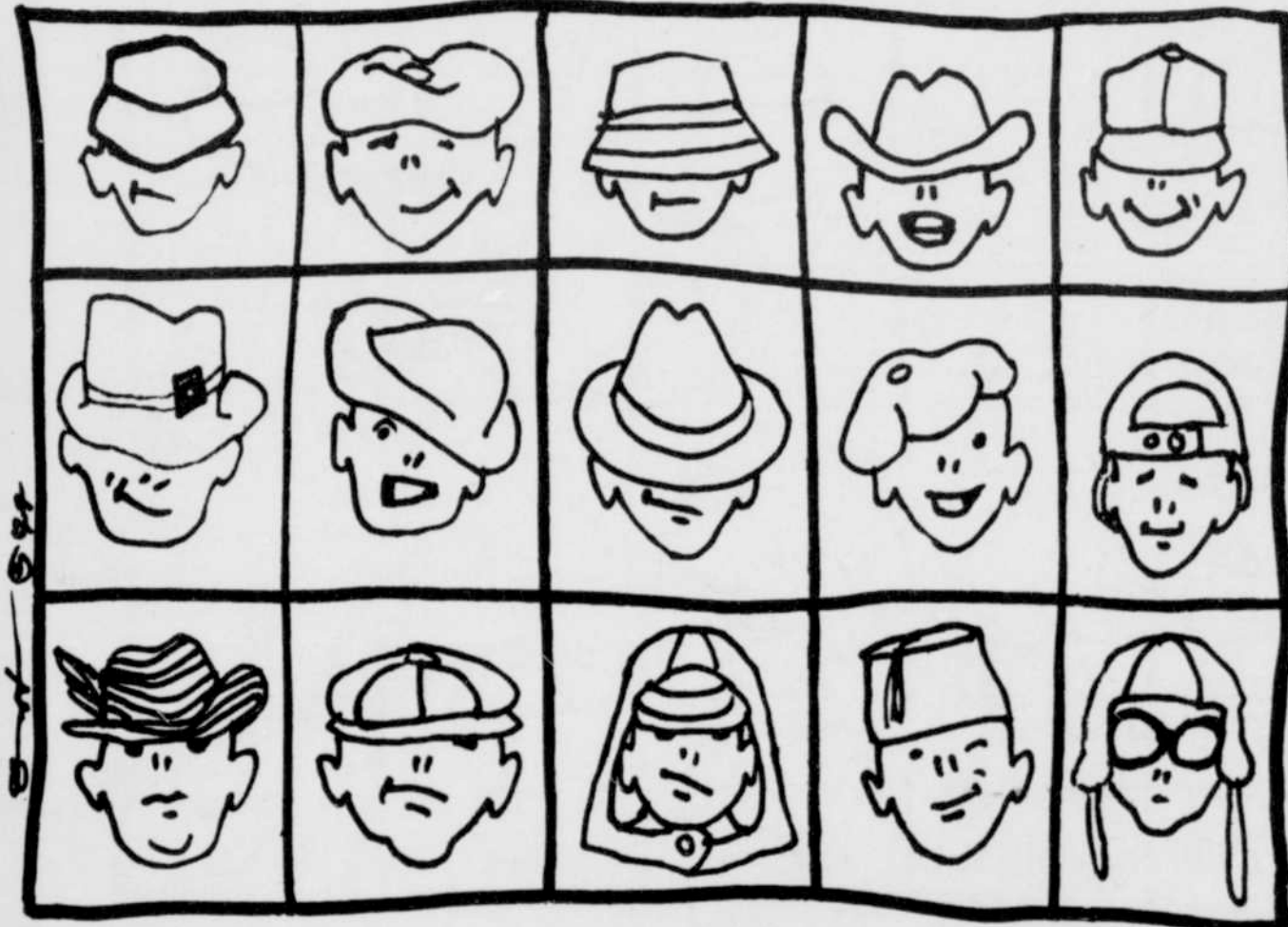
It's not a butch thing, as decades of photographs of femmes bedecked in feathered felt or flowered straw illustrate. There are simply hat women and non-hat women. Vanity, practicality, style, eccentricity, another way of declaring who we are in this world—these are all reasons for the headgear habit. But then, I suppose certain styles might be considered a butch thing...

This rain hat of mine was a long-term project. Rain jacket hoods are handy, but inhibit vision.

anemic pompadour and ducktail became my butch helmet. Little urban Amazon, strutting the streets, my femme on my arm—no hat could have fit on that swollen head.

College returned hats to my life. Maybe, as I flaunted my gay rebellious self, I felt protected beneath them. I remember a particularly offensive turquoise suede golf cap rescued from a bargain bin. Berets seemed more appropriate for college, and of course I had a black one, but never could comfortably incorporate the concepts of butch and academe.

As my college career continued through the mid-1960s, I became more comfortable with the role of barefoot dyke poet. Only money prevented me from owning a hat for every mood. The hippie



Plastic rain bonnets are beneath butch contempt. An old fisherman's yellow sou'wester would have been very cool, but hard to get and pretty conspicuous off of a Gloucester whaling ship. No, my rain hat entered my life in arid Sedona, Ariz., of all places. It was my birthday. When I fell in love with this nylon, khaki-colored, floppy-brimmed, flat-crowned Columbia yuppie-adventurer gem, Lover shooed me out of the shop. It has never failed to keep my hair dry, but even more important, my glasses free of raindrops.

It all started when I was a kid. My mother knew better than to buy me some wide-brimmed straw sun bonnet. It was a white canvas sailor's hat for me, front bent down to protect my face, and back up again like a real sailor when out of sight of my mother. The blue cap with gold admiral braid was reserved for my father, though I admired it greatly.

In sixth grade Elvis Presley exploded into my 11-year old world. Why did my mother indulge me by buying that white fedora-style hat festooned with Elvis illustrations? And let me wear it to school where the kids called me Elvis—not because of the hat, but because I did such an enthusiastic rendition of "You Ain't Nothin' but a Hound Dog"?

Four more years and I was OUT! My high school years were hatless. This was a butch thing. Rain, snow, wind—no hat, no hood and especially no sissy umbrella. No, those years were for hair. The overgrown pixie cut slicked back into an

culture contributed little to hat styles. Again, hair was the thing, but I never went for that wild look. Red crushers were cheap back then and could be molded to the cavalier look I needed in a gay bar, the skulking shadowed image sported by my druggie pals, the silly zaniness I'd feel after sharing a pitcher of beer at the college tavern. But I never wore my crusher in the rain. My head wouldn't shrink, but that precious crusher might!

I graduated from college directly into the closet. Straight jobs, real poverty, isolation from any community, hats seemed part of a lost youth. Little did I know the women's and gay lib movements were just down the pike.

Today I have a wall full of the things. Lover even gave me one of those baseball cap racks, probably to get them out of sight as they're now a collection in themselves. New York Yankees (my team!), Red Man chewing tobacco from a visit to the rural south, the State Police and Shoprite Supermarkets (both former employers), CAT heavy equipment just because it says "cat"—souvenirs of my life.

I have a white cowboy hat for dress up, a gray fedora, a straw hat for working in the yard, my Irish wool tweed, a painter's cap that reads, "An army of lovers cannot fail." They rain down from my closet wall when I'm rooting in there for some lost object. As I hang them back up one by one, I find parts of myself in each hat, from the ebullient little kid to the middle-aged lesbian who prefers to keep her glasses dry in style.