

CONTROVERSY ERUPTS OVER DRAG ACT

BY LEO SKIR

New York, N.Y. On February 1st there was a heated discussion at the Gay Activist Alliance Firehouse during the weekly membership meeting over an evening of drag entertainment which would be put on the next evening, February 2nd, by Pudgy Roberts, a professional entertainer, as a benefit for GAA.



Pudgy Roberts as Bette Davis

Several of the lesbians stated that the representation of the woman offered by the male drag entertainer, the makeup, the bosom, was the very representation of the female which they had opposed. The lesbians stressed the fact that it was no cross-dressing that they were putting down, but what they felt was male-making-fun-of-women.

Pudgy Roberts is noted for a "comic strip" in which a very ugly woman strips and takes liver and a mousetrap from her panties, as well as a fish.

Pudgy Roberts himself was present at the debate. He told the assembled members of GAA that he had offered to put

the show up and get together four other transvestite entertainers to show his fellow-gays what drag was. "I'm gay and proud," he said, "I've had the same lover 14 years."

Other GAA members spoke saying that Pudgy and his friends should do their thing and that freedom to express one's different sexuality was the central idea of GAA.

The next night the show went on as scheduled. The backup transvestite entertainers had backed down but Pudgy called on a long-time associate, Frankie Quinn, who had just come in from Florida and by alternating the two men put on an all-evening show.

Pudgy did not do his "comic strip." Instead he did imitations of Eartha Kitt, Pearl Bailey, Tiny Tim, Carol Channing, Marlene Dietrich and Bette Davis.

Frankie Quinn took over during his changes, a full-bodied drag well-stuffed into a Gay 90's red dress. His humor and songs were broad broad. Humor: "You've got a stool here. I hope I don't step in it." Songs: "Honeysuckle Rose," "Cupcakes" (this with much patting of her/his two "breasts"), "A Hard Man Is Good To Find."

The audience was composed almost entirely of males and some wondered if this was a woman's boycott of the performance. But there was a zap planned at Barney Google's that night by the Lesbian Liberation Committee. Also in the audience were representatives of the professional drags, members of STAR and sex-changing Liz Eden.

The audience received the show with much humor and much applause, although a radical member of GAA told GAY later he found the imitations of the black singers "racist." However, several members of the audience said they felt the imitation of the women was more an appreciation of them than a satire.

At the next meeting of GAA on February 8th, President Bruce Voelger, talking about the debate about drag entertainers, said that he was glad it had happened and that GAA members needed to debate and exchange views.