

## DIVERSIONS



### Dear Ellen, Call me! Love, Lisa

**A**t first I was just a little irked, but now I'm downright pissed off.

As you know, Ellen DeGeneres is coming to town March 22. The big-name queers always advertise in *Just Out*, of course (Margaret Cho's people bought three ads spanning three issues), so our advertising department contacted Ellen's management company.

"We're not targeting the gay press this time," they said.

We suggested that if money was an issue, we would run an ad in exchange for a few tickets to the show. This is common practice for groups with a limited budget. They said no.

Our ad manager made a few phone calls to Ellen's peeps, suggesting that they would miss a lot of potential ticket sales and that, frankly, as a gay man, he's concerned about the lack of support of the gay press. Finally, they caved and bought a quarter-page ad—to run once.

Simultaneously, *Just Out* requested an interview some time ago and were put on hold about a month before we were told she was not scheduling "any more interviews" in Portland. They did, however, send helpful press releases and photos to make sure all the info got into our paper somewhere.

OK, I think. Probably she'll talk to *The Oregonian* and that's it. Time is short when you're on tour, and sometimes celebrities will limit themselves to one paper, and it's the biggest one in the state. It happens.

So imagine my surprise when I open my *Willamette Week* March 19 and see an interview with Ellen. Seems she found the time to talk to that alternative paper, but not this one. Am I to believe that in the past six weeks she didn't have 30 minutes to talk to *Just Out* on the phone?

I guess since Ellen has all the queers in her pocket, she doesn't need to tell us when tickets go on sale. *Just Out* will no doubt mention the show anyway, why should they pay us to? And why talk to us when *Willamette Week* has a larger circulation?

We did mention her show in the past two issues because we know our job. How irresponsible it would be if we ignored her the way she's choosing to ignore us. But, heck, dykes will buy tickets regardless, so why support the queer press?

I'll tell you why. Because if it wasn't for the love and support Ellen has received from the gay, lesbian, bi and trans communities in this country, she'd have had a nervous breakdown long ago. Because if queer newspapers weren't here, she wouldn't have had them to read for the past few decades when there was nowhere else to find news about queer political action, culture and entertainment. Because if not for us, she wouldn't have doubled her ratings on that coming-out episode. And because young lesbians in her audience tearfully thanking her for changing their lives makes good HBO special material.

And because queer papers will go the way of her two TV shows if queers like her don't feel the need to put their money where their mouths are. Free papers rely entirely on advertising dollars to stay in business. No advertising, no business. Ellen has the money. And, let's be honest, she has the 30 minutes.

*Just Out* is one of the largest and longest-running GLBT newspaper in the United States. This is the third time Ellen has visited Portland in the past four years, and the third time we've been passed over for an interview.

Quid pro quo, Ellen, baby. We put out for you; time to put out for us.

Send comments to: Ellen DeGeneres, c/o Warner Bros., 4000 Warner Blvd., Burbank, CA 91522. ☐



Tara Jane O'Neil brings her ambient sounds to the Blackbird on March 26

### Lend her your keen ears

**C**all her courageous. Tara Jane O'Neil is a musician who lingers in obscurity. Her recordings are quiet, ambient, experimental. Her live performances—one of which you'll find March 26 at the Blackbird—demand you to be patient, to find your keen ears, to accept subtle aural information.

And her boldness extends beyond sound—into the personal and the political. O'Neil's latest album, *TJO TKO*, is released on Mr. Lady Records, the dyke-run label churning out creamy music by artists like Doria Roberts, Sarah Dougher and The Butchies. She also plays all of her own instruments and writes her own songs. What more could you ask for?

A DIY altermagirl to the bone, O'Neil also collaborates with her life partner, Cynthia Nelson, in the studio (or, more likely, at home with a four-track and headphones). After meeting on a film set (director Suki Hawley's indie-rock road film *Half-Cocked*) and falling in love, the couple took the next logical step—started a band and named it Retsin, hit the road, made a bunch of records.

