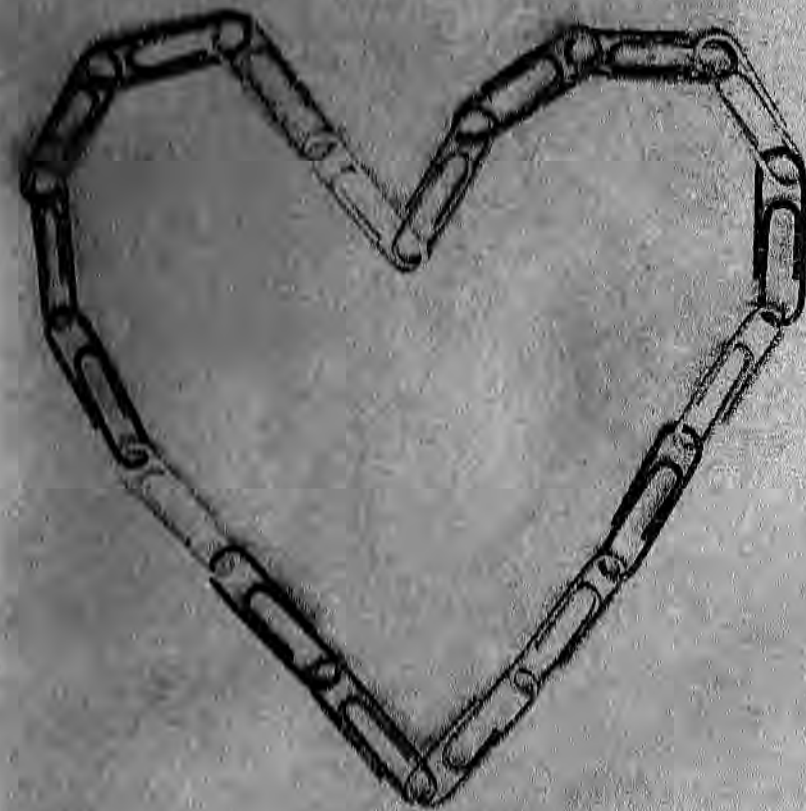


# REASSESS YOUR WEAPONS



Issue 3

Welcome to the third issue of *Reassess Your Weapons*, Manifesta's collective zine.

Reassess Your Weapons is about the messy place where our stories, ideas, ideals and day-to-day lives collide. A nexus of information & ideas, fun & thoughts.

As always, thank you so much to all the talented, generous people who have taken the time to submit the articles and artwork that make up this issue.

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I read this quote about Pavement that said, of their debut single/EP:  
*'[they] recorded five songs on a whim, the day before they went on vacation'*.

Imagine having the confidence to release things you write, or record, or think, on a whim. Imagine how revolutionary that could be. To get to the point where we value our creativity and believe in it enough to put it out into the world and not be seen as, or fear being viewed as, 'self-indulgent' or 'dumb', 'arrogant' or 'over-bearing', or simply feel guilty for expressing ourselves. Especially 'on a whim'.

I'm not a huge Pavement fan, but even I am not denying how crazy and misguided it would have been had the members of Pavement not recorded that first single on a whim, or had not thought enough of it to put it out.

Imagine if we all had the confidence to believe that the thoughts we have, the creativity within us is worth hearing, worth reading, worth seeing. Imagine if we thought enough of our creative output and had enough confidence in ourselves to do something about it.

I'd love for Reassess Your Weapons to be a place to capture and encourage our creativity, and to grant it further legitimacy. And to spark people's imaginations so that we can all respond and act more creatively, and politically.

> To contribute to Issue 4, please send your work, writing, art etc, to [m\\_k\\_maddison@hotmail.com](mailto:m_k_maddison@hotmail.com) (or email for a postal address). The zine is open for anyone to contribute to.

November 2005

[www.manifesta.co.uk](http://www.manifesta.co.uk)

Manifesta is a Leeds based DIY not-for-profit feminist collective of totally amazing and inspiring individuals who blow my mind!

This is my flow of consciousness, my thoughts unrestrained....

I hear swirling, churning noises, my stomach seems to empathise, I feel sick, nauseous, nervous, dread all in the pit of me, I wake with self disgust, all my walls are down, I am vulnerable, I am more than that. I look around an empty house, all is as usual, everyone is going about their daily lives. I'm finding it so painfully hard to get out of bed and face the days. I worry constantly that I am losing my mind, I fear discovery that I am sick, yet I know this sickness originates from me, its just the symptoms are voicing it. I take the tablets to stop the anxiety, to make me feel 'normal' yet the side effects leave me more isolated than ever. I don't feel strength within me, just the need to keep getting through the days as best as possible. I've lost so much weight-I feel an object-I want my pot belly back-my comforter-I want my body back. Physical illness it ensures time is allowed to heal, but when your soul is sick? There is no time. I feel despair. I feel alone. I feel lonely. No amount of positive thinking is helping here. I want my personality back. Working hard to get back to me, I carry on, waiting for the breakthrough, nausea please subside, tablets please numb my sickened soul, for I no longer have the energy to cry.

It will pass, it is temporary, I must remember, I must always remember, push on through, find my courage, and believe in myself once again.

Debbie

With the immense popularity of Dan Brown's novel 'The Da Vinci Code', a religious subject which most people usually ignore has become big news. With the Hollywood Blockbuster version of the book scheduled for release in 2006, there is no doubt more of this controversy to come; a big film will always reach a larger and more homogenous audience than even the most astounding NYT bestseller. However, unlike 'The Passion of the Christ', Mel Gibson's bloated Jesus snuff movie, this Hollywood fueled religious hoo-hah threatens to divide rather than unite the two main denominations of Western European 'Christianity'. 'The Passion' was recommended by both Catholics ("It is as It was"- His Popeness John Paul II), and Protestants ("Everyone should see this movie"- 'Left Behind' co-author Tim LaHaye). This roughly Jesus-themed movie will be excoriated by Papists and recommended by the craziest of Prods, for the exact same reasons. Few novels are demonic enough to be reviewed by the Holy See, but 'the Da Vinci Code' shares with the Harry Potter series the artistic version of a Papal Health Warning: "Do Not Read! Eternal Soul at Risk!"

The main controversy at the heart of 'the Da Vinci Code' is as old as the Church itself- Brown was able to draw on reams of considerably less accessible academic literature for the basis of his fictional story. The book caused a stir with its depiction of a secretive and conniving Catholic Church and its fascist- founded offshoot, Opus Dei, involved in a thriller involving secrets hidden in the art of renaissance homosexual and genius, Leonardo Da Vinci. The allegation is that the early Catholic Church suppressed a "Cult of the Feminine", removing everything except traces to cement the power of a patriarchal priestly class. By challenging, however obliquely, the central conceit of Christianity- that the Bible is divinely revealed truth, free from the editorial meddling of fallible and biased human beings- Brown is inviting criticism from all flavors of the faithful. The fact that his book is fiction makes no difference to the perception of its allegations as dangerous heresy- you would expect the Catholic Church to understand the power of a popularly held falsehood. The book's phenomenal success seemed baffling to some, but is just another example of the distrust of traditional organized religion the Catholic Church (and others) have been trying to combat for decades. People eager to believe that secret groups of Templar Knights have kept esoteric knowledge of the true Jesus alive down through the millennia are merely another face of the misguided post-modernist search for replacement religion that ranges through Scientology, homeopathic faith healers, Wiccan rock worshippers, and string-wearing Cabalist movie stars.

The Church and Opus Dei have so far concentrated on pointing out small details of religious or art history that Brown misuses or exaggerates, thus spectacularly missing the point. The irony of this as a critical approach is simple; however many details are exposed as flawed, and whatever preposterous conspiracy theories Brown seems to give credence to, the basic accusation that the Catholic Church, and Christianity in general, were and are misogynist and patriarchal are absolutely true. One need only look at the book's accurate description of Opus Dei's New York headquarters, with its segregated entrances and prayer spaces for


men and women, and the subjugation of women within the organization, to recognize how ingrained this holy hatred is, especially amongst Christianity's more conservative offshoots.

Shooting the film version at Lincoln cathedral (itself standing in for Westminster Abbey) the production was met by a gang of protesting nuns, adamant that the book is "against the very essence of what we believe". Now Protestants must decide on their response. The Church of England, at least the administrators of Westminster Abbey, has made its feelings 'clear', in its usual fashion; The book is "theologically unsound"- implying that an 'attack' on the Vatican's veracity is an attack on all Christianity. Since it was the Vatican that produced the edited edition of gods' word we know as the bible, there is a ring of truth to this viewpoint. Therefore, only lesser church buildings will be allowed to co-operate, and then only for a fee. It hardly seems fair that a schismatic sliver of the mother church that will benefit from so-called "fiction tourism" (the influx of readers who wish to view what they previously read about) should refuse the request to shoot on location; I doubt they will turn down the extra cash. Still, this isn't the first example of Church hypocrisy on this issue. The Dean of Lincoln Cathedral has stated his wish to piggyback the phenomenon for use as a proselytizing tool, despite rejecting the book as "a load of old tosh." Sister Mary Michael, the nun leading the protests, has accused the church of committing Simony, the sin of 'conducting financial transactions involving spiritual goods', something a historically minded Catholic should know all about- Papal Indulgence anyone?


However, unlike the wishy-washy Church of England, more conservative branches of Protestantism have retained their historical antipathy to Rome, and the (as they see it) biblically dubious nature of Catholic practice. One need only glance through the Jack Chick tract "Are Roman Catholics Christians?" (Hint: the answer is No) to see what "real" Protestants think of the historical Mother Church. The kind of fanatic represented by Tim LaHaye and Pat Robertson may be pleased to have Hollywood helping to remind everyone that the Pope is the Anti-Christ and the cult of the Blessed Virgin is idolatry. They must decide, however, which is more important to them- kicking Catholics when they are down or combating the idea that Christianity itself is misogynist, and the bible's version of history a deeply flawed myth.

I expect the film will be rubbish; I can't see Ron Howard breaking the habit of a career. Either way, there will not be hordes of Christians exhorting you to go see this when it comes out. However, nun-based word of mouth marketing worked for 'The Exorcist'. For most people "What Would Jesus Watch?" isn't how to decide on a Friday night out. There may be bonuses to catching this one in the cinema though - who in their right mind wouldn't enjoy having to squeeze past a picket line of angry nuns before you even get to the popcorn?


Eoin  
(atheisttractleague@yahoo.com)



I'm writing this because in real life I'm more socially awkward than socially awesome, and I know that a lot of people think they know who I am and understand what I do but I get the impression from things that people say to me that really they have no idea (and to be honest why would they?). I want this to be read by people who give a shit about me, not what I do or what I've been involved in or whatever. I need to tell my story, and to counter the silencing of my words are my weapons to share with you, and my route to recovery ...




'words became my expression, my voice, my activism, joy, rage and release... to face emotions on paper, and then I could share them, talk about them... to reclaim my power, my energy, and my life with a passion' (Jennifer DiMarco 2001)





...I know amy wrote some stuff about manifesta/the holy terror and at first I was hurt that she didn't come to me and talk about it to my face and I was feeling a lot of stuff similar to her, and maybe in some romanticised world, we could have joined forces and got rid of the tyranny that is choking my psychic life right now. I want my experiences to be out there so that some people can gain strength to speak out, maybe learn from my mistakes, and make some progress in terms of organising progressive underground collective diy feminist action in the uk. But yeah let's begin...


Some of you might remember what manifesta was in the beginning. I met amy in a weird philosophy course. I wanted to take an elective as far away as possible from my psychology degree and started talking to her because she had a ladyfest Glasgow t-shirt. We decided to look for other girls. She had some really cool close mates from home she was always talking about but hadn't really met anyone in Leeds. I made and put up a few posters in record shops. I remember our first meeting/party summer 2002 at amy's house. It was pretty disastrous in terms of organisation. At the time I didn't have any clue of what riot grrrl/feminism was really besides a few bands that I really really loved, I didn't even have an inkling about previous riot grrrl chapter activity in Leeds/Bradford.





All I knew was the punk scene wasn't a fun place to be any more for me, cuz if you cross the line, and say that you don't want to go out with a 'punk star' (cuz you've just come out of a long term relationship and need some time for yourself) then they cut you off and talk shit about you forever and ever and none of yr friends will stand up for you because there is no girl unity there and everybody craves 'punk star' boy attention and validation. And if you talk to a girl, or refuse to be a coat hanger people accuse you of being a dyke all the time whilst wearing their against animal cruelty, anti-racist t-shirts and boasting their straightedge tattoos. They don't even see the irony. They call me weird and sexist for listening to music made by women when all they do is listen to music made by men. But of course there is no such gender as male, that's just music right whereas music made by women just takes things too far.




Karren Ablaze came to our meeting and I didn't know who she was (!) and I got the impression she thought we were all stupid little girls and there were a few boy-morons who were going around talking saying that we weren't capable of doing anything at all. I remember sitting on the step waiting for people to come and feeling really heartbroken then when I was the least prepared people came and it was ace. I remember that was the first time I met Emma and I was like lef's start a band and she was really reluctant, and Karren was organising a bangs gig, which ended up turning into a hello cuca gig, and sarah brought a sparkly mix tape that everybody loved, and joelle was a 'proper dj' and we organised putting on a club night in time for when the students come to start uni.





Then I don't know what really happened properly but we put on 'pussy whipped' at bar phono for a while and put all our hearts, soul and energy to making people know about it, standing outside star at three in the morning etc. We had these girl friendly practice sessions in emma's cellar and started playing with different people each week. It felt really exciting. I started messing around on a drum kit of my ex-boyfriends friend's (we had one practice in my mum and dad's attic and then he just left it there forever.) I'd never even thought about playing drums before. I was in a band when I was younger called sicksty nine, it was a pretty terrible band looking back on it and the drummer became a bit controllery freakery so I was always a bit wary of being a drummer and figured they had power complexes. I really liked playing around with different instruments and doing covers and making up crazy beats. Then emma's nextdoor neighbour started going a bit nuts, bringing down environmental health noise laws and saying we were distressing her rats. I thought that was way funny. But yeah poor little rats.




Then another blur and I find myself in sponge studios not really knowing how to put a drum kit together and being in a band with amy, emma, and cathy and just making really really great music together and just getting that feeling where you just can't stop smiling. Like your band is the biggest best secret in the entire world ever. And you're all doing it together and adding bits in and talking about it and messing around with structures and timings. My arms getting tired and sweating so much feeling like you're on fire. This is about the same time that manifesta started putting on gigs. I think our first one was the sarah dougher ladyfest Manchester benefit so we were all really excited about playing in front of people and we did play our first gig supporting katastrophy wife. The support from everyone was amazing and we made up a name on the night cuz we didn't have one yet so we called ourselves no problems disko which is a pretty terrible name but for me it was never about the name, the image or whatever, it was about the feeling of making music in such an exciting way together, playing it to people and watching their faces, being able to empower people into making music themselves, and doing it all ourselves.




I'm not sure how it got so far away from that idea I figured making music in an all-woman context was enough to save it from any gross co-optation and cuz I respected and trusted everyone at that moment I thought nothing bad could ever happen to us. We had our fair share of frustration like I got annoyed that I couldn't hear amy's voice a lot but then maybe we should have taken a step back and thought about our music in different ways, maybe being primarily instrumental with a few quirps here and there instead of the mainstream kind of there's the rock star singer, everybody hears and watches the singer. We could have fucked with that idea.




Manifesta also got a bit messy. I remember doing a lot of work and not being able to cope with it being at school and feeling like I was the only one keeping it afloat or so it seemed to me. And me, emma and amy met up at a pub to discuss things, I think I thought of it as like a crisis meeting cuz I was seriously burnt out and felt I didn't have enough support. So we talked about stuff and for some reason I just didn't process a lot of the shit that was going down. I mean emma said some really homophobic things about amy's friends and seemed to be placing a lot of emphasis on making pussy whipped into a C-O-O-L clubnight (I guess by her white, heterosexual, indie-serious standards). I guess she wanted to assimilate and to do this meant that she wanted to eradicate 'the queers' (read: any sign of radicalism.) Within the following couple of days amy had quit manifesta and the band. I was heartbroken. I remember emma's rationalisation was something like 'well she should have argued back' obviously not recognising the power or privilege in her position constructed through our personal relationships. She didn't seem to care. I should have stood up for amy I can recognise that, but at the time I was so burnt out that I was just happy for




someone to be excited and take on some work, but Emma had moved to Manchester by that point and I became increasingly alone and isolated.




