

OLIVIA NEWSLETTER

#3

Dear Distributors:

Many apologies for the lateness of this issue. The Rape Crisis Center where I work has been moving to a new location and then the holidays. I promise to get my act together and be on time. I hope every one of you had a good holiday season with lots of good food and loving women.

We're growing fast so it is necessary for me to ask you to be as concise as possible when sending in goodies for the newsletter. Olivia now has approximately 50 distributors and more to come. I'd like to hear your ideas on anything you think the newsletter should be dealing with and isn't.

Also, I'd like to extend an invitation to any of you who may be passing through Albuquerque. I've got the room and would love to have any of you visit during your travels. Keep those cards and letters coming.

Sandy

Deadline for the next issue is February 15th.

WHO WE ARE

Ronnie Ewoldt - Felton, Calif.

Age 25; Scorpio w/Taurus rising. I quit graduate school in speech therapy 'cause student teaching was stifling and I couldn't imagine a career with the public schools. I now work as a counselor with emotionally disturbed kids who no longer call me girl or lady; are beginning to understand and talk about racism, sexism, classism, and their favorite - ageism; and I can play women's music at work and they enjoy it!

I live with 4 other dykes and a 3-year-old woman child in a collective household in the Santa Cruz mountains - quite a change from my previous living pattern of alone, in the smog-fog-and grog of San Jose.

I recently began taking care of my body for the 1st time since mama stopped--I now work out almost daily in a woman-only gym; have (almost) stopped eating junk food in favor of real food; and have gone from a heavy alcohol trip to an amount that doesn't trash my mind or my body.

I read everything from Colette to science fiction to The Last Unicorn to mysteries, and my newest interest is spirituality, having just read all of Castaneda's books.

Also play lots of pool, am hooked to nostalgia movies, and after 10 years of talking about it, am finally starting to play guitar.

The most important thing I've taught myself is that wherever I am, I can always turn around and lean on myself for support. Two years of working on it to get that feeling in my gut as well as my head, and once in a while I doubt myself, but mostly I know I'm OK.

Distributing for Olivia is a great project for me 'cause it combines my greatest love --music - with a focus for my energy and aptitude for making phone calls, meeting people, making those contacts and connections, and speeding around "doing things."

Would love to meet you other distributors. The autobio's I've read have been far out...

Laurie Ryan - Binghamton, N.Y.

Born in Brooklyn 20 years ago, I was raised in Levittown, New York, of all places. I'm a dyke who came out in my junior year at Sacred Heart Academy, an all girls' Catholic High School (everything you've heard about those places is true!). I settled in Binghamton two years ago, presumably to go to college, but since that time I have involved myself mainly in lesbian/feminist activities. Right now I'm helping organize a women's social club here (sort of like the Daughters of the Nile, only a little gayer) called Herizon. distributing Olivia records, looking for a job, and doing research in women's history.

Olivia means a great deal to me not only because it is producing such fine women's music but because it is a woman-identified business with vision. We are really going places.....

Peg Johnston - Binghamton, N.Y.

I'm 27, a native of Binghamton and have been free-lancing for a long time - writing, editing, researching, community organizing, etc. I was working on a book - a women's history biography on Elizabeth Freeman. Now I'm preoccupied with organizing in the women's movement the lesbian community, and in an organization I founded called the Learning Exchange. To make money I do surveys for the government. (God, a G-lady!).

I'm an Olivia distributor because I like the music and I want to be a part of the Grand Olivia Economic Experiment. The whole spirit of the thing is beautiful and bold.....

Debra St. Charles - Milwaukee, Wisconsin

I got involved with women's music accidentally on purpose by attending a free university class that Dorothy Dean was holding on women's music some 2½ years ago. Out of that sprang Paid My Dues for which I've written 3 articles, done layout, books, and general shitwork. About 2 years ago we held a benefit to raise \$ for the magazine with 2 women from Chicago and some local performers. I loved the concert and wanted to have more but Dorothy didn't have the energy to produce anymore concerts. I did, so I became a project of Woman's Soul Publishing (which puts out Paid my Dues) called Woman's Soul Productions. In the last 1½ years I've produced over 12 concerts, 4 since the end of August. During this time, I was working at Master Lock testing locks and trying to learn guitar. Now I'm a student and have played guitar, banjo, and bass in a women's band called Odessa, which is no longer.

I produce concerts fairly independently which means I handle all arrangements with performers, layout and design my own posters (I put them up too). Sometimes I'm assisted in this by Barb Kutzner. I do my own sound, etc. I'm also building a small recording studio in my basement with some equipment I've been able to buy and barter for. It will be good enough to produce semi-high quality demo-tapes and will help women learn about equipment and controlling the media for themselves which is something I'm very concerned about.

