

# THING

Number 4 • \$3



**Dennis Cooper**  
**Vaginal Davis**  
**Essex Hemphill**  
**Gary Indiana**  
**Ishmael Houston-Jones**  
**Lady Miss Kier**  
**Ultra Naté**



# the garden

Original soundtrack on  
Mute cassettes and compact discs.  
Music by Simon Fisher Turner.  
Directed by Derek Jarman.

"The Garden" will screen in Philadelphia, Boston, Cleveland,  
St. Louis, Houston, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Pittsburgh  
and Washington. Watch local listings for details.



© 1990 Mute Records Ltd. Manufactured & distributed by Elektra Entertainment, a division of Warner Communications Inc.

# THING

**She Knows Who She Is**

Number Four • Spring 1991

**PUBLISHER/EDITOR** Robert Ford

**EDITORS** Trent Adkins, Stephen Freshwater, W. Delon Strode, Lawrence D. Warren

**ART DIRECTION/LAYOUT** Robert Ford

**OPERATIONS MANAGER** Stephen Freshwater

**ADVERTISING SALES** Sylvia Michaels, Stephen Freshwater

**GRAPHIC SERVICES** Simone Bouyer

**CONTRIBUTORS** Bunny & Pussy, Lee Collins, Edward Crosby, Scott Free,

André Halmon, Larry Heard, Essex Hemphill, Kathryn Hixson, John Bernard-Jones, Iris Kit,

Steve Lafreniere, Joe Lindsay, Roger Noel, Kevin Thaddeus Paulson, Todd Roulette,

Lawrence Steger, Vincent Webster, Kurt Weston, Stephen Winter

**THANKS** Steve Lafreniere, Michael Thompson, Brett and Carrie at PLU, Ralph and  
Karen, Nick, John and Francisco at Pulp

*Thing* is published capriciously. Subscriptions are seven dollars for the next three issues published prepaid. Single issues available at your favorite gay bookseller. Wholesale inquiries invited. Donations encouraged! *Thing* encourages unsolicited submissions of any printed matter, only those with self-addressed stamped envelopes will be returned. Artists' payment is the satisfaction of contribution. Editorial inclusion casts no aspersions on one's racial or sexual categorization (Things know who they are.) Opinions expressed are those of individual contributors and do not always reflect those of *Thing*. *Thing* does not sell or rent its mailing list. © 1991 *Thing*

*Thing*, 2151 W. Division, Chicago, Illinois USA 60622-3056 © 1.312.276.0398



**COVER** Give us an homage to Josephine and we'll take it any time!  
Photo and styling by Stephen Winter, Hair/Makeup by Colin Josephs,  
Earrings by Window to Africa. Model, Pam Johnson.

URBIS ORBIS

COFFEEHOUSE • BOOKSTORE • THEATER

URBIS ORBIS  
1934 W. North Avenue  
Chicago  
312.252.4446



**4** **Joe Lindsay** gets a holy boner and a few folks are having sacred cows! ... A super dyke calendar for '91... **Lafreniere** and friends plan a Zinefest in Chicago... **Vincent Webster** recalls Wigstock '90... *Brother To Brother*, the long awaited follow up to *In The Life*.

**6** New diva on the block, **Ultra Naté**, talks to **Robert Ford**. Plus a run down on the mark of the disco diva.

**8** Music reviews ... **Scott Free**, **Roger Noel**, **Robert Ford**, and **Lee Collins** mouth off about the new tunes they love to mouth off about.

**10** Music listings... **Larry Heard**, **André Halmon**, **Lee Collins**, **Edward Crosby**, **Steve Freshwater**, and **Scott Free** chart their current faves.

**12** Sex Lies and Audiotape... some grist for the rumor mill

**14** THING Lists. What can we say?

**16** **Vaginal Creme Davis**, the force behind Fertile LaToyah Jackson Magazine, lives up to her name and talks to **Steve Lafreniere** about everything of interest to a postmodern blactress.

**19** Put on your thinking caps. **Kathryn Hixson**, art critic and movie, pumps writers **Dennis Cooper** and **Gary Indiana** for all it's worth. Heady stuff indeed.

**24** Deee-Fabu **Lady Miss Kier** chats with **Trent Adkins** about AIDS, backwards record companies, outing, and personal politics.

**30** Performance artist/curator, **Lawrence Steger** does a two step with dancer **Ishmael Houston-Jones**. Fun.

**32** **Todd Roulette** on artists **Candyass** and **Adrian Piper**, plus a review of artist **Matt O'Niell** by **Joe Lindsay**.

**34** Life's a beach and then you die. Sort of. Fiction by **Kevin Thaddeus Paulson**.

**39** Tighten your thinking caps: Poet/writer **Essex Hemphill** lets **Dr. Frances Cress Welsing** have it with both barrels. Thank you Essex! A good read.

**42** You dish and I'll eat. Doin' lunch with **Bunny and Pussy**. That's Bunny and Pussy to you!

**44** **Stephen Freshwater** blasts the AMA, and offers alternative health choices for those directly affected by the AIDS crisis.

**46** **Marjorie Marginal** and **Iris Kit**, two girls after your own heart.

COULDSIT



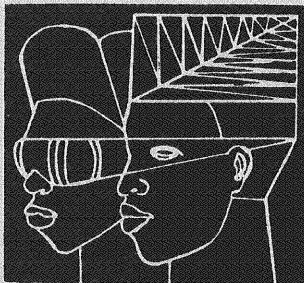


Clockwise from top left: **Hapi Phace** smiled into town March 6 with a cute show at Club Lower Links, with autographs afterwards. Photo by Trent Adkins. Would you vote for this queen? Queer Nation's Chicago Mayoral Candidate **Joan Jett Blakk** in performance at "The National SCUM—A Tabloid Trash Fundraiser" for ACT UP Chicago, November 15 at Smart Bar. **Gurlene Hussey** and Joan Jett Blakk at a recent drag ball. Miss **Fraulein** mit leathermeister friend und **Kermit Berg**. Photos by Kurt Weston.

