

Gender Giants

**DIET
POPSTITUTE**

THE REAL ARTICLE,

THE LAST RESORT.

An interview by **Bob Davis**

The first installment of GENDER GIANTS introduced Virginia Prince, that icon of heterosexual transvestites. Two dear friends of mine, Red and Queenie, responded, "Who is Virginia Prince, honey?" I guess I didn't realize how far it was from the clubhouses of those straight men with their devotion to passing, style and taste and the queer cabarets devoted to display, glamour and fabulosity. Even though nose counting psychologists divine more hetero than homo men in women's clothes, VENUS' audience is "mo' ho' den het, Rhett." Therefore, we decided to head for the center, the Mecca, the nexus for VC's demographic.

The most exciting social event of the fall season has been the resurrection of Klubstitute, S.F.'s weekly queer nightclub and cabaret, serving the transgender, fag, dyke, bi, as well as those who truly thrive in their company; not to mention plenty of fierce individuals displaying their own, flamboyant as it may be, style! Klubstitute can be found every Saturday at The 11th Hour on Market St. near Van Ness Ave. So, now it's time to meet the man behind the curtain, Diet Popstitute.

I have no idea why you want to talk to li'l ole me. My pal Phillip R. Ford even said, "You're not a drag queen. What's he want to you for that magazine?" Well, I do like to DRESS up and I love the zine!

Diet's long time collaborators REMIX VON POPSTITUTE and TYLER-BOB ANGENOUS offered some of their thoughts and opinions:

RVP: This tea is good with milk.

TBA: Do you want me here for two cents?

RVP: There would be no POPSTITUTES, no KLUBSTITUTE, no PLAYSTITUTE without Diet.

TBA: Diet gets people to pursue their ideas where normally they wouldn't. He encourages people.

RVP: Diet became the booker because he's the best at coordinating things

TBA: He's a severe devil's advocate. He'll switch his opinion instantly. He can also help you look at things differently and help you not be stuck in some sheepish, clone-like behavior. A lot of people see that as being difficult, but it's not necessarily.

RVP: People get annoyed when you're something other than a passive receptor for culture.

I guess I'm just a people-kind of person!

TBA: He has, you know, a big theater queen background.

RVP: He's the least conventional person I've even met.

TBA: But that's 'cause he also knows the conventions so well.

The first time I dyed my hair was about 15 or 16 years ago. I started because I always had



Diet Popstitute and Remix
by Shane McDade Courtesy of Diet

orangey red hair and people would make a big fuss over it. Lucy and Bozo have orange hair and they were important to me in my childhood. Jimmy Olsen and Carol Burnett, too. And I

was a Bowie queen in Junior High. My mom was always dying her hair. My two gay brothers, too! So, as soon as I saw people changing their hair color, it was an easy switch for me to do because I'd always gotten a lot of attention directed at my hair color anyway. They'd say "better dead than red, etc." Now my hair is green. There seems to be a lot of life in green.

But I've been blond or white the longest. Or bald.

TBA: *I met Diet a little over four years ago at DNA at like four in the morning. The Popstitutes had just gotten back from a show and were all on speed. They had New Wave double layer haircuts with crazy color which*

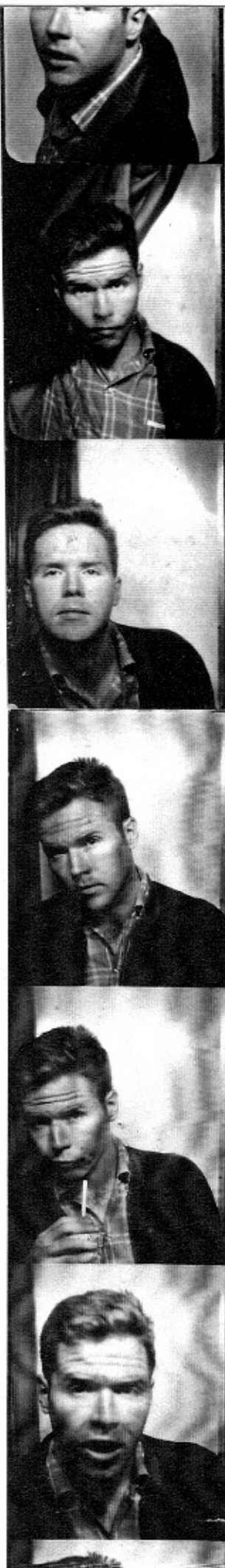
at the time I thought was really passe. Diet had an all different color Easter egg pattern carved in his head. Remix had a red Mohawk. I was just off the boat from hostile Detroit and I couldn't believe people are still running around like that. I told them that I was a 15 year-old runaway from Michigan. I was 21 at the time.

