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Outpunk

Jello Biafra: In the very early Mabuhay scene, many people were openly gay and it wasn't a big deal. Theater was part of what you did. You weren't supposed to cop a rock star attitude, but when you were onstage you better be a fucking star. And offstage you were just a regular person in the community like everybody else. That was the way it worked.

When punk morphed into hardcore, and MRR got really doctrinaire and Gilman Street became very anti-rock star, people became more strict about what music they wanted and how they wanted people to look. It took away some of the flash. People were less likely to be outrageous for the sake of being outrageous. Theater kinda got stamped out.

Matt Wobensmith: AIDS took its toll, and a lot of people were dying, and it really affected the San Francisco artistic landscape. But there were still little pockets of stuff going on. One of the things that was interesting in San Francisco was actually right down the street from my apartment.

I had just turned 19 and I couldn't go to bars. The only place that would let me in was this place called the Crystal Pistol. It was called Klubstitute, and it was the home for this drag-punk-weird art-performance-literary-cabaret spoken-word thing, run by the Popsitutes. Diet Popsitute, Reemix Popsitute, the whole bunch. It was a freak show. I could watch weird performance art and see a punk band. All kinds of drag, just crazy shit.

Jello Biafra: In a way *Homocore* and Diet Popsitute and Klubstitute helped rebuild some of that sense of fun that had been missing

from punk and hardcore. It even challenged a newer generation's attitudes towards different sexual orientations and practices.

Shawn Ford: Tom Jennings started up *Homocore* towards the end of my time at the first Shred of Dignity warehouse.

Richard the Roadie: Tom was a punk and he was gay, but at that point those worlds didn't really intersect.

Matt Wobensmith: *Homocore* was one of the original big gay punk zines from the late '80s.

Tom Jennings: I was the editor, along with Deke Motif Nilison, from 1988 to 1991. We kinda messed with a queer/punk hybrid thing, based upon anarchist principles, discordian silliness, distaste for de facto separatist gay culture, and a burning desire to get laid. We also put on a bunch of *Homocore* shows. It was sort of a big deal for awhile, now no one remembers it.

Shawn Ford: Tom got really involved with the Radical Faeries movement, and a lot of Faeries started coming through the warehouse. With the Radical Faeries and *Homocore*, the gay punk identity became a lot more solid and recognizable as a distinct part of the punk community.

Ian MakKaye: Fugazi did a lot of shows with *Homocore*. These people were deeply creative, deeply visionary.

Tom Jennings: We used the "stone soup" method of organizing events. We worked with absolutely minimal tools and components, silk-screening T-shirts with cardboard stencils and spray paint. We have the honor of having the last actual punk show at the original Deaf Club.

Lynn Breedlove: The whole thing about San Francisco—with there being dykes and fags in punk—is we all felt this void. We'd go to straight punk shows and we'd be the only queers there. All of the other queers would be down at Amelia's having just finished playin' softball, rockin' out to "Push it! Push it real good!" We'd be listening to KALX on the way to the bars, and then we'd have to listen to disco to hang out with other queers. It was terrible. Matt Wobensmith is a big fag and he's a punk. He's all tarted up. He felt that alienation.

Matt Wobensmith: In 1991 I started working for *Maximum Rockn-Roll*. I was also helping with the last issue of *Homocore*. And I met this crazy punker kid named Jux at Gilman. Bisexual,

according to him. Really fun-loving and filled with grand ideas. I made a fast friend.

At the time, there were all these dudes moshing at shows, this little macho thing going on. So Jux and I came up with this idea to subvert it by square-dancing in the pit. Or by doing ballet, or interpretive dance, or same-sex dancing. We would do that at Gilman.

If someone got really really aggro and violent, we would go hug them. We called ourselves the Huggy Crew for awhile. It wasn't just us, lots of people started doing it. Then one time, when Jux and I were dancing or doing something really silly, this kid ran out of the pit screaming, "There's a faggot in the pit! There's a faggot in the pit!" We thought that was the funniest thing, so we made a record about it.

