



The
Interview
ISSUE:

part 1 of 2

issue 3
Summer
2005

BIRL
MINE



Editor's Note!

One of the reasons that I love the birles community is because it's so supportive. It's not just about feeling lonely for us who push the gender boundaries, but about sometimes being alone when we have to do it and coming back to a place where we can relate what we've done. It's frightening to hear stories about genderqueers not supporting FTMs or lesbians not supporting bisexuals or on and on and back and forth. When I visit the birles community, though, I tend to see a much more compassionate and encouraging group of people from different sexuality and gender groups and different walks of life. This and the next issues' goal is to show our diversity and how it works within our unity.

Thanks to all you contributors and readers who are inspiring me and allowing me this opportunity to compile your beautiful art, writing, and important information!

Thanks to all the beautiful, gorgeous, handsome, talented, intelligent, brave, interesting, unique, label-busting, amazing birles out there. Y'all are incredibly inspiring. And I mean all of you. Much appreciation to all birl-lovers, too! You're welcome in this birl's house any time.

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BirlZine! is a nonprofit compilation zine of personal writing, essays, poetry, photography, art, news, and resources for and by boyish girls (birles) who enjoy riding the gender wave and don't let their gender dictate how to look or act. A birl can be a straight tomboy, an FTM, or anyone in between. This is a safe space for birles to share our work and find relevant news and resources. Find out more info. at www.birlzine.com. Please share this issue with your friends and submit your own work!

BirlZine!

Issue 3

Summer 2005

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All contents are the properties of their respective contributors.

"Guessing Game"

by Kayden

Confusion and guessing started right away.
Fisted and red-faced, I was ready to take this task.
The guessing started.
With just my head out, I could have been anything.
"Boy, girl, twins or triplets. Boygirl, twins or triplets."

But they needed to categorize, classify, and check one box on the birth certificate.
Full body out, they still couldn't see my true spirit.
I squirmed and screamed against the doctor's eyes while he played the guessing game.
"It's a girl!"
(Well no shit ya' dumbass, I was just born and I could've told ya' that.)
Everyone was so pleased ...
I think I just screamed.

That was the first time anyone played "guess my gender."
I had already had enough.

When I was only 5,
two girls stopped me from going to the bathroom.
I felt like a black in the South.
Apparently, I didn't look feminine enough.
Sympathize with the two girls at the YMCA
who called me "It" and blocked the doorway,
told me I had to "prove it,"
show them that I had a vagina before I could go in.
I just wanted to pee.

Don't feel sorry for me.
Empathize for the two truly "Gender-Confused" girls.
I don't know where they are today.
They might still be closed-minded.
I do know "It" made it O.K.
A pit formed in my stomach while I was peeing in the woods.
"I wish I could stand up and pee ..."
"Could I go into the boy's room? Would Mommy get mad?"

The guessing game continued for the "gender-confused."
Whispering never ended for me.

I didn't detest grade school until my family moved.
My first school day at St. Sebastian,
The game was played down, but I could read it in their eyes.
Lining up, in those boy-girl lines;
I wanted to stand in the middle, but I was two states from home and alone.
It wasn't until a brave kid said,
"You're in the wrong line."
I was in the girl's line.

But I feel sorry for the truly gender "confused,"
the ones who play "guess my gender"
as I walk down the halls.
The people who think I have balls.
(I have a strap-on, but I don't want to explain that to you, nice stranger on the street.)
I play with the idea,
in which they must think that my breasts are really large man boobs.
Even if they are strapped down with my sports bra or bound.

In all seriousness,
feel bad for the Newt Larson followers who whisper,
"Is it a boy or a girl?" as I pass.
I haven't heard those whispers since second grade.

And if I think about it long enough,
I must really mess with people's psyches, and that is not very polite.
People must get whiplash as I walk into the Womyn's room
so that they can play the "guessing game,"
scared that they just pissed in the Men's room.

I tally how many heads turned today.
It must be at least 20 people today.
Two more and I beat last week's score.
"Yes!"
It is cheap entertainment for me,
counting the number of "gender-confused" people
I pass on the street.

And as I put them into numbers and statistics.
I urge you to feel sorry for them,
because now they are fisted and red-faced,
dizzy with headaches from trying to categorize me
as I walk smiling down the street.

Art and Poems by Ythan

"Duality"

Duality screams inside of her.
The masculine and the feminine,
the disordered and the typical
run through her veins
simultaneously creating desire and disdain.
She thinks she hardly knows
the woman in the mirror
yet she inhabits the body.
Modified and understood
on so many levels
yet not consciously recognised as beauty,
as life precious as it is in any form.
Who will bear witness to her pain,
who but the ambiguous female
reflected each time she passes
for who they think she should be.
The soul embraces duality in joy and sorrow
but the knowing of her soul
has become clouded
by manufactured deities.

"She"

You had deftly
equipped yourself
and mastered the split.
All the while
I had failed
to notice
that you
had stepped onto
the continuum.

Conviviality
having taken me over
expertly glossed in
with that articulate smile.

Cemented
by this constructed effigy
I held over
I mistook consistency
for meaning.

Then she
walked out the door
and I was left
in a place
beyond meaning
where significance echoed
as if it was
its own enemy
where she
could be taken for I
or I she.



"Amie du Baise"
by Annie Aarons

*Girl, you inflict me with madness
Of sight, smell, sound, taste, and above all,
Touch*

It wasn't planned, I don't think. The last thing either of us was expecting to find was one another, especially in a situation as random as that night. And to think, I probably would have just gone to bed early that night if it hadn't been for two hall miscreants.

"Hey, Annie, would you be interested in say, 'shopping' for us? We'll supply the car." Barbara and Wyatt, resident hall hippies, they used to find drink through other channels, but those rather dried up, much like their supply of alcohol. So that left them with me.

All five foot, four inches, bright blue hair and the looks of a teenage boy me. Who says I can't pass for twenty two?

Don't laugh, it's impolite.

So I went on a run, jammed into the car with Ray, Maggie, Barbara and Wyatt, all in Kim's painfully red station wagon. We pull into the parking lot of Safeway, and lo and behold, this was the week of the crackdown.

After swallowing rather loudly and staring at the cop car, "Um ... hey, could we *not* attempt to buy illegal alcohol with a cop car waiting outside, that just seems a bit, oh, high-risk to me, what do you think?"

So we pass by the closer Long's Drugs, another car, finally we hit the Long's on Front street, out front is a Rent-A-Cop, I can deal with Rent-A-Cops, they don't have cars they can force me into.

I go in, wondering exactly how much booze constitutes as enough for a weekend. I myself had been rather clean and sober since my fungal-induced trip to revelations the week before. Apparently six bottles of wine and an entire handle of our good friend the Captain was enough.

"Good Gods! Do you have enough money for all this?" as I try to lift the basket and almost drop it.

"I think so, the Captain was only twenty-three." She hands me two twenties.

"If it goes over, I've got six bucks in my pocket, but that's all the money I've got in the world because I'm sure as hell not attempting to use *my* debit card when I'm trying to be someone else.

"No, no, it'll be fine," as we step in line and wait for the cashier.

As luck would have it, I happened to find the friendliest checkout girl in the entire store, and of course, she had to talk to me.

I hand over the driver's license and passport. "What's the passport for, honey?" after she examines the license and finds nothing wrong with it.

"Oh, the license is expired. I just live in Santa Cruz for most of the year and don't have a car, so what's the use in getting it renewed?" I had to stop using the "I lost my wallet" scheme because you can only not have a wallet for so many months before cashiers start to become wary of the very young-looking, blue-haired girl who only pays in cash.

"Well, why the passport?" I probably could have handed her the license and gotten out without talking.

“Because it’s still current.”

“Well, this pictures doesn’t look like you, hon. You’re so angry in it.”

