

# Crystal Clear

Infectious dance diva spreads boogie fever across the land

**Y**ou likely remember Crystal Waters from her two gold singles in the early 1990s, "Gypsy Woman (She's Homeless)" and "100% Pure Love."

What you probably don't know is that she's continued to pump out an impressive string of dance singles ever since—and that she wrote almost every one of them. Waters dished with me from her pad in Silver Springs, Md., before hitting the road for her first Portland gig in a decade.

**Jim Radosta:** Does it get pretty crazy when you have all these Pride shows crammed together every summer?

**Crystal Waters:** It gets a little crazy, but it's a good crazy. During the winter it's always a little slow, so the summertime is when I really get to tour and do stuff, so I actually get excited about it.... I love Gay Pride events. Whenever we do a show, I always ask if it's straight or gay, because the gay crowd is so much better. They like to have fun. They enjoy themselves.

**JR:** My favorite song of yours is "Come on Down," which samples heavily from the theme to *The Price Is Right*. It cheers me up every time I hear it.

**CW:** You want to know the story behind that? The track that I wrote to—*The Price Is Right* sound was barely audible. It just kind of alluded to it. But by the time the record label got it, they took it full blown. It was supposed to be the theme song for [the 30th anniversary of] *The Price Is Right*...and they were going to use it on the commercial and they were going to give away airplane tickets to come to *The Price Is Right*. It was all set up, but then 9/11 happened, and they pulled the whole project because they figured nobody would want to fly after that. It was supposed to be a big commercial thing for me. I was very excited about that, but it didn't happen.

**JR:** What was the inspiration for "Gypsy Woman"?

**CW:** "Gypsy Woman" was about a woman I saw actually standing in front of where my sister used to work back in the '80s. The woman used to stand there and sing gospel songs. She was always dressed very nicely. She was a little crazy. [Laughs] But her makeup was always done, and her hair was always wrapped up.

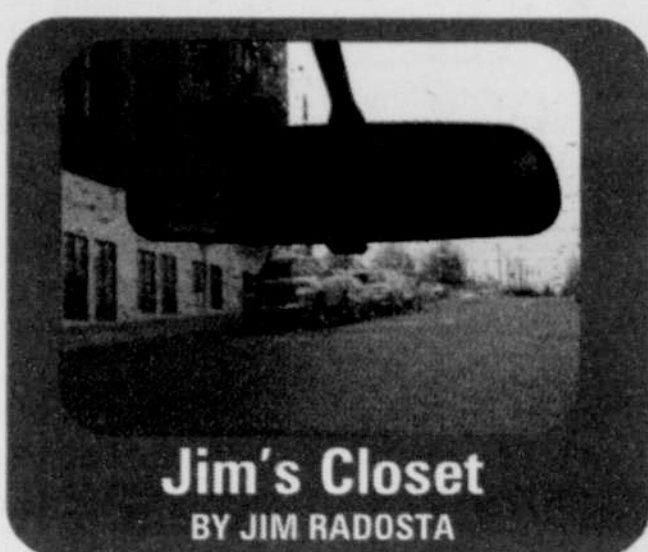
I think I read a story about her in the local paper that she used to work in a department store, like a cosmetic counter. But she lost her job, and she was trying to keep her dignity because she was out on the street.



Crystal Waters

**JR:** I wonder if she ever realized that she was the subject of a really popular song.

**CW:** Yeah, I think people told her, and I think a couple people helped her out. I haven't seen her, but I heard she moved to Florida and someone took her in and she was doing well.



Jim's Closet  
BY JIM RADOSTA

**JR:** I love your remake of "Uptown" by Prince. I think it's even better than the original.

**CW:** I did two different versions. I did one version with my own lyrics, and Prince wouldn't approve it, so I had to go ahead and just do the cover. [Laughs] I forgot all about that story.

**JR:** Was he a big influence on you musically?

**CW:** Yeah, growing up I remember him being on that cover of—I think it was *Dirty Mind*, with the bed springs and he had the bikinis on? I was thinking in high school, like... "Fuck it, if he can do that, I can be myself!"

**JR:** Who else were big influences on you?

**CW:** My father was a jazz musician, so my favorite female artist was Ella Fitzgerald...I listened to a lot of her. Prince, Chaka Khan and Gil-Scott Heron were my favorites.

**JR:** What's your earliest memory of your first joyful experience with music?

**CW:** I remember going to see The Jackson 5, seeing Michael Jackson. That was very special. I had to get my big sister to take me. [Laughs] And I believe the opening act was The Commodores with Lionel Richie before they got famous.

**JR:** When did you decide to pursue music as a career?

**CW:** It was after college, and I was working at the parole board for D.C. government, and it was so boring. My mom told me to go to a psychic, because she loved this stuff, and I went and the woman told me that I would be doing something with my voice. Back then I had laryngitis. I was like, "Yeah, right, whatever."

I was telling everybody at work and a guy said: "Well, you love music. My cousin has a studio, and he's looking for some background singers. I'll go if you go." So we went and I got the job, and I think that's when I was hooked. 

CRYSTAL WATERS performs during *Pure Love*, the second annual warehouse party presented by *Boxxes* featuring Francisco DJ and hip-hop on the bounce video floor with VJ Jim Hopkins, 8:30 p.m. June 17 at Northeast Ninth Avenue and Flanders Street. *Poison Waters* hosts a no-cover silent auction for the first hour. Proceeds benefit the Red Dress Party and Q Center. Tickets are \$20 at the door or \$15 in advance from TicketWeb.

Arts and Culture Editor JIM RADOSTA needs your feedback. Write to jim@justout.com.

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