

THE NEED CORPSE

An intimate conversation with
Rachel Carns & Radio Sloan



The Need Swamp House
Olympia, Washington
January 29th - 30th, 2000

Text and Photographs by
Todd and Shelley Swindell

This document is dedicated to Nadia Winstead
for consistently going above and beyond
the call of queer duty.

Because we must...

A note on the photographs:

The photographs were taken with a variety of pre-digital Polaroid instant cameras. The full-page photos were shot with a SX-70 Polaroid Land. Among it's many unique features were a focusing screen. This allowed the user to slightly alter the focus of the image, which was the standard Polaroid size of $3 \times 3 \frac{1}{8}$ ".

The JoyCam (later marketed as Pop Shots) came pre-loaded with 10 exposures of Captiva (500) film that measured $2 \frac{7}{8} \times 2 \frac{1}{8}$ " and featured manual film ejection.

The smallest photos, measuring $1 \frac{1}{2} \times 1$ ", were taken with a Polaroid i-Zone that came on a pullout strip of paper. The strip was decorated and could later be cut to the size of the photo when the image was finished developing.

All photos were originally shot in color and their dimensions altered for the purpose of layout.

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THE NEED TAKE FRIGHT IN THEIR FUNHOUSE OF THE NEW MILLENNIUM!!!

Step right in to see The Need archive blown into architecture! Stand amazed as the very sleeve in your hand inflates to living room proportions! Don't miss music made plastic in fantastic constructivist angles of colour! Watch magic origami horses trapezing from swampwater - with birdwinged bodies! - Ride nestling radial antennas on the newspaper rooftop! Twist your mane to see yourself strangely alluring in the mirror of their lyrics!

Note the in-house colour scheming pale blue, pumpkin orange and white frosting a la Pony 4 Honey! See their tasty racing stripes offset one wall from another in the sight shifting scenery of this surrealist theatre piece! Take your chances to the tall cornered pitched tent studio of the Rolling Stones rock 'n' roll circus! Behold the Villa Villa Kula gone punk, gone pop, gone mod metal goth, collared by a freeway and swallowed by a swamp! Come hear crazed dykes of mad genius revel in their crumbling kingdom!

Come in, fear not! Wander over bmx bike amplifiers as big as refrigerators with rocket ship lights reflecting off cracked bronzed flying saucer cymbals, cassette tapes and old letters scattered everywhere! Past a gas mask, aquarium, dartboards and a poster of The Who! Covet a black and white Duran Duran bootleg album cover! Picture a zeppelin riding pumpkinheaded faerie flying puppies past a KISS poster at the temple of Judas Priest!

Come right in to see Rachel's red "Slayer" mural on the living room wall - a linear tour de force! - surrounded by furniture of rich and torn fabric scattered at random for rehearsing show! Walk this way up the winding staircase to lust over a poster of Prince lovesexy on the ceiling of an alcove room!

Journey into another room to experience a candy striped red stratocaster hung on a black wall, cornered by a red walled black poster of the Rolling Stones red lollipop tongue logo! Lick your night vision!

Come downstairs to note penciled rough song titles from "The Need is Dead" scrawled on the kitchen wall! Take your turn at the talking skull microbone! Win a ride in the Radio fashioned Night Rider racing car bathtub! Admire a felt painting 70's van decaled "R-A-D-I-O" in funky letters - truly a glow in the dark masterpiece! Warm yourself like Lambchop sleeping near the hearth of the heating oven!

Step outside to see haunting lacquered woodframed landscapes hung on tree trunks heralding the gabled house, lined with Radio's assorted automobiles! Prick up your ears to hear her contemplate forsaking car fixing for fear of losing one of her hands, "which would suck cos I'm a dyke and a guitar player," - "HIGH FIDELITY" on black hanging on the front of the house, trophied relics once adorning her storefront electronic repair shop, now red watertower letters watching over a weathered piano organ rotting on the damp grass beside a sleek rustic blue sedan! Come feel planet earth grip your shoes at each step! Right this way!

Follow the point of the pale blue carnival hands to the garage alcove cum poolroom, complete with rotting pooltable covered in cobwebs and dead leaves! Cloudlight spilling through roofholes spots wallpaper flyers from old shows with bikini kill, team dresch, meme america, the third sex! Feel the far wall caved in completely! See the swamp Radio and Donna once rafted up slowly swallowing the house! Legends and relics lost murmuring in the moss crawling in the trompe l'oeil swamps of Olympia!

The Need Interview Transcript

Mini Saigon, next door to the Midnight Sun

Olympia, Washington Saturday, January 29th, 2000

Todd Swindell: I guess we could start talking about the new album [*The Need Is Dead*], which is really exciting. We enjoyed listening to it for the about the last week or so.

Rachel Carns: Yeah, what did you think?

Todd: It wasn't anything what I expected and I was really like...I really enjoyed it. It expanded a lot from your previous album [*The Need*] and took things to just a whole new level, production wise, lyrically.

Shelley: It sounds very dramatic to me and when I heard that you were doing a rock opera that seemed so perfect. Because your music has always seemed very dramatic to me, very suited to the stage, like a cabaret act.

Rachel: Yeah.

Shelley: And some of the songs on the new album especially have that feel.

Radio: Were you scared?

Rachel: (laughs)

Shelley: There were some parts where it was just like...Oh My God! *lol*

Radio: Good.

Shelley: It definitely shocked me in places, but that's really cool, you know. It's like stuff I've never heard before.

Radio: That's good.

Todd: Yeah...

Radio: That's great.

Todd: Yeah, I was playing it around the ACT UP space and some of my friends were listening to it, cos I told them about doing the interview and my friend Dave Pasquerelli, who works on the magazine [*Magnus*]- we finished listening to it and he says, "It sounds-" and then he paused, "really dark." And I first I was like "Oh no" and he says "...and I like that a lot!" *lol*

6 Todd: ...then during the "Dark Sally" song, when all the weird voices and effects come in, my friend Betty turned to me and said, "Wow! They sound like they're from another planet!" *lol*

Todd: It's very theatrical, very animated. I've always gotten the sense from your lyrics as being illustrative, similar to the way characters are described in children's' books rather than novels...like the last album seemed to be more observant, almost as if you were at a carnival sideshow describing all the different freaks. Whereas this album is more into character...

Rachel: Yeah.

Todd: ...and action and things like that.

Rachel: I agree. Yeah.

Radio: That's a pretty good description actually.

Rachel: Yeah, it's a really good description. I think lyrically, that for the first record I was seeing things more in a two-dimensional way around me or something. That's how I dealt with things, sort of cut and pasting...

Shelley: Yeah, exactly, like when you said, "Did it scare me?" There were parts where, even lyrically, it's really intense, it's very fierce, it's very in your face...

Rachel: Wow! These are all such good things to hear!

Radio: No kidding.

Shelley: Just very naked, you know?

Todd: Very raw...

Rachel: I was kind of... I had a certain fear because our last record [*The Need*] has been out for soooo long because it took us two years to put out another one, so it'd would be like "Where's The Need? This doesn't sound like The Need!"

Radio: Yeah.

Rachel: "Where's the band I like? What is this?"

Radio: And I hate that record now too...

Rachel: The first one?

Radio: and I was gonna be really sad. (To Rachel) Yeah.

Shelley: Really?

Radio: Yeah. I was gonna be really sad if people didn't like the new one because I just don't like the old one so much. I mean I don't totally hate it but you know...

Todd: One thing that really struck me, the last time you played in San Francisco, I wasn't able to go, but Shelley went and got some copies of the 10-inch of "Vaselina"...

Radio: Uh-huh.

Todd: And I was really blown away by that, especially "Talk Potty".

Rachel: Awesome!

Todd: Because you were taking the songs and playing with the format, stretching it out, you know...

Shelley: That's the first thing I noticed about it, just the length of the songs is longer.

Rachel: Joe Preston's influence.

Radio: Yeah.

Rachel: I don't know if you've ever listened to Thrones but he's a very long man, very large.

Todd: That was really great, cos you don't see that, at least I don't really hear that much experimentation in terms of like punk music, it's gotta be fast, it's gotta be short and those types of things, you know...and you seem be playing around and expanding things.

Rachel: Yeah, I'm so honored to still to be called a punk. *lol*

Rachel: I feel a little old for that actually.

Shelley: Well, when I think of punk I think of being experimental and pushing the boundaries, know what I mean?

Rachel: Yeah.

Radio: That's what it used to mean (laughs).

Rachel: Yeah.

Todd: That's what I think is so great cos you don't seem to be satisfied...

Radio: Yeah.

Todd: ...you're always searching, taking it to some new level, some new experience.

Radio: Of course.

Rachel: That's why we're doing a rock opera.

Radio: Exactly, what are we supposed to do? Just put out another record? Nahhh!

Todd: That's the great thing about a rock opera... Shelley & I were talking about the KaraNEEDoke and how that was so liberating in that they're the songs that everybody knows, but nobody admits they know the words to and to just get a group of people belting them out...

Radio: Uh-huh.

Todd: ...was really fun and it levels the playing field of performer versus spectator.

Rachel: That's exactly, exactly why we have done that for the last couple of years, like every couple of months we just tell everyone in town we're gonna do a show and if anybody has a song they wanna do, their alter ego, their dream whatever to do it. I mean we've had some... I have videotapes of these amazing people around town that are just like...

Rachel: Did somebody videotape last night?

Todd: Yes, there was somebody videotaping in the back.

Rachel: Ok, cos we're hoping to make a video compilation of that stuff cos there's been some amazing stuff, like Nicky McClure singing...

Radio: "Sympathy for the Devil"

Rachel: Yeah, "Sympathy for the Devil"

Shelley & Todd: Wow!

Rachel: Stripping off her shirt and having this devil painted on her chest and just so awesome.

Radio: It's really something.

Todd: It's really great to see those personal interpretations. I don't remember the name of the woman who did the Joan Jett song last night but I thought it was so cool because she said something like "When I was 13 this song meant a lot to me and was like an anthem for domestic violence survivors but then I was going over the lyrics the other day with a friend and realized it's totally about S/M!" That was so great because to me that's what really great pop music is about: The artist starts with whatever conception they have but then they put it out to the general public and it takes on a whole life of it's own.

Radio: Yes.

Todd: You just seem to be really breaking down the walls on that. It was great.

Radio: It's so fun to work with people who don't normally sing too. They're so excited when they hear you play cos it's loud and they can hear themselves and do it over and over, it's so fun!

Todd: Yeah, I got this feeling like I was watching them in their bedrooms, know what I mean? That rush... *lol*

Rachel: (excitedly) It's totally... Yeah!

Todd: The emotion! When she did that Pat Benatar song ["Love is a Battlefield"], she was so into it! You know what I mean? I'll never hear that song the same way again! *lol*

Todd: It's redefined Pat Benatar for me!

Radio: That's good.

Rachel: Did you know there's a KaraNEEDoke 7-inch?

Todd: Yeah, actually, we picked it up at Dumpster Values.

Rachel: Okay, awesome.

Todd: I got a couple copies. You can't find it in San Francisco.

Radio: Yeah, there's some hits on there. (Laughs)

Todd: And actually one thing we were talking about last night after the last two songs of your set from the rock opera, it seemed like a lot of people in there were very familiar, knew a lot of the words and it just seemed so...

Shelley: They were so jubilant, the energy...

Todd: Yeah.

10 Shelley: ...in the crowd and the sense of togetherness... I'd never seen that at a show before, ever.

Radio: Well, it's such a small town that half the town, well, okay a fourth of the town is in the rock opera...(*lol*)...and some people moved here from Los Angeles to be in the rock opera and, excluding those like 4 people or 3 people, everyone is just local people that we see every day, that are so talented, that why would we need go out of town and find them or something? It's great.

Rachel: It's totally the ultimate community project.

Radio: Yeah.

Rachel: It's really exciting.

Todd: That's what I thought was so great about it cos it was like...just the theme song, I was blown away cos who sings about freedom?

Radio: (laughing) No one without getting laughed at usually...

Todd: Not only in a pop song much less a rock opera which has been, you know, one of the most clichéd things about rock operas... You think about *Tommy* or something like that...

Radio: Right.

Todd: ...but at the same time there's so much power in that...

Radio: Yeah.

Todd: ...and if we don't forfeit it, we reclaim it. It was like "Transformed...

Shelley: "Transmit, Transformed, Transfused."

Radio: See you know all the words too!

Todd: I was like, "That's it!"

Shelley: It's a total anthem.

Shelley: That's why I was saying when I heard you were doing a rock opera, I thought it was so perfect, because especially this last album, just to listen to it for me, is a very cathartic experience because it is just so intense and so real and so it seems natural to move towards doing a rock opera.



12 Shelley: Has your involvement in it changed the way you create music?

Rachel: It will...Yeah, it's really hard to tell right now because The Need has multiple personalities...

Radio: Yeah.

Rachel: We're getting ready to go on tour as The Need but we're also working heavily on the rock opera. So it's definitely feeding off each other but I don't really know how yet.

