

reviews

news and



Constance Craving hears the first Noel

Well, Christmas may or may not come early but Noel is certainly on Drag Queen time. I love my dear friend from The North East Kingdom, but let me just say if she were doing the Winter is a Drag ball instead of me, we could all wear swim wear.

Noel's long awaited CD, soon to be available to the rest of the world, is a trendy poppy collection of dance songs and ballads, although a lot of fun, sometimes it has more a hint of the possible power of her voice than the actual power. But like that quick image of Ru Paul dancing across the screen in the B-52's Love Shack video this is just a hint of things to come. Noel has had her detractors, and Constance isn't quite sure why, I mean she has never said anything against other local drag personas. Well, maybe it's just that tacky green sequined monster, Jealousy.

The CD, as far as I know is available at Tones in Johnson, right now, and I imagine soon to be in your local store wherever fine drag queen music is sold. I mean, female illusionist music. Sorry my dear, Constance has so much to keep track of these days.

Not much else has been happening around here though, except apparently Cherie and Yolanda did make a little trip to The Tunbridge Fair with Mr. Fred Tuttle, Constance was away that weekend getting her little red wagon fixed. Apparently they met Mrs. Fred Tuttle, who was not too impressed by the states foremost drag queen Television stars. I have not heard yet who won the blue ribbon though for the best drag queen. But I guess that would be small potatoes for Ms. Tartt who we hear will soon be gracing the sides of busses to promote the Burlington Film Festival. Rumor has it that Amber and Marguerite have been lobbying in Montpelier for busses to be added to the billboard law. But then again they might have a point, I mean those idiotic Cellular One and WIZN busses are uglier than some of the worst stretches of NJ highway.

But Constance digresses. My darling, Endora and I, have been chatting about the next Winter Is A Drag ball, and do not worry, it assuredly will happen again, despite what I guess I can report to the world now, Ms. Endora will be leaving the agency. All of you letter writing drama queens had better put your money where your mouth is and write that big check to CARES you had been withholding. She and I will indeed be doing the ball. I, however will be in charge of the advertising. I think I will be contracting out the assigning of the dressing rooms to a local cat declawer, though.

The Rise and Fall of Gay Culture by Daniel Harris. Hyperion: New York, 1997.

BOTH REVIEWS BY PAUL OLSEN

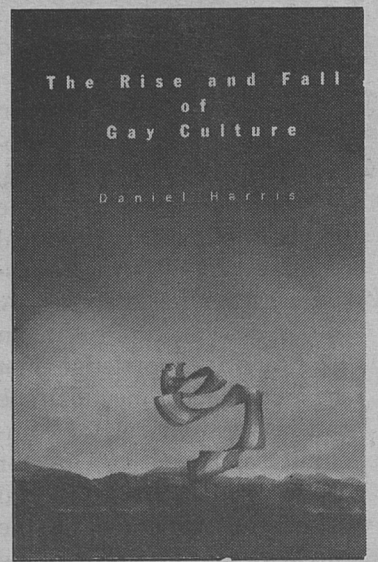
books

"What a dump!" "Toto, I don't think we're in Kansas anymore." "But you are, Blanche, you are in that chair." Citing Hollywood quotes like these is just one of the techniques author Daniel Harris uses to trace the historical development and meaning of gay culture over time in his book, *The Rise and Fall of Gay Culture*.

Using "before" and "after" snapshots, Harris thoroughly documents shifts in gay culture and the movement towards assimilation in queer rituals like drag, diva worship, personal ads, pornography, and piercing. (Harris does not address the unique elements of lesbian culture in his book). In chapters titled "The Death of Camp", "The Evolution of Personals and Gay Romance", "The Death of Kink", "The Aesthetic of Drag", and "The Kitschification of AIDS", Harris raises important questions about the death of cultural diversity in American society. "In part because of the business world's growing recognition of our appeal as a market," he writes, "the most valuable features of our culture...are disappearing." "The gay sensibility now transcends regional borders, so the homosexual in Tennessee looks and sounds almost exactly like the homosexual in Arizona, sharing not only a common style of dress but a physical type, a linguistic accent, and a set of defining tastes in art, decoration, and music" Harris laments.

Harris's comprehensive sociological review provides a humorous and, at times, poignant look at gay culture. In his chapter on camp, he describes gay men's attraction to Bette Davis and Joan Crawford. "The fantasy of the vicious, back-stabbing vagina dentata, always quick on her feet, always ready to demolish her opponent with a stunning rejoinder, is the fantasy of a powerless minority that asserts itself through language, not physical violence," he writes.