## BROTHER TO BROTHER

**Brother to Brother** is the long awaited follow-up to the 1986 anthology **In the Life**, edited by the late Joseph Beam. This new anthology is 300-plus pages in length and contains poetry, essays, journal entries, and short fiction that, like it's forerunner, attempt to empower Black gay men. "The silences surrounding the lives and experiences of Black gay men have been aided and abetted by the tremendous amount of denial, homophobia, and heterosexism that exists in the African American community" says writer Essex Hemphill, a close friend of Beam's who completed editing **Brother to Brother** after his death in 1988. **In the Life** and **Brother to Brother** are both powerful and affirming works from which anyone can learn.

**Brother to Brother: New Writings By Black Gay Men** is available by mail for ten dollars from Alyson Publications, 40 Plympton Street, Boston, MA 02118.



## anteline: WIGSTOCK

**Wigstock** is like Woodstock, but with wigs-cum-central theme. The be-all, end-all place to be Labor Day weekend in Manhattan, and this year was bigger and better than others, which didn't baffle the star and m.c., **Lady Bunny**, the ultimate in control and entertainment up on center stage. This event is one that brings everyone together to "oooh" and "aaah" in unison; not only are the queens and professional hams in heaven, but also them normal boys and girls, because this is the brightest spot in the universe on Labor Day. 1990's treat was **Deee-Lite**, those kids from down the block who we all know and love. I don't know much about the Asian boy, but I can add a spicy word or two about **Dimitri**'s past...

**RuPaul** "this is the front, and this is the back" **Charles** served; she's very, very fierce on stage now. After all, she is the Queen of Manhattan, and that is no easy task. She was not the only one getting a life on stage, for there was **Jo-Jo**—who to me is like a God—giving us body and boy-girl drag. It just goes to show what so much drugs and dance floors can do, but there really were too many acts to mention, and besides, it is the real people who make the day. One queen sang "I did it my way"

moved on to **Silencio** in order to get into the night thing and the real music. **Skinny Vinny** was there. I was happy to introduce **Jeffrey** to Ru. He had not heard of her in Philadelphia.

Another soothing moment was Monday night out at the Pathmark in Jersey City of all places. This is the highest priced supermarket I've ever seen. I spend hours there comparison shopping. I was wheeling down the frozen food aisle at about eleven p.m. when I saw a large, beautiful girl who looked very much like **Queen Latifah**, but how? Not in a grocery store! Not in New Jersey! She did have on a real gold bracelet and one of those t-shirts you only get from record companies as promotion. The odds are stacking. Then a brother comes drooling up to me supplicating for a pen or pencil for her autograph, and yep, it is! Queen Latifah right here in Jersey! I ask her if she really is herself, and she says "yes." As bait, I say, "I know **Scott Gibson**," my friend who designed the jackets they wore on her album. She says, "Wow! Yes, I know Scott! He's a great design!"

There is nothing better than actually having something to say to the famous.

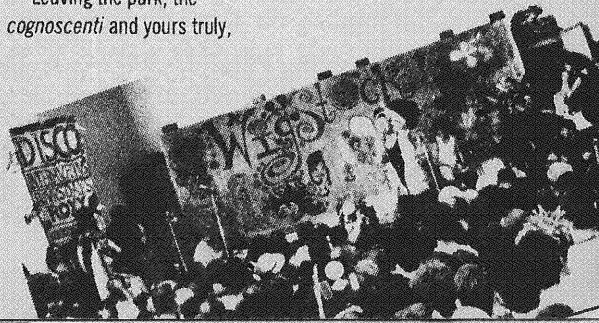
I must add that I'm glad to see a shift from the vogue of wearing gold chains to the wearing of wooden African beads instead. It's high time we stop feeding the sick black South African economy.

— **Vincent Webster**

à la **Sammy Davis Jr.** while simultaneously peeling off polyester Sammy drag to reveal her falsies bra. Hari Bo!

**Lypsinka** did her phone number. **Filoyd** of the People Tree looked like a chicken and definitely cannot sing, so we were all sick of the dragon scene and happy when that little twinkle in our eyes, **Kier**, came out and put the Groove in our hearts!

Leaving the park, the *cognoscenti* and yours truly,





Attack of the 50 foot woman:

# Vaginal Creme Davis

by Steve Lafreniere



Blacktress Vaginal Davis, photographed by Bimbox publisher Johnny Nonzema, out lunching at Troy in L.A.

**Steve Lafreniere:** Would you consider the Afro Sisters a musical act?

**Vaginal Davis:** Well, the Afro Sisters sing a *capella*, original songs that I write, to a recorded musical backing track. When the Afro Sisters started, around...I don't know, '83, '84...we were purely a *capella*. And we'd go into a kind of rap banter, and then into me doing a little spiel telling everybody where I'm comin' from. Then I'd go into reading my poetry and whatnot.

**SL:** Oh you're a poet too? I've never seen any poetry in *Fertile La Toyah Jackson Magazine*.

**VD:** I do my poetry separately. I may print some of my poetry in the upcoming issue. It'll probably be our "Literary Issue." When we started off, it was me and two biological females. Vaginal Davis and the Afro Sisters, Urethra Franklin and Clitoris Turner. Clitoris Turner was going through some problems with a junkie boyfriend, the usual punk rock problems. She tried to commit suicide, and her family came out and got her. She was really a great Afro Sister, she had an amazing voice. When it came time to replace her I decided to use a boy instead of a girl. A white male. And then I used another white female, and made her Cherry Jefferson. When we got onstage no one could really tell which ones were drag queens, and which ones were the real girls. And I like that, I like keeping people guessing. I mean, I'd get on stage and people would even speculate as to whether I was a boy or a girl. Which I think is ludicrous, because first of all I'm 6-foot-6. I've been described as being part Harlem Globetrotter and part beautiful black Amazon. So, for someone to be in limbo as to whether I'm a boy or a girl, no matter how perfect my makeup looks, they're a little off. But I guess under the lights and stuff, any illusion is possible!

