

## DIVERSIONS

# Out With It!



by Lisa Bradshaw

## Happy Anti-Valentine

Ah, the queer community and Valentine's Day.

You're just not cool if you're into the lovers holiday wherein you buy a satin box of chocolates and red, red roses for that special someone.

It's everywhere, the smarm: "Singles Awareness Day," reads a big sign in the window of In Other Words, and as the sun goes down, you can mosey over to the White Eagle Saloon for "Singles Awareness Night." Ha! Take that, happy couples!

All right, the embracing of alternative relationships and sexualities within the queer community, coupled with the lack of legal representation in the form of marriage, allows for a reinterpretation of the oppressive confines of traditional couplings. Yes, yes, I know all that. But what if I just want to snuggle up with my sweetie and drink bubbly out of heart-shaped champagne flutes? Can I still be hip?

OK, I admit I'm mostly playing devil's advocate. The pressures of V-Day do, indeed, get out of control, as does the tacky crap Fred Meyer wants to sell you to prove your love.

So we all agree then. Screw Valentine's Day!

But it is a Friday night and some of us do have people we love, after all. And some of us just want to get laid, but, anyway, the question is: What can you do Feb. 14 that isn't cheesy or expensive or requires you have an LTR (yet, it's OK if you do)?

Well, first, there's a very special episode of Skervy—Queer to the Bone! which is moving from its usual digs at Billy Ray's over to Northeast Alberta's Whatever Lounge, for the Black Hearts Dance.

There will be the "large wine bottle painted red," describes DJ Zanne, "should some bottle spinning need to occur." Even easier is the Kissing Krew—roving kisses on the dance floor. "We may even bring back Pin the Merkin on the Pussy with my large and lovely lady life-size illustration on the wall," says Zanne. (I had to ask, too. "Merkin" is a pussy wig. The things I learn working here.)

Also available, according to Zanne, will be a crew of volunteers "to spank, paddle, whip, tie up or tickle any willing participants. I encourage guests to bring implements of their own choosing, and we'll put them to good use." Also suggested are "scandalous and outrageous" outfits, which could lead to a discount from the outlandish \$2.99 entry fee. Any and all queers and their friends are welcome at any Skervy event.

Across the river at the Roseland Theater that same night is the annual Fetish Masquerade Ball, where the vibrant fire, belly and go-go dancers mix it up with other rather unforgettable performance options. Two of note among the hard rock

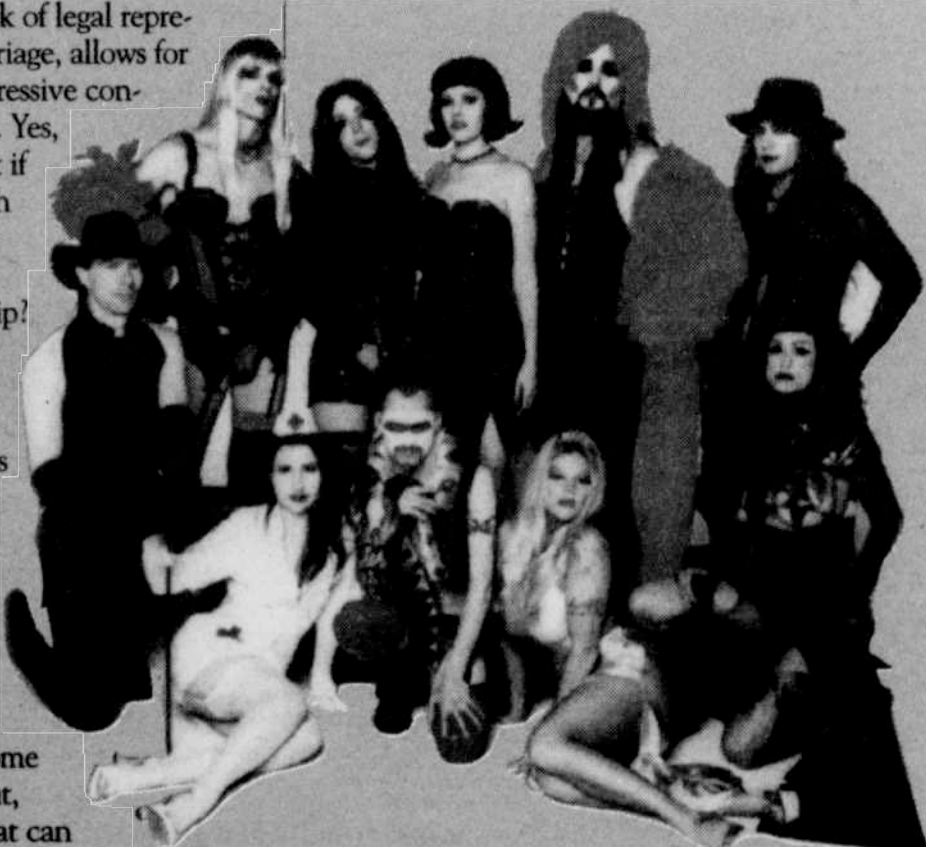
and goth bands are Shift SS and headliner The Impotent Sea Snakes.

Shift is a "performance body modification group" that, according to Stephanie McShane, manager of Spartacus Leathers, "is not quite for the squeamish. But it's really beautiful." Expect some onstage piercing and suspension from hooks. Impotent Sea Snakes may show you more of the same among its "futuristic rock 'n' roll circus," but bigger and more, more, more.

