

Ladyfest Scotland

Last year, when *Veronica* heard that someone was organising a Ladyfest event - a non-profit making, community-based festival celebrating and supporting all things Lady-like - here in Glasgow, we got very excited. Someone, it seemed, was bringing lots of woman-based bands, spoken word artists, authors, visual artists and filmmakers to town and organising multiple workshops and panel discussions. That intrepid someone was Lee Beattie, co-ordinator extraordinaire and her team of volunteers. Happily, she was able to take a break from her busy schedule of extraordinary co-ordination to tell us all about it.

Who are the Ladyfest team?

There are, I think, fourteen people who're working on it consistently and have particular jobs on committees. Three of us actually went to the original event and when we came back we basically went round all our friends, family members, people that we knew in bands, people that we knew just from going out. Just people who we knew would be interested in this kind of thing. My mum booked all the spoken word performances and someone else's mum does all the book-keeping. So it really is all just friends and family. Most of the people haven't done this kind of thing before. Most are from Glasgow, there's a few from Edinburgh, a few from London and the girl that does the website actually lives in Germany.

How did you find out about the first festival (Ladyfest in Olympia, in 1997)?

I was in my last year at uni and I was doing my dissertation on masculine and feminine roles in rock music, and the kind of people I was speaking to were from Kill Rock Stars and these kind of labels. I was interviewing people from bands that I liked who were actually playing at the festival, and I found out about it from them. It was kind of my reward for finishing uni. It was fantastic.

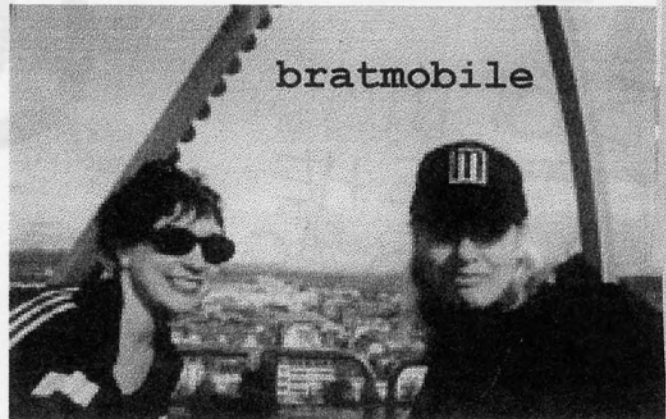
With doing that research for your dissertation you must have made some contacts that were quite useful for getting this going?

Totally - it was great. When I went over there I met all these people that I had just quoted in my dissertation and people who'd written books that I'd read. It was really bizarre. Actually, that whole week was bizarre - you'd be in a pizza parlour and someone from Sleater-Kinney would wipe your table. It's this really strange town, with every band you've ever liked walking by you in the street. You'd go to workshops and the person who wrote the book you're discussing is in the room. Everybody's been amazingly helpful, and I think their main aim was that people

would go home and do this in their own cities. It was never an aim for them to do it every year. I think we were the first people to start doing it, and there's now one in New York and one in Chicago.

What's been the most challenging thing about putting Ladyfest together?

Probably money. It's been a major factor, and obviously it's been really hard to get money together. We ended up getting grants from Glasgow City



Council and from the Performing Rights Society but we got knocked back for so much it was unbelievable. Getting people to sponsor something like when it's never been done before is really really difficult. I'm on the budget committee as well, so the money situation's always at the front of my mind. But I think we've just about made budget now. There's other things as well. Because we all work full-time it's not like you have all day to just sit and sort it out. I don't get home until half seven so I've been up to, like, two in the morning every night so it's been

really tiring for the past nine months. Booking the performers wasn't that difficult and everyone really put in 100%, so time and money were the most difficult things.



Who are you most looking forward to seeing?

I think I'm particularly looking forward to seeing Katastrophy Wife because I was such a big fan of Babes In Toyland, and I never got to see them because I was too young when they were at their height. It was really weird the way we got to book them. Some girl e-mailed us and said that she knew Babes In Toyland, and we were like "yeah, yeah, right, cool.". She said if we wanted to e-mail her some stuff she'd pass it on, and we were like "okay". And then about a month later their manager phoned us and said they'd really like to play the festival, so it was like "oh my god, no way!". That was the only one that wasn't through people knowing someone in the band or knowing someone at the label, so that's been really exciting. The stuff that Kat Bjelland's doing now is really good, so I can't wait to hear it live. I think it's actually better than some of the Babes In Toyland stuff. I thought that was going to be the most popular night but the Bratmobile

night seems to be the most popular. I saw them at Olympia for the first time and they were just amazing.

Who else was on the bill at Olympia?

Sleater-Kinney headlined, then Bratmobile, the Bangs, the Gossip. The Gossip are a new Kill Rock Stars signing, and we hadn't heard of them. We went to see them play on a daytime slot and they were just the most amazing thing I've seen live.

Would you ever put this on again?

I don't know. In one way, there's no way I could. I've just go no life just now because of it. In another way I think it'd be a lot easier if we did it again. It would be easier to get money, because you've proven you can do it, and I think more people would be there from the beginning to help out. It's something to think about, but I think I'd rather go to another one that someone else had organised.