**SL:** Have you found happiness?

**VD:** Well, honey...there's no way....I don't consider myself an actor, and I don't consider myself a singer even though I sing, and I have acted in underground things and above-ground things. And I really don't consider myself a performance artist, although I'm lumped into the category. Perform-

What would the homocore movement of underground gay zines be without that wondrous bible of libel, *Fertile Latoyah Jackson Magazine*? Edited by Hollywood's famed performance queenpin/blacktress Vaginal Creme Davis, *Fertile Latoyah Jackson Magazine* is an hilarious account of the very hot days and nights of Vag and her cohorts the Afro Sisters, a multiracial, maxigenderal gang of "talented persons." The only way to describe *Fertile Latoyah Jackson Magazine* to someone is to show it to them. Ditto Miss Davis, who, as member of three musical acts (The Afro Sisters, Cholita, and Pedro Muriel and Esther) and sought-after mistress of ceremonies (Fuck Club, Café Hag, Sissy Club USA, Sit and Spin and sundry other Sin Bros. events) is one of the Los Angelenos currently slapping that city awake to a new decade. Let's all pray the goddess that a 6-foot-6, occasionally platinum-blonde, African-American drag queen becomes one of the archetypes of the '90s.



ance art...what is that? I mean, people want everything figured out for them.

**SL: I read where you recently mc'd a big Sin Bros. event in L.A.**

**VD:** Mmmmm-hmm, it was an event for ACT UP. We raised, oh God, about 17 or 18 thousand dollars, and it was like 1500 people. It was one of the first events that brought together the funky homos and the old school homos. All the really mainstream homos were there checking us out, like, "What is this with these homos with tattoos and piercings, and the shaved heads and the drag queens? What are these people that we never talk to ...what are they *doing*?" The monied homo crowd, the so-called politically correct crowd, the ones who have that showy display of their means. They're fascinated by the new breed. But they don't approve of us, and they wonder why we get so much attention! It's funny because I've been written up in so many magazines lately, like the *Advocate*. Years ago the *Advocate* would have never done anything on me. It hasn't come out yet, I just took the photo for it Saturday. They wanted to see the *FLJM* staff in their office.

**SL: So would I.**

**VD:** I went out to the UCLA campus, and found an office, and we just invaded. Used their computers and their whole office area. We brought two half-naked boys, stuck them on a desk and made them mock fuck. We were all dressed like secretaries, so while the drag queens are all busy at the typewriters and the computers and the fax machine, the naked, cute boys are on the desk fucking!

**SL: Where do you put together *FLJM*? In your apartment?**

**VD:** More or less. Wherever people donate space for me. Urethra Franklin, she owns a punk rock boutique on Melrose Avenue called Retail Slut. And she has a xerox machine. She bought herself a xerox machine to make her catalogue. Basically, the magazine was an offshoot of the Afro Sisters' performances, because whenever we do a performance I like to give something to my audience. To explain that better I have to go back in time a little. The boys and girls version of the Afro Sisters was about '85, '86, when *Interview* magazine did a piece about us.

**SL: I think I remember that.**

**VD:** It was when Andy Warhol was still alive. We were in the segment "New in Los Angeles." I'm in the string bikini. Later, when I played in New York at the Pyramid, all these queens said they cut that picture out and had it up in their dressing rooms. And that really makes a girl feel good.

**SL: Have you ever at Wigstock?**

**VD:** No, I've never performed there. I've talked to Lady Bunny about her doing a version of Wigstock on the west coast, though.

**SL: At a speedway.**

**VD:** I would like it to be kind of like a California Jam. In a park in Hollywood! But we want it to be huge. Bunny and I performed at a benefit in June in San Francisco at the AIDS conference. It was at a club called Colossus. They had drag queens from all over. They had DeAundra Peak from Atlanta, and me and Glen Meadmore and Chanda Lear and Jomala represented LA. The drag rock band Chastity from San Francisco. And Lady Bunny representing New York. And Lurleen, she came out from Atlanta. It was a benefit for ACT UP, and there were tons of people. I even got to see Lady Bunny not in drag. We both went to the Church of Phallic Worship. And honey, we went for communion! And we both had ourselves a really good time because, honeeeeey, those San Francisco boys are frisky! And they enjoy us queens!

**SL: You go to a lot of celebrity parties that don't even make it to the magazine, right?**

**VD:** Oh yeah. A lot I don't write about because they're so boring. People think that the entertainment industry here in Los Angeles, that it's all so glamorous and exciting, and in the long run people in the entertainment industry are very middle class. Their aspirations are real, y'know...having nice things. That's about it. They're quite boring. That's why the movies and music that you hear on the radio is so dull, because these people don't know anything about art, and they have not one creative bone in their bodies. They pay us weird people, like drag queens, to come to their dumb parties just to liven them up!

**SL: Out of all those people, you have to have some favorites.**

**VD:** The thing is, we ...the drag queens and whatnot who get invited to these things...we rate them according to the food spread, and the liquor. If it's a good food spread ...a lot of us gurlies out here are vegetarians...if they have a large selection for vegetarians, that's how we rate a lot of the parties. And how good the liquor is, y'know, whether it's just beer and wine or mixed drinks. Things like that.

**SL: In the last issue, there was a steamy encounter between you and Anthony of the Red Hot Chili Peppers. Did that actually, umm...occur?**

**VD:** Honeeeeey, Anthony went to the same junior high school as my Afro Sister Fertile. They went to Bancroft Junior High School. And before Anthony was a Red Hot Chili Pepper, he was just a punk kid.

**SL: Are you originally from Los Angeles?**

**VD:** Honey! I was born in Watts. You know, the Watts riots?

**SL: I know Watts.**

**VD:** A lot of these people were more or less street kids. Like

Flea, he was in porno magazines posing, because he has a really big wiener. He was a male prostitute.

**SL: But he's straight, right?**

**VD:** Well, he's married now and he has a kid, but what does that mean? It doesn't mean very much. Before he was in the Red Hot Chili Peppers, he was in a band called Fear. With Lee Ving and Derf Scratch.

**SL: Do you know Dennis Cooper?**

**VD:** Oh yeah, Dennis Cooper just moved back here after living in New York. Miss Cooper is back in LA now. He just did a piece in *L.A. Weekly* talking about Fertile Latoyah Jackson. He loves Fertile. In L.A. there's a lot going on now. With my friend who's a fashion stylist, we did a club last week called Café Hag. It's a thing we do about once a month where we convert this little Czechoslovakian restaurant in Hollywood, we turn it into, like, Bricktop's, a little Paris speakeasy. You get a buffet dinner and then nonstop performers doing 1920s music. A lot of people that performed are out of the punk scene, and here they were singing songs from the 1920s. Somewhat cabaret style, but also New Orleans style. I was dressed real Louise Brooks and singing songs like "Muddy Water," and doing the Shimmy and the Black Bottom.