For those outside the leather community, this is your chance to plop down \$20 to see how the other half lives. McShane encourages those who don't normally engage in this stuff to not be afraid. "Go with a friend...and check it out," she says. "It's unbelievable, and you just really have to see it for yourself."

And don't worry, nobody expects anything of you. "There's...three bars, and upstairs has stadium seating. You can just hang out and be comfortable."

But don't, for gosh sakes, wear your Gap lounge pants. If you're unsure how to dress, stick to whatever you've got that's black, McShane suggests. Then "maybe you can add a little of the gothic or Victorian look to that."



The Impotent Sea Snakes is the band your parents always suspected you were seeing

Anything leather, PVC or latex is good, too.

If you have trouble, just call her at the store or stop by. "We have clearance racks; you can actually get a pretty cool outfit for...under \$50. Certainly not everyone has to go out and spend several hundred dollars on chain mail for one event."

Well, that's good news.

But if this stuff just isn't your thang, I heartily suggest the rousing Rose City Swing Band's Moonlight and Melodies concert and dance at Portland Metro Club. If you swing, of course, there's no doubt this will be your Valentine's Night destination. If you don't swing, don't worry; the traditional 16-piece band will give you plenty of ear candy.

Featured is vocalist Carol Reise, who, if you saw her performance at the Portland Gay Men's Chorus Adults Only Cabaret last fall, will rev you up and send you running to event hostess Misha's Make-A-Date. See? Couples and singles co-habiting.

What am I doing for Valentine's Day? I'll be dressed as a giant heart in front of the Immigration and Naturalization Service on Northwest Broadway as part of the Lesbian and Gay Immigration Rights Task Force's protest against discriminatory immigration policies. Yep, pretty sexy. ☐

## A child of pleasure

Portland playwright William "Sam" Gregory has penned another piece about a remarkable woman from a distant century.

His previous play, *Mary Tudor*—about the 17th century English queen known as "Bloody Mary"—won three Drammy awards in 1999, including best new play. His latest, *Child of Pleasure*, runs through March 15 at CoHo Theater.

It's actually the first work in a trilogy about Ninon de L'Enclos, a 17th century French Epicurean, philosopher and courtesan. That last one means a high-priced call girl.

"Her father had gotten involved in a tremendous scandal," explains Gregory, "and was exiled from Paris." This made poor Ninon unmarriedable, which meant "she and her mother were left with nothing."

So Ninon looked at her two choices—"the church and the street," Gregory explains. Being "a free thinker, she was not inclined to go into the church."

She didn't exactly take to the streets, though. A courtesan, Gregory continues, is "a successful and high-priced prostitute, more like a geisha—someone who is valued not only for their sexual skills but for their intelligence, their wit and their conversation."

Gregory was inspired to investigate her life because "as a gay man I was so impressed how she managed the issues of her own sexuality and the sexuality of her day. She decided from a very young age...that sexual morality...was so wildly different between men and women and that...she would live in the sexual arena for a man."

This meant Ninon called the shots. "Her sexual partners were, for the most part, although not exclusively, men, but she would...take on what...society sanctioned as male attributes," Gregory explains: She chose her partners, she set the terms of the affair, she was the one to terminate it. "This was all considered very scandalous. They were very much into the idea of the woman as the passive flower."

She turned these decisions into a philosophy, deciding never to carry on a love affair for more than three months. "She truly believed that friendship was the highest ideal and that sexual passion, although every exciting, was a transitory experience," Gregory muses. After three months, "they were never allowed back into her life as a sexual partner. Many of them continued to be her friends...but it was a very strictly regimented arrangement. I was very interested in how



Ninon de L'Enclos

17th century courtesan Ninon de L'Enclos has been quite an inspiration to Portland gay playwright William S. Gregory

this seemed to parallel some strata of contemporary gay society."

The play covers three days in the life of Ninon upon the return of her father. Gregory's interest in the lives of women from a very different time and place stems from "the experience of people who find themselves in such dramatic situations. Both Mary Tudor and Ninon are people put into extreme situations. Mary is unsuccessful in dealing with her society...*Child of Pleasure* is a comedy; [Ninon] more successfully negotiates the traumas inflicted on her."

Tickets to *Child of Pleasure* are \$16-\$18 from 503-220-2646.

## What a month for comics

Two fabulous queer comedians are coming back to Portland in March. Margaret Cho will delight audiences with her new *Revolution Tour* (no doubt rowdy and lewd) March 13 at Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall. Tickets are on sale now for \$29.50-\$39.50 from Ticketmaster.

Ellen DeGeneres follows March 22 with her new show, *Here & Now*, also at the Schnitz. Those tickets are \$29.50-\$42.50, available by Internet presale only until 5 p.m. Feb. 7. They go on sale to the general public 10 a.m. Feb. 8 at all Ticketmaster outlets.

DeGeneres has also made a pact with NBC to produce *The Ellen DeGeneres Show*, scheduled to begin running this fall. Taking Rosie O'Donnell's place as top lesbian daytime talker, DeGeneres will play host to celebrities, musical acts and field segments. Although not yet slated to air in the Portland area, Ellen's Web site encourages us not to worry—more cities will be announced in the coming months. ☐

Compiled by LISA BRADSHAW



March is queer comic month