

T W I N G

Number 5 • \$3

REALNESS!

real love

VOICE FARM

real face

LYPSINKA

real fierce

**ESSEX
HEMPHILL**

real hype

**BILL
COLEMAN**

real looks

**QUEER
FASHION**

real dirt

T E E

real dish

BUNNY & PUS

real trade

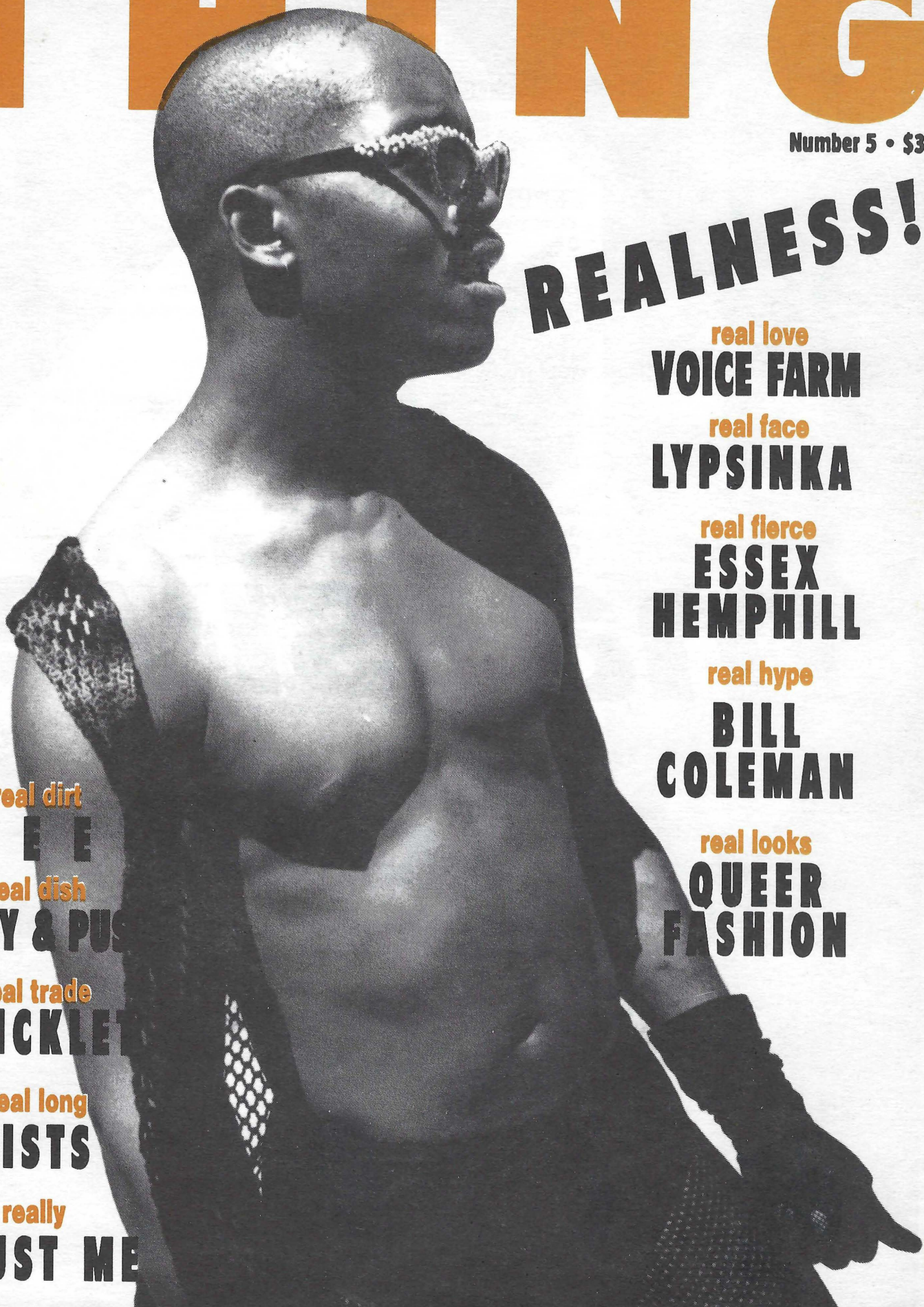
CHICKLE

real long

LISTS

really

TRUST ME



c o n t e n t s

EVERYTHING TO GO

Things that make you go...hmmm. The long awaited faggy newsy stuff from faggy newsy people.
You know, Spew, Music, Trust Me, Kiss Off, Niggerati, etc.

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Tod Roulette talks to **Essex Hemphill** about being black and gay, and loving fiercely.

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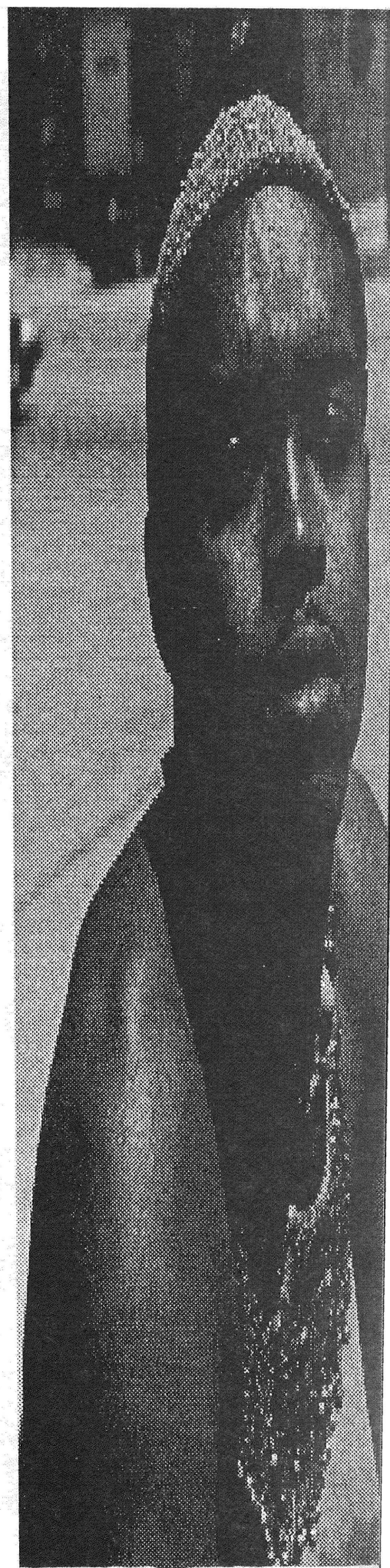
plus more folks we'll miss.

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COVER AND THIS PAGE Photograph of Jeff Britton by
Stephen Winter. Styled by Paul Stura.



THING

She Knows Who She Is

Number Five • Fall 1991

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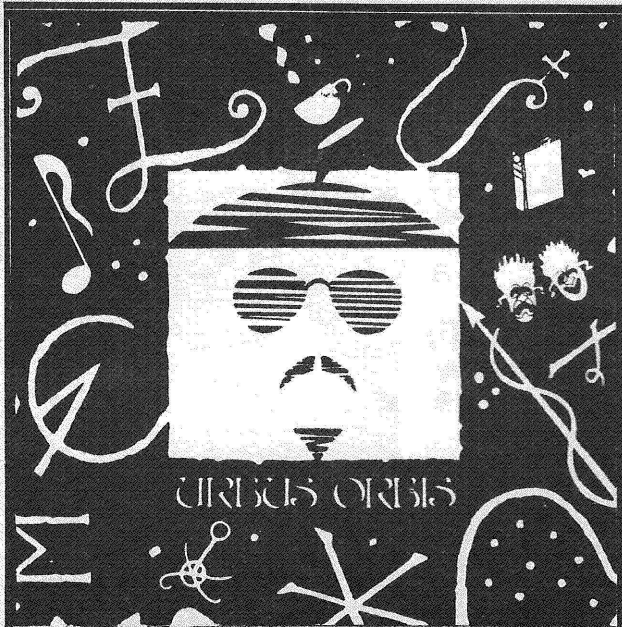
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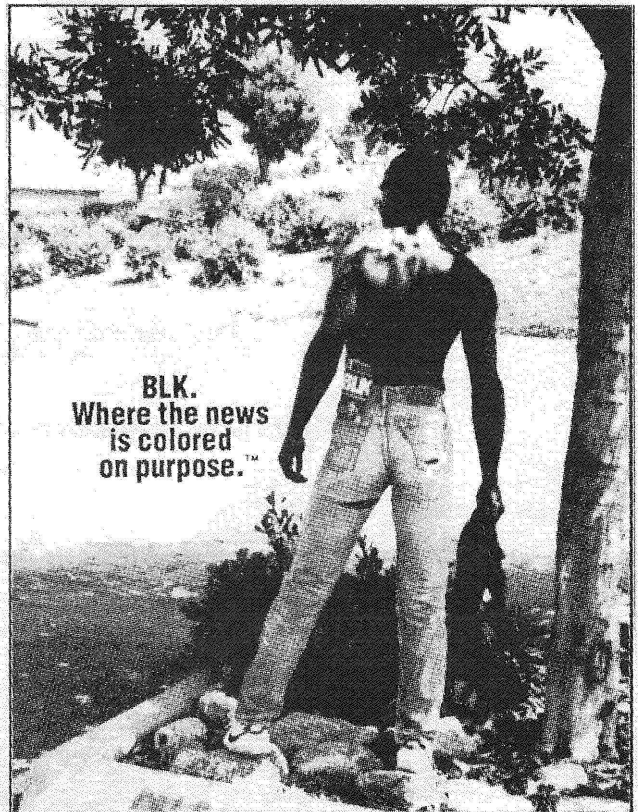
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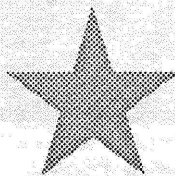
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MUSIC