Radio: I have a weird way that I separate it in my head. I don't know if it explains it but The Need always is, to me, more about what we can play live and our energy live and with people. It's like a way for us to hang out with people and be like "Look at this show and tell us what we do!", to get excited with people in different towns and stuff. And then the rock opera is a little bit more planned, precise...and it involves a lot of people that we create visuals with too. So, in my head, if there's things that we can't do onstage live and that includes other instruments or other vocals or like you know whatever else...it goes there...creatively it comes out of you and you have to figure out where to put it. So that stuff goes there and this stuff goes to The Need, you know what I mean?

Rachel: Yeah, we had all these fragments of songs, bits and pieces that we haven't known what to do with and now we have a place to put them all. We're using almost all of them, it feels so good...this little bag of gems that we got to use.

Shelley: How did the collaboration begin?

Radio: Nomy [Lamm]...actually it was Nomy's idea.

Rachel: Yeah, it was Nomy's idea.

Radio: She just came up to me one day...we were doing our Hesh night every Thursday night... *lol*

Shelley: Cool! Wow!

Radio: ...because we were so bored here that, check this out... *lol*

Radio: No, really...like everyone in town would call each other and be like "Meet me at Safeway at 10:00" and so we'd all like drive our shitty cars, cos we all have shitty cars, to Safeway and open the doors and blast Judas Priest and dress up like heshers... *lol*

Radio: ...and all the dykes would go in drag, you know, they'd all show up in beards...

Rachel: And have the mesh shirt and the red bandana...but there were totally some bitches too...like some of the girls would do the full-on pumps with socks and little vinyl skirts...

Radio: That was hot.

* Rachel: ...and wear wigs and stuff.

Radio: We'd just scream at cars and stuff.

Rachel: Totally ridiculous and so fun.

Radio: And we wouldn't drink or do anything bad because we were of course kidding, like making fun of everyone else who really does it in this town and so the cops couldn't even bust us. They'd be like "What are you doing?!" And we'd just be like totally crazy (laughing)...but anyway that's where Nomy...I think the crazy energy of that kinda stuff... Nomy was just like "I love your band, let's do a rock opera and see what comes out of that."

Rachel: Can I go back in time just a second?

Radio: (laughing) No.

Rachel: Because there was about this time last year kind of a split in the...

Radio: Oh yeah...

Rachel: ...dyke community...and I say dyke community because the gay male community here is... There's like a couple of gay male kids in the punk scene or whatever but there's just this sort of older gay male scene in town that is really separate from like my personal scene and there's not a lot of young fags in Olympia...

Radio: It's so weird...

Rachel: ...and it's so sad and it's totally true...

Radio: ... and it totally sucks... there's like four boys that I know, gay males, or at least they know that they're gay here.

Rachel: Yeah...but there was at that point about a year ago, there was a pretty big split between the queer kids, like us who were in the music scene or were aspiring to be in the music scene somehow and these other queer kids that were just more activist types...

Radio: ...more theater types too...

Rachel: Yeah, more theater types/activist types, including Nomy and Elizabeth Harry who is the director for the rock opera and Hilary who sang Joan Jett last night... I don't know, there was just sort of this big split. We all co-existed but we weren't really close in any way and they...their posse decided to form a gang... *lol*

Rachel: And they called themselves "The Sleazy Fuckers" and they took over our house one night, they like stormed the house, they took this girl hostage and took Polaroids of her blindfolded in a dog kennel and all this stuff.

Radio: (laughing) It totally sucked.

Rachel: All these crazy things and you never knew when something was gonna happen. They called us "The Scrawny Wusses" and we tried to call ourselves "The Goblins" but I mean... *lol*

Rachel: But the fact is we were all like pasty-assed, like punk kids who could hardly lift a feather, you know, and they're all like lumberjack dykes, you know, so they totally had our number, we were just terrified.

Radio: (laughing) We couldn't even fight...we'd be all "Oh God!"

Rachel: But in the end, it ended up being their way of making friends with us and then we all ended up hanging out and then Hesh night sort of grew out of that. So we would all hang out in drag doing this thing and then the rock opera became the next step where we all became involved in this big project.

Radio: Yeah, yeah.

Rachel: So it's kinda like a year's worth of Olympia scene history involved with the making of the rock opera.

Radio: Yeah, we've actually been acting it out this whole time... It's totally funny; I forget how ridiculous we were.

Rachel: The dyke gangs were totally fun.

Radio: (laughing) Except for, I was getting my ass kicked all the time...That sucked...I was mad because I try to be tough, as small as I am. All the time I'm always like, (pounds fist) "*at least I try*" (laughing). I'm excited at least. Everyone else is just nice and painting pictures and stuff and I'm like "C'mon!" (makes pantomime movements to motivate the others)...Rachel's tough, Rachel's tougher than me, she's just quiet... She's the secret weapon, yeah.



Todd: I think that's really interesting cos there seems to be this split in the queer community between the performance and the activist types...

Rachel: Totally.

Todd: ...which I think is something that has been a detriment all around not just in queer communities, but also within youth communities in general. It's kind of like activists are activists and it has to be totally serious, no fun.

Rachel: Yeah.

Todd: And your art has to be frivolous entertainment.

Shelley: It can't be political.

Todd: You can't interject politics into it and you can't certainly make a living off it. Otherwise you're a sellout or something like that.

Radio: Right.

Rachel: Yep.

Radio: Totally.

Todd: It does a disservice on both ends because it keeps the art stagnant and boring and it never lets people know that, you know, politics is really about being true to yourself, your vision. I mean that's the ultimate revolutionary stance. So I think it's so cool that *The Transfused* seems to be about the melding of those two...

Rachel: Totally.

Todd: ...and making it really real. We were talking last night after the show about *The Transfused* and you mentioned Shelley something I think about *Hair*.

Radio & Rachel: *lol*

Shelley: I saw a production once at a local college and it was these kids who put it together. It was kind of a slipshod type thing they had done on their own but it had that same kind of energy, that same kind of excitement. What was really cool was that this was something that was being done now about our generation instead of something from the Sixties.

Rachel: Yeah, there really- there hasn't been that kind of energy in pop music since the... '70s... I don't think... that I can remember. Can you think of anything?

Shelley: No. I mean the '80s were completely different from that and the '90s as well.

Radio: I always don't want to say that myself cos I always feel like I don't know, so disconnected from that sort of stuff actually. Like how would we ever know? Like if there was- (To Rachel) like remember there were people telling us that there was this rock opera that's really good called *Hedwig the Angry Inch*. You guys have you heard of that?

Shelley & Todd: No.

Radio: Well there's an example of some like thing that's out there right now that's supposed to be really awesome and challenging gender wise and all this shit that I don't even know about. (Laughing) Maybe, so...Maybe...I don't know. (Pause) Who knows what's out there? We just live here and try to get out every once in awhile. *lol*

Todd: Well something else that struck me in terms of The Need in general is how you play with identity and image. I read an interview in *Bitch* magazine with Stella Marris talking about her postcards and cutting up images and words to reinvent language and to reclaim it. And what's really cool from my perspective is you don't seem to forfeit anything that you can use to your own artistic end. It seems like everything out there is for you to pick and chose from, you know. It's all really just labeling because we all get put into our niche and everything gets really comfortable there. So has that been something that was part of your artistic expression before The Need or did that come about when you two started getting involved together?

Rachel: Hmm, that's an interesting question. (long pause)

Radio: You're in charge.

Rachel: Yeah (ponderously) Well I personally feel like my artistic expression or my artistic persona or whoever that person is didn't come into full flower until The Need just because (pause) because we're coming at it from all angles, I guess. You know visually and music wise or live wise and all that kind of stuff. So it's hard to say if it was exactly like that before. But I think it did come from that sort of collagist mentality like in my writing and when I was in art school.

Todd: What were you studying in art school?

Rachel: I was a painting and drawing major (laughs) and actually I didn't make art for probably four years after I got out of school or so. I just kind of had it...didn't...yeah. So I started playing in bands and didn't make any visual art for a long time. I needed to take a breather. Art school worked for some people, I think, but it didn't totally work for me.

18 Todd: It's interesting what you say about taking things from all different levels because I think that's one of the things which struck me early on about The Need: all the different sounds and influences going on. Visually you take what can seem like separate images and put them together and create something like the Outpunk 7-inch, you know having birds with the horse's heads. I found it at first jarring, almost kind of scary, but then beautifully poetic and liberating.

Again I think it gets back to that element of playing around with things and not just choosing or the other. It seems there's a mixing of elements that goes on with The Need, not just musically, but everywhere. I think especially in terms of the lyrics there's a mystery, a real undefined element, which has been very much lacking in art. Everything's got to be specific. Everything has to be representational. There really doesn't seem to be a lot of room for grey area, for the listener or the spectator to figure out what's going on.

The artists I've always loved from the poetry of Arthur Rimbaud, to the writings of Gertrude Stein to, say, the theater of Tennessee Williams, there's always a real undefined element. I think that's something inherent for people who grow up queer in American society because we aren't able to fit in or see ourselves represented, so consequently we take from everywhere. We are kind of everything but not everything, if you follow me.

Rachel: You are explaining it so well.

Radio: Yeah...

Rachel: You're doing such a good job.

Radio: Yeah, he totally understands.

Rachel: Yeah it's totally great.

Radio: Not very many people understand it.

Rachel: I don't know if its not so many people understand but it's a real difficult thing to articulate. I don't know if I could have articulated that right now.

Radio: Well but you can in your art and that what he's saying he notices.

Shelley: Yeah, exactly, I mean that's what we pick up on.

Rachel: Yeah, so totally great.

Todd: I think that's what makes it so distinctive is that it's familiar but at that same time very, very new which is kind of like the age that we're living in right now.

Todd: Trying to deal with our past histories and move with some type of conception towards a future. 19

Radio: Isn't that exciting? I'm so excited that it's the year 2000 now. Hopefully stuff like that...I wanna see a horse grow out of my body somewhere. I wanna see things in this world politically change.

Todd: I think so. That's why I was so excited by last night. It seemed to me like hopefully a blueprint for the future. I mean it was one of the first times that I, like I just turned 27 and I looked around and realized that most of the people in here are younger than me. That's a rarity when I go not only shows but any type of thing around, you know. I thought it was so great that these kids could come out and be kids you know, goof off, wear funny clothes, and act like their true self. I mean it's beautiful to see that go on.

Rachel: Olympia is the city of eternal youths. It totally is. There's always new blood coming in too. It's a pretty transitional place. It's a real exciting place to live. I think that's why I stayed here for so long.

Radio: You're drinking Artesian well water, which keeps you young forever.

Todd: (laughing) It's the secret to good life and health in Olympia.

Radio: And happiness.

Todd: Oh, I remember one other thing we wanted to talk about which I always thought was really cool, especially in your first CD, is how you approach sex and S/M sex. There's just so much sexual repression in general and this false equation of sex with disease and death. So from my perspective, I don't see the chance for people to truly have fluidity in terms of roles and identities. I found it so empowering that you were fucking around with those images and roles because that's just not being put out there, you know. You are constantly told to be either top or bottom, either a sweater gay or a leather dyke or something like that.

Rachel: Yeah, we want to mess with all that stuff too because how boring!

Radio: I know.

Shelley: Exactly.

Todd: And it's so stale and the same old stuff. With *The Need*, it was such incredible stuff really. When that CD [*The Need*] came out I bought like eight copies and sent them to all my friends because it was an important cultural document, I believe, because it's not put out into the queer community. And all of these young queer kids are being demonized over and over and not given real chances for expression and liberation that have been there before, in the past. That's why it's so cool that someone's doing that.

Radio: I hope that gets across though. I hope that people don't reject it because to you it seems...it's always the thing of... cos there's alternatives out there that don't challenge that stuff that are a lot more popular and they have money and we're poor. (laughing)

Rachel: I think we're resentful because we're not getting paid for our brilliance. (laughing)

Radio: But that's not the point.

Rachel: It's the age-old history of the artist.

Radio: Yeah but the point is that also, because of that exactly, it isn't as accessible to as many people to challenge them as you say they are challenged. So we have to either spend a lot of money to get it out there or hope that people like you buy eight and send them to friends.

Todd: I can't wait until the next album goes on sale cos it's going out to everybody. But I've never really felt that kind of identification with any other group. Because I'm like wicked into music, do you know what I mean, like I listen to music all the time but it's rare that I can truly identify with it and not have to like compromise myself. I'm so used to in Pop music "OK aside from the sexism, its good song. Aside from the racism, it's a good song." You know you always have to qualify things like that and you didn't have to do that. You didn't have to compromise or anything like that. That's why it was so liberating to me

Radio: I'm glad that you feel that way.

Rachel: I am too.

Radio: But still there's some guy who says, "God, the music's great but they're dykes." I mean, you know, don't forget. I mean, I know, I'm with you brother. I'm on your side, trust me. But you know what I mean?

Todd: Yes. I think that's why it's so...Even if those people don't necessarily get it, I think just to tweak them a little bit, to kind of shake them out of their mold, you know, it's almost in some sense a threat to them.

Rachel: Well this is our way of being activists as musicians rather than blowing someplace up. (laughing) Which if my life had gone in a slightly different direction, I might be doing that instead, be a terrorist, you know...but...yeah.

