

BONANZA MUSIC ISSUE



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BITCH AND ANIMAL



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Lesbian Culture, Politics, and Entertainment

September 2002

# Girlfriends

**The future of feminist rock:**  
(left to right) JD Samson, Kathleen Hanna, and Johanna Fateman



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# Ani Get Your Camera

The first-ever DiFranco documentary fleshes out the folkie's convictions.

by **Candace Moore**

## Ani DiFranco resembles a

political folksinger circa Joan Baez, retouched with twenty-first century, guerrilla-style girl power. Armed with strong vocals, a trusty acoustic, and her own independent record company, she wages battle against the whole twisted rightwing-capitalist-conspiracy brouhaha. In order to keep executive control of her particular brand of performance poetry, indie rock, and jazz-influenced folk—

and later to distribute the music of eclectic musicians who fit her worldview— DiFranco declined contracts from big studios and scrimped and borrowed to get

When they delve into the underpinnings of DiFranco's political convictions, Goldberg and DiFranco do provide some background. We are introduced via interweaving narratives to the issues that drive DiFranco to the boiling point: commercialism, the prison system, and discrimination based on race, gender, sexuality, or poverty.

In scenes reminiscent of a PBS special, DiFranco points to Buffalo's city-planning maps, discussing the "white flight" that has left the upstate city's downtown deteriorating and economically depressed. She also

home queerphobia), Ani is visibly livid. She includes live footage of the redneck cop yelling threats and proving his own asininity.

Throughout the film DiFranco comes off as a down-to-earth radical who puts her money and effort where her mouth is, and actively educates herself and her fans as to how to try and right societal wrongs. The arty aesthetics of the documentary, which portray figures in hyper-speed as if they're on fast-forward in blinks, fits nicely the frenetic energy of Ani's music. The pleasure (as opposed to

### Render: Spanning Time with Ani DiFranco

Dirs. Hilary Goldberg, Ani DiFranco  
Righteous Babe, 120 min.

Righteous Babe Records off the ground. Now a stable independent record company, the label has a modest staff and offices in an old abandoned church on Buffalo, New York's main thoroughfare.

*Render*, the first feature-length documentary about DiFranco, follows the minstrel-activist onstage and off through the past five years of U.S. tours. Edited by DiFranco and filmed by co-director Hilary Goldberg, the footage builds a cumulative view of the artist on the road, at home, and in a studio in Austin, Texas, meticulously adjusting her tracks to perfection. Long-time fans will be tickled pink to see their beloved Ani flailing dreads mid-tune, composing on the fly, or giggling backstage, enrapt in playtime with her chosen family of band members, roadies, and techs. Newbies, however, might wish that *Render* assumed less, and supplied more biographical context to put the melange in perspective.



DiFranco takes her message into a new medium in her film debut.

addresses this economic version of racial segregation in a song entitled "Subdivision" and featured in the film: "White people are so scared of black people/they bulldoze out to the country/and put up houses on little loop-dee-loop streets." Later, when gender-bending opening act Bitch and Animal nearly get arrested in South Carolina for exposing their breasts on-stage (an excuse for what appears to be down-

the polemic) to be gleaned from *Render* comes from its deeply personal aspects: watching openly bisexual DiFranco flirt with her keyboard and accordion player Julie Wolf, scribble words in black Sharpie into a journal, or simply deliver some beautiful live renditions of her songs. Grade: **B**

Candace Moore, co-editor of the small press *Runcible Spoon*, lives in L.A.



# The Dark Side of Queer

Gay film noir captivates viewers and critics alike.

by Candace Moore

*Clue* has far fewer characters than this ensemble-cast mystery and is immensely easier to follow. But who other than director Robert Altman can pull off such a sardonic, tightly packed zinger with more than thirty distinctive characters? A gossipy shooting party at a countryside manor goes awry in little interpersonal slivers before

someone gets offed. Snooty aristocrats and two Hollywood odd-ducks are juxtaposed with their servants, all rife with

anxious chit-chat and pent-up urges that become slutty behind closed doors. The cast is superb but too long to list without a roll-sheet. Grade: **A-**

## Gosford Park

dir. Robert Altman  
USA Films, 2001



Servants, nobility, and murder mix in *Gosford Park*.

