

# REBECCA RIOTS:

## Coming to a House Near You

BY MIKI THOMAS

The members of Rebecca Riots have a novel approach to touring. Eschewing clubs and theaters, they prefer "house concerts," that is, playing to 20-plus guests at a host's home where intimate surroundings allow both artists and audience to participate in the concert experience.

The best analogy would be a Tupperware party; instead of belching plastic containers on display, it's the talents of Rebecca Riots.

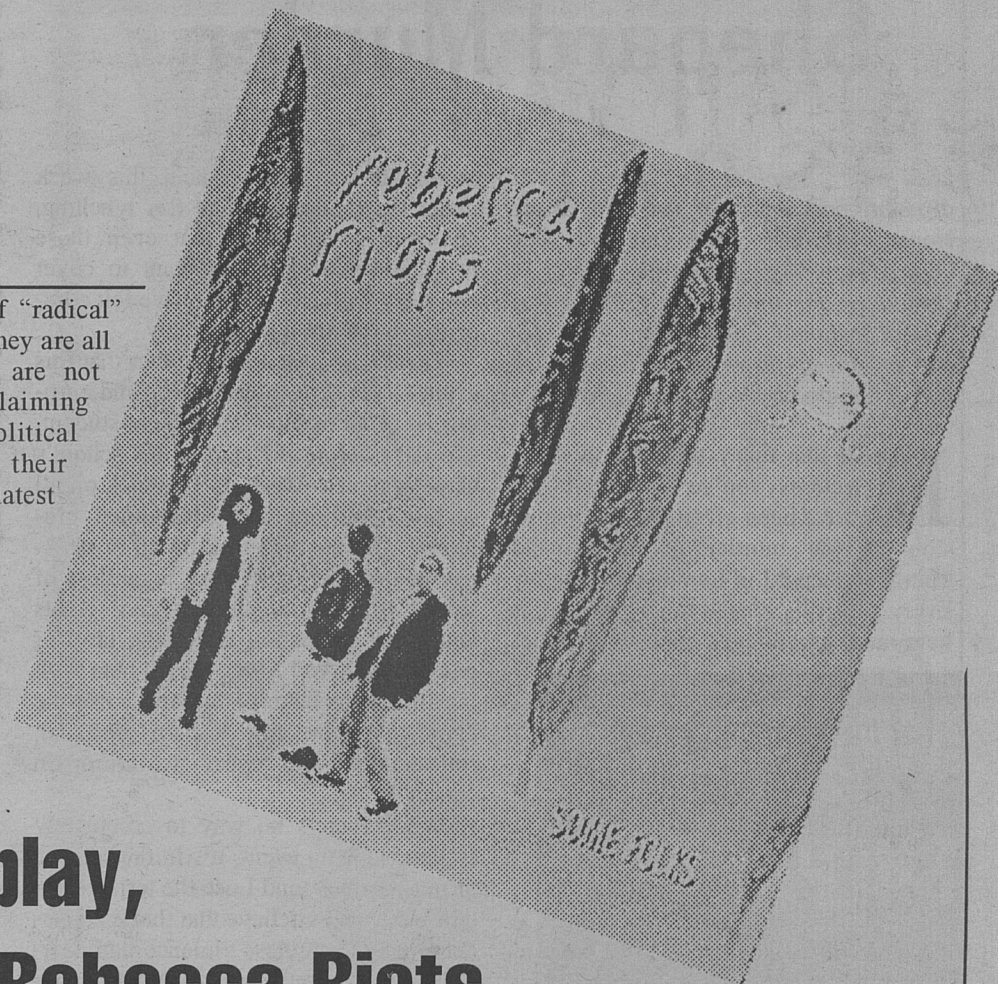
Based in Berkeley, CA, Rebecca Riots is made up of Andrea Prichett, Eve Decker, and Lisa Zeiler. Andrea sang in bands in Zimbabwe while she taught self-defense classes for women. Eve sang in choirs and rock bands back in the US. The two met as counselors at Camp It Up, a camp for children of gays and lesbians.

Lisa, Andrea's guitar teacher, was soon recruited to complete the fledgling group.

The trio was originally called Final Girl, after an article in a local weekly about the one girl who manages to elude

their brand of "radical" folk music. They are all activists and are not shy in proclaiming their political beliefs in their music. Their latest

**Instead of belching plastic containers on display, it's the talents of Rebecca Riots.**



CD, *Some Folks*, features early Indigo Girls-style harmonies in songs about conformity ("Uniforms"), body image ("Women's Bodies"), and Mumia Abu Jamal, the African American writer on Pennsylvania's death row for killing a cop ("Storyteller").

However, Rebecca Riots also has a personal and tender side and it is evident in such songs as "How I Feel," "The Dream Where You Were the Angel," and "Come and Go."