Todd: Pop music can certainly be a form of terrorism.

Radio: Sure, just crazy.

Todd: Well that's what's so subversive about it because if you tried to hold a rally or a seminar or something like that around the things we've been talking about, people just wouldn't get it, you know. But if you put in a format like a movie or a song I think it's easier for people to accept it because they feel more comfortable.

Radio: Exactly.

Shelley: I always like interviews where they ask people what they're listening to now like what's coming out of your stereo now, what's the music, you know, that you're into right now?

Radio: What do you listen to?

Rachel: Um, well right now I just have a really crappy boom box and a stash of old tapes that I've been listening to. Radio has my stereo receiver and my record player got moldy in the closet when it was in storage

Radio: at my house.

Rachel: Yeah, at your house. So what's in my stack? Chrome?

Radio: Oh, I found a tape of that.

Rachel: OK. Yeah I've been listening to Chrome and (turning to Radio) that mix tape you made me with the Butthole Surfers (laughs) and Danzig and The Birthday Party, all on like really slow speed.

Shelley: Oh, cool...

Radio: Yeah, there's some songs by bands like that where if there's not that many words, like the Butthole Surfers, like there's a band where you go "God, if this song wasn't so fucked up in this way, their music would be really great." But it's even better if you turn your record player speed all the way as slow as it goes...(laughing)...it's really good.

Shelley: Todd did that once with "Bigmouth Strikes Again", the 12 inch single, he accidentally put it on the record player at 33 instead of 45, you know, so the drums come in really slow and Morrissey's backing vocals, which are speeded up on the original mix, are slower.

Todd: It sounded very...metal, like a Danzig song.

Radio: You liked it?

Todd: Yeah, it was really weird.

22 Shelley: It was very haunting.

Radio: Awesome.

Radio & Rachel: *lol*

Shelley: I think it sounded like Joy Division.

Todd: Yeah, like on the album version Morrissey's backing vocals had been recorded at a higher speed, so when you play it at 33, it comes out at like the normal voice.

Rachel: Oh wow.

Radio: Nice.

Todd: But yeah those kind of like accidents, almost unintentional accidents...

Shelley: Yeah, we were just too lazy to get up and switch it to the right speed...

Todd: And it was like "Wow! This is kinda interesting..."

Rachel: Wow.

Radio: I totally had this Butthole Surfers record and I never knew that I was playing it on the wrong speed cos I was like 14 and I just loved it and ever since then I always play their records on the slow speed and they've been great ever since.

Rachel: It's funny; I didn't know that.

Radio: Really? Yeah, I think that's why I just have vinyl of it, cos I don't like if it's fast cos they're just like annoying and I don't like annoying music. (pauses) I like Judas Priest, that's about it.

Rachel: Yeah, I've been listening to a lot of Priest.

Shelley: I've actually never heard them.

Radio: Really? (To Todd) Have you?

Todd: No.

Radio: Can I make some recommendations?

Shelley & Todd: Yeah, please do.

Radio: First of all, that guy the singer, Rob Alford, was GAY! Ok? Sorry, I'm 23
spitting, I'm so excited about it.

Shelley & Todd: *lol*

Radio: And he was in this heavy metal band in the '70s, you guys. There was this *Heavy Metal Parking Lot* movie made about... (turning to Rachel) wasn't it a Judas Priest concert?

Rachel: I think so, yeah.

Radio: Like some kid made a ten minute flick. I mean this is how crazy, you know, going to those concerts... Did you guys ever go to heavy metal concerts when you were younger?

(Shelley & Todd shake heads no)

Radio: I mean it's insane and white trash and everyone's like (mimics screaming heavy metal fan). My background, my friends were like these two heavy metal hair, hacky-sack playing, you know, you hang out in the back of the car and have on the stereo and turn it up, you know. And tons of people, heshers and stuff... and this guy was a fag. I mean the kind of people who hang out and go (turns to Rachel and mock-punches her on the shoulder) "FAG! Whaddya doin' lookin' at my girlfriend?" and like all this stuff. I mean he was the lead singer for this band and all these chicks loved him, you know, and he was wearing leather...

Rachel: He totally has a leather daddy outfit.

Radio: Yeah, and all the girls just thought he was S/M dude and just wanted to fuck him but he was just awesome! And he could sing so good, he's like an opera singer, he's amazing, and if you listen, like there's some really crappy Judas Priest songs that are just like duh-duh-duh-duh rock or whatever but there's this one record or any record that has the song for instance "Exciter" on it, it's on *Stained Class* and it's on *Unleashed in the East* which is the record I suggest you get, if you want to hear good Judas Priest, get *Unleashed in the East*. (laughing) That rhymed. *lol*

Radio: And his songs, those songs are rock operas, they are, each of the songs that you can hear that has the changes in it, that actually goes places other than just like...it's really weird it's like...what's another band that has...like the Beatles. They'll have a song where it's like this completely complex musically orchestrated thing and you're like "Oh my god, that was amazing!" and then next song's like Paul, cos there was Paul and there's gotta be a Paul in every band...

Shelley: Yeah like on the *White Album*.



Radio: Right. It's that kinda thing with Judas Priest, it's just that it's heavy metal and you know... I don't know, check it out.

Todd: Yeah, I will. That's really cool cos it's like no one's ever presented it [Judas Priest] from that perspective for me and it's kind of a weird thing, cos in San Francisco we live right next door to the Bearded Lady [Café] and a lot of times I'll be in there and they'll be playing all of this stuff that I would never ever listen to, like a lot of metal and stuff like that, and while some of the songs I don't really care for or whatever, a lot of them I'm like "Wow, there's some interesting parts there." And I think that's really cool cos my whole perspective in terms of metal, from being a fag, is all the queer bashers I grew up with who were totally into metal.

Radio: *lol*

Todd: And I full-on associate it in that way and I'm just like "Oh, it's all crap", you know, it's just like rap music or you know that kind of trip...

Radio: Totally!

Todd: And I think it's really cool cos like if a guy tried to come and talk to me about Judas Priest, I just wouldn't get it, you know what I mean?

Radio: You'd suck if you did. *lol*

Todd: And it's just like you said, there's some really cool shit in that music and it's just going through it and filtering it out.

Radio: Yeah.

Todd: And I think that's really cool when we cannot forfeit anything, do you know what I mean? Not have anything held against us, not be the victim anymore and just say I like this, I don't like that, you know? I think that's really cool cos people just aren't honest about what they're into...

Rachel: Own that heavy metal!

Shelley: (laughing) You're gonna turn him into a hessian now. *lol*

Todd: Watch out! I'm gonna get the full on cut-off black biker gloves, sleeveless denim vest, the mullet and all that shit.

Shelley: You know, it's funny cos when I first came across your first 7-inch, the black one with the white gothic script that said "The Need", I was flipping through the new record bin at the Epicenter [now defunct record store & collective space in SF] and I didn't know anything about your band at all and I just thought "Oh, they must be very metal."

Shelley: I picked it up and turned to the back and went, "Oh, wow! What the fuck is this?" you know, cos it totally tripped me out, your artwork on the back. It was like some kind of Max Ernst collage or something and then I started reading the lyrics and I was like "Fuck! I have to put this on!" and I did and it just blew me away...

Rachel: Rad.

Radio: Awesome.

Shelley: It really, really rocked.

Rachel: Yeah, we have the metal soul.

Radio: Yeah, but we're in a way...like you were saying, we take out... I mean, I don't like Ratt or like Dokken or...

Rachel: Poison.

Radio: That is the stuff like all the dudes that used to push me in the garbage cans and stuff were all like that too. The thing about Judas Priest is because of that of the guy [who is gay].

Todd: Yeah, no, I hear you. Cos before I heard that story I had no idea, you know what I mean?

Rachel: There was a big article about him, what was it in? Was it in *Out* or *The Advocate* or something?

Radio: *The Advocate*.

Rachel: He came out publicly and like people have known that he was gay for years but yeah, there was a big article and he talked about it a bit. The article actually wasn't that revealing but it was interesting.

Radio: Yeah, it seemed like I wanted to hear more about how shocked people probably were. I wanted more people to know. Like I want those 25-year-old dudes, 30-year-old dudes with families to know that their favorite band when they were a kid, that they like kind of did all bad stuff too, this guy was a fag. That's so cool.

Todd: That's so subversive.

Radio: That's awesome.

Todd: Because all those people once they heard, had to go back and reevaluate so much shit, consciously or subconsciously.

Radio: What a kick in the ass, you know, really for all those dudes. That's just awesome. I can't get over it.

Todd: What are some of your other influences, not necessarily musical, or things that you really got into to growing up, that inspired you?

Shelley: Oh before I forget, I was really excited when I saw the tour poster, I don't know if it was for your last tour or not, but the Picasso drawing of Rimbaud that you used...

Rachel: Oh, you know that girl Maya, the same girl that I said sent her personal review of our record, that was the poster she made for a show we did at Gilman.

Shelley: That's really cool. I think that's really right on because I studied French for a long time and basically my interest in it was like you know French poetry, especially Rimbaud. He's the poet that I always thought of as being punk rock and his poetry being queer but very kind of subliminally and all of the academic books on him, they don't mention at all that he's queer.

Rachel: Yeah.

Shelley: They completely cover it up and stuff like that. So I thought it was really cool for a punk group to reclaim that.

Rachel: Yeah Maya's a brilliant kid. She took that down to the show and she was going around asking people if they know who it was a drawing of and by whom and that she would give them a dollar if they knew. Actually only me and one other person, Tamala from Automaticans, knew who it was. (Pause) Yeah I was very into Rimbaud and Baudelaire and all that as well, in my timely time, and Gertrude Stein. All the things you mentioned.

Shelley: Yeah, your lyrics remind me a lot of Gertrude Stein. That sense of it being so much her own world, her writing is, and if you like... It's weird because you have to open up enough to accept who she is as a person to really get into it but at the same time she leaves enough room, I think the same way you do in your lyrics, for somebody to bring their own interpretation to it. And like what Todd was saying earlier, he was talking about your music being a kind of tool that young queer people could use to help them come to terms with their own identity. Like it's very inspiring to see people doing what you're doing, to put that out there. It's really cool.

Rachel: Yeah, I can only hope that it inspires others to do the same.

Shelley: So getting back to his original question what was some of the music or art that inspired you when you were younger?

Radio: *Yellow Submarine*.

Radio: I love that movie. I know it's kind of heavy but...

28 Rachel: Yeah, that's really a great movie. We actually just watched it again the other night, a couple of nights ago.

Radio: Yeah I think that's why I was thinking about it because we just watched it.

Todd: Were you at all into like horror films? The last album sounds to me a lot like the soundtrack from *Hammer House of Horror*.

Rachel: Yeah, more...(To Radio) Well we have different takes on this. When I was a child, my childhood was very strange. My Dad's a preacher and my parents were fundamentalist Christians. I wasn't allowed to listen to rock music. I wasn't allowed to go to movies, wasn't allowed to dance. I had to go to Christian school K-12 with like 40 people. I mean it was really like almost cultish. There was this way of looking at the Church as being very separate from The World, from pop culture and politics and the rest of America, and they saw that world as being totally hostile, totally "us" and "them". So I was born with a chip on my shoulder and my love for stuff like horror movies and metal really came from a sense of it being totally taboo and even satanic, not in a cheesy sense, but in a way that was very real. Satan was very real, like the Church I was born into. My whole world and family and community couldn't accept that the roots of its original passion have dissolved. The passion of the first Christians, heresy and persecution and all that, has become the dominant moral force, because Christianity in the worst sense really grooves on its victim status. So in a way it was an easy leap for me to jump on the bandwagon of the oppressed for whatever reason. The idea of resistance and struggle is in my blood. I'm totally out to my family, and although there's a lot that goes over their heads, I think that's the place where they can begin to understand what I've done with my life. A few years ago when I was visiting them, my Dad said to me that when I was younger, he hoped I would become a missionary and in a way that's what I've become. It was very perceptive and very generous. I was amazed.

Todd: I wanted to know how it 's going with the making of Need sex toys?

Rachel: A dream that never came to fruition is what it is.

Shelley: Well even if it's a dream, I was so excited to read that. For a band to merchandise that, I think is so cool.

Rachel: You know if we ever got the capital I would so love to do that. As it stood at the time like we had the actual practicality of mass making stuff, which was completely impossible financially for us. So we thought OK we'll do custom work only. You know totally willing to like make these amazing things for people. You know something that they can't buy elsewhere or whatever. Like we never had it...we would get these drawings from like 15-year old girls and stuff like totally weird, just the weirdest stuff.

Todd: Brilliant. That's so totally brilliant.



Rachel: So, yeah, it never really took off.

Radio: I wish we could do that. I wish that was our job, if we had to have a job, I wish we were making special sex toys.

Rachel: I mean it would be a little more conceivable as an economic option if I weren't living in Olympia.

Radio: Oh yeah we're here. That's right nobody has sex here.

Rachel: It's really hard to like visualize ever getting your investment back because it's pretty much a sexless punk town.

Radio: Do you know that there's like no strip clubs here? Have you two noticed there's no...

