

Two days after the World Trade Center bombing, I called New York City actress Mo Fischer (aka drag king Mo B. Dick) to talk about her planned Portland performances. But naturally we first talked about her life at that moment in Manhattan.

The city, she said, has been an endless parade of "emergency vehicle after emergency vehicle, jet fighter planes zooming overhead—really an assault to your senses. Emotionally it's been really exhausting and terrifying to be a part of this."

Although Fischer lives a safe distance from the area, she had lots to say about the tragedy and its effects. The morning of the attack, she rode her bike to within 10 blocks of the World Trade Center. She couldn't get any closer but recalled: "I was chewing gum and then chewing soot, too. It was just terrifying."

She also commented on the startling lack of traffic in a city that never stops. "People were just walking around, not checking traffic or anything, just walking all over the streets in a total daze."

As people get back to work, Fischer believes that is precisely what New York needs right now: a return to normalcy. She said Mayor Rudolph Giuliani has justifiable concerns about the financial health of the city and state should people remain stunned and inactive too long.

"The mayor told people just last night, 'Go out to a restaurant, go see a movie, shop, enjoy.' He's basically saying we need to get back to normal and practice action over anxiety."

Referring to the mood of New Yorkers, Fischer lauded Giuliani's thoughtful admonition not to react in anger, bigotry and hatred. "It's really remarkable that he felt the urgency to say that."

As we moved on to the subject of her upcoming appearances, she acknowledged her own concerns about starting a 30-city tour after such an event. "Quite frankly, there was a moment where I thought: 'Should we do the tour? How can we go out and do shows? How can we be entertaining people in the midst of this crisis? Where do you draw the line?'"

Fischer just had canceled a show for that very evening at Wesleyan College near Boston. Logistically, she explained, getting out of Manhattan was still a nightmare.

Mo B. Dick (the B stands for Bodacious) is one of four gender-bending drag kings touring North America together this fall. Fischer described her character as a "motor-mouth ex-con who's good-looking, hot for the ladies, brazen, outspoken and tough-talkin'."

Expect a bawdy, foul-mouthed, funny show—but with a social conscience. Fischer undoubtedly will speak her mind on the events consuming our national consciousness. As she told *The Advocate*, "Whenever you're onstage and you have the mike, it's your responsibility



Gay men who hit on Mo B. Dick are out of luck

## Kings for a day

### New York gender-benders blow into Portland to strut their stuff

BY RICHARD BRAY

to say something a little bit real and political."

Besides Fischer, the foursome is made up of Muthafucka MC, an Aussie gangsta; Antonio Caputo, just named Berlin's Best Drag King in 2001; and Miss Lora Marie, a multitalented drag king who also branches out as a drag queen named Miss Hamhock, a born-again stripper, ex-choir girl and 1987 Arkansas Pork Product Pageant Queen. If they're even half as entertaining as their names, this should be an evening to remember.

As the leader of this pack, Fischer has been getting lots of press lately. In addition to the spread in the Sept. 25 issue of *The Advocate*, she recently was featured in *The Drag King Book* with photos by Del LaGrace Volcano.

Even more impressive, she appeared in the 1998 film *Pecker* as a "brazen, bold and angry" lesbian stripper performing in the Pelt Room and as a biker named T-Bone. She couldn't say enough about the incredible talent of director John Waters, laughing as she acknowledged his icon status in the gay world.

"He's everybody's idol, he's everybody's

hero," she exclaimed. "He's a fantastic person and so much fun to work with. He's absolutely hilarious. It was a dream come true to be in a John Waters movie—come on!"

All of this started for Fischer after she met drag king Buster Hyman in Provincetown, Mass., then joined up with other kings to create Club Casanova in New York City. She credited her mentor, a "conventional" drag queen named Mistress Formica, for teaching her the basics. She and I talked about the gray line between her onstage persona and real life. "Most people are more interested in who I am offstage than what I'm doing onstage, which has been from Day One understandable, but it strikes me as funny."

Offstage, as a woman, Fischer is more femme and didn't think she could be a drag king "from the get-go because I'm too girlie. I'm not butch."

She insisted that with some work any woman could become a drag king. "You don't have to be butch to begin with."

Fischer obviously doesn't take this aspect of

her life for granted and still marvels at her ability to pull it off in public. "A lot of people see the transformation and they're like, 'Oh my gosh!'"

This change isn't a public process. "I like to be in a quiet space, not in a club, to get ready, because I like to take the time to just...well, it comes over me. Where I cross that line...I don't know and how exactly, it just literally comes over me. My body begins to change, my stance, my hand gestures. I'm not as lucid and free as I am as a female," Fischer revealed.

Although the possibilities are limitless, she claimed she never has hit on anybody while in her "other" role, except for a little fun. "I'll play with somebody's mind, but I don't want to play with someone's heart."

However, Fischer confided she has had numerous people hit on her. "Straight women totally freak out that I'm actually a woman."

As if that isn't enough, she also gets hit on by gay men. "They're out looking for a little action...but they're not gonna find it."

Laughing heartily, Fischer said the funniest thing for her is when she gets hit on by bisexual men. "They love it—they love it because it's so twisted. It's like the best of both worlds for a bisexual man or woman...it's ideal."

Because she works so hard at it, she said she's especially flattered and always thinks: "Oh, my God, I'm passing. It's such an affirmation."

Fischer is bisexual and has a boyfriend. "He's not bi, but he's cool if I date women because that's one thing he can't provide."

One of her favorite aspects of performing is the diverse crowds she draws. "Sometimes it would be just lesbians, then the next week a totally different crowd, very mixed. To me that's reality, that's life. I've never been fond of single-mindedness or the blinders thing."

Fischer and her troupe will be touring through Oct. 27, crossing Middle America and Canada in a van. Her hope is that "people will begin to recognize women in suits as not threatening and that hopefully, as an extension of that, we'll no longer have any more Brandon Teena stories." □

MO B. DICK AND THE MEN OF CLUB CASANOVA perform Sept. 30 at Portland State University's Smith Memorial Center Ballroom, 1825 S.W. Broadway, sponsored by PSU Queers and Allies. Doors open at 5:30 p.m., and a buffet will begin at 6 with a no-host bar. At 6:30, a PSU student improv group will perform. At 7:45 the kings take over. Tickets are \$16 from 503-725-5681 or at the door. As soon as the kings finish up at PSU, they stride over to the Egyptian Club, 3701 S.E. Division St., for another show at 10. The cover charge is \$5.

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