I remember one pussy whipped where she didn't even turn up and I couldn't get in touch with her and was worried about her safety. She wanted to put on the French toast gig but didn't even show up to do the work on the night. I remember one band practice where she didn't turn up and I couldn't get in touch with her for a week and I was really worried about her and she laughed in my face about it saying she had been at a relative's funeral in Ireland (I was thinking about calling the police and filing a missing persons report). And at all tomorrows parties I had a really long discussion with her sister about her wellbeing and her boyfriend and stuff. I really looked out for her. At the time I thought she was my best friend. We figured we'd go on and find a new singer. I think cathy drew up an advert and put it up in jumbo where she works and I even remember emma slagging off the bands she put on the advert 'fucking interpo!' and going on about how she should leave her other band (les flames), who again don't match up to her idea of what is c-o-o-l. I thought the advert was cool in that it represented all our likes and that we were all pretty diverse in our musical backgrounds. I remember doing a lot of work by myself meeting and talking to a lot of young girls by myself before we met up with Helena.



She seemed amazing when we first met her, we made an amazing demo together at mook, we played a few gigs and I felt happy. I'm not sure when the shift started but I'm pretty sure it began when a guy got hold of our demo and wanted to meet up with us. He ran 48 crash records and the first words that fell from his mouth were 'when I first listened I thought oh it's just another shit riot grrr! band but then the vocals kicked in' but everybody was so excited about the idea of putting out a record. And guess what, suddenly riot grrr! didn't assimilate to the emma's steering notion of C-O-O-L and the came all the indie-serious stuff which at first I liked getting to know about new music and junk (the velvet underground, PiL, delta 5, gang of four etc) but it also alienated me really bad, it was like they started talking in a different language. I remember emma saying to me about a band I totally love (discount) 'they're just a shit pop punk band'.




Suddenly (true) Helena emerged with this all-encompassing ego, ambition, and ruthlessness I'd never experienced before. Plus her social association with the band black wire was strange to me, but her own choice, but I kept trying to push back to the notions of why we started the band, as in to do something different to white boy mediocrity, of which you could argue bands like black wire epitomised. I remember we had an interview in a zine (we were now called the holy terror now by the way) and I was trying to talk about this stuff and I just got so much hate from Helena in an email.




This is when I started getting depressed. I was silenced. I became invisible. Everything I did or said was trivialised, put down, made fun of. I got comments like 'it's not what you say it's the way you say it' or 'the things you say are so aggressive' (read: just shut up and drum.) We met up in the angel and she apologised to me saying that these issues were for everyone and not just at me (read: bollocks) and that she just wants to make sure everyone is on the same page (read: her page, her notion of cool). For some dumb reason I agreed to carry on. Mainly because I wanted to be on the record and document what I had done up until that point.


I want a revolution you want to make your mark




On one level I was probably acting out and trying to seek the reconnection we had in the past. I could feel these words pass from my lips and they were pretty stupid but I couldn't hold them back I started to hate myself, my feminism, my ability as a drummer dwindled cuz I had no confidence. I think I even said the




horrible cringe-worthy words 'it doesn't matter that we're girls we're just musicians'. I battled on believing that in some way women's bodies creating music was in itself radical and challenging. But then the lyrics came, heterosexist wanting 'rock star' boy attention and girl jealousy/hate themes, being an object for male approval, all very incredibly troublingly mainstream etc.




I worked my ass off for that band. I remember driving them everywhere we did gigs all over the UK. I remember driving down to Bristol for bring yourself fest and getting no petrol money from any of them and having to ask rosie and michal for money from what was meant to be an anti-corporate type of festival. Getting money and having an audience were all very high up on the priority list back then. I remember them going out to an indie night whilst I had to sleep cuz I had to drive them all the way back in the morning. I remember getting a parking fine and having to wait in the car whilst they all had a good time. I remember Helena drunk saying 'why are you being so nice to me' when I was helping her out when she got kicked out of a club. That night I slept on the floor of a hotel room with only a towel to keep me warm whilst they all slept in warm comfy beds. I remember no thankyou's or sorry's. I remember helena's disgust about having to play bring yourself fest because she'd rather be doing her black wire groupie thing. I remember her hate of playing ladyfest Birmingham because there weren't enough people there to justify her presence on stage. I remember cathy saying 'I just don't think you and Helena can be in the same band'. I remember my sister saying 'god she really loves herself doesn't she'. I can still see the jealousy in her eyes that people pointed out to me when she watched scream club play after us and how the attention was on other people not her. And the way she would beam and lap up any male attention she got at gigs not giving a shit about anything that came from women's mouths. I remember all these warning signs. I can feel how nobody supported me or stood up for me. I can remember the relief in helena's eyes when I told them all I was leaving after the next three gigs, that she co-incidentally did not want to play because they weren't cool enough to her standards (dly gigs e.g. gojonyyogogogogo alldayer).




We played the last three gigs. I remember I was in tears at the josephs well gig. I just could not take it anymore. She was blatantly bullying me. It felt like she had stolen what was beautiful about music making to make herself into an rme star and my other two bandmates just let it happen. The last thing emma said to me was 'I just want to leave my job'. We arranged to meet up at cathy's bedsit to have a meal and discuss stuff, try and sort stuff out I guess. But it was like I wasn't even there. I noted at one point I hadn't said anything for over an hour they were all raving about how our demo had been played on new york radio. At this point I was writing my first essays for my gender studies ma and I was getting really engrossed in that probably because it was the only place where I truly felt like I had a voice and that my opinions mattered and somebody was going to read them. I didn't give a shit about doing a record anymore. So I left when emma rang me to arrange getting together again. I have never heard from her since.




'Optimistically there are still a lot of valuable groups making essential meaningful statements ... but it's becoming increasingly difficult for these groups to be heard or seen. What was once so hard to do (form a punk band) is now done 'by the numbers' with kids settling for style over content. This is always the imminent danger in new music movements. It has to keep check on itself, lest it become the thing it originally sought to replace'




You know people can warn you about people in your life and tell you to watch your back and to quit stuff but you have to figure it out yourself even if that's a really long slow painful drawn out process (as it was for me). If anything came out of this experience it's a renewed feminist identity because I refused to compromise, be silenced, and tag along for the glory trip. I put my heart and soul




into that band. I wrote an essay about feminist aesthetics in music about this time looking at Cixous and her idea of 'l'écriture de féminine' (feminine ways of writing) and figuring out what I love about music and how important the process of music making is, and how amazing music's political potential is. I did my dissertation looking at women's experiences of musicianship and heard loads of different stories and a surge of interest in what everyone else was thinking and feeling a connection.




My relationship with the holy terror came from bits and bats of information I heard. I heard from someone that they made their record with a session musician drummer who never got paid for his time. I heard that they changed their names to the ivories. I heard that Helena got her own club night (you should always watch who you empower with dj'ing 'skills'). I heard that Helena was refusing to do lots of cool gigs like erase errata. I heard that Helena and emma had become best friends. Eventually I met up with cathy for a drink and we just talked and talked and talked about what had happened and she said some stuff that in a horrible way made me feel better about my decision but also made me feel really sad. She said she was crying in the toilet of the house where they were recording their record, that she hadn't mourned for what our band used to be, that she gets told what to play now instead of letting her crazy creativity run riot.




There was a long period of silence after that where I just got on with my work and my other band black bats. Then the media hype began! My friend Rachel brought a story from the guardian to a gig I was at. I didn't even want to read it. It was all about Helena and that record guy and the Kaiser chiefs and all this bullshit and Leeds as the epicentre of new indie. I see pictures of them now all stylised and weird. Only Helena has a voice in interviews. They got a new female drummer (probably for marketing purposes - as Helena once commented that she wanted to get us out there as soon as possible before anybody else thought of the idea).




People (unknowingly) made hurtful comments to me. I went to a women's magazine meeting at my uni and got asked if I was in the ivories when I said 'no I'm definitely not but I was in the holy terror' she replied 'oh so you didn't make it then' and I was like erm no. Then when I said I wanted to write about music and the magazines theme was sex and I was asked if I could write about the best songs to get seduced to. I never went back to the meetings. And I guess this is what people are going to think about on the outside, they're going to see this band and think that it's all coming from this one person who is totally fucked and they're never going to see what that band originally was about, it's going to get swept under the carpet. Their record came out and they left me off the writing credits for the b-sides that I was a huge part of. It's like I never existed. This is their bio from their website...




The Ivories formed earlier this year when Helena Gee, promoter of local club night Release The Bats and former vocalist of The Holy Terror, joined a line-up of Emma Rowe; guitar, Cathy Russell; bass and drummer Anna Prior. Live sets are short, sharp and exciting and in recent months the band have supported the likes of The Futureheads, Eighties Matchbox B-Line Disaster, Art Brut and label mates Black Wire.



It's like the ultimate co-optation story, the ultimate how to get ahead in the music biz by screwing relationships between women story. And there have been times when I've been weak and thought 'oh my god I totally missed my chance to make it' and I haven't been able to face playing drums again, and I have vicious




mistrust of band members, and the whole thing makes me really angry and sad with lots of sleepless nights, like I could have stood my ground more etc. But who am I to stand in their way if this is what they truly want and good luck to them if they can make a difference and get a little space in an industry which is full of boring dude bands then fine. Maybe it's a comfort thinking that you can inspire other girls to get up there and play instruments. But I don't want to be part of a system that is already that fucked. Offering women a place for 'sanctioned resistance', they can play but only as long as they still perpetuate how important men really are for women's wellbeing and don't mind being a novelty every once in a while. One which will automatically highlight your gender as other and add on annoying taglines like foxy, sexy, beautiful just because you're a girl making music. Will maybe let you release a single but always lay off dedicating any real money to you and divert it to the male bands on yr label. An industry that keeps recreating the 'women in rock' or 'girl power' category just to push record sales when they are low. The ability to make art should be seen as a privilege not a get out of middle class suburbia free card. It's funny, the women musicians I interviewed that could identify as 'working class' thought it was really arrogant to assume that you will get paid to make music. That their reality is that you work hard to get where you are and that anything is a bonus not a god given right.




The mean truth of the matter is I'm a feminist and I like to make music that challenges boundaries, in a way that allows people to be themselves and create freely. I'm not going to drum behind some fuck who thinks rock n roll is about shaking her ass and singing heterosexist love songs whilst writhing in male attention.

revolution was not born from the swaying of pretty hips.  
revolution was born from dry throats at the microphone.  
strong grrr vocal cords, guitar rips, and strong opinions.






This whole thing has made manifesta so much more important to me. The ability to support great bands, create a network, and share feminist opinions in a forum is amazing. So that's where my energy is right now. I've only just started talking to amy about what happened to me and us and everything and I'm hoping it will make us stronger. It was a bit shit to have all this stuff going through my head at ladyfest brighton, plus the lack of sleep I think it was making me a bit paranoid, that everyone was talking about me and thought I was a total homophobic anti-feminist loser. These experiences have made me re-discover what feminism and activism are all about for me. It's made me stronger in the sense that I don't give a fuck about any external validation for the creative things I'm involved in. In fact it's probably better if people hate what I do. I don't want to follow no fucking rule book. I don't want to be acceptable to people. I will never shut my mouth and dilute my politics. They're part of who I am.



I'm getting comfortable to the idea of being more involved in manifesta and really happy that amy is involved again, and really into my school work which now involves a media analysis of the constructions of women musicians in the nme and Q magazine (ha ha). I'm also looking at collective forms of underground feminist cultural resistance and the production of feminist music. I realise now that just because things like the ivories/kaiser chiefs etc get big, it definitely doesn't make them amazing. In fact it should make you damn wary of them and dissect what their message really is and the processes and structures in which such a project came to be. I'm becoming more and more confident every day, in what I'm doing, and where I'm going. I'm surrounding myself with people who will call me on my shit, care about me, and look out for me.

julia x x x



What better way to round off a Sunday evening than getting fucked roughly at the hand of another girl? Wonderful. Fast forward four days however and things are not so wonderful. I'm doubled over the toilet throwing up bile because the pain in the internal area between my stomach and my cunt, the perpetual feeling that I need to piss, and the inability to piss more than a few drops, have kind of put me off my food and drink. I've already thrown up the little I did eat, leaving me with only my own innards to expunge in response to a feeling of nausea that shows no sign of abating.



I was confused and worried. I knew the pain and discomfort were the result of my debauchery, but I also knew I'd done such things before without suffering any of the above. When I woke up on Monday morning I noticed something was amiss but decided that hopefully it would go away if I only ignored it long enough, either that, or it wasn't really curable. I have this belief that most physical things are incurable. That most tablets are nothing but placebos, and if something doesn't go away if you ignore it for long enough then you are probably stuck with it for life. In which case it's really best not to know for as long as possible and to live in the hope that it'll go away rather than the knowledge that it won't. I therefore put off going to the doctor for several days.

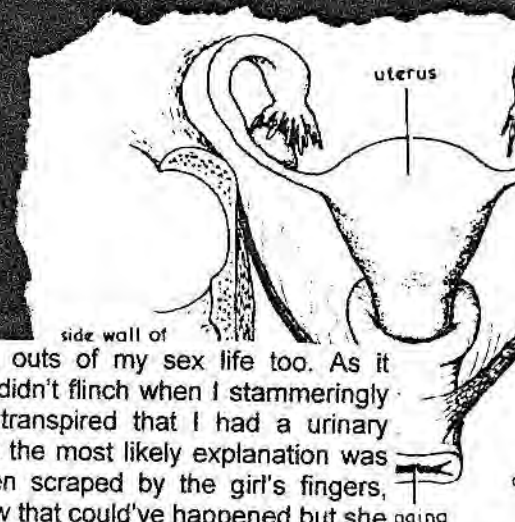
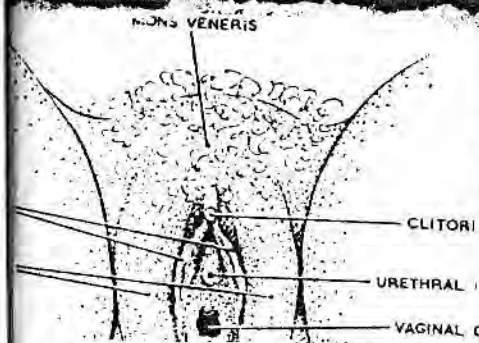
What's more, despite me being relatively liberated, I worried about telling the doctor. I know it *shouldn't* be embarrassing and I shouldn't have anything to be ashamed of, and of course if the doctor was judgmental then that was his goddamn problem. But in actual fact I was worried what the doctor would think. Why the fuck should I be? Would it be this embarrassing if I was straight? Or was it just the sexual aspect itself?