Recently I formed a layout, graphic design studio with Barb Kutzner. We design posters, stationery, do animated cartoons, and will soon release a comic book that Barb is doing. We call ourselves Dissemination Studios. We are non-profit and have special rates for women's groups and special low rates for benefits.

Tomorrow I start a job repairing player pianos; I'm still in school and am considered an inter-arts major. I'm 23, a Leo, and a little crazy but that's what keeps me sane.....

Meg Flemming - Radford, Virginia

I first heard of Meg and Olivia this past summer through a woman involved with the Women's Center here. I just saw her at a concert in Richmond this November and finally met her and Ginny 5 days later in Lynchburg. At that concert she sang "Ode to a Gym Teacher" and a song by Alix Dobkin about a riding instructor. I knew then that it was my calling to get involved with Olivia. Horses, athletics, music and women are my life.

I've been a professional trainer and teacher of horsemastership for 3 years, have spent 17 of my 22 years riding these kind, graceful beings and am dedicated to spreading my knowledge to others. One way I spread it one summer was as a camp counselor. "Let us not forget.." I am presently finishing up a degree in P.E. at Radford College - a college flooded with lovely lesbians. My name is Meg, my brother's name is Christian--what more could you ask for? Destiny, I'm sure.

I feel really good about being with Olivia, especially about being part of a group of women trying to establish an economic base, small tho' it may seem. I strongly believe that economics is one of the roads to a successful revolution. And sisters, there will be a revolution! Let freedom sing!

#### NEWS FROM GINNY

We (Olivia in LA) are contacting Discount Records at their headquarters in California about them stocking our records. Local Discounts have been telling distributors that they don't have the authority to buy records, so we are going to try to get the national office to approve us. So we need to know where, besides Syracuse, Binghamton, Boston, and Ann Arbor; are there Discounts that people have tried to deal with. Please contact us immediately so we can get on this.

Regarding Kay's album. Please be extremely careful about giving these out for promotional purposes. Give them away only for sure things: i.e., a reviewer who you know will do a review or a radio station who you know will actually play the album.

A question came up at the East Coast Distributors' meeting in regards to the monthly sheet. In cases where albums are sold on consignment or wholesale during one month, but are not paid for until another month, you should indicate on the monthly sheet sent in with the money from those sales that X amount of \$ is from sales for a previous month.

#### PUBLICITY

I received 2 great letters on dealing with radio stations. So, I'll share these with you.

Susie Gaynes (Syracuse)

Thought I'd share a few thoughts on the proper care and feeding of your local radio station.

I've been doing a "women's show" every week for 2 years on Syracuse's "progressive" radio station. Since we've got our own show, we at least get the music out and also are in a good position to rap to the other announcers and directors. Most distributors will go to a station and get directed to the program or production director. That's a good place to start, but only a start. Ask to talk to the "women's director" (our station has one). If they don't have one, ask why not and ask for the "minorities director." They may not have one of those either. Ask why not.

Our time on the radio is considered "public affairs" programming. A certain amount of public service programming is required of a station (particularly FM) by the FCC (Federal Communications Commission) in order for the station to retain its license. Appeal to them on a level which they can understand - their job. Their license can actually be challenged

if the station fails to provide programming which serves minorities, etc. Our station uses our time to show the FCC it is serving the community with "special programming." Take advantage.

If you can't get a "show," (for yourself or another woman) even if it's only a ½ hour, you can still get the records played. But not by leaving it with the director and his smiling assurance it will be aired. All they'll do is put it on the "new release" shelf for a week along with a hundred or so other records and then file it away later with a couple of thousand other records. Ultimately, the people responsible for what gets on the air on FM stations (AM is a whole other subject) are the announcers themselves. Get a list of the women announcers (it will probably be very short), go see them, talk to them. Ask them who are the male announcers who might be responsive to Olivia. Go see them. Good luck.

#### Ronnie Ewoldt (Fenton, CA)

A couple of suggestions and choice items I've already learned in my few short weeks as an Olivia distributor:

When a radio station "accepts" a record or song as "playable" on their station, they automatically inform record stores. I learned this from a program director at a local FM station. I was also told that the powers-that-be at this station have a weekly meeting at which they decide which new songs they'll try on the air; then, if they get a "suitable" number of requests for the song, and favorable reports of sales from the stores, they'll play it more.

