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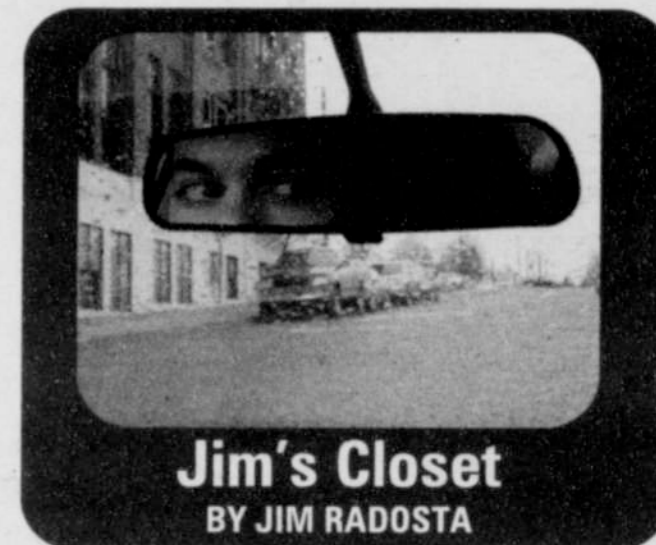
What's a "Stray"?

It's the latest trend: Straight men pretending to be gay

I'd like to introduce you to Jim. No, I'm not talking about myself in the third person. I mean my friend Jim. Let's call him by his initials, JT, just for clarity's sake. When I met JT eight years ago, I was completely baffled: He claimed to be straight, but he would point out cute guys wherever we went and often brag about the times that he nearly succumbed to The Pink Side. WTF?

After receiving many mixed messages, I came to learn that JT is the prototype for a new kind of queer-friendly heterosexual male—not the metrosexual who mimics our aesthetics, not the bi-curious who dabbles in our sexual habits. This is someone who simply digs what we're all about and mirrors our personality—sort of like how Eminem idolizes hip-hoppers and pretends he's black. As you might know, there's a potentially offensive word for this that starts with a "w" and ends with an "igger," but I'm not gonna go there.

Instead, I've decided to coin a similar mashup term for guys like JT. You take a "straight" guy posing as "gay," and you've got yourself a **stray**. Naturally, the female equivalent—found prominently in colleges across America—would be a **stryke**.



Jim's Closet
BY JIM RADOSTA

mainstreamed and watered down. Fer sure. Time will tell, but I predict radical queers will make sure we stay on the fringe.

Meanwhile, homos are so popular that we've got several straight bands who are stealing our identities. Check out this recent press release: "Despite their name, **The Lesbians** are three blue-collar men performing in the vein of The Mummies, The Cramps and White Stripes with a noisy garage rock sound."

Then there are **The Queers**, a punk trio who were testy when asked about how they settled on their name. "They just wanted something that would piss people off," bassist B-face told WXJM. "And it worked! We get shit from straight people who aren't into punk and don't get it.... Then, the gay community will give us shit for using the name and say: 'Well, you're not really queer. We use the name Queer Nation, and you can't use it.' Again, it's like the deal with drinking Budweiser—damned if you do, damned if you don't."

Uh, yeah.

And let's not leave out **The Gays**, yet another band that falsely comes out of the closet. At least this one's sound is in the vein of glam superstars David Bowie and Iggy Pop.

"The bass player was always mistaken for being gay—construction worker, tight jeans, boots, etc.—and he had a hard time with the band being called this," drummer Greg Odell revealed to me via e-mail. "The singer, Roy Tinsel, is very flamboyant and definitely crosses the androgynous boundaries."

Not sure what to make of all this, but it's a fascinating trend. I wonder what would happen if a bunch of fags decided to flip it around and bill themselves as...The Straights? The Heteros? The Breeders? Shit, that one's taken already. 10



Sexy Pants: gay for play.

Need proof of this growing phenomenon? Look no further than the indie music scene.

Bands like **The Snuggle-Ups**—whose swan song is approaching—have popularized the Sweaty Homoerotic Electronica Dudes subgenre. I saw this duo draw so much energy out of a basement party a few Halloweens ago; it's a shame they're going away.

Fear not, though, for **Sexy Pants** is filling their, er, pants. I wasn't certain that all of the fellows in this funk/new wave quartet—whose songs include "Buttloaded"—were strays, so I contacted lead singer TC for confirmation. "We are all quite clearly homoerotic and homo-friendly," he wrote back.

And then there's Portland's answer to Pet Shop Boys, **The Cancer Fags**. They smoke cigarettes, but they don't smoke pole.

In these cases, I really don't mind seeing sincerely sweet guys simulating our sexuality. It's nice to be admired.

The fear, as African Americans have already experienced, is that our essence will be co-opted,

THE SNUGGLE-UPS make one of their final appearances during the fourth annual PDX Pop Now! music festival, which runs through Aug. 5 at AudioCinema, 226 S.E. Madison St. Admission is free. For a complete schedule visit www.pdxpopnow.com.

SEXY PANTS performs 9 p.m. Aug. 3 at Slabtown, 1033 N.W. 16th Ave.; 2 p.m. Aug. 21 at Outside In, 1132 S.W. 13th Ave.; and 8 p.m. Sept. 8 at Tube, 18 N.W. Third Ave.

THE LESBIANS perform with Guau Guau and Reptilian Civilian during the Portland Radio Authority Monthly Rock Showcase 9 p.m. Aug. 9 at Kelly's Olympian, 426 S.W. Washington St. Admission is \$5.

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