I smile. This one’s easy to explain because it was taken of my older sibling at eight in the morning at the DMV *after* I’d realized that I’d forgotten my birth certificate and we had to go back home to get it and lost our parking spot, so of course my sister was feeling intense hatred for the DMV and the universe in general.

“That’s because it was taken at eight in the morning at the DMV. You would’ve been angry too. Look at the other picture, it’s much more accurate.” Probably because it was taken of my sister at a much younger age ...

“That still doesn’t explain your passport, where are you from?”

I stare at her perplexedly, I did hand her an *American* passport and a *California* driver’s license, did I not?

“I’m from California, Orange County actually. I just go to college up here.”

“Oh, well, we just get all kinds of kids here every day losing their passports left and right. Makes it right difficult to return it to them when they don’t come back for it.”

Now I’m just feigning interest because she’s taking forever to bag the bottles of wine. This is why I prefer hard liquor instead of a few bottles for one or two; you have one bottle, and it souses many.

Eventually she finishes bagging all of my bottles and then comments upon the severe volume I’m buying.

“Now don’t you go drinking all of this and then driving somewhere.”

“Oh, don’t worry. I don’t have a car, remember?” At no other time in my life am I capable of lying, but the second that ID leaves my hand, I become the world’s most terrible pathological liar. Or perhaps I simply put on my performance persona. I never thought I was any good at acting, though. Guess I was wrong. I leave the store with the bags in my hands and give a passing nod to the Rent-A-Cop on the way out, then knock on the back window of the car. The trunk pops open.

“Oh my God! I thought they caught you, you were in there for, like, EVER!” Armani glasses gaze over the head rest of the passenger side.

“Yeah, Ray was getting rather worried for you. I knew you’d be okay though.” Maggie, perpetually level-headed in the face of very strange adversity.

“No! She was sooo great! It was fun to watch, she’s so much better than Maya, and the cashier was giving her shit and everything too, and she just went with it!” Barbara’s so excited with her haul that she’s practically jumping up and down.

I didn’t think I was *that* impressive though. I just did what had to be done.

We’re back at the dorms. Barbara and Wyatt thank me graciously many times before disappearing with their haul, not to be seen until at least noon of the next day. I turn to Kim’s room, Maggie at my side, and push open the door.

“Oh, hi Annie! We were *just* talking about how hot you were!” It’s Jenna, Kim’s friend from Pasadena and an acquaintance, for good or ill, of Maggie, and some girl I don’t recall ever seeing before, but subtly sporting most of the earmarks of a fellow sister in sapphistry.

“Oh ... okay, um, hi, Jenna and ... whoever you are, and thank you.” I’ve heard many things upon walking into various rooms, but “we were just talking about how hot you were” was certainly a first. I didn’t even know I was being coveted. *That* was certainly a new feeling, and rather pleasant as well.

“Oh, Annie, this is Jenn, you know Jenna already.” Kim rouses herself from a bit of a staring stupor. There’s a movie playing on her television. The sharp bite of ethanol stings the air, and I can see the handle of Captain poking out from behind the mini-fridge. Ironic that the intoxicant of the night on campus is exactly the same as the one I just risked arrest for buying in town.

“Hi Jenn,” I shake her hand, firm grip, the formal greeting of butch lesbians everywhere.

“You two should sleep together.” Jenna being blunt as a fence post because all of them are drunk. Maggie sits down on the bed. I cast wolfish eyes over Jenn, the ones you’d smack a man for putting upon you. Yeah, she’s cute, but my track record with on-campus lesbians is terrible, and she’s been drinking. Anything that gets past kissing is generally dangerous in the lesbian realm. I tried it once; I’m sure the other party wasn’t too appreciative of my clumsiness, swore to myself never again. I turn to Jenn and size her up for a different purpose.

“How many shots have you had?” Thinking that it’s only 10:30, and the night is indeed rather young. She thinks for a moment.

“Four.” *Good enough.*

“Hmm, alright, let me go put all my accessories for evil away and I’ll come back and hang with you guys.” I go back to my room to return the passport and the ID to my desk drawer. Detour to the bathroom where I scrub the grit of daytime off of my teeth and check myself out in the mirror. Stare at the KIWIN’S “Service with a Smile” logo gracing my chest. *Shit, this shirt is so not attractive. But it’ll have to do.* Laundry had been rather lax lately, leaving me with very few choices at that point. I rinse and toy with the idea of aftershave, decide it’s too much butch at that point, and go back into the room.

I roll my eyes. Maggie’s on the bed, Jenn’s shirt is pulled up to her ribcage.

“So, are you ticklish?” I recall *that* line. It totally disarmed me once and left me wide open for seduction.

“I-um ... well waitasec-,” which translates to, “Oh please don’t, I’d laugh so hard I’d fall off the bed and hurt myself.” So she leans over and kisses her stomach as I flop onto the bed and shoot Maggie a look that growls *Mine*. She gives me a tiny nod, but proceeds to leave a hickey anyway. Wench.

Maggie hadn’t been doing too badly. As of late her sexual scorecard was far better than mine, particularly after her find of a fabulous alumni top to fulfill the majority of her deepest, darkest, masochistic desires.

I’d been sleeping with underage virgin imports again and made the mistake of trying to forge a relationship with one, but that mistake didn’t pan out until later. Never buy girls birthday presents over \$20 and include notes that were written while you were feeling lonely and sexually frustrated. It just doesn’t bode well. At any rate, a full-fledged lesbian looked far too appealing to pass up. I move closer, our hands “accidentally” brush. I love seduction. I’m getting better at it as time goes by. She looks up at me. I grin and then focus on her in all seriousness.

“You know, I would have slept with you sober, too.”

“But you’re sober and I’m not, it’s not fair.” She looks at me with a bit of pleading, every one of us is a stone butch with a marshmallow center of insecurity.

I sigh and get up, pour myself a shot and a half out of the handle, down it, and then hunt for a chaser. *Glad I’m a lightweight.*

“Hey Maggie, I’m stealing your soda,” and wash down liver-killing intoxicants with all-natural vanilla. Then I return to the bed and realize she’s moved into a different spot, lying stretched out full length on the bed. This begs for assault--

of the cuddling variety.

I sidle up next to her, feeling the rum work its way through, insulating everything with warmth and fuzziness. Gods, it seemed as though I hadn’t lain next to a girl in an eternity, the act just feels ... right. In a way that few things compare to. Yeah, tell me my sexuality’s a choice, no other situation in the world feels as good as being pillowed on a girl you’re attracted to.

Touch is a bit strange at first, we’re still unknowns to one another, wondering what boundaries can and can’t be crossed.

I’ll move my arm here.
You move yours here.
Is your shoulder asleep?
Can you see?
Is this okay?

We come to an agreement and lie still for endless minutes and feign interest in the movie, all the while girding ourselves, bringing up courage, silencing the ever-crowding hordes of What If?

I exhale, and it caresses the skin of her neck, a final sigh before launching myself into action. But instead of breathing in air I’m met with soft lips, and a kiss, tentative, then demanding. Warm skin, hot breath, and scalding lust, these are the only things left in my reality. Until touch enters, subtle but precise, sending nerves tingling down my back, behind an ear, upon a breast, everywhere and nowhere.

I gasp and tighten my arms around her, knowing she feels my touch as I feel hers. Following the lines of her back with my fingertips, mapping the dips and hollows of her throat with lips and teeth and tongue, losing all sense of my existence as she nips my ear.

