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Devan McGrath, 21, who plays Pollyanne Marie and is the creative mind behind the ever-improving multimedia, agrees: "Shock ended with Divine. Shock is not our main focus."

Turner adds, "Our overall mission is not to offend, but to present art that creates dialogue from our experience."

In many instances, they have been scandalously effective. During *Sissyboy Goes to Hollywood*, Splendora-saurus Rex (Splendora in a Barney outfit) asked the kids to choose a word of the day from a Missy Elliott song. When one child shouted "nigga," Splendora-saurus Rex chastised the child: "Everybody knows the n-word is a word that only black people are allowed to use. It is a derogatory word that has been reclaimed and redefined by the artists of black culture."

But when listening to "Niggers Are Afraid of Revolution," Splendora-saurus Rex unwittingly illustrated the unsatisfying dissonance of her previous statement by saying: "Now let's dance! But don't sing along—unless you're black, which you're not!"

However, Sissyboy's desire to attack and shred certain mainstream and politically correct mainstays with its DIY shears has also fallen flat. During *The Zombie Pin-Up Girl Pageant*, Kreischer portrayed Mama Cass's zombie while wearing a fat suit.

"As a 185-pound, muscular dude, it was impossible to portray a large woman without a fat suit," he defends. However, through the course of the unscripted show, several comments were made about Mama Cass being a "fat bitch."

Weissman queries, "Although the person on stage at one time had weight issues and is acting out his demons, how useful was that scene?"

The Sissyboys, in retrospect, agree. "Our first controversy was Fannie in a fat suit," states Thomas, "and that was a controversy because it was not funny. It was mean."

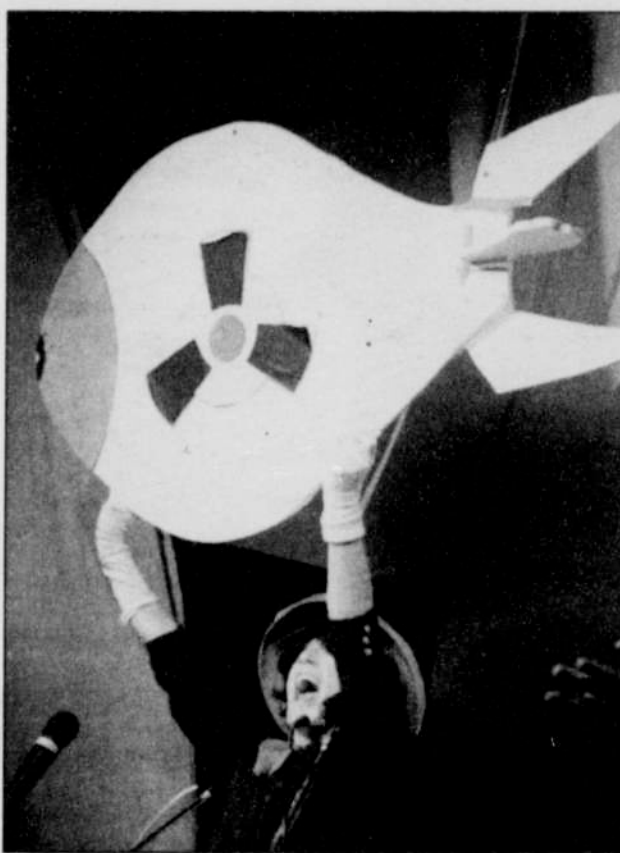
Turner acknowledges: "We make mistakes, and we learn from them. We won't make jokes like we did with Fannie."

Thomas continues: "People want controversy with intelligence. The Splendora-saurus Rex piece was about reclaiming language, and I didn't talk to one person who was offended."

Perhaps a surprise to many detractors, the group now extensively deliberates most controversial images and jokes. Thomas used images

of toys falling from the Twin Towers because the real images were too painful. And during one recent rehearsal, while discussing how to exaggerate Splendora-saurus Rex even more for her caricature in the upcoming show, the Sissyboys immediately ruled out using blackface, recalling that not even Ted Danson could pull it off when doing it at the behest of Whoopi Goldberg.

Of course, one might wonder about the intelligence of jokes about edible tampons and tuna. "If it's primarily offensive to women,



Zebra, dressed as first lady Laura Bush, discovers WMDs!

what's political behind it?" asks Weissman. But the Sissyboys respond that they are very open to criticism and parody themselves first and foremost, as they believe this month's show will reveal.

Their aggressive theater has no doubt managed to shock and offend. Audience members seeking a more sensitive, politically correct or polished show have gone elsewhere.

