

DIVERSIONS

Out With It!

by Lisa Bradshaw

Let's make some porn

Let's just all come to a consensus right now and admit it: Lesbian porn sucks.

Good, now if we all agree on that, we also agree that it wouldn't hurt to have some lesbian porn that didn't suck. That's where Virginia Martin comes in.

The Portland State University student took a porn class last term (note to self: go back to college) and in her, ahem, homework discovered a distinct lack of decent queer porn.

Oh, there's no lack of gay male videos—they have all kinds of cool stuff to choose from. But where women and transies are concerned, it's almost all exploitive crap. OK, those are my words, but Martin's words are very similar, I swear.

"Good Vibrations really tries," the 21-year-old admits. "I really respect them for what they're doing, but I feel like a lot of it is really softcore. They'll just start getting into something and then they'll cut it off—right as you're getting turned on. I want to see some penetration; I want to see some action!"

Amen!

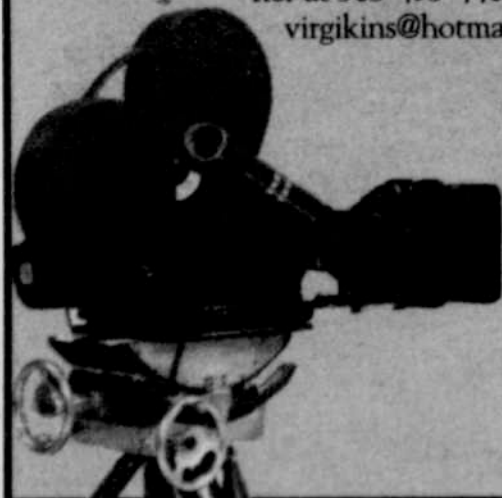
"I think it's the assumptions," she continues, "of what women want to see in sex."

So the Alaskan transplant, having learned there is "little queer pornography that was made by queers," has decided to make her own film. "Women in the porn industry who are controlling it is very rare," she says, "so I wanted to kind of put my hand in there." (So to speak.)

So the next logical step is to find people to help put together and star in Portland's very own queer-produced, queer-starring porn movie. "I want it to be really inclusive," Martin says. "I really want trans people, and I really want different body types...I'm looking for anyone who identifies as queer."

Martin would like places to peruse and buy decent porn, too. She laments that besides *It's My Pleasure*, it's hard to find a place to go. "Fantasy and some of the others are very male oriented, and there's a lot of shame and secrecy surrounding them. You go in there, you can't make eye contact...men are very uncomfortable that any woman is there.... It's not a safe environment, overall, for women to find porn."

Hence, Martin's first big planning meeting for anyone interested in helping with this project is 7 p.m. April 8 at *It's My Pleasure*, 3106 N.E. 64th Ave. To find out more, contact her at 503-493-4404 or virgikins@hotmail.com.



Not another queer night!

Downtown weekend club Level is throwing its hat into the queer-night pool starting April 13.

Beginning April 13, every Sunday from 8 p.m. is now **queer night** at Level, which is managed by gay boy John Guidone. He's mixing his own knowledge from the Atlanta queer night scene with the club owner's South Beach background and with their promoter's San Francisco and Los Angeles experiences to create a carnivalesque atmosphere they think will set them apart.

"We're used to queer nights being more of just a different thing," says Guidone. "Here it seems to be real separate, where it's either gay girls or gay boys. We wanted to do a true family night where it's for everyone."

They also want to make it a unique experience, tying in different live entertainment every week. "For opening night," divulges Guidone, "we have a marching band that's going to actually march down Stark Street and then march into Level, all the way from the Eagle." Called March Forth, the band is "amazing," he says. "It's a grand opening—why not have a marching band, right?" Well, right.

They're a "trippy, mixed group," Guidone continues. "The whole vibe is queer, which is what we were looking for. Whether you are gay or straight, old or young...it's just the queer vibe, the nonmainstream, tattoo, pierced, fetish, whatever your deal is, come on."

The night is being billed as "Not another queer night," which, Guidone says, acknowledges those new queer nights popping up all over town but also emphasizes it's actually not just another queer night. "It's going to be something different."

Also billed for opening night is a sushi happy hour upstairs in the "gals lounge," CD giveaways, go-go boys and girls and a special performance by Black Venus, aka queer night promoter Leonard Huguet, doing a live rendition of a Dead or Alive song "in kind of a gender-bending drag," explains Guidone.

Level, 13 N.W. Sixth Ave., will remain open "as long as we need to," but at least until 1 a.m. There's a \$3 cover. And, says Guidone, if it all works out "we're going to take over Thursday as well."

Seventh Heaven

And you thought the Oscars had gone gay this year. Well, the Independent Spirit Awards queered it up a notch March 22 with a much-deserved **Far from Heaven** sweep.