**SL: It sounds a little like the Cockettes in the late '60s. That's sort of a constant with drag queens, that 1920s period. In the '70s it got all fucked up once middle America picked up on it, and started wearing polyester baggies and Cork-Eez. But even that was kind of hilarious. Are you familiar with the Cockettes and their version of home-grown fantasy and perversity, or...**

**VD:** Well, Sylvester was a Cockette.

**SL: But do your ideas, the magazine, performances, etc., come out of that home-made ethos?**

**VD:** The Afro Sisters and Fertile Latoyah Jackson's performances and videos come out of the fact that there are a group of talented and creative people here in the city who create their OWN outlets; who have their own audience, their own support system. We can't just go into a studio and make a deal and make a movie...so we make our OWN movies. And we distribute them through an underground network so that people find out about us. And honey, the weird thing about it is that now, I go out and do my own films on little...video. And word gets out and...I just got offered to do a play! It was a stupid play and I turned it down because the part was really lame, but the reason I got offered this was not because I went knocking on doors and went on interviews. It was because of my magazine, because of the videos. I'd been seen on a cable show called "Decoupage," AND THEY CAME TO ME! You've got to make those things for yourself first, by doing it as cheaply as possible with whatever resources you've got. You've got to do it



yourself. And not even THINK about what you're doing, just have a good time, have fun, and doing YOUR SHIT. And get it out there, and then those other stupid people, if they're interested...fine. But you don't even worry about that.

**SL:** Do you think this determined attitude of yours, which is currently paying off in at least the fame department, is that something that poor white and poor black queens share? From not ever having a lot, so your expectations aren't as easily... disappointed?

**VD:** I remember the first time we played in front of a really large audience. Since a majority of the Afro Sisters are white, in the guise of black people, they were saying, "Oh God, they're gonna lynch us! Here we are in afros, they're gonna think we're making fun of black people!" I said, "Don't worry about it, it'll be cool. They'll realize where we're coming from." And we went out there and we performed in front of all these black people, and, honey, they wanted my magazine...they were just saying, "That was hot!" And these were straight black people. At first they were like, "What is this?" They were, like, all angry. But once I got up there and started going into my thing, they could relate to it. Because it wasn't all stodgy and old school. It was quick and direct and to the point and it gave them a whole new look at a homosexual context. Of someone who's gay and black...and fearless in telling them, "Lookit, I'm gay, I'm black, I'm a drag queen, I'm dressed up and I'm shoutin' and yellin' and I'm a MILITANT!" You know? "I'll tell that white man!" And here I've got these white kids who are in my group, and they feel the same way too. They're feeling so strongly, they've taken on a black identity, not in jest, but because they identify with blackness. I would start the show off by walking up to the mike saying, "I'm black and I'm very, very proud." It always got a big laugh.

**SL:** I don't understand where Fertile comes in, though.

**VD:** Fertile came in a little bit down the line, later. Not until '87, early '88. Urethra Franklin every year would take her little European vacation. So one year she went on vacation, and I had a friend who is El Salvadoran take her place, and he became Urethra Franklin. He was so funny and original portraying her, I wanted him to stay in the group. So I had to create a new character for him, the character of Fertile Latoyah Jackson. Always pregnant, always giving birth, sort of a mother figure, icon. His character became the most popular character. That's why she's the perennial cover girl, she's on the cover of every issue of the magazine. Because...you've seen the picture of her, look at that face! It says enough right there! What do you get when you see that face?

**SL:** What do you mean?

**VD:** Well, you have to admit, that's a different kind of face. Hoooooney, it's spelled out right there! The image of that face

and what it conjures up, all these maternal feelings, the madonna....A lot of people think Fertile is a real woman. But, then a lot of white people are so one-sided, when they see a bunch of white people dressed up in "black" clothes and what-not, they think they ARE black.

**SL:** The magazine is so well dreamt up. It's got this consistency, and what's great is how you can't even tell what's true and what's not. It's full of lies, but who cares?

**VD:** Well, yeah that's the point, y' know? But I do use a lot of pseudonyms in there because I'm always creating...I'm like Sybil, honey. I've got more faces than "The Three Faces of Eve." I've got all these personalities revolving through me.

**SL:** So you've been doing this your whole life?

"Lookit, I'm gay, I'm  
black, I'm a drag queen,  
I'm dressed up and I'm  
shoutin' and yellin' and  
I'm a MILITANT!"

**VD:** When I started school it was in the MGM program. For mentally gifted minors. The learning was very accelerated. But since I didn't fit the stereotype of a mentally gifted minor, a lot of the white teachers that I had saw me as a problem. I would question things that children didn't question. I was always argumentative, always challenging them, because I had this innate desire to learn. Because I think the education system in this country sucks! It really...sucks! And they were always calling my mother down, and they were saying that I was causing problems. You know? This was the rhetoric I got from grade one to high school.

**SL:** Plus it's a racist system.

**VD:** Oh definitely. Two of my Afro Sisters, Fertile, who is El Salvadoran, and Pussy Washington, who is Mexican, both are elementary school teachers. That's Fertile's day job! Both of them teach kindergarten and first grade. And the school board is so fucked it makes me and them very angry. They're so tied up in their fucking bureaucracy that they won't let good

teachers teach. In L.A. there's a lot of Spanish-speaking kids, but they want to rule out bi-lingualism, and that's the only thing that helps these kids learn. Both Fertile and Pussy work in the communities that they came out of, and they're giving back to their communities.

**SL:** Pussy Washington is a great name.

**VD:** Her real name is Alice Bag. She was in one of the seminal L.A. punk bands, the Bags. And she's also in my band Cholita, an offshoot of the Afro Sisters. We're like the female Menudo. We just played a new club here called Sissy Club USA, and she and I collaborated on some original material. Before, we just lip-synched obscure latin pop records. Our new songs in Spanish are really funny.