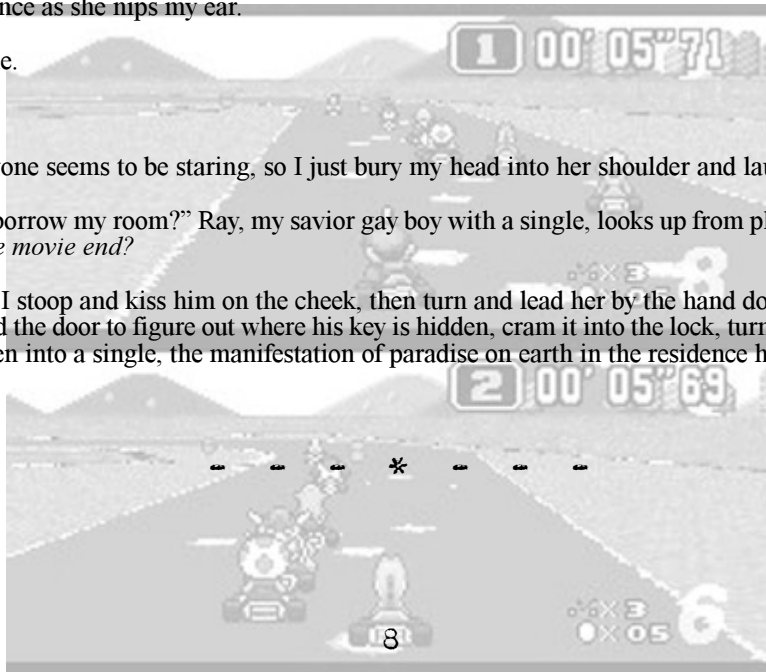
Until I hear a giggle.

Oh shit.

We turn and everyone seems to be staring, so I just bury my head into her shoulder and laugh.

“Did you want to borrow my room?” Ray, my savior gay boy with a single, looks up from playing Super Mario Kart. *When did the movie end?*

“Ray, I love you.” I stoop and kiss him on the cheek, then turn and lead her by the hand down the hall to his room. I feel around the door to figure out where his key is hidden, cram it into the lock, turn the handle, and shove the door open into a single, the manifestation of paradise on earth in the residence halls.



God help me. What does one do when the real you is censored? When the real you is not "socially acceptable"? I hate hiding what I am. I will continue to chisel my way out of this barrier of black and white happily everafter stone. It's shocking, and amazing as I watch the real me emerge from the rubble of my past. Rules need to change. They always have, but the ones we have now are getting old. I hope that one day, stereotypes will die. *What are you? Who are you?* They ask with such an heir of sickening cockiness. When can I be free? When will I be allowed to live my life to the fullest, outside of these social compounds of torture. Stares. Whispering. That's what I get in public. Any signs of affection to my girl are illegal. This disgusts me. Can't I live? I'm tired of being under society's microscope of normality. Picking at my brain, judging my flesh. Why isn't that illegal? I'm frustrated. I'm reacting to venomous criticism. People, can't you see that all I'm trying to be is just ME?

by darkfemme9

The Interviews: Part 1 of 2

This issue and the next issue of BirlZine will each have five interviews to give readers a sample of how many different kinds of birles there are. "Birles" is a new word in gender-related vocabulary, but it deserves attention. It's inclusive, the way it encompasses so many gender-fluid individuals instead of pigeonholes them into micro-labels like FTM or butch dyke, who can both be birles. There are so many different kinds of birles. You can see that, looking at how many types of people adopt the birl label.

The questions were simple. I didn't want all the interviews to look too similar, so I let respondents choose two of their questions from a list. I wanted the interview to be kinda fun and to further show diversity, which is why I included the fashion and music question. Below are the questions I asked each birl:

1. What makes you a birl (or alternate gender)? In other words, define your gender. Is gender physical, mental, emotional, or some combination? Are you comfortable with your gender now?
2. We know the photo aspect rocks, but why else do you think it's important for birles to have a community? What do you get out of the community, and how do you contribute to it?
3. and 4. CHOOSE TWO OF THE FOLLOWING TO ANSWER:
 - When did you realize you were a birl/an alternate gender?
 - What's your favorite personal birl/identity story?
 - Why might some gender identities disagree with one another?
 - Did you have any role models, books, movies, etc., that helped you define your gender?
 - Do you have a local gender-supportive community, including friends and family?
5. Describe your favorite outfit.
6. Put together a set list for a birlly mixed CD for me!

I hope you enjoy their responses!

Laura

LJ handle: xall_alonex

What city/state are you in? Niagara Falls, NY

How old are you? 18

What's your sexual orientation and gender identity? Lesbian. Butch Lesbian.

1. What makes you a birl (or alternate gender)? In other words, define your gender. Is gender physical, mental, emotional, or some combination? Are you comfortable with your gender now?

Well, I feel more comfortable with myself in birl clothing. I couldn't imagine myself ever being girly. Gender is emotional and mental. I believe physical gender goes along with emotional and mental aspects. Almost like ... completing your mental and emotional transformation with the physical appearance. I'm comfortable with my gender now. I might not be completely comfortable with myself but I don't believe that has anything to do with my gender.

2. We know the photo aspect rocks, but why else do you think it's important for birles to have a community? What do you get out of the community, and how do you contribute to it?



It's important for birles to have a community because that's just what it is. A community ... for all birles ... whether they be genderqueer, FTM, what have you. It's a place where birles can relate to other birles. There isn't a lot of that around. Especially for younger birles just figuring out who they want to be. The community helps me keep in touch with birl issues and also lend others a hand.



3. When did you realize you were a birl/an alternate gender?

I realized I was a birl back when I was a younger kid. When I played with the boys with their matchbox cars and when I hung out with the girls I was always the Ken doll. I hated when my mom dressed me up. So, in middle school I decided to dress the way I wanted. I never called myself a birl. I was just Laura.



4. Do you have a local gender-supportive community, including friends and family?

Local gender-supportive community, eh? Well, sure. I have the type of mom who would wear a proud of my gay daughter tshirt. I think she even reads birlzine! My sister is 13 and the most open person about my homosexuality that I've ever met. My friends are cool and I haven't lost any friends because of it. I get the occasional ... why don't you dress like a girl?! But doesn't everyone?

5. Describe your favorite outfit.

My favorite outfit would be a hollister t-shirt with a cowboy-looking snap-up shirt and jeans. Along with a pair of converse or hi-top vans. A hat on bad hair days. I'm pretty easy to please when it comes to clothes.



6. Put together a set list for a birly mixed CD for me!

Holly Miranda-High above the City
Tegan and Sara-My Number
k.d. lang-Surrender
Melissa Etheridge-Scarecrow
Springsteen-Born to Run
Melissa Ferrick-Everything I Need
theSTART-Melt

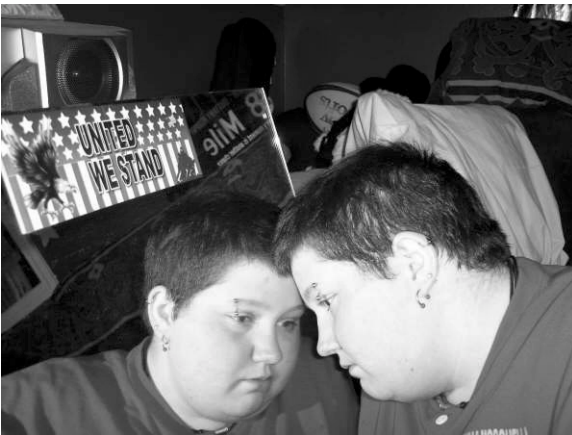
Jamie/Ryan

LJ handle: outforgood/ryan8302

What city/state are you in? New Hampshire

How old are you? 22

What's your sexual orientation and gender identity? I identify as genderqueer and questioning transgendered



1. What makes you a birl (or alternate gender)? In other words, define your gender. Is gender physical, mental, emotional, or some combination? Are you comfortable with your gender now?