Todd: I have noticed that it's like very white bread, very homogenized. There's no dirt. There's very little graffiti or um, not necessarily homeless people, but like those crazy street people. You know the things that make life interesting. And it seemed like most of the stores that we were popping into were filled with families with kids in strollers and shit like that. I get a sense that it's a heavy religious thing.

Radio: Yes and no because we don't actually get that in our face all the time. Like in here, it's really more community but everyone's white. That's for sure a problem. Well or just the way it is, I guess I should say, you know. Like that's how it is over in the business town.

Rachel: Maybe not in an overt way but it's definitely you know...

Radio: What's the word, old style?

Rachel: It's definitely like European style mind set in general, which is Christianity based. So it's there. Like good, clean people.

Todd: The wholesome Americana type thing.

Rachel: Yeah, yeah.

Todd: But at the same time I mean you've got The Need and the whole scene. We were seeing just...like this guy walking down the street and on his jacket was this bright sticker that said "FREAK". So at the same time it's this double-edged thing.

Radio: Well it's a college town also, Evergreen.

Todd: How many colleges are in the Olympia area?

Rachel: I think Evergreen's the main one but there's a few other community colleges. St. Martin's College is a Catholic college. It's a really weird town and I don't know how exactly it got to be this way but there's a big history here, you know, of the scene. But since I've been here for so long I've seen it evolve a lot. Even in my last six years it's evolved a lot. Even in the last year it's evolved a lot.

Radio: I know so many people have moved here-

Rachel: -and moved away-

Radio: -and not always having to do with college, which is weird. People actually move here for the things that come out, stuff or art.

Todd: I bet that makes a big difference.

Rachel: Totally.

Radio: Kind of. It's also really annoying cos they come here with stars in their eyes (laughing) don't know why cos it's sort of like, "What? Where do you think you are?"

Todd: Well I thought that's what was so cool about all the bands we saw last night. Basically they got up there to do it because they were having fun doing it. It wasn't about getting a record contract or whatever. It was just let's get together and have fun.

Rachel: I'm sooo glad that's happening. I mean for a while here it seemed like things were pretty dead in this way where there was this pressure where you couldn't just casually play music with somebody.

Radio: You had to be in some band.

Rachel: Like you had to be in a band, you know, and have some sort of plan or motivation because there had been this history of people here [in Olympia] getting recognition for whatever reason. But that's kind of come back around where things are alive again.

Shelley: That's cool. It seemed like everybody was just having a lot of fun. You know like Todd was saying earlier especially with the KaraNEEDoke you were spying on people in their bedroom, singing those songs and having that, you know, completely irrepressible good time. It seemed like a lot of fun to be up on stage doing what you're doing.

Radio: It was totally fun. ✓

Rachel: Yeah, it was awesome.

Radio: People had fun last night, I could tell. It felt really good. I was all happy when I went home; I was all in this dream world. It sucked, I'm sorry, that there were like 12 bands, but we knew if that many bands came and a different mix of people, that we would raise more money for the rock opera. So that's why it was like that.

Shelley: Well, it was an interesting mix, all the different groups. It was really cool.

Todd: It was great cos usually it's like you go to see whatever band you want to see and you're just sitting there and you ignore all the other bands and they get put down or whatever. But they all had something really unique, distinctive...

Radio: Who were your favorites? Will you tell me? Just cos you guys have a totally out of town perspective... I totally wanna know.

Todd: I thought that Space Ballerinas were fucking hot.

Shelley: I liked The Crutches. I liked their sound. I liked the guitar a lot.

Rachel: They're awesome.

Radio: Her guitar sounded great.

Shelley: She sounded hot, yeah. I liked the way she backed up from the mic and kept singing...

(tape breaks off)

Todd: I'm used to seeing a lot of people that can't play (laughing) get up there and try to pretend that they can play and they were just so relaxed, you could tell that this is what they do in like their living room or whatever, and if you're there watching it, well so the much better but they were really there for themselves, you know?

Radio: I know it was like we were in their rooms last night, huh?

Todd: Yeah, it was really cool and I really hope that more things like that can start happening elsewhere.

Radio: Yeah, that's the thing- find a city in a small town. I mean, you know, it's totally a different community. People don't... I don't know...it's weird to get that intimate with people in a huge city, you guys.

Shelley: It's harder to make connections.

Radio: Yeah, it's just too hard when you work 40 hours a week.

Radio: I don't understand why you guys live in a city; I've never understood it. I mean I know I'm a hick right, we've established that (*lol*) but you have traffic, everything's too expensive...and if you need culture you can visit a museum, there's always a city real close. I don't understand why you deal with that?

(tape breaks off)

Radio: See, now with things like the Internet, I feel like you can be outside the city and still have access to it. I'm really hoping that everyone will spread out a bit more cos it's so fucked up the way things are. I'd just love to see it cos I just think it's gross at this point to try to deal with it in a city. I mean what is the thing that draws you to a city, the gay bar scene? The job you have, that hopefully is based around something politically that you like or support?

Rachel: Safety in numbers I think. You just think that there will be a few more people like you.

Todd: Fear of loneliness.

Radio: Yeah, exactly.

Todd: Well, I think one of the reasons I've stayed [in San Francisco] is cos when I moved up there in 1993 [from Orange County], I had all these images of what San Francisco was gonna be like, and the gay scene and all that stuff and I got up there and I really freaked out cos it was so much like the world I was trying to run away from, like strip malls and you go to this store, you buy these clothes and you got this type of identity and I was really angry.

I was lucky at the time cos I met two gay guys who came from Florida, my friends Michael Bellefountaine and Dave Pasquarelli who were involved with ACTUP [in rural America]. Having been terrorized my whole life by AIDS, I really wanted to figure out what was going on and the three of us had a common bond in that we were all new to the city and we all wanted to be political activists cos we were coming to San Francisco to really get into it. And we saw how just everything was bought off by the pharmaceutical companies, that we were just so pissed off, that we wanted to stay and do something about it. It's taken us a very long time and now we have a center on Market Street where we run a medical marijuana dispensary and we're opening it up to other groups. We've gotten involved with the animal rights groups...

Rachel: Ah that's awesome.

Todd: And we're just really trying to get out of the "gay" mold, do you know what I mean? Bring the movement out into other areas and really break through the hype and hysteria about AIDS, which has been our most controversial aspect.

34 Todd: Talking about HIV not being the sole cause of AIDS, the deadly toxicities of AIDS drugs and really what's happening in San Francisco is a lot of fags are being poisoned by these AIDS drugs. It's really, really scary to see physical deformities and stuff like that.

Radio: But there's supposed to be treatment for AIDS?

Todd: No, these are caused from the treatments.

Radio: From the treatments of AIDS. OK.

Todd: Yeah and I brought some information and flyers I can give you afterward like Christine Maggorie's book *What If Everything You Thought You Knew About AIDS Was Wrong?* ACTUP SF sends copies out free of charge to anyone who wants one.

Rachel: I would actually be very interested in looking at that.

Radio: Yeah.

Todd: But as you can see it completely flies in the face of everything you know about AIDS or queer identity or what's accepted or things like that. We have been vilified, attacked in the press and in person, but overall ignored by the queer community. We did kind of become comfortable on that edge because, being for many years just three people with no money or consistent place to meet, it did give us a lot of power.

Slowly, however, over time our message began to break outside of this little clique in San Francisco and people began to really listen to the message that we were putting out. Like with the animal rights movement, it's really weird because we have a lot of young, straight edge boys who are now getting involved with these pot smoking, HIV does not cause AIDS, queer liberation activists.

Radio: Wow.

Todd: Which has been really interesting getting these kids to start talking about issues of sexuality and homophobia within the animal rights movement and I think that's why I am able to stay in San Francisco now, because through hell or high water, we've got our foot in the door and we don't want to relinquish that. We want to push the door open for everyone. That's part of why we started *Magnus* to bring this all out and share what we are up to with other people.

Radio: That's a really good attitude. It's great that you do that.

Todd: I think that's what I have always felt from great music is that communal feeling like some *Brave New World*. There's so much more to it than just the music.

Todd: With groups as diverse as Bikini Kill, Bratmobile, Team Dresch, Sta Prest and The Need you really inhabit a place that's an accurate picture of the world we live in. So it kind of makes you want to go out and see it everywhere, cos that's the way it really is. Like how The Need are really a model for utopia, a Duchamp readymade. I sense a real of camaraderie, all these groups knew and played off each other in a really beautiful way.

I think a lot about Aloofa [from Sta Prest] being very similar in the terms of putting things out there. I mean she does it in her own style and own way. But I knew when I saw Sta Prest, it was going to be totally real, no bullshit and no tolerance of bullshit and it was like "Oh my God, if only all of life and all of the world could be like that."

Radio: You know like in the show environment where you run around feeling all great.

Todd: Yeah it was like the feeling I left with last night was just so incredible and I wanted to have that all the time and spread that to everybody.

Radio: Me too.

Todd: Because so often you're just at home with headphones on you know what I mean?

Radio: Yeah.

Todd: And you're so isolated. And to hear it live with all these people, it's like life.

Radio: That's what so cool about shows and stuff. I mean I totally relate to that cos I used to go to shows and wish that it was like that- God, who was the band? I can't even remember when I was younger going to see a band that I felt safe in that environment at all until bands like Bikini Kill and stuff started coming around. You know that is amazing. That's fucking amazing. I'm so glad you said that.

Rachel: Yeah that was an amazing time.

Todd: Yeah, exactly, and I think that's it really important that we document that and we don't let that go by because it's like- Are you familiar with [graphic artist] Barbara Kruger?

Rachel: Yeah.

Todd: I just saw this great retrospective down in Los Angeles at the Contemporary Art Museum where she talks about history not being singular but plural and what we need is everyone documenting their own history.

Todd: So by taking a look back and seeing a broader range of perspectives we get a more accurate picture than say *The Bible* or *The American History Textbook*.

Rachel: Totally. Plus it's just a web of all these individuals. Even just all the people I know, all the people I've known that at some point have known each other- just the family history is an amazing thing, the family tree.

Todd: Yeah it really is and hopefully we can start doing some, um, genealogy around that.

Rachel: That would make an amazing book.

Todd: This stuff doesn't come out of a vacuum; it's all part of a lineage.

Shelley: That's one of the reasons we wanted to come up and interview you here because you are part of a very important artistic movement that's been happening for the last ten years, you know primarily in the Pacific North West, bands, queer punk bands, and it hasn't been that well documented.

Radio: Not at all.

Shelley: To begin doing that and put it out there and on the Internet so that kids out in the middle of nowhere can download it, find out about it and get turned on to it.

Rachel: God, it's so exciting to tour for that reason too. We've played some amazing places...

Radio: Yeah, tours are amazing.

Rachel: ... like a little coffee shop in North Dakota. That night when we stayed with all these kids in their apartment and they had pictures of all our friends on the wall. You know like Kaia and Team Dresch and all this stuff there in this little town and they're like "We're the only queer kids in the whole town." There's like two of them.

Radio: And they were [the only queer kids].

Rachel: And they were. At least who were out and who were, you know...

Radio: And they fully brought us to their town and they let us stay at their house. It's so funny because it was different at first when we started touring because we were scared of everyone and then after a while we started to realize that we're making friends.

Radio: They're coming to the shows so that we can all be friends or something you know what I mean? Like I felt really afraid of everyone at first when we were starting. Also we were playing with bands that were in no way our friends. We didn't have any set map really from the beginning.

Shelley: What's it like now for you when you tour?

Rachel: Well it's been a while. We haven't toured for whatever...a year and a half.

Shelley: Yeah I think that's the last time I saw you.

Rachel: Yeah, well we've been to California a couple of times. In my opinion California isn't the same as touring because it's like West Coast is safety zone. The shows are always pretty good, we know people and it's like taking our little trip, you know, whatever.

Radio: California is it's own little country. *lol*

Shelley: It is, it totally is and Northern California is it's own country separate from Southern California...

Rachel: It's true.

Radio: Yes, it is!

Shelley: But going to the East Coast?

Rachel: Yeah this tour is actually booking itself kind of.

Radio: It makes such a big difference.

Rachel: It's so much easier this time.

Shelley: People are calling you saying that they want you to play?

Rachel: Yeah, I mean I'm still working on a lot of stuff but the first two tours were such a pain in the...So hard.

Radio: We're so in debt. *lol*

Rachel: It's so humbling to have to call up some club and tell them what bands I've been in or what we sound like or stuff you know.

Radio: (mockingly) We sound like The Need. (*lol*) It's so sleazy. I hate it.

Shelley: That's wonderful that you're getting some recognition. It's about time.

Rachel: Yeah or at least we know enough people now not to have to like grovel to get a show.

Radio: (jock-like) "Hi! We're in this band and we're really good. Are you fucking like...Like how do you...? (*lol*) I don't know how it ever happened in the first place.

Rachel: Really I don't think I've ever made a phone call.

Shelley: Well it sounds like telemarketing.

Rachel: I mean honestly I'm not very good at that stuff either and I never have ever been. I just think that in particular this is a case of just having integrity and faith like eventually you get to the place where you are going because I refuse to be a sleaze. I just don't even want to play that game.

Shelley: Do you enjoy touring or is it a pain in the ass?