In *The Rise and Fall of Gay Culture*, Daniel Harris provides a persuasive and witty argument against the homogenization of American culture. "The eventual disappearance of gay culture constitutes a significant loss, not just for gay people, but for American culture in general" Harris concludes. Sadly, Harris's well-documented book proves he may be right.



angels over queen city

On a trip to Great Britain in 1992, I had the opportunity to see the Royal National Theatre's production of Tony Kushner's play *Angels in America*. In anticipation of the Vermont premier of *Angels in America* at the University of Vermont, I've dusted off my old OITM review and am reprinting it here:

Tony Kushner describes *Angels in America* as "a gay fantasia on national themes." Using a mix of humor, fantasy, and tragedy the play is AIDS drama at its best. Subtitled Part One: Millennium Approaches, the play focuses on two couples (upwardly mobile Mormon Joseph Pitt, his valium addicted wife Harper,

and Louis Ironson and his boyfriend Prior Walter) and the guilt they experience during the Reagan years. Featuring some real-life characters, including Joseph McCarthy's secret homosexual aide/power broker Roy M. Cohen and the executed Ethel Rosenberg, the play deals with the ethical and physical decay of America in the 1980's and is clearly an indictment of the Reagan administration.

Actors in more than one role, actors as stage-hands, and minimal scenery contribute to this impressive production. In light of how the AIDS crisis has touched all of our lives this play cannot help but make you cry which is only relieved by

the effective placement of humor as evidenced by the witty character Belize, a nurse/former drag queen and Prior's former lover.

American playwright Tony Kushner wrote *Angels in America* as part one of a two part series. The play, which won the 1990 Fund for New American Plays/Kennedy Center Award and the 1991 Joseph Kesselring Award, premiered in Britain in January (1992) and will be followed by Part Two: Perestroika. You heard it here first: *Angels in America* is unforgettable. Watch for it and make plans to attend or better yet call your travel agent and book a trip to London (or UVM, see right)!

CALENDAR

october

6 MONDAY

GLITTER Film Night at Rhombus Gallery, Corner of College and Church St., Burlington. Unzipped, a documentary about the life of fashion designer Isaac Mizrahi. FMI call Steven Kopstein at 802-434-5653 or email: GLITTERvt@aol.com.



sarah schulman

7 TUESDAY

"An Evening With Sarah Schulman" - novelist Sarah Schulman reads from *Rat Bohemia* and discusses how her activism with ACT UP and Lesbian Avengers has impacted her life and career as a writer. 7:30pm, McCullough Center, Middlebury College. call moqa FMI: 388-0750.

8 WEDNESDAY

2:30 PM, Hanover, NH, Auditorium E at the Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center, free lecture by Constance Nagi, MD, on recognizing and treating depression throughout a woman's life. FMI: 603-650-7500.

9 THURSDAY

7 & 9:30pm FILM: "Beautiful Thing" In this touching and funny movie, two boys find first love in the housing projects of South London. Full of the rough life, tender moments, and quirky characters. \$1, Twilight Auditorium. call moqa FMI: 388-0750

10 FRIDAY

10-13. Radical Faerie Columbus Day gathering at the Vagabond in Grafton (\$30 for two nights / \$45 for three) or with Autumn camping on the parcel of land purchased this summer in Grafton. contact Moon for more information: 254 6276.

10-13. Columbus Day Biking and Hiking with the Chiltern Mtn Club. We'll do some light to intermediate bicycling

and hiking the next three days, depending on the weather. Free lodging. Chip in for breakfast and vegetarian dinners. Limited to 9 in the house, 2 in the cabin. Unlimited camping. Bob Bland (802) 333-9448 bland@sover.net

11 NATIONAL COMING OUT DAY

Amelia's Foliage Hike around Deer Leap, Killington, VT. 1 pm. FMI: Lynn & Jeanne: 802-672-5280 (lfisher@conriver.net).

As part of UVM's National Coming Out Week, the Samadhi Singers will perform at St. Paul's Episcopal Church (corner of Battery & Cherry Sts. - Burlington) 7:30 pm.. Also, the Rev. Barry Stopfel & Will Leckie, life partners and authors of "Courage To Love," will speak on "The Sexual & The Sacred: How Coming Out Affects Spiritual Growth." Admission is free, donations welcome. FMI, contact UVM's Cooperative Christian Ministry & Office of the Episcopal Chaplaincy at 656-3882.



samadhi singers