What makes me a birl? Well I used to think it was just being a “tomboy,” but I believe it is much deeper now. I think gender isn’t just the package you carry, but how you carry yourself. Gender is a combination of yourself mentally, emotionally, and mostly what you are in your heart and soul. As of right now, no, I am not 100% comfortable with my “gender.” Right now I have a female body, and sometimes I feel it is the worst ever ... but don’t get me wrong ... I LOVE WOMEN lol

2. We know the photo aspect rocks, but why else do you think it’s important for birls to have a community? What do you get out of the community, and how do you contribute to it?

The community for me personally is an outlet so that I can see for myself that I am not the only one. You hear that once and you hear it twice, but if there is no evidence of other people out there to connect with, it just makes things harder. For me it was harder mentally. I think way too much. I don’t really get to contribute. Unfortunately I have other obligations other than the computer lol.

3. When did you realize you were a birl/an alternate gender?

I guess I really realized that I was genderqueer/trans maybe 2 or 3 years ago when it was introduced to me. Unfortunately, I have lived under a rock; my parents never talked about anything in this direction. I learned what homosexuality is on my own. I guess I was at the right place at the right time, now that I think about it. I was at Tufts University for the “Safe Colleges” Conference, and I saw a movie about this girl who was trans, and all her/his interests and thinking was much like mine. And just recently I was at True Colors, and once again I was in the right place at the right time. But this time I was able to express my emotions and ask my questions to someone who has gone through this and is willing to help me.

4. Do you have a local gender-supportive community, including friends and family?

I have a strong girlfriend who said "gender used to be a big deal to me, but I am in love with you, and not your gender. I will support you 100%." I also have a few friends who say they love me and not my gender and that I will always be their friend. Also a few people at work are supportive. My family, on the other hand. I'm not sure they will ever accept this. I'm not even sure if I will ever really tell them.

5. Describe your favorite outfit.

lol. Ok, my favorite outfit ... hm ... pair of khaki shorts, some nice fun boxers, wife beater with a button-down (sleeves rolled half way) a sweat-band thing on your arm, hemp necklace, and hair spiked into a small, tiny, f-hawk, and of course Birkenstocks

6. Put together a set list for a birly mixed CD for me!

1. Green Day (anything)
2. Tobey Keith-How Do You Like Me Now?
3. kenny chesney-You Had Me from Hello (me and my girlfriends song)
4. 50 cent-Disco Inferno
5. Rupee-Tempted to Touch
6. Black Eyed Peas-Where is the Love
7. Tim McGraw-The Cowboy in Me
8. Katie Curtis-Forgiveness
9. Ani Defranco-Plastic Castle
10. Dixie Chicks-Wide Open Spaces
11. Dispatch-Do You Suppose
12. Eve 6-Anytime (out cold soundtrack)
13. Beach boys-California Girls



14. Guns n' roses-Knockin on Heaven's Door
15. Hot Chocolate-You Sexy Thing
16. Joe Coker-Help from My Friends
17. Led Zeplin-Stairway to Heaven
18. Lynard Skynard-Free Bird
19. Rod Stewart-Maggie May
20. Weezer-Island in the Sun

yeah that sounds like a good cd... maybe i will go make one lol

"I'm fine with it."
by **Brittany Dunning**

I'm fine with just being a stand in,
there for you when you can't be with him.
And I'm fine with being used,
I'm quite familiar with being abused.
I'm fine with just being your friend,
the kind that always has a hand to lend.
And I'm fine if you just know my name,

and hearing it takes away some of your pain.
I'm fine with watching from afar,
and leaving random roses on the seat of your car.
I'm fine with being in love,
and being the only one you're thinking of.
I'm fine with just being your toy,
even if my heart gets completely destroyed.

steffi

LJ handle: conformistsheep

What city/state are you in? well, by the time birlzine 3 comes out, I will be in Vancouver, BC. right now I am in Winnipeg, MB.

How old are you? 24.

What's your sexual orientation and gender identity? I usually say I am bisexual, which I am. But since there is a growing awareness of other genders but two, I guess I could say I am pomosexual or polysexual or metrosexual, but honestly I don't hold a lot on those terms, I think they are a bit fake and trying too hard. I don't quite get how we have to categorize the attempt to overcome categories. So let's sum it up with I am sexual. My gender identity? I am a girl, who enjoys very much to blur a bit of the lines. I am a tomboy. To get sir'd is nothing new to me, I accidentally pass as a boy on a regular basis and I am not even trying. So much so, that I have gotten sir'd wearing a cocktail dress and high heels and having someone argue with a friend of mine about my gender. Argue with a friend of mine! You'd think a friend would know ... and to top it off, this happened in the most unlikely place: dyke night out at a gay bar. You'd think ...



1. What makes you a birl (or alternate gender)? In other words, define your gender. Is gender physical, mental, emotional, or some combination? Are you comfortable with your gender now?

I see birl as a modern word for tomboy, though I personally like the ring of the word tomboy better. I think gender is your mental and emotional reaction and fleshing out of your biological sex. In a way. It is very flexible. You might be a bio-boy and feel very discordant with that, feeling more like a girl. Your gender, the result of that feeling, is still a reaction to the fact that you were born male. Then there are those who are a bio-girl, for example, and who are at heart and soul a girl and that is all there is to it. No discordance there. Of course those are the extreme cases on either end of the spectrum, but gender—one's mental and emotional reaction to one's physical sex—is just that: a spectrum, and you could be anywhere on it at any point in time. As a spectrum it is fluid, as you are as well. Gender develops as you do as a person. I don't think—other than at the end points of the spectrum—it can be really pinned down.

Sociologically we no longer need gender. That is to say, we are on the best way to make the biological sex of a person irrelevant. Every day we erode traditional gender roles further and further. In the context of historic societies, the idea of gender as a spectrum would have not been suitable because clear roles were attached to someone's biological sex. Which then was also the gender. Only now do we begin to separate the two and my definition above becomes relevant. An emotional and mental reaction to your biological sex would seem nonsensical in a society where things are less flexible and sex = gender. Of course I am not saying that the concept of gender always was black and white with no

exceptions and we just added colours to the picture, of course there have always been people who preferred for themselves to be closer to the other gender, tomboys, feminine men, or people who were born into the wrong body. That is nothing new, but I do think that today we have more options that way and we also have more awareness that way.

Personally, I have always been very comfortable with gender. I am a tomboy and I love it. That has always been that way.

2. We know the photo aspect rocks, but why else do you think it's important for birles to have a community? What do you get out of the community, and how do you contribute to it?

That is a difficult question for me to answer. I have recently left the birles community on livejournal. I think it is important to have a community for those who seek support, answers, sharing experiences and a general sense of belonging. That is why any community is important, any circle of people with common ground. A community is to provide just that: common ground; a familiarity amongst its members. I understand a lot of people, especially younger birles, get that out of the birles community on livejournal and I am glad they do. It has very supportive elements to it. However, since I no longer contribute to the community online, I should probably go a bit into why.

I personally don't feel that the birles community itself is as open minded as it could be. And in my mind should be. There have been a few incidences where intolerance was raging high and where people got shot down for having opinions. I am not interested in supporting that, especially in a group that is all built on tolerance, that requires tolerance for its existence and that demands tolerance from everyone towards them. I am not interested in supporting a community that fails to give what it demands as soon as someone is or acts differently than the norm. I am not speaking of the norm on the street here, none of us fit that, otherwise we would not have been part of be part of a community about being different. I am speaking about the norms established within the community itself. I have found the same pattern as I have found in some feminists who are intolerant towards women who chose to marry and have children, vegans who are intolerant to those who chose to eat meat or drink milk, lesbians who are intolerant towards bi women or towards straight women, the list is endless that way.