There's a Faggot in the Pit was an exploration of gender roles in punk. Most of the bands on it were not gay bands, but they were supportive East Bay bands. That spawned me doing gay punk records with Outpunk, from 1992 onwards.

Tom Jennings: *There's a Faggot in the Pit* was the first local queer punk 7-inch I remember seeing in San Fran.

Matt Wobensmith: Outpunk put out 15 or so records, and seven issues of a zine. The first Outpunk record I did was *There's a Dyke in the Pit*, 'cause I figured we ought to have a companion record.

I did a queer issue of *Maximum* in early '92. Tim let me be a guest editor. I did this whole thing with articles on Tribe 8 and Pansy Division, etc., etc. And the *Maximum RockRoll*—Epicenter world were very supportive of me doing my label and doing gay punk stuff. As I got older and a little bit more evolved, I got hugely into the riot grrl movement that was happening in the early '90s. Bikini Kill was a fucking life-changing event for me.

Davey Havok: The whole riot grrl movement was the Rosie the Riveter version of punk rock. It's something a lot of people don't know about. If you weren't there to see it, it kind of disappeared. But people talked about it a lot back then. I remember being frightened to go to Bikini Kill shows as a young, small, frail boy. 'Cause the girls were scary. Kathleen Hannah saying, "You boys, get the fuck back! This isn't for you." The Bay Area scene was very pro-female and anti-misogynistic. They went very far left in that scene.

Dave Dictor: It was really the natural flow of things. You know, 75 different scenes came out of the punk hardcore scene—everything

from dykecore and homocore to eventually riot grrl and everything that came out of that.

Matt Wobensmith: I noticed that Tim and MRR was really bristling under this whole new wave of feminism. They weren't covering it. I started writing a little bit about it in my fanzine. I challenged the machinations of the punk scene. In some cases, I was just trying to unearth the hidden history of homosexuality in punk and hardcore. You find out about Gary Floyd from the Dicks, and Biscuit from the Big Boys, and Karen Allman from the Arizona band Conflict. Little factoids here and there. It seems inconsequential, but it was a big deal when you found out that the lyrics were gay.

Gary Floyd: I got interviewed one time by this big gay journalist and he said, "You're openly gay but your songs are not openly gay." My songs are gender-free. Why would I let anyone dictate my art?

Matt Wobensmith: There was a lot of animosity because I was young, bushy-tailed and occasionally naive. Which worked to my benefit sometimes, but you're dealing with a lot of people who are jaded and older and who want to kill your enthusiasm. So I got a reputation of being somebody who was too PC and humorless. But I felt Tim was trying to control the punk scene. I believed in what I wrote and I stood by it. There were a lot of hard things that needed to be said. Tim was spotted at Epicenter hiding my magazines behind the racks so no one could find them.

When riot grrl started getting media press, so did queer punk. I was often asked by reporters, "Can you send us pictures of gay punk clubs and gay punk mosh pits?" I explained, "You don't really understand. *Outpunk* is literally just me sitting at home listening to a record, writing a zine, and putting it in the mail."

Michael Hoffman: My first Gilman show was Friday, March 25th, 1994. It was Tribe 8, Pansy Division, Mutliteo Fairies from Olympia. It was an Outpunk Records showcase, all queer bands. It was really amazing. And at the end of the show the lead singer of Tribe 8 pulled out her bloody tampon and flung it into the crowd. I was 13. That was the most incredible thing I'd ever seen.

Lynn Breedlove: I like to skeev people out and make 'em twitchy, so I just whipped it out and kind of twirled it around my head a couple of times and *wbhp!* It did seem to me like it skipped over people's heads—*thwip, thwip, thwip*—like a stone skippin' on the

beach. It was a good solid tampon, though, probably o.b. It wasn't going to splash around.

Gary Floyd: I really, really loved Tribe 8.

Lynn Breedlove: I was in San Leandro, the most racist town in California, and I knew that I was queer from the moment I fell in love with my kindergarten teacher. As I became a teenager, my pals used to pick me up in their pickup truck and take me to Cloverdale. At the time, I was still listening to Fleetwood Mac and Journey and all that crap. As soon as I opened the door, they'd crank Black Flag and I'd be like, "Turn that shit down!"