In the end I actually couldn't ignore it anymore and had to swallow my bile and slump to the doctors' surgery clutching my stomach and feeling sure that something had been permanently dislodged and I would probably become chaste and incontinent and find God or something and repent of my violent lesbian past. And the girl who fucked me would find out and she'd blame herself forever, despite my being, erm, encouraging. That wouldn't be so bad I guess if I was fifty or something, at least I'd've had a good lesbian innings but I'm twenty one for fuck's sake. I requested a female doctor but the surgery told me if I wanted to be seen today I'd have to take whoever I could get. I decided that I'd rather be seen quickly on the off chance something could be done now than satisfy my slight preference for the gender of

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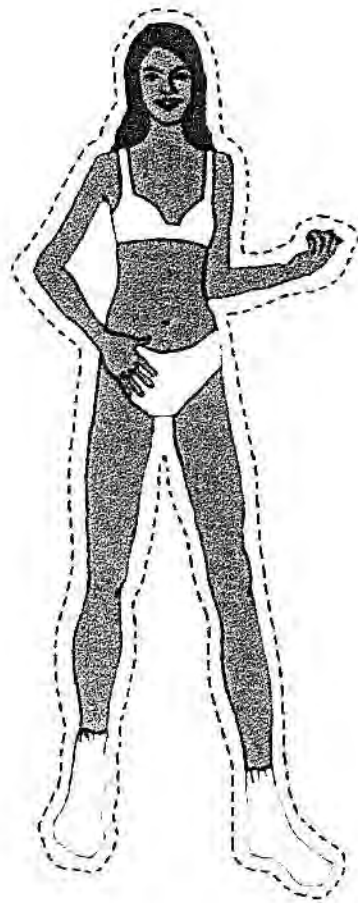
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stranger I had to describe the ins and outs of my sex life too. As it happened the doctor was a woman who didn't flinch when I stammeringly told her what had occurred. It quickly transpired that I had a urinary infection. Lovely. The doctor thought that the most likely explanation was that my bladder wall had somehow been scraped by the girl's fingers, thinking about it I still don't understand how that could've happened but she theorised in this way immediately. Maybe it happens a lot. Much to my surprise it was treatable with antibiotics. I even decided to take painkillers which I usually don't take, not out of any ethical principle or concern for side-effects, but simply because I never believed that they really worked. I thought they were a placebo or were for people who were in a tiny little bit of pain but not *proper* pain, and that the good stuff that actually worked was prescription only, not available over the counter to the hoi polloi. I felt a bit silly when they did work. I also felt silly when the antibiotics worked. I felt silly because I could've just gone into the surgery the day after it had happened and saved myself four days of increasing worry, pain and discomfort. But then I started feeling a little pissed off. I mean I know I clearly have an irrational lack of faith in the medical profession at times, but it's sad that in this supposedly liberated age I'm still scared to talk about an injury relating to sex with another girl to a professional doctor the way I would any other accident. Pissed off that there is even the possibility of doctors being openly judgmental or making me feel more awkward, pissed off that I still would've let them. Pissed off that, particularly if your queer, fucking safely is often a process of trial and error. Like a seemingly disproportionate number of homos I went to a Catholic school so there was never any proper sex education classes anyway, but even if I'd gone to a different school I know I never would have got the four one one on everything you ever wanted to know about lesbian sex but it never occurred to you to ask, or indeed anything not relating to heterosexuality (apart from the whole condom thing of course, but even then it's taught in a straight context and queers have to adjust it for their own lives). You may think I'm over-reacting, that this isn't exactly the most obvious thing to happen, that straight or gay we can't reasonably be expected to know all these little things until they happen. But I wish at least we were encouraged to feel safe to share and pass on such information rather than embarrassed and ashamed to convey it even when we need treatment.

agina

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## \*Confidence\*

## \*Confidence\*

Watching the *X Factor* on TV tonight, viewing the auditions where people are ridiculed and abused and bashed, I got to thinking about the nature of confidence and bravery. Regardless of whether or not they are genuinely 'talented' (though shows like these and their definition and focus on a specific brand of 'talent' is dubious anyway), what is it that makes these people be confident enough in their own perceived ability, confident enough to show up to and compete alongside and against thousands of other people, confident enough to be on TV, confident enough to face a panel of judges, confident enough to face the rudeness, abuse and ridicule that is very likely to ensue? What is it that makes these people, regardless of their level of 'talent' and regardless of the (true or untrue) criticism from the judges, exit their audition and say with unwavering determination: "Nothing's going to stop me. Nothing those judges said to me is gonna make me give up on my dream. I can do this. I will do this"? Where on earth does that self-belief and confidence come from? How can anybody be that sure of their abilities? How can people rise from criticism like that?

I am one of many of my close group of friends who battle daily with their confidence. So to view confidence on such a grand scale as this baffles me. I begin to wonder whether in society, or within my family, or within my friends, other people ended up with my share of all the confidence that abounds. Confidence seems to be this thing that gets zapped really easily. Confidence seems to get stolen really easily; Confidence seems too easy to lose. Confidence is something I lose daily. I have seen others pick up my confidence and use it for themselves. A girl I once knew scraped my confidence up off the floor that I'd fallen headlong onto and went on to use it, and me, to make a really great life for herself. People I still know now possess confidence that I jealously and selfishly believe should have and could have been mine too, if I'd only [catch 22], had the confidence to grab and hang onto my share rather than relinquishing it.

Looking at where confidence can and does come from, and looking at how we can gain, establish and crucially *hang onto* confidence is something I think is really important in order for us to live and achieve a life in which we can do the things that we'd like to, we need to, we have to. There's too many times in my life that I've kicked myself for not doing something, and there's too many things that I'd love to be able to do and achieve and be that seem too far out of my grasp due to a debilitating lack of confidence. There's too much at stake to let it completely get the better of me. There's too much at stake to let it get the better of my super talented and inspirational friends. There's too much that we need to do. We need to overcome our lack of confidence.

Bizarrely, and in now what seems like another life, I used to work as a therapist, often facilitating confidence building, anxiety management and assertiveness training groups. I know all the theory and the supposed techniques of positive thinking, tackling passivity, breaking negative patterns and tackling avoidance, but somehow I think (at least my own) lack of confidence comes down to fears that none of these techniques or advice can quite meet. It's somehow more than that.

Audre Lorde once wrote, 'maybe that's all any bravery is – a stronger fear of not being brave'. This lone statement is the closest I've ever come to understanding confidence and of how to meet and achieve any degree of bravery within myself in order to achieve what I need to.



Lorde's words jump at me as if they're written in neon against a night sky. It's the close, dependable relationship between bravery and fear written about in a way I understand; Bravery as the result of a stronger fear – bravery never as a result of possessing something innately that could entitle me to be classed 'brave' or 'confident'. But rather bravery as a consequence of the fear of what would happen if I were not confident or if I never gained confidence, or even bravery as a consequence of the fear of showing people that I'm trembling inside, thus fear of letting people down who *need* me to be strong.

And there's something else embedded in that quote: the qualifier of *'any'* bravery. There's a huge relief and freedom in the use of that qualifier. It lets me know that there's not a singular set-in-stone 'bravery' or confidence. And there's hope in that. Hope that there's more than one way to be brave and confident, and that perhaps this bravery-as-a-result-of-bigger-fears is just as much of a hopeful, valid confidence as anything else. Thinking of it this way makes me feel less like a fraud, less like a cowardly deceiver since I've been 'acting' strong and brave for so many years – being there for so many people, helping others out, being their rock, being brave for their sakes, all the while crumbling and trembling inside, hoping they'd never catch me out, discover I'm a fraud, see my fragility and my failures and see through my confidence smokescreen.

If that's all any bravery is, a stronger fear of not being brave, then bravery cannot be this innate feeling and possessed power that can be stolen or lost, it's got to be something born of and built through societal interaction. Interaction that is scary and creates fear.

And *that's* the greatest argument I've ever heard for *really* wanting to tackle avoidance.

Confidence must therefore be about living with fears and using those fears. Not combating them. Turning those fears on themselves. *Creating* bravery.

It's a struggle and god is it *difficult* to create something so important when everything inside is screaming 'forget about it', 'just give it up. Give in', 'it's too hard'. And hell it's *really* scary too because turning fears around so that they roar and gnash in our faces actually requires us to fucking *deal* and actively cope when, I don't know about you, but staying in bed instead just seems so much easier and safer.

Maybe it is true that *everybody* is scared all the time. To be able to think of those people on the *X Factor* and to be able to see their unwavering, determined confidence as perhaps coming from stronger fears they too may have, whether it be a fear of missing their chance, fear of letting themselves and their family down, fear of never achieving their dreams, or whatever, does provide an element of hope regarding bravery. Because, somehow, to see how maybe all the confidence I so enviably see all around me could also be down to stronger fears of not being brave makes me wonder if I too could possibly regain a level of confidence and not feel like a fraud because of it. Because maybe it's all anybody is doing.

\*\*\*\*\*

*To further address the issue of confidence, here follows a collection of thoughts, ideas and examples people submitted regarding confidence and confidence building...*



## Confidence...

\*I once read of Virginia Woolf that she had 'net after net of security around her' that helped her to achieve what she needed to. I feel most confident when I remember that I too have at least three people in my life that, should I really need it, have a net to catch me if I really mess up. There's both a reassurance and freedom in that.\* >Melanie

\*What I've found works for me, well one thing, is breaking down seemingly "challenging" tasks into tiny, achievable niblets. I follow each one with a breather, to regroup and recover from the panic, and usually a reward like peanut M&Ms\* >Katherine

\*I feel most confident when I've done my research.\*

\*[Anything] that doesn't involve some danger is too much [of] a gift to create confidence.\* >Marge Piercy

\*Be very careful about whose criticism you respect and whose you don't because there's a lot of people - they may be friends of yours - but they might not have your best interests in mind in terms of helping your confidence. Its competitive with them, they may try and undermine you - Not that this has happened!! Just cos someone gives you a criticism, doesn't mean it's true.\* >Kevin Blechdom

\*On the good days, remembering that *everyone*, including me, deserves to be happy, and remembering that happiness often comes through interaction with like-minds, gives me the confidence to work to tackle avoidance of social situations\*

\*A ship in a port is safe, but that is not what ships are built for.\* >Benazir Bhutto

\*The "just do it" blinkers approach - when doubts niggle and I start to think longing of bed, it's "no, just do it", ignore everything else, don't even think of the possible bad things that could happen. Good for social events, and getting to work - don't think about it, just turn up. Doesn't always work!\* >Katherine

*\*Receiving unexpected, supportive emails from strangers (and friends) about my zines that I keep saved on my computer offer me a bank of reminders to return to when I lose confidence in what I'm doing.\* >Melanie*

\*Discover your own world and really, really get lost in that - don't think about the outside world. From that other stuff will come. Don't doubt, there's no room for doubt.\* >Planning To Rock

\*Confidence\*

\*Confidence\*

\*Confidence\*

\*Things I have actively done to try to gain more confidence include once writing homophobic graffiti in the hope that someone would change it/cover over it. This would prove that someone other than myself thought that it was important to get rid of this hateful graffiti and therefore this homophobic attitude. No-one did. This helped to concrete my feelings that homosexuality was wrong and no-one would ever give a damn about gays.

When, many years later, I found myself passing graffiti on the way to work which also showed this homophobic attitude I got my mum to help me to amend the graffiti. Mums, and people who have known you forever, are a great source of confidence.

I don't know quite how I got from writing graffiti to amending it. I know that seeing the graffiti makes me feel confident, and if I'd seen it when I was younger perhaps I wouldn't have written the first graffiti at all.\* >Anon

\*In my experience, no matter what I try to employ it just seems like there are good and bad days, when either anything's possible and achievable, or conversely nothing seems to work no matter what I do. On those days I'm getting better at being ok with just having a quiet, undemanding day and not expecting too much from myself, knowing it will pass - but it's difficult to get this point of view across to other people sometimes! Especially and hold down a job...!\* >Katherine

\*I believe for myself, in creativity systems in which failure is impossible, so embrace mistakes, embrace failure as the medium (in a way) - not everybody does that. People create worlds differently, but in mine there's no way to fail.\* >Kevin Blechdom

\*I guess confidence means lots of things to lots of different people. I tend to think it's about having positive and realistic views about yr abilities; as well as being able to accept it when things don't go ok. Some of the people who act really "confident" (whether that's by being loud, capable, or easy going etc) actually don't feel ok about themselves or what they're doing and feel as if they're going to be discovered any minute as a fraud. Its something I think about lots, as in the course of my job I'm supposed to raise young peoples confidence and self-esteem (so read/ think about/ discuss the subject), yet frequently feel as if I cant do lots of things myself, especially at work and feel 'unconfident' every day. All of us feel confident about doing different things (like I feel fine about catching a plane by myself; but the thought of going to an exercise class on my own makes me terrified) and it's crucial to recognise what we are good at, and things that we can do!

I really think that what works for me, is if I'm scared of doing something forcing myself to do it, like having to speak in front of lots of people, even though my voice shakes, and I go red, at least I've done it and that's the only way I'll get better. I think what's also vital for me is having a group of people I can talk to who are supportive and who don't let me believe the bad things about myself.\* >Anon

\*Confidence\*

(N.B. Thanks to Chic Alors for the Kevin Blechdom/Planning to Rock interview excerpts)

\*I had a lot of physical confidence when I was a child. I ran around and climbed trees and rocks & the dangerous climbing frame in our garden, went places on my bike, rollerskated... And I never considered that my body might let me down, and it never did. I just decided what I wanted to do, and did it. There have always been other areas of my life where I didn't have much confidence (often in a funny grandiose/paranoid kind of way, where I secretly know I rule, but I'm convinced nobody else will see it that way...) And recently I've found that when I can get back in touch with that physical self-confidence from my childhood, it makes my confidence better in all areas and I feel like I can tackle all kinds of things I was too afraid to try before.

When I'm having a confidence emergency, I try to move around and stretch and breathe deeply. (That's the worst bit, because when you breathe deeply, you feel all your feelings more strongly - in this case self-doubt and fear - but I think that actually feeling the stuff is the only way to get through it in the long-run, even though fake confidence and empty bravado have often served me well in a pinch!)

And over the past year I've been going out for long walks and stretching even when I'm not having an emergency. And it just makes everything better in general - sometimes doesn't feel like it, as I'm stretching and all the bullshit from my day and my life comes back out from my muscles and - I don't know how to describe this - sort of exists freely in my body making it hard to breathe and making me panic, and I just keep breathing and I make fake retching movements and noises and say to myself: "well, damn, it's better out than in!" And it really is. All those things people told you about how wrong you are, what a problem you are, all their requirements and standards and demands... Those aren't yours! That's just stupid stuff people told you, and it's better out than in. Stretching and pretending to vomit isn't the kind of solution I expected to come up with, but I can feel things changing, and there are more and more moments when I think: I feel great. I feel like myself again.\* >Helen

## \*Confidence\*

### \*Strategies to improve confidence (nicked off various websites and kids' books)→

- Learn to reject the negative voices that tell you "I can't do this", "I'm gonna be shit". In fact talk to yourself in a positive way (this sounds cheesy but...) "I'm a good/capable/ clever person"
- Take risks, as it's only by putting yrself out there that you'll find out whether or not you can do something
- Act confident... hold your head up, sit and stand straight, put on a confident walk, speak loud, the more you do this the less it becomes an act, and eventually you won't need to pretend
- Make a list of all the good things about yrself, whether it's things you know for definite or what other people have told you but you don't quite believe. Remember those things.

- Treat yourself good; eat your favourite things and look after yourself
- Don't rely on other people and their approval to make you feel good, learn to evaluate yourself realistically and trust in your own view of yourself\* >Anon

## \*Confidence\*

"I've always wanted to ride a motorbike, yeah ok, it's the rebellion image, the less conventional choice of transport, but more than anything motorbikes are just so god damn sexy! Last weekend I decided I'd do something about this, so I got a copy of the highway code out from my local library and read and reread it and revised and I felt kinda confident about it, Step One sorted. Step two, I booked a Compulsory Training course for the following weekend. I excitedly tell anyone who will listen that I'm gonna ride a motorbike and I thrill from the surprised responses. The night before I'm nervous but excited. I arrive at the centre in good time, I'm one of a group of three, the rest being boys, I must admit I was kinda hoping for a girl here. I see my geared bike-it's huge! I make an embarrassing attempt to pull it off its stand, "maybe I should try something a little smaller" I mutter.

The scooter is much more manageable and I eventually get the hang of it, but the instructor (male) is clear that I'm not learning as fast as the others, and I know this. I feel embarrassed to be getting extra help and also guilty that I'm holding the group up. I imagine them thinking how crap it is that they've got a girl on their course. However the guys seem really nice, in fact they help me to put the scooter back on its stand without me asking. This however makes me feel worse, I wanna say "I'll do it myself" but then I feel that I can't afford not to cash in on gender stereotypes. This makes me feel crap because I'm a woman and I'm strong and I know this, I just can't feel it right now.

The instructor tells me that I've passed the morning sessions but we are going out onto the roads, this fills me with dread, someone else admits they are nervous, at least I'm not the only one. He singles me out as the one who has the most to prove as he will have to send me home and I'll come back some other time if I don't seem to be getting it right on the road. I understand this. I feel the pressure as we leave the yard, about to exit I give into my fears and admit I'm really not ready for it. The guy sends me home to come back again another time. I'm left feeling dejected, guilty, and incompetent and generally crap. But there is something that resonates in me "you need to work on your self-confidence, in everything, you know what I mean?" the instructor had said. I know this already, but I feel angry. I'm tired of people telling me I need to be more confident, but how exactly do you become more confident? It seems to me that the way to become confident is to challenge yourself, push your boundaries, and this is what I do, only to be confronted with people telling me I need to be more confident!

I feel angry because this morning I passed a boundary, I rode a motorbike really fucking fast and I was scared, but I did it. Last week I got my nipple pierced and I was scared then but I did it. Last month I applied for an M.A in a huge city, hearing my fears that I'm not intelligent enough or brave enough and still bloody going for it. In fact five years ago I decided to challenge my unhappiness and quit my shit job, shit flat, shit town and shit mates to come to a big city and start again, and fuck was I scared!