If anyone is interested in discussing this further, I am more than happy to. My email is conformistsheep@hotmail.com

3. What's your favorite personal birl/identity story?

Oh god, there are just so many. All of them. One I like to retell particularly is how two girls in the bus flirted with me once because they thought I was a guy. They were whispering to each other how "he is really cute" and I was the only one around. They said hi, I said hi back and they got very giggly and whispery with each other. I blew them a kiss when I got off the bus.

4. Why might some gender identities disagree with one another?

Because to understand different concepts as equally valid concepts is so hard for most of us. We barely manage to understand our own concept if it is different from what we think is the norm. Nevermind understanding others.

5. Describe your favorite outfit.

Oy, lots of them. Some days it's a dress over dress pants. Some days it's a suit dressed to the t in formal style. Some days it's a black tanktop over black corduroy pants, suitpants, cargo pants, etc. Some days it's a short kilt with big belts and a tank top with huge steeltoe shitkicker boots up to my knees. As long as it's black with a bit of interspersed red.

6. Put together a set list for a birly mixed CD for me!

The hardest question of them all. I don't know. Honestly I don't know. Maybe something like:

Melissa Ferrick—I Am a Lesbian (which is accredited to her but she did not write it, nor ever sung it, she claims)

Deidre Flint (I think)—Boobfairly

Jessica Klein—I think the song is called Flirting, but I am not sure. it's about a girl working in a diner getting unwanted male attention and dealing with it accordingly. very funny song.

I am sure there are more, but I do really suck with music. I can make you a collage about it though. ;)

A poem by Maya Rrrrrr

The best thing in the world, is when your grandma says,
“that shirt would go great with your black tie.”
and you’re no boy.
although some could argue that possibly you are a
“boi”
or if you are not per se a “girl,” then maybe the
opposite would suffice ...
but the important thing is:
when your seventy-year-old, old0school Russian
grandma,
who cried

when you came out to her, and then proceeded to
attempt to set you up with all of her friends’ single
career-building sons,
is offering her biased opinion on
which of your ties would look best with that new
button down shirt from Target,
You might just begin to feel accepted, and even
understood,
as you have never really felt among the people in
your
genetic pool,
and you might even get a little teary-eyed and
sloppy.



Tyler

LJ handle:

What city/state are you in? Philly

How old are you? 17

What’s your sexual orientation and gender identity? dyke - genderqueer

1. What makes you a birl (or alternate gender)?
In other words, define your gender. Is gender
physical, mental, emotional, or some combina-
tion? Are you comfortable with your gender
now?

I consider myself a birl because as a kid I
always considered myself to be one of the guys,
and when I got to middle school I really missed
that. I never felt like I was true to myself while
in tight pants and skirts and makeup and all of
that. I’d much rather be out playing sports or
pulling crazy stunts, and chilling with my boys (or
bois as the case usually is) than worrying about
my hair and makeup and who likes whom and
most drama. I mean, yes I still have a girly side
to me. For instance, I love shopping and I love
shoes. I’ve accepted and embraced both sides of
me and I express them both equally, thus making
me genderqueer.

2. We know the photo aspect rocks, but why else do you think it’s important for birls to have a
community? What do you get out of the community, and how do you contribute to it?
since I started dressing the way I do, I’ve heard a lot of people tell me how there are so few of us
and how I’m never going to find anyone to fit in with, etc. The birls community proves them wrong. It
brings so many of us together from all over the world. It gives all of us so many different points of

view and experiences. If someone needs advice or just needs a boost in self esteem, she/he/ze knows where to turn.

3. What's your favorite personal birl/identity story?

Yes, this is yet another bathroom story, but let's be honest, who doesn't love a good bathroom story? Over Thanksgiving I was visiting my best friend in Colorado Springs. We were out one night seeing a movie and it was a loooooong movie. I stepped out to go to the bathroom, and of course being the smart one I am, I missed the huge neon signs. So I asked the custodian to direct me towards the restrooms. She said, "Yes, men's bathrooms. Right over there at the end of the hall." Keep in mind, I wasn't even binding, just wearing a button-down shirt. So, I figured, why not, let's see if I pass. I went in the men's bathroom, into a stall, and when I came out there were about 5 men in there. No one said a thing and no one gave me weird looks. I then went in the women's bathroom and some girl looked up from the sink and said, "Hey isn't this the women's bathroom?"



4. Do you have a local gender-supportive community, including friends and family?

Yes, there's this great group about 15 minutes away from me for GLTBQ youth ages 14-22. There I met some of my greatest friends who are going through much of the same stuff that I am. We support one another and depend on one another for everything. It's given us a place to go where everyone is accepted, no matter what. It's truly a great community.



5. Describe your favorite outfit.

baggy green chords, vans, tight "Queer as Fuck" shirt, open button-down Gap shirt, Boston Red Sox backwards baseball hat. Rainbow belt. Hemp necklace with blue beads and shells from Saint Johns, OR same hat, same shoes, same necklace, royal blue past my knees basketball shorts, white beater.

6. Put together a set list for a birly mixed CD for me!

Well, iI mostly listen to country music, so I don't know how well that would go over.



Merissa

LJ handle: xmurderscenex

What city/state are you in? Rochester, Indiana

How old are you? 19

What's your sexual orientation and gender identity? pansexual and I identify as mostly female.



1. What makes you a birl (or alternate gender)? In other words, define your gender. Is gender physical, mental, emotional, or some combination? Are you comfortable with your gender now? Being a birl to me is about being independent, strong, and passionate about my beliefs. I think gender has to do with what one is comfortable as. People are comfortable with different things. As we come into our own, we realize what fits for us, be it male, female, or whatever we choose to call ourselves, and we make that work.

2. We know the photo aspect rocks, but why else do you think it's important for birls to have a community? What do you get out of the community, and how do you contribute to it? I think it's important because it gives people a place to come together and support each other. We've got a lot of young members and some of them (and some of our older members, too, for that matter) may not be out or are in an area that is less than accommodating to people out of the "norm." I get a sense of family so to speak. My family isn't really that accepting of my lifestyle choices, therefore a lot of them don't know about my sexuality. I try to contribute advice where I feel I can and positive feedback to people.

3. When did you realize you were a birl/an alternate gender? I think I was around twelve or thirteen when I first thought about it ... but coming from a very strict, protective background, I wasn't allowed to express myself until I was a few years older.

4. Did you have any role models, books, movies, etc., that helped you define your gender? When I first saw the movie "Better than Chocolate." I immediately identified with the Maggie character.

5. Describe your favorite outfit. Jeans, a fitted band tshirt, my black polka dot headband, and my black and pink airwalk shoes.

6. Put together a set list for a birlly mixed CD for me!

"Ravenous"-Arch Enemy

"Posession"-Otep

"Playing Soldier Again"-Walls of Jericho

"Frozen"-Tegan and Sara

"Fresh Meat"-the Deadutants

"Girl Anachronism"-the Dresden Dolls

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"Where Is My Mind?" by harpreet kaur

I let my fingers hover above the buckle of his belt. His voice is insistent, hurried, impatient inside my ear. It rushes to thump against my eardrum like a heartbeat, sending signals I to my brain. I cannot avoid it. In my head, I am refusing him. I push him away until he falls off the building. He tells me I am a fucking tease and I have to give him what I've promised. My hands disobey a direct order from above and slip below his boxers.

Humpty Dumpty sat on the wall.
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.

It is dark except for a few patrons; most of the seats are unoccupied. Movie light from the screen flickers about our faces, over my bare chest and hands eager to sin. I feel caught in a tableau of an old man's fantasy about schoolgirls and sex between cinema seats, next to popcorn and cups of coke the cleaner forgot to pick up, breathing the stench of recycled oxygen and countless other sex episodes on these very floors. I am sitting on someone's semen, smiling at the camera, waiting for the zoom and the flash, the smash of the light bulb.