Since her Louisville, Ky., band Rodan split up in 1994, O'Neil has been a regenerative organism reproducing like mad. In 10 years she's formed three bands and released 12 albums (five solo, five with Retsin, two with The Sonora Pine).

Oh yeah, and O'Neil has added her spooky vocals and instrumental/producing talents to a bunch of other people's albums, including Sebadoh's *Bakesale*, Papa M's *Whatever, Mortal* and k.'s (aka Karla Schikele) last two releases.

Expect a different part of your cerebral cortex to be stimulated from a night with Tara Jane O'Neil. Listening to her music might require more from you, but if you open your ears, it just might be worth it.

Tara Jane O'Neil plays the Blackbird at 10 p.m. March 26. Tickets are \$7 from [www.insound.com](http://www.insound.com) or at the door.

### Want to be head lesbian?

**T**he Portland Lesbian Choir is looking for a new head lesbian.

After several years as the group's director, Teri Beemer has decided to step down and take some time off from the choir, which is hard at work preparing for its spring concert.

The choir, says original member Cindy Zrinyi, would love to get a new director involved as soon as possible, but she "would actually start directing us at rehearsals in September when we start up again." The director position includes a stipend.

The group skipped its usual winter concert, Zrinyi says, to concentrate on the spring show because "we felt like we had enough energy to produce one major concert this season." They have, however, been doing smaller performances, such as the one at Portland's International Women's Day on March 8.

The upcoming concert, titled *Passion*, is May 9 and 10 and includes "a lot of songs that take a look at lesbian love and relationships," says Zrinyi, including Mary Chapin Carpenter's "Passionate Kisses" and Holly Near's "Simply Love."

For more information about the director position or becoming a member, e-mail [portlandlesbianchoir@hotmail.com](mailto:portlandlesbianchoir@hotmail.com).

### Red Dress Party becomes CAP fund-raiser

**A**ccording to fashion magazines, the little red dress is a versatile outfit to have in any girl's wardrobe. It can take her from a garden party to a luncheon to a...warehouse!!

That's right. Already infamous as a night of depravity and debauchery, the third annual Red Dress Party has outgrown its humble basement beginnings and is moving to a former grain warehouse in North Portland on March 29.

With the move, the event also becomes a fund-raiser for the Kids Connection program at Cascade AIDS Project. Kids Connection helps HIV-affected children and their families access resources and services such as counseling, medical care and immunizations.

Food for the affair has been donated by Afares Catering and by Chameleon Restaurant, and liquor is being provided by Mint, whose owner, Lucy Brennan, has created a berry vodka cocktail called "Red" especially for the event.

You can do full-on drag for the event if you want to, but really, all you need is that little red dress to get you through the door. Committee member Jeff Hawthorne notes that for the more masculine-oriented, safe choices for shoes "have been combat boots." But, he warns, "I expect to see a bit more experimentation in footwear choices."

The Red Dress Party is 9 p.m. to 2 a.m. March 29 at 2119 N. Kerby Ave. Tickets are \$20 or \$15 in advance from Balloons on Broadway, Gai-Pied or [redresspdx@yahoo.com](mailto:redresspdx@yahoo.com).



Peggy Melanson (left) and Catherine Thoele exhibited extreme dyke power on the slopes of Timberline at the Winter Games of Oregon

### Dykes dominate slopes

**C**atherine Thoele of Welches decimated the field in the Winter Games of Oregon slope style competition March 2 at Timberline.

Slope style is a contest in which skiers ride jumps and rails in a terrain park format. They're scored on difficulty of tricks and overall style. Thoele took home the gold in her age group as well as gold for the entire event in the women's division.

Her partner, Peggy Melanson—who apparently whipped the crowd into shape with theatrical flair during a rendition of the Olympic song at the closing ceremonies—brought home silver in slope style.

Lesbians excelling in sports...what next?

The Winter Games of Oregon are held every year at Timberline and are open to snowboarders and skiers of all ages. ☐

Compiled by LISA BRADSHAW, FLOYD SKLAVER and CORI TARATOOT

The third annual Red Dress Party moves from its humble basement beginnings to a great, big warehouse March 29

