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PSYCHE

# Lavender Jane Still Loves Women: An Interview With Alix Dobkin

BY ESTHER ROTHBLUM

**W**hat's the first thing that comes to mind when we think about women's music? Many lesbians will recall Alix Dobkin's 1973 album *Lavender Jane Loves Women*.

How did Dobkin first become a lesbian musician as opposed to a musician who was a lesbian? She had been a professional folksinger for many years, and she recalled, "I was writing about my own life, so music was part of my consciousness raising. I was at the right place, at the right time, with the right background, doing the right thing."

She produced several albums of women's music during the 1970s and 1980s, as well as a compilation disc in 1992 and a book in 1978. Her first two LPs were re-released on CD in 1998.

I asked Dobkin what other music was around for lesbians when she first began performing. The answer: not much. Robin Tyler had produced Maxine Feldman in 1972, creating a 45-RPM record with two songs on it. There was the Chicago Women's Liberation Rock Band and the New Haven Women's Liberation Rock Band Double Album. And in New York, Lesbian Feminist Liberation conducted a talent show and recorded it, resulting in a record called *A Few Loving Women*.

But Dobkin's *Lavender Jane Loves Women* was the first album of women's music that was distributed internationally.

"Those days were tremendously exciting," Alix said. "First of all, I was writing about myself as a lesbian. I was writing the kinds of songs in which you could not change a pronoun and

have it still make sense. In other words, you could not change my music into heterosexual songs. They were clearly and openly songs about women loving women. I realized that as long as

*Festivals*, (Alyson Press, 1999) as an excellent overview of this oft-forgotten topic so close to her heart.

"Women's music is about raising consciousness, and most peo-

*"You could not change my music into heterosexual songs. They were clearly and openly songs about women loving women."*

I was writing songs like that, I was writing unique material. No one had ever written that before, and even the women depending on lesbian audiences almost never write about lesbians - in fact, they rarely mention women!"

Even today, Dobkin feels that there is a great need for lesbians to be writing about their lives. She has sensed at times that women's music has received a bad rap, when in fact it is precisely because of the foremothers in women's music that performers like the Indigo Girls have been successful.

"There is this belief that women's music is confined to folk music, which it never was," said Dobkin. "The negative reaction coming from many young lesbians is due largely to the backlash against feminism. Our communities very much reflect what is going on in the world generally and feminism has been dismissed, even by women in our own communities."

Dobkin recommends Bonnie Morris' book *Eden Built By Eyes: The Culture Of Women's Music*

ple don't even know what that is any more," she said. "Furthermore, due to budget cuts in education, we've also lost a generation that was schooled to appreciate music"

Nevertheless, she is excited by the fact that many of her performances these days are at universities, so that she does have an impact on young women.

After a lifetime in New York, Dobkin is now living in California and still performing around the country. She is involved with a club that features concerts by women and holds and furthers our culture (its director, Barbara Price, is a former co-producer of the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival). Dobkin is also writing a column for *Chicago Outlines* and working on a book of her memoirs. ▼

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DISCOGRAPHY

- Lavender Jane Loves Women (1973)
- Living with Lesbians (1976)
- XXALIX (1980)
- These Women (1986)
- Yahoo Australia (1990)
- Love and Politics (compilation, 1992)
- Living with Lavender Jane (CD re-release of first two albums, 1998)

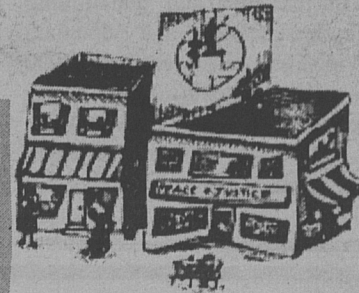
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- Alix Dobkin's Adventures In Women's Music (Not Just A Songbook) (1978)

WEB

[www.ladyslipper.org/vendors/ladyslipper/alix\\_dobkin.html](http://www.ladyslipper.org/vendors/ladyslipper/alix_dobkin.html)

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- MCTV (Middlebury, E. Middlebury, Weybridge) 388-3062 for airtimes
- MMCTV (CH. 3) (Richmond, Jericho, Underhill) call 434-2550 for air days/time
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