

Controversy in perspective

To the Editors:

Re: *A Gay Men's Guide to Erotic Safer Sex*, Feb. 28, 1991 issue of the *Gazette*

I feel compelled to write about the publication of this article in the *Gazette* for a number of reasons. As well as being employed on the Dalhousie campus, I am a constituent of other communities affected by this article and by the controversy it has generated: as an artist and writer; as a heterosexual and feminist; as a parent.

First, as a visual artist, and as a writer who uses print medias as a venue to create dialogue about issues of censorship, I cannot stress enough how appropriate the actions of the *Gazette* staff were in printing the text of *A Gay Men's Guide to Erotic Safer Sex* and in using the accompanying photo.

sexuality

I understand well the maxim "a picture paints a thousand words". My profession has been plagued by the right-handed tactics of censors. Several notable - and unfortunately not exclusive - examples of this are the Ontario Censor Board's chronically stifling policies on the presentation of video tape and film works and, thankfully, the defeat in recent years of the Federal Government's proposed Bill C-21. This tabled broad and repressive changes to how and what the Canadian public could be exposed to

via visual medias and the written word. Had it passed, the *Gazette* would undoubtedly be facing legal action. Certainly most people will be familiar with the recent Mapplethorpe obscenity trial in the U.S., and the vindication of the host gallery and its curator.

As an artist I feel emphatically that neither the text of *A Gay Men's Guide to Erotic Safer Sex* nor the accompanying illustration, however graphic, is in any way pornographic. It does, however, have something in common with porn. Both insist that humans - in this case gay men - are sexual beings. Both have made sex an experience open to public examination and, now, to debate. Censorship means that Big Brother is watching. Fear it.

As a heterosexual and a feminist I am patently aware that one of the greatest dangers we face when trying to understand pornography is confusing explicit sex with sexism. Women know that it is possible to create images of sexual experience that do not perpetuate the current imbalance of power between men and women. Its time to extend that understanding to another marginalized community.

The reality that my child, now in elementary school, could be sexually active before the grim '90's give way to the year 2000 is one that I share with other parents. When I was an adolescent, parental concerns were centered on the fear that their sexually active chil-



dren would themselves have children before they had gotten out of high school, and that they would contract herpes. My own very real fear is that my son will have sex and die.

I don't believe I can teach him that sex is taboo any more than I can teach him that sex with another man, should he choose it, is wrong. He knows that sex is right when two people share loving feelings. He knows that its about hugging

and kissing and more. He knows that condoms are worn for birth control and to protect him from AIDS, and that their presence is a part of lovemaking.

When I talk to my son about AIDS I use language appropriate to his age. Patrick Barnholden and Padraic Brake, the authors of the contentious article, have used to argot of the gay community. I applaud its appropriateness.

Anna-Marie Larsen

To the Editors,

Things are getting ridiculous. For about four years now I've been reading the *Gazette*, believing it to be a publication which represented the diverse Dalhousie community with honesty, respect and integrity. Occasionally articles and letters are printed which I object to, but I also realize I'm not the only student here and that others may view things differently, freedom of speech right?

What's my point? My point is I think it is time the *Gazette* stood back and took a good look at its readership. I say this because the February 28th issue deeply disturbed a lot of readers. The *Gazette* is at risk of becoming a joke, a paper to be read for the latest sensational article, not to educate and inform.

If you want to print explicit text, go right ahead that's your right, but don't try to pass it off as education, that's offensive.

Quenton Currie



Jezebel promotes women

by Lara Morris

Ever wondered where the women entertainers are? Jezebel Productions has set out to find them.

Jezebel Productions is a not-for-profit, all-woman group dedicated to the production of women's music and performance.

Formed in late August last year, this group has had three events, with more in the works.

"We started doing this because we were bored with the lack of women's entertainment promoted in Halifax", said Erin Goodman, a member of Jezebel Productions.

Having spent the previous summer in Toronto, Goodman is aware that there are lots of women entertainers available, they just aren't coming to Halifax. "It dawned on me that if I wanted to see women's entertainment I'd have to do the organizing", she said.

Goodman points out that you can go out any night of the week and see male performers, but only once in a blue moon will you ever see a

woman. Jezebel Productions has formed to change that.

Lorene Dobbie, Connie Clarke, and Yvonne Hanson are working with Goodman to promote local and out of town talent.

They are focusing on alternative entertainment featuring women. This includes dance, drama, performance art and comedy. "We want to do a real variety of things. At the moment we have a list of people we'd like to bring in..." said Goodman.

The second event brought Montreal singer songwriter Lucie Blue Tremblay to Halifax and also featured the local trio of Rose Vaughn, Cathy Porter and Pam Mason.

As well as bringing in people 'from away', the group is trying to tap a local talent base. The success of their Valentine's Day coffee house proves this idea has potential. "We had a real line up of women, some of whom had never performed on stage before", said Goodman.

The help of volunteers and the availability of affordable venues add to the group's success.

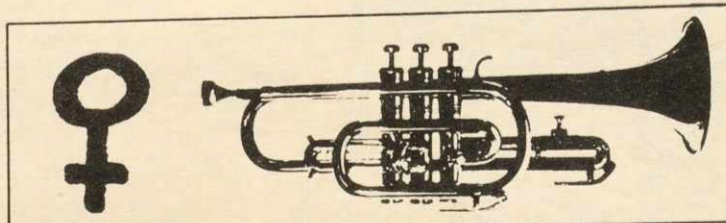
Goodman says the group gets a lot of help from professional music promoters and women who are "organizational geniuses" in the community. People with technical skills have also volunteered their time for the shows.

The Church and the Casino theatre are the facilities used by the group. Goodman feels they are the only affordable places in town and

is hopeful they will continue to rent space to groups such as Jezebel Productions.

The women of Jezebel Productions are also working or going to school and work hard in their spare time to offer the community entertainment they would otherwise rarely or never see. The sentiments of the group are summed up by Goodman when she says, "It's fun, but it takes a lot of work."

Don't miss the next show!



The events produced so far have met with great success. Initially the group held a benefit (last October) to raise money for future shows. The benefit featured local performers including Rose Vaughn, Cathy Porter, Laura Smith and her partner David Hillyer, Brenda Barnes and Joan White.

Goodman is pleased with the positive response the shows have received from the community. "The women's community has been very enthusiastic and performers have been very enthusiastic too. We're finding a lot of support, as we knew we would."

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