I am ALWAYS scared, it gets me down sometimes, I feel that everyone else is brave and I'm a big coward. I recall a university lecturer recently turning to me and telling me in front of the class 'you need to take risks', this angered me. Inside I was feeling how dare she say that, she had no idea of the risk I had taken to leave where I had come from, knowing there was no going back, knowing it *had* to work. She had hit a nerve. My life was under my control, I could not allow anyone or anything to threaten that control. I was afraid to take a risk as the cost seemed too great.

I recall something I once read 'it is not fearing nothing which makes us brave but feeling the fear and doing it anyway' ( *Incidentally, a great self development book to read on this is 'feel the fear and do it anyway' by Susan Jeffers*). This thought rouses me and continues to empower me as I remind myself of it whenever I doubt my own confidence. I think of all those people who went through with something which was important to them even though

they too were scared, Rosa Parks refusing to give up her seat on the bus to a white man, Irma Kutt who risked death to see her lover of another faith. Whilst these women may have hit the headlines, what really arouses me is the daily acts of courage that people make. A depressed person leaves the house, a woman leaves her abusive husband, a child attends school every day despite being bullied. In the face of these daily acts I am reminded of the fact that people continue to confront their fears and through this the human spirit is strengthened and we all feel that power.

As a mentor in a secondary school I recently went on a school residential with a group of sixth formers. The tutor was inspirational. Whilst he wanted them to pass psychology, it was clear his real agenda was to raise the self esteem of this group of fucked up kids. He did this through various games and activities. One of these activities was named 'angel cards', the young people were asked to open their minds to the possibility of spiritual assistance, we each picked a card and on it was a quality(?) such as 'faith' 'joy' 'perseverance', this encouraged the kids to look inside themselves and ask why they had received that particular card. The comments were so pertinent to the recipients. When it was my turn I received 'inspiration', I smiled. I explained that the idea of inspiring people and being inspired is a huge drive in my life. I truly do not believe I would be here today if I had not been inspired by some amazing people, the woman that taught me to believe in myself, the man who taught me that little people can make big differences, the woman who taught me to forgive myself. This residential turned out to be incredibly inspirational, I was fortunate enough to witness impressive spiritual growth as the young people faced their fears and survived them. The reason for this development was because the environment was safe, both safe from ridicule and rejection. It was in this environment that I took a risk to disclose my queer sexual orientation to the group. Some young people told me they respected me for my bravery, and a particular girl commented that I 'inspire her to be herself'. This felt amazing, I had taken a huge risk and the benefits were ten-fold.

So where does confidence come from? While I feel that some people are born being ultra-adventurous and with nerves of steel some of us are not, and that's o.k. I've come to the conclusion that for someone afraid of change a new haircut, this is as valid an act of courage as jumping out of a plane is for someone else. I also feel that living in a society which promotes competition between people, inadequate feelings are inevitable. I suspect that I am one of a large number of people who feel that they are never *quite* enough and it is this feeling which filters into every area of our lives and creates self-doubt and destructive actions.

This feeling of never quite being *enough* has led me to make some sacrifices in my life; I have prioritised my career over my free time and many personal relationships. I arrive at the point in my life where I have finally made my mother proud; I have 'letters after my name'. I practice writing my name and letters on an envelope, but I ask myself why I feel a fraud. Inside of me I am fiercely proud of my achievements as I know how hard I have worked, but the other part of me is disappointed that I'm still racked with insecurities that I am not *enough*.

I do believe that you cannot have it all and that getting what you want takes hard work and sacrifices. I do not regret my choices and I feel empowered by the feeling that comes from *really* owning your own life. But inside I feel an anger, why did I have to spend so much time and effort just to prove I was worthwhile, that I had to earn love, affection and respect?. Recently I worked with a young girl who self-harms, and I overheard her say to a friend 'I want to have a baby so I can contribute something to the world' I was shocked. I responded 'you don't have to have a baby to contribute to the world, you contribute something very special just by being you' - she looked surprised. My words resonated inside me, I really believed this, so why was it so hard to believe this of myself? I felt irritated, why did no one ever tell me I was ok, that I was enough just as I was? And if this is something you as a reader

can relate to, who ever told you that you were not o.k? Who made you feel that you were not enough? Alike many people I have childhood memories of feelings worthless and unwanted, hurtful comments that stung me, 'don't praise her it goes to her head' 'I don't want to see your face, you disgust me', etc. How can those of us who experience negative comments, little acceptance and rejection, not incorporate a feeling of low self worth into our adult consciousness? The thoughtless words of adults scar the hearts of children and to borrow from a line of a song 'I think the heart remains a child'...(why don't you love me?).

I would argue we need to be our own mentors/coaches, to praise and encourage ourselves for achievements in whatever form they take, to be our own best friend, to reject negativity, to recognise the beauty in everyone we meet and make them feel special too, and develop that confidence that comes from challenging our own boundaries and 'feeling the fear and doing it anyway'.

In my work as a mentor, I aim to raise your peoples self esteem, when a child tells me 'I'm shit' or 'I'm useless' it makes me sad. Perhaps surprisingly I don't feel angry towards the adults or children who have conveyed this message to them, just sadness. I feel that an adult/child with healthy self-esteem passes this on to children and nurtures their self esteem producing confident adults. So how can an adult with poor self-esteem possibly empower their child? How would they know where to start? I believe that it is essentially a feeling of powerless that leads to lack of confidence. Situations such as poverty, abuse, and confinement can encourage this but whilst these things attack the spirit they are not insurmountable.

Various spiritual practices work on the idea of an internal locus of control, (the idea that we all have a point within us that we can retreat to to block out that which becomes unbearable) I discovered this as a child where I realised I could subvert power here, that someone could attack my mind and body but could never destroy the essence of me-this is my place of power which no-one but me has access to, this is my core, this is my confidence. I am currently reading an amazing book featuring writings from prisoners of consciousness. The stories are filled with tales of extreme torture and degradation, yet the recipients never gave in. One guy writes 'the only way to survive here is to transgress physical boundaries'. It never ceases to amaze me the resilience and strength of the human spirit, let it inspire you, I may be accused of being an idealist but I do believe that nothing is insurmountable.

I often wonder why so many 'everyday' people cannot see how special they are, that people do amazing things every day that fill other people with admiration, I recall a primary teacher who praised and held me when there was no affection elsewhere, I wonder if this woman would even know just what an impact she had over my life, that she became part of my confidence, that she inspired me to be there for young people the way she was there for me.

I wonder if the people I know who stand up for what they believe in despite great risks are really aware of how much they stir in me. I wonder if my sharing my inspirations will stir anything in you. I hope it does.

A final thought: Someone once told me that it is not the fear of failure that frightens us most but the realization that there are infinitely no limits to our success.... Surprise yourself.  
*Be inspired!* P.S: I will be a damn biker no matter how long it takes!\* >Debbie

\*Confidence\*

\*Confidence\*

## \*Confidence\*

\*I suppose I'll start unconfidently to talk about my strange relationship with my confidence. When I was a kid my sister always picked on me for being too confident she said that I was full of myself, always walking around like I was a big rock star singing and dancing around in my bedroom, totally intruding on her moody adolescent death soundtrack on the other side of my bedroom wall. In primary school me and a friend made a school newspaper called Toony I drew cartoon strips and slagged off Guns and Roses (my heart belonged to New kids on the block!). This was probably my first zine and we were all ten years old girls we got our mums to photocopy it at their work and gave the money to the rspca. But later in (big) school I was the opposite of confident, I was really shy and unable to talk in class. I remember my heart dropping and my throat drying up whenever it was time for me to read out or give an opinion. My confidence then went on to erupt at opposite extremes. I could be confident in booking a gig, dealing with promoters and venue dudes, but when it came to talking to the bands I really admired and done all this work to get them to play in Leeds I'd choke up. I gained a lot of confidence in learning how to play drums but I just as easily lost it all when things began to twist the wrong way and money and egos got involved. I'm learning to be confident in my (academic) writing but am still totally scared of giving presentations about my ideas. It's only now at the age of twenty three when I've finally begun to realise the root of my confidence is in figuring out what you're really about, who you are and not what other people expect or think you to be. You see I've always felt kind of out of place (guess that comes from being a little bullied by my supposed friends when I was in high school) always trying to find a way to fit in with something, anything, and that's where I think the importance I laid on external validation came from. When people commented on what I did, like putting on gigs, the band I was in, records I liked, I took their feedback way too much to heart. Pretty soon I found that I was catering to other people's expectations or torturing myself about my 'mistakes' when making my 'own' mind up about things. I couldn't even figure out what I was all about anymore. What the hell did I want in life? I had to go back to what really inspired me to do these things in the first place (be in a band, be part of a collective, put on gigs, dj, have an 'academic career' etc.) I had to stop listening to some negative voices in my near surroundings. I had to learn to stand up for myself. To learn how to recognise people's relationships to power and to see what was in for them when they put me down or celebrated something I was involved in. I had to quit things. I had to learn to say no. I had to take a pretty hard and mean look at my past actions and admit how fucked up I had been acting whilst trying to juggle everybody else's needs, ignoring my own desires and pleasures. I delved back into the herstory of women in underground feminist diy collectives, got in touch with Karren Ablaze who was involved in riot grrrl leads/bradford in the early 90's. I read books about women activists and academics like Elaine Brown and Donna Gaines. I read interviews and zines with women musicians and activists, I talked to my friends, I found quotes that pretty much saved my life. I talked to my supervisors and listened to their compliments and encouragement, and learned to accept them and see my own potential. I started writing. I started finding my own voice. I finally got my grrrlly atti-fuckin-tude back. I guess it's like fighting the programming inside me that prevented me from valuing who I was, what I believed in etc. It's so fucking hard to be a feminist in everyday life sometimes. We need to stick together so email me if you want ... julia.h.downes@gmail.com hmrm guess that's blown my anonymity!\*>Julia

## \*Confidence\*

\*I remember when I was young, and my confidence had dropped so low that I was paranoid about how I walked, and I thought "no", I started pretending, acting like a (slightly more) confident person, playing a difficult role that was all about deceiving myself, about wearing a shell that hid my insides, and to begin with it was hard, very hard, but as I got used to it the shell softened and became my skin. Eventually I wore it comfortably. I was duped by my own act. I still play this game occasionally, in an attempt to become the person I want to be.\* >Hywel

## \*Confidence\*

## \*Confidence\*

\*I find alcohol always helps, but then maybe that's just because it's all I know and if I didn't drink I'd either be forced to learn to deal with life without or I'd find another equally or more self-destructive method to dull my inhibitions.

Being told nice things about yourself, I mean my friends are always trying to help me gain more confidence by complimenting me or whatever, but that often falls on deaf ears, perhaps because I know stuff about myself no one or hardly anyone else knows, so whatever people tell me I usually feel is coming from an incomplete picture. However, sometimes someone will tell me something they see in me that never occurred to me before. Someone once said, 'no one else has ever given a shit' to me and it's comments like that that make me believe that now and again I can get things right. Someone coming up to me after a gig and saying they really enjoyed my band's performance is always amazing and being in a slightly 'comedy' band is good too because it's not my life's passion or anything so if people think we're shit it's not too painful.

Having really supportive and encouraging people around me. Two years ago I would've laughed if anyone had said I was going to be in a band, and go topless on stage no less; also I would've laughed at the idea that I could co-run a club night but these aren't things I have to do alone; I get encouragement from the other people involved. And once you're doing it, you realise it's not such a big deal, it's just that initial fear that can be hard to let go of, but it is so worth it.

Counselling helped me to some extent deal with a lack of confidence in everyday life and social situations. I'm sure that it would've helped me a lot more had nhs resources not been so limited that I only got twelve sessions! It upsets me sometimes the knowledge of how much more could've been achieved had I been able to have it for longer. I've had bad experiences with counsellors too though, it all depends...

Realising my own insignificance. It's still something I struggle with. Feeling that all eyes and responsibility is on me in social interactions shatters my confidence and fucks up my life. You gotta remember that yr friends, if they're real friends, will still love you even if you fuck up, and most other people couldn't give a fuck about you. It's hard though. Perspective is difficult to find because you can only see the world through your own eyes. The lyrics to 'I Like Giants' by Kimya Dawson are worth a listen. Working on a helpline for people in mental health crisis really puts into perspective how small my world and sphere of experience is.

Standing up to harassment. The first time I really did this was during the summer when I was on a train and some teenage lads were saying, 'what's that? is it a man or a woman? what's that?' and pointing me out to another passenger and snickering at me. I finally had enough and was able to get up and shout at them, 'It's none of your fucking business!' and it felt so good. It shut them up too. People don't usually expect you to say anything back, especially if you're queer. True, it's not always safe, but I think a lot of times it's worth breaking through that initial fear. It is so incredibly worth it. I am a complete pussy, but I can't describe how much better it feels to take a calculated risk than to feel afraid and intimidated for prolonged periods of time. And after the first time you stand up for yourself, it gets easier.

Knowing that it's ok to fuck up, it's not the end of the world. You're only human and so is everyone else. Though that can sometimes be hard to realise, hence counselling I guess. I think it all comes down to how you feel about yourself in the end, confidence or lack thereof is dependent upon your level of self-esteem. It's funny cos a lot of my friends I made through our love of the same bands and a lot of the bands I got into precisely because of being a big walking ball of neuroses, small wonder then that most of my friends have self-esteem issues too. I wish I could convince them they have nothing to be worried about.\*>Helena.

## \*Confidence\*

## \*Confidence\*

You fully support the right of all other women, queers, shy boys, PEOPLE, to live whole

not an after-thought. Practice what you preach. Great! DDD

lives - but are you really a feminist if you hate yourself? ?

you have the right not to know something or how to do something, + the right to be supported in learning. you are not stupid.

accept your limitations. you are not a superhero. you cannot singlehandedly right the wrongs of the world but you have the best intentions + you're pretty cool.

value your own creativity. one mixtape is a time

your opinion, ideas, experiences, dreams, are just as valid + valuable as anyone else's.

**CONFIDENCE in your own right to exist, to take up space, to live a full life**

fight to unlearn meekness, internalised sexism, homophobia + body-hate

**CONFIDENCE to speak your mind, to express yourself in whatever ways...**

think of the most difficult times / events / feelings that you have been through in the past. you are still here so you are a survivor.

don't apologise for things that aren't your fault. don't slag yourself off. accept compliments

you are flawed. that's cool. so's everyone else.

practice standing up / speaking out for what's important + it will get easier over time.

feelings that you have been through in the past. you are still here so you are a survivor.



embarrassment is a tool of the patriarchy!

everyone has crises of confidence - it's normal to sometimes feel like shit. don't beat yourself up for not having it all together - just try + remember some of this stuff

take time + space for yourself. you are important.

challenge yourself to do scary things + accept that you will make mistakes

take the fucking credit. give yourself a pat on the back.

**CONFIDENCE to move, dance, walk around, be in your body in front of other people**

find out about your body. DIY\*

don't hang out with people who make you feel rubbish

**CONFIDENCE to pursue what is important to you, what you believe in, to do what you have to do.**

think of all the things you've already achieved - according to your own definition of achievement

try to look after yourself. don't smoke, eat. don't drink yourself into delusion. then you will have more energy (+ lifespan!) for revolutionary activities

you believe that various unconventional people possess true beauty entirely unconnected to mainstream judgements - so why aren't you good enough??

call off other people's value judgements of you - ESPECIALLY family, school, media, commerce. Reclaim your self-identity

achievement has fuck all to do with academics, thin-ness, careers, motherhood - come on girl - this shit is basic. don't get sucked in!

working on our own self-esteem + self-belief should be a first step for all of us in feminism

\*Julia: My friend Melanie she's doing a zine on confidence she just wanted me to ask you about your experiences of gaining confidence just kind of experiences of that because

Alison (to Tobi): You have a good quote some time in the van you said something about I'll always remember it was something like when I was younger if someone tried to make me feel like I didn't know what I was doing or what I was talking about it made me actually wanna be more push the platform more you said something like that

T: I can't remember it right now.

Crystal: What was the question again?

J: She just wanted to gather many peoples experiences of gaining confidence because she's asking a load of people and she asked me to do it so I thought I'd ask you about it if you had any experiences of gaining confidence like what helps you get up on stage and how you started or

Angela: Fear

Al: Alcohol (laughter)

Cr: I think a lot of it is how you grew up and how supportive your parents were it's very important because I had really really encouraging parents that always like encouraged me to play music and would go see me perform so that you know you can't always get it if you don't have it but that's where it starts I don't know I think it takes a mentor or someone important that can encourage you to keep going.