**SL:** Are you going to get all this stuff out on record?

**VD:** Well, my speed-metal thrash band (Pedro Muriel & Esther -ed.), we're gonna do a record on America Records.

**SL:** Do you know the artist Mike Kelley?

**VD:** Oh, yeah, he's the one who does the little felt thing. He's so funny! He had a showing at a gallery here on gallery row, La Cienega Boulevard, and, like, it would be this piece of dirty felt, stuck with a thumb tack on the wall! And it'll be like \$12,000! It's so funny!

**SL:** He's got a band with Raymond Pettibon.

**VD:** Oh I know Raymond Pettibon! I think the band is called Raymond Pettibon's Supersession. I think they just did a show.

**SL:** To end with, my friend Wendy wanted me to ask you this one. What does the phrase, "Fear of a Female Planet" mean to you?

**VD:** Well, I think the powers that be, the great white corporate structures, they're afraid of the feminine. But, honey, they should just relax and let loose, because there's a lot of power in femininity. The only way for this planet to survive is to not neglect the feminine portions of our personalities, but to revere them and to work with them. Empathy and love and trust. It sounds really simplistic doesn't it?

**SL:** No it doesn't. It sounds really difficult.

**VD:** Mmmmmmm—Hmmmmmm. ☺

---

Fertile LaToyah Jackson Magazine is available by mail. Write: 7850 Sunset Boulevard, penthouse suite 110, Los Angeles, CA 90046



# Lady Miss Kier

by Trent Adkins

The self-proclaimed "Mother of the Garden of Earthly Deee-Lite", Lady Miss Kier Kirby, was phoning from the East Village digs she shared with fellow band members Super DJ Dmitry and Jungle DJ Towa Towa. Since then, however, they've relocated to some other locale in New York City whilst whirling about on a World Tour. So far, they've played just about every major city here and abroad, the whole while managing to entertain and intrigue real party people because of the way they sound, look, and politic. Their subsequent visit to Chicago on November 1 at Shelter was both fabulous and a mess. The sound was pumpin' and what turned out to be a little crew on stage (Funkateers Latasha Natasha and Ronald, girlfriend on percussion) gave a marvelously "up" and too brief show. Very live. Alas, it was at Shelter. And, speaking of things famous for things and what constitutes celebrity, rumours were widely circulating that Miss Kier had overdosed on drugs à la Neely O'Hara and Edie Sedgwick. She was definitely too fabulous! Wasn't this the put down trend familiar with anything striving to be so positive or progressive? Should a musician and personality like Kier Kirby have to endure rumours of plastic surgery and dangerous liasons? Quit! This is not the Judy Garland story. In the midst of continuing live dates and promotional appearances, Deee-Lite's close friends and management maintain that Miss Kier Kirby is just fine.

**Trent Adkins:** It's great to be talking to you. You mentioned that you were trying to schedule press and everything, has that been the downside of all of this attention recently?

**Lady Miss Kier:** Not really. I think the downside is turning stuff down. I mean there's just so many things that two years ago I would have done anything to do that I've had to turn down 'cause I don't have time now.

**TA:** It's been said that you seem more interested in talking to gay underground press or even the national gay press and not as excited about more mainstream press coverage.

**LMK:** Well, I'd rather read your magazine than *People* any day! I know you had a thing on the zines... and there's *Pansy Beat*. You know about that?

**TA:** Yeah, sure. We had copies of *Pansy Beat* around here thanks to a friend who's a subscriber. Actually, we've been in touch with them to do an exchange. I see *Pansy Beat* Editor, Michael Economy, is doing your illustrations for the album. I know a lot of people have really negative attitudes towards drag queens, seeing them as being difficult and catty many times. *Pansy Beat* sure is helping to dispel that image. I saw the Wigstock

footage and La Homa, Lady Bunny, and RuPaul seemed so sweet. I couldn't believe how nice and laid back they seemed, however glamorous. Will Deee-Lite keep playing Wigstock?

**LMK:** Yeah, definitely keep doin' Wigstock. Oh, RuPaul is the sweetest person in the whole world! Nobody nicer. Basically that's what Wigstock is all about... it's a day for love. Michael Economy basically is *Pansy Beat*. He does just about all the graphics for it.

**TA:** As well as most of the editing and stuff.

**LMK:** Yeah.

**TA:** They're really fun!

**LMK:** The guy on the cover has two horns. Do you have that one?

**TA:** don't think so. We had one with Lady Bunny on the cover and another one, like a Christmas Issue.

**LMK:** Oh right! I had an illustration in that issue, too.

**TA:** Did you really? I'll have to go and research that one. I probably saw it already and just

didn't pay much attention to it. I didn't know you then and probably thought it was just another drag queen; everybody's a Miss This and a Lady That. Have you been approached by *People*?

**LMK:** Yeah. Like we were in it two weeks ago. I can't really dish them, but it's not something I would put on my list to get in.

**TA:** Did you expect that they would contact you? I mean, pretty soon we should be seeing you in *Vogue* or....

**LMK:** We'll be in *Vogue*, the December issue of *Vogue*. I'm doing the cover of Italian *Vogue* with Steven Miesel. Yeah, that I'm excited about! Doing a fashion thing.

**TA:** Great! Congratulations!

**LMK:** I just had to turn down Thierry Mugler and Jean-Paul Gaultier to do their fashion shows...

**TA:** Because your schedule won't allow it?

**LMK:** Because we're starting this tour and they wanted to do it on Thursday and I have to leave on Saturday and it was just like too much. I don't want to be jet-lagged at the beginning of the tour.







**TA:** I've read you're doing five European cities. Is that true?

**LMK:** Yeah. Well, we played England already.

**TA:** You got really good press there, too. Did you just do London or did you do other cities as well?

**LMK:** We did Manchester. This time we'll be doin' Amsterdam, four cities in Germany, and I think Italy.

**TA:** That sounds exciting. Will this be your first time in these cities?

**LMK:** Well, I'd never been to Europe before we went to London. Dmitry's been there because he's from there and Towa's never been there, so that's really one of the best parts about all of this. I'd never really been out of the states... and then all of a sudden it's like, Japan, London and the west coast... all in a month!