Rachel: Ooooh I love it. I love it. I love it more than anything.

Radio: It's a vacation.

Rachel: Yeah it's awesome. You're in a-

Radio: (To Rachel) Do you wanna go out for a cigarette?

Rachel: Yeah I want one too.

Radio: I gotta leave in like five minutes. Do you wanna hang out more tomorrow?

Todd: Yeah.

Shelley: That would be cool.

Radio: God I wish I'd known that you guys were at the Golden Gavel last night. Cos I was trying to go over to visit my friends who were there cos I had a friend who was in from out of town. It would have been, fun we could of had a hotel party (*lol*) at the Golden Gavel. At the GG. (*lol*) Isn't that funny, meet me at the GG? It's so funny. You know the Golden Gavel is hilarious, sounded like a character from...

Shelley: It sounds like the name of a hotel in The Simpsons.

Radio: Yeah.

Todd: I had this feeling about it when you emailed me about it and then I called and got that woman's voice on there and she sounded like a character from The Simpsons...

Shelley: And that Golden Gavel out front.

Todd: It's too much.

Radio: I know that's cool.

Todd: As soon as we drove up I knew that this was the place for us.

Shelley: The cinder block walls.

Rachel: We lived there for a couple of days too when we first got into town.

Radio: Yes we did. We did. Guys, I gotta go. I have to set up their P.A. system so they can scream through it.

END OF TAPE 1 BEGINNING OF TAPE 2

The Need Funhouse

Sunday, January 30th, 2000

Shelley: We forgot to ask you yesterday how you two met and came together.

Radio: Do you want to?

Rachel: You can go ahead.

Radio: OK. There is this band called the CeBe Barnes Band with Toni [Gogin] and Miranda July and...Who else was in that band?

Rachel: And you and that was all.

Radio: Was that it? I'm old, I can't remember anymore. We played a show in Olympia and she was in a band called Kicking Giant and we were invited to play a show with her band and I had never seen her band or heard her band or anything. We were from Portland.

Rachel: And I had never seen your band or heard of your band either.

Shelley: Had you heard of each other at all or heard of the band?

Radio: I had heard of Kicking Giant but I don't think she'd heard of us at all. It wasn't like you have to see this band. I just happened to like, "Oh I've heard of this band that's cool." We played a show at the Capitol Theater and I was absolutely like...



Radio: Oh my god, when I saw Rachel play drums, I had never seen anything like it and I was just like I have to play in a band with her. She is so rad. I don't know if I just fell in love with her or just the whole performer like audience complete idolization freak out or like it all occurred at once? I think and it was just like, "Ahhhhhh!" We were just like do you want to move to Portland with us and she's like "OK" and she did.

Rachel: Well it was at that point I was telling you about in a previous conversation was just the lowest, lowest dismal point of my first three years here like being involved in the music scene and having the queer scene be really separate, like really based out of Evergreen [College].

Radio: It's so weird here. That is weird.

Rachel: You know a lot of college lesbians, you know. I didn't really feel like I fit anywhere and really miserable and I was like, "Ugh! Dykes!" you know, and moved to Portland, was really happy to get out of here.

Radio: She played with us in the CeBe Barnes Band. She played keyboards actually in that band. She didn't want to play drums and we went on tour and stuff and when we came back from that tour the band kind of broke up. Me and Rachel just started playing as The Need with Miranda July. We were just like creating a soundtrack. We were making up stuff to her performance art or whatever was planned. That's what it started as and then eventually we realized that we wanted to play music. We wanted to rock and not really do that sort of thing anymore and Miranda went off in her Miranda world. That's how we started playing and stuff. It's so weird when you find, the person that you play music with and you just like... We don't even have to- we just look at each other and know the thing that can happen. We never really disagree on musical stuff like we know when it's good and we know when it's not and it's amazing.

Rachel: Yeah, it's pretty awesome. It's totally magic. We're lucky.

Radio: We are lucky.

Todd: I get that sense from you two that it's very intuitive and almost like there's an E.S.P. thing going on.

Radio: It is especially musically like it's so weird you guys. It always works in art like sometimes she makes stuff for our band and I don't even look at it cos like I know it's going to be good. I just trust her so much.

Rachel: Well I forget to ask you, too. I'm like, "Look, the posters done and printed." You're like, "Oh it looks great." *lol*

42 Rachel: It was kind of funny because at one point we were kind of going through kind of a bad time. I mean we've had our hard times relationship wise and stuff, like trying to keep our band together. We went to see the local dyke therapist...

Shelley: That's really cool.

Rachel: ...and she was like, "You know I really think that you guys are just like soul mates, like Sonny and Cher." (*lol*) And you know she's like, "They went on and did their separate love affairs and relationships but no one could ever replace that" you know,

Radio: magical relationship thing.

Rachel: And it was sooo funny. It was cool. It was funny.

Radio: I know. We all of a sudden felt better. Like oh yeah, Sonny and Cher, they're just like us. (*lol*) God, that woman's awesome by the way if you ever need a counselor.

Shelley: So can you tell us about your song writing process? Is it like one of you is more developing the music sound, the other is doing the lyrics, or does it just kind of gel together in the studio, rehearsal?

Rachel: Usually Radio comes up with some type of guitar thing that's cool or sometimes you'll write a whole song. I don't know, Radio comes up with most of the musical part of it and sometimes I mess with it a little bit.

Radio: Yeah but...

Rachel: Well there's a couple of songs on the record that I wrote on keyboard. I mean that's the thing is that when it comes time to record I'll write more songs. But if we're like writing songs to go on tour or whatever, I can't really play organ live and drums at the same time so...

Shelley: You should clone yourself.

Rachel: ... you take care of the music and the vocals.

Radio: I wish Rachel had a clone. I wish she had a clone. (*lol*) Oh My God. (*lol*) Wow.

Shelley: There could be all these Needs.

Radio: That would just be so good.

Rachel: It might be possible. Wouldn't that be weird?

Radio: I know. That's what I was thinking like, "Oh my god, if I could make a machine of Rachel from a strand of her DNA, then we could have a keyboard player." (*lol*) Yeah to me- it's real clear to me when I listen to the songs back and stuff. It's like "Oh yeah, I wrote that song" because it's kind of like guitar wanky but then Rachel will write all the lyrics for it or do all the singing on it. So it totally becomes the song that it is because neither one of us seems like we do it, all of it, all at once.

Like there were a couple songs on the record that you totally did like "The Two Story Girl" right? That song for instance, I almost hardly don't even play guitar on it because it was so good that it was just keyboards and then she made up all the vocal stuff and all the changes and stuff, do you know what I mean? So to me, when I hear it I can tell it's totally "this is a keyboard oriented song" or "this one is a guitar based sound" or whatever I guess, does that make sense? Rachel mostly writes all the lyrics though, thank God, cos I don't really know how to write yet. I wish I could figure out how to express- like I don't know how to get it on paper very well.

Rachel: When you do write them though they're totally good.

Radio: Yeah but I like honestly in my whole life like maybe one song a year I can actually write but she's really good at it. She has all these thesaurusii and all these crazy rhyming dictionaries and weird... (To Rachel) What is that one book that always had all those rad evil heavy metal words in it?

Rachel: Oh the necronomicon.

Shelley: Oh cool.

Rachel: Yeah I totally use that as a source book for lyrics and stuff.

Shelley: That's so funny cos Todd was talking earlier about this idea he was think about your music and your lyrics especially...

Todd: Oh yeah cos the last couple weeks I've been really paying attention to your lyrics and reading them and like I was really interested in terms of what I call the Need Corpse, all the different body parts. Like how for your first album the head is totally separate from the body, rolling around, looking at things. Which I found to be rather surrealist you know, because your taking the reality out of the brain where it is always fixed and moving it to other places. For instance on the last album I think it was more kind of pelvic oriented, you know?

Rachel: (Laughs) Yeah.

Todd: And then the whole thing about the liver and the spleen being the organs that filter out toxins and poisons. Then the heart is severed as well as the head. It's chopped off at chopping blocks and put in boxes and such. I was really tripping on the anatomy of The Need Corpse.

Todd: Then when I got the new album, it seemed to me more like the throat on this one, more jugular. I don't know. As I said yesterday, to me it's always had a kind of a descriptive thing, very pop-up storybook Hansel and Gretel or something like that. So I get these visions or images of different things. I don't know if that's just something you were going for?

Rachel: No, I mean when I'm creating a world for the music to live in or whatever I totally draw on paradigms from my childhood. I grew up with Bible stories as being truth, you know what I mean? These sort of fairy tale, really colorful legends like "Wheels in the sky..." and all these crazy miracles everywhere that were happening. I think that I am just continually replacing that stuff with other stuff you know?

Todd: Yes. When you write do you sit down and write lyrics or do you scribble in notebooks and then go back and pick out things to use?

Shelley: Does it come when you're listening to the music or before or is it just kind of a hodgepodge?

Rachel: It usually comes after or like now and then something will run across the front of my head and I'm like "Wow, I need that piece of words as something" and I'll write it down and I have little scraps of paper all over the place. Then I just kind of string them together using the thesaurus and the rhyming dictionary and usually find little words. Those are my two main source books. I really love the thesaurus. It's like instant poetry.

Todd: Your approaches [to the music] seem to really complement each other. You [Rachel] seem to be on a word and image type thing and Radio, you mentioned yesterday about how you could diagram the sound of The Need, the more kind of technical aspect of it, and I think that's what makes The Need so unique, cos it's kind of a marriage of two things that most people would see as being very separate, very contradictory, but when you place them together, it's just... it's The Need, you know? And that seems to be the one of the ways art is heading, with technology and the internet, melding that with alchemy, like in medieval times, with metals and stuff and it seems like that's what you do with words.

Rachel: I was just thinking about that, yeah.

Radio: That's a total metaphor.

Rachel: That's why I wanted our record cover to be gold as well. I mean it's like a completely way out there metaphor for something but it was important to me for that reason.

Radio: Yeah, cos it's basically like turning metal into gold.



16 Shelley: [To Rachel] Your way of phrasing your voice is really interesting to me cos it sounds like another instrument. Is that something very natural to you, or something you picked up from other singers...

Rachel: I think it became important for me to sing that way because... Well, my voice is another instrument in the group; there's nothing to hide behind when it's just guitar and drums. I have to provide as much with my voice as the guitars and drums do.

Todd: Did you sing in any of the groups that you were involved in before The Need?

Radio: Not enough.

Rachel: In Kicking Giant, I mainly just did backing vocals. I couldn't really sing and play drums at the same time yet. I've never really been a person to practice drums, we would practice when we played with each other, so I never really got that down, you know? And I pretty much sang sort of breathy, pretty back up vocals for the most part. So this was a whole new thing cos Radio's not gonna sing, you know? She's like, "No way!" So I kind of had to be the singer and that's how it ended up happening.

Radio: (Laughs) I was just remembering the first time. I was like "Let's play metal!" It was so funny, like trying to get Rachel... I'm such a teenage boy sometimes to poor Rachel; I'm just like "Ok, now you gotta play really fast!" And then actually when you started to sing this way, I was just like "Oh my god! This is so awesome!"

Shelley: [to Radio] Do you sing backup vocals on "Kathy Quaalude"?

Rachel: Oh, you sing the lead on "Kathy Quaalude" actually.

Shelley: You sing the lead?

Radio: Yeah.

Shelley: That's weird cos we we're listening to a Need mix tape this morning and I could hear your voice, and I didn't know that before I met you, cos I didn't know the sound of your voice.

Radio: There's a couple songs that I totally sing, only like 3 or something, or 4...by myself. I like it better when Rachel sings. I just like the way she sings so much, honestly. She's just so good at it.

Rachel: Well, I think your lyric writing process is really different, like usually when you write something, it's about a specific person or about something and it has to have this kind of meaning for you.

Radio: Yeah.

Rachel: Whereas, it's not like that for me.

Radio: Yeah, totally, I know.

Rachel: I can take a bunch of garbage and make a song out of it.

Radio: Yeah, it doesn't work at all to write lyrics for one another, like I can't write words for her to sing, it doesn't work at all. Like, I've tried to sing her weird-ass words...*lol*

Radio: I'm like "What?!" I can't even remember it.

Shelley: Did you write "Kathy Quaalude"?

Radio: Yeah.

Shelley: I didn't know that. I really like the line, "*We watch her become her Mother.*" It's something I can totally identify with, not only with myself, like sometimes I can catch myself making gestures I've seen my Mother make so many times, but also my friends.

Radio: Yeah, that's it, exactly.

Shelley: It's a very intuitive, intimate way of reading another person.

Radio: Yeah, it's totally about a girl I knew. I watched her and I was like "Oh no", you know. You see it all the time.

Todd: One thing that really struck me about the new album is that everything is taken to a whole new level. I sense that you're [Rachel] really developing your vocal style and there are so many different sounds coming out from "Dark Sally" to "Blew Candy" and then even having a guest vocalist, Marcie, from Paige, on there.

Rachel: Well, I knew that I was gonna have to try and match Marcie. I don't know if I could possibly match Marcie. I think she has an awesome voice, but I knew that I was gonna be on that CD with her and I think that also affected, like made me try harder in that way, you know? And on the first CD, I think I was really more on my dexterity of words than with my voice.