Sing Softly and Carry a Big Beat

Always a fan of slow, skanky, soulful, moody tunes, I'm too-too happy to have discovered **Massive Attack's *Blue Lines*** (Virgin). At once urban and gritty yet soulful and mysterious. Vocalist **Shara Nelson** is reason enough to dash out and buy it. She's givin' voice very reminiscent of divas like **Randy Crawford**, **Cheryl Lynn**, even **Tanna Gardner**. On "Daydreaming", she pull's off the best intonations of **Aretha Franklin's** "Day Dreaming" (...and I'm thinking of you). In this era of over-sampling, Nelson's vocalizing á la the Queen of Soul work much better, sounding far more interesting than a plain old sample. "Lately" is truly wicked for continuing the skanky going's on put forth in **En Vogue's** "Hold On" or almost anything downtempo by **Caron Wheeler**. Massive Attack's first single, "Safe From Harm", is on 12" and it's quite the catchy tune. It's very downtempo so it's completely the other side of anything high energy or techno. Splendid chill pill sounds. More, Massive Attack, please.

— TA

Beyond the Hype

A funny thing happens when people become famous. Take DJ/producer **Frankie Knuckles** for instance. Suddenly, he's got all these newly-emerged, self-appointed critics complaining that his smash debut album, ***Beyond The Mix*** (Virgin) disappears because it's not 'House-ier.' Here's yet another example of how some people misinterpret House. Certainly, if anybody could produce a well-rounded House album, it's Knuckles who's entertained many a club tart from New York to Chicago and back again. With ***Beyond The Mix*** he craftily creates a worthy homage to House's most humble beginnings (mainly Gospel, R&B and the Philly Sound) and a product that works for the radio. Merely making an effort to have mass appeal is not a sin. Under Knuckles' and DEF Mix Production's guidance, every track sounds of artistic integrity. They're all highly listenible and danceable. Wisely, Knuckles used the dance floor at New York City's Sound Factory to gauge crowd response. Favorite picks: "Work Out," "Sacrifice," "Party At My House," "Sold On Love." The very popular hit "The Whistle Song," is now the anthemic last song played at all the clubs. "Right Time" is catchy and bumpy and fully orchestrated without being heavyhanded and boasts beautiful vocals by **Lisa Michaelis**. There's also **Satoshi Tomiie** programming keyboards, **John Poppo's** sound engineering and **David Morales'** drum and percussion programming. Altogether, ***Beyond The Mix*** perfectly sums up the many facets of Frankie Knuckles' musical genius: soulful, jazzy, smooth, sophisticated, matured and extremely marketable. — TA



KNUCKLE SAMMICH: DJ/
Producer **Frankie Knuckles**.
Photo **Alex Smith**.

Club Shirley Strikes Again!

Ceybil Jeffries' *Let The Music Take Control* (Atlantic) is the hot major-label underground house sound out of Chicago/New York. "Love So Special," the catchy club hit is included in both a new remix by **Steve Anderson** and the original fierce remix by **Tony Humphries**, best known for the "Zanzibar" sound. The disc also features collaborations with **Ten City** members (and labelmates) **Byron Stingily**, **Herb Lawson**, and **Byron Burke**. Chicago followers will also recognize the talents of **Yvonne** "Doin' It In a Haunted House" **Gage**. And there's even a collaboration with **Jennifer Holiday**. Ceybil (don't ask me how to pronounce it) has a strong, sanctified voice that rises above the mediocrity of some of the would-be divas on the block. Some tracks were produced in New York, others in Chicago, giving the project a balanced sound. — RF

GHOST DAD? Are you buying the new **Natalie Cole** album, *Unforgettable*? She does a flawless duet on the title cut with her daddy **Nat King Cole**! They're walking out of the store! What's next, a new **Liza Minnelli** and **Judy Garland** CD? Or **Crystal Waters** sings with **Ethel Waters**? **RIMSHOTS** Q: When

sex, lies, & audiotape

does **Crystal Waters** start to sound like **Muddy Waters**? A: Around the

third or fourth track. Ah-hoohah! Q: What do you say when the last track of the **Ce Ce Peniston** CD single ends? A: FINALLY! **YOU HEARD IT HERE FIRST...** **Vaginal Creme Davis**, publisher of *Fertile Latoyah Jackson Magazine*, informed us on her recent visit to Chi-town that she'll soon begin publishing a second zine. Named *Shrimp*, she says it's focus will be "feet and music coverage." We can't wait! Also, look for forward-thinking **Tommy Boy** to sign glamorous and leggy **Diahann Carroll** look-alike **RuPaul** "Starr Booty." And writer **Dennis Cooper** has reportedly nixed **Matt Dillon** as the star of the film version of his novel *Closer*. (Too long in the tooth, maybe?) **CHUBS "R" US** Who was bigger the last time you looked, **Oprah** or **Delta**? Are **Vesta Williams** and **Carnie Wilson** on the same diet? Or did they just trade tonnage with the now-svelte **Jennifer** "but-my-ego's-still-big-as-a-house" **Holiday**? And what about **Demi Moore** showing her pregnant privileged Hollywood fat white ass off on the cover of *Vanity Fair*? And then there's the **Paula Abdul** diet, where you eat anything you want and then have your video image sque-e-e-zed. Oops! **GREASY KID STUFF** Now that "Pee-Wee's Playhouse" is off the air, **Fox** is prepping its **Blaine & Antoine** Saturday morning animated series. And can anyone believe that **Paul** was doing some hetero **Debbie-does-Dallas** styled porn? Right... **Miss Pee Wee Herman**, givin' you six year old sissy boy with a queenie gene and humpy, half-dressed Hispanic playmates? Maybe he stumbled into the wrong theater. **SUPERFREAK** More ridiculous scandalous celebrity news from **Miss Rick James**, who, along with girlfriend **Tanya Anne Hijazi**, was recently arrested on sexual assault charges. A story in *Entertainment Weekly* quotes **Ms. JoAnne Funderburg** of the **Mary Jane Girls**, "With all the things he's done over the years, this latest incident is just karma working its way around." Otay! **CHICKEN BREAST TO GO** Though its trendy to dis **Marky Mark**, the white boy is due his props for not only giving **Loleatta Holloway** credit and a video appearance on the otherwise dull "Good Vibrations", but for having much better pecs than his brother **Donnie**. **I WANT YOUR SEX** Lastly, what was super-straight pop idol **George Michael** doing playing pool at **Ka-Boom!** ...on a **Sunday (GAY) night!**!