He pushes me to my knees. There is urgency in the way he unbuckles and drags his jeans down. His hands on my head, urging me closer. I smell him, a salty, musky odor and a hint of his cologne. It makes for an uneasy equation. The movie unfolds behind my naked back. His hands on my chest, urging me on.

Behind closed eyes, I think of someone else who tells me I will be a star some day.

A star.

Irony is the easiest to hide when you pretend not to notice it.

I'll be a star someday in the kind of movies that have less plot and more mindless sex. She sells me my own potential like an expert salesperson. I almost bought it even though it didn't come with a guarantee. But I am thinking of her again, the way her body moves in class, her loose-collared blouses that sway when she writes on the whiteboard. We learn about literature and philosophy. Religion. Is it necessary to separate physics from metaphysics? I've always liked chemistry and we have plenty of that together. Sometimes during tutorials when she looks at me briefly, an obvious mask for so many hidden intentions, my eyes dance at her. Her questions are laden with innuendoes, heavy with promise yet weightless. She is a tease. I do not see her outside of class; I am afraid of what an easy conversation might become when she rests her hands casually on mine, rubs my back the way teachers do. I will mistake compassion for encouragement. Maybe she wants me to so we have an excuse to fasten lips in the backseat of her car, in her apartment while her husband is at work. I must be alone with her but I mustn't. There is a snake coiling in my guts and threatening to poison its way out. She looks at me knowingly and I blush a deep red. I want her. I want her to be mine. I want her so badly.

Why is it that they teach you everything necessary about life in school but nothing about affairs? Strange that the very thing we are never taught is the first thing that hits us.

When the deed is done and the movie is over, I get off my knees. Lights switch on and credits roll off the screen. People filter out of the cinema slowly. They don't see the girl at the back, fumbling with her buttons, trying to wipe the shame off her face. No one's interested in the end.

GENDER QUEER



by darkfemme9



by Nicole Luna

"Tonight it happened" by Jessica Phelps

just talking, shooting the shit,
but something deeper going on between us,
and we both feel it surging, the question comes up,
I answer honestly and in return am greeted shockingly,
shown a scar on a wrist and in return with no hesitation,
I lift up my polo sleeve to reveal my scars,
all across my arm in neat little rows, all raised and prominent,
screaming out every pain, every heartache, every failure,
letting the world know that I am here and real and I feel,
as fast as I reveal them a kiss is placed upon my arm,
something so sweet and short it still makes me shake,
just one kiss on my arm, on my scars, went to my heart, my head,
everything
So simple a gesture but so soon in knowing each other,
does it mean more, or is a kiss but a kiss?,
are there hidden thorns in the metaphorical rose that was given,
no hesitation in the action, just natural movements, a kiss and
then a statment,
refreshing I was found to be by another person in this life,
I don't know what it means but, my heart was touched the
barrier broken,
and I will never be the same again

"who are you?" by Jaime

I'm not a man, I'm not a woman. Sometimes I'm a boy, sometimes I'm a girl. I do not fit into the box society tries to make the world fit into, I'm much deeper than that check mark. I am an identity. I am no label. My spirit is free. Nothing that you will ever be able to feel unless you are willing to be different, unless you are willing to question the norm society has made for you. Make you believe you have no choices. Make you believe that everyone has to be the same. Step out. Free your soul, be you. Be a man, be a women. Don't be a boy, don't be a girl. Gender is not you. You are yourself. Flaunt it. Live it. Love it. Embrace it.

“The Bill of Rights for Self-Injurious Behavior” bookmark was originally included with Cut #1, an autobiographical zine about recovery from self-injurious behavior.

The more ya know, the more ya grow--

Facts:

Most self-injurers are *women* who are very *intelligent*, very *creative*, and in their upper 20s and 30s ...

Self-injury is *not* an attempt at suicide.

Self-injury is *not* a fad or fashion statement .

Self-injury is a *coping mechanism* that *can* and usually *is* overcome.

For more information on self-injurious behavior, visit www.psyke.org.

Thanks for reading.

-Julie

A Letter by Jayden

Dear America,

I would like to tell you a story of an 18-year-old girl. This story is not what some may call a “happily ever after” story, nor is it a gothic story. It is more of a “food for thought” type of story. This 18-year-old girl’s name is Jayden, and our story starts out in a hospital, where most of the collective thoughts are done.

Sitting in the hospital bed with nothing to amuse her other than the little buttons on the platinum-colored, cold bars of the bed in which she lay, Jayden looks around. She sees the common computers and electronics that most hospitals have and the broken-down chair to her left, occupied by her mother. She then looks around and notices the “comforting” pale pink plastered on the wall and wonders how on earth such a color was meant to comfort people. If anything, it would drive a person crazy. She mentioned as much to her mother.

“I mean seriously. This room looks like it crashed through a baby shower. Who likes this sort of thing?” Jayden asked questionably.

“Well,” her mother replied, “most people don’t pay attention to the walls, but I suppose pregnant women would like this color. Like you said, baby shower pink.”

“I can’t wait until I have kids. That’ll be the best blessing in the world,” Jayden replied after a moment of thought.

“Yeah. It is a blessing. Too bad you’ll never have kids,” her mother said, with such sadness and regret.

“What are you talking about,” Jayden asked? “I am going to have children. I’ve always wanted them, and one day I’ll be mature enough to do that.”

“Nowadays,” her mother said, speaking from raw knowledge, “it takes more than one person to provide for a child. You don’t have that. And you never will.”

Jayden sat back and thought. Was she right? Would she never get the chance to marry the one she loved? See, Jayden is a lesbian. Yes, she did want children, and she did want to marry. She wanted her father to walk her down the aisle in her gown of white lace, and silky material with a veil over her face. She dreamed of taking vows to stay truthful and monogamous in front of everyone she ever loved; her family, friends, and those who have helped form her into the woman she would become.

She admitted to herself that it wouldn’t be the traditional wedding of a man and a woman, but a woman and a woman. It would still be love. Why shouldn’t she be able to marry for love? And then her thoughts turned to the opposing side of gay marriages that she had read about, for she had done a school research paper on the subject. One of the main points against gay marriages, she remembered, was the fact that it was religiously a sin. But if the government is really separated between church and state, then why would that even play a factor? Separation between church and state means that the state bases its decisions apart from the lessons taught by the church. The laws against interracial marriages were ended because they found that that decision was based on religion and prejudice. Why would same sex marriages be any different? And then her thoughts led to more damning thoughts. She is a citizen of the United States of America. The Land of the Free. Immigrants came here to be who they were meant to be--themselves. They fled from persecution and set up this country so that no one would be persecuted again for their beliefs. Yet, in today’s society, all of America’s born citizens are not free to express their beliefs without disciplinary actions. Immigrants can come to America from other countries and benefit from all of America’s laws and constitutional rights, yet if you are a gay, born citizen to the US of A, you cannot marry, or experience or take advantage of any of the benefits that married couples receive. Jayden thought of all the things that will be denied her all because she is gay.

It is point-blank unconstitutional, she thought. And suddenly, anger engulfed her as she thought back to a

conversation she had with her grandmother about a month previously.

“Why do you have to be gay?” Her grandmother asked.

“How can you be straight?” Jayden replied sarcastically.

“What’s this nonsense?” Her grandmother retorted. “A woman is not supposed to be with another woman. Women are supposed to be with men. Couldn’t you just be straight?”

Jayden sighed. This was an ongoing argument, and Jayden was tired of it. “No gram, I cannot just be straight just like you couldn’t just be gay. You are who you are and are accepted for it. I don’t try to talk you into being gay, because that’s not who you are. Why must you try to talk me into being straight? I am not trying to be provocative, and I am not crying for help. I am simply attracted to women. It’s not sick, or at least no sicker than a straight couple. I don’t understand why you can’t accept it.”

