

RESPONSE FROM THE RED DYKE THEATRE

As the co-ordinator of the Great South East Lesbian Conference and a member of the Red Dyke Theatre I feel it is necessary to write this response to your report on the RDT performance.

I think it is important that you know some of the facts about the situation here in Atlanta before I go on to respond to the article I have before me. Until very recently, the only bars here were men's bars that produce drag shows. I don't know if you have ever seen a real drag show before but I can assure you that they are perhaps the most sexist and repressive form of entertainment that exists today. Although it is hard for many to accept, bars are where the majority of lesbians make their contacts with other lesbians. Many, many lesbians are intimidated by political organizations such as ALFA or your own. It is easy to forget that all lesbians are not "lesbian feminists" or even "feminists" for that matter. The drag show is almost a way of life for a lot of women that "lesbian feminists" don't have an awful lot of contact with in their every day lives. Our reverse drag acts have begun to show them the oppression and sexism that exists in real drag shows. Drag is an important part of what we are. I hope you can understand what is meant by this.

When men do women's drag they are making a joke out of the roles women have been forced into. When we do it, it is a recognition of sex roles. It is usually left up to the audience to take what ever they want from it: (1) they can see us as being a lot easier to take than seeing gay men doing it; (2) they can identify with the roles and mannerisms that they see; (3) they can feel good about women, Lesbians, impersonating some of their favorite musicians; (4) they can trash the whole thing and write an article about it.

The tipping that goes on in our performances is first of all beyond our control; and secondly it is something that is done by our friends because

they want to show us they appreciate us and give us support. Although it is assumed that money is always the content of the tip, it is an incorrect assumption. Tips often consist of notes that say things like, "You're beautiful.", "Keep up the good work." or even, "Zip up your dress." To you it may seem as though it is a sexist act, but our friends tipping us is often a way of reacting to the tipping that goes on in real drag shows. Many times in the real drag shows I have seen my Lesbian Sisters tip and give sexual come ons to a man who is portraying women in a degrading way.

As for your article, I feel that you have really misinterpreted what you saw, and more importantly what was said to you by members of Red Dyke Theatre when they took the time to talk to you on Monday morning. Mis-interpretation is a favorite ploy of the straight male press and it is hardly something that I would expect of my Lesbian Sisters.

"New Sappho's Woman to Woman" was not necessarily an ad for Lesbian Love. I believe that the intent of that skit was to spoof the heterosexist commercials that we are confronted with and to express the rage we feel because it is so difficult to present Lesbianism as a valid alternative to heterosexuality.

The "Coming Out" skit, although it is not a positive piece of acting, is a true to life reenactment of something that happened to a real live lesbian. Even though many Lesbians get positive reactions from their parents, some do not, and some refrain from coming out to their parents because they sense what will happen. Coming out to your parents is not an easy thing to do. I don't feel that a woman who doesn't come out to her parents is less of a lesbian because of it.

The role playing that is done in our performances is something that is done because we see it as a reality in everybody's life. I don't deny that role playing has existed in the relationships that I have had. It was a hard thing for me to accept but it does exist to one extent or another.

Red Dyke Theatre's priorities are: (1) LESBIANS....all lesbians, be they bar women, feminists, professional women, closet cases, separatists, etc. (2) Women.... all women, be they heterosexual, lesbian, contented housewives, feminists, working women, etc. (3) GAY PEOPLE...even gay men. (4) Straight men. In those priorities