REVIEWS



PARIS IS BURNING

Paris is Burning the new documentary film that explores the seminal drag balls of Harlem, is all humor, homegrown glamour, and pathos that exposes many of its subjects' burning desires for fame, fortune and fashionable living. Director Jennie Livingston was said to have come out as a lesbian during the process of completing the film. Not surprising when you view the movie and feel the unifying sense of family and security created by the various house members. It would be easy to come out with this bunch. Mostly black and gay, these children are the very fringe of the mainstream society. Through the houses and balls they communally share in one another's eccentricities, effectively sanctioning their own misfit-ness while subverting the fuck out of mass culture's and mass media's racist, sexist and homophobic assumptions. These kids aren't formally educated but they're as smart and perceptive a group as you'll ever find. Through sheer determination and wit, these kids manifest their fantasies to become self-created stars in their own right. This is a candid and fabulous glimpse into the now legendary houses of Extravaganza, Ninja, DuPree, Saint Laurent, and Labieja. In years to come, Paris is Burning should stand up as a major historic chronicle of the black gay culture that we currently see so much misunderstanding and exploitation of by the mainstream. A must see. — TA

Yo, Ms.

THING

we're actively seeking female contributors for our forthcoming special issue spotlighting womyn, with a y and otherwise. Send prose, poetry, essays, erotica, reviews, and stuff.

CHICAGO IS BURNING

New York's black gay underground is getting much press due to Jennie Livingston's *Paris Is Burning*. Chicago's dynasty of fierce club queens was never quite as organized as NYC's "houses" and "balls". But that doesn't mean we don't have a celeb list of our own. Our gang: **Miss AARON** aka **MAGILLA GORILLA** Butch Queen Realness doin'! Fiercely muscular body, with a propensity for toe-jammed stiletto heels and high fashion cocktail dresses and gowns. Hot! (and we mean freshly mopped) Kansai, Gucci, and Louis Vuitton. **JOSE** and **LOUIS** These two hustled grooves into the dance floor. Local black fag lore has them pitching a brick through the window of Blums Vogue Furriers to let them have fur at the Warehouse. Notorious chain smokers, inspired the cry, "Phyllis, got another cigarette?" **WARDELL FORD** Designer to the stars. He turned out perfectly fitted diva garments given enough time, money and incentive. Wardell was possibly the first kid who had the nerve to dress the legendary party girl **Pamela DuPaty**. Along with **Aaron Pierre Brown**, Wardell is now co-founder of the Chicago-based House of Avant Garde. **CHIP** aka **MICHELLE** went under the scapel many times, going from that beautiful and fashionable boy at the Warehouse to a gorgeous married woman who now lives in the countryside. Soft, soft, soft, elegant and leggy. **FRANDA B. GOODCOOKIE** also known to the "old school" kids as **FRANDA PANDA** The mentor of Chicago's gay black club tarts, known for the quick read and timely barb. The official arbiter of Warehouse society (Grand Den Mother). Please, don't come for her!

SPEW

, the Homographic Convergence, held this past spring at Chicago's Randolph Street Gallery, was the first event of its kind and a landmark in the history of a burgeoning 'queer' culture. Organized by and for homo zine makers, it brought together folks from as far away as Toronto, Montreal, L.A., and San Francisco. Noticeably absent were editors from New York's *Pansy Beat* (publisher **Michael Economy** understandably just couldn't swing the travel expenses) and the groundbreaking zine *My Comrade*; everyone wanted to meet its publisher **Les/Linda Simpson**. However, many other independently produced homographic zines were represented by their publishers, editors and correspondents. Mainly a meeting of media manipulators, most were busy interviewing and/or photographing each other. Eyes are still smarting from all the camera flashes and glare of filming lights. Publisher of San Francisco's *Cunt* and former Chicagoan **Rachel Pepper** was there representing some of everybody from the West coast. She interviewed **Robert Ford** and **Trent Adkins** for *Outlines*; Ford interviewed everybody for *Thing*; **Larry Bob** interviewed and shot pix of everybody for *Holy Titclamps*. Ditto **Johnny Noxzema** and **Rex Boy** for *Bimbox* and **Fluffy Boy** for *Homoture*. *Maximum Rock and Roll's* **Mykel Board** was one of the free floating journalists on hand: **Nicolas Jenkins** (in from Montreal) seemed content to just sit and sell out of his sexy and smartly written zine, *Fuzz Box*. *Straight To Hell* editor **Billy Miller**, a far cry from his wilder days, sat calmly near the front, closing deals on *STH* back issues and t-shirts. Several people were videotaping everything. SPEW co-organizer and videophile **Steve Lafreniere** compiled a fierce program of queer videos and films including **Bruce La Bruce's** *No Skin Off My Ass*, **Summer Caprice**, **DeAundra Peek**, **Glen Meadmore**, *The RuPaul Film Festival*, and, of course, **John**

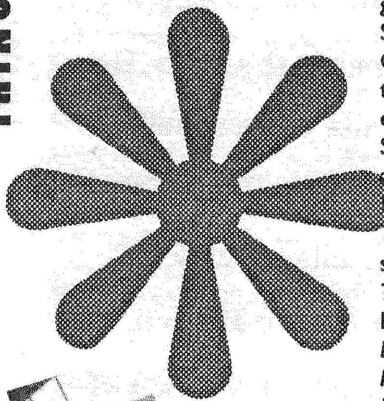
Canalli's footage from *Wigstocks* past. **Vaginal Creme Davis** came in from L.A. and managed a performance at RSG the day of the convergence, another performance at Hot House later that evening, and yet another performance/appearance at RSG the following Wednesday during an *In Through the Out Door* panel discussion. She won over many admirers and Fertile Latoyah Jackson converts. There were also readings by other underground faves like **Hudson** of New York's *Feature Gallery* and the literary zine *Farm*, bad boy genius **Dennis Cooper**, and Chicago's own **Jon-Henri Damski** who read from *Homocore*. Plus, performances by **Cheryl Trykv**, **Andy Soma**, **Sheree Slaughter**, **Joan Jett Blakk**, **Gurline and Gurliette Hussey**, **Mary Brogger**, **Bunny and Pussy**, **Iris Moore**, **A.K. Summers**, **D. Travers Scott**, **Kiwi**, **Fraulein**, **Thax Douglas**, and **David Eckard**. Very glamorous, too, with the likes of **Dora** of L.A.'s *Sissy Club USA* breezing about all day in chartreuse chiffon and gold stiletto mules. Later, the party at Hot House saw a nice crowd of folks and music by **Burle Avant**, **Robert Ford** and **Trent Adkins**. The dyke band **Fifth Column** performed, as did **Vag**. **Joan Jett Blakk** jumped in to play air guitar with the girls in Fifth Column. A few people are of the opinion that the event wasn't queer enough, was too expensive, blah-blah-blah. This was all done on a shoestring budget, with tables offered to zine editors for free and many of the out-of-towners able to enjoy free housing, I can't figure out what the hell these folks are talking about. A \$6 cover? We all wish we had more money to make things free to more people. At SPEW, people enjoyed each other and planned for the future: Publishers and editors discussed an independent Canadian Queer Film Festival slated for next year and several individuals and groups left inspired to do their own zines and Cooper and Lafreniere are already conspiring for SPEW II, '92 to be held in L.A.

Top to bottom, photographer Stephen Winter. The Reverend Vaginal Creme Davis deliverin' at Hot House. Gloria (G.B.) Jones and Jenz von Brucker at the Bitch Nation booth. Cheryl Trykv. Gurlene and Gurliette Hussey.

Clockwise from top, Michael Sheppard and Chandelle North. Women in the Director Chair's Jean Crocker and artist Mary Patton. Performer/ Gallery 2 curator Larry Steger. Bong and Juan.

Top to bottom, designer Darren Brown and writer Todd Roulette. TA and Joan Jett Blakk outside Hot House. Amoeba Record's Keith Holland and Miss Dora. Painter Simone Bouyer and poetess Sheree Slaughter. All photos Stephen Winter.

THING



Clockwise, Fifth Column's Beverly Bevridge and filmmaker Bruce La Bruce. Cheryl Bailey and Vaginal Creme Davis. Miss Scout with writer Walter Youngblood.

INTERVIEW

Chippin'ka

by John Smith

Illustration/Robert Clyde Anderson



John Smith: How long were you in Chicago?

Lypsinka: Only two nights, unfortunately.

JS: Did you have an opportunity to do anything?

L: I've been to Chicago many times, but only in February. I used to come with the American Ballet Theatre.

JS: You were their rehearsal pianist. Are you still doing that?