Keep in mind the kind of music a particular station plays, and when you get an appointment with a music or program director, who'll probably give you 15-30 minutes to "sell" him (few women in these positions), play cust most likely to fit their image. "Hurts like the Devil" looks like the best bet so far for teeny-bop AM and cock rock FM. For "Easy Listening" stations, there's more chance for something like "Waterfall" or Meg's "Morning Song."

Unpleasant Reality: Much as we in the women's community would love to hear "Dream Child" and the like as we cruise down the road, it ain't gonna go on the radio, and may turn off a potential straight woman or any male--result: fewer sales. So, I'm temporarily pulling my punches. \*(I'd like some feedback on this.....Sandy)

Once a station accepts a cut, we can try for a short interview about Olivia Records; 3-5 minutes seems to be the going time allotment.

Something I'd like further information on: I've been asked several times (told, really) "It's fine to produce your own stuff, but why don't you distribute through a company that specializes in it?" And further BS from these people "Don't you know you'd sell more records"? Argh! My answer, without going into a rap on capitalism, selling images most commonly used, the \$ aspect, and the fucked things we don't want Olivia to get into, has been; Olivia is a women's record company and the collective wants it to remain so. I'd appreciate some help in developing a solid, valid (to them, if possible) reply. Help! Some other distributors may already have, or in the future, meet with this same @#&%.

#### PERSONALS

Electric music people: Susie from Syracuse is looking for other electric music people with whom she can redefine electric music. She's willing to relocate.

Musicians: We would like information from other distributors on local talent who might be interested in doing a concert or dance in Binghamton. We've contacted Teresa Trull in NYC and she's agreed to do a concert here. Wed like to promote all kinds of women's music, in addition to the Olivia distribution. Any news on other women's music, let us know. Peg Johnston and Laurie Ryan, 125 Mary St., Binghamton, N.Y. 13903.

Debra St. Charles: If you see Julie Muldower, could you tell her to send me her address? Thanks, Sandy.

#### OUTLINE OF THE EAST COAST DISTRIBUTORS' MEETING

Submitted by Mary Harmon (Philadelphia)

##### I. General Discussion

1. Chain stores & how to get records carried there (see notes from Ginny)
2. Liberal policy on record returns because of defects.
3. Olivia will be listed in the Schwann Catalogue.
4. Boston, D.C. & Berkeley are selling the most 902's.
5. Suggestion to have price printed on songbooks, so discounts in price can be noted.
6. If distributors claim themselves as self-employed, they may be able to claim tax deductions due to Olivia expenses.
7. Olivia pays distributors' commission so Olivia doesn't withhold taxes.

##### II. On Promotion

1. Bad and factually incorrect reviews have been written by men. Be careful who reviews the product - underground or overground. Try to find a woman reviewer. Even then, a good article can be edited to look bad. Generally, no review at all is better than a bad review.

2. 903 and 905s are to be given to stations for promotion or jukeboxes.
  3. For FM stations go to program director; use request lines; and get on public affairs shows to promote the record.
  4. Pacifica has an Olivia interview for those stations with that service.
  5. If you want Chris to perform in your area write c/o Olivia to get on the schedule.
- Both Meg's and Chris's concerts are non-profit this time around.

### III. Women's Music as Political.

1. Reaches people who won't otherwise hear and talk together about ideals. Presents a non-threatening situation.
2. Good music -- trying to get away from slogans. Olivia's quality is musically and lyrically high (concepts good). Music and lyrics go together.
3. New musical form needs to be developed (Meg's "Where Do We Go From Here?" a good statement -- we need to ask questions.)
4. We need to redefine electric music. So far many women are mastering instruments with vehicles of established music. In order to make a living women have had to conform to those standards rather than developing rhythms and styles expressive of self.
5. What do we want said now? Olivia is looking for a band that can tour. Olivia doesn't want to become stereotyped as doing only the type of music they've put out thus far. They need a different sound. High Risk shows overall context but can't tour.

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This article, submitted by Betsy York (Mass.), was discussed at the East Coast Distributors' meeting. It is reprinted from the Nov.-Dec., 1974 issue of The Lesbian Tide. I'm putting it in the newsletter to stimulate some interchange on the subject of woman-identified music.

### Roundtable: Musicians Look At Culture "If It Weren't For the Music" In Flux and Evolution by Margaret Adam

My immediate reaction to the question of what constitutes feminist music is a vague feeling of discomfort around the word "feminist." The word has been distorted and diluted by the media, and also used as an anvil on which narrow and sometimes oppressive political dictums have been forged. I feel more at ease with the phrase "woman-identified music," by which I mean music which is consciously derived from the uniqueness of one's experience as a woman and which speaks to certain life-values that celebrate and liberate.