Listening to their CD, it is easy to see why Rebecca Riots prefers to play house concerts. The band's music lends itself to a more intimate setting than a smoky club could ever provide. They are anxious to expand their

fan base, especially in the Northeast, and are looking for "domestic venues" in this area. ▼

For more information about purchasing CDs or booking them for a house concert, you can reach them at P.O. Box 3536, Berkeley, CA 94703, [rebeccariots@rebeccariots.com](mailto:rebeccariots@rebeccariots.com) or [www.rebeccariots.com](http://www.rebeccariots.com).

### MORE LETTERS

*continued from page three*

Obscurantism has certainly reigned following the removal of Wittig's painting from Burlington City's art gallery early last summer: glibness, contradiction, evasion, the complicity of local artists who, showing complacency and easily triggered compulsions to show, hurriedly flocked to an 'invitational' to cover emptied walls which should have remained empty. There also followed the defense of 'community' exhibition guidelines which for years had been forgotten but were, as is the case with 'community' cultural apparatuses, held quietly in reserve. It is astonishing that the same city which launched the political career of Rep. Bernard Sanders who has stood firmly and consistently against the Right's efforts to restrict 1st Amendment freedoms, and which operates under the auspices of his Progressive Party, would not recognize its exhibition guidelines as free-speech restrictive.

The censorship established more general support through glosses in the local arts weekly, a

more pointed editorial in the conservative local Gannet daily, which variously included dubious dismissals of the painting on the basis of 'quality' (including Moes's), the questioning of public funding for the arts, and concerns (this from Progressives!) that Wittig's work would pose some danger (see statements attributed to City Arts official Doreen Kraft in a pro-censorship op-ed by Pamela Polston in a July issue of SEVENDAYS) to the latest refuge for scoundrels - 'the children.' The complicit parties continue to assert that the censorship was not based on homo-erotic content. These discourses issuing in unison from a community made of what were formerly often bitter and polarized adversaries are the instruments of a most aggressive form of silence: refusal. Mr. Moes's writing on the subject is the latest and certainly the most perverse I have read.

Most of the important battles over what makes way into 'public' culture are being fought at the local levels, on fronts formed at venues like the local Firehouse. Contrary to Mr. Moes's bizarre assertion that the Firehouse incident "is a sign of how meaningless art is in America and Burlington," it is precisely a

sign of how important art really is. Senator Jesse Helms and Donald Wildmon's appropriations of Robert Mapplethorpe's photographs (along with the work of Wojnarowicz, Serranos, Finley...) ten years ago remember, initiated the systematic dismantling of what was already meager public funding for the arts in this country. But this spectacular instrumentalization of our work by the right was not simply directed at cutting federal funding for the arts. It was an effective assertion of the enormous hostility that is always reserved for us.

What Moes attributes in the first section of his commentary ("Arrogance and the Christian Right") to the Christian Right, in an extraordinary semantic turn of the sort Roland Barthes made us aware, returns to speak through the voice of its 'accuser.' Moes performs precisely what the Right would have for any expression of resistance; in a privileged position to address his adversaries Moes shreds the issues of his ranks (including, as if unrelated to the issues of art and censorship, those of race and class) in a subterfuge of incomprehensibility.

The editor refuses his opportunity to address the local censorship

of a gay work yet scolds the gallery for not showing the works of 'local Lesbian artists.' He joins his voice with the Right's in an exhortation of liberals, 'out of state owned businesses' (the conservative theme of 'local control' makes its way into Moes's piece a number of times), and artists who are the beneficiaries, according to Moes, of 'years of education and healthy stays at Skowhegan and Province town (sic) arts center.' Moes sneers at Wittig's work as having 'any merit beyond a cheap turn on' then redoubles and exposes the hypocrisy of his position with further qualification: 'even as porn it really had little merit.'

The context of the City Arts action was clearly lost to Moes. It was, for example, no coincidence that same week (June 25) that the United States Supreme Court, in a duplicitous and dangerous manner, ruled that the National Endowment for the Arts may consider 'general standards of decency' with regards to the awarding of grants. Also, the Firehouse incident was not even locally isolated. A week before, 'Transformations of Text: Visual Art and the Written Word' an exhibit which Marie Lapre-Grabon and I co-curated, opened at the

Helen Day Art center in Stowe only after David Greene and the National Campaign for Freedom of Expression intervened; just days before installation was to begin the Center's director Johanna Darrow staged an all out effort to censor our selection. The show included highly confrontational works by Jenny Holzer and Jean Michel Basquiat - works which address issues of class and race. However, the direct target of the censor was the work of Vermont ('local') artist Ed Pepe whose work deals very effectively with issues of censorship specifically around gay representations of the male body.

Moes's editorial is symptomatic of the ways reactionary discourses on homosexuality, art, class, race, pornography, etc., are internalized and, in monstrous forms, replicated. In a way that is even more spectacular than the Supreme Court's recent ruling the editorial demonstrates how through insistence and repetition the Right has inserted significant stretches of its message into the messages of those it targets.

Peter Gallo  
Hyde Park