

MUSIC

Winning the sweepstakes

Le Tigre's JD Samson is one mixed-up little mother—but he's in just the right band for it

BY CORI TARATOOT

New York City-based Le Tigre, who play the Roseland Theater on June 13, aren't just another electronic band. They're feminist crime fighters on a mission. Live, expect the former Bikini Kill front-woman's band to incorporate visual media, dance and digital gremlins into their performance and plan on a jumping night with—to quote the 2001 release *Feminist Sweepstakes*—"the ladies and the fags."

Band member JD Samson took a few minutes with *Just Out* to give us the lowdown on her/his identity crises, "JD's 2003 Lesbian Calendar" and Le Tigre's plans for bringing justice to the planet.

Cori Taratoot: How important has it been for you personally to use Le Tigre as a venue for expression?

JD Samson: It's been everything to me. I was really frustrated with making art and not performing. Before Le Tigre, I was making films, Johanna [Fateman] was painting, Kathleen [Hanna] had been doing Bikini Kill for so long....

Our performance is an expression of who we are and who our audience is. We're creating a space for people...to be who they want to be, to dance and have a good time and feel really safe doing that. This is the one place where there are more queers and women than there are straight men. [Laughs]

CT: I read a quote from Carrie Brownstein of *Sleater-Kinney* about how her character in the movie *Group* was who she might have turned out to be had she not found a vehicle for self-expression.

JD: It's funny you mention that. Did you see the calendar I made? One of the reasons I made that calendar...it was a lot about who I would be if I weren't in Le Tigre, what I would be doing.

CT: Was the calendar aimed at the trans community?

JD: A lot of people asked me why I called it a "lesbian calendar." I was so confused about that. What do all these words mean right now? Am I weighting this in the wrong way by saying this?

I do feel very much a part of the trans community as well as the lesbian community, but it was this thing I felt I had to do in reclaiming the word "lesbian"...it was like, I want that word back! [Laughs] I want all of this! So, I was just like, I'm gonna do it, and I'll deal with it when people ask me what that means. And I do feel like it was for the trans community.

CT: How do you prefer to be identified? I've been seeing "she."

JD: If you said "he," I would have noth-

ing wrong with that. If you said "she," I would have nothing wrong with that. The one thing that's been hard for me is that I've been considered "he," not from gay papers, but because people actually think I'm bio-male.... *Mojo* magazine thinks I have a little penis that has semen in it. [Laughs] People come up to me and say, "Wow, I'm so sorry that happened." But it doesn't make me feel bad. It's so complicated. Sometimes it makes me feel good.

CT: Do you play with that on stage?

JD: Definitely. And in everyday life. [Laughs]

CT: You're from the East Coast, right? You don't have a personal relationship with the Pacific Northwest like your bandmates.

JD: No. Well, my girlfriend lives there, used to live there, she moved here now. I'd never been to Olympia until we drove through on tour. [Laughs]

CT: What are you listening to these days?

JD: I really am going back to what I liked when I was 17, which I'm sure everybody is...Toshi Reagon and Joan Armatrading and Tracy Chapman.... I dreamt about Joan Armatrading last night. [Laughs] I'm obsessed with her.

CT: You guys, as a band and as New Yorkers, have been through a lot together these past couple of years.

JD: We had a tour planned that we can-



They'll be post-feminist in a post-patriarchy: From left, Le Tigre's Kathleen Hanna, Johanna Fateman and JD Samson play the Roseland on June 13

celed after 9/11...everything seemed so stupid. We thought, why do we even give a shit, we don't even want to reschedule this.... It's hard to talk about, for all of us, when we get asked about Sept. 11; you're tongue-tied. It's complicated. It's hard to say anything.

CT: Everything got weird, sort of

flip-flopped. Do nothing? Do something? Be a pacifist in the midst of this?

JD: I know. Watching it happen from my apartment building, watching the buildings fall, I just felt...like the wind was getting knocked out of me. There was this thing inside of everyone, like "How do I feel? This is horrible." My every day is affected by what this government is not doing.

CT: After recovering from feeling like what you do is meaningless, you must wonder if making music is the most meaningful thing you can do.

JD: Definitely. We're covering a war song this tour. It's really hard for us to do—because we feel this is our place, where we have this voice, where it means something more than it ever did. And it's so weighted for us to play that song right now and have the video of protests going behind us.

CT: One last question. What's this I hear about Le Tigre's ambitions to be the anti-Charlie's Angels?

JD: Yeah! When we stop having this band...we are going to form a private investigation team. We're really into justice right now and making everybody free who should be. We're especially interested in people who are freed from 20 years in prison after a DNA test. Things like that, that's what we're really into.

CT: What will you wear?

JD: Wow. Well, me personally, probably a Sherlock Holmes hat and a magnifying glass. [Laughs] Yeah! Maybe a pipe—that sounds good. [G]

Experience the wonder that is LE TIGRE 9 p.m. June 13 at the Roseland Theater, 8 N.W. Sixth Ave. The Aislars Set and King Cobra open. Tickets are \$12 from TicketsWest.

Free-lance music contributor CORI TARATOOT is still recovering from being spotted by Sleater-Kinney wearing her "Sleater-Kinney is for Lovers" T-shirt.

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