

DIVERSIONS

Doug Fir grows queer roots

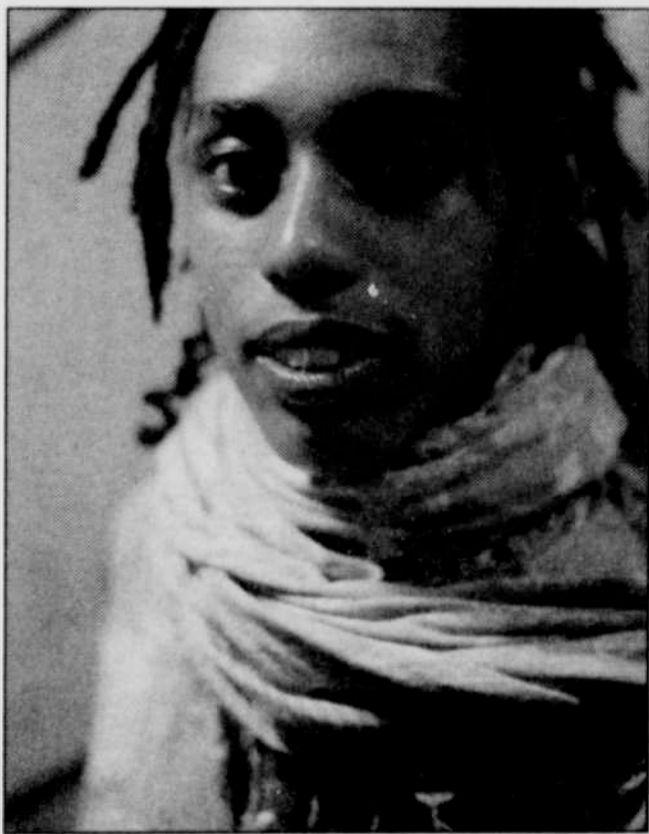
Two new queer nights in town promise to pull queer Portland out of the provincial mud and show the rest of the country that we know how to play queer. Jack and Snatch are trading off Sundays at the new **Doug Fir Lounge**, intending to party on the cutting edge of the entertainment scene by featuring nationally recognized DJs and bands, go-go dancers and performance artists who will lift the Rose City's queer nights to a national par.

Jack: Queer as Fk** is brought to you the second and fourth Sunday of every month by the parents of Porky's perpetually rocking night, Booty. While DJs Puppet and Stormy will continue to pump out their ever-popular hip-hop, electroclash and rock, they intend Jack to focus on national names and queer acts in addition to showcasing community talent. Proving they mean business, Jack will kick off with electroclash creator Larry Tee on Nov. 14, follow with DJ Boy on Nov. 28, then fly in some queer hip-hop from L.A.

The organizers of Jack want its audience to truly embody "queer," which is to say a gender spectrum willing to screw sexuality's neat bifurcated boxes, not to mention anyone in those boxes. Jack doesn't want to pick a fight with Holocene's two favorite dyke nights, Tart and Diva (second and fourth Sundays, respectively), so expect a mixed crowd, possibly with a slight leaning toward the boys.

On the other hand, as the not-so-subtle name implies, **Snatch: A Dyke Knight** wants to seduce the queer ladies on the first and third Sunday of every month. Each week will offer something special, be it a band, performance artist or crazy contest, in addition to a number of rotating DJs, with the intention of showcasing new queer talent both local and national. Lesbian bands Take the Blame and Excuse Me, Sir (fresh out of Austin) will rock the stage for Snatch's debut Nov. 7. It's about time Portland remembers its dyke rock past.

The Doug Fir's fancy duds at 830 E. Burnside St. offer both nights the opportunity to play at a performance and club level other queer nights can't reach (not to mention the Jupiter Hotel offers overnight package deals for any Doug Fir event, promising a new shag potential). Jack and Snatch's crowds are undetermined, but Portland's voracious queers continue to eat up queer nights like candy. And these two nights offer something particularly sweet.



Lenelle N. Moise wrote the "choreopoem" *Comered in the Dark* to explore the psychological aftermath of sexual assault



Queers love the Dresden Dolls' cheeky take on sex and gender

Both Jack and Snatch will be held from 5 to 11 p.m. and cost \$6 at the door. For more information visit www.jackpdx.com and www.snatchpdx.com.

Silent voices brought to light

It's the year of the woman for Wade McColum's fledgling theater company.

Insight Out—which was founded by the Portland star of *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* along with Julianna Rose and Lindsay Lucas—opens its first full season, themed "Women in Time," with the play *Comered in the Dark*. Written by East Coast lesbian performer/playwright Lenelle N. Moise, *Comered* runs through Nov. 20 at Firehouse Theatre, 1436 S.W. Montgomery St.

Billed as a "choreopoem," the play melds poetry and dance Ntozake Shange-style to explore the psychological aftermath of sexual assault. Four anonymous characters—played by Moise, Jaffe, Lucas and Chandra Curtis—meet in a dream.

"Through a series of ceremonial slam poems, testimonials, music and movement, [they] begin a process of individual and collective healing," Moise told *Just Out*.