**TA:** So you've played Japan?

**LMK:** We didn't play but they flew me over there to kinda oversee the editing with the video because the guy who did it is Japanese.

**TA:** Is that Nakano?

**LMK:** Yeah. And he's amazing!

**TA:** I was really impressed with *World Clique* because it seemed that that was the way that a few groups were gonna go — psychedelic. You know, with the B 52's, with some of their releases and remixes, stuff that combines the best of funk, soul, and rock. People got excited when De La Soul came along because they brought together the '60s psychedelic and '70s funk with rap. And not just as a music thing but even stylistically with the fashion. Then here you kids come! I was impressed by your sampling. Is that a Sly Stone sample on "Try Me On"?

**LMK:** (singing) - That 'Na-na-na-na-naaa!'

**TA:** Yeah, that! It sounds like Sly. Where'd you get that?

**LMK:** Actually that's from a jazz record. A lot of the things we get are from the worst records!

**TA:** But you pull out some cute parts. Are there Led Zeppelin samples in there, too? I read where Dimitry was a big Zeppelin fan.

**LMK:** In "Try Me On"?

**TA:** Well, on the album?

**LMK:** No we didn't do Led Zeppelin either.

**TA:** I think my very favorite tune from the album is "The Power of Love." That song just

**TA:** That's just what you hope most remixes would do because that's when you get crazy... at the end of the record. It's a dance sensibility, you think it's over and then it starts to jam. It's not over.

**LMK:** Yeah! It's so psychedelic! That's why it's so scary that they're trying to do away with vinyl. I don't mind that they're



did it for me right away. It works! I've heard DJs remix it and it's awesome. I can imagine the single will be really hot.

**LMK:** We've totally changed it though. It's really like a whole new song.

**TA:** Well, I'm sure that in your hands it's bound to be fabulous.

**LMK:** We took the part at the end, 'ayee ayee ayee aaa,' and used that more as a hook. Instead of just something at the end, you get more of it.

doing away with vinyl because the CD is... technologically it is much better, but, before they do away with vinyl, they better find a way to mix CDs. They, the record companies, didn't care. The record companies did not give a shit that it was going to hurt the DJs until the most ironic thing, and this is usually the way it works, the people they were trying to phase out started to break through and make them money. Once Technotronic broke through, they were like, 'Wait a minute! This band wouldn't have gotten here if it wasn't for the DJs playing them for months.' By then, it was almost too late to put stuff into motion. They didn't care. Basically they care about the money. But they still are trying to understand dance music.



**TA:** Where do you think that's going? Deee-Lite is obviously going to crossover into the mainstream. Where do you think all of this is going?

**LMK:** They all are looking for dance bands. No doubt about it, they're all trying to find dance groups. Groups that could write something that could be successful, yet, I hate that word

lowest common denominator. I think that's why a lot of people are excited about Deee-Lite because, you seem to have a strong sense of integrity that doesn't appear to be prone to "selling out," or doing any kind of great revising. I think people are excited about that because they think that you can retain that originality, you have real appeal.

record companies have got to support it because they can't ignore it any longer.

**TA:** Right. Now, how do you see your development, the group's development over time in light of how the record companies might go? I saw something in your bio that said if you go mainstream that's fine, if they buy it, that's great, but we know who our audience is and we want to be true to our original following.

**LMK:** Well, we're gonna do our own thing. We'll just go where the music takes us. But, I think when we started we were a lot more cynical. Like we're really... Because in the mid-eighties there was like a lull in dance music coming out. You, know. So, when we started listening to classics and everything we started getting into the... Well, listening to classics musically. But I mean visually, all of a sudden we recognized (*chuckles*) like this whole thing that happened in the seventies with black exploitation movies, just how it kinda put a 'cap' on the Black Liberation movement. And so we were really cynical about that, progress. It was very... dressing and everything, that whole thing. Occasionally people would try to peg us. Like fashion magazines, "Oh y'all are a seventies revival band!" Like, wait a minute... *revive?* You know? They've got it all wrong! A lot of people say, "Oh, well nothing happened in the seventies." We were like, nobody wants to talk about what happened in the seventies and it was more like a punk thing. It was like, FUCK YOU! And then I think that happened to a lot of people in the eighties where it got very cynical. Towards the end of the eighties when it just seemed like it wasn't trendy to talk about certain issues or it wasn't like part of the thing to do. I hate to get something that's such a great issue down to something that's trendy. But I mean let's face it, in the sixties if it wasn't somewhat trendy to get a peace sign, we never would have ended the war. Not without putting the pressure on. Where like marching in front of the White House certain things might not have happened if it wasn't somewhat attractive to go to a peace march. It's just a whole kinda cynical thing that got a little bit more realistic. If anything's gonna change we've got to be more positive about it. So we got into more of a positive thing. It's not that we're all bubbling with positivity all the time, it's just that we realize, 'OK, you gotta work.' There's so much destruction facing us. I don't just mean Deee-Lite, I mean everybody.

**TA:** The world.

**LMK:** Yeah! I feel like Deee-Lite is just a reflection of the general feeling that's in the air. Obviously, that's got to be why people relate to us. They're buying the records. I mean, a lot of it's the music but it's also that there's the positive thing about us. 'OK, we've got to do something.' So, I think we'll probably stay in a positive direction. Unless, of course nothing gets done in the nineties. Like in the eighties nothing seemed to get done. I don't know, I mean, you can only guess about the future. If I don't see more people taking stands, it could easily get to be more of a cynical thing as far as change is concerned.

## GLOSSARY

**Deee-** The prefix Deee put in front of anything the least bit groovy is taken to the nth degree. Deee-licious, it tastes so good. Deee-with it, it's the Shits. Get the picture of the Garden of Earthly Deee-Lite.

**Doodlebug** Groov-nick artists/illustrators/designers.

**Groov-nick** Global Villager. Club Tart. Fabuli for the New Age.

**Sampladelic** Special audio effects that utilize digital sampling, computerized sound programming, and mixing, incorporating elements of House, Disco, Pop, Rock, etc. Also, Deee-Lite's production company, Sampledelic Productions.

**Global Village** The place that is the Garden of Earthly Deee-Lite. New Ethnic.

**Age Of Communication** The global flow of ideas and information being the basis of the grooviness of things in the Garden Of Earthly Deee-Lite.