J: Like determination? That's what I struggle with

Cr: So if you didn't have that when you were younger maybe you could try and do that for someone else

Al: Well it's hard to regain it I think to I mean I think all people that I think there's definitely like research on women especially when they hit their teens having a real drop in confidence or self esteem or whatever and figuring out how to regain it. I read some book or something that was talking about as children they run around and play and beat up boys whatever you know they're all playing together on the playground yeah

T: Carol Gilligan

J: A different voice (laughter)

Al: But something happens when they hit puberty was that right when they hit puberty all of a sudden self esteem goes down

J: Yeah and they're like silenced

Al: And like trying to figure out exactly why that happens or whatever because I was brought up with radical feminist lesbian hippie mom or whatever you know who was overflowing with confidence and stuff like that but sometimes I felt that it was lost on me I didn't have as much as her or something like that but I think there's other factors in my early childhood that made it harder yeah I think sometimes it's just like the encouragement off other people like you you know.

T: I think for me like I wanted to be in a band like but like having someone like Calvin Johnson who like was in my favourite band take an interest in me and tell me you can do this, this is how you do it and sort of demystify it to me and then having like role models like Heather from Beat Happening and then later Jean from Mecca Normal I mean seeing Mecca Normal is probably the reason why I ever would like consider screaming something political into the microphone as opposed to just singing something personal in a nice feminine way. So I don't know I think it's like older people that you admire taking you seriously and like mentoring in a way like you said.

Cr: And to realise that even though people like worship others and think that they are a rock star they have the exact same feelings you do they don't always feel confident they feel like a loser you know like you know it's just

An: That's human nature everyone feels like that

Cr: And even if people appear that they don't, they're just good at hiding it.

An: That's half the battle and once you start acting confident you start feeling more confident

T: I remember Joan Jett told me that she has stage fright really bad every night and you would never know that like watching her perform

Al: Right right

Cr: And that's when people are the most attractive is when they're confident in who they are no matter what they look like or

An: Learning to know it's okay to make a mistake or to screw something up that it's not bad it's just something that happens to everybody

Al: But like breaking down the barriers is an important part to what you're saying like we can be total fuck ups on stage and it's part of the experience it's part of performance it's part of being in a band and it can be fun and it can still be a performance and entertaining but also and also trying to break down the barrier between the audience and the performer through I don't know

An: Mishaps (laughter)

Al: Mishaps or jumping off the stage or bringing the person on stage

An: I think it's its own art being kind of I'm just kind of clumsy and absent minded so you have to use your weaknesses you know and abuse your weaknesses (laughter) you know and for confidence.\*

> Julia in conversation with Partyline (Allison Woolfe (Al), Crystal (Cr) & Angela (An)) and Spider And The Webs (Tobi Vail (T), Chris (Ch) & James).

## \*Confidence\*

\*I have lots of tips. I have troubles with confidence:

Don't let the scene rule your life. Don't think that your scene is always going to protect you. Believe in yourself, it sounds cheesy but very important. Even though your community will save you, your scene wont. Completely different. I really think that you should look at yourself naked and break the moulds that you're told you're supposed to look like. And wear a lot of eyeliner, where ever you go, no matter what outfit you're in.

And if people shout stupid stuff at you in the street immediately tell them to fuck off. Immediately. Unless they're a skinhead and you're scared.\* >Beth Ditto (The Gossip)

\*Confidence\*

Obviously, this discussion of Confidence is far from over, it's a work-in-progress - as all confidence building is. If you would like to contribute to the discussion email your thoughts so they can feature in future issues as an important rolling zine theme & a continued reminder of how crucial it is for us to keep on top of our confidence ☆

(Thanks to Bob Chic Alors for Beth Ditto interview excerpt, and to Julia Downes for the kick ass Partyline & Spider and the Webs interview excerpts. You both rule!)

\*Confidence\*

\*Confidence\*

# Isn't it a bit strange

by: Karolina Bang 2004

...that nakedness equals sex?



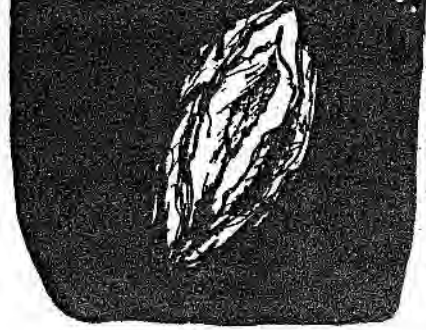
...that you can't snog your girl-friend without guys drooling over it?



...that the female body has become kitch...



...that there's no obvious word or symbol for pussies?



...that you can still be seeing as something sexual in your tracksuit-trousers in the supermarket just because you're a woman?



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I wrote when I was a little girl.

I was silenced.

I was not allowed to speak.

To declare something in speech is to give it truth even when it appears a lie.

It gives it weight, volume and substance.

It is too powerful to be heard.

The embracing of adulthood as an escape from childhood has worked only though a compromise.

As one gets older one must discard childish things,

As long as I clung to those memories, I could not experience the escape I required. I had to collate them and file them away. Something I never thought I could do. The anger and pain would never let me do so.

I let them go.

I turned that anger into ambition and I bloody well fought.

I was never going to get justice, it would never be amended, but I could reclaim my body.

No longer the childish body of fear, the bruised, scarred frail being. I killed it off.

I killed *me* off.

I would not hurt myself anymore, and nor would anyone else.

I am strong. I am weak.

In my weakness I am no longer weak, I am strong. I am an adult: I possess autonomy, authority, choice.

The pain...the hole, that deep, deep, aching hole inside me.

The darkness held me. The light betrayed my eyes; it presented smiles when all I saw was grief, all I felt was pain.

I held onto my stomach like a last grasp at finding a soul, Void. Grief. An aching chasm. My breath slow, calm, the peace I always sought, in my aching last breathes I find it. That night I cried, I cried like the child I was. The adult body succumbed to its pilot. The breath screamed from me.

My soul awoke.

It shouted from my skin, everything else quiet but my screams.

That night I died.

That night when I felt my heart stop,

I felt that last stale breath of my girlhood exhale.

That night I started to live.

Debbie.



Melt Banana + Khanate @ Joseph's Well, Leeds, 18<sup>th</sup> November

Life is full of surprises. On rare occasions they are very pleasing, a case in point being the live incarnation of Melt Banana. I knew they were gonna be good, I didn't know they were gonna be *that* good. Usually however, you feel it would've been better not to know, hence Khanate (pronounced KON-AYT, as in "I fockon 'ate this band"). All the promotion for the gig screams loud and proud "Only UK gig Melt Banana are playing with Khanate". On the basis of this statement I assume rather prematurely that Khanate will be an awesome Japanese band who can only make it over for one date, instead they are monotonous American dudes who can only make it over for one date. My friend turns to me at the end of their set and says, "They've drained me of the will to live", which is as accurate a review of them as anyone can give but I'll try my best to expand. As Khanate musically masturbate onstage, peddling their seemingly endless dirgey shite, I do indeed feel the heart being slowly sucked out of my body until it seems like there's nothing left inside. Khanate use really loud guitars and drill sound effects in a way that is moderately horrible and hard on the ears (which I imagine they were aiming for, so well done there lads) yet my overwhelming response is boredom gradually subsiding into numbness. This is hopefully the closest I will ever come to understanding the feeling of being lobotomised. The singer screams in a manner akin to Rock School's Emperor, but with decidedly less charm or charisma as this whole display feels like one big penis extension. Indeed, if they all had got up onstage and wanked for one and a half hours they probably would've been mildly more watchable. Their set consisted of three songs, each one lasting between twenty and forty minutes. Imagine the album.

★ THIS SHIT IS MELT BANANAS! ★



Melt Banana are the polar opposite. You know, fun? For a start they're much more exciting to look at, dancing and leaping about the stage like they're having stylish rhythmical epileptic fits. Sometimes Yako the lead singer does awesome mimes and pulls 'expressionistic' faces. I know that sounds like something you might see in some terrible student drama class but it really is gripping to watch. They are all dressed in white; Yako in a

white hoody which makes me think of snow, the hood of which keeps falling down, the guitarist with a surgical mask duct-taped over his nose and mouth. How does he breathe? I couldn't actually see the drummer but I heard on the grapevine he was very impressive to watch too! As soon as the guitarist starts to shake and play I'm transfixed. When Yako opens her mouth mine turns into a smile which stays there for the duration of the set. Elements of Melt Banana's sound reminds me of digital hardcore bands I love very much such as Atari Teenage Riot, punk/hardcore yes, but with some (at the risk of sounding like a schindie uncle gatecrashing a drum n bass night) mental beats thrown in for good measure that make you wanna dance and jump about like you're being given electric shocks only not as painful. But Melt Banana were there before Digital Hardcore and are even better. At one point in their set they bring out all their uber short songs which last approximately ten seconds each and have so much charm. Their other songs are like perfect hardcore pop songs, gradually restoring the feeling in me I thought their support had removed forever.

★ THIS SHIT IS SHITE ★ 😊



Helena Lukowska (milkshake65@hotmail.com)

# Partyline & Spider and the Webs

If you missed out on getting to see Partyline and Spider and the Webs on their joint tour this autumn you oughta be ashamed! Hitting the UK and Europe club, pub, and Ladyfest circuit seemed like a dream soaked in feminist politics, hot pants, stripes and lots of bottled beer. Most readers will probably recognise Allison Wolfes rants anywhere coined in *Bratmobile*, *Cold Cold Hearts*, and the *Hawney Troof* and now fronting the awesome DC based Partyline, as well as Tobi Vail who once drummed for *Bikini Kill* and now plays drums, guitar and sings for *Spider and the Webs*. I think the one thing that I got from talking to them was how grounded and uber-inspirational it was to see them still infusing politics in their everyday lives, constantly demystifying rhetoric and bullshit, and discussing the history and future of the riot grrrl movement they are still held up to represent with humour and soul. The constant questioning and deconstruction of the structures within we live, make music, go to work and try to resist taking our psychic existence. I read a quote somewhere recently from Courtney Love who was talking about the situation of women in the music industry (yes still bad) and she was pointing her finger at the riot grrrls and asking where are they now? Well they're right here, now, talking to us the younger generation, doing what they always did, questioning, resisting, creating new bands and zines, having fun touring the world, inspiring us girls and women to step up to the challenge, to create something new, and to figure it out by ourselves. So I caught up with them the day after they played in Leeds, we sat around and discussed a wide range of things from the disappointing re-election of bush and life under his regime, psychotic stalker novels and even how unhealthy eggs are for you (no more than two a day). Then I figured I better switch the tape recorder on...



Allison (Al): I'm Allison and I'm in Partyline  
Rosie (R): I don't need to be in this  
Al: I thought you were going to be in it, that's Rosie over there  
Crystal (Cr): I'm Crystal in Partyline  
Angela (An): Angela ditto  
Tobi (T): oh erm Tobi  
Chris (Ch): I'm Chris from spider and the webs  
Julia (J): This is so formal (laughter) bob do you wanna?  
Bob (B): I'm making dinner and I'm Bob (laughter)

J: Okay so really I don't know do you wanna talk about how the tour's been going or?  
Al: Okay yeah we've been on an erm Partyline and spider and the webs have been on tour together for almost a month now in Europe and the UK and it's been really fun it's been awesome there's like seven people on tour together it's crazy and erm I don't know we're near the end we only have two shows left and erm but it's been really cool.  
J: So erm did you play three ladyfests?

Ch: No we only played two  
J: Just two was it just Madrid and Brighton  
Ch: Yeah just those two  
J: And how did you find those  
Ch: Those were great they were awesome yeah Madrid was huge and really more urban and Brighton seemed more community a sort of style like very light knit or whatever and this is James from spider and the webs walking into the room  
An: And then he left the room (laughter)  
T: That was James he hasn't had coffee yet  
Al: He can have my dregs  
T: You have dregs of coffee?  
Al: Yeah okay so yeah the Ladyfests were really cool those were kind of the high points I think you know I mean you definitely have the built in population and fun and they were like also we were kind of surprised well maybe Angela will say this about how much of a big party the ladyfests were they were just total party ladyfests  
An: They were definitely some of the wildest shows either like the partying until 5am or longer or you know and just constant energy throughout the night you know and the daytime and just you know and the best bands cutest audience  
R: Do you think there weren't as much politics involved than the American ones or?  
Al: Hmm like how is the political balance or whatever well it's hard to say because when you're playing and you're passing through town you don't necessarily you know woke up too late maybe to go to some of the panels or whatever. So it always kind of depends on your level of involvement like when did you wake up what you did attend but I just think it's kind of cool in a way that like the ladyfests were like the biggest party atmospheres because it kind of shows I think some people might have misconceptions about arrghh ladyfests about being like ohhh that's just a bunch of uptight girls who are just like no fun and just politics you know they're no fun and it's just like these are way more fun than like the dudedests so you know.  
An: Well honestly I just enjoy the music more and also the fact that you get to see more bands like sometimes when we've been playing we've been the only two bands and I just think the whole part of travelling around and going to other countries and things is seeing other bands and even if you don't necessarily love all of them I just love to see what people are doing or just you know what's going on in each region or city or town and just meeting people that are kind of doing similar, like also in a band but they might have a totally different perspective of why they're doing it or how they're doing it you know in another country or something and I think that's one of the more gratifying parts you know and when you're at ladyfest you're just multiplying the number of experiences like that because there's so many more bands playing and artists and things and it's always great and I'll say it networking you know networking, networking, networking, you know talking to people getting information from them just information sharing and networking I don't want to sound like a corporate nerd but you know we're all on the same page and everything no we're not on the same page and that's good because you can learn what page other people are on.  
Al: Tobi what do you think?  
T: I don't really have anything to say  
J: I mean were you two both involved in the first ladyfest?  
Al: Yeah  
J: Did you have one this year?  
Al: Olympia did have yeah I wasn't involved but Tobi was involved  
T: I wasn't an organiser but we played it  
J: Because wasn't it like it's never going to happen again  
Al: Well I think it sort of well. Well I think what's interesting about ladyfest too is that people can take the idea and run with it and do one in their own town and it kind of format it to their own communities and utilise the resources that might exist in each different town or different community and then it makes it different. I mean I think there are some things that are similar of course but also there are difference and it's always interesting to go see those and like Angela said go and meet other people and see how things work in other places and see how ladyfests work in other places. So in a way I think it's fine if people want to do it again in their town or whatever and it'll still be different because it's different organisers but I find it more interesting to go to and see how it is in always a different place.  
J: That's cool I mean have you heard of CLITfest at all?  
T: Uh urrr  
J: Because the thing I find is like being in two different communities at the same time like a hardcore punk one and then also what you might term riot grrrl one and the thing that strikes me is that there's hardly any discussion or overlap between those two communities so sometimes I feel like I'm in two places at the same time and I'm never really quite completely in place. There was a CLITfest which is like Combatting Latent Inequality Together by the Breast brigade and it was kind of like ladyfest but there just seems to be no dialogue between the two communities. Anyway I was just wondering if you'd heard of it but  
Cr: CLITfest?  
J: Yeah CLITfest  
An: Was it like music

J: Yeah like two days of like workshops bands and they made a rule that like each band had to have at least one woman in it and they had a really hard time to find any because I guess hardcore punk is like the same I mean I find that over here.

Al: I still think it's still cool that people have something and they call it use a different name use terms that are more fun for them or whatever but maybe I don't know we're playing this thing in London Her Noise and I don't really know a whole lot about it but it seems like yeah it's also like women are subjugated or whatever and it doesn't have to be ladyfest or called that or related to it exactly but it's a celebration of women in music or whatever

Ch: It might be a good idea to have every organisation sort of to have their own name on it you know but of course having everything ladyfest would

Al: But at least you can go to the ladyfest dot org clearing house website and be like what one's going to happen next ohh I wanna go there I'll click on them and then email them (laughter)

An: Yeah it's like one stop shopping that's nice but it'd cool if there's like a site where it had like different festivals or maybe even not just focussed on music but are focussed on literature or visual art or something you know because there's a lot of events and organisations even beyond music that will be relevant and worth checking into

T: Yeah you could probably email the webmaster at ladyfest dot org and she would put everything up there it doesn't have to be about ladyfest.

J: I mean when you organised the first ladyfest did you really expect that it would have such a big huge impact?

