

# Views: Where the Men Aren't

Why aren't there any men here?" asks the fortyish woman ahead of me in the box office line. She's wearing a black velvet evening coat, sparkly earrings, heels. Her date opens his wallet and buys their tickets to tonight's show headlining a local up-and-coming comedian (a lesbian).

Women's voices percolate through the small dinner theater. The gentle timbre of their laughter rings out over the tinkle and clink of ice and forks. Oregano-scented lasagna spices the air. Soft house lights wash over the few unfilled seats and glint off gelled haircuts.

"Where are all the men?" she asks again, apparently not noticing that she's with one, there's one selling tickets, and another one waiting to usher them to their seats. I recognize a couple of gay guys in the audience and wave. Seems like plenty of men here to me. The woman grows more agitated, "Where are the men?"

**sally sheklow**

being in the minority once in a while.

This little tirade goes on inside my head along with my instant regret for adding to the poor woman's distress. I feel like a big oaf. Where do I get off being so judgmental? I'm ashamed of myself for not having more compassion. I want to explain or at least apologize. I hope she didn't even hear me, or if she did, that it didn't register.

"Where are all the men?" she asks her date again. "What's

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"Who needs them?" I reply without thinking. My instinctual reaction sounds hostile, but I didn't mean it that way. I swear. I've come off sounding like a complete man-hater, but that's not it at all. My mental sound track plays folk singer Malvina Reynold's "We Don't Need the Men," a good-natured ditty inspired by women mill-workers who were getting impatient for the men to end their checkers match and show up at the union meeting.

What I meant to convey is the song's message - women don't need men around to take care of business. Malvina's song is about affirming women's competence and self-reliance, not man-hating.

How can I clarify that all I meant is that we don't need men to validate ourselves? I wish I could explain my thoughts to this perfect stranger: you don't need men around to have a good time; it's okay to be places that aren't male-dominated, you might even find it refreshing. Do men worry that so few women attend stockholders meetings, technology conferences or, say, the US Congress? No!

But I'm magnanimous. Not all men are privilege-sucking power mongers. Some of my best friends are male. They can't help it; they didn't choose to be born that way. I don't begrudge men who pay good money to see a lesbian comedian. But neither do I worry about them

going on here? Is this comedian GAY or something?" Her guy mumbles under his breath. "No, it is NOT a stupid question," she argues while he folds his change into his wallet and hands their tickets to the usher. She loops her arm though his, telegraphing her uneasiness at having stumbled into a swarm of lesbians.

The headliner is, in fact, absolutely hilarious and the crowd is roaring. Most of the material is universal humor - what, you thought lesbians have only one thing on their minds? Hey, don't confuse us with men! No, haha, I am only kidding. But the comedian includes a few pointedly inside jokes that might go over the heads of anyone not in the know.

Instead of just enjoying the show like everyone else, I worry that another straight person is now completely alienated and convinced that every low-down mean and ugly thing she's ever heard about lesbians is true. I crane my neck to see how upset the poor woman has become. I spot her and her guy a few seats away. I have not given her any credit for having brains. There they are, laughing their heads off. ▼

*Sally Sheklow lives in the Pacific Northwest with her partner of 15 years and two overindulged cats. She performs improv comedy and actually has some male friends. Send comments to [sally@wymprov.com](mailto:sally@wymprov.com)*



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## OUTRIGHT VERMONT EVENTS FOR SEPTEMBER 2002

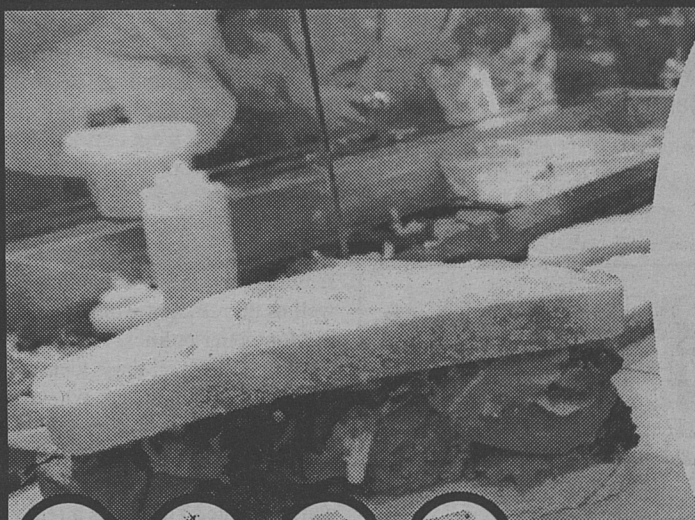
"People are see through if you hold 'em up to the light...people are enlightening if you plug 'em in right." ~Alix Olson

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1 OUTRIGHT	2 LABOR DAY OUTRIGHT IS CLOSED	3	4 Drop In: Last VT Expo Home Game of the Season Join us to Root em' on! 6:30-	5	6 Youth Activist Meeting 6:30-6:45pm Friday Night Group 7-8:30pm Brattleboro Group	7 Youth Hike @ Mt. Philo Meet at Outright 12pm
8	9 Young Womyn's Social and Support Group 6:30-8pm	10	11 Drop In: Movie Night: 6pm-8pm	12	13 Youth Activist Meeting 5:30- 6:45pm Friday Night Group 7-8:30pm	14
15 Alix Olson Poetry Workshop! @ Outright 2-4pm	16 Trans Group 6:30-8pm	17	18 Drop In: Peer Outreach Meeting 6:30-8pm	19	20 Youth Activist Meeting 6:30-6:45pm Friday Night Group 7-8:30pm Brattleboro Group	21
22	23 Young Womyn's Social and Support Group 6:30-8pm	24	25 Drop In: Lessons from the Church of Spongebob Squarepants. 6:30-8pm	26 VT CARES AIDS Walk Burlington 6pm	27 Youth Activist Meeting 5:30- 6:45pm Friday Night Group 7-8:30pm	28 OUTRIGHT
29 OUTRIGHT	30 Trans Group 6:30-8pm	All activities and events are free and confidential. For more information or for directions to Outright, call 1-800-GLB-CHAT. All Queer and Questioning youth 22 and under are welcome!				



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