Shelley: You're were speaking yesterday about how much your producer Mike [Lastra] has become a part of creating your sound and how he has become more aware of what you're looking for, almost like another member of the group.

Rachel: Totally, he knows exactly what to do and I don't understand everything that he does but he gets it somehow.

Radio: I totally understand what he does, we've [Radio and Mike] had extensive conversations about all this stuff throughout recordings with The Need and ever since I've known the guy, I've known him a really long time. He's in Portland. He'll try the weirdest shit. We're like "We want the kick drum to sound like total sub-bass, like rap groups." This stuff's really important to us cos we just don't have a bass player, so if her kick drums sound totally subsonic, it's gonna totally rule. Even though we're a rock band or a punk band, nobody else's drums really sound like that, but because of the way Rachel plays, there's a place for it. It totally can fill bottom register, frequency wise. He'll hook up the oscillator and so every time she hits the drum, it triggers the oscillator. So on top of the drum sound, it will produce a frequency, a low frequency with it, which is how that sound happens on the record.

Todd: That's the thing. It's so distinctive and the production has amazing attention to detail, which really allows you to like go into this world... like if it wasn't there I don't think there would be anywhere to go into, it wouldn't be as accessible. Do you know what I mean?

Radio: Like if it was a shitty recording or something? Wouldn't that suck!

Todd: Yeah, it would just be so disappointing cos you could sense where it's heading. But even on your first 7-inch on Kill Rock Stars, there was nothing out there that sounded like that. It was totally amazing.

Radio: You know that was actually recorded by someone else. That was recorded by Steve Wold, a local dude who has a music store here, and he has an amazing studio. But that record wasn't even what we wanted it to sound like. Do you think that record sounds like the rest of them?

Shelley: No, it does sound like the beginning, like a framework to build upon. And the production on the new album is so tight and on and so filled with all these amazing sound images.

Radio: Aren't sound effects the best? Why don't people use it more?

Shelley: It's like spices in cooking.

Radio: Yeah.

Todd: It's cool that you take such attention to detail in the recording. And I get the sense that you're totally doing it for yourselves, and if other people are into it, then that's cool.

Radio: Well, it makes sense to me to play what you would want to hear. I don't know why so many musicians don't understand that? *lol* 49

Rachel: I was just remembering when we we're recording "Talk Potty" our friend Zena brought her turntable and mixer and stuff to do the DJ stuff at the end [of the song] and she forgot her power supply, which was this kinda rare 15 volt or something power supply and Mike didn't have one in the studio. We didn't have one. We didn't know what to do.

So, Radio and Mike tore the variable voltage regulator from the light dimming in the studio (*lol*), they like tore it out of the wall. We took a 20 minute break and made a variable power supply for it, so she would have the right voltage. It was so awesome!

Shelley: It sounds like you have a lot of fun in the studio.

Radio: Oh yeah, it's fun. He has a studio in his house, so we just go to Portland and hang out and they're so cool, these people, just him and his wife and their kid, Harvey. Mike has been in this band called Smegma for 25 years and they're just this weird noise band. They're so weird.

Rachel: With like all this rotating members and

Radio: crazy instruments, they're awesome.

Rachel: There's this amazing series of record covers in that band, just the most awesome, like drawings by Captain Beefhart on the cover, all this stuff like lining the ceiling in one of the rooms, really cool stuff.

Radio: Those are some cool people, man.

Rachel: Yeah.

Radio: Those are some way out there...

Rachel: They give me hope for growing older, you know, like old freaks.

Radio: Yeah, totally, I wanna be like them when I'm older. Them and some of their friends did this project this summer where they rented a barge on the Willamette River in Portland and there was this band called 50 Foot Man and they built this huge man and they played music on this barge all day while it floated around...

Rachel: And it blew fire...

Radio: And it had a radio station broadcasting from it. They do that for fun.

Shelley: That's the way to live.

50 Radio: Yeah, I mean, right? We're bored, let's rent a barge! *lol*

Todd: We were really struck by both the songs "Crown" and "Majesty", like lyrically. I guess this gets back to the whole S/M expressionism thing we we're talking about yesterday. You're really going into the relationship between two people and it's not done in the same stale old way. It seems there's a versatility to it and a kind of respect to the roles you play, like *"I met my match/ better tip your hat to it."*

Radio: Well, those two songs are about each other. *lol*

Rachel: Yeah, those two songs in particular we're written at the total like fiercest point of our passion for each other, I think.

Radio: Yeah, she wrote the lyrics for "Majesty" and I wrote "Crown" and they're about each other.

Todd: That makes sense.

Radio: That's rad that you picked up on it.

Shelley: Yeah, we we're wondering about that. "Crown" is just so intense...*"You are the King, I am feeling so detrimental/ Under your crown, I have found everything."*

Radio: Yeah, that's for Rachel.

Shelley: That's really beautiful.

Radio: Thanks.

Todd: It's so real and true and you don't hear that so often. You get the sense of two individuals truly relating to each other...

Shelley: Like on a very intimate level...

Todd: Yeah, like the way you can value and respect someone and play with image and power. I found it really...electric.

Radio: You guys are so awesome, you're so perceptive, two of the most perceptive individuals I've ever met about our band. You guys are so right on.

Rachel: Totally. You're totally getting it and I think certain people get it on an intuitive level but not on an intellectual level where they know how to talk about it.

Radio: Yeah.

Radio: Yeah.

Radio: It's really exciting; it makes me feel so good that you all are noticing these things.

Todd: Your music's really given me a lot of freedom, cos I'm so used to internalizing stuff and not vocalizing it and [then] I don't get perspective. That's why when your music came out, it was not only the sound, but what you were talking about. I just felt a real connection with that and it was really powerful for me, cos it was like "Well, if you all can go out and put this out, then anybody can do it."

Radio: I hope so. That would be nice.

Shelley: It is very inspiring. The Need has this strange mixture of being very femme and very butch, and it's like that fierceness...

Radio: What are we? [turns to Rachel] What are we? *lol*

Rachel: Yeah, please tell me.

Radio: We don't know! We can't tell.

Shelley: Yeah, I'm exactly like that so it's so cool to have something out there where I can say "Yeah... they're like me!" You know what I mean?

Radio: Wouldn't it be cool if there were more people like us?

Todd: Well, I think that's what's happening now, cos there's less pressure to be just one label. There's a very fluid sense to that, not only in your lyrics but even in your performance on Friday night, like you [Radio] and Donna [Dresch] were having so much fun...

Radio: Isn't Donna rad?

Shelley: Donna is so cool; she's a total headbanger! *lol*

Todd: It was so cool cos she was being totally true to herself. And I think that's what's so cool about your sound, cos you do it for you, while so many other bands try to please as many people...

Rachel: That's why I can't believe so many people like it [our music].

Radio: I know, that's the thing that's awesome.

Rachel: I think that we're kinda... I can speak for you too Radio, I think... we're just kinda constantly surprised by the attention...

Radio: So many times that we go, "Oh my god, can you believe how many people came to the show... or how many people like our record?"

Rachel: Cos how lucky can a person be to make music that you really love and have it be your passion...

Radio: -and so personal-

Rachel: ...and have all these people like it too.

Shelley: I think people have been waiting for something like what you're putting out, because I think our culture is definitely getting more open to the idea of gender and sexuality being fluid, instead of these fixed roles. Like if you're transgender it means this, if you're a dyke it means this, if you're gay it means this...instead of just allowing yourself the freedom to really just get into your own desires and whatever you feel is totally cool, put that out there. And I think because you're being so open about who you are and about your desires, people are picking up on it... I mean that's definitely what I picked up on.

Todd: Especially the putting it out there part.

Shelley: It is like what you were saying yesterday, Rachel, that your art is like activism.

Rachel: Totally.

Shelley: For me, at the time I first got into your music when the first 7-inch came out, I just felt like a freak cos I was just starting to deal with my sexuality and my gender, my body image and feeling like I wasn't fitting in anywhere and your music just made being a freak the coolest thing.

Rachel: That's so awesome to hear!

Radio: That's great!

Rachel: That's like the biggest compliment ever.

Radio: Yeah.

Rachel: That's like all I could ask for, you know?

Radio: No kidding, that's the biggest honor, to be considered part of that by somebody, at least just you guys even, that's great.....(*lol*) I'm all [beaming].

Rachel: Plus we're both Leos.

Todd: Ok, I was gonna ask but was like is that too personal?

Rachel: No, it's not.

Todd: It makes perfect sense.

Radio: And we have that [Rolls up sleeve to show tattoo of Leo astrological sign on right forearm, identical to Rachel's, as well as the letters "NEED" tattooed in gothic script across the knuckles of the left hand, also identical to Rachel's.]

Todd: Yeah, when you said you were Leos it totally clicked.

Radio: All the majestic shit.

Todd: Yeah and the crown and the royalty thing and stuff like that, cos I'm an Aquarian and vibe really well with Leos, like a lot of my friends are Leos.

Rachel: I'm an Aquarius rising and my Dad's an Aquarius and my Mom's a Leo and they've been married since forever and they will be, for of course like many traditional Christian reasons, but also they just work really well together.

Shelley: Did it hurt to get the tattoos on the knuckles?

Radio: Yeah.

Rachel: Oh god, it hurt so much.