Originally, when I wanted to do the Popstitutes, I wanted a queer activist band that sang about their own lives. There were about three English bands that did that, like Bronski Beat. And I wanted to excite a lot of cute boys. I'd done a lot of punk-fag and art-fag stuff but not enuff to really satisfy my urges! My first actual stabs at performance were done on the sidewalks outside bars after everyone was kicked out into the street. I'd just start shouting my poetry like "barfag" at all the people pouring out. Nobody really knew what to think but I'd get applause and that was a silly way to end an evening. Better than just being bitter, I was often a sour drunk! People would often insist that I was reading them, that my poems were directly aimed at them; which was funny because I only write about



Shane McDade photo courtesy of Diet

myself. I don't really understand poets who try to attack other people. I feel like they're missing out on a chance to discover more about themselves. It sounds naive now but as campy and cliché as I tried to make my work, I still felt like I was the only one with those feelings till I read my stuff to people who told me they could relate. I had to have proof, usually 90 percent proof, that I wasn't the only fucked up poof! Then I knew I had something to say so that led to more. We formed the Popstitutes. The original members were Remix, Bad, and for the first show: Ellie and Roxie Toxic, who is in the Clipped Out Recipes with Miss Kitty. We gave the audience bananas to throw at us because we knew we'd be really terrible, even for a free show at an art gallery. We did sidewalk shows in cruise alleys, nude orgy parties, street protests, ice cream parlors, Homocore benefits, Jennifer Blowdryer's Smutfests; just absolutely everywhere and anywhere that would have us or we could force ourselves on them, like Karaoke mikes! Later we started doing performance pieces, go-go routines (which we'd always done anyway), and installations for clubs who wanted the window dressing without the show. DV-8 didn't want us to freak out their straight patrons. We agreed to do four shows in two nights but after our first show, which featured like 10 various dick props that we made special just to spite them, they asked us to leave and paid us in full. We had some fun. I'd hang



36 Dinos, Fred Flintstone's pet dinosaur, on the walls, call it "Dino Night" and sho Dino videos. I have a thing for Dino, I like his enthusiasm. The Dinos are now part of a permanent day-glow installation in a local house that throws a lot of sex orgy parties. So people can go in this neat room to have sex. They're quite crusty now. I like to think they're having a blast!

There was a bar on Valencia St. called the Crystal Pistol. Nobody had performed in the back room in years, since it had been the Fickle Fox. I asked if we could have it for a Saturday night birthday party for an ex-boyfriend, Kevin Santon. Neither he nor his birthday party entourage made it down there that night, but we packed the joint with 250 fun people and had a great time! Later, after the place had caught on with a lot of different crowds the owner asked me if we'd do a night. I don't know why. Maybe to thank us for discovering the place, I suppose they just wanted to make money at the bar. I'd been running an open mike in a disco there for six months that was extremely popular, but it really clashed with their dance fever scene. So we said, "oh well, o.k." We didn't think about getting anything out of it. There weren't a lot of places to perform. Most places wouldn't stop the dance music long enough to do anything. Our shows were turning into large scale productions and not always particularly rewarding from an artistic or social angle. And there's never enough moeny for that to be a motivation. I was