**Holographic Groove Sound** Deee-Lite's up-to-the-minute sound variation on the strong bass, hard drum and gospel influence in current dance music, better known as House. This stuff sounds like the real thing for a new age of hardcore dance club fans. Funky fresh multi-dimensional mix of 60s psychedelia, 70s funk sound, and 80's technology makes anything sound fun.

**Groove O'clock** When groov-nicks get busy, 'It's time to jam!' See the New Age Power Soul Wave.

**Deee-Do** Who'd a thought a headband on a flip, Pucci tights, and catsuits could become such the rage?

**LMK:** The English charts basically have all dance music right now. This can indicate to the major labels over here that it's not, I mean... First of all, the reason why there's so much more dance music, and there's so much that they can't ignore it, is because it was the dance community that embraced the technology. First. It wasn't like suburban, like college radio, you know. It wasn't like a rock crowd or whatever college radio is playing, you know. It was like the dance community in the urban areas, you know, the club scene. And they embraced the technology. That's why there's so much more music. That's why there's just a whole explosion of dance music. And the

crossover. What is crossover anyway? Crossover is just a matter of getting the music to the people. It's not really about people's choices.

**TA:** I agree. I think a lot of times people misinterpret and think that crossover implies that you have to overmarket to get a lot of people to buy your thing. I think some of the best efforts are where the product is what it is and people either buy it or they don't. And if what you're doing is good, it goes beyond just pure mass appeal. It's more than just the

Deee-Lite, left to right: Super DJ Dimitry, Jungle DJ Towa Towa, Lady Miss Kier. Photo: Simon Fowler.



**TA:** Are there any things that Deee-Lite personally believes in or embraces spiritually to work on developing your own positive outlooks?

**LMK:** Well, I think dancing is one.

**TA:** Good answer.

**LMK:** Dancing and music. I guess that's the main thing. Music is really what takes me there. But also communicating with people. When you share information with someone, that to me is really uplifting, to learn something new. To learn about different organization doing different things. That's really positive.

**TA:** While you're mentioning organizations, have you done benefits with ACT UP there in New York? I think I saw a notice for a benefit you're scheduled to do with the Gay Men's Health Crisis in New York.

**LMK:** ACT UP...I don't think we did anything with them. We did do a benefit or two for Gay Men's Health Crisis and one with HEAL and one with Community Research..

**TA:** Are you pro ACT UP?

**LMK:** I have to know more. Certain things I love that they've done. Like when they went to this church here and they literally turned their backs. Basically the Cardinal turned his back on the gay community so they when in and they turned their back, literally. That was really beautiful, really amazing. I can't say that I've liked everything ACT UP's done. The outing thing is really fascist. I can't support that. If you're not together enough and you don't have the strength of character to say what you're about is who you are, then why should you be pointed out as a role model? You're twelve years old and you want to come out and it's pointed out that there's this coward who happens to be a celebrity yet they won't admit it, that's not going to help you. What I think would be more positive to do is to contact all the people that are afraid to come out who are celebrities and could be role models and give them information. Recommend some books....

**TA:** Try to help them develop some confidence so they can come out on their own.

**LMK:** Yeah. Contact them behind the scenes and say, "Look this is what I think would be helpful to the world if you were to take a stand on this." Leave it up to the individual because just pointing fingers.... that's not good. That's creating an hysteria, and this is not the time to be feeding any kind of hysteria. I think if you're together enough to say something that's gonna

be positive about your sexuality, then great! But if you have to denounce who you are then someone from your community should contact you and try to talk to you about how important it is to be more positive about it.

**TA:** I thought as much about your feelings towards out-cate asked if any members were gay or itry answered that he really didn't think it was anyone's

As far as Deee-Lite is concerned, we're not gay straight or bisexual, we're open minded and sexually free. And beyond that it's nobody's business what we do unless you see it!

business or that it was important. Professionally it really shouldn't have anything to do with how good you are as musicians or whatever.

**LMK:** Right. As far as Deee-Lite is concerned, we're not gay straight or bisexual, we're open minded and sexually free. And beyond that it's nobody's business what we do unless you see it. (Laughs)

**TA:** Right! OK! Perfect. I know you sew and you've studied textile design in school. I think you'd be a fabulous designer, do you see yourself doing a line of clothing at some point in the future? Would you like to do a label?

**LMK:** I would. I mean, I wanted to be Pucci! I did! I was making costumes for this one band in New York which was Dimitry, Sister Dimension and Lady Bunny. I was go-go dancing, I started go-go dancing to support myself. Not stripping, but club dancing. And that's when I decided this, entertain-

ing, is better, it's so much more an in-depth expression of the joyous movement of dance that brings out your soul and everything. And so, I decided I'd go into music and dancing.

**TA:** Were you doing this at the Pyramid and Susanne Bartsch's Copa parties?

**LMK:** Yeah, Copa, I danced for her. I was the only one that wasn't a drag queen at the time. Actually, Deee-Lite played the opening night of the Copa. And I danced for her at Bentley's, because before Copa she had another club called Bentley's.

**TA:** The Wednesday night parties we heard so much about.

**LMK:** Oh, they were great. And then I did this club called Afrochine.

**TA:** Wasn't Dimitry spinning there?

**LMK:** Yeah, he was spinning there.

**TA:** Before you all went whole hog with the group, with performing and signing the record contract, did you have regular day jobs?

**LMK:** Well, let's see... Before Dimitry was DJ-ing he was a go-go dancer, too, at a place called Pizza A Go-Go. Then he managed a restaurant and he was always DJ-ing but before he made a living with it he did these other things. But he's been DJ-ing for a while, something like four or five years. I was... God! I had every job in the book! I was a waitress, I worked as a bathroom attendant.

**TA:** In a restaurant or a club?

**LMK:** In a club. At Area.

**TA:** There's the story!

**LMK:** Yeah! (Laughs) Actually, I worked in the windows, too, at Area. I worked in a gallery doing errands and things. And then go-go dancing. I made furniture. I used to make art furniture. 'I'm a jewelry designer! I'm a fashion designer! I make furniture!'