The play's 24-year-old Haitian American author is a recipient of the James Baldwin Memorial Award in Playwriting and co-screenwriter of the award-winning feature film *Sexual Dependency*.

Moise says she wrote *Comered* because she "wanted to create art that went a little deeper than the typically voyeuristic film angle of a naked woman weeping in her shower after an attack. I wanted to write something that wasn't just about facts."

She notes that a woman is raped every two minutes and that 66 percent of rape victims know their assailants. She says she wanted to explore how those facts affect women's psyches.

Comered runs at 8 p.m. Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays. Tickets are \$15 from 503-234-0973 or www.insightouttheatre.org. Thursday performances are sliding scale and are followed by a talk with the playwright.

Dolled up

If you're looking for emotionally charged, decadent theatricality, you'll find it on Aladdin Theater's stage Nov. 15, when the Dresden Dolls—a Boston-based musical duo

who recently conquered their hometown by winning a handful of Boston Music Awards, including Best Live Act—bring their "punk cabaret" act to Portland.

The two Dolls—Amanda Palmer (songwriter, vocalist, keyboards) and Brian Viglione (drums, the occasional guitar)—put on makeup, don anachronistically formal, dandified attire and use incongruous whimsy and insanely catchy nursery-rhyme rhythms to explore themes of loneliness, mental breakdowns, sex/gender rebellion and the malaise of encroaching conformity. The result, as heard on their self-titled album, is an intense balancing act between the literally hysterical and the mordantly hilarious that could easily draw listeners from the fan bases of Tori Amos or Fiona Apple.

The Dresden Dolls' aural and visual style stands in stark contrast to the dressed-down earnestness of much of today's "alternative" music scene, but, according to Palmer, their focus is more on following their own artistic path than on making aesthetic statements.

"I consider myself, first and foremost, a performer," she says. "Then a songwriter, musician, singer...there are plenty of artists out there who feel a kind of cultural or political responsibility. I'd prefer to inspire our audience to take that job on themselves."

But Palmer does acknowledge the group's attention-grabbing visual presentation.

"I [used to have] a real aversion to costumes and makeup on stage," she says. "But to say it works is an understatement. There's a freedom in wearing 'performance' clothes. In an age where costumes and makeup are suspect and jeans and T-shirts on stage are the uniform of authenticity, we do stick out like a sore thumb. But I believe the music cuts through that very effectively...our image enhances our sound, rather than distracts from it."

Although both Palmer and Viglione are straight, their progressive, cheeky take on sex and gender has fueled a kinship between the Dresden Dolls and the queer community, and Palmer unequivocally considers her group queer-friendly.

"Brian and I straddle different so-called 'gender roles' depending on the weather," Palmer says, "and our early core fan base in Boston was the performance art and queer scenes. Some of our most devoted fans have come from the gay and trans communities, which doesn't surprise me at all considering the identity/gender-crisis nature of some of our songs."

Then, reflecting the Dresden Dolls' way of cutting seriousness with humor, she playfully adds, "Of course, it probably doesn't hurt that the drummer is an occasional cross-dresser with a rocking bod, either."

Count Zero and the Ditty Bops open for the Dresden Dolls 9 p.m. Nov. 15 at Aladdin Theater, 3017 S.E. Milwaukie Ave. Tickets are \$12 at the door and \$10 in advance from the box office or Ticketmaster.

Lady, make a noise!

Don't say don't to Diane Syrcle and Susannah Mars because they're sure to turn around and *do*.

The two well-known Portland vocalists—and anointed "divas" of the Portland Gay Men's Chorus—have teamed up to bring you *Everybody Says Don't*, a spirited, eclectic evening Nov. 16, 23 and 30 at Wilf's Restaurant and Piano Bar, 800 N.W. Sixth Ave.

Syrcle, the director of Portland Youth Philharmonic, has lent her soprano talents to the Portland Opera, the Oregon Symphony and others. Mars has been wooing regional audiences with Broadway numbers for years.

Last year, they found themselves sharing the stage at a PGMC benefit wearing gigantic bouffant wigs and singing a tune from *Hairspray*.

"It was a turning point," said Syrcle. "I was belting, she was singing high...our worlds finally collided. We decided it was time to do a show."




Diane Syrcle lets the fur fly this month in her cabaret with Susannah Mars at Wilf's

With a little help from pianist Carol Lucas, Syrcle and Mars set about combining their repertoires. When it came to finding a title for the show, Sondheim's "Everybody Says Don't" was a shoo-in with lyrics like "Laugh at the kings or they'll make you cry...Fall if you have to/But lady, make a noise!"

"Here we are a straight woman and a lesbian, coming together to make beautiful music," said Syrcle.

But before you get misty-eyed, Syrcle also promises "there will be a real catfight, blowout, fur-flying extravaganza—musically speaking," including a duet from *Avenue Q*.

Syrcle will sing a love song to her sweetheart, Susan Leo. Plus she says she'll gladly give up the limelight for a moment to listen to "Blue" by William Bolcum "sung by the divine Ms. Mars."

Shows are at 7:30 p.m. with a \$15 cover. Reservations recommended from 503-223-0070. 

Compiled by MEG DALY, CHRISTOPHER MCQUAIN and AARON SCOTT