

Imagine that

Yoko Ono visualizes world peace

In the last issue I quizzed readers on Beatles songs with gender-bending references. Shamefully, I left out "The Ballad of John and Yoko," which features the lyrics, "The newspapers said she's gone to his head/They look just like two gurus in drag."

Christ, you know it ain't easy. So I decided to call up Yoko to apologize for my embarrassing omission.

It turns out she's pretty queer-savvy for a 71-year-old. Sure, she was tight with Andy Warhol, Allen Ginsberg, William S. Burroughs and Keith Haring, but she's become quite the fag hag in her golden years.

Last year Yoko and Yo La Tengo collaborated on the rousing "Hedwig's Lament/Exquisite Corpse" for the Portland-produced charity album *Wig in a Box*. And last month she reached the top of the dance charts with a same-sex version of 1980's "Every Man Has a Woman Who Loves Him."

"Suddenly, the administration started saying that they're going to change the Constitution?" Yoko told me from her New York office.

"They thought that would be very hot to put it in there so that people had to deal with that instead of any other issue. It's a good political move, but it was used for that, in a way. It's really a human rights issue, so then I had to stand up—I felt that I really had to."

As if that's not enough reason to win our hearts, she recently updated "Give Peace a Chance" for *Wake Up Everybody*, a compilation to benefit America Coming Together. Could it be that, more than four decades into her career, one of pop culture's most misunderstood artists is finally getting her due?

"It was funny because when I made 'Walking on Thin Ice' and I just finished the track, John said, 'It's your first No. 1, Yoko.' I thought afterwards, 'Well, you were wrong,'" she said. "We were both kind of people who saw the future."

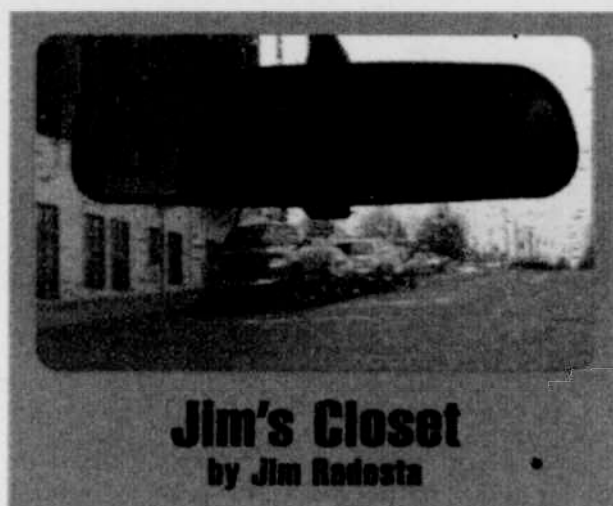
That's an understatement. I told her how I've been obsessing over John Lennon's 1984 release "Nobody Told Me" since the "re" election of President Bush, but even spookier is the single's flip side, where Yoko sings, "I don't know what to do with my sanity when the world's at the verge of calamity." I wondered if she still feels this sense of looming doom.

"Yeah," she said bluntly. "But I think we can still hack it. I think we can move it and survive."

But how, Yoko? "Visualizing—that creates reality. This is an age where it's very difficult to focus on something because there's so many gadgets around out there, but we just have to, even if it's for two seconds a day. Just focusing on that—that we are going to be all right, and we are going to survive, and we're going to have world peace. It's going to be a beautiful world...."

"Ninety percent of the world is really wanting world peace, and they're peaceful people. Only 10 percent is messing up the whole place with their violence and loud mouths and all that."

Pretty positive perspective coming just six days after the 24th anniversary of her husband's assassination. I didn't want to pry, but I gently asked if Dec. 8 continues to be a difficult day for her.



"It was getting OK, and then this year it was very difficult for some reason," she said. "I'm just being my best every day, being alive, searching inside of my soul more than searching outside."



"War is over...if you want it"

We never did get around to talking about "The Ballad of John and Yoko," but as a man from the press, I'd like to borrow a line from the 1969 classic: "It's good to have the both of you back."

Happy Xmas, Yoko.

Arts and Culture Editor
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your feedback. Write to
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THE TOP SHELF

Another counterculture figure from the '60s seems to be everywhere these days. Bob Dylan is the subject of a new autobiography, *Chronicles, Vol. 1*; an exhibit of music, rare artifacts and film at Seattle's Experience Music Project through Sept. 5; and a display at Portland's Photographic Image Gallery through Jan. 31.

The legendary musician, who has reinvented himself repeatedly throughout his career, is also the focus of queer director Todd Haynes' recently completed screenplay—a nonlinear, nonliteral biopic that tells Dylan's life story through seven separate characters. Portland gets to take some credit for the project: The man behind *Far from Heaven* and *Velvet Goldmine* was on a cross-country road trip from New York to Oregon when he found himself craving Dylan's music.

"I associate it with adolescent energy, where anything's possible," Haynes said Dec. 15 at a taping of OPB's sketch-comedy show *Live Wire!* "So much can happen when you're alone in your car."

Haynes moved here in 2000 to join his sister, Wendy, frontwoman for the band Sophie Lux. Listen in on the creative sibs when *Live Wire!* airs Christmas Day. (See Page 28 for details.)

As an editor of *Just Out*, I'm normally the one exposing others, so the tables were turned on me during a **Strip Jeopardy!** face-off with *The Portland Mercury* Dec. 9 at the gay-owned No Fish! Go Fish!

I neglected to devise a layered clothes strategy, so I found myself wearing nothing but boxer briefs in no time at all, even though I kicked ass on the Tarantino trivia. I demand a rematch!

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