Then I got totally addicted. It was hilarious! "Six Pack," "T.V. Party," "Gimme Gimme Gimme" . . . Oh my god! Funny funny funny. Those guys were like stand-up comics set to music and it was all about getting rage out, which—guess what?—I had a lot of, being a queer.

In the '80s I mostly hung out in San Francisco and went to a lot of straight punk shows. I went to see Tragic Mulatto a lot 'cause they had a dyke drummer. I was like, "Ooh! There's a dyke, there's a dyke! Oh my god!"

In the meantime, I was at home goin' to Cal State Hayward and running around the house, fuckin' yelling into a beer can to Black Flag CDs, doing the punk rock face. I really wanted to be Henry Rollins, but that was a boy thing, a straight-guy thing.

After I got clean and sober, somehow the ten years of speed rage and the Henry Rollins and the fact I actually heard some lesbianic folk songs, where they used the female pronoun—all that came together. I thought, I can do this! Alright, punk rock love songs about sex. I'll channel Henry and Jim Morrison and Patti Smith, I'll get all of my pals to come and throw panties. We'll do this our way. Tribe 8 was the first all-dyke punk band that was singin' about being dykes. There were bands that had dykes in them, but they were singin' "you" instead of "she." And that's just cheatin'.

Tribe 8. Tribade was the original word for lesbians back in the turn of the century. A tribade practices tribadism—tribbin', flat crackers, rubbin' your flat parts together. Flat Crackers—that should've been our name.

Matt Wobensmith saw us playing at Klubstitute with Diet Popsture's band. Outpunk put out our first record, us and Pansy Division.

Jon Ginoli: I started playing under the name Pansy Division by myself, just me and my guitar in '91. I got a few go-go dancers to dance behind me at Klubstitute. Tribe 8, it was their second show. I remember thinking, "Wow! They've got a whole band! And they're all dykes! Man, this is great!" I loved it. I thought, "I wanna do this with guys!" Seeing them, actually, made me want to go out and get a whole band.

Lynn Breedlove: We meshed the two cultures for the first time. There were no gay bands going, "We're fags! We're dykes!" There was only us and Pansy Division. Matt put a lot of energy into publicizing us. He was super organized. He got the *Advocate* to come do a photo shoot with me and Gary Floyd and some other guy that was in a hot queer band. Then Jello gave me a blow job onstage at Klubstitute, proving his dedication.

Jello Biafra: I didn't realize how dirt covered it was until it was already in my mouth. Where did they store this thing, the Humane Society?

Wendy-O Matile: I went to my first Tribe 8 show at Klub Komotion in San Francisco. Most women at the show took off their shirts. Lynn Breedlove put on a cop outfit and pulled her cock out and got a gay guy to suck her cock, then eventually castrated herself and flung the cock out into the audience. We all went crazy. It totally changed my life.

Lynn Breedlove: Good Vibrations donated some dicks to us. They have a rejects box 'cause if you order a rubber dick, and you're in Idaho, and then the dick comes and you're like, "Ooh, that has too many veins, it's too realistic, I wanted the Porpoise," you send it back. The law is that you can't sell a rubber dick that has already been sold, because god knows where they put that thing. Mere soap and water will never get that cunt juice off.

So I'd just go to Good Vibes and grab a box. Like 'em big and realistic. Because it has to hurt the rapist out there in the crowd watching. When he sees the knife going through the dick, he has to feel it in his own dick. That's my idea of aversion therapy.

I kept needing to amp it up. Everybody had seen a rubber dick, everybody had seen the blow jobs. The knife was big. Then it got bigger—like 13 inches long with jagged edges. Now what? I got a chain saw.

During all this, I started Lickey Split. It was the first and only all-girl bike messenger company in America. Babes would call

from all over the world, and say, "I'm comin' to San Francisco and I need a job. Can I work at Lickety?" We had about 100 women working for us over the ten-year period.

