

Northampton/Amherst Lesbian Festival

Miki Thomas

The second annual Northampton/Amherst Lesbian Festival, held on August 3, 1991, was a bit of a wash out. A downpour flooded the festival so everything was moved inside the UMass Student Union ballroom. However, this did not "dampen" the spirits of those attending the festival or the fun of the festival itself.

Thirteen performers took the stage during the festival. The acts ranged from folk, jazz, and performance art, to cabaret. The festival opened and closed with Roy and Reggie, who are two women named Zoe Lewis and Julie Wheeler, teamed up to "create a Lesbian Lounge Lizard extravaganza." Their last set and the festival finale featured them singing the *Northampton Blues*, which lamented that wherever they go, they always meet up with their ex-lovers. It was followed by their lesbian interpretation of *The Sound of Music*, based their "discovery" of an original version of the script which had Maria coming out of her particular cloister or closet.

Other performers included Catie Curtis, Austin, Texas born Purlie Gates singing a combination of folk and blues, and Justina and Joyce, who performed a cappella with breathtaking and beautiful harmonies. Nurudafina Pili Abena gave a demonstration of African and Caribbean drumming that made many festival goers get up and dance to the hypnotic rhythms.



Photo by Birdie MacLennan

Nurudafina Pili Abena

In the afternoon, local favorite Jaime Morton, an up and coming folk artist, sang a selection of songs from her compact disc *Animals are Moving*. Another folk artist on her way up and featured at the festival was Jan Corliss, whose sound is similar to Joan Armatrading's, and whose repertoire includes reggae. The audience favorite was Suede, a multi-instrumentalist with a strong voice who could at one moment sing a red hot blues number and at another give Bette Midler some competition with her version of *From a Distance*.

Comedy was provided by two stand up comedians and a theater group. Julie Waggoner gave her observations on life and love from a "WASP-ish" point of view and Betsy Salkind got the audience laughing with some priceless imitations of cat noises. The Lesbian Preoccupied Theater performed a short skit consisting of some very funny and observant spoofs of commercials and game shows.

By the time Roy and Reggie gave their last curtain call, the energy level among the festival goers was very high. The excitement and joy of being with 1000 women cel-



Photo by Birdie MacLennan

Festival Vendor

brating lesbian pride was overwhelming. The craftswomen and entertainers expressed the diversity of lesbians in their respective arts. Diane Morgan and Aliza Ansell of WOW Productions should be congratulated for their efforts at putting together this festival. ▼

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