**TA:** (Laughs) OK! I guess you'll do whatever you have to do!

**LMK:** There's so many people in New York like that, that can do so many things.

**TA:** Right. Multi-talented. Speaking of which... do you co-write the songs and lyrics?

**LMK:** Basically, I write just about all of the lyrics. The ideas



we all talk about. The they come from all of us. They aren't all mine. I write the words though and some of the music. We all write the music, that's pretty equally divided. Dimitry and Towa do more of the production. Like, Sampladelic Productions, which is also Deee-Lite, through which we do mixes. Dimitry and Towa do most of that. They just did a Jungle Brothers remix of "Black Woman" which is gorgeous!

**TA: Where did you get your names? Were they given to you or did you adopt them yourselves?**

**LMK:** Well, we were all born with them.

**TA: Well, Kier Kirby.**

**LMK:** But I used to be called Baby Kier but now I'm Lady Kier.

**TA: All grown up. (Laughs)**

**LMK:** Since I turned into a Lady they've dropped the Baby. I guess I was about four years old then. Let's see, Dimitry... Actually, you know they used to call him Daddy O. But then we thought people would confuse him with the other DJ, Big Daddy Kane. But some people still call him Daddy O. They call him different things from different clubs. Jungle DJ Towa Towa... I don't know, because he... well, that's his name Towa Towa, that's Korean. Towatae, and it means, it's ironic, it means peace from the east. His parents named him that not knowing that he would later moved to the west and bring a peaceful message. I think that's really sweet. That's the kind of thing that we've got to keep... destiny. It's a certain magic.

**TA: There's a lot about karma and the mystical or psychic forces in your lyrics.**

**LMK:** Were talking about the sort of magic that's in coincidences.

**TA: It appears from all the many accounts of how you all came together that it was very karmic and not accidental. It was destiny and fate and it's obviously working out quite well.**

**LMK:** I think so. I really think so: I don't believe in destiny to the point where, oh, with a Nazi victim and say that was his destiny. I don't believe in absolutes but I do believe to a certain extent you can make your own destiny which is making your own luck. Just by believing. For instance, we used to be really afraid of the music business; that's one of the reasons why we played for three years just doing it in clubs. It wasn't about trying to go to a record company and get signed. But at one point we just said, hey, if I believe in destiny then why can't I believe that there will be someone in the music industry that's gonna know and respect what we do? And once we started believing that, it wasn't so hard. We weren't surprised when we met Bill Coleman and Nancy Jeffries.

**TA: How did you meet Bill and Nancy?**

**LMK:** He came to one of the shows and then we talked to him afterwards and we gave him a tape, he asked for a demo tape. He was working at *Billboard* and that was it. That was the break we needed.

**TA: Nancy is with Elektra?**

**LMK:** Nancy is with Elektra. She's the Vice President over A&R (*Artist and Repertoire*). She's the only woman in that kind of position, a VP of A&R. And that was really like a blessing.

**TA: Your destiny again.**

**LMK:** Definitely!

**TA: A lot of bands have that apprehension about the major labels because it is easy to be compromised or just overwhelmed by it all or just falling into the wrong hands because it is so money-grubbing.**

**LMK:** Yeah, and you think that it's like us and them but actually it's a mistake to think that way because they need you and you need them and they're human. So, yeah, some people in the industry may have a money-grubbing attitude but you can say no. You don't have to do certain things that they may suggest.

**TA: Was *World Clique* done when you signed the contract?**

**LMK:** It wasn't recorded but we do most of it in our home so we gave them... well, most of the songs were already written, so then we signed the deal... we knew we were gonna get one of the companies, we were pretty sure it was going to be Elektra so we went in and started recording the album anyway. So we were half-way recorded by the time we signed the deal. We just had that much faith that it didn't matter, we were going to do this anyway.

**TA: Have you already started work on the next album?**

**LMK:** Well, we were together for three years before the album came out so we wrote enough material in those three years for about three albums.

**TA: How will you pace their releases?**

**LMK:** It really depends. Like, for the last five months we haven't had too much time to write new music so, we're really lucky that we had this stuff all ready. It's not produced but when we produce it, the production sound comes out differently every year. What we'll do as soon as this tour is over is stop everything and start writing again. But, like "Try Me On I'm Very You" that was totally spontaneous.

**TA: You did that while you were recording the album?**

**LMK:** Yeah, while we were doin' the album.

**TA: That's really amazing because that's a really strong song.**

**LMK:** That song's interesting because it's usually the least favorite song and then it grows on people. They like it a lot.

**TA: I actually took to it right away. It's so funky. But it does grow on me more and more. It seems the more I listen to it, the more I hear different things going on in it. It's really danceable though. It's one of the funkiest ones on the album, maybe only second to "Who Was That" for that funky feeling. Your music is so refreshing because it is breaking through the lull that you spoke of earlier. It's not at all saying too much that Deee-Lite's music is boosting people's levels of hope, saying that we can still be happy and positive and feel good about things.**

**LMK:** We've got to if we're going to survive in this day and age.

**TA: I come in contact with quite a few ACTUP members and people in different activist organizations and there seems to be a new spiritualism emerging from these groups and individuals. People are learning or re-learning how to heal and nurture themselves and each other. A lot of people like to compare it to the sixties Love In thing because now there are all kinds of retreats and conferences and things. Are any of you involved personally in any organizations or AIDS activist movements? Where's Deee-Lite in all of this?**

**LMK:** I think that positivity can change your life. There's no doubt about it. It's done it for me. I was basically kind of a cynical child and it wasn't until I got a little older and met a few people that were just so positive. I kind of studied them and I saw that it wasn't that everything went right for them but it was just that they appreciated each moment in life more. And as soon as I realized, "What you mean every moment in your life matters!" Even when you think you're just killing time. There's really no such thing as "killing time." I think that positivity is great to enhance your life. I don't think it's curing AIDS. It will not. It can help you. It can help you enjoy what life you have left. There is evidence that a positive attitude can help in cases of terminal illness. But we need more money for AIDS and more education. I think we have to be positive to cure AIDS. We have to be positive that there will be a cure. There will be. We have to believe that. But we also can't just have "blind faith," we have to be ready to work to get the information out to the people who aren't aware of the facts. ☺