Kegger: I grew up down in L.A., where the SST boys ruled the scene, always talking shit about women. I had gone to all these hardcore shows in L.A. but it was all dudes. I was so stoked when I got here. I had never seen chicks going crazy.

Bucky Sinister: Kegger was in the Hags. Oh man, the Hags were fuckin' scary, man. Jesus Christ. At the time, S.F. butch was flannel shirts and the Indigo Girls, right? The Hags were these crazy metal punk girls and they were all gacked out of their mind with speed. They rode dirt bikes and skateboards.

Matt Wolensmith: Basically a bunch of tattooed, rough, hard-living San Francisco fucking rock 'n' roll dykes. I loved the idea that there were roving girl gangs.

Kegger: Hags SF were a sisterhood of crazy rocker dykes that weren't going to back down to dudes who gave us shit. There was Stacy Quijas, Car Crash, Mona, Head Hopper, Julian, Fiver, Alice B. Brave (I think she was a Hag), Becky Slane, Boomer and Joan of Anarchy—she was crazy. That was my crew. Wendy-O Matik and Noah from Neurosis were our buddies so we'd go to their house in the East Bay.

We had vests and we spray-painted "Hags SF" on everything. We'd go to Oakland and we'd say, "We've come to fuck your women and drink your beer!" We were just obnoxious fuckers. I guess we were trying to outcore everyone. We just fought everywhere. We'd fight on buses.

Bucky Sinister: The Hags all went out with strippers, these beautiful high femme girls. You would see them hanging out at the Market Street Cinema and some of the nastier strip clubs in the Tenderloin, waiting to pick up their girlfriend after work. They all packed dildos in their pants, visible like in Spinal Tap. The strap-on was still a little taboo at the time—it was before the whole tranny-boy scene. And they would pop up their skateboard and hit you in the face with it.

One night, I was in the Lower Haight and I was on acid, and I start hearing skateboard sounds outside my window. And these nasty, nasty conversations—like Redd Foxx nasty—about some girl they both fucked. I looked outside and it was a couple of the Hags. They were saying the basest things I had ever heard. It was really frightening on acid.

Lynn Breedlove: Feminism in San Francisco has always been like 15 years ahead of everybody else.

I actually wrote a song called "Menstrual Revolutionary" which never made it onto a recording, thank god, because it was ridiculous. We had friends who would just wear their bleeding pants. Just skanky, you know, the same pants every month.

Iliz Cameron: I thought Lynn was gross. I didn't have any reference for what was going on. I was just like, "That gross lesbian, eww!" I have this weird thing with feminism. It felt like hippieism to me. It was whiny and dorky. I didn't buy it.

Wendy-O Matik: Lynn didn't take any shit. If someone was fucking shit up, she'd stop the song, grab the fucking guy by the neck, and toss him outside. You felt really protected.

Lynn Breedlove: After awhile people would say, "My boyfriend's scared to come, everybody says that boys'll get killed." So then, there were no more boys at the Tribe 8 shows, and the only mixed shows were at Gilman. Tribe 8 shows were always packed, like 500 people.

So what's the point of this whole story? Oh yeah, Miranda July got her start at Gilman and so did Green Day. And they're millionaires, billionaires. They're huge! They're gonna be president. And Rancid, they got their start at Gilman, too, and they're on the radio. What happened to me? Why am I not president? Everyone keeps sayin', "It's 'cause you're a dyke and you're a dick-chopper and people don't want a dyke dick-chopper for president." If I had it all to do over again, I would've just sang sappy love songs in a major key.

Jon Ginoli: The first time Pansy Division played as a full band was at Klubstature. We were nervous. It's not that we were a gay band, but the fact that we were really in your face about it. We thought, this is gonna piss people off! If we form a band like this, we are just going to be *hated*.

Jesse Lustious: They are probably some of the most fearless people I know. "He Whipped My Ass in Tennis (Then I Fucked His Ass in Bed)"—incredible song.