I think there has to be an acknowledgement that woman-identified songwriters and performers have been isolated and, until recently, have performed in pockets across the U.S. with little knowledge or access to each other. As a result, audiences and musicians alike have had little contact with the diversity of the music available. It is such a joy to me that this is changing as woman-identified musicians travel to new audiences and exchange songs with each other. This is all by way of saying that the definition of woman-identified music is evolving very quickly and is in flux as we all get more exposure to it.

Right now, in my brains, I would define woman-identified music from three standpoints. First, the form. It is clear to my ears and to my sensibilities that this music is different. There is a complexity about the chordal progressions, the rhythmic variations within a single song. The chord structure deviates more from basic tonal harmonies (triad chords and sevenths) and into fourths and fifths -- open chords -- chords which give the effect of space. In terms of musical style, whether one accompanies the melody by spreading out chords in a linear fashion (i.e., the piano accompaniment of my "Beautiful Soul" or "Best Friend"), or plays block chords (i.e., Cris Williamson's "If It Weren't For the Music"), or where the melody is the linear interest (i.e., Meg Christian's "Song to My Momma"), there is a feeling of open space...a place for the ear and mind to go.

I think we have to be able, sooner or later, to define what it is--technically--that makes woman-identified music different. One can hear it, but articulating the difference is much more difficult. A project I have in mind is to do a factor analysis of, say, ten woman-identified songwriters' music--just the musical form, not the lyrics--and see exactly what are the commonalities. My theory is that there is a woman's collective musical unconscious, form from which women songwriters who are ~~xxxx~~ not into writing strictly commercial music, derive our musical form. People have said of my music: "It sounds like Joni Mitchell or Laura Nyro..." I know they are not talking about the lyrics, but rather about the form. Part of this comes from Listeners' Laziness. I mean how many well-known women writers are there in the industry? And how much easier is it to pick out similarities which make the ear comfortable, than it is to hear new sounds which may have no precedent in the listener's musical background? I used to resist the comparisons because I felt my creative uniqueness was being invalidated. Now, I think it is safe to say there are similarities in woman songwriters' music. But they do not come from any of us listening to and incorporating the other's musical ideas. I had not heard Joni Mitchell or Laura Nyro when I started writing 11 years ago. For that matter, they had not heard me. Stumbling across Cris Williamson's album 3 years ago stunned me because our music had so much in common. The same was true on hearing Meg Christian's music and Woody Simmons' music. The similarity in the music that Meg, Cris, Woody, Casse, Laura, Joni, et al, share comes from the fact that we all have reached into the same artistic pool of expressive potential that is available to all women by virtue of the uniqueness of woman. This pool is what I would call the woman's collective musical unconscious.

### Speaking to Woman-Identified Values.

Lyrically I see woman-identified music running the gamut from overt political statement (i.e., my "I'm Not a Service Station," Casse Culver's song which includes the line "Brother, you better watch out where you step," and Debbie Lempke's "The Bloods"), to woman-loving woman songs (i.e., Cris' "Sweet Woman," Laura Nyro's "Emily," Woody's "Jennifer"), to songs which speak to woman-identified life values, such as self-affirmation and self-definition (i.e., my "Best Friend" or Melissa Manchester's "Home to Myself"), and to the celebration of women supporting and working with other women (i.e., my "Sweet Friend of Mine" or The Chicago Women's Liberation Rock Band's "Mountain Moving Day").

Another unique quality to the lyrics of this music is the treatment of relationships. Woman-identified music speaks to some of the same relational processes like, "You've left me and I'm in pain," but comes up with different conclusions than the traditional, "...and I'll die if you don't come back" -- rather the conclusion is, "I'll make it on my own, because I am a whole person by myself." The music celebrates freedom and equality in relationships, rather than possessiveness and insecurity. The range of topics discussed tends to be unique also. You have "Your Friends Should be Your Lovers" by Debbie Lempke, Cris' song "Shaum" (about a horse ride), Meg's "Gym Teacher Song," Casse's song "I'm Late Again," all dealing with subject matter far beyond what AM male-identified and male-programmed radio has to offer. The list is endless. I'm loving this!

