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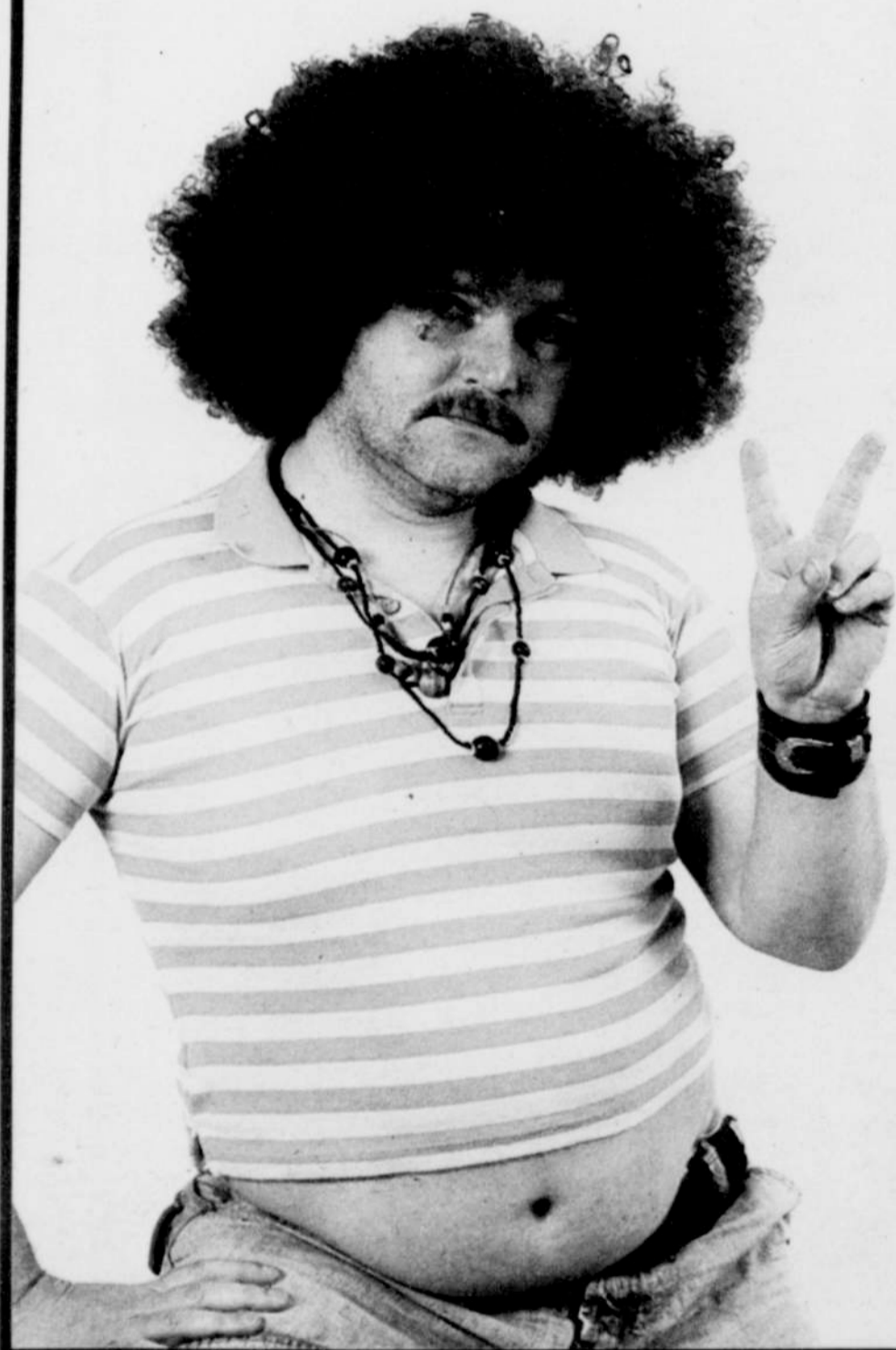
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film

**Summer Camp**

Infamous drag troupe exits in style with film parody, documentary

by Brett Glass

The defunct drag troupe Sissyboy will go out with a bang Aug. 7 with a fitting final tribute: the world premiere of its last—and, in some respects, first—film, *What Ever Happened to Fannie Mae?*

A parody of *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?*—the 1962 camp classic starring Bette Davis and Joan Crawford—the 50-minute film will be screened alongside a much-anticipated documentary about Sissyboy, which called it quits last year after three years of revolutionary performance art.

