

**AN INTIMATE  
CHAT ON THE  
ANNIVERSARY OF  
THE KING'S DEATH**  
JOAN JETT BLAKK INTER-  
VIEWS LEIGH "ELVIS HER-  
SELVIS" CROW

JJB: Isn't it ironic the day we — finally, finally — after playing phone tag and people tag, get together it is, coincidentally, on the day that Elvis died.

LC: Supposedly.

JJB: He's hanging out with Jackie somewhere, your diva and my diva. Still alive!

LC: After all these years.

JJB: Being an Elvis Impersonator.. do you hate that word?

LC: I call myself an Elvis *stylist*.

JJB: And you're doing a new show called . . .

LC: HILLBILLIES ON THE MOON.

JJB: How'd they get there?

LC: Well, of course, by accident. How does anything in a good musical happen? Two hillbilly brothers transported to the moon.

JJB: By accident

LC: That's ruled by a queen, a planet of all men, and all the parts will be played by women.

JJB: This is fabulous.

LC: The first all drag king musical.

JJB: Hey, it's San Francisco baby, lets go.

LC: Only in San Francisco.

JJB: And we like it that way. I am listening to you talk, and you don't sound like you're from Mississippi.

LC: No, I'm from the Southwest, which is like the South only not as much character.

JJB: Oh yeah, you ain't got real dirt on those cowboy boots.

LC: Talk about the whitest place in America. I'm from Phoenix. I grew up in Scottsdale.

JJB: A lot of sun.

LC: When I grew up there, it was really Western and then it got very golf course, which is what it is today.

JJB: Do you play golf at all?

LC: No I don't, although my mother did win a golf tournament when she was six months pregnant with me.

JJB: Oh, so you were swinging even before you were . . .

LC: Even then. Yeah, Dinah Shore look out.

JJB: How old were you when you first saw Elvis and said, "Wait a minute, wait a minute, I can do that!"

LC: I was a kid who was not that

athletic, and in Arizona you just can't spend that much time outside the house 'cause it's too damn hot, so you do watch a lot of television. Especially during the summer. I saw a lot of stuff that I'm afraid was very formative, so that included Elvis movies, and they were so full of kids, so on a children's level, or just a very basic level... but the songs, the music is what's important.

JJB: His movies are totally forgotten

LC: Well, some of them are well to be forgotten.

JJB: Didn't he make like twenty movies?

LC: Thirty-one, actually.

JJB: Right away you think of *Viva Las Vegas* and Ann-Margaret tossing her hair.

LC: That's such a good movie!

JJB: I've never seen that one.

LC: That's one of the good ones, are you kidding? Oh, its campy, it's so so so campy. Movies like that are what influences the play that we're going to put on, it's going to have a very similar feel to that, where the statement will be... [Stops to let cat in window] Come in here. They can't open the window themselves so they stand there and look pitiful.

JJB: Yeah, I know that look.

LC: The only point we will be making with this show is that we are going to give women their catch-up time

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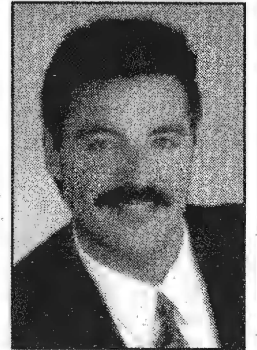
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*Leigh Crow and Annie Toone as the Hillbilly Kings. Photo by Erin O'Neill*

in gay theater, in onstage time, and in campy gay theater. So it'll be pure entertainment like those films, but certainly with a queer identity, just by virtue of there being all women involved in the cast.

JJB: Sure, you gotta keep saying that because these boys are thick in the head.

LC: Right, but it's not a separatist project. We have a male co-writer, Kelly Kittell, who you just met, who is very clever . . .

JJB: A charming fellow.

LC: And David Hawkins will be directing.

JJB: I long to be in something

directed by David Hawkins.

LC: Hit him up.