What have you learned from the experience?

I've learned a lot about a lot of things in Glasgow that I didn't really know existed. I was really bored with the whole scene, with what was going on in Glasgow. I thought there were no girls playing in bands, there were no girls writing fanzines, and it just seemed really stagnant. It was like it went from great in 1993 to shit all of a sudden. But this has proved to me that it's not just totally disappeared, it's gone back to being underground and there are still girls doing amazing things, which is fantastic. We've met so many great people through it as well.

How does Glasgow compare to Olympia?

I don't know if it's even fair to compare them because Olympia is this unbelievable fairy town. It's run by women and everything is geared towards empowering women, so everyone there's in a band, everyone there writes zines, everyone there works for a label. There's only one major street and it's like Kill Rock Stars is there and Chainsaw is there, and I'd been there five minutes and I'd seen everything there was to see. If you're living in a place like that there's no way you can't be involved, but at the same time it's so small that it's also really boring, and if something like Ladyfest isn't happening then there's nothing else to do. You have to be involved in that one thing. Whereas in Glasgow there's hundreds of things going on, there's a lot more to do. There's probably just less of a scene in Glasgow and fewer people willing to help each other out to put on gigs together, because so many different people are into so many different things.

Do you think it's harder to motivate people to get involved in this kind of event in Protestant work ethic, male-oriented west of Scotland?

Yeah, but from doing Ladyfest, my point of view has changed. I think if someone is willing to set the ball rolling and say "I'm really going to do this thing", then loads of people will suddenly appear. There are people working on Ladyfest who I didn't know beforehand and they all said that they'd wanted to do something like this for so long. I probably wouldn't have done this if I hadn't gone to the Olympia one, and I got there

and the message was that you can do it anywhere. I'd always talked about doing things like this, putting on an all-girl gig night and stuff but I'd just never done it. This is the first time we didn't just complain about things not happening and actually just did it.

What's happening at Ladyfest away from the music side of things?

During the day in the club there are workshops from twelve to five pm. I'm not sure how many, but there's things like guitar workshops, DJ skills, feminism workshops, identity workshops, stuff on sexuality. They run right across the spectrum and a lot of the performers are actually teaching them, as well as a lot of Glasgow women. Other things are spoken word and performance art, and they're on between all the bands.

And finally, would you like to pick five bands for your own personal Fantasy Festival?

I've thought about this a lot. I think Bikini Kill, because I didn't get to see them and I think Kathleen Hanna's amazing. I'd probably put Sleater-Kinney in as well, the Slits, Courtney Love, Kat Bjelland and Jennifer Finch when they did their Sugar Baby Doll thing, that would be fantastic. And Patti Smith too.

All activities during Ladyfest Scotland will take place at the 13th Note Cafe and Club in Glasgow. Daytime performances start at 12 and will consist of workshops, panel discussions, art exhibitions and unsigned bands; evening performances start at 7pm and consist of headline bands, interspersed with spoken word/performance art and followed by afterhours clubs from Stiletto, Amy Lane and the Strange Fruit Collective. For more details see www.ladyfest.co.uk.

SUNDAY 12 AUGUST

KATASTROPHY WIFE Ex-Babe in Toyland Kat Bjelland returns with multidimensional sounds.

BIS Punktechnodisco from prolific poptarts Amanda, Steven and John.

FAKE from Norway, hard rock with heavy punk riffs.

*Plus unsigned bands: Pico, Hello Cuca, Cria Cuervos, Lady! Die & Akira
Spoken word and other performances from Donna Campbell, Poemfishgirrl,
Jeanne Marie Spicuzzi, Minx Grill Comedy.*

*Workshops include How to get on in the music biz, DJing for Beginners and Guitar,
Menstrama, Women and Race Talking, & Women and Violence.*

MONDAY 13 AUGUST

BANGS Bratty righteous garage rock from Sarah Utter, Maggie Vail and Kyle Ermatinger.

ELECTRALANE Acclaimed Brighton quartet create space-age introspective soundscapes.

SARAH DOUGHER Political country/soul from Portland-based singer-songwriter.

RED HOT SECRET all the way from New York,

Plus unsigned bands: Lack of Reason, Pro Forma, Blue Minkies, Flamingo 50 and Goofball.

Spoken word and other performances from Rachel Jury, Jamila Brown, & Magi Gibson.

*Workshops include Stress Management, Drumming basics,
Women and Business, Sexuality & Women and Media.*

TUESDAY 14 AUGUST

BRATMOBILE are back with fun and personal songs about boys and girls and rock 'n' roll.

ANGELICA Punk pop and classic 60s girl group harmonies.

CAROL LAULA Folk/acoustic rock from one of Scotland's best homegrown talents.

HE GOSSIP Thundering bluesy vocals and a languour born of Southern heat and teenage boredom.

Plus unsigned bands: Fran Schoppler, The Lollies, 5 Days Late, Kirby, and Gertrude.

*Spoken word and other performances from Amy Prior,
Pauline/Janette, Anita Govan and Penny Arcade.*