## Bound (Gramercy Pictures, 1996)

A mobster's trophy wife (squeaky Jennifer Tilly) presses a tattooed fix-it-woman's (Gina Gershon) hand to her crotch to feel the leak in *her* plumbing. Soon the heated lovers rob a crime family. The Wachowski brothers got grief for making such a gruesome (read: bloodletting by hedge clippers) dyke feature when most girls can't even get a green light, but hiring lesbian sexpert Susie Bright as erotic advisor saved them. Gershon in muscle-T is as mouth-watering as the cold dewy beer she slugs. Yummy sex is the engine that propels this film that, despite shadowy tips of the hat to classic noir, is otherwise a run-of-the-mill heist flick. Grade: **B+**

## Double Indemnity (Paramount Pictures, 1944)

Billy Wilder's consummate film noir stars real-life lesbo Barbara Stanwyck as cold-blooded Phyllis Dietrichson, a femme fatale who baits with breathy sighs, blond bangs, and a voodoo ankle bracelet. The housewife lures rough-mouthed door-to-door insurance salesman Neff (Fred MacMurray) into breaking her crippled husband's neck and leaving him, crutches and all, on train tracks. Once the dough's on its way from a forged life insurance policy, the vixen stomps on now-useless Neff's heart, pulling out the pistol to prove it. Relentless! Based on the James M. Cain novella, Stanwyck makes for a sleazy heavy you can't help but adore in this hardboiled masterpiece. Grade: **A**

## Monkey's Mask (Strand Releasing, 2000)

In this steamy Aussie whodunit, lesbian private eye Jill Fitzpatrick (Susie Porter) investigates the strangulation of nympho teen Mickey Norris (Abbie Cornish). A trail of Mickey's potty-mouth performance poetry leads to English professor Diana Maitland (*Top Gun*'s Kelly McGillis), who's more than happy to shed her clothes to throw the horny gumshoe off track. The film clunks along as the detective interrogates the boring poetry curmudgeons (when all the time she's bedding her biggest clue) and concludes with a not-so-stunning thump. Romping trysts lead you to believe that if Fitzpatrick sleuthed as hard as she fucked, the movie could've been a short. Grade: **C+**

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# One Year Later

When hijacked airliners ploughed into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon last September, at *Girlfriends* we were finalizing our December 2001 issue. Our lives as Americans and as lesbians changed radically that morning, and we knew that the magazine would have to change, too. We hastily reassigned most of our features to address lesbians' reactions to the Scared New World we were living in. That issue turned out to be one of our best-selling magazines of 2001; I think that's because you heard so much about how Middle America responded to the tragedy but little about how lesbian America did.

Many lesbians instantly felt less tension between their identities as dykes and as Americans. Up until we watched the terrible footage of the Twin Towers, we'd felt mainly pain and dissatisfaction as lesbian citizens. We

were angry that America barred us from getting married, denied us the ability to adopt children, criminalized our sexuality, and failed to protect our jobs. When freelance writer Beth Greenfield interviewed dyke New Yorkers, they all remarked upon how they previously felt united in their opposition against their mayor, whose effort to "clean up" New York was stifling their edgy spirit.

But after September 11, all that changed. Suddenly Rudy Giuliani was a hero. Suddenly we went from resentment to thanksgiving when it came to basic American freedoms that global forces of fundamentalism wanted to take away from us. One reader even wrote, "today I am an American, not a lesbian," as if all dissonance between the two identities had been erased.

Not all of you felt that way. Surina Khan, who wrote our Soapbox for that issue, said that the rampant jingoism and anti-Arab sentiment brought out the proud Pakistani in her. In this issue, Le Tigre's JD Samson, who was in New York on that day, says that since the attacks she's felt "confused" in her feminism, as if the events had hopelessly complicated her feminist world view.

In the wake of the terrorist attacks twelve months ago, *Girlfriends* has stuck to its mission: to bring you the lesbian perspective you won't find in other magazines. But we've also committed ourselves to better understanding the newly intensified relationship we have with ourselves as Americans. In the meantime, peace, and enjoy this issue.



BEVERLY PAET

Me with some peaceful reading material for September 11, 2002.

Heather Findlay, Editor in Chief

# Girlfriends

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