

# the world coming to?

San Francisco's favorite drag queen rips through your closet of millennial anxieties.

By Joan Jett Blakk

I AM in a unique place in San Francisco's queer community. Being a drag queen about town, and being at the same time employed at a bookstore-information center, puts me smack-dab in the middle of a lot of happenings. As Joan Jett Blakk, I get to speak at or MC a wide array of events, and working at A Different Light Bookstore allows me to observe the worldwide queer pulse. And, by the way, I detest the word *black* and I abhor the term *African American*.

Now, having said all that to introduce myself, there are a few things that I must wonder aloud about, and trust me, I see enough of these things in one day to baffle even the most seasoned people watcher.

Has anyone noticed that quite a few Caucasian gay boys behave more like colored teenage girls? The finger-snapping, the head-rolling, the quick, sassy retort, the love of loud colors that don't match. I swear, there is something going on. I, however, don't think it's all bad. First of all, it makes sense to me that these poor fellows—growing up in Iowa or whatever, having no culture to speak of—are drawn to the powerful language (body and verbal) that Negro women have always possessed. Their strength and humor, always very evident, very attractive, have lent themselves to a curious blending. I really believe that it shows how much (a) black culture has influenced American life; and (b) that the very idea of "culture" is a fluid, ever-changing thing.

Another example of this is the short hair-and-goatee hip-hop look being sported by 85 percent of gay boys nowadays. Aside from its being yet one more clone look, I wonder if these boys know how much they look like Negroes from the 1950s? I used to say, "Look, honey, if you don't have any Miles Davis records, you need to shave that fucking thing off." I've since relaxed a bit. How-

ever, even though we are awash in pretty boys (and girls) here in San Francisco, let's try for a little more individuality, shall we?

OK. Now we're going to discuss the obscene amount of misogyny in the gay male community. Boys, just because you walk like a girl does not mean that you are in touch with your feminine side. The next time I hear some fag refer to women as "fish," he's gonna be getting up off the floor. Get a grip, boys. Women are not the enemy. They rule, in fact. You're lucky I wasn't elected president last year, because I'd like to see a law stating that only *women* be allowed to carry guns, OK?

Please understand that I did *not* become a queer activist way back in 1975 so that I could join the military or get married for Goddess's sakes. Hello, one of the beauties of being queer in the first place was we *couldn't* get married! We long ago figured out how to honor our relationships without the trappings of religion or government. Yes, I've heard all the arguments as to why the gay-marriage issue is the most important issue of our generation. (And just how do you future *that*, Mr. Sullivan?) What nobody says is that marriage, as an institution, was created to control women, a tool by which a woman becomes a man's *property*, in a sense. Do queers really need to imitate that? I think not. We have the ability to make the world a better place, but it ain't gonna happen unless we realize that we are different from hets, not the same.

Recently I have also been trying hard to come to grips with my heterophobia. I'm happy to report that my straight-bashing days are behind me, but it has been a long, hard road. When you have friends who have been killed in hate crimes, it leaves a rather sour taste in your mouth that can only be exorcised with a bat. Or so I thought. Now I can definitely see that even some straight folks can be



Pearls of wisdom: Joan Jett Blakk (left) with pal Diggety.

PHOTO BY ARLON

"queer." It's more of a political stance and not just defined by who you share your genitals with.

Today, as another celebration of pride is upon us, there are a few questions burning in me that I must ask. Why, when gay boys do drag, must they look like bad *Showgirls*-type caricatures of women? Why are people who normally don't drink that much encouraged to get shit-faced during the day on a Sunday afternoon to the extent that they end up not remembering where they parked, where their friends are, or why they came to San Francisco in the first place? Why doesn't everybody pitch in and help clean up our beautiful city after the pride festivities? I really hate waking up on Monday to find I'm knee-deep in rainbow trash. Why hasn't someone invented rainbow toilet paper, so you can "Wipe your ass with Pride™"? Why are women on Harleys while men ride those plastic crotch rockets? Who decided that gay pride should occur only on one day of the year? Why can't everybody march in the parade?

I realize that I must come across as the most jaded, bitter queen ever, but it's just not so. It's apparent to me that, as a movement, we need a huge resurgence of energy and direction and that it's right there for us to use—we only have to recognize it. We have here the most unique situation of any metropolis in the entire world. Here one can be absolutely, without question, whoever one thinks one is. I am constantly warmed by the hum of creativity brought about by the freeing atmosphere of our sanctuary by the sea. I love that most of us are from somewhere else and we all come together here to rejuvenate and reinvent. That, my dears, is *my* source of "pride," if you will, but I would rather believe that it is as much a part of our daily lives as the air we breathe. ■

Joan Jett Blakk appears as part of the "Tangent" series Thurs/3, 8 p.m., Cafe du Nord, 2170 Market, S.F. \$3-\$5. (415) 861-5016.

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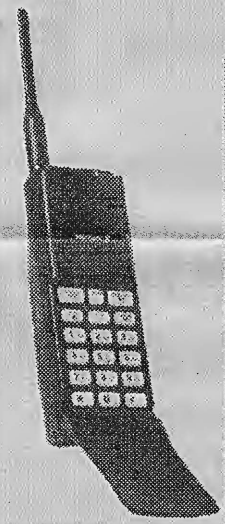
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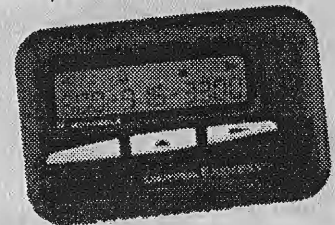
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# What is the world coming to?

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