The last area which defines a woman-identified musician/writer is how she relates to her audience. I think we have the responsibility and the joyous duty of being real and really being on stage when we perform our music. It is too easy to allow the traditional audience-performer relationship to separate us, through performance styles which are detached to the point that the audience does not get a true sense of who the woman is on stage beyond her music. I perceive a woman-identified artist as one who participates in the Theatre of the Vulnerable (a phrase coined by Liebe Gray). That is, she exposes herself to the audience by her emotional relationship with the music and by her conversation with the audience. By validating herself through the strength of her performance, she validates all women. I don't want to make this sound easy. It is very frightening and sometimes threatening to lay one's soul bare in public. I think there has to be an understanding of trust, born of mutual respect, between the audience and the performer, that 1) the performer is being honest and 2) the audience is listening to the full range of music being presented.

### Our Evolution

I used to make distinctions between "feminist" music and "woman's" music based on how well an artist could combine all 3 qualities of form, lyrics, and presentation at once. Now, I see that we are all evolving and growing and expanding our musical expression at our own rate, in our own time. It just is not as easy anymore to use rigid definitions and pigeon-holes. The ideal situation is where a woman musician/songwriter embodies all 3 woman-identified qualities. The reality is, that some artists' form is woman-identified, but their lyrics aren't. Others have the form and lyrics down, but are still creating distance between themselves and audiences through traditional performing styles. Others have the performance and lyrics together, but use traditional forms. What can I say? We're evolving, all of us. My own definitions have changed so much in just 4 months that my brains are shaken loose at the pace of it all. The more woman-identified artists I hear and the more I experience what it is to be a woman-identified artist, the more I am convinced that it will be a while yet before we can come up with, let alone agree upon, the perimeters of definition around our music. Hopefully, this interim period will be spent listening to each other, artist with artist, audience with artist, and audience with audience.

Woman-identified music is much deeper and bigger than a single political line, or a single style of performance, or a particular artist or band of artists. If audiences limit themselves to approving and supporting artists who reflect only their particular set of politics or lifestyle choices, then women's culture is going to be damaged and stunted and distorted. Tolerance and appreciation must be given to the incredibly beautiful variety of musical expressions (through musical styles and performing) and to the political viewpoints we are producing from our woman spaces. Otherwise, very fine artists will be lost to our growing woman-culture.

Woman's culture, by virtue of its very existence, is political. The fact that a woman gets up on stage and performs from a woman-identified position of strength is political. The problem comes when we start talking about lyrics and whether or not they are politically correct at a given time; it comes when an audience makes judgments on a performer, not because of her music or her performance, but because of the fact that she might play to mixed audiences or might be produced by someone who is at odds with the ruling political clique in a particular community at a given time.

I see a support system growing across the United States, as women's groups and women's centers and individual women-producers put together concerts and set up situations where women musicians can perform.

I see this system as an alternative, but not exclusively so, to the established way women musicians have had to get their music out -- i.e., through an industry that is basically threatened or disinterested by anything which is new and especially that which is consciously woman-identified. I hope to make a living by sharing my music with mixed and women-only audiences. I hope audiences realize that women performing for them are not only doing so out of a joyous desire to validate other women's lives through music, but also because they see these kinds of performances as a means of financial support to maintain their principles and stay alive.



## NEW DISTRIBUTORS

Welcome to all of the new Olives. Hope to hear from those of you who have not yet sent in your bio-sketches.

Lauren Basch (Cleveland, Ohio), Barbara Biesinger and Debbie Snow (Philadelphia, Pa.), Cathy Coogan and Kathy Bluemenstock (N. Augusta, S.C.), Joan Dark (San Diego, Ca.), Ronnie Ewoldt (Felton, Ca.), Fan Fernow (Atlanta, Ga.), Meg Flemming (Radford, Virginia), Sue Henk (New Haven, Ct.), Jude Moore (Columbia, S.C.), Laurie Ryan and Peg Johnston (Binghamton, N.Y.), Jenny Roddy (Charlottesville, Va.), Cheryl Sena (Newfield, N.Y.), Linda Whedbee (Helena, Montana), Lynette Jerry (New Orleans, La.), Paule Kwasniewski (Goleta, Ca.), Cindy Green (Worcester, Ma.), Faye Anderson and Chris Meldner (Sun Valley, Nevada), Carolyn Hayes (Princeton, N.J.), Marjory Ackerman (Rochester, N.Y.), and Pamela Mahler (Eugene, Or.).

### Next Issue -- DEADLINE February 15th

1. Bio-sketches from new distributors (and old ones who haven't done one).
2. Women's production groups
3. Suggestions on getting the music into bars, coffee houses, etc. and ideas about listening (and perhaps, selling) parties.
4. Personals
5. Problems or suggestions regarding distribution.
6. Feedback on Margie Adam's interview in The Lesbian Tide article.

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