T: Yes

J: You did, really?

T: But I felt that with riot grrrl too and you (pointing at Allison) didn't. I always think that things are going to be huge and sometimes they aren't and sometimes they are.

Al: I don't know I can't remember I definitely felt very driven by the idea and really like this has to happen it'll be really great but yeah I guess I don't have that much farsight to see like the ripples like the wider effects or whatever you know but more like this would be really important amongst me and people I know and girls in music and stuff like that. Yeah I guess I thought it would be a big deal.

T: I mean the way we organised the first one was like specifically so that this could happen I mean there was a lot of discussion about trying to make it something that could happen everywhere in a decentralised way.

Al: Yeah and especially when because I was on the music organising committee and I think at some point when we had this A list B list when it was like we'll ask these people first and then see who confirms and then we'll see if and when almost everyone on the A list confirmed it was like wild it was like wow and it was like big acts and things like that

T: Not Patti Smith or Yoko Ono though

Al: That's true but you know we had like Cat Power and Nico Case and Sleater Kinney well since they were organisers but you know it was like pretty cool even just knowing that sheer numbers would show up for that but then Olympia's kind of weird town you never really know what's going to happen with shows there it could be a big band and no one shows up or something so it is a gamble of sorts. I was more worried about the gamble with Olympia in general but people love to go to festivals there so festivals all festivals there are always pretty great.

Ch: Plus it's a really good area it's erm and Olympia's so creative that like on the other hand there was this play called the transfuse that happened in Olympia and that was one of the most amazing things because it's almost everybody. Basically it was like a transgender gay lesbian sort of play like in a post-apocalyptic sort of way

T: It was a rock opera

Ch: A rock opera and it was just amazing because everybody I think it played for like a week and every show was almost sold out and it was the most amazing thing

T: Yeah and they worked on it for a year and the whole thing was an original production it was insane

Ch: And it was so Olympia and so many people came out to support it and that's the type of place Olympia is there's no other place in the world where that would have happened like you know you go to a show and it's like ohh man I can't believe I live here it's crazy.

Al: Yeah it's true it's a really supportive environment for some of these types of things and that's also why Olympia seemed like the perfect place to have the first one and there's also so many kind of progressive people and women and lesbians and stuff who own businesses there and run things and are in charge of things that it just seemed like yeah this

T: Even on the city council

Al: Yeha and it's cheaper access to space and things like that then like a city or metropolitan area so yeah it's kind of great to have ladyfest there and also the media really did a local newspaper really zeroed in on it and was very supportive which I think it was one of the first times that they really kind of like really all behind local music and reported that much about it.

T: They'd been doing that for like five years by then

Al: Oh really but when I lived there no way you'd never see anything about local bands in the paper

J: Cool I mean how did you find the riot grrrl panel thing?

Al: Which one?

J: At Ladyfest Brighton?

An: Once you found it

Al: Well finding it

An: That was a different experience altogether

Al: Well Rosie called us a few times

T: I don't really remember it that well it was like a month ago

Al: I don't think I was that prepared for it I mean I actually didn't know it was going to be a discussion of the don't need you documentary like I didn't know that was going to be screened and then that was the topic. I was sort of unaware but also like as I said we couldn't even find the place for a while so I thought it was

R: I don't know because I remember you kind of saying this one thing and it just seems like everything's really retrospective all of the time which maybe is a good thing like looking at what's happened but sometimes it just seems like we're talking about the same things all the time and just looking at what happened in Olympia and you know in the mid 90's and

J: Yeah that's like the frustrations I felt because I was sort of on the panel and then I wasn't introduced and I sort of sat there feeling like a bit of a I don't know because I was there to sort of talk about what was happening now in the UK and stuff and it didn't sort of didn't come up and maybe that's my fault

T: Yeah that's why I said to you I thought that like since it was called riot grrrl retrospective that's what it would be about but then like yeah some people in the audience was depressed that it was so much about the past or whatever but it wasn't really like nothing about it said talk about the future or the present. The one in Madrid was supposed to be a discussion about feminism and underground music and all it was was just history and there was no other questions at all and it kind of made sense because Ana De Silva was on the panel and we all wanted to listen to her talk and then that's what the questions were kind of about.

Al: And also because at the one in Madrid there was like a translator that was kind of hard to keep it fluid because we'd have to stop every however long and then the translator would translate it and into Spanish and that kind of halved the time and also made it not flow as much but I don't know. But one thing I think the panel in ladyfest Brighton could have I mean I would like to have seen it be more about british stuff in general I mean I would have liked to have seen people like I don't know pussycat trash girls or huggy bear girls or karren abtaze or whoever on these panels or to be yeah like have them tracked down and be a part of it or like Karen from huggy bear who lives in Brighton

J: That's weird how they didn't come down

Al: I know I mean it's possible they had been contacted and couldn't have made it or something I was surprised there isn't enough interest in the UK riot grrrl history.

T: Because there are movies too

Al: Or even just a feminist history that involves music too like the slits and the raincoats or whoever something like that people who might be nearby and accessible

J: Yeah people have written books retrospectively about reconstructing women in music a lot but I kind of get the impression that it frustrates people that category kind of like riot grrrl category or women in rock category because I try and write about like feminism and underground resistance and stuff like in what I do and it's really hard to like end up using the terms that have been used to categorise and contain women for so long so it's just a really tricky thing to do to talk about it but not use these gross terms all the time so I'm just kind of stuck at the moment of how to write and think about things

B: So it's easier to idolise stuff that's happening at the other side of the world as well and you only have to pick up on the more positive bits whereas it's the day to day stuff you could get bogged down with here you know like scene politics in whatever you're doing and it's hard to appreciate it without considering that's something you think everybody has it better than you because you can't see the negative side of something like

Al: You only see what inspires you

J: Yeah let's slag off Olympia (laughter)

Al: But also it doesn't have to be about I guess I'm one of the best talker but certainly not intellectually or whatever but I don't know I don't think it's that hard to kind of move between like I don't feel that riot grrrl has to be this really confining term or whatever I mean it does seem that that word kind of connotes a sort of era and time and all this stuff.

An: It seems like there's this outside pressure for it to be used in a negative context and I think that comes from the same reason that it had to happen in the first place it comes from sexism or whatever is internalised and you know having your own community with women or you know from gay bands and promoters like this is just dealing with music now you know. And I think it has sometimes a negative connotation and that's just because it's just sexism that's how I see it I don't think it's very complicated I can see it for what it is I think people are you know kind of being negative and turning it into something that is historical and not present to you know try to kind of eliminate it.

Ch: That word that term sort of inspires I mean I know I've met younger girls who are inspired by that term like they really are empowered by saying like I'm riot grrrl I think it's just like a media thing is the one thing that sees it in a negative aspect and I mean all those people that were at ladyfests who identify with riot grrrl and are really into it and that sort of what keeps them going and makes them want to do art and it's like why am I doing this oh yeah riot grrrl so it can be really positive.

An: No I really think it is really positive I just think there is a force there that and you know that idea that progress is always going to be linear you know what I mean it can't be in sort of the same sphere it's like that was then now we're doing something different it's like things are going to be different just the nature of living in a different time you know different circumstances but it's not necessarily going backwards or forwards if you know what I mean if you're calling yourself something else besides riot grrrl or if you're you know if you're more into what was going on then and that kind of music or you're just all about now or you

only wanna do electronic music or think about things going on right now but it not necessarily one's not better or worse I always think that there's like a linear model of progress as far as like you know those were the forming stages of women in music or something which is of course is a lot of bullshit because there's a lot of music before it.

T: Yeah but it was one of the times when like it was in the mainstream media and so that's a reason too why people think it was like a big part of history because the mainstream media validated it in a sense by covering it whereas it's been going on the whole time and it's still going on now it's just not in the media

Al: Right and maybe wasn't using the same words or whatever terms

B: Things in the media they become branded and stylised and what you're saying about maybe with riot grrrl it became a bit dangerous because there's loads of things you are but like if you sort of buy a brand totally it can be sort of

T: Yeah I mean we didn't even identify with the term you know

Ch: But I think also it's human nature is that people want I mean people feel comfortable and want to be part of a group and that's what makes them feel empowered like family and community and things like that so like you know just like skinhead or mod or whatever I mean people feel empowered by these terms and it's sort of confining in a way where it's like this thing like I'm punk or whatever but at the same time it's like you know that on the other hand it can sort of bring stability to somebody who you know they feel like they're part of a community so like I think it's okay to use sort of like terms because people can identify with it and not everybody is like you know reads tonnes of books or whatever and so kind of have to lay some sort of terms so people can sort of access it you know and then they can read up on it.

T: Well we were trying to create like a youth culture like archetype just like the same as mod mod-ism or punk like we were trying to create a new one that is feminist and so that's why there was the focus on identity but at the end I thought it was too much focussed on identity and not enough focus on what kinds of actions people could do which is why I like ladyfest better in a way because it's like here's something you can do and then you can decide how you are going to do it and it can reflect your community and it doesn't have to be like I'm copying this outfit that I saw in the melody maker or something you know what I mean. There's also a lot of power in youth subcultures and stuff but the struggle is to keep them countercultural to keep it as some kind of resistance happening and not having it just as marketing especially now as like how youth culture is so corporate and marketable and the media like that.

J: Yeah and I don't know how you feel about this but I'm sort of doing a feminist analysis of the NME and Q magazine at the moment and it just seems like the only women in there are Madonna and Patti Smith and with new bands they call them femme fatales and shit and there's people like Avril Lavigne and I think there was someone like Beyonce on the cover of Rolling Stones women in rock issue it just seems that like what you were saying everything's co-opted and sold back in a very sort of heterosexist way and how can you counter that though?

T: I think you just like have to keep making new things and like you know it seems like ever since at least the mid-90's everything's going to be immediately co-opted I mean like in America like until then that wasn't true and I've been reading literature and it was obviously true in England way before that with like punk and everything but we didn't have that till like 94 or the start of the early 90's I think but really 94 was you know the year but I think you can use the mainstream media to get information out and erm you know you still have to have underground media and keep creating things and not attach yourself to one term or one thing you know. I think Ladyfest is like succeeding in that I mean it hasn't been co-opted and in a way if ladyfest was co-opted it would be kind of cool because like can you imagine a huge feminist festival actually happening if that happened it might actually be a good thing.

J: Ladyfest sponsored by Coca Cola or something

R: I don't know if it happens in America but they got so much shit if they did something that's slightly not diy it just seems as though there's a very pure idea of what a ladyfest should be and what it shouldn't be as soon as you go outside of that.

T: Well I don't know because I've never been to a ladyfest other than these three

R: I'm interested in it generally not like I'm not sure if people can say what is and what isn't a ladyfest but

T: Well I think if people are making money off it then that would be wrong but like if the money's going to charity then I don't have a problem with that because we made \$30,000 for like all kinds of things in Olympia and like we got we did get donations for like dot coms and people got a lot of money we got \$1500 donated to us and it wasn't like a pure thing.

Al: But I think that if it did turn into some like if there was some kind of media orientated type of thing where there's like cheesy stuff and cheesy bands I think I'd be disappointed in the use of ladyfest just as I was over use of phrases and things that we had used or made up or whatever with riot grrrl.

T: But I think you can't lose sight of the overall goal which is like you know to try and get feminism to be a popular movement and if you want to be a popular movement you can't be underground those things are totally at odds so like if you're goal is to make feminism a popular movement which that's my goal. In one sense you have this underground world that you want to be a part of and have it be decentralised and have like everyone have access to everything and have it be very community orientated and that's the popular means of doing something too. But on the other hand it is a conflict but I don't know I mean you can't expect the mainstream media to be feminist you can't expect corporations to be anti-capitalist

you know and you know for me feminism is anti-capitalist like if it's real feminism so those are all issues but you can't lose sight of the larger goal which is to make feminism a popular movement those are the things you have to think about all the time like if it's just this tiny purist diy movement that's not, that's doing a disservice to the real goals which is to change the world.

J: It's just like a community of survival sort of thing whereas if you're thinking about changing things I mean there was a lot of hooah about le tigre signing onto a major label there was a lot of people saying it was really fucked up.

Al: What was fucked up?

J: Le Tigre signing to who did they sign to

T: Universal

Al: I mean that's everybody's own decisions and stuff like that but I still think even if there is a goal to be to want feminism to be more popular or in mainstream society or to take over or whatever of course that is something that we'd all want but I just don't really trust mainstream anything enough to think that the goal or the aim wouldn't be so watered down by the time it reached so many people or whatever but I'm not saying it's bad exactly I'm just saying that I would be distrustful or not that happy if something was

T: Yeah but if the Clash weren't on a major label Bikini Kill would have never existed and that's a fact like Bikini Kill would have not existed if the Clash were not on EMI or whatever

Al: Well I'm not saying that that's wrong with everything like obviously I was influenced by that stuff you know Bow Wow or whatever and I'm not saying it's all bad just because it's mainstream I'm just saying that I don't want fucking ladyfest to be like for Avril Lavigne and whatever to have a lady and use that for ladyfest. I'm fine if they wanna use they're own words to sell like whatever.

T: Yeah but I don't consider her a feminist but what if there was a feminist that was selling top 40 records I mean is that possible

An: Ani DiFranco you know you don't want to throw the baby out with the bathwater you know like take what you need from what the mainstream can offer if you know what I mean you don't have to jump in and sell your soul and take all of it. I feel it's sort of self-regulating I guess.

Al: I still don't want something mainstream taking over ladyfest that's bullshit and I'd get totally depressed.

An: I don't know there's one in South Africa I just checked their website and it was you know it was kind of a beer brand and more of a like lolapalooza type festival with big sponsors but you know it had all women bands and everything and it seemed really cool and some of the bands playing were interesting.

Al: I mean people can use their own terms or whatever I mean Lilith fair for example that was pre-ladyfest J: Yeah but there's a lot of debate about lilith fair considering what artists they chose, the way they chose them, a lot of branding was going on as well they had a lot of sponsors which a lot of people didn't agree with it's very messy.

B: Yeah I think the thing with this is that everything you do in life is a compromise to an extent right and it's just lots of people want to do that really big thing and get it out that way and just for me personally it's like that's cool but I don't want anything to do with it so it's not like totally disagreeing with what people are doing but

J: I think it was about what these people in bands are saying as well there's a lot of Avril Lavigne songs that are like I wanna hold you it's boring

An: I wanna get married (laughter)

T: And I think for me if we're talking about Le Tigre like if Le Tigre had a number one hit I would think that's really amazing. But that didn't happen you know the reason why it didn't happen was because well I'm not going to say the whole thing but it didn't happen and part of the reason why that's not going to happen is the whole structure of everything you know

Al: Or because the music industry is not feminist it's sexist and it's not going to accept first of all women who are a little bit older who aren't in their late teens and early twenties, it's not going to accept women who don't whatever starve themselves and aren't

An: Pose in Maxim

Al: Yeah and who aren't doing the whole sex it up thing you know

An: Like Liz Phair

Al: Bless her soul but I mean sometimes you can see the most famous women the most like women who just don't have to and they're always naked on a magazine or almost naked on the cover and I'll be like it's fine if you wanna do that but I can't believe that every single female who's popular in whatever music acting whatever why? I mean you don't see Rollins you know in a bikini on the cover of everything. I mean I'd like to (laughter) or you don't see JZ I don't want to see him like that but (laughter)

J: We could ask them and make our own

Ch: Missy Elliot

T: Yeah Missy Elliot doesn't do that, she's hilarious

Al: But she is a rare exception Missy Elliot I mean I don't think anyone exactly has to but I think they're expected to.

An: Well if you have less obvious talents

Al: That we also found with bands that like well like the donnas went major label and stuff and it's not like they were so alternative or whatever and had political goals or whatever but like the industry and their handlers were all telling the guitar player not to wear a skirt because they thought she had cellulite on her thighs and that guitar player is one of the more slick mainstream looking people I've ever seen I mean in a traditional societal way beautiful and perfect actually and they're telling her she's too fat and not to wear a skirt god!