“No one will accept it. It is not our way of life.” Her grandmother’s final reply.

This is a perfect example of why it is unconstitutional! She thought angrily. No one will give me a reason that makes sense on why the gay community, why SHE is getting punished. The reason she is being punished is out of sheer prejudice, discomfort, and fear. She understood the prejudice, for it is everywhere. Prejudice against blacks and whites, minorities, against interracial marriages, etc. Discomfort? Kind of like the discomfort she has when she sees straight couples. What most people seem to ignore is that she understands straight people about the same as they understand about her as a lesbian. And then there is the fear. Fear of what? The unknown, she thought? What does America fear? And the answer came quite simply and suddenly. They fear me. She sat and thought. Yes, I look odd by a political standing, and yes, I have short hair. And the famous words crept into her mind, the ones that always sounded so cheesy hearing at school, but now rang true and wise. “If I were cut, would I not bleed? If I were to bleed, would the blood not be just as red as yours? If I were mortally wounded, would I not die?” We are all the same. Why would society fear me, she thought again. She swore on her hospital bed, the only thing around, that she would ask that question to the public one day. And then the pain killers took her and she lost all thoughts except for the pretty pink walls that reminded her of the baby shower she wished to one day have when she had her first daughter.

So here I am asking you that same question. My name is Jayden and I am an eighteen-year-old lesbian who wants nothing more out of life than to live well, with the same opportunities and benefits as ever other American. I want a family, a legal family, and I want to live without being shamed by my government. The same government that I pay taxes to. The same government that I tried to protect, until the military said I couldn’t join because of a rainbow tattoo I had on my arm. I have to abide by all the rules our government has set in place, yet I am still denied constitutional rights due to my sexual orientation? Who is to say I cannot marry and be acknowledged as a legal spouse, just because it is a woman I married? It is fear and prejudice that holds this country from being the amazing and free country everyone knows and believes it could be.

What is it that makes you fear me? Because I would beg for that answer. I am just a girl with dreams and beliefs that aren’t so different from yours. I really am not trying to scare you, and I am really not trying to offend you. I am what everyone else is. Myself. I hear the word dyke whispered behind my back, and though it doesn’t offend me, nothing is done. I do not expect a police officer to come and save me from verbal assaults, but I do expect the government, my government, to set a better example for the citizens in which they govern. If you accept us, me, then so will many others; and in doing so, many innocent people will stop being victims of gay hate crimes that are threatening to plague our beautiful country. Homosexuality is not a disease. We are like you, but with slight differences. No one stops a young adult with piercings and tattoos all over their body from marrying or taking advantage of their constitutional rights. And quite frankly, they are looked down upon as much as any gay person I have met. So, all that is left is for you to please answer my question.

Dear America, what makes you fear me?



by Kris Lee

About cleaning needles by Max Siegel

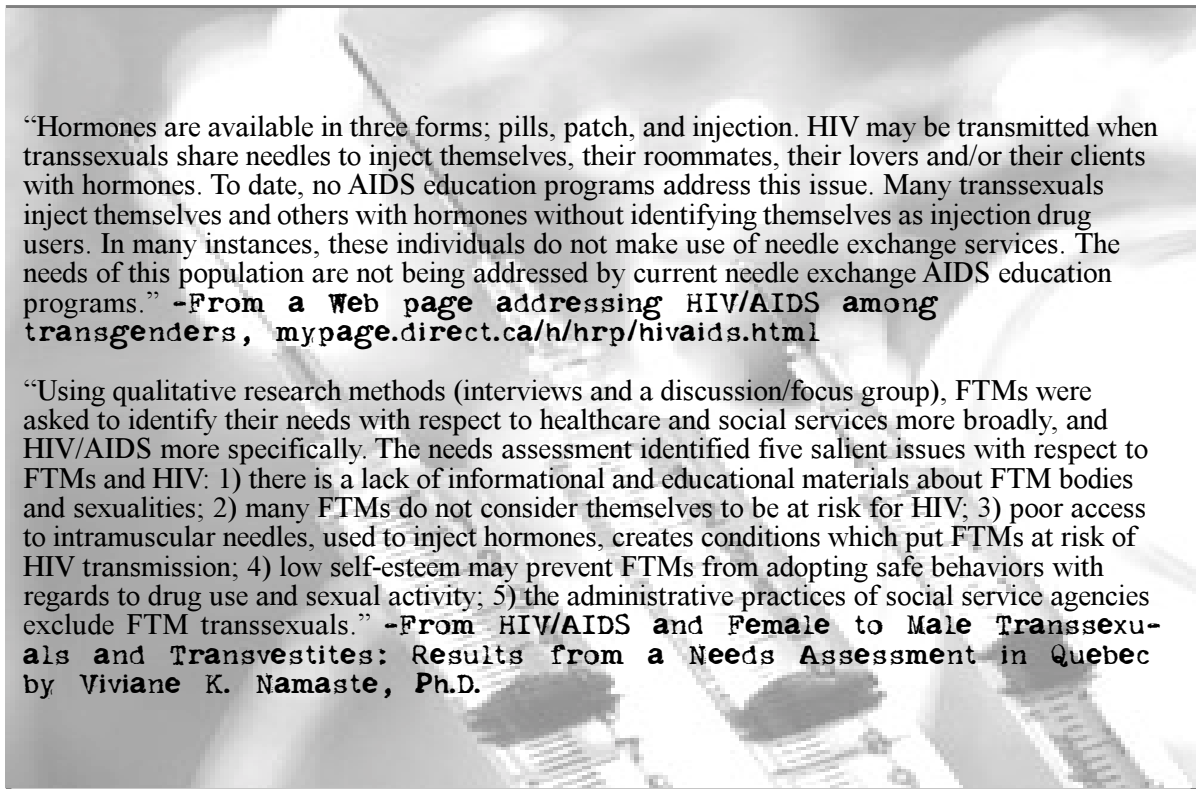
-Gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth have disproportionately high drug and alcohol use compared to their heterosexual counterparts. The 1995 Seattle Youth Risk Behavior Survey found 35.8% of LGB youth engage in high-risk or heavy drug use. Comparatively lower, 22.5% of heterosexual youth were found to engage in high risk or heavy drug use.

-New needles may be the safest needles to use for injection drug use, but cleaning needles can also prevent HIV and Hepatitis infection.

-Here is needle cleaning in six steps!

(1) Fill syringe/needle with clean water. (2) Tap the needle to eliminate air bubbles and shake it up to rinse it out. (3) Shoot the water in an area where no one can come into contact with it and where it cannot be used again while repeating the second step until the water in the syringe is absolutely clear of blood. (4) Pour bleach into a cup. Place the syringe in the cup after filling the syringe to the top with the bleach. Wait at least 30 seconds. (5) Shoot out the bleach where no one will come into contact with it. (6) Fill the syringe with water again, shoot it out, and repeat filling and shooting out with the water at least three more times to ensure that all the bleach is out.

***Never share needles with anyone. Make sure to throw away old needles and works. Clean needles and works as soon as possible, and especially before the blood dries.



