

MUSIC

Bush bash

Musicians come together
for a good old-fashioned concert protest

BY JAMIE BOLYARD



Eileen Foster (left), Rachel Down and Sarah Dougher (far right) rage against the war machine Oct. 11

*"Bush hates
gay people;
is this not
argument
enough?"*

—Sarah Dougher



Twenty years ago it was Rock Against Reagan. Today, we have Bands Against Bush (sensing a pattern?), an international movement using music as political protest. The idea originated in Olympia, Wash., the brainchild of musician and activist Tobi Vail. Thanks to grassroots organizing, the Internet and, of course, the president himself, Bands Against Bush has grown from a twinkle in Vail's eye to a worldwide resistance movement.

Local BaB chapters have sprung up in cities around the country, including Seattle, Los Angeles, Boston, New Orleans and San Francisco, and internationally in Paris, London and Dublin, Ireland. BaB has proclaimed Oct. 11 International Day of Action with more than 20 cities staging music shows as an act of nonviolent protest.

Just as you would expect, Portland is right in the anti-Bush thick of it. Head organizer of the local chapter is 22-year-old lesbian musician and activist Eileen Foster. A New Jersey native and Oregonian since August 2002, she heard about BaB last spring and was instantly intrigued. Combining music and activism? Go. She immediately set out recruiting friends to join the cause.

One of the first on board was fellow dyke activist Rachel Down. Both women had done community organizing in the past—Foster started a feminist Web site that served as a resource for women in music, and 21-year-old Down did an internship with the American Friends Service Committee, helping with various youth programs. They placed an ad in a local paper to generate more interest, and soon the Portland BaB chapter was born.

"If you want to do something politically or musically, this is a good area," Foster says. "People are more aware of what's going on and aren't just listening to what they're told on the news."

Foster says the Bush administration "puts off this aura like what he is doing is so wonderful, and the American people are all supportive of it. And it's not true. So many people are unsupportive. How many people protested? Over a million worldwide? What is his goal?"

She certainly knows her own goal. The BaB

Portland show Oct. 11 is 10 hours of musicians, speakers and workshops. Artists and bands scheduled to join the Bush bash at Liberty Hall in North Portland include local favorites Spider Moccasin and Sarah Dougher as well as Pepto Dismal, Desert Rat, BrewZerkus and Shed, Inc., among others. It's a diverse lineup of musical styles, encompassing folk, punk and even a circus sideshow act.

Lesbian singer/songwriter Dougher is performing at the event because she opposes the Bush administration and wants to motivate political action. "As a musician, I know that the emotional impact of music can sometimes be more comprehensible and powerful than the logic of arguments."

So why should we queers care about this event? "For every queer who feels they are not addressed by mainstream politics, this place is for you," says Dougher. And, more directly, "Bush hates gay people; is this not argument enough?"

Foster's views are similar. "Bush is pushing Christian morals. We're not close to getting gay marriage."

The organizer was particularly charged when she read one of Bush's speeches. "There's this one statement where he's saying what they're going to try to do in Afghanistan and he said, 'We're going to go in there and create a world that's of peace and tolerance like we have in the United States.' And I was like, what the fuck? Like, seriously, tolerance? This is not tolerance."

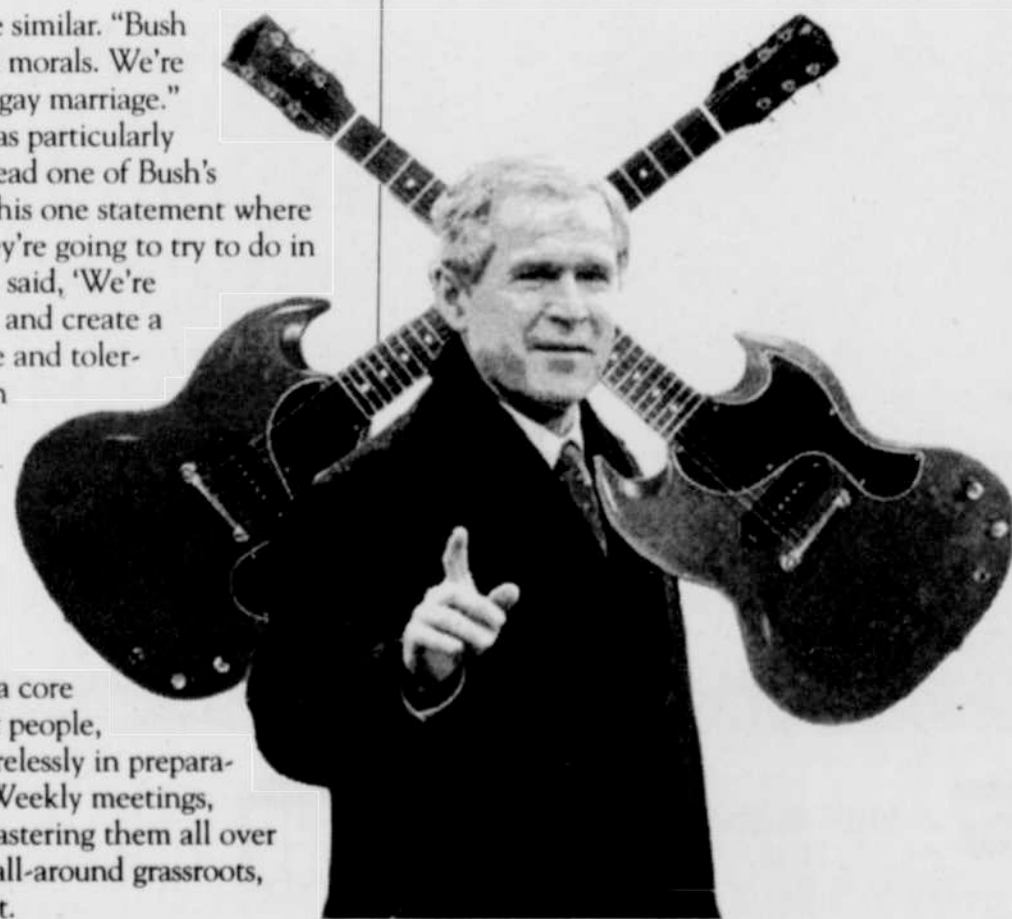
Portland's Bands Against Bush crew, a core group of about eight people, has been working tirelessly in preparation for the event. Weekly meetings, making fliers and plastering them all over town—it's been an all-around grassroots, do-it-yourself project.

They have also held concerts to raise money to pay for the show. An August benefit at Noc-turnal helped offset the cost of their merchandise (T-shirts, buttons and stickers), and they brought in a few bucks from a September gig at Conan's. The success of these benefits has allowed the not-for-profit to keep the big event free to the public. It's all-ages, too.

"This event isn't just happening in our city; it's happening all over the world," exclaims Foster. "Your voice is so loud, and if you come together it just gets louder." **J**

You can add your voice to the BANDS AGAINST BUSH INTERNATIONAL DAY OF ACTION from 2 p.m. to midnight Oct. 11 at Liberty Hall, 311 N. Ivy St. It's a free, all-ages show. For more info visit www.bandsagainstbush.org or www.babpdx.org.

JAMIE BOLYARD is executive director of the Lesbian Community Project and a Portland free-lance writer.



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