

## Blast From The Past: The Tom Robinson Band, *Power in the Darkness*, Harvest, 1978.

An OITM review by Miki Thomas

The Tom Robinson Band was born from the punk movement of the mid-70s where three chords and an attitude were mixed with a political consciousness to create a sound that reflected the anger towards the establishment and the music that fed it. Unlike groups like The Clash, The Tom Robinson Band tempered its anger with a sense of hope. Also unlike any other band of that period, the band's namesake was openly gay.

Tom Robinson's daring-do in coming out did not exactly help his career and today he more or less works in obscurity and without the anger that fueled his earlier efforts. His most recent album has a rather blissed out Robinson with a bad haircut on the cover looking as if he just met up with a New Age guru. It is tragic because he really can rock it up with the best of them. *Power in the Darkness*, his debut effort, is proof of that.

That album features the song that will forever be associated with Tom Robinson: "Glad to Be Gay." Now remember, this was 1978. You can just imagine what a ruckus this song produced at its release. Hardly anyone up to that point had been so upfront about his/her sexuality right off the bat like that. "Glad to Be Gay," which Robinson dedicated to the World Health Organization that still in 1978 listed homosexuality a disease, is a stunning diatribe against the homophobia and gay-bashing encountered by gays and lesbians everywhere. Chuck Eddy, in his book *Stairway to Hell: The 500 Heavy Metal Albums in the Universe*, wrote that his wife used to play this song "out the window to piss people off when he lived on an Army base."

Robinson touches upon other issues as well. In the course of the album, he admonishes everyone to "stand up and fight for your rights" and for the freedom "to choose what to do with your body, for brothers to love one another, for blacks and whites, [and] from male domination" (from "Power in the Darkness"). He asks us in "Ain't Gonna Take It", "Sisters and brothers, what have we done?/Fighting each other instead of the Front [the British equivalent of the Nazi Party]/we gotta get it together."

Seventeen years have not diminished the message of *Power in the Darkness*. To some extent it is sad that much of what Tom Robinson has to say is still relevant, but he does offer hope that if all oppressed peoples get together and fight our common enemies, perhaps then we will be able to live in freedom. ▼

## Vermont CARES hires Executive Director



(Photo: Bennett Law)  
Vermont CARES Executive Director Tim Palmer

Cleland E. Selby

MIDDLEBURY -- Two years ago, when Tim Palmer prepared to send out his holiday cards, he decided to look at the greetings he and his now deceased partner, Scott, had received a decade earlier in 1983. "At that time, thirty gay men formed the nucleus of our world." These were the friends with whom Tim and Scott travelled, saw shows, and enjoyed dinners.

In 1993, twenty-eight of those men were dead.

"For me, what that crystallized was that my shared experiences were no longer shared. Albany (New York) was not as much home anymore. It mentally became part of my past." Now Tim will be making his new

home somewhere within commuting distance to his new job as the Executive Director of Vermont CARES.

Late in August, beside Otter Creek on the deck of the Storm Cafe in Middlebury, forty-five year old Tim talked with ease about the work he has accomplished and the work he hopes to accomplish. "It's easier to talk about my work than it is to talk about myself," he said several times during the interview.

Palmer is a soft spoken man with a gentle smile. He is not new to his duties at Vermont CARES; in 1990 he and Scott, an attorney who once served in the New York State legislature, founded another CARES -- the Corporation for AIDS Research and Educational Services in Albany with a specific focus upon legal and housing issues for persons living with AIDS. In June that year, Scott died, ending their thirteen year relationship.

Tim describes himself as a "scrawny gay kid" who grew up in Stafford, New York, one of seven siblings of an Irish-American, Roman Catholic family where there was little room for individual identity. After graduating from the State University of New York at Albany, where he earned a degree in political science, Tim came out as a gay man and subsequently earned his advanced degree in public communications which led to a short career as a television reporter.

Palmer believes that working in Vermont will provide him with opportunities to be creative, unlike New York and Massachusetts where he has worked, where "the systems have hardened because of longevity. Vermont is a place where we can be creative as the AIDS epidemic changes."

For Tim, the key issue is "not to commit so many resources to the development of a system that cannot move" but instead to commit resources "to meet the epidemic in different ways, in the different communities." He wants "to build collaborations that reflect the reality of where people live and work."

Vermont CARES is the oldest and largest AIDS service organization in the state. It's new Executive Director, however, does not want it to be a bully organization. "Growing up as a gay boy, I know what bullies are like. And that's not what I want for Vermont CARES."

When asked if he is aware that some members of the current board have been criticized as bullies, Tim responded with a simple, "I did my homework before I accepted the job" and went on to note that Vermont CARES has "gotten where it has gotten because of the strong drive by persons on the staff and board."

He recognizes that the staff did not unionize without reasons. However, he believes that the more clearly defined roles for the board and the staff will ensure that the organization does not "lose that commitment and drive" it has exhibited for the seven years of its life. "I want to maximize the benefits of the strengths of everyone involved."

Tim is in the process of selling his country home near Albany, one he shared for years with Scott and Buddy, his six year old Springer Spaniel. He is looking for a similar setting that will allow Buddy the freedom he has known. "It's more like going home than a lot of people perceive. Moving to Vermont is a coming home to a community I find most comfortable." ▼

# 135 PEARL

**re-GAY-lia**  
the hottest HALLOWEEN bash ever!!!

9p.m.-???

Saturday 10-28-95      deejay DAN SHAW




---

## ONE ACT PLAYS

NOVEMBER 5, 6, & 7

CALL FOR MORE INFO

## WOMEN'S DANCE

11-3-95  
5p.m.-9p.m.




---

**DO UNTO OTHERS** starring  
a one-person show      cRAIGMITCHELL  
dealing with the issues  
of humanity      call for dates & times

## CHERIE TART GETS STUFFED...AGAIN

11-19-1995

monday: football, free pool, & hot dogs tuesday: \$1 BUD and games wednesday: deejay roberto renna--all ages thursday: deejay cRAIGMITCHELL friday: deejay cRAIGMITCHELL 18+ saturday: deejay DAN SHAW 18+	<b>135 PEARL</b> burlington, vt 802-863-2343
---	--

## HOWDEN COTTAGE

### bed & breakfast

Continental • By Reservation Only

32 No. Champlain St. • Burlington, VT 05401  
Bruce M. Howden • Proprietor • 802 864-7198