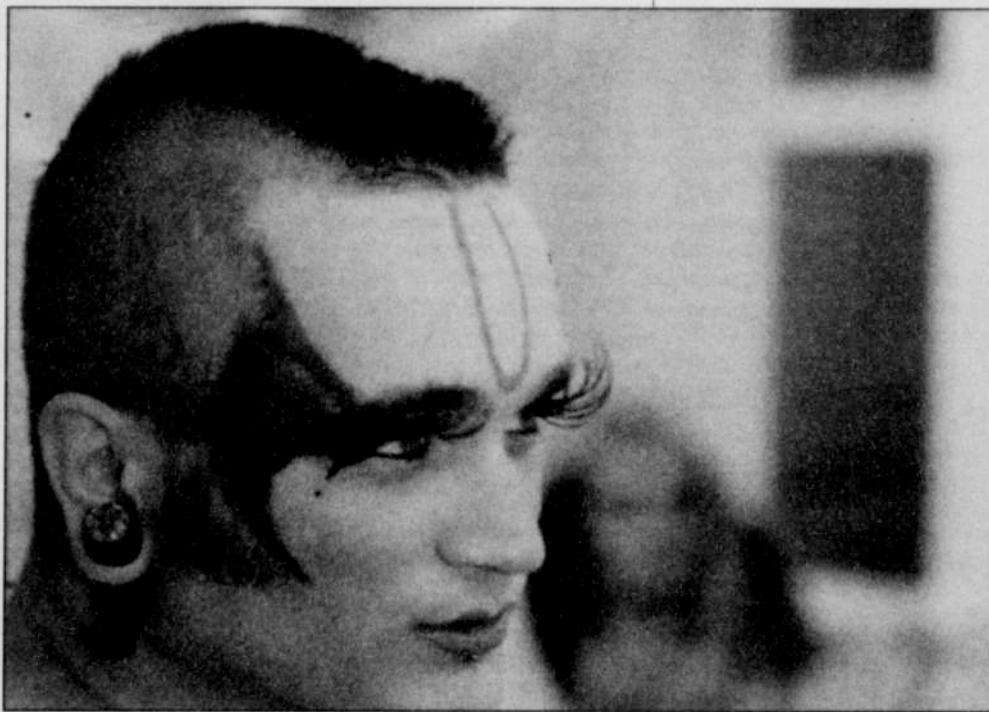
"People say, 'I went to a Sissyboy show and didn't feel safe,'" recounts Thomas. "But you don't go to a punk rock drag show to feel safe. You want safe? Stay home and watch *Dawson's Creek*. We're here to make fun of tension in the world."

But in the same breath, Thomas contends: "What's most rewarding and important is doing something for Portland that is reverent—building a community for a group that didn't have a

voice before. Radical faeries with hot indie boys. And dykes and straights, too."

You're Just the Way You're Supposed to Be

As much as they have ostracized people, Sissyboy has also empowered a new generation of gender rebels to reclaim, like Missy Elliott, the terms of their oppression.



Donatella Sol flutters her long lashes backstage.

"People identify with Sissyboy," states Porter while speaking about *Sissyboy Goes to Sleep: Nocturnal Emission*, a show in which a young sissy named Billy was finally accepted by his mother, Candy, after both had a series of fantastically absurd dreams. "This show was healing. People freaked out about Santa Maria Jualdolupe, matron saint of trannies, because we're taking something queers have been left out of and making it our own. And the end when the mom accepts Billy—I cried, because there was a point in my life when my mom accepted me as a tranny and took me shopping."

Turner agrees: "That was my most personal show. I was always called a sissy. I drew Candy off of my own mother. I wanted that acceptance. When I came out, she said, 'It's going to hurt like hell when you get fucked in the ass.'" Certainly Sissyboy is not always a comfortable show to watch. But therein lay its merits. "We're the type of group that takes theater off stage and puts it in your face," explains Kreischer.

"It's important to have outrageous, political-ly incorrect, radical theater in all cultures, not

just queer," confirms Howie Bierbaum, the general manager of Wonder Ballroom, about why Sissyboy was invited to his venue.

At their worst, the shows are at least entertaining, if occasionally unnecessarily long. But at their best, the performances force the audience to evaluate arguably outdated cultural tenets and to reimagine, hopefully positively, their notions of gender, sissies and their own identities. Each show begins with a recording

that states, "You're just the way you're supposed to be" and concludes with the post-bow shout, "Are you a fucking sissy?!" encouraging the audience to fiercely affirm their so-called deviance.

The first anniversary show, *Sissyboy Is Offensive and Wrong*, will address and parody the alleged offenses the group has committed against everything sacred and good. And per-

haps the Sissyboys will be sentenced to prison, because, according to American society at large, they are still *Offensive and Wrong*. Without an eye's shadow of a doubt. But if every generation builds off its predecessors, then hopefully the Sissyboys are laying the catwalk for a world in which they are right.

On being a Sissyboy, Fannie Mae Darling said it best as Mary Esther's guardian angel: "The apocalypse has been happening since the civilization of man. Everyone is trying to survive with what they were given while the world is crashing down around them. The point is to look fabulous while doing it." ■

SISSYBOY IS OFFENSIVE AND WRONG! starts 9 p.m. July 20 at Wonder Ballroom, 128 N.E. Russell St. All ages are welcome. Tickets are \$7 at the door or \$5 in advance from Madame Bouffant, Bridges Café or Le Rouge.

AARON SCOTT staunchly believes that every time a child laughs, a Sissyboy gets his wings. But every time a child cries, somewhere a Sissyboy is up to trouble.

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