*Fannie Mae?* exploits the talents of four of the group's members to the max and comments on the real (or real-onstage) relationships between them.

"Splendor and Fannie Mae in drag," says Devan McGrath, the film's director and co-writer, "have a certain mythology to their relationship—highly competitive, jealous, really bitchy, out to get one another."

Producer and co-writer Mark "Zebra" Thomas agrees: "When they put on their drag, their personalities skyrocket. Splendor gets mean, and Fannie gets hurt...in a funny way!"

From this dynamic sprung an infamous Sissyboy short, *Splendor Dearest*, based on the 1981 Crawford biopic *Mommie Dearest*. True to their dominant-submissive dynamic, Splendor got to beat

Fannie with a wire hanger, douse her in Comet and strangle her.

*What Ever Happened to Fannie Mae?* twists that relationship, reversing the roles somewhat.

"The fight scene is my favorite," says Jeffrey Darling, aka Fannie Mae Darling. "In *Sissyboy*, when Splendor was drunk, she'd hit me in the face, by accident or on purpose. In this movie, I get to beat the shit out of her. Fannie gets revenge!"

Thomas expands on this sentiment: "Fannie gets to be something that she never really gets to be. In some ways I think it was empowering. But he still got to play this weird victim role because he got to play a junkie...which is a victim role."

During the writing process, McGrath and Thomas decided to replace Baby Jane's booze with Fannie Mae's crystal meth, a reference to Darling's real-life conflict with the drug.

"I struggled with the idea of smoking fake meth onscreen," Darling says. "I wasn't sure if it was a good idea. In the end, it was very empowering to fake it in front of the people who feared me smoking it the most. It was liberating and painful at the same time."

Lee Kyle, aka Splendor Gabor, himself sober for several months, says: "I say the line 'I think I understand her,' which is in the original. But when

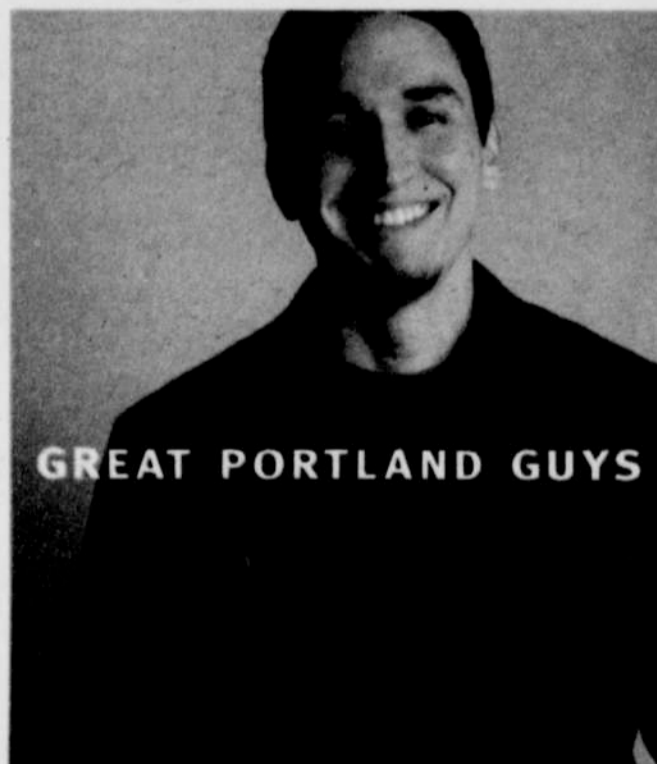
you step back from the tongue-in-cheek aspect of that line...it's true. I understand the nature of addiction, the false sense of comfort you get from it."

As much as the film plays with the real and stage relationships between the principals, at heart it's a very funny comedy.

"It's a totally classic drag movie in many respects," Thomas says. "Our financial limitations became our strengths. In the fight scene, Devan wanted sugar glass for Fannie to break over Splendor's head. It was really expensive, so we came up with the idea of slamming her head in the refrigerator over and over. And I think that's way funnier than just breaking glass over her head."



*What Ever Happened to Fannie Mae?* twists the dominant-submissive dynamic between Fannie Mae Darling (left) and Splendor Gabor.



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