

TELEVISION

Word up

Showtime rolls out another season of the only lesbian drama on the boob tube

BY CHELSEA FINE



Creator Ilene Chaiken (right) confers with actress Katherine Moennig, who portrays the androgynous Shane

2004 may have been the unofficial year of the lesbian—brides flocked to wedding chapels, *Ellen's* talk show was critically acclaimed, *All My Children's* Bianca was in a constant state of daytime lesbian angst, and late-night cable junkies were introduced to *The L Word*, Showtime's steamy lesbian answer to *Queer as Folk*.

And while 2005 may be the unofficial year of the conservative backlash, the writers of *The L Word* aren't listening and are continuing to develop intriguing stories about a group of lesbians in Los Angeles who struggle with careers, families, friendships and romance.

If you were disappointed by the lack of flesh at this year's Super Bowl halftime show, just wait until Feb. 20, as the luscious, lascivious, lubricated, lustful, lurid ladies of *The L Word* return for season two.

Executive producer and creator Ilene Chaiken delivers a baker's dozen of original, drama-filled episodes this season as she freshens up the cast, debuts a punchy new theme song and adds a dash of plot twists, fun locations and guest stars including Camryn Manheim, Sandra Bernhard, Gloria Steinem, Arianna Huffington and Melissa Rivers.

After Bette's (Jennifer Beals) infidelities last season, Tina (Laurel Holloman) is shopping for a new residence instead of decorating a nursery. Bette regrets her philandering and spends the better half of the season trying to win Tina back. But Tina has her own agenda and her own secrets.

Alice (Leisha Hailey), a quirky bisexual magazine writer, and Dana (Erin Daniels), a sweet professional tennis diva, find themselves reeling from their passion-filled kiss last season,

just as Dana is planning to marry her manic public relations girlfriend, Tonya (Meredith McGeachie).

Androgynous Shane (Katherine Moennig) continues to unleash her pheromones in every girl bar in L.A. but may be in over her head this season as she softens toward Carmen (Sarah Shahi), a sizzling new Latina addition. Jenny (Mia Kirshner), a lost creative writer, continues down a bizarre path in search of her life and a muse to replace Marina, who abruptly



Ivan (Kelly Lynch, right) comes to Kit's (Pam Grier) aid

ly departs home to Italy, and Tim (Eric Mabius), who accepts a coaching job in Ohio.

Kelly Lynch reprises her role as the dashing transgender Ivan, who comes to Kit's (Pam Grier) aid before riding off on his white Harley. Marina's absence leaves Kit a business opportunity and a fresh perspective as the new owner of *The Planet*, everyone's favorite watering hole.

The dyke drama continues to pile up:

Jenny's new roommates include Shane and a voyeuristic film student named Mark. Tina finds a new admirer in Helena Peabody (Rachel Shelley), and the sparks continue to fly between Dana and Alice.

The ladies of *The L Word* develop wanderlust this season, venturing to L.A. Pride, random sex shops and the Caribbean on a Sappho-soaked Olivia Cruise.

The veteran characters have all become more comfortable and confident in their portrayals, showing a bit more strength, courage and skin throughout the developing storylines.

While the depictions of some traits and lifestyles may not appeal to all audi-

ences, *The L Word* is simply a continuing story of women loving, laughing and losing. We can all relate to making mistakes and bad judgments, loving the wrong person, finding bliss, yelling Indigo Girl lyrics at the top of our lungs on road trips and asking friends to use their gaydar for picking out girls. You won't find yourself in every character or every scene, but you may find a slice of your life sometime this season. Even if you don't, it's a fun romp every Sunday night.

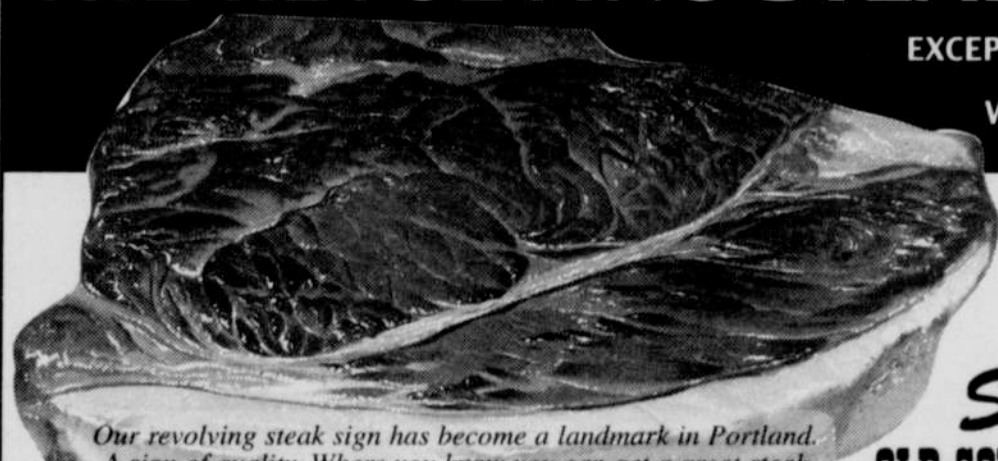
So after getting all hot and bothered watching Alyssa Milano cast her spells on the WB's *Charmed*, get out your remote control, replace the batteries and prepare to be satisfied by the ladies of *The L Word*. **J**

Watch the start of the second season on a 7-foot screen during THE L WORD PREMIERE PARTY 8:30 p.m. Feb. 20 at the Egyptian Club, 3701 S.E. Division St. Win raffle prizes between episodes, and enter a drawing to win a script signed by the cast! Preceded by a season one marathon at 4 p.m.

CHELSEA FINE is a southern Oregon free-lance writer and photographer.

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