

DIVERSIONS

Out With It!



by Lisa Bradshaw

Just what does that L stand for?

If Showtime executives are smart, they will take the pilot episode of *The L Word* and bury it deep in some vault at headquarters. They could label it "Weapons of Mass Destruction" to ensure no one would ever, ever find it.

The cable channel's new lesbian series premieres at 10 p.m. Jan. 18. The "L," of course, stands for "lesbian," but other "L" words fly across the screen during the opening credits to make sure this is watered down (the whole show isn't just about lesbians, for gosh sakes!): "Lust," "Laughter," "Lattes." Lattes?

Let me suggest a few others they might add: "Ludicrous," "Laughable," "Lost."

You will literally lose interest after the first 10 minutes of the pilot amid grossly exaggerated lesbianspeak, uninteresting yet strangely still unlikable characters and the trivializing of serious queer issues.

Example: Promoted star Jennifer Beals, half of the show's LTR, is constantly making comments like, "If we were a straight couple, she wouldn't say that," and "You would never suggest that if we were straight." An oftentimes valid point to be sure, but here it's played for laughs—the easily offended dyke who overreacts to every utterance from innocent straight people trying to treat them "like normal." She is responded to with eye rolls from both the straights and the queers.

Example: Because of wanting to force every single lesbian issue into 90 minutes, you will hear such lines as "Can you please decide between dick and pussy!" "You are going to pickle in that self-loathing homophobia." And, my personal favorite: "Do you have to dress that way all the time?"

What lesbians talk like this to each other—all in one week?

Example: Beals' character, Bette, and her partner, Tina, played by Laurel Holloman (*The Incredibly True Adventure of Two Girls in Love*), are trying to find a suitable sperm donor. They choose carefully, they check backgrounds, they know when they're fertile, they have a supportive medical professional. After a donor Bette wants makes Tina nervous, throwing a wrench into their plans, the two run into a complete stranger at an art event—a straight guy—who says to them: "The two of you are just so fucking sexy. No offense." To which Bette replies, giggling, "It's hard to take offense to something like that."

Yeah, my partner and I love it when straight men ogle us in public. Particularly when they make comments like, "You need a little meat in that sandwich!" (Actual occurrence. We told him we were vegetarians.)

But what do Bette and Tina do? Decide to have unprotected sex with him so Tina can get pregnant! Yes, it's a good ol' straight male fantasy threesome. How refreshing in this new lesbian drama.

When the guy figures out their cunning plan, he gets so frustrated, poor thing. "Why is it when dykes want to have sex with a guy, it's only because they want to steal his sperm?!" he exclaims. Hmm, I dunno, let me think about that...IT'S BECAUSE THEY'RE DYKES, YOU MORON!

Good heavens, excuse me. You see, it's just so exasperating.

Following episodes do offer a glimmer of hope, particularly the third, which references queer history through photography and includes guest star Holland Taylor, who is fun, even while being a bit too eccentric.

That's really the trouble with *The L Word*—it's too everything. There is simply too much material per episode. They're playing all their cards way too early. It's rushed, it seems panicked.

And the saddest part is there's some really wonderful talent here. The fantastically gorgeous Karina Lombard (*Wide Sargasso Sea*) has the hottest role as seductress of the show's "straight" girl; musician Leisha Hailey (actually queer!), who was so sweet in *All Over Me*; and Pam Grier, the iconic Foxy Brown (who doesn't play a lesbian—damn it!). Katherine Moennig (*The Shipping News*) is perfect as the show's punky dyke player, Shane.

We can only hope *The L Word* finds its stride, but, regardless, queer women will watch every episode in hordes because what other show do we have? And that's a shame, because we deserve better. ☐



Katherine Moennig (left) and Leisha Hailey are a breath of fresh air in the otherwise overwrought *The L Word*.

Wade McCollum never sleeps



PHOTO BY DANIEL JOHNS/SUIT BY MARIO

It's the age of Wade

Can't get enough of Portland gay actor Wade McCollum, who plays Bassanio's clownish servant in this month's production of *The Merchant of Venice*? Then follow him aboard the Portland Spirit Jan. 16, 23 or 30 for his one-man show, *To the Next—A Rock Cabaret*.