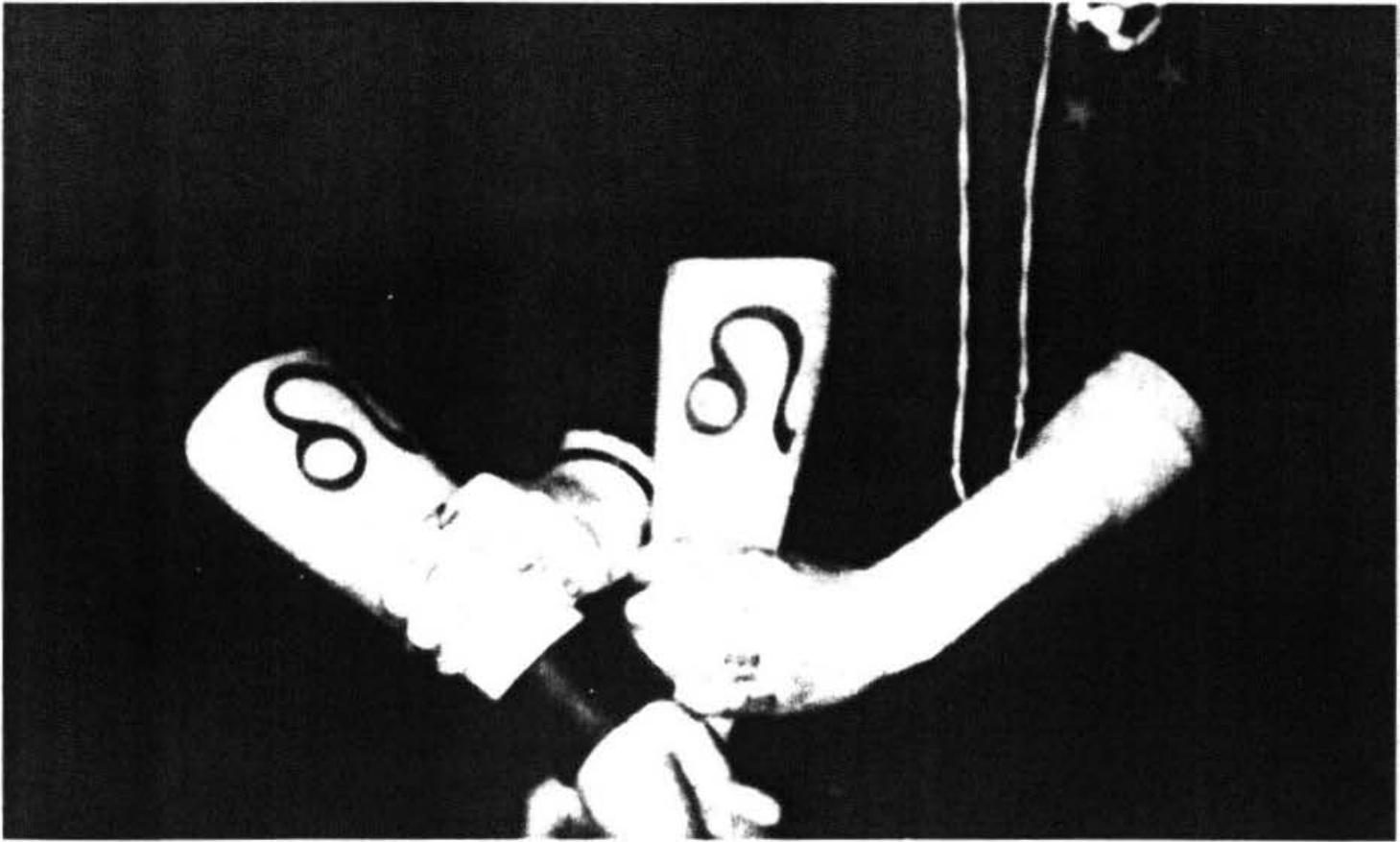
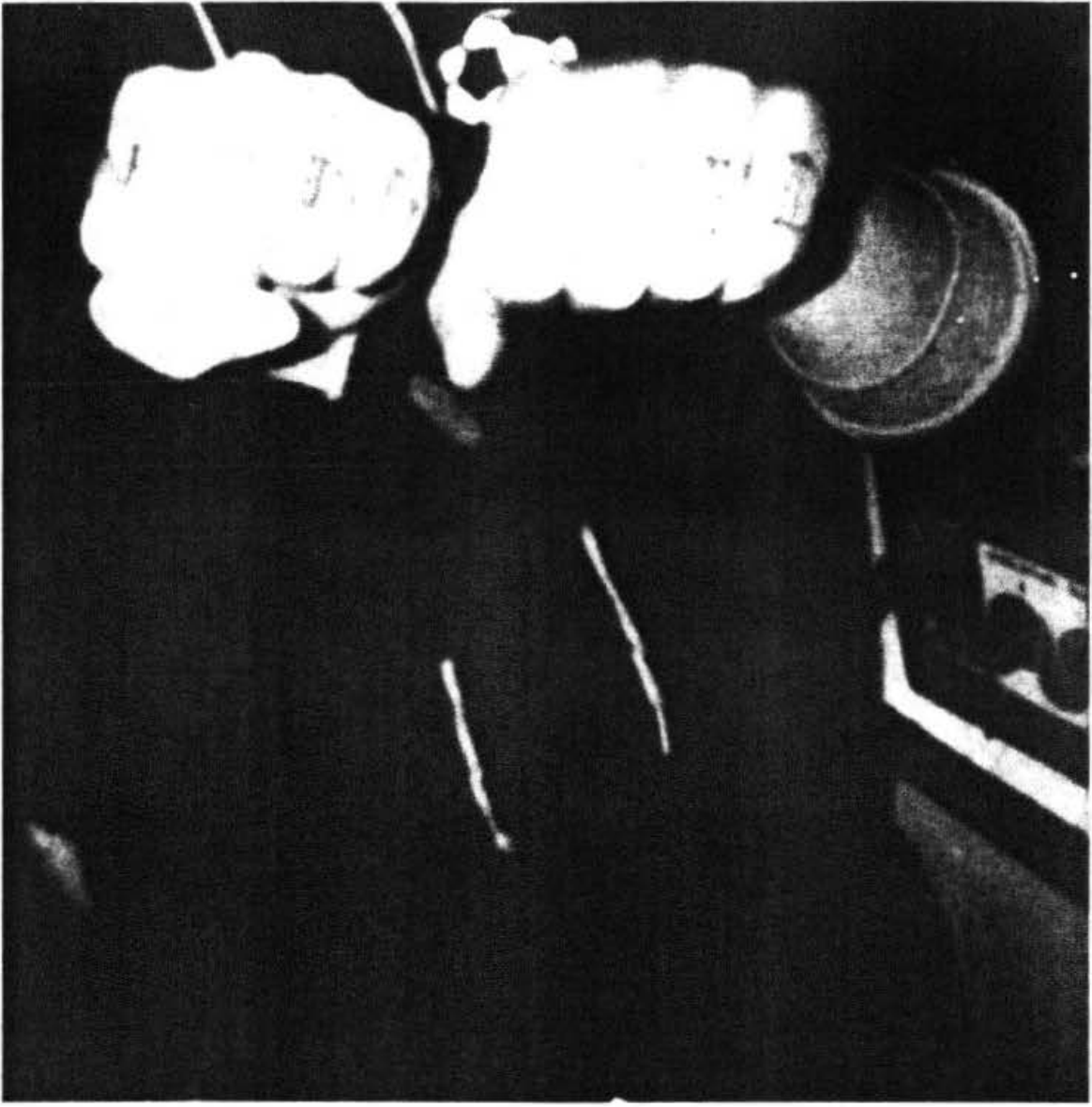
Radio: Plus we we're on tour.

Rachel: The interesting thing was that, I mean I don't know, this probably has more to do with my obsession with body parts but like each finger had a totally different personality to it's pain, like going from one finger to the next. It was so strange.

Shelley: What's your favorite place to play on tour?

RS: Well there's different shit because the cities are awesome because there are more people [into it] and more excitement and the people are really nice to us. But the smaller towns even though there are only ten kids those kids are there...

Shelley: They're like hard-core Need fans.



Radio: Unless some friend dragged them along and it's like "I don't even know what you are... What are you?" and we're like, "We don't know. What are we?"
lol

Rachel: We really like playing in the girls' schools-

Radio: -like Smith College.

Rachel: Yeah Smith is one of our favorites and there's a Homocore Chicago and Homocore Minneapolis that put on really cool shows for us.

Radio: I love those shows. They are so awesome when it's people who are gay there, even if they're not really even into the music and they're just at a gay event or something. That's really cool, few bands have that special, lucky thing.

Rachel: On this tour we're playing a show in Burlington, Vermont at a teen center that's sponsored by a local queer youth advocacy program. I mean it will probably be the smallest show that we do. Talking to the woman [at the center] she expects about fifty but she's like, "It will be so important." Because nothing like that happens there and I know what it's like to be a freaky queer kid growing up in a small town and not having access to anything. I mean I'm really excited for that show.

Radio: Yeah that stuff is really important, you know, cos you get a chance to talk to some of those kids about their lives and what they are doing.

Shelley: You're total activists.

Radio: Have you guys heard of Le Tigre?

Shelley & Todd: Yeah.

Radio: We're touring with them on the East Coast.

Todd: And you're going to be doing a split 7-inch with them on Mr. Lady Records. When's that coming up?

Radio: Whenever we get it together. *lol*

Rachel: We have the concept.

Radio: Yeah we're going to cover one of their songs and they're going to cover one of ours.

Todd: That's hot.

Shelley: I love that kind of stuff.

56 Rachel: They're gonna cover "Crown" and I think we're gonna cover "Hot Topic".

Radio: I think we're gonna make it about them though. (lol*)

Rachel: Well they're like three of my favorite artists, three of the most inspiring people of all time in my life. They've all done so much stuff like fanzines and movies and bands and writings.

Radio: They're just like the coolest girls. They're all so rad.

Rachel: I want "Hot Topic" to be all the rad stuff that they've done.

Shelley: Oh that's just the coolest. Wow!

Radio: I know I can't wait 'til we write that.

Rachel: It's like the title of Johanna [Fateman]'s fanzines will be really exciting to sing.

Radio: To yell at the end. (*lol*) God we gotta find a way to play it live.

Rachel: *Some Thoughts on Jackson Pollock*. *lol*

Radio: God those three girls, since I've known about them they've been the three people that I'm like pushing their stuff on people besides Judas Priest, which is obviously like a whole different thing (*lol*). Like I'm always giving Kathleen [Hanna]'s fanzines to people. God, she wrote the greatest fanzine, *April Fool's Day*, have you guys read that?

Shelley: I've heard of it but I haven't read it.

Radio: Fuck. It is so good, about addiction and stuff like that. Jo's fanzines are amazing. I have a video of a bunch of Sadie [Benning]'s movies and I'm always taking it to people's houses and am like "Watch this."

Shelley: That's cool because we've never seen those but we've heard about them.

Radio: Awesome. I just loaned out my tape or I would let you guys watch them.

Shelley: I think they showed one of her films recently at the Center for the Arts in the San Francisco Yerba Buena Gardens. Anytime I've read an interview with Kathleen Hanna I'm blown away because she's always saying the things that no one else is saying.

Radio: Fuck yeah. She's like...

Radio: No shit. (*lol*) She's inspirational to us all. She's...yeah. I'm so happy that they're using samplers too and all this like techno equipment to do stuff with.

Shelley: It's really cool to hear that in punk rock. I like that crossover between techno and punk and hip-hop and rap.

Radio: I know.

Shelley: That's why I find a rock opera to be so exciting. When you said last night that it was originally an idea of Nomy Lamm's, I wasn't surprised. From Friday night's show I got the sense that her dynamic personality is perfect for stage, screen or TV.

Rachel: I know, don't you want Nomy to be like on TV winning an Oscar?

Todd: Totally, she should have her own talk show.

Shelley: Her own talk show! *lol*

Radio: Oh my god that is my dream, Nomy Lamm's talk show. Oh my god, that would just be so good.

Shelley: I'd get a TV for that.

Radio: I know, I would get cable for that. That would be good.

Todd: You'll have to start a queer cable channel or something.

Radio: That would rule. Wouldn't that be good?

Shelley: Totally.

Radio: Oh that's a good idea. God, I want to watch Nomy's talk show.

Todd: I think it's really great if people can start fucking around with different media.

Shelley: That's funny because Todd had said that he'd never seen *Yellow Submarine* and I was telling him about it and I said, "Wouldn't it be cool if The Need made a film."



Rachel: That's gonna be our next thing when we're done with the rock opera.

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Shelley: That's so exciting!

Todd: That will be the coolest thing ever.

Radio: It will probably be animated or at least half animated and half computer world you know. We wanna make one so bad but that is even huger. I mean animation, what the fuck, we don't know anything about it.

Shelley: (To Rachel) Do you do most of your design work on the computer?

Rachel: Yeah that's what I do for a job. I'm my own business. I haven't worked for The Man for six years.

Radio: I know I hadn't either until this one job I had for three months and that's it. We've liked figured out how to live without having jobs and it's not that we make money from music

Rachel: Which is like eating crumbs but it's so worth it.

Shelley: You get to do your art.

Rachel: Oh my god, I'm so excited to make a movie. Last night when we were done talking I was thinking about some of the amazing surrealist films that I've seen. Things that really influenced me visually like Luis Buñuel's films and [Salvador] Dalí's films and the early abstractions of Harry Smith, have you seen those? They're basically like animated collages. He cut out these sort of Victorian figures and sort of made them move all over on this flat screen. But the way that they move is really amazing.

Shelley: Were you at all influenced by Hannah Höch?

Rachel: I know the name but I don't know her work.

Shelley: She was part of the [Berlin] Dadaist group but her work didn't really get exposed until about two years ago [when] there was a big retrospective of her work. Unfortunately I didn't get to see it but there is this like coffee table size art book from it that's really good. I have an extra copy that I could send you.

Rachel: Yeah thanks. That would be really cool. I'd be really interested in checking that out.

Todd: Her work is so on it and she was very isolated. She was a woman...

Shelley: ...and she was also working a lot with androgyny.

Todd: Yeah really fucking around with gender and marriage roles and stuff like that.

Rachel: Wow, that's awesome.

Todd: It's funny that you mentioned the films of Buñuel and Dali because the sense I got from your songs and lyrics, especially on the last album, reminds me of their work and also the films of [Jean] Cocteau. Things that on the surface seem very jarring or violent become very beautiful and poetic. I think that's so much like the world we live in.

Rachel: Yeah totally. There was something about the surrealist paintings that never quite got me as much the films or writing did. Maybe because they didn't move or something. It's really hard to...In my mind I think that's where painting died or something. They were trying to do something that didn't have anything to do with painting.

Shelley: It's funny because that's when film really started to take off.

Todd: Yeah, it's amazing to see because my conception of surrealism from taking art history classes and stuff is really academic. I didn't get it. It was like, "What?"

Rachel: It's like melting clocks. *lol*

Todd: That's one of the things I thought about on Friday night was that it reminded a bit of surrealism and Paris of the 1920's and the whole café culture. People would come together and the art came out of that communal setting, not with just one person in their bedroom doing whatever, but a group of people talking and interchanging. I saw that exemplified on Friday night's show and especially in what you're doing with the rock opera is really bringing that out. Art used to be a real communal thing but in the '80s it was high finance, really corporate.

Rachel: Totally, it became an investment.

Todd: Exactly and many of the best art students were bought up by ad agencies. I get more from looking at billboards sometimes than I do from art museums.

Rachel: That's why I didn't make art for five years after I got out of art school. I graduated in '91 and maybe the next year it started to become OK to hand in a fanzine as your art project.

Shelley: That was just starting then, yeah.

Rachel: But I kind of missed that boat plus I went to Cooper Union, which at that time was a pretty old style school place.

Rachel: There was like the ye olde scholar (in shaky, old man voice) "I knew Mark Rothko" and whatever. (*lol*) I was so not interested in art any more after that, or art as I had learned it. But consequently I definitely have holes in my art history references. Like Hannah Hoch, I definitely should know who she is. Also a lot of musicians are art school casualties, I think.

Todd: Well one of the last things I think you can still do is pick up a guitar or drums and create something. But to paint- it's so expensive to get the materials and it's so hard to get the tools. Most of the stuff I do is collage because it's found materials, magazines, scissors and tape, you know? Having people who aren't necessarily musicians involved in a musical form of expression brings a lot of different things into it.

Shelley: Radio when did you start playing guitar?

Radio: I could kinda figure out how songs went at like 11. I always kinda had a guitar around and [would] always hear a song and I could go, "Oh it goes like this...". But I don't think I really started to realize that I could make my own songs and stuff until I was 11 or 12. So...forever.

Rachel: I tried to learn to play guitar but I learned music on the piano which is laid out in a line not on a grid and I just could not...I just totally gave up.