L: (emphatically) No!

JS: So you devote all your time to performing?

L: Yes, it's much more emotionally rewarding to perform and meet interesting people than to be the lowest person on the totem pole.

JS: I certainly imagine Lypsinka doesn't like being the lowest person on the totem pole. You bring an incredible intensity to your performance. Does it take you long to get into that character?

L: Oh no, I've never had any trouble. I just do it.

JS: How about coming out of the character?

L: I have no trouble with that either. I can't wait to get out of that stuff.

JS: I've read that you are from Jackson, Mississippi.

L: Actually I'm from Hazelhurst, Mississippi.

JS: Is Jackson the nearest hotspot?

L: Well, if there is one.

JS: Those drag queens you wrote about in *My Comrade* sound interesting.

L: That was the 1970's. I don't think they've progressed much...in fact, they've probably regressed.

JS: They remind me of drag queens I knew in the 70's from Paducah, Kentucky, who drove pickup trucks with shotguns in the back window.

L: Like most all the rest of the entertainment history in the world, those Southern drag queens got stale. In the 70's everything was a lot more interesting. At the time, people were saying, "Oh, movies are over," but when you look back, they were a lot more interesting than what's going on now.

JS: I hate people who trash 70's culture. Do you consider that your formative period?

L: My formative period started the day I was born. But the 70's were a much more liberal era, looking back one can see what an exciting time it was.

JS: Do you refer to yourself as a drag queen, actor, female impersonator... How do you pre-

fer to be characterized?

L: I consider myself an actor playing a female role.

JS: Do you feel you have a range that could go beyond Lypsinka?

L: Oh, yes. But this is what has caught on with the public.

JS: With good reason. Were the people you knew when you came to New York part of the

drag/club scene?

L: Well, when you can't get that kind of gratification, you become obsessive about it, and then obsession turns into a career.

JS: Are you obsessed with your career?

L: I don't know if I'm obsessed, but I spend most of my time dealing with it.

JS: Had you been before?

L: I had been three years earlier with my mother when all I did was see Broadway show after Broadway show. In the summer of 1978, I finally said I'm ready to move.

JS: After that first trip, was every minute of your life devoted to finding a way to get there?

L: (Laughing) Yes. There actually was one other time I tried to move but I keep forgetting about it, it was really a bad scene. It didn't work out.

JS: But you got there?

L: For about six weeks. The second time it took. It was L.A. or New York and in Mississippi you have to drive a car and mine kept breaking down, so I decided that New York was the place. Plus theater is easier to break into than film.

JS: In the 70's were you aware of performers like Charles Ludlam and the Ridiculous Theatre Company? Did that intrigue you?

L: It definitely intrigued me. I didn't set out to become a drag performer by moving to New York, but it was always in the back of my mind that it was something I could try. I certainly was fascinated by him (Ludlam) and by Holly Woodlawn, Charles Pierce and Divine. But I had only read about these people. I had never seen them do anything. There used to be a magazine called *After Dark*, you couldn't even get it in Mississippi; you had to drive to New Orleans.

I've sacrificed a great deal of my personal life. I haven't seen my family in one and a half years.

JS: You've been performing Lypsinka for one and a half years?

L: I had a long stagnant period for about a year, but about nine months ago I came out here and had a huge success around Thanksgiving.

JS: Was that the club act or your play, "I Could Go On Lip-Synching?"

L: It was the show I'm doing now. It's called "The Fabulous Lypsinka Show," and it's a cabaret act. And then I went to L.A. with it and came back here immediately and had an even bigger success. And in the meantime, "I Could Go On Lip-Synching" had been in negotiations for about two years to open in L.A. and it finally did in March of this year. I did four months there which brings us up to the Chicago show and now I'm in California again.

JS: When do you go back to New York?

L: I'm going back mid-August and might be performing at the Ballroom in the last two weeks of August. The Ballroom is a high-profile cabaret where Peggy Lee, Eartha Kitt, Rosemary Clooney, Julie Wilson, and people like that perform.

JS: That's quite a legacy. Are those people you admire, cabaret performers, or are you drawn more to the larger-than-life Ethel Merman types?

L: I admire them all.

JS: Do you have any specific idols or influences?

L: Dolores Grey, who is really the emotional prototype of Lypsinka. She made a few films at MGM in the 50's, that can be rented. "The Opposite Sex," was one, "It's Always Fair Weather", was another, "Kismet," and "Designing Woman"

JS: What character is she in "Designing Woman?"

L: She's the television star that Gregory Peck leaves for Lauren Bacall.

JS: Who is another?

L: Kay Thompson. She was in the movie "Funny Face" with Audrey Hepburn and Fred Astaire. She does the number "Think Pink."

JS: That's a great production number. Have you ever done that?

L: No, not the whole things, but bits of it. She's still alive, but she doesn't do



"Yes, the face must be worked."

fer to be characterized?

L: I consider myself an actor playing a female role.

JS: Do you feel you have a range that could go beyond Lypsinka?

L: Oh, yes. But this is what has caught on with the public.

JS: With good reason. Were the people you knew when you came to New York part of the

Lypsinka in performance at the Vortex in Chicago. Photo Scott Free.

anything. She wrote the "Eloise" books about the little girl who lives at the Plaza Hotel. She was also a great arranger and idea person at MGM. She was Judy Garland's vocal coach and she's Liza's godmother. She had quite an amazing career.

JS: Have you met her?

L: No, she's not meetable. She's a recluse. I do have her address and telephone number. Carol Burnett is also one of my idols.

JS: That I can really see in the physical quality of your performance. Have you had any professional dance training? Your body is so expressive.

L: I have had some. I started too late to be a real dancer, but that is really what I've become. As we're speaking I have ice on my knees, because they hurt so bad. So I guess I'm a dancer.

JS: I was watching you perform on a Wigstock video the other night. There were closeups of your face which were remarkable. Extremely expressive.

L: Yes, the face must be worked.

JS: Do you practice in front of a mirror?

L: Yes, but if you saw me off stage you wouldn't even know it was the same person.

JS: Do people treat you differently than they do when you are Lypsinka?

L: People naturally treat a man in a dress differently than they do when you're not in a dress. I'm also treated differently when someone meets me and they find out who I am.

JS: Do you find any resistance in the gay community to drag queens? It seems there has been a great rediscovery of the importance of drag.

L: There is definitely something going on, enabling it to be accepted as a mainstream art form. It's been going on for quite awhile now and you would have thought it would have run its course.

JS: Do you see the opportunity to continue what you're doing for quite some time?

L: I certainly see the possibility. I don't know if the people who can help me maintain that do. I've had some interest from TV and film people. That would be the best test on whether or not this would go mainstream.

JS: Are you getting backing from Madonna?

L: I am getting backing from her, yes.

JS: How did this come about?

L: She came to see "The Fabulous Lypsinka Show," when I was doing it in L.A., around Christmas time. Sandra Bernhard wanted to come because Isaac Mizrahi had been telling her about me, and she never had a chance. She was in town and so was I. A friend of mine who knows Alek Keshishian said he should go see the show, so between the two of them, it just fell into place that Madonna would come see it.

JS: Had you been a fan of Madonna?

L: Frankly, not really. The only thing she had done before "Vogue" that interested me was the "Material Girl" video because it was a clever take on the "Diamonds Are A Girl's Best Friend" number. When

she came out with "Vogue," I thought, "Well vogueing has already had its day in the underground in New York," but when I saw the video I realized this was something; plus the song is really catchy. Last year when she did it on MTV Awards, that style of movement she was doing...I've seen dancers at the American Ballet Theatre try to do, but she had all the subtleties of the way people moved during the Marie Antoinette era. I was so impressed with her dancing, plus she was fun. I had never seen her be funny before. So there was some interest on my part. When she came to the show, I thought, "Oh, isn't this great? Here's Madonna." We met afterwards and she was very nice. A couple of days later, I got a phone call from our mutual friend telling me Madonna wanted me to perform at her Christmas party, which was the next day. I said that would be great and I would love to come to the party, but I can't perform unless she's going to pull it together. I need a stage, I need lights, I need sound. I can't just show up and do a show. So he said, "Well, if she still wants you, she'll call you herself," and she didn't call.