JJB: I'd like to see you as Paul Lynde. What happened to Alan Sues, Charles Nelson Riley? These were people that, when I was a kid, I turned on the TV and I thought, "I like this guy and I don't know why."

LC: What about the dykes on TV? Alice, Barbara Stanwyck.

JJB: I didn't get that until later.

LC: I share a birthday with her.

JJB: You know who blows my mind is Marjorie Main. "Pa! Pa Kettle!" And then to find out she was a lesbian, it was like, "that's why!"

LC: How did we know?

JJB: When I was coming up it was *Julia*. What a beautiful show. "Wow there I am on TV." Finally, no mummies, I was into Julia.

LC: One of my big crushes as a kid was Nichelle Nichols in *Star Trek*.

JJB: She was gorgeous.

LC: And strong, they portrayed her as so strong.

JJB: You know her and Whoopi Goldberg talked before she did that show, can you imagine that dinner?

LC: Well I just read Nichelle's book. It was great. I got it for Christmas last year.

JJB: Did she hate William Shatner too?

LC: No, no!

JJB: I'm paying attention, darling. I'm a media whore.

LC: Well . . .

JJB: Everybody hated William Shatner.

LC: Well, I know, but I love to watch him.

JJB: Now in *HILLBILLIES*... do you play the older brother or the younger brother?

LC: I play the older brother, and it is an Elvish character, but sort of an everyman as well — a rock and roll rebel, you know that sort of thing. It's sort of a rock and roll

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Joan Jett Blakk. Photo by Marc Geller

musical, not a rock opera.

JJB: I'm sitting here looking at you with that fabulous haircut. Now this haircut, the first time you had it done right you must have just . . .

LC: I had had a lot of pompadours, I was heavily into The Stray Cats. I had this hair that was just fried fried and aquanetted aquanetted . . .

JJB: In Arizona.

LC: I was a rockabilly chick. It was shortly after that that I started to do my act, but I was afraid to dye my hair black like Elvis

JJB: He always wanted to dress like the the black guys. That's where he got that pompadour, from black men, I'm surprised you don't see any pictures of Elvis with a do-rag on his head. I saw a great picture of him recently. You know his feet smelled terribly . . . did you say rockabilly chick?

LC: Well, yeah, I maintained this androgyny that kept me going through out my entire youth.

JJB: That glam rock or new wave, it gave you an outlet for your androgyny and for your "difference" from other people and made it hip.

LC: Yeah.

JJB: Did you get into trouble? Cause I didn't, cause I was too cool, the kids didn't beat me up cause they were like, "It's Ziggy Stardust!"

LC: No, I didn't get beat up, not really, more like being outed and stuff.

JJB: Did you come out to yourself when you were like 17?

LC: A little younger. I was real bisexual when I was in high school. I didn't sleep with boys, but I made out with them.

JJB: Yeah, I said that too. Its sort of puzzling, you go outside of San Francisco and you see people still struggling with this idea of coming out. I've been out my entire life, I've been so out, that's why I had to come to San Francisco.

LC: When you just can't help it, when everybody just knows, you can try for awhile and then just forget it.

JJB: And theater has all this energy, being ready to cross all these gender lines . . .

LC: The great thing about some of this underground theater that I've done is that I've been given the chance to play great leading male roles. Jack Nicholson, John Travolta, Ernest Borgnine, which was so fun.

JJB: And your show is a musical?

LC: Annie Toone is writing the music.

JJB: We love her.

LC: She's a big show tune queen like me, we're both big queens. We're getting in touch with our gay roots.

JJB: When I first moved to San Francisco I saw some art thing with the Bucktooth Varmints and I thought, "I'm definitely in the right place now."

LC: It's really folk music.

JJB: Folk music with much better clothes.

LC: Well, yeah.

*HILLBILLIES ON THE MOON will be on the Rhino Mainstage March 14 - April 13 1996*

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*Miss X and Michael Wilson in the Modacrylic pro-  
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*The cast of POSITIVE SPIRIT, a production by  
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