Radio: And I can't learn piano so I totally understand.

Todd: Yeah it's like your minds both work on those different levels, very yin and yang.

Radio: Yeah we're totally lucky. Like she [Rachel] can totally read and write music fluently but I have to memorize it all but some how it works also which doesn't make any sense.

Shelley: Do you think in terms of chords and notes or...

Radio: Shapes. I remember songs with shapes like which way I move my hands, I'll draw [outlines the path her left hand will move up and down the guitar neck] But I can't even really write it down. I'll just write down the note that it starts on and go from there. Sometimes I forget, you know I'll have to look at the thing. Like for the rock opera for instance...

Rachel: How are we going to do that?

Radio: I don't know.

Shelley: Are you on stage the entire time playing?

Rachel: We're going to be in the orchestra pit-

62 Radio: -with suits and white wigs. *lol*

Rachel: I really want to have a Mozart thing.

Shelley: With the powdered wig and everything. Bravo.

Radio: That's kind of what our shtick is in the rock opera. We wrote it [the music], so we're like the wizards in the pit-

Rachel: -which is gonna be really funny because the costumes for *The Transfused* are going to be completely insane.

Radio: Did you guys see the weird dyke that had the glowing...like

Todd: The glowing codpiece? Yes.

Radio: That's our director.

Rachel: Freddie Fagula.

Radio: She's going to be a main part of kinda like the costume brain and you can tell that if she makes that up to go to a show...

Shelley: That is amazing.

Radio: She's pretty on it.

Todd: Yeah I saw a Drag King show she was involved in a couple of years ago. It was amazing. I mentioned to Rachel last night that there is a play, which just opened in San Francisco, *Up Your Ass*- the play written by Valerie Solanis [who shot Andy Warhol].

Radio: (excited) Oh yeah. Really.

Rachel: Don't you want to go down there and see it?

Radio: No way. Yeah.

Todd: It's amazing. It plays through April. It's really incredible because all the parts are played by women. Some of the women are doing a Drag King thing and then as the character they come out as Drag Queens. It's so weird because this play was written in 1965 but the way it fucks with gender and sexuality is so contemporary. The structure of the play is very sort of standard Broadway feel, characters and dialogue, but with lots of vulgarity. But what the current production has done is update it with rock songs like Bowie, Patti Smith and Roy Orbison by taking the text that Solanis wrote in '65 and making them into song lyrics. I totally got the feeling that Solanis had written the lyrics for that song.

Todd: It was so weird because afterwards I kept thinking that's how people should really be doing it. Then when I heard the theme song for *The Transfused*, it was such a strong sense of déjà vu, because it's hitting on that same theme of bringing all these various elements of pop culture and media into theater. Which is what theater is really about.

Radio: God, I want to see that so bad. You don't understand.

Todd: It's so funny because, when I heard about the rock opera, I thought there was a connection because they seemed so similar to *The Transfused*.

Radio: We live here.

Rachel: Yeah, our gleanings from the greater world are kind of slim, like droplets coming in.

Radio: But we don't have time.

Rachel: It's really hard to research and keep up on stuff you know.

Radio: When we go on tour we totally see stuff but that's it. People tell us about stuff or e-mail it or whatever.

Rachel: We're like a little tribe in a distant foot lands away from the...

Radio: You guys I was so obsessed with Valerie Solanis. At age sixteen I was so obsessed with her that I would paint these pictures on boards in front of my house of her shooting Andy Warhol and of him all bloody and fucked up and stuff and set them up in front of my house cos some dumb boy gave me the *SCUM* [Society For Cutting Up Men] Manifesto and I had never read anything like it. I can tell you that was like my first mind-wakening experience that started the whole everything for me was to read that stuff and then I went to New York to find her because I didn't believe she was dead and I searched and searched and searched until I found this old, weird rack DJ guy named Howie through friends of people who knew her and said that he would see her on the street all the time and that she had died a couple of years before.

Shelley: Yeah she died actually in San Francisco in the Tenderloin a few blocks from where the play is being shown.

Radio: It's crazy. I can't believe that really happened.

Shelley: Yeah, they just found the play in Warhol's archives in a box of like theater stuff I think.

Radio: Yeah. That's like where was that, right?

64 Todd: Well he was a pack rat. He saved everything, boxes and boxes of shit. They've got everything in this Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh. Somebody was going through and discovered it. Before photocopiers, it was literally Solanis's only copy.

Radio: Yeah that was the thing.

Todd: The whole story behind it is so amazing.

Radio: How did you guys hear about The Need?

Shelley: I was going through the new record bin at the Epicenter and I bought your first 7-inch like how sometimes I'll buy a book or an album for the cover because I'm intrigued. Then I put it on and I was blown away.

Rachel: That was one of the first things I ever made on computer. I was just thinking, Oh God, cos I had such a hard time with that.

Shelley & Todd: Really?!

Rachel: Yeah cos I taught myself how to do everything.

Shelley: That's really cool. It was amazing especially the numbers and letters blurring and kind of being typed over reminded me of this Francis Bacon painting of a man writing at a table and the letters are smudged onto the canvas in the same manner. Also on the bottom left there's a hand coming up with an exclamation point next to it. It reminded me of these collages by Max Ernst. It was this whole Lop Lop series he did with this hand figure in black that was kind of like that, very Need-like, very sharp. And when I read the lyrics on the bottom I was like, "Wow, I know when I buy this I'm getting my money's worth." That's what I thought.

Radio: That's good.

Shelley: Yeah I basically got into it just on the image, the design of the sleeve. I wasn't disappointed once I put it on.

Rachel: Yeah it's working. I'm doing my job. *lol*

Todd: I thought that was really funny that you weren't familiar with Hannah Höch because I read a lot of her into your imagery. Like the Outpunk 7-inch with the horse head on the bird body to me was a very surrealist image because you can't really articulate what it meant but by visually looking at it you get the essence.

Rachel: God I'm really interested to see what she's all about. I love stuff like that. It's like finding your hidden family somewhere.

Shelley: She worked for a publishing company that basically put out all the magazines and newspapers in Germany at the time. She was working in a department that designed dress and embroidery patterns and had access to all these kind of ethnographic photographs and everything that was going on so she had everything to pool from.

Radio: That's cool.

Shelley: I wanted to ask you about music or bands that might have influenced your sound. I'm wondering if you were ever into Public Image Limited?

Todd: Not so much in terms of the lyrics and the mood but the aural texture and stuff.

Rachel: I was really into that band at a certain point. Yeah I know what you're talking about.

Todd: It's not like it's the same as the sound you have. But most music is dependent upon the guitar and it carries everything. You put a different perspective on it.

Radio: I'd like to hear it actually.

Todd: Yeah I'll make you a tape. I got this cheap mixing board and I'm totally into making mix tapes.

Shelley: Mix tapes are totally cool.

Radio: I agree. Yeah like I don't think that on my own I would explore Johnny Rotten but if you bring it up I will you know. Like it's kind of like that Judas Priest thing, you know what I mean?

Todd: Totally. Yeah it brought me out of my own head-trip and really changed my perspective. I always saw it [heavy metal music] as this full on macho aggressive male rock and the singer is a total fag. It put a really weird spin on it.

Rachel: It does on all the words and everything.

Radio: Yeah he sings about girls.

Rachel: Well he sings a lot about you more. He doesn't use pronouns very much.

Radio: Sometimes.

Rachel: Occasionally.

Shelley: So he would like switch with the gender or something like he's singing about girls but really about boys?

Radio: Yeah back then how could you be in a heavy metal band and sing?

Shelley: That's really funny because Proust did the same thing with his characters when he wrote about women.

Rachel: Judas Proust *lol*

Shelley: That's where it's at.

Rachel: Awesome.

Radio: Joan Jett probably does that. She's a dyke you guys.

Shelley: What about Joy Division?

Radio: Not really, I mean I've listened to stuff but...

Rachel: When I was in high school yeah.

Shelley: (To Rachel) Do you have a Goth past?

Rachel: A little bit.

Shelley: I have a friend who was a full on hardcore Goth and I showed her your first CD cover and she was tripping out on the eye make up like, "That's very Goth."

Rachel: Yeah. I was never that kind of Goth soul but I was never like a full on Goth kid because I wasn't in an urban area. But yeah Joy Division was definitely hitting on something there.

Radio: See all that music was like New Wave for me. I didn't really like any of that dance shit very much.

Rachel: Joy Division stands out to me from a lot of the other ones.

Radio: Really?

Rachel: Yeah.

Shelley: I always thought of them as being really punk.

Radio: Really?

Rachel: Yeah me too and their singer [Ian Curtis] was just amazing.

Todd: The thing I really got into was all the different noises and the way they layered so many different sounds and fucked around with the production and stuff. It reminded me a lot of your work in that it's sonically textured.

Shelley: The guitar especially.

Todd: Yeah like a lot of feedback and echo and weird noises. Like lately I've been getting into a lot of dub reggae and there's all of these really out there noises and sound effects which remind of the stuff in your records. It's not just the drums and the guitar or the lyrics and the melody, it's all this other weird shit that's thrown on.

Shelley: Like those bells in "2-Story Girl" that are just so perfect and give this atmosphere to the song. It makes it cinematic.

Radio: Do you guys hear the cat purring on the last song?

Shelley: Is that a cat purring? I thought that was a wheel or something turning. Do you put the mike right up to it?

Radio: Yeah.

Shelley: That's so cool. I love that.

Radio: [While] listening to Marcie sing that song I saw the cat and it made me want to listen to a cat purring.

Todd: Yeah it's perfect.

Shelley: I like the way you collage sounds together.

Radio: Thanks.

Shelley: It's a lot like what you do with images, cutting and pasting.

Rachel: Yeah, I think of it the same way.

FIN

If you enjoyed this interview, check out some of my other items about the gay Beat poet Harold Norse.

Harold Norse Of Course, a recording of a poetry reading from Amsterdam in 1984. Originally released on cassette tape by Ins and Outs Press, it has been re-released by Unrequited Records in CD and vinyl. The record features double colored vinyl with an opulent, gatefold layout containing a collage of Norse photos.



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They say Dylan Thomas's recordings were the best recorded poetic voice of the twentieth century, but for my money, Harold Norse's voice runs a close second. Hear this master of the American idiom, whose mind and knowledge were absolutely cosmic, on the must-have album for all poetry collection, *Harold Norse Of Course*..."

-Gerald Nicosia, author of *Memory Babe: A Critical Biography of Jack Kerouac*

THE END IS THE BEGINNING

Elegy for the Carnivorous Saint



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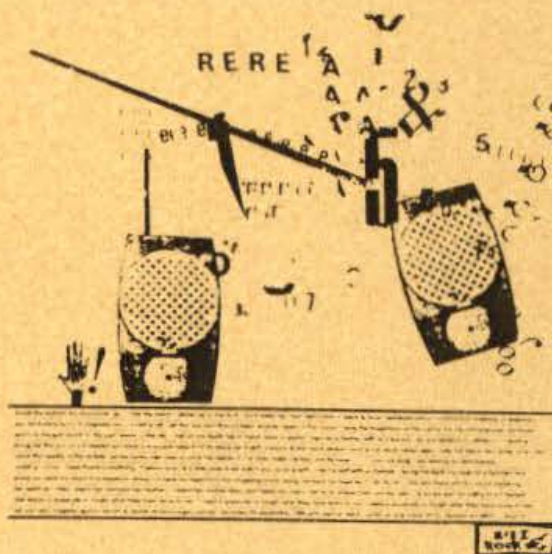
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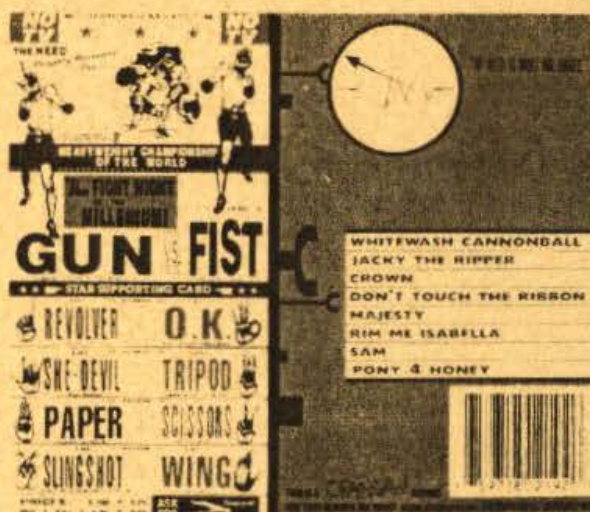
The Need 7" (Kill Rock Stars, 1997)



Jacky O'Lantern 7" (Outpunk, 1997)



The Need s/t CD (Chainsaw, 1997)



The Need Is Dead (Chainsaw, 2000)



"What is painting? What is writing? Art? Literature? These words have no meaning now. This is the space age and we need precise maps of space areas. Only the painting and writing that gives us precise maps of some psychic area serves a function at this intersection point of word and image that we call Present Time."

William S. Burroughs

From the brochure to Harold Norse's COSMOGRAPHS
exhibit at the Gallery of the *Librairie Anglaise*, Paris 1961