

\* \* \* \* \*

AN OPEN LETTER TO OLIVIA RECORDS

EDITORS' NOTE: This letter is in response to a statement Olivia wrote several months ago concerning a transexual who works with them. We assume copies of their statement can be obtained by writing to them, P.O. Box 70237, Los Angeles, CA 90070. This open letter was sent to Olivia by the author, but as yet she has received no reply.

I am writing in response to your statement. You said that Sandy Stone, a male to female transexual, was hired by Olivia in the spring of 1976; and that you believe Stone to be a woman--"our daily political and personal interactions with her have confirmed for each of us that she is a woman...". The following, also from your letter, provides some insight as to your justification--"We reasoned that...because Sandy decided to give up completely and permanently her male identity and live as a woman and a lesbian, she is now faced with the same kinds of oppression that other women and lesbians face..."

You also explained that you concealed Stone's transexualism for over a year because, "...we saw no way to communicate the situation to the greater women's community without Sandy being objectified." This last statement indicates that you knew there would be women in disagreement with your choice.

These facts are clear: Olivia exists as a women's recording company to be run by women and to provide women's music; Olivia concealed the sexuality of an employee; the concealment was revealed; and Olivia has attempted to convince the women's community that this transexual is a woman.

I am willing to believe that Stone has contributed greatly to your expertise, that he is an excellent technician and that he now looks and behaves like a lesbian/feminist. I also believe that your fundamental purpose is to be a women's recording company and you have crossed that objective by hiring a transexual. I do not agree with either your conclusion that Stone is female or with the logic that leads you to that conclusion. Stone is not a woman because he now experiences women's oppression.

In the past Olivia records has exhibited exceptional regard for accountability. You have done this through repeated public explanations of your process, your history and your finances. Knowing that, I am shocked and infuriated by your concealment of this decision. You write that you concealed Stone's transexuality because you didn't want to "objectify" him. I don't believe your only choices were either to objectify a human being or betray your community.

Having a women's recording company in existence has meant a great deal to me. I buy Olivia records because I believe I am supporting women who are bringing us closer to the dream of self-sufficiency and because I can buy music that is about my experience, in a way, music that I am part of.

The term Women's Recording Company, women's anything for that matter, has been a term that I've come to trust and respond to. You at Olivia have violated that trust, not only because you've hired a non-woman, but also because you chose to decide for me that that was alright, and continued to trade as a "women's" recording company. I am stunned by the audacity of your making such a decision for your consumers.

It is one thing to believe you are female and to undergo a physical change to resemble the female. It is a very different thing to invade women's space as Stone has invaded you. If I can speak of what is positively true, it is fact that Sandy Stone was a person with a penis, and it is equally true that the penis affected the way the world acted towards him. Regardless of how he accepted that action, he was afforded a great deal of privilege. He was spoken to by the schools, the government, the church and the media, as we born female were not. He was expected and permitted to take his mind seriously, to feel his potential, to grow in a greater, fuller way than females. Being a woman begins at birth, in the mind, in the body, in the subconscious, long before one is aware of oppression. Stone's experience was not my experience. It was not your experience. We are women because we grew up female, perceiving and being perceived female.

That a man can go anywhere he wishes, even be taken wholly into the female realm, is a devastating injustice. By admitting Sandy Stone into Olivia, you have permitted men yet one more, perhaps