



lesbian, lesbian, any woman can be a lesbian

'Lavender Jane Loves Women' is a record by Lavender Jane, a band made up of Alix Dobkin, Kay Gardner, and a woman whose name is so good that it sounds made up: Patches Attom. I think that record is the first ever recorded by a group of out lesbians. I have a copy of the version released in 1975, although it has since been reissued.

Strictly speaking, it's Simon's copy. He found it in a charity shop in London a few years ago, it was in mint condition. He reckons some local lesbian had it in her collection out of loyalty to the Dyke Nation, but that finally she couldn't take it any more and had to get rid of the thing. As for me, I wonder whether or not it was part of the spoils from a particularly bad break-up between two old school lezzers. We will never know.

This record exemplifies lesbian kitsch to me. I'm obsessed with it, or, more specifically, the penultimate track: 'View from Gay Head.'

The song is a mixture of fluttery flutes, acoustic strings, women's voices singing as sweetly and non-patriarchally as they can. It contains a line that refers to there being "no penis between us," and "living in a woman's land." It also has a great Sesame Street-style singalong chorus boasting the classic refrain: "lesbian, lesbian, any woman can be a lesbian."

The sleeve notes say: "The chorus came to me while Liza, Adrian and I were driving to Gay Head in Martha's Vineyard in the summer of '73. After we arrived I wrote the verses and very carefully lifted the tune from the Balkan song 'Savo Vodo' which I had recently learned at my Balkan singing class."

By the way, additional vocals are provided by a bunch of gals called the Great Matriarchal Reunion and they over-pronounce the word "lesbian" making it sound like "lesbi-hehn," which always amuses me.

I like this song because it's painfully dated. It's a part of queer prehistory, like a big old lesbian dinosaur. It's hokey and corny, charming, whimsical, cute, sweet and naive. The original version of Barbara Hammer's film 'Dyketactics' (1974) uses 'View from Gay Head' as a soundtrack. It's a perfect mix - naked white hippie lesbians frolicking together in a sunny meadow, whilst the child-women sing their "any woman can be a lesbian" line. It's just... twee, which is why I find it hard to reconcile the song and its sentiments with the hardcore, mean-faced politics that came out of their scene.

To me separatism was like the lesbian dark ages. During those times "admitting" that you fancied men (sell out!), liked looking at porn (rapist!), enjoyed penetrative sex (victim of the patriarchy!) or even SM (nazi!) could rid you of all your friends and allies in the movement and destroy your credibility as a human being. Lesbian separatist community meetings had a lot in common with the Salem witch trial albeit with added circle dancing and voluminous ethnic trousers.

In the 1980s I had a hard time under these rules, which explains why I still feel fabulously naughty whenever I listen to this record. My boyfriend and I sing it to each other, and fall about laughing (stealing lesbian energy and giving it to men! Mocking the patriarchy! Being unfeminist!). It's such a ridiculous song and it's insane that it could have become an anthem for a generation, which makes laughing at it all the more delightful. I think this is the real reason why I love listening to this song so much, it's like spitting in the eye of your enemy.

Any woman can be a lesbian
Any woman must be a lesbian
Any woman should be a lesbian

And one last thing: I don't think any woman can be a lesbian, some are just born to be straight. That's what I think.



View From Gay Head

I heard Cheryl and Mary say
There are two kinds of people in the world today
One or the other a person must be
The men are them, the women are we
They agree it's a pleasure to be a lesbian

Lesbian, living in no-man's land
Lesbian, lesbian, any woman can be a lesbian

And Liza wishes the library
Had men and women placed separately
Ah, but their's is the kingdom
She knows who she'll find
In the history of mankind
But then she's inclined to be ahead of her time and she's a lesbian

And Carol's tired of being nice
With a sweet face, a pretty smile, submissive device
To pacify the people who they won't defend
A woman who's indifferent to men oh
She's my friend and she's a lesbian and

A woman's anger Louise explains
A million second places in the master's game
It's as real as a mountain, it's strong as the sea, besides
An angry woman is a beauty, she's
Chosen to be a dyke like me and she's a lesbian

So the sexes do battle they batter about
The men are the sexists I will never doubt
I'll return to the bosom where my journey ends
Where there's no penis between us friends
Oh no will I see you again when you're a lesbian?

Lesbian, living in no-man's land
Lesbian, lesbian, any woman can be a lesbian
Any woman can be a lesbian
Every woman can be a lesbian

10 Important Facts

1. This zine was made for a performance by The 1-2-3s at Homocrime
2. The 1-2-3s performed the song 'View From Gay Head' at Needles, 5 Clipstone Street, London, UK on Saturday 28 August 2004
3. A recording of the song is available from <http://www.homocrime.org>
4. Kay Hyatt has some 'any woman can be a lesbian' badges. Email puppigrrl@hotmail.com if you would like one
5. You can listen to the whole of the original Lavender Jane Loves Women LP (that they've mysteriously renamed ..Loves Pussy) and which contains the real version of 'View From Gay Head' at the Vinyl Preservation Project: http://www.engine-studios.com/vpp/Folk/Pages/LavenderJane_BerkeleyWomyn.html
6. Find out more about Simon's guitars and musical projects at <http://cheapguitars.cjb.net>
7. This zine was written by Charlotte Cooper. You read more of her writing at <http://www.CharlotteCooper.net>
8. You can contact The 1-2-3s via beefergrrl@hotmail.com
9. Irene Revell and Daniel Cuzner are wonderful people
10. Any woman can be a lesbian

The 1-2-3s

The 1-2-3s are a pretend band consisting of me, my girlfriend Kay Hyatt and my boyfriend Simon Murphy.

A couple of Xmasses ago, Simon showed Kay and I how to make a chord each and we fought the seasonal boredom by playing his guitars together in the front room, making an unholy racket. It was the first time that Kay and I had ever played electric guitars.

It was then that we decided to call ourselves The 1-2-3s, because there are three of us. The three of us are not a couple, or a ménage à trois, or a polyamorous grouping. We are just a funny little queer family and The 1-2-3s somehow reflects that.

So look, we are a pretend band because although Simon and I have been in proper bands before, pretending is a lot less hassle.

And there are more reasons: neither Kay nor I can play our instruments, and we have no intention of practising or learning our musical craft in order to become proper musicians. Kay plays the apple bass because she likes the shape of it, because she looks cute and funny with it perched on the end of her tummy. (I play our friend Iain's old guitar, that was given to him by a vegan punk rocker, and which has 'Liberate Laboratory Animals' stickers on the back. Simon plays his Amazon guitar, because the name seemed somehow appropriate.)

Simon - who knows how to play - showed us the easiest way of making a note or a chord, he removed all the strings on the guitar that I didn't need and tuned the remainder to the same note so that I can play by sliding two fingers up and down the neck. Kay plays all her notes on one string. We taped pieces of tape saying A, D and E onto the instruments, so that we'd know where to put our fingers. We're happy with that.

Singing along to 'View From Gay Head' in the car and playing the song to our friends gave us the idea that this is a song we'd play if we were in a band. So that's our song. We are a pretend band because we don't have a repertoire of lots of songs, we don't write songs, we have no plans to do that. We play one song, someone else's song, a song we really like. We will probably only perform it once to an audience.

We asked our friends at Homocrime if we could come and play our song, and they said yes. So we've spent the last few weeks practising the song in our basement, getting it ready for our performance, probably annoying the neighbours. When Big Brother was on we'd practise for an hour and then come and watch the latest episode together. The dog sits on a rug at our feet as we sing and play together. These have been very happy times.

Lavender Jane is irresistible!

Long live Dyke Nation!

Power to the women!