“Hormones are available in three forms; pills, patch, and injection. HIV may be transmitted when transsexuals share needles to inject themselves, their roommates, their lovers and/or their clients with hormones. To date, no AIDS education programs address this issue. Many transsexuals inject themselves and others with hormones without identifying themselves as injection drug users. In many instances, these individuals do not make use of needle exchange services. The needs of this population are not being addressed by current needle exchange AIDS education programs.” -From a Web page addressing HIV/AIDS among transgenders, mypage.direct.ca/h/hrp/hiv aids.html

“Using qualitative research methods (interviews and a discussion/focus group), FTMs were asked to identify their needs with respect to healthcare and social services more broadly, and HIV/AIDS more specifically. The needs assessment identified five salient issues with respect to FTMs and HIV: 1) there is a lack of informational and educational materials about FTM bodies and sexualities; 2) many FTMs do not consider themselves to be at risk for HIV; 3) poor access to intramuscular needles, used to inject hormones, creates conditions which put FTMs at risk of HIV transmission; 4) low self-esteem may prevent FTMs from adopting safe behaviors with regards to drug use and sexual activity; 5) the administrative practices of social service agencies exclude FTM transsexuals.” -From HIV/AIDS and Female to Male Transsexuals and Transvestites: Results from a Needs Assessment in Quebec by Viviane K. Namaste, Ph.D.

Resources, People, and Things to Learn About!

Moorea Malatt,
"love and lack thereof"



Moorea's voice is cotton-candy sweet, complete with swirly strands and lullaby-pink complexion. Pair that with her acoustic guitar, and you've got some damned-happy music. Smooth, warm, and sometimes freewheeling, she doesn't have the superpower voices of her folk contemporaries like Ani, Ferrick, or Tegan and Sara, but she compensates with fun and easygoing lyrics, and by playing the hell out of her guitar. My favorites are "see jane ride," "love and lack thereof," and "no patriarchy here":

"Barbie slept with Christy
And Barbie slept with Midge
Sometimes Barbie slept with Ken
She loved anyone she wished
And I'll love you if you're femme
I'll love you if you're butch
Sometimes I like boys and trannies
Got a thing for androgynous
Cause there's no patriarchy here."

Ms. Direction, Summer 2004:
the genderbending issue

Irrelevant (and, in my opinion, annoying) pictures aside, there's some pretty great content in this issue. I'm not sure what the other issues are about, but with this one's genderbending emphasis, I had to pick it up. Not all the material is relevant, but the material that is is pretty well-written. Take note of the interview with Eli Green and the Performance Art article.

Fence Sitter

ed. **Sabrina Darling**, knocoutpress.com
A one-shot zine, long in the making, about bisexuality. The zine is very text heavy, but the information and

insight that the articles and personal stories provide are invaluable, and pointless illustrations might only serve to take away from the information. The zine's editor is bisexual and put Fence Sitter together because of her frustration in trying to find a zine that fit her own sexuality instead of trying to relate to either the lesbian or the heterosexual categories.

Assimilate This! zine and button
distro

assimilatethis.com

"We specialize in radical/queer/feminist/activist buttons, zines, and other assorted miscellany. We're currently a two-queer affair (but not too-queer! (is that possible?)), featuring kestryl as button-maker extraordinaire and click as reigning zinester."

Trans-Academics

trans-academics.org/

"Trans-Academics.org is a place where people of all genders can discuss gender theory, the trans community and its various identities, both as a part of the academic world and day-to-day life. This is a trans-friendly space and is open to people of all gender identities.

"Trans-Academics.org is especially interested in supporting people who are considering or currently are working with trans-related topics via research, writing, teaching, and other academic ventures. It is our hope that people working on trans-related topics will be able to connect with other people working within the field. Trans-Academics.org firmly believes that there should be a strong connection between academics and activism, as such this site supports: students of all levels, professors, activists groups including campus Queer and LGBTQI programs, as well as people who are involved in the gender variant community on a more personal basis."

Gender Anarchy Project

genderanarchyproject.com

"causing trouble with interactive graphic activism"

"Gender Anarchy Project is an installation that intervenes in public space to break down assumptions on gender. The iconic sign normally on a bathroom door is replaced by an interactive sign that draws attention to gender ambiguity. The project is in honor of the gender movement which began in the early nineties, and the recent efforts by activists for gender-neutral bathrooms"

Visit the birls community at

www.livejournal.com/~birls

Thanks to the community's moderators—

EJ (~mcpuggington) and Nik

(~boiface)—for all you do for the community.

Birl-Friendly LJ Communities

What Birls Wear

www.livejournal.com/~birlstyle

What Birls Aren't Wearing Anything

www.livejournal.com/~nekkidbirls

Creative Birls and Other Queers

www.livejournal.com/~queerarts

The Birls Group on MySpace.com
groups.myspace.com/birlgroup.

My Favorite Words #s 19 and 22

Grl

DIY (Do-It-Yourself)



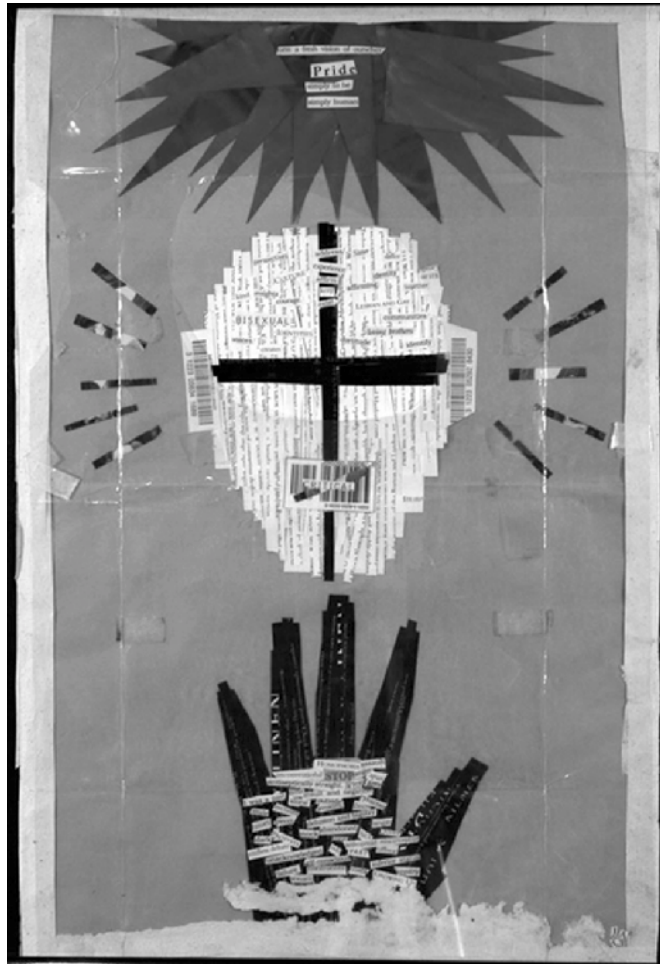
BirlZine! asked:

Hey, what made you decide to do a button company with a queercore punk theme?

Squirtgun Buttons answered:

Well, while I was growing up, I listened to a lot of queercore bands, and most of them didn't have their own merch, which really sucked. I mean, you have all the emo bands and hardcore bands with their merch. What about the poor queer kids!? My lady friend actually does buttons for other bands (she's on the link page), so I decided to branch out and start my own distro with nothing but queer and girlrock bands and such, since there wasn't any other website where you can find all these bands collectively. This is totally a labor of love.

The Reversing Vandalism project ...



Recollect/Reconnect by Julie Elefante

mixed media collage: handmade paper, acrylic paint, book parts, manila envelope

I wanted to recollect and reconnect the pieces that resulted from the near-complete and violent destruction of an identity. The process of destruction and its metaphor to the hatred and fear of an entire group of people inspired me to reconstruct a piece that would symbolize the destroyed identity without wasting anything—not the violence of the act or the debris that was left over. Just as individual identities or group identities are formed from both the good and bad experiences of an existence, I formed the art piece's identity by retaining well-defined aspects of that which was destroyed—in this case, actual text and unaltered material from the books—and combining them with new, altered elements, including handmade paper and painted collage material made from the vandalized books. The overall piece is a stronger, more assured identity that overcame a former incarnation's hate-induced destruction without sacrificing any part of what it was before.