McCollum is a local media darling for his starring roles in the musicals *Bat Boy* and *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*. (And because he's damn cute.) His new show will include songs from *Hedwig* as well as original tunes and stories from his life, promising a chance to see him "up close and personal."

McCollum has worked with the Utah Shakespearean Festival, Willamette Repertory Theatre, Portland Center for the Performing Arts Theatrefest, Oregon Cabaret Theatre and Idaho Repertory Theatre. He is a graduate of Pacific Conservatory of the Performing Arts in Santa Maria, Calif., and co-founder and artistic director of Portland's Insight Out Theatre Collective, which recently produced his rock musical *One*.

Boarding for the Portland Spirit performances is at 10:45 p.m. at the Salmon Street Springs Fountain in Tom McCall Waterfront Park. Cruise and crooning is from 11 p.m. to 1:30 a.m. Tickets are \$16 from 503-224-3900 or

www.portlandspirit.com or \$20 at the door. It's 21 and over, and, if you need a snack, the hors d'oeuvre buffet is \$8.

Mark Wooley turns 10

The biggest hoo-hah in Portland's art world this month is the 10th anniversary of Mark Woolley Gallery, 120 N.W. Ninth Ave. #210.

Known for its eclectic shows and strong community spirit, the space has become a mainstay for talented and maverick artists like Walt Curtis, damali ayo, Debra Beers, the Pander brothers, Rebecca Guberman-Bloom and many others.

Benefits and donations from the gallery have aided some of the city's worthiest queer-friendly organizations like Cascade AIDS Project, Outside In, New Avenues for Youth and Sisters of the Road Café. Generous and savvy, Mark Woolley has held firm at a time when other galleries have gone under.

To celebrate its success, the gallery is sporting a special exhibit titled *10 Years: One Foot After Another* in which an ever-changing grid of 12-inch gems highlight the work of 180 artists. Check it out through Jan. 31.

And to really whoop it up, don't miss the dance performance at 7:30 p.m. Jan. 22 featuring three of Portland's most respected queer dancers: Gregg Bielemeier, Linda K. Johnson and Mike Barber. Proceeds



Gregg Bielemeier performs at the Jan. 22 benefit for p:ear at Mark Woolley Gallery

from this don't-miss dynamic evening will benefit p:ear, which serves homeless youth downtown by engaging them in the arts.

"I like what p:ear does," says Bielemeier. "It's a smart organization. They realize

the power of imagi-

creation and expression. They seem to trust the results of kids who've been thrown away...lives with heart and souls and who need love and respect."

Tickets to the performance are \$25-\$100 from 503-224-5475.

Don your best codpiece

Visions of Camelot will abound Jan. 18 when Peacock Productions and the Oregon Bears team up to host a Medieval Feast at Darcelle XV, 208 N.W. Third Ave.

You, too, can be part of the fun. Just don your costume, bring \$15 and away you go on your trusty steed.

Will there be a show? "Darling! The feast IS the show!" exclaims Peacock's Poison Waters. All-you-can-eat chicken, ribs, twice-baked

potatoes, corn on the cob, rolls and fruit comes with "no utensils or napkins," she notes. "The serving wenches toss the food about." (Reportedly, you may purchase utensils for a small fee. All proceeds go to the Audria M. Edwards Scholarship Fund for queer students and the Friends of People with AIDS Foundation.)

As you might guess, a variety of appropriately themed contests will adorn the evening, such as Grape Spitting, Belching, Beer Chugging and Chicken Sh\*t Bingo, which finds an actual chicken named Penny "going" on a big numbered card. Doors open at 5 p.m. for cocktails; feasting commences at 6.

"I'm hoping for a knight in shining armor," notes Waters. "I'm tired of getting stuck with the jesters!" ☐

Compiled by LISA BRADSHAW and MEG DALY