B: It's like the huge double standards the main one is like if a woman's going to be that big she has to be really pretty but there's so many ugly guys  
A: Yeah!  
B: And I think that's one of the main ones  
An: Like Blink 182  
B: Yeah except you never see ugly women in music at all  
T: Yeah like even guys who supposedly are attractive say Dave Grohl I'm sorry but a lot of the time he looks really bad in his photos and it's like you know no women that popular in bands would be allowed to have their photos looking that bad no.  
A: I'm sorry he's not cute! (laughter)  
An: But that's not the point, the point is he's a guy he doesn't have to be cute  
T: Yeah like half the time he doesn't even look like he combed his hair or anything in the photoshoot or whatever got ready whereas like every woman has to have like a makeover or something  
A: Right right  
An: Plus they're so unrealistic because they're like airbrushing there's actually some website that will show you how much they actually airbrush and it's incredible the before and after pictures it's like a different person they're creating you know that's not a real person it's just so with photoshop technology is just  
A: Yeah it's so odd  
T: Like with Belinda Carlisle  
A: Yeah totally oh who as on the cover of GQ I saw the other I can't remember it was some woman and she was just so clearly airbrushed entirely and it looked like porn  
J: Yeah like Julia Roberts legs on Pretty Women weren't even her own legs  
An: Now you need body doubles for a photo shoot I mean where does it end (laughter)  
J: I think they even traced down Julia Roberts legs for an interview in some documentary I saw  
B: Like her legs are gonna that bad anyway do you know what I mean?  
J: Yeah just not good enough you see  
B: It's the ultimate perfection no matter what is  
Ch: But the other thing too where's the problem is it the corporation or is it the consumer? Because you know they're doing these things because they know that it sells records or sells whatever they wanna sell you know  
A: But if you're only offered like one type of thing or one set of values or just a couple of things it's like there's just enough choices and of course people just keep buying  
Cr: And they don't think outside of the box they don't think I don't have to look this way  
An: They hey it's in a magazine you know what I mean that has a lot of sway  
Ch: But you'd think things would change because there's so with the internet and everything and like with TV there's so any fact or any piece of information at the world is at your fingertips  
B: Yeah but it's a question of proportion though because you still get like most people still get like watch TV for five hours a day and they get so many of their messages from there and then there's this little bit off the internet and it's quite hard to believe stuff sometimes if you know what I mean?  
Ch: Yeah but why are people watching television for five hours a day?  
An: Because they get home from work and they're tired  
A: And depressed yeah  
An: They're depressed and they  
Ch: Is it because people want to just sit there and watch TV that's the best form of entertainment if that's what they're doing sitting there and watching TV if that's all they want to do then they're going to do it and everybody here sat round we all read books and so we all have our great ideas and stuff like that  
A: (Laughs)  
Ch: But it's you know people  
A: I actually watch a lot of TV  
An: I watch reality TV  
Ch: I watch a lot of TV too I was raised on TV and all that other stuff but at the same time if I didn't meet certain people in my life that introduced me to different ideas then maybe I would be you know playing soccer and working in an office job or something you know. If I didn't meet the right type of people or if I wasn't living in Olympia who knows what type of music I might be playing in I might be playing in a back up band for Backstreet or something you know  
T: (Laughs)  
A: Yeah I wouldn't even be in music  
Ch: So I'm just lucky to actually be able to know people who are able to turn me onto different ideas and like you know be interested in different but like I think in general people are lazy and they just take it you know  
A: Or they're in pain you know I think I mean people who are really sick have no other options but to lay around there read or watch TV  
An: It should be on like health insurance or something or just like whoever you're surrounded by I think there's a lot of pressure to conform you know it's a mess and maybe just because of how you grew up you don't have this like you know somebody could get beat up or something you know for like having the wrong opinion or something

Ch: I know it's like every time I leave Olympia I realise like actually what the general population are like and it really is like and how it really is and they all really just want to be told what they want to hear and then go home you know cuz that's really what most people want you know  
T: Well that's what I want every time I work a forty hour a week job you know I just wanna go home and relax  
A: Because you're tired  
An: You're exhausted  
Ch: Yeah which is fine  
T: And you feel psychically drained  
A: Right you get it sucked out of you every day at work  
Ch: Not but I mean I totally understand I'm the same way but at the same time you know you have the drive to learn something else or you have ideas you know and you can be able to filter out information that's being like  
T: Yeah but I won't have any energy to do anything even working like thirty five hours rather than forty at a job that's meaningful to me versus a job where I feel completely exploited it makes all the difference you know  
Ch: I don't know I just wonder where it starts but I think that corporations are really bad but at the same time I think you know people if they put some Avril Lavigne in a skinny little punk rock outfit and a girl is like yeah  
T: Well that was kind of the problem for me with riot grrrl too is like we're "riot grrrls" in quotes you know that era of music of bikini kill and bratmobile and heavens to betsy and all that because I was really disappointed with the audience response or you know audience versus performer whatever that dichotomy is because like people would just want to go there and they'd just wanna hear what the people in those bands had to say they'd want to read your fanzine they wanna you know like. I mean fanzines were the exception but we were like go start your own bands go start this where you live I mean and that didn't really happen. Bands started but they broke up on the way, the music thing that was we were trying to get to happen didn't really happen the fashion thing happened and the zine thing happened but the band thing didn't really happen you know and that was frustrating. But yeah it didn't happen in a way where you could really see it and when I say that to people who are like ten years younger than me they're like what are talking about all these bands happened but it's like it happened so slowly you know what I mean because I had like twelve year olds in the audience and like then five years later they made bands or whatever but that was kind of frustrating because we couldn't see it happening at the time it just seemed like they were just consumers and they just wanted to buy the product that you could make, as fast as you could make it they would buy it, but they wouldn't make their own thing.  
A: I don't know I mean maybe it's just my perception but back then I thought there were definitely more girl bands I felt that at least in every town I knew a girl band or a girl promoter or something back then and that was before the internet and everything well before it was really taking off and then now it almost seems more rare in the underground  
T: On the west coast there are always a lot of bands  
Cr: Yeah but how much of that is due to the sexism of the whole scene you know  
J: Can't really tell what's good anymore sometimes you have to think a lot harder  
T: But it was just alienating to have people come there and want your autograph when all you really wanted was to have feminist peers that were making like music you could listen to. It kind of made you come across as like a snobby asshole because you'd be like why the hell do you want my autograph like I'm no better than you and then after saying that a couple of times you realise you have to sign the autograph and say hey what's your name like what do you do do you play music and try to be like engaging in a human way but because people get so insulted if you don't play the role that they are seeing you in you know.  
A: Well I just think it's important to make a human connection like wherever you go and stuff like that and I think a lot of times people were disappointed people because maybe various of us were fighting within our own bands or being anti-social or whatever and if they meet someone who influenced them a lot and the person was rude to them and sadly that was actually happening quite a lot like a lot of anti-social behaviour and social dysfunction going on and it's not like it was any one person's fault it was probably just like ok this band's not getting along or you know whatever or someone has just died and I don't wanna talk to anyone you know stuff like that. But I mean at the same time it's like yeah why should the responsibility all be on this one person who someone idolises or looks up to  
T: I guess for our band there was so much pressure on Kathleen like every single time we played and this is not an exaggeration every single time we played in for like five or six years someone would come up to her and say I was raped by that person over there like what should I do about it?  
A: That's a lot to deal with  
T: And then the whole entire show would be about her freaking out about that situation and the person would often be like and I've never told anyone.  
B: Yeah it's weird but it's like the answer is sort of doing like a huge Avril Lavigne is like having bands in every state who are similar and diy do you know what I mean? Because you can't just but it's almost trying to replace that to total media saturation with just like another diy band that can't quite keep up with it and yeah it's like you were saying if people don't do it in their home towns it's kind of a lot of work for  
T: Yeah it was just really intense and a lot of pressure in a different kind of way than maybe other people have to deal with.

Ch: Oh yeah

T: So it'd be like if we had a dressing room like sometimes she'd just hide in there and it'd be like why is your singer not hanging out with us and it'd be like well she's dealing with a lot of stuff right now.

Al: It's just you have a lot of expectations you know every day.

J: Yeah maybe it was like your band was the only band that was saying that sort of thing at that time like everybody was kind of exploding over that

T: And looking for a spokesperson and

Al: But the thing was it wasn't exactly and I think a lot of people cling to tokens and things like that like they want to be like oh bikini kill is the one girl local band or Sleater Kinney is like the only girl band that counts right now or whatever when really there was a lot of stuff going on, a lot of girls organising and having meetings and making music or whatever but with women we're always treated like there's not enough room for all of us or with any marginalised group you're always treated like there's not enough room for all of you and then tokens are picked out to represent the whole. And it's frustrating you know and it ends up pitting girls against each other.

T: That's true

An: It's never the whole history of women in bands you know it's just like two or three and they'll find some way even if they sound anything like it they'll find something about it you know like bikini kill you know or something because they're the ones that will register with someone and that just limits the whole scene

T: I remember like even when our band started like every time we got press would be like they're not the go-go's like the go-go's had already broken up like six years earlier or something whatever and like would be how everyone would write about us it was really weird and then I'd be like I love the go-go's and they'd be like really like they were like shocked you know because they put you in these weird categories.

J: Like the angry girl band box

T: Yeah

Al: But you're right every article in order to uplift one person they have to diss another like especially when Sleater Kinney first started getting a lot of press it was like every goddam article was like out of the ashes of riot grrrl or basically

An: First of all out of the ashes

Al: Right yeah I know as if there was

An: Like the witches of Salem you know who set them on fire

Al: But it was like that it was all like riot grrrl failed and all those bands are still [tape break] they're smarter they're more musicians or whatever and I was like clearly they are great but also the fact that it has to be pointed out that they're good musicians or that they can play their instruments is so insulting. You don't hear that like Oasis where people go on and on about how they can actually play guitar yeah you know

B: Rising out of the ashes of Britpop

Al: Right yeah or yeah you know but I also think the media serves to like it has to have some conflict to keep the story going whatever you know so of course it'll always be

An: We all love a bit of conflict

Al: Right but you know even you'd have Blur and Oasis okay but with the girls it was like you'd have Babes in Toyland versus Hole or riot grrrls against 7 Year Bitch you know it was always pitting people against each other which I guess it does in every way.

B: It's the whole idea of dichotomy again isn't it it's A or B you can't be both you can be a girl band or everything else

An: Well with other bands like with a guy band or something I just felt there was bigger pool to compare to but with women bands there's just such a handful that they just seem more intense and limiting because you know they're always comparing bands to other bands I mean that's a way of describing them.

B: You hear a band compacting something it as riot grrrl because it means other people can sort of justify it without having to relate to it whereas if it was just girls in bands it would be something more integrated with the rest of that thing but if you give something it's own label it's like you're letting it exist but saying it's over there.

J: Yeah it's not effecting the rock or punk canon and it's never talked about you know it's never talked about in like critical musicology and stuff like that it's like you can go off and do that in your women and rock class and like oh yeah

An: We have an hour for you

B: And reading queer stuff at the moment it's the same with like labeling people as homosexual or whatever it's like you can have your own culture over there but it's nothing to do with us like it's the same all the way down you just make all these little compartments and the you can say oh that's alright I approve of that but then there's that distance

Al: Keep it over there

An: So it's not serious

Cr: Makes them feel more comfortable

B: Yeah so it's look at me I'm really liberal I approve of you're little bubble there you know

Ch: And plus it is about comfort zones like in what you were mentioned is just like when you start making a break in what's normal mainstream then like people like what James said in an earlier

interview is that people fear it and so when people fear it what they're going to do they're going to attack it they're going to get rid of it especially with riot grrrl like you girls like you know like it was a big deal because like you know nothing really came before it I mean the first people to do anything are going to have the hardest time doing it like the first black anything the first black anybody had a really fucking hard time doing it. Like the Black Panthers for example like they were a peaceful organisation that fed people and like did all the stuff and taught people who weren't being taught, schooled people who weren't being schooled and they totally got attacked and they had to arm themselves and once they had a gun then like they killed them all off, they put crack in the ghetto, they divided everything up and they tried to kill it like as soon as possible and it's because people didn't understand you know and you know like it's got to be so heavy like what you're saying Tobi it's girls who have no idea what to do and they get this tape and it's the only tape that's speaking to them and I'm totally picturing this girl who's been raped or like abused in some sort of way and feels they have no way out in like the middle of Kansas and they're just sitting in a room by themselves like listening to Kathleen singing to them and then when you guys show up in town it's like WAHHHH it's gotta be tough because you guys were the first people and that's gotta be really hard I can only imagine like trying to deal with that

J: But it's also like where do we go from here, that's what I'm trying to figure out

Al: Also a lot of things are hard for a lot of people even just to make it out like oh it's just harder for certain bands or whatever like everybody has something hard in their lives that they're dealing with but I don't know I mean yeah there's a lot of pressure and stuff and just the pitting of people against each other and I know one time it was when bratmobile got back together and we were playing a show and I guess this girl had asked me to go talk to her friend across the room and I said I would and then I disappeared in the dressing room and never came back whatever. Who knows what was going on I don't even remember it but then the girl posted on like a website actually on our message board I think and was like oh Allison is so horrible she said she'd come talk to my friend, my friend had leukaemia and then died after you know how ever many weeks after the show and she that was the one thing my friend wanted to do was go see bratmobile and meet her and stuff and I've met Kathleen Hanna and she's way more of a rock star than Allison and she came and talked to my friend and it's just like you know turning it into a big you're an asshole this is a war Kathleen versus Allison or whatever and I was devastated by that also my mother had just died of cancer recently and I was just like don't you fucking dare say that I don't know about this or care about this kind of thing. I mean nobody told me there was a girl who had cancer waiting for me I mean had I known I would have gone straight there you know but who knows what was going on I mean I might have been in the backroom you know I could have been tired, I could have been sick I could have been drunk, I could have been like late loading which often happen and my band were yelling at me to help load or whatever you know it's like who knows what happened and then who knows like lord knows that there's been plenty of times where Kathleen hasn't talked to whoever or hasn't been nice to whoever but (laughter) but it happened to be the night that she actually left the dressing room and came and talked to someone you know or maybe she was told that that person had cancer you know whatever but it was just like ahhhhh made me so mad. So like why should but it's as if one of us is meant to have the cure or have the answer or have the whatever you know

B: It's just that whole celebrity thing is really like that

Al: I mean the idea that we're celebrities (laughter)

T: I go to work every day

B: That's what I mean like people just treating you

J: I mean that came out on the riot grrrl panel as well was like you were saying I work at mail order for kill rock stars and you were saying you work of Washington post and they were like (!) it was like they pictured you in some sort of mansion or something

An: Yeah riot grrrl revival parties the underground (laughter) piles of goals.

If you haven't already got the Partyline/Spider and the Webs split ep on local kid records you can order a copy from [www.localkid.co.uk](http://www.localkid.co.uk) for £3 plus p+p. Local kids are an awesome feminist/queer collective that emerged from ladyfest Bristol they arranged and drove around partyline and spider and the webs on this tour as well as many other cool tours, so pay their site a visit to see all the other cool stuff those kids are up to.

Tobi's currently involved in...

[www.feministsagainstbush.com](http://www.feministsagainstbush.com) (new collective resistance)

[www.bumpidee.com](http://www.bumpidee.com) (online zine)

[www.myspace.com/spiderandthewebs](http://www.myspace.com/spiderandthewebs) (with James and Chris)

And Allison, Angela and Crystal's are...

[www.partylinedc.com](http://www.partylinedc.com)

# Staying In

Most Definitely NOT because you're too tired to go out!

At Your House  
will never

£ Free

Still cool!



Your CD Collection - Channel 4 - June Sarpong OST - Being 'Creative' - The 6th Bag Of Seabrooks - Losing The Remote - Friends - Friends - Friends - The Inside Of Your Head - Picking The Skin Off Your Feet - Tea Scum Stains - Nice Bog Roll - Friends

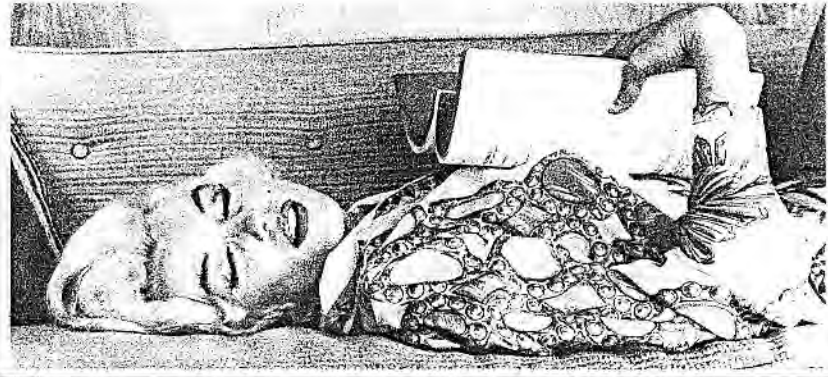
*"Got a to-do list behind my eyes.  
So go tell your friends I'm still a feminist but I won't be coming to your benefit"*

Following inspiring conversations with incredibly active and awe-inspiring friends, a section of the next issue of Reassess Your Weapons will be dedicated to BURNOUT.