The people who were planning to produce "I Could Go On Lip-Synching," were coming to see the cabaret act every night bringing potential investors and they knew Madonna had been there. One of them worked for Propaganda Films which produced "Truth or Dare," and he got in touch with her and said we want to send a prospectus. About two weeks later I got a call in New York saying Madonna is an investor. She also did a photo session with me.

JS: Do you find that there's a difference between the crowd that comes to see you on the East and the West coasts, or the Midwest. Do they have different expectations?

L: Well, San Francisco and New York audiences are very much the same.

JS: In Chicago, I think you were an unknown quantity to many of the people at the Vortex, they weren't at all sure what to expect.

L: While I was onstage, looking at the audience I could see in many of the faces that they were thinking, "What is it?" It is always much more gratifying when they get obscure references, but, to their credit, that audience paid attention. They may not have understood everything, but they did pay attention, especially down front.

JS: I was in the back and you certainly had no problem projecting that far. Do you prefer a theater to working in a club like the Vortex?

L: Yes, when people are sitting down they have a longer and better attention span.

JS: You've said that drag, or playing a female role isn't all you can do. But do you think that lip-synching gives you a freedom you might not otherwise have?

L: Lip-synching gives me freedom to move more. That's the reason Madonna lip-synchs on stage. She's dancing her butt off. But I do plan to get away from lip-synching, but not give up the name Lypsinka... I have a whole, elaborate plan.

JS: I have no doubt about that. I want to know about the Temptations number you did at the Vortex. People were really thrown off by that.

L: (Laughing) Yes, but they started rocking out.

JS: That, and "The Telephone" piece. Did that just come to you one day when your own phone had been ringing off the hook?

L: Actually, I just realized that I had all these recordings about telephone stuff.

JS: It's a remarkable archive of material.

L: A lot of stuff you saw wasn't originally part of the "The Telephone" number. The stuff I originally did was like "Telephone Lover" that Connie Francis did, then I began to realize that you can just take anything and make a sample of it. The telephone is a universal thing that drives everyone crazy, everyone can relate to it.

JS: Does it continue to evolve?

L: I play around with it. It's what people remember most about me. What people always comment on first.

JS: What a trademark. I've always wanted to answer the phone saying, "Why don't you die?"

L: When I start to analyze why this character is so appealing to people it's because it's like early Bette Midler, who says things everyone wants to see but propriety and society keeps them from saying.

JS: Is Lypsinka that character for you? Do you do and say things as Lypsinka that John Epperson wouldn't say?

L: It's definitely a catharsis.

JS: Do you feel that it's revenge?

L: I've gotten a form of revenge. When I was growing up, I was a misfit in a small town when people made fun of me and I've taken my misfitness and turned it into a career and ended up in the pages of *People* magazine with the most famous woman in the world. How many people in my hometown got to do this?

JS: And the people in Hazlehurst knew that was you?

L: Oh they knew.

JS: That's a great kind of revenge. Does it bother you when someone like Sandra Bernhard capitalizes on the drag queen tradition?

L: No, we're fellow postmodernists and iconographers.

JS: I love hearing you refer to yourself as a postmodernist, because that was one of my first impressions of you.

L: Well, it had to be explained to me. I always just called myself a nostalgia buff, but because people expect me to analyze myself more readily, I've learned what postmodernism is.

JS: You also said that you are very serious about not being serious.

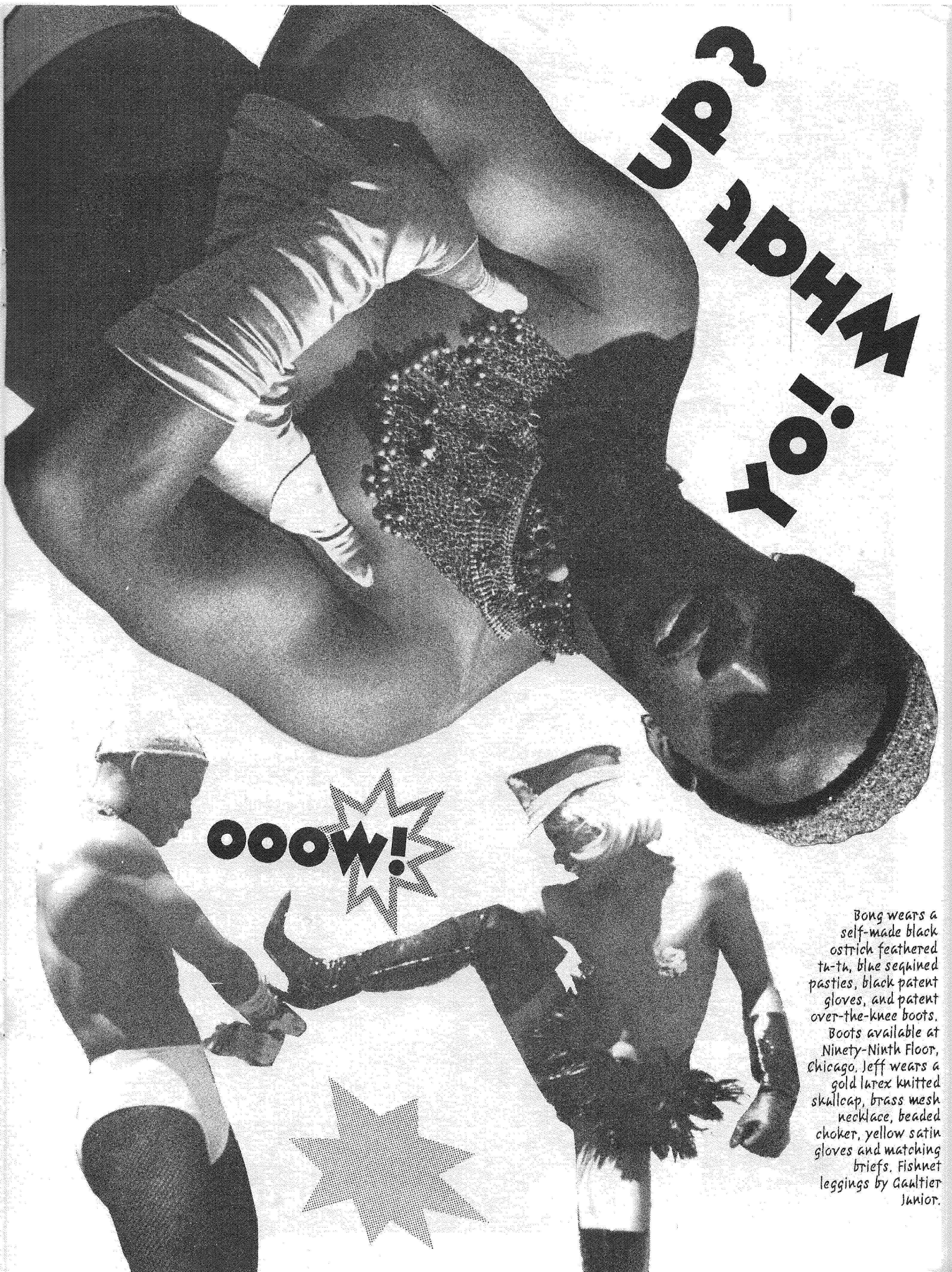
L: Well, a lot of people think I'm boring because I don't go out every night, but I don't want to go to another smoky bar. After a show, I want to go soak in a hot tub somewhere. ▼



Can you
YO! M
YO!

OOOW!

