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Barbra Streisand Siren, they summoned Christina Ahrrrrrregulera from her genie bottle, only to find a treasure of padded bras, Bette Midler CDs and other drag accouterments.

While arguing with a tied-up Duracelle, the Sissyboy leader, Captain Susan, declared: "Sissyboy is not about taping up dicks and building boobies! Sissyboy bends gender until it breaks! We create our own reality. We are gender rebels!" Like all young upstarts, he believed his generation was paving a courageous new path.

To which Duracelle countered: "I am 876 years old, and I started this shit! If it weren't for me, you Sissyboys would just be drinkin' and fuckin' at C.C. Slaughters, wearing Abercrombie and Fitch, bitch! Sissyboys, I AM YOUR GRANDMOMMY!"

The real Darcelle, who understandably remains an unconverted Sissyboy fan, echoes this sentiment: "I don't like some of the things they say about me. They have to remember: If not for Darcelle's, they wouldn't be here."

Yet the Sissyboy pirates acknowledged in the show's after-school-special-style ending that their messy drag is politically and culturally indebted to the female-impersonating queens who have gone before. Every fake eyelash and press-on nail was necessary to create the freedom to explore gender that Sissyboy now enjoys.

As Poison Waters says, "Every decade has its 'Oh my God, what are they doing' queens. There's NOTHING new and cutting edge really in the drag scene. We are all taking our leads from someone or something else, so there is that sense of parody, mimicking—yet everyone IS different."

While not *sui generis*, Sissyboy's drag does speak to the contemporary cultural issues relevant to its members.

sis-sy-boy [SIS-ee boy]
adj. subversive

Queer Portland filmmaker David Weissman places Sissyboy in the tradition of The Cockettes—a group of hippies and freaks in the 1960s who pioneered messy, theatrical drag—about whom he made a documentary. He argues that Sissyboy, like The Cockettes, "does

drag as subversive comedy instead of female impersonation."

The subversive nature of its performances most regularly appears in the form of satire. A recent show, *Sissyboy Goes Apocalypstick*, lampooned the millenarianism of right-wing Christianity. The character Mary Esther became a Mary Gay Cosmetics saleswoman and created her own color of lipstick while reading Revelations. Her righteous blend proceeded to unleash the apocalypse by turning her neighbors into the four horsemen and the Anti-



Precious gets a heart-on.

Christ, whose final battle with Jesus (a lesbian carpenter of mannish features and nail-gun-inflicted stigmata) took place in the Thunderdome under the purview of Tina Turner.

Satire is also apparent in Sissyboy's characters, each of whom is a caricature of some aspect of that actor's life. Benjamin Porter, 22, created Linah Cocaine, a parody of a neurotic, abusive, housewife-cum-vacuum-cleaner of coke, as a way to love parts of himself that he did not like and that are not acceptable in gay culture.

"I am poor white trash; I grew up in Canby," he states. "I created this fucked-up, impervious

monster who is undeniably trash but who is also glamorous. She's the spokesmodel for Louis Vuitton. She's a beautiful, lit-up trailer park—the American dream that's supposed to be beautiful but really isn't. Because there's a



Bulimianne Rhapsody stuffs her face during *Sissyboy Goes Apocalypstick*.

broken-down swing set, and sometimes chickens, in the back yard."

Sol articulated the dichotomy of his experience into two characters. Polygrip is a rock star and a "glamorous extension of my tomboy, biker-girl mom," he explains. But Polygrip's name (from a brand of denture adhesive) hints at his darker character, Crystal Mess—a shit-stained, toothless junkie. Though a caricature, Mess is a terrifying catharsis when played by a denture-less Sol, who lost his teeth to addiction.

"Crystal Mess is therapy—working out my past as a meth junkie. I make fun of her, but she also has a serious message, because it's an epidemic. She's terrible, but you can't take your eyes off her."

The Sissyboys agree that their characters are attempts to work out inner demons, often related to being branded "sissy" in its many forms, while sharing their lessons with their audience.

"A lot of Sissyboy characters are anti-heroes," argues Porter. "Think bulimia will make you beautiful? Well, here you go. Think

coke is glamorous? Then here you go. Think tweakin's fun?"

And as Crystal Mess exhibits, Sissyboy is willing to be far more abrasive than mere humorous parody in its quest to upset complacent thinking.

sis-sy-boy [SIS-ee boy]
n. provocateur

Sissyboy's most artistically successful moments erupt when the guys break the flow of humor with viscerally painful personal and political commentary. Such moments simultaneously universalize their personal experience and personalize the universal—the personal is political, after all—creating art that ensnares the audience in the co-creation of its message. According to Weissman, "In many numbers, they inject intense political images into campy musical numbers, which is very provocative and courageous."

Sissyboy Goes Apocalypstick began with a number set to The Weather Girls' "It's Raining Men," in which a jubilant Laura Bush and a bearded Saudi princess met in Iraq and stumbled over weapons of mass destruction while a video projected images of toy people falling from the Twin Towers.

"I wanted to make the connection between the destruction of the Twin Towers and the creation of an intense fear in the American people," says Thomas. "[The characters] were so happy that it was raining men because now [they] had control over the American people and oil."

The show's multimedia went on to juxtapose images not immediately associated by American society, thereby illuminating their uncomfortable connection. The famine video interspersed images of starving children with photos of the Olsen twins and emaciated models, illustrating the poverty of starvation as well as its decadence. The war video showed images of death and destruction next to photos of toy soldiers, displaying the romantically detached relationship our culture holds toward war.

"These political images are so unexpected that they have value, particularly in a club environment where there's a desire to exist in a realm of pure fun," continues Weissman. "Ever since Divine ate poop in *Pink Flamingos*, it's impossible to do shock for shock's sake."

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