Portland's own Todd Haynes was named Best Director, while longtime producing partner Christine Vachon took home the trophy for **Best Feature**. *Heaven* also won **Best Female Lead** (Julianne Moore), **Best Supporting Male** (Dennis Quaid) and **Best Cinematography** (Edward Lachman).



Screw you, Oscar: *Far from Heaven* wins big at the Independent Spirit Awards on March 22. From left: Dennis Quaid, cinematographer Edward Lachman, Portland director Todd Haynes, producer Christine Vachon, and Julianne Moore.

An homage to the "women's pictures" of Douglas Sirk, the melodrama tells the story of a 1950s housewife who, upon learning her husband is gay, strikes up a scandalous friendship with her black gardener. Now available on video, *Heaven* was shut out at the Academy Awards.

You oughta be in pictures, Darcelle

Portland State University psychology professor Jan Haaken is watching a lot of drag.

Together with Wendy Kohn of Portland's Kwamba Productions, she's directing *S/He Shows: Drag as Social Action*, a 50-minute documentary focusing on Walter Cole (Darcelle) and the multicultural influence of Darcelle XV in Portland and all over Oregon.

"*S/He Shows* grew out of long-standing interests on the part of the production crew in cultural work and the role of cultural workers in the transformation of society," explains Haaken.

"Working toward fundamental social change means creating spaces where people come together, develop new capacities and experience a sense of hope that social transformation is possible."

But aren't they just drag shows?

Heck no, claims Haaken. "Through humor, warmth and camp burlesque, Darcelle and Company challenge rigid gender stereotypes," she explains, "encouraging audiences to question a range of cultural boundaries."

The documentary—which should be complete sometime next year "contingent on fund raising"—centers on "responses of both audiences and drag artists to the performance," she continues, "bringing into view the contributions of drag artists to a revisioning of gender, sexuality and community."

Several fund-raisers have already happened, and several more are in the works. During a recent event at Darcelle XV, a fabulous performance preceded a lively auction with an eclectic blend of items like massages, decorative pieces, a chance to be married by Darcelle (who is legally able to do so), a whole bunch of flashy rhinestone jewelry (including Darcelle's own family jewels) and funky clothes.

Haaken has plans to release *S/He Shows* not only to queer film festivals but also other

national and international festivals. "The documentary's focus on the role of drag in bridging cultural differences," she says, "will provide a vital context for diverse participation of community groups in post-screening events."

But it all takes money, so make out those checks to PSU Foundation—Darcelle Project and mail them to PSU Foundation, P.O. Box 243, Portland, OR 97207.

Liza in Portland

Well, almost. Bryan Hall has been doing Liza Minnelli in performance for nearly 10 years now and is at Darcelle XV on April 13 with a cast of other characters in *Liza's Back*.

The gay massage therapist, who worked at Darcelle XV for several years up until 2002, had never even done drag before beginning to channel Liza years ago. "I went to go see her in concert once, and something just kind of happened. I remember leaving going,

'You know, everybody in the world should see this lady.'"

When he met Don Lonsbrough,

who does Judy Garland and a bunch of other stars, they began putting together shows.

They're now up to their ninth annual Liza/Judy show at Darcelle XV. "It's

just been history from there," says Hall. "It's really my love for Liza that fuels this whole thing."

Also in the show are three other performers and a cast of divas, including Marilyn Monroe, Mae West, Barbra Streisand and Bette Davis. New this year is Lonsbrough's rendition of Lily Tomlin's phone operator character Ernestine, who "chimes in" several other guest celebrities to wish Liza well in her comeback.

Hall jokes that the show is great for people who "want to see Liza and can't afford it." But, in all seriousness, "I've spent years and thousands of dollars investing in having an audience come in and walk out going, 'Oh my god, I think I just saw her.' And seeing Judy and Liza up there together—we get more feedback about that. We've had people in tears. It's phenomenal."

Liza's Back starts 7 p.m. April 13 at Darcelle XV, 208 N.W. Third Ave. Tickets are \$15 from 503-222-5338.

Gay band seeks color guard

The Rose City Gay Freedom Band's latest groovy concert is April 12, but if you want to be more than an audience member with this mainstay in Portland's queer community, you might think about joining up with the new color guard. If you're a color guard queen, you might even get to lead it.

If you don't know what the heck we're talking about, the color guard is that group of people who have flags or batons with marching bands. They "build a routine with the music," explains band member Steve Ostenson, "and kind of dance and twirl flags at the same time." Color guard gives the band "an interesting look," he says.

Although the band has used color guard here and there before, now they're looking for a leader who can run a permanent team of color guardians to make their debut at