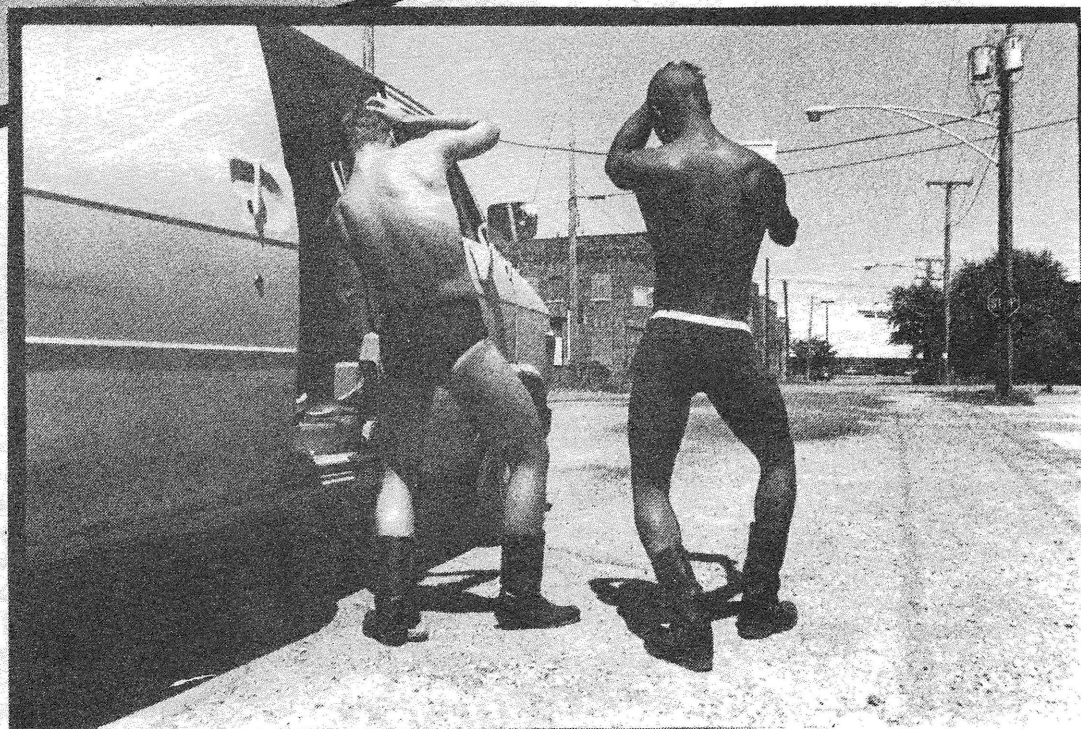
Bong wears a self-made black ostrich feathered tu-tu, blue sequined pasties, black patent gloves, and patent over-the-knee boots. Boots available at Ninety-Ninth Floor, Chicago. Jeff wears a gold latex knitted skullcap, brass mesh necklace, beaded choker, yellow satin gloves and matching briefs. Fishnet leggings by Gaultier Junior.





**Opposite: Boys in the Van...
Bong, Craig, Jeff, and Andrew
tried to satisfy Stephen's
desire for a photo of
everybody in the van á la
band of gypsies. The most
retail here? The DKNY silver
lamé trench that Craig (2nd
from left) wears. That, and
the Clavin Klein briefs Jeff
wears. The beret, sailor cap,
pom pom choker, floral
decorated officers cap, cycle
jaket, and white tu tu, is all
stuff out of Paul's closet and
bag(s) of tricks. This page:
We liked the way a plain
black bra, black leggings,
and tu tu came together on
Craig. Boots are models own.**

**Photos by Stephen Winter.
All styling by Paul Stura.
Edited by T. Adkins.**





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TEE

KER-PLUNK!

When publications like *Inside Chicago* begin ranting over how your club is "only the most fabulous place to see and be seen," well, I hope you favor lots of midwestern style Euro Trash and Tacky Wannabe Suburbanites because they will "come on down!" Ka-Boom!'s high rent location in a newly refurbished warehouse building at Chicago and Halsted, and the club's over-styled interiors suggest that a lot of money has gone into the place. Ka-Boom! is obligated to make lots of money to stay open and they seem determined to appeal to the lowest common denominator to attract as many patrons as possible. People like **Shanda Leer**, **Richard Knight**, **Michael Mangiaforte**, **Joe Lopresti**, **Paolo Pincinté**, and **Christasy** work at the club as promoters, hosts, and bartenders. They're bait and their work is cut out for them. This may only be partial protection against the illin' personnel one encounters at Shelter. As volatile as clublife is, by the time you read this, some of these people may no longer even work at the club. Let Ka-Boom! do whatever they want to bring in the spenders and filler people, but let's see how they are at running private parties or special events for the more seasoned urban clubgoers. I've never run a club, but the trick has to be providing a good atmosphere and a good mix of people as often as possible. Right now, Ka-Boom!'s crowd is pretty lightweight: posers and weekend suburbanites. And we've already seen clubs that get a bunch of trendy people to work for them, just to turn around and dick their employees and patrons by trying to second guess everybody. Take Stimmelight for example. Limelight Chicago had some of the best kids in the city as staff. But, somehow, the club was still lacking. The opening night party at Ka-Boom! was true to Slimer: a big patriotic mess that over-capitalized on the then current Persian Gulf mania: every service employee dressed in some manner of red, white and blue, stars and stripes, and yellow ribbons! Flags everywhere! (This wasn't tongue-in-cheek, either. They were serious!) I'd only gotten as far as the t-shirt booth when I see **Steve Marton** and posse quickly on their way out. "You don't want it! It's sick. A total waste of time." And this after they got to see **Mary Irene** walk in the fashion show in red, white and blue, stars and stripes leather! (Courtesy of **Michael Hoban** for North Beach Leather, of course.) BMCS seems to lurk especially at the straight clubs that have "Gay Night(s)." Ka-Boom!'s opening gay night party F.U.C.K. (held on 6/9, ooooh!) was B.O.R.I.N.G. And where were they hiding the members of Cirque Du Soliel for the circus' cast party there? That evening, the upstairs game room looked like a Gold Coast/Division Street circus: Mother's meets P.S. Chicago. Can people like Michael Mangiaforte get folks out for **Crystal Waters**, **RuPaul**, **Gina Tay**, **Ultra**, or whomever the children are following? We'll see. Advertisements for the club call it "Chicago's most explosive night club!" It's a dud sometimes, too!

MEN WITHOUT HATS

I knew it from the word go that anyplace having the nerve to name itself the Warehouse was doomed to be a drag. The original Warehouse was the end-all haven of jack for only the most fabulous black fags and it would appear that it met its demise due in large part to a door policy that became too lenient in allowing just any ol' body in. It had no sign out front or anything outwardly marking its location. You either knew where to find it or you didn't. Now *this* place is open, straight as the day is long, with a big red neon sign out front that says "The Warehouse". However, by the time sissies who are thinking of the original Warehouse *do* drop in, does the management have to be forced to remember its gay sensitivity training? A little more than a dozen of us were there for the House Hoedown, a house party by way of a country theme (not to be confused with **Christine Johnson's** House Hayride of a similar bent). It was **John D'Armour** aka **Fraulein**, **Terence Smith** aka **Joan JettBlakk**, *J.D.s* publisher and filmmaker **Bruce La Bruce**, videographers **Stash Kybartas** and **Gabriel Gomez**, **Steve Marton**, **Craig Siegle**, **Brian Matthews**, **Brian Funk**, **Dave Williams**, SPEW organizers **Mary Jo Schnell**, **Suzie Silver** and **Steve Lafreniere**, **yummy Chuck Gonzales** and some others. We'd just left the "In Through The Out Door" series' *Appropriation/Representation and the Subculture of Queer* panel at Randolph Street Gallery. One of the panelists, **Vaginal Creme Davis**, was going to meet us at the Warehouse. Much to her benefit, she missed the party. We can thank **Gina Love** and **Alan Louis** for ushering us in comp because we really didn't want the privilege of paying five bucks and having to redo our looks, too. We were being denied entry because we were sporting baseball caps, a no-no in most straight clubs because gangs are represented by colors of caps. I overheard Miss Love explain to the manager (?) that she would eat the loss of the door cover but that the bar would still profit from our drinking if they'd allow us in. "Oh, ok." But think about it: gang members show up at the club, remove their hats and gain entry. So then you have hatless hoodlums in the club? OKAY! How 'bout a policy of "No Gang-Bangers!" Period. **Mark Farina** had the unenviable task of playing to a sparse crowd and was only spinning so-so. I've heard him in much better form which is why I couldn't understand **Lady Arlene** and **Gus Boy** getting so excited that Farina was dubbing the party for them to take home. I'd heard that the original owner of the place, **Ralphie Rosario**, had spent lots of money installing a fabulous sound system, but what I heard sounded rather average. A few kids danced for awhile on the overly lit dancefloor before we all finally settled in the upstairs lounge, continuing the weekend's SPEW induced gabfest.

BURNING DOWN THE HOUSE

The *Paris Is Burning* opening at the Fine Arts cinema proved fun because a good sized crowd turned out (mostly white kids) and everyone seemed 'up' and high spirited. It wasn't as glamorous as expected, even though we'd spotted a few queens on Halsted the day before shopping for outfits for the opening. However, the presence of super-hot **Lorraine Baskerville** more than made up for the conspicuously absent parade of glamor girls that usually accompanies events of this sort.