Jon Ginoli: There's our song "Curvature" about curved dicks. There was "The Cocksucker Club" about somebody trying to figure out his sexuality. Our most popular song is called "Bunnies," which describes the early part of a relationship, where you just fuck like bunnies.

At the time, there was a shifty, sludgy, non-melodic style of S.F. punk at the Chatterbox and later the Chameleon. Bands were sort of like biker punk and I just thought, god, this music is just so fucking stupid. That's what people like around here? I had never gone to Gilman Street before we played there. I'd never heard of Operation Ivy and Green Day and Isocracy and Blatz.

Matt Wobensmith: Jon came by Epicenter with a demo and I thought it was okay. It had promise. Jon was a little bit older than I was, coming at it from a different angle, but I saw the whole thing as connected. I definitely saw a place for Pansy Division and I was really shocked when Larry Livermore signed them. That was really ballsy for Larry to take that chance.

Jon Ginoli: The "Homo Christmas" single came out in November. We identified with the pop punk sound, the more melodic stuff. Suddenly it seemed like we were in the right place at the right time. After we'd finally gotten a record deal set up, we played at Gilman. And lo and behold, we were opening for Tribe 8 and Bikini Kill.

What was sad about the night was that even in enlightened Berkeley, enlightened Bay Area, the sexist shit from the crowd, the catcalls—it was so stupid. If you were writing a movie about this and you wrote down that dialogue, it would seem unbelievable. I could imagine this back in the Midwest, but I thought people would be smarter here.

By the middle of '93, our record was coming out and we did a three-week tour around the country. People came out of the woodwork. The audiences were a lot more straight than gay. This has been true generally—we play a style of music that most gay people don't care about. But we made money, everything went really well.

I was on my way to Lookout! on BART and I ran into Chris Applegren. We were changing trains at MacArthur station, and there was Tré from Green Day. Chris introduced us. We got on our train and Chris said that Green Day liked our album. I was like, "Wow, I'd love to open for them." So he gave me Tré's phone number. When I called, Tré was watching TV and he didn't sound very interested in talking. He just said, "So, you guys have a van?" I said yeah, and he said, "Oh, alright. Well, I'll let you go." I thought, that was a pretty offhand dismissal.

Then six weeks later, he called me up and said, "We're doing a

tour this summer for about a month. Do you want to come open for us?" We were like, "Yeeeeeaaaaww!"

I talked to Green Day about it. I said, "We're really glad you picked us. But what were you thinking?" And they said, "We've got all these mainstream fans all of a sudden, and we really want to do something to show that we're not just your average, typical mainstream band."

Jason Beebout: They could have done anything, and they were like, "Okay, fuck it—let's go on tour with a gay band."

Matt Wobensmith: I got to be a roadie for parts of that. Pansy Division, the most obnoxiously gay band in the world. Not only was it a great strategic move, and it was great for Pansy Division, I think it helped sort of insulate them a little bit. Maybe helped their psyche.

Billie Joe Armstrong: We wanted to bring a band that was a good band but had some shock value to it, that was for real. It wasn't necessarily Marilyn Manson being spooky or something like that. We thought of it as being sort of educational. It was like, yeah, this is something that we come from. This is a place where there's that freedom and that open-mindedness.