Burnout, stress and pressure within DIY communities, and beyond, including when balancing work/ DIY/ social/ creative/ volunteer commitments with our own personal wellbeing, is a hugely common occurrence. We feel it is important to identify, discuss, name and think about burnout so that we don't all collapse under the weight of it.

Hopefully doing this will help us to see the stresses and pressures so that we can more effectively cope, as well as support each other through, and help share the load. Hopefully by opening up the discussion, and validating burnout as an important and dangerous problem, we can all begin to feel less like we're letting people down or missing out by stepping back every once in a while.

Reassess Your Weapons welcomes your experiences and/or thoughts & advice on how to avoid/overcome burnout (and still feel as if you're able to be involved and active and creative). Please submit your ideas, in any form, to: [m\\_k\\_maddison@hotmail.com](mailto:m_k_maddison@hotmail.com) by the end of February 2006. Thank you. xx



FROM ALICIA:  
(7<sup>th</sup> September 2005)

*Ever since Bush and his cohorts came into power many of us have known just how dangerous they are. We spoke out against their politics, theology as a way of governance, tax breaks for millionaires, raiding the budget and repealing decades of environmental regulations in favour of their personal investment interests. We spoke out against the war on "terr-r" and the haemorrhage of American jobs to third world slaves. The media has called us "chicken litters" and liberal special interest groups out to bring Satan and Allah into public schools. For me personally it has been cold comfort that history will bear us out, only after tens of thousands of deaths and backasswards foreign policies that will keep most of the middle east as an occupied territory long after the "war on terr-r" is over. And then comes a big shit storm, er... hurricane to expose the fact that the emperor wears no clothes.*

*Today, 8 days after the storm of the century wiped out a good portion of the southern coast, the toxic flood waters are receding enough to expose the real cause of the disaster, red tape and the ever inefficient government approach of "what a big mess, someone really ought to do something!"*

*The endless preparations to halt the next 9/11 have not only kept Americans on the verge of panic for years, but have funnelled billions of dollars, man power and public attention away from the ever deplorable conditions that many people live in here at home. For those who rely on FOX news to learn about the world I am sure it is shocking to realize what a thin margin divides many American towns and cities from becoming third world moonscapes that make post-tsunami Thailand look like the picture of order and efficiency. The simple fact is that all Americans should be shaking in their shoes and hoping that the next big disaster doesn't happen in their town. This hurricane has laid bare the complete breakdown of any government agency to act either independently or as a team to bring even a bottle of water to a city drowning in its own filth. When NBC cameramen accidentally discover 20,000 people trapped in the middle of a city 4 days after the storm with no supplies, relying on 1 nurse and self rule and still have it take 3 more days to drive in a convoy with food and water, who is to blame? When there are orders for a mandatory evacuation and those without car or money are left to die, who is to blame for not sending busses to the nursing home, or the projects? When 2 New Orleans cops kill themselves in one day because they were ordered to guard Kmart while their families drowned in shit and children were raped in the shelters, who is to blame? Sadly, everyone is. Bush, with his empty words of hope and his promise that "Trent Lott's home will be rebuilt, and he and I will sit on the porch and have a drink." Cheney, in Montana, hiking and enjoying nature. Condi Rice shopping for GODDAMN shoes on Fifth Ave. And the rest of them, FEMA director, HOMEland security, whose homeland do you secure exactly? And whomever ordered the troop to point machine guns at American families knee deep in water while their babies cried for water.*

*I could go on but for once I don't need to, the news is actually reporting the real story and realizing that their job can and should be used for good and not evil. For those of us who saw the need for change long ago, there is no sense of victory in the exposure of the empty promises and lies, only the empty knowledge that it did not have to be this way.*

\*\*\*\*\*

I've been laid on the couch ill for the past week, half awake half asleep, completely unable to comprehend just what shit the world is in. I've been laid here with the news on the radio washing over me, at times shaking me hard, but more often completely immobilising me with fear. And the majority of the news?: The destruction and complete despair of the Gulf Coast of America. Destruction & despair that has been heightening daily. It's eight days down the line now and I'm still on the couch, (though no longer just through illness), and it's still getting worse; the devastation & hopelessness building in magnitude and severity as the fuller picture comes to light. The stories of the everyday lives of individuals coming to the fore, bringing it home, screaming in my face. The mortality and morality of this situation rendering me ever more helpless and hopeless.

Today I read the above note from Alicia on a blog. And I realised, not that I hadn't before, that lying down (quite literally in my case) and being immobile when there is so much to be done is a nonsense. A nonsense that seemingly the American government doesn't appreciate.

Three days before this I had read and heard of the radical, hardline Christian fundamentalist who had blamed Hurricane Katrina and the destruction wrecked on this area of America, on the debauched nature of New Orleans, singling out its LGBT community; 'Although the loss of lives is deeply saddening, this act of God destroyed a wicked city' claimed *Repent America* director Michael Marcavage. The hurricane and subsequent atrocities an apparent 'Act of God' in lieu of what Marcavage called a 'public celebration of sin' within New Orleans; of the city he now hopes: 'may it never be the same again'. Marcavage went further, citing from the Bible a passage reading, '[God] sendeth rain on the unjust', and asked that this 'act of God' cause us all to 'think about what we tolerate in our city limits'.

I have also been faced, via email, with the emerging claims of *Columbia Christians for Life* (CCFL) that the satellite image of Hurricane Katrina that came ashore the Gulf Coast at Louisiana, Mississippi & Alabama looked like a scan of a 6-week unborn human child. This, they claim, is God's message to the affected states and their attitudes towards abortion rights. The CCFL claim, 'Louisiana has 10 child-murder-by-abortion centres - FIVE are in New Orleans. God's message: Repent America!' Let me get this right, CCFL: the image (vaguely) looks like a foetus, thus providing inconclusive proof that the Hurricane (a natural phenomena let's not forget) is a God's way of punishing and correcting this region for their providing choice, help and support to pregnant women?!? And let me also get this right: studying the image (that in truth, and with a bit of a squint, looked more like a lion than it ever did a foetus), and concocting this 'link' is the first thing you thought of upon seeing that satellite image - not the pending destruction, loss of life, and amount of support, not attacks, this region would require?!? Peddling such antichoice, inciting, dangerous messages about an area struggling to come to terms with the enormity of their loss is not only insensitive, but deeply troubling. Thousands upon thousands of people have died in these past few days. People are still dying. And it's \*not\* their fault. Blaming the victim is the lowest level to stoop to.

And I'm not as immobile any more. I'm pissed. Watching tens of thousands of people lose everything. Being unable to actually even begin to think what that would be like. Watching thousands of people die and drown, starve and perish. Hearing of all this and knowing that for so long people were having to go-it-alone due to a severe lack of assistance. Knowing that people in a country of such wealth died due to a severe under-sight and care of, and response to, people's basic needs. And to have to hear that apparently all of these people died and all of this suffering continues because a God judged this area on the basis of it holding festivals like the gay Southern Decadence party, and it having centres where women can safely have pregnancy terminations, it just makes me livid. To have to hear that people are rationalising this apocalyptic, life destroying natural disaster, and subsequent humanitarian disasters in this way, laying blame at the feet of the 'wickedness' of this areas LGBT community and its provision of services for women is sickening. How about focussing all the resources and energy it took to prepare and voice these attacks (attacks on people who incidentally died in this atrocity too don't forget) on actually seeking to help and support the vulnerable people in these areas who *need help*, not formulating whacked-out reasoning, and blame, and hatred. Because, as Alicia in the blog entry above states, somebody really ought to do something, something that isn't standing around appropriating blame. Or, for that matter, something that isn't restricted by red tape. Because, Michael Marcavage, what we *\*really\** shouldn't tolerate in our cities limits are people dying and people suffering because of inefficient response and relief.

7<sup>th</sup> September 05

See: [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org) to donate to help the massive relief operation.



See: <http://www.kimyadawson.com/relieftthroughmusic> to offer practical help by donating CDs, tapes, walkmans, batteries etc. to *Relief Through Music*, an initiative set up to initially provide homeless, re-homed and evacuated teens with an avenue of escapism via music. How many times when things get bad have you turned to music to help you get through? Now imagine you no longer have that music, or any possessions at all. Donating music via this initiative may just help these teens cope.

(To read Alicia's blog, seek her out on Myspace.)

N.B: I initially wasn't going to include this piece in this issue of RAYW for a few reasons.

Firstly it kinda seemed out of date, both in terms of the time elapsed since it was written, and when the hurricane hit, and the fact that subsequent hurricanes have wreaked havoc over the world since Katrina; when nature moves so fast, nothing remains "current".

Also, the hurricane and the ensuing response from the Religious Right almost seems like an easy target for a queer feminist to write about, and an 'obvious' zine piece.

But mostly because hurricanes like Hurricane Stan that hit Central America at the beginning of October, killing hundreds, causing apocalyptic mudslides and flooding huge areas of Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua barely featured in the media at all.

For days following Katrina you couldn't move for updates on the tragedy. And don't get me wrong, a tragedy is a tragedy wherever, whatever; and Katrina was certainly a tragedy. But I didn't want my zine contribution to be seen as, read as yet another example of Americacentricism, treating the events there to be more important, more newsworthy, more legitimate than those in poorer southern countries.

Hurricane Stan wasn't the lead story on the evening news, wasn't plastered over front pages from tabloid to broadsheet, wasn't "sensationalised" by the media [not that I'm saying the extreme events due to Katrina and Rita had to be, or were sensationalised: I appreciate they were extremely sensational in their own horrific right], and panic wasn't bred from media propaganda. But how, how can one devastating, life shattering natural disaster preponderate over another??? Hurricanes don't differentiate, don't discriminate. Media, as we are well aware, does. And I didn't want this piece to be seen to be perpetuating that; hiding truths and stories also hidden by mainstream media - negating a whole batch of issues regarding wealth, class and race in media representation in order to focus and report on North America's failure to respond to its citizens when thousands of people die for precisely the same reason in Central America every year in reoccurring, 'expected', (thus less devastating? ; No), natural disasters that these countries don't have the resources or infrastructure to cope with (unlike the US).

I have included this piece, however, because despite all these points, the arguments, truths and realities in my initial piece still stand true. I've included it because I can't be discriminating in writing these truths any more than mainstream writing should be doing with what it writes, what it focuses on, what truths it depicts.

All the stuff I wrote about still happened.

At the time of writing that initial piece, focussing on those stories, those realities, those truths was important for me to discuss, to air, to politicise. But hopefully not at the expense of, or dominance over the realities of other events and others' experiences occurring elsewhere.

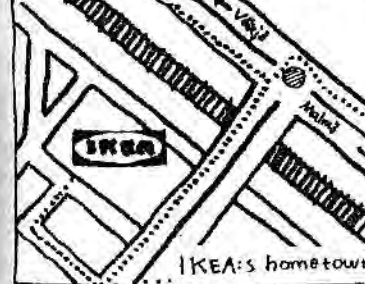
Which is why I have so much faith in the importance of indymedia, zines, blogs etc to provide us with the opportunity to speak our own truths about what's happening in our own lives. And not allow dominant media (mis)representation to always speak for us and our own lived experiences.

Melanie.  
08/10/05

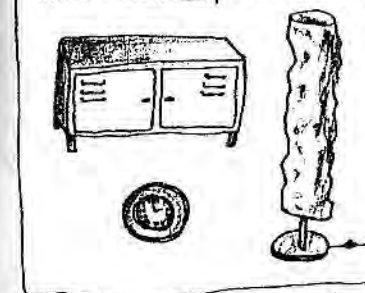
A year or so ago I had a girlfriend.



She lived in Almhult..



Her dad has designed stuff that everybody has at home.



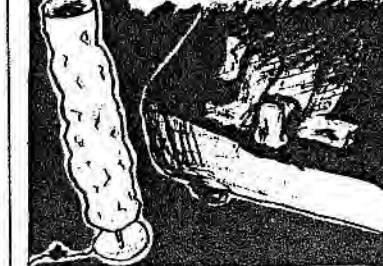
The end was shattering.



It took one year before I fell in love again.



She also had one of those lamps...



### THE MAGAZINE PROJECT NEEDS YOUR HELP

The Magazine Project works with many different methods of action. Our main "project" is done by volunteers, who are mailed free sets of writing, art, and other girl-positive media. From there, they go to their local drug stores, book stores, grocery stores, and wherever else popular teen magazines are sold. Our volunteers then "stuff" these magazines with their media and place them back on their racks, where they await to be bought by countless teenage girls. We hope that when these girls read their magazines and come across the inserts that have been placed in them by our volunteers, they feel some positive self-worth rather than the negative image being broadcasted to them by the magazine that they are reading. We also help point these girls along to our website by printing our web address at the bottom of each insert. At our site, you will find more full-length and in-depth articles and essays explaining how these magazines are harmful to a young girl's self image. We offer links and contact information as well to give more information to those interested. We also help our visitors locate resources that they need, such as counseling and youth center information.

We need: art, stories, writing, essays, etc., anything that can be stuffed in magazines to get young girls to think about the way the media attempts to manipulate us. We also welcome submissions that will inspire girls, help them to see the beauty inside themselves, or just piss them off and get them active! Volunteers welcome. For more information, visit [www.magazineproject.org](http://www.magazineproject.org) or email [marchzine@yahoo.com](mailto:marchzine@yahoo.com).

(N.B: this is a U.S based project, but the invitation to volunteer art, writing etc. is open to all)

Any girl skaters/bikers/riders who fancy hanging out with fellow kind please get in touch with: [deborah\\_clements@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:deborah_clements@yahoo.co.uk) (Leeds based)

### QUEERS IN THEIR UNDERWEAR.

Queers in their Underwear is a calendar project currently being put together for 2006.

To get involved, donate your form (you can wear as little or as much as you want, any props permitted), or to find out about getting hold of a copy email Debbie or Amy at: [deborah\\_clements@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:deborah_clements@yahoo.co.uk)

N.B >> As a bit of a follow up to a piece in the last issue regarding Mia Zappata of The Gits, I thought it may be of interest to readers to mention that in the time since that issue of RAYW was out Mia's killer has had his sentence overturned on the basis of a technicality. Jesus Mezquia was originally sentenced to 36 years in prison for Mia's murder, but since, technically in the U.S that sentence is "exceptionally" longer than a standard 26 year sentence for felony murder, his appeals lawyer managed to overturn his sentence on the basis of unfair, harsh sentencing, and thus a breach of a ruling referred to as the 'Blakely ruling'.

In the original sentencing last year, the court unanimously affirmed Mezquia's conviction. And the judge found legal justification in the length of sentence due to the extreme injuries Mia suffered during her attack. Yet the sentence has still been overturned.

And if all of this doesn't smack of hypocrisy I don't know what does.

He took her life, he subjected her to a brutal attack, he was unrepentant and he got away with her murder for over a decade. The only exceptional thing here, as far as I can see, was Mia. <<

End of rant.

Manifesta... is a diffuse network of women, ladies, grrrls

bois, gentlemen, and queers who like to organise inspirational gigs, club nights, benefits, workshops, distros amongst other things.



### Ukgrrrlevents e-letter

I've been thinking there's so much going on in the uk at the moment it would be neat to have a coherent and bi-monthly e-letter that would detail all the grrrl-related feminist/queer events and activities in the uk, serve as a point for people to find out about gigs, distros, zines, cool record labels, band tours, ladyfest organisation, art groups, crafting, dance troops, benefit gigs, film screenings, club nights, riot grrrl meets, find others in cities, find bandmates, network, call for submissions to zines, women's groups, trade mixtapes, etc... across the uk.

It would be amazing and really overdue to have a massive mailing list of grrrls so we can trade information, open communication, and get involved in making the revolution happen. If you are interested please send an email to [ukgrrrlevents@gmail.com](mailto:ukgrrrlevents@gmail.com) saying something along the lines of 'bring it on' 'subscribe' whatever and use the same address to send me submissions for the e-letter. So if you're organising a women's group, want people to know about your band/zine/art/website/gig, want to find bandmates, find others to form a chapter, or wanna trade mixtapes, let's do this...