The party at Ka-Boom! directly following the screening was lacking. Don't get me wrong; the crowd and the music were probably the best it's ever going to get there, but it didn't fly. **Spencer Kincy** spun an eclectic and pared down mix of hot cuts that kept folks busy on the dance floor. But he's really a genius for not once resorting to playing **Madonna's** "Vogue." (Thank You!) Lot's of cosmotata in the crowd: **Robert Ford**, **Steve Marton**, **Michael Hyacinth**, **Jeff Britton**, **Andrew Sarver**, **celebrity hairdresser André Walker**, **Willie Crespo**, **May Day**, **Alan Louis** as **Azanda**, **House of Avant Garde** founders **Aaron Pierre Brown** and **Wardell Ford**, **Lady Arlene Casillas**, **Delon Strode**, **Lorraine Baskerville**, **make-up man Dwayne McKeever**, **Roderick Conrad**, **Betsy Johnson's Rebecca Hoffman**, **stylist Paul Stura**, and **make-up wiz Gina Sporacino**. **Voguer extraordinaire, Willie Ninja**, was scheduled for an appearance at the club but was a no-show. Hmm? And don't try getting away with saying that Madonna was there. The cast and crew of *A League of Our Own* was on break for the weekend and Her Fabulousness was known to have left the area. Finally, *thank you, so very much!* whoever it was that sent us the tee kee fresh *Paris is Burning* full-color poster! ...It's goin' on and we love it!

parties and other
TEE
by T. Adkins



THEY SHOOT CLUB KIDS, DON'T THEY?

When you say club kid you say *Project X*, I think. It's supposed to be the club kid's Bible. But I don't know, club kids seem better covered by people like **Michael Musto** and **Stephen Saban** who come to the latest club scene more informed of clubdom's past incarnations. Club kids don't seem too interesting covering themselves, lacking in the pages of *Project X* is any amusing sense of tongue-in-cheek or self-parody. They seem to take themselves much too seriously. *Project X* likes hyping itself, going as far as to suggest filling the voids left by *Details* and *Egg*. The original *Details* might've ever be duplicated—they were able to assemble so impressive a stable of editors and contributors. Lots of clubby pix to look at but don't go mistaking Julie Jewels for the likes of Bill Cunningham. *Project X* is far from being another *Details*. I can remember, not long ago, when it didn't have the glossy cover or all the big name advertising. I wish them luck. The New York City styled club kid thing comes to Chicago via people like **Michael Mangiaforte**, **Gina Love**, **John Boy**, **GIGI**, who at times take to the dress and manner of people like **Mykl Tron**, **Floyd**, **James St. James**, **Zette**, **San D.**, and **Kenny Kenny** in NYC. Of course, the NYC originals are better. Sometimes. And sometimes the Chicago versions are rather inspired. Local club wars erupt when too many kids get too competitive between too few clubs and patrons. Like, what's so bloody holy about Sunday night as the night for gay parties? Not long ago, **Brian Kamp** and **Byron Dorsey** hosted an anniversary party for Brian in the Pyramid at Cairo. That same night, Michael Mangiaforte was hosting B.A.N.G. (Boys And Nasty Girls) at Ka-Boom! The Pyramid party was too loud, too crowded and too fast. Rumor had it that the party at Ka-Boom! was poorly attended and in retaliation for stealing the crowd, Mangiaforte reportedly had stink bombs set off at the party at Cairo. More recently, the same night that Mangiaforte planned a blow-out *Paris is Burning* party at Ka-Boom!, the *Project X* kids decide to import New Yorkers **Michael Alig**, **DJ Keoki**, **Ernie Giam**, **Sushi**, etc. for a party in the Catacombs at Cairo, promoting the new issue of the magazine. I could only get as far as handing Keoki a couple copies of *Thing* and snap his pic. He seemed nice enough because he was busy working and made time for me. Alig wasn't mean, but he wasn't helpful either. Too preoccupied. I was a basket case because the whole evening I was unable to score a copy of the magazine. (Note: the next week, on a regular Sunday night at the same club, they were all over the place and anyone's for the taking!) Keoki's sound quality was good, but the selection of music was too much on the techno/thrash side and, in my opinion, pitched way too fast to dance to, even considering the Ecstasy. You never saw so many camera hogs and so few cameras (just the two I had and **Al Carter** taking polaroids). It got real sad when we reached Josh's and Christasy's place later for an afterhours party and not one club kid had the vision to bring a camera or buy film. But, dearies, if I'm gonna play the photographer and columnist for you people, the least I could get out of it is some cooperation, namely a complimentary

things, has a fetish for vintage **Pucci**, sixties lunch boxes and furnishings. We got to be fast friends. Saturday afternoon I ran around town feverishly playing beat the clock to complete a few interviews and stop at a few *Thing* distributors. Lady Bunny met me at Sha Sha Café in the West Village, "...it's close to my place." A lovely little spot where we enjoyed coffee, sinful desserts and dirt. Afterwards, we dashed over to the cozy Oscar Wilde bookshop and Wigstock co-sponsor MAC cosmetics. Then we popped by Bunny's friend and Wigstock co-organizer **Scott Lifshutz'** to get Wigstock programs. From there, we were off to Pat Field's, where I caught a glimpse of **Perfidia** and some of her very cute wigs. I browsed. Then I taxi'd over to Michael Musto's apartment where we gabfested and went through old photos together. (Full interviews with the genius Lady Bunny and the ultra-ovah Michael Musto to follow.) Saturday night, Riqué and I did the Shampoo party at Limelight because Bunny invited us. It was cute. We ran directly into **Deandra Peek** rushing out post-performance. "Hi Y'all!" We screamed and chatted for a moment, I snapped her and she was off. I could just eat her! Met **Johnny** (Hot-Man!) **Dynell** who was spinning and in fabulous form. He told me to look for his new release and that he and **Chi Chi's** Jackie 60 was the club of the moment, that I should check it out Tuesday night. **Sister Dimension** was spinning in the big room. Bunny introduced us to **Miss Guy** who's as sweet as she is cute. And the guy named **Pearl** is a gem. We were off to the Building, accepting Linda Simpson and Page's invite, but just as we were about to leave, in walks Linda telling us that they closed up the bash around 3 AM. So, we hit it to the Sound Factory where we saw everybody we didn't see at Shampoo: **Larry Tee** and **Lahoma Van Zandt** (post Roxy) and **Ronald**, who dances with **Deee-Lite** who was very surprised to see me again (we'd first met when Deee-Lite played Shelter in Chicago last November.) I know just how he felt: I can't believe I ate the whole thing!

APPLESAUCE

Out in New York City, in town for Wigstock, some club hopping and a much overdue visit with the illustrious **Charles (Chas) Bennet Brack**. It was both disturbing and comforting to see that not a whole lot has changed there. New Yorkers are still impatient and quick-tempered and some of the most fun-loving people anywhere. I arrived in town on the last day of a dreadful heatwave (way up in the 90's) and later found myself out at the comfortably air-conditioned After Five Plus with Chas, **Ricqué Green**, and Chas' friend **Leo**. We had a good ol' time. The people were very nice. The After Five Plus is a small bar in Brooklyn that attracts a pretty eclectic crowd of black, Puerto Rican, and white guys, a few women, and people of varied ages. Everyone insisted we were out on a good night and the music was crute, mostly tapes put together by one of the bartenders, a sexy Puerto Rican named **Jay**, who should have returned my calls. I figured if he posed for *Playguy*, he'd maybe pose for us. That was Friday night. Saturday night was the Sound Factory and finding the Chicago contingent and a whole bunch of city kids out for the Labor Day weekend in full force. Brian Mathews, Steve Marton, Craig Siegle, Montreal's **Nicolas Jenkins**, Lady Arlene, Christacy, Mangiaforte, Brian Funk, Byron Dorsey, Byrd Bardot, Sinisha, and N.Y.C.'s own **Bill Coleman** and Michael Hyacinth. DJ **Frankie Knuckles** is on top of the world, looking great, meeting and greeting only the sexiest guys and girls in the dj booth and enjoying huge success with his debut album *Beyond the Mix*. He graciously accepted our gift of a *Thing* T-shirt and bouquet of flowers before continuing to pound us to smithereens with sickening mixes of Basscut, Susan Clark, The Sounds of Blackness, and a yet-to-be-released tune from the album titled "Work Out." It's easy to see why the more serious dance kids flock to the Sound Factory week after week: the bass pumps and the place jacks 'til way past dawn.