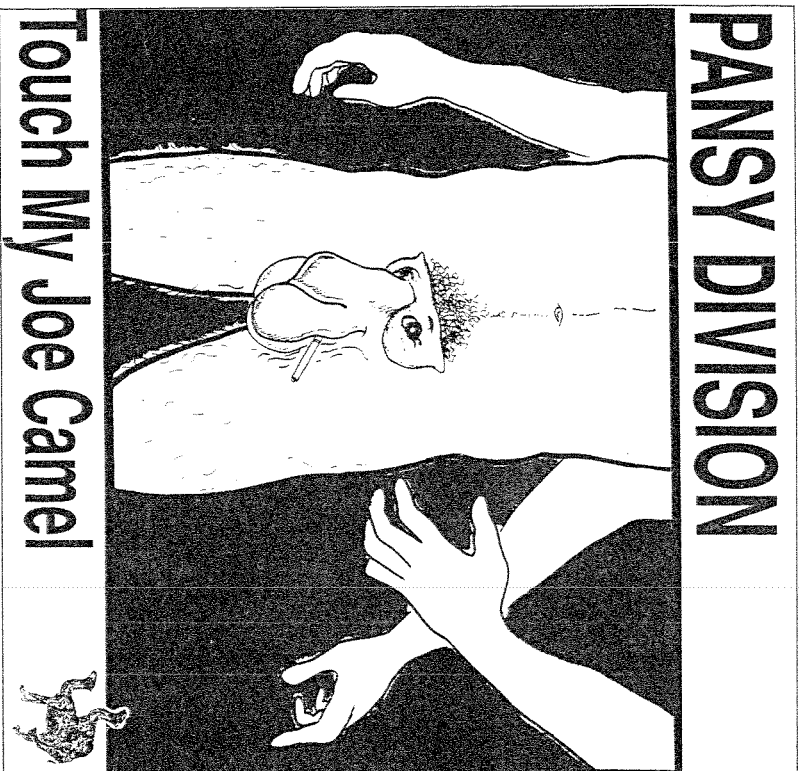
It was great. I remember one show, people were sitting there and watching them play, kids would just be rocking out, not really understanding, and then slowly they would be, "What's going on?" And then Chris came out on the microphone and said, "Has anybody figured out we're a bunch of fags yet?"

Jon Ginoli: The first show, in Calgary, Alberta, was actually one of the worst. There were people flipping off Chris, who's more flamboyant than I am, and throwing stuff at him.

Green Day's manager called us about a month later and said, "Look, they're going to play arenas. And they want you to open for them." We were just like, "Oh my god!" We started our band with really modest ambitions. We never thought it was going to go over with a general audience.

San Diego Sports Arena with 11,000 people. I'll never forget that. It was just so disorienting 'cause we're used to playing to 100 people. I was stuck at the microphone singing. I really wanted to be floating in the air above it, just looking around and talking it all in. Groups of people yelling at us and flipping us off and throwing drinks at us. People moshing and cheering.

I had the most conversations with Tré. So before the show I asked him, "Are you nervous?" and he said, "Fuck, yeah!" That



Homosapiens: Pansy Division 7" 1993

Courtesy of Lookout! and Pansy Division: artwork by Anonymous Boy

might have been the last time Tré Cool was nervous about anything.

Billie Joe Armstrong: We were playing a show in Madison Square Garden, and we found out that Bon Jovi was playing. And we were like, "No way, we're not playing the show. Not with Bon Jovi. We're not gonna do it." They were like, "Come on, you guys gotta do it. You guys gotta do it." It was funny 'cause Weezer and Hole were playing on that gig, too, and they decided not to play. Then Courtney told the people, "If Green Day plays, we'll play." And then Weezer was like, "Well, if they play, then we'll play." And we said, "Well, if Pansy Division plays, we'll play." So we got Pansy Division to play with us, at Madison Square Garden. In front of this almost prestigious kind of crowd, 12,000, 15,000 people, Jon singing "Cocksucker Club." Okay, now that's cool.

Ray Farrell: Maybe parents wouldn't understand it, but then Pansy Division becomes something that these kids could relate to. They may not come out of it convinced that they should be gay, but you have to really appreciate the humor that band had, in the way they did it.

Jon Ginoli: Our songs are kind of cute. We were just not punk enough for a number of people at *Maximum RocknRoll*, but our songs are never about conquest. They were all about mutual desire. It's not like, I'm going to do this to you, I'm gonna give it to you, baby. It's like, you're hot, we're going to do this together.

Kids get so much anti-gay propaganda and so much anti-gay peer pressure. Here is a gay band in your midst, being as blunt and outspoken as possible. And people responded to that. So having access to the younger ears, we had to be as uncompromised as possible and do our thing and be honest and not condescending. If some parents were upset, well, whoop-de-do. We're countering propaganda just by being ourselves. And to me that's punk rock.