Sunday night we were in Manhattan to attend a little party put together by Michael Hyacinth and painter **Darinka Navitovich** at the Flamingo East on 2nd Avenue. Everyone aforementioned at the Factory, plus, **Babs**, Homoture's **Fluffy Boy**, writer **Gary Indiana**, Steve Lafreniere, *STH* editor **Billy Miller**, **Gerald Paoli**, **John** Volkening, preferred promoter Bill Coleman, and writer **David Sedaris**. Graphic designer and ex-*Think Inker* **Arlene Ayalin** and her friend, photographer **Tina Paul**, sat in the back with retailer **Pat Field** and several others being fashionable and true to the legend of the Flamingo. Later, we went over to Club Pyramid, quite lucky to run into **Hapi Phace** who remembered Steve Marton from her visit to Chicago and comped us in. The place was mobbed with pre-Wigstock folks just carrying on! It was fun even if a little too packed. As we were leaving, the fire marshals were checking out the scene and were unable to find any fire code violations. Whew! The day of the Wigstock extravaganza, I awoke feeling not quite up to the occasion and was mortified to find myself not on the press list for backstage access as promised by **Lady Bunny**, and too overwhelmed by the throng of ten thousand spectators to stick around and take in the show. So I left. Me and Riqué headed out to Queens (Queen's Village to be exact) to join up with Chas and his friend **Tony Teal** who was hosting a cook-out and impromptu performance by a few members of Lavender Light, the Gay and Lesbian Black and People of All Colors Gospel Choir. We pigged out, sang and had a good ol' time.

The following week saw most of the Chicago kids heading home by Tuesday but Riqué and myself continued our stay with Chas and Co. Wednesday night we got lost in Alphabet City en route to Pyramid for the Channel 69 taping. What a nightmare! Kids call it Crack Alley and the Badlands. It's a mess! Less jam-packed than the previous Sunday night, the Pyramid was worth our unfortunate detour. We saw everybody from RuPaul to **Page Mona Foot** to **Codie Ravioli** to **Afro-Ditee** to **Linda Simpson** to *Thing* correspondent and former Chicagoan **Vincent Webster** to **Debbie Harry**. They were all really cute and friendly. We took lots of pix (except for Ms. Harry shaking her head back and forth, quietly indicating, "No photos, please.") Ms. Harry was very bubbly and seemed to be having a good time. Friday night, I ventured out alone and went to **Breeze's** loft party on Grand. It was right! Two floors and a rooftop in SoHo. Lots of fresh people and tee kee crute Margaritas! It was so goin' on that only a few hours into the festivities, the cops came in and kicked us all out. "Something about a license... From there I split to Two Potato on Christopher St. Very black and Puerto Rican with "No Dancing!" It was packed. Hosted by a few drag queens, it was like a very well-attended cocktail party. I freaked running into fashion illustrator **Michael Ascendio** and designer **Stacey**, originally from Chicago, now both working for the **Oleg Cassini** label. I also met the delicious **Frankie Chillino**, who, among other things, has a fetish for vintage **Pucci**, sixties lunch boxes and furnishings. We got to be fast friends. Saturday afternoon I ran around town feverishly playing beat the clock to complete a few interviews and stop at a few *Thing* distributors. Lady Bunny met me at Sha Sha Café in the West Village, "...it's close to my place." A lovely little spot where we enjoyed coffee, sinful desserts and dirt. Afterwards, we dashed over to the cozy Oscar Wilde bookshop and Wigstock co-sponsor MAC cosmetics. Then we popped by Bunny's friend and Wigstock co-organizer **Scott Lifshutz'** to get Wigstock programs. From there, we were off to Pat Field's, where I caught a glimpse of **Perfidia** and some of her very cute wigs. I browsed. Then I taxi'd over to Michael Musto's apartment where we gabfested and went through old photos together. (Full interviews with the genius Lady Bunny and the ultra-ovah Michael Musto to follow.) Saturday night, Riqué and I did the Shampoo party at Limelight because Bunny invited us. It was cute. We ran directly into **Deandra Peek** rushing out post-performance. "Hi Y'all!" We screamed and chatted for a moment, I snapped her and she was off. I could just eat her! Met **Johnny** (Hot-Man!) **Dynell** who was spinning and in fabulous form. He told me to look for his new release and that he and **Chi Chi's** Jackie 60 was the club of the moment, that I should check it out Tuesday night. **Sister Dimension** was spinning in the big room. Bunny introduced us to **Miss Guy** who's as sweet as she is cute. And the guy named **Pearl** is a gem. We were off to the Building, accepting Linda Simpson and Page's invite, but just as we were about to leave, in walks Linda telling us that they closed up the bash around 3 AM. So, we hit it to the Sound Factory where we saw everybody we didn't see at Shampoo: **Larry Tee** and **Lahoma Van Zandt** (post Roxy) and **Ronald**, who dances with **Deee-Lite** who was very surprised to see me again (we'd first met when Deee-Lite played Shelter in Chicago last November.) I know just how he felt: I can't believe I ate the whole thing!

1. Yolo! Miss May Day (aka Daryl Oliver) as Pamela Shields backstage at Ka-Boom's *Paris is Burning* party. 2. Spencer for Hire: DJ Spencer Kincy at *Paris is Burning*. 3. Black Gay Poets Society: Walter Youngblood and LDW at *Thing* offices. 4. Mo fierce blackressing: Afro-Ditee at Club Pyramid, NYC. 5. What's in a girl's lunch pail? Azanda at Michael Alig's CK party in the catacombs. 6. James Tucker at *Thing* offices. 7. Steve Marton. 8. Mo Cosmetota: Dwayne McKeever. 9. Page at Pyramid, NYC. 10. DJ/Designer Freddie Bain at Cairo. 11. (L to R) Brian Mathews, Christasy and Arlene en route. 12. Royally yours... Sir Roderick Conrad. 13. DJ Mark Farina at Ka-Boom! 14. Ms. Charlene Unger. 15. Hairbumer Deluxe, André Walker and model Andrew Sarver. 16. Roberto Soto at *Paris is Burning*. 17. Jungu Yuk walks for the House Of Avant Garden at *Paris is Burning*. 18. Rebecca Hoffman at *Paris is Burning*. 19. Homoture's Edward Fluffy at Sha Sha Cafe, NYC. 20. Andy Substance and Lady Arlene Casillas at Ka-Boom! 21. Shanda Leer meets and greets at Ka-Boom! 22. Miss Gigi. 23. Coffee, Tea or Natasha? 24. Daryl Oliver at F.U.C.K. opening. 25. Willie Crespo backstage at *Paris is Burning*. 26. (L to R) publisher Robert Ford, Delon Strode, and me at the *Paris is Burning* premiere, Fine Arts. 27. Steven at *Paris is Burning*. 28. Just en route afterhours. 29. George Rubio. 30. Showstopper Mona Foot at Pyramid NYC. 31. Are these those rich dykes we read about in *Outweek*? Gina Love and friend pootch in the catacombs. 32. DJ Keoki in the booth at Cairo. 33. Design team Tommy Walton and Roger Price. 34. Bill Coleman at Peace Biscuit suite, NYC. 35. A Cat in the Hat. 36. Keep it under your hat. Or. C) Dressed to Kill. Delon Strode (in the hat) and illustrator James Tucker, Chicago Pride Day at the Rocks. 36. In the middle: Codie Ravioli at Pyramid, NYC. 37. Mo Niggaras: (L/R) Max Smith, me, Essex Hamphill and LDW at the Sound Factory. 38. Delon and Lorraine Baskerville at *Paris is Burning*. 39. Writer Michael Musto at home. 40. DJ Derrick "The Maestro" Carter in the booth at Ka-Boom! 41. Money in the middle? Chip Duckette flanked by Floridan pals at Pyramid, NYC. 42. Curl up with a good look: Christasy in the Catacombs at Cairo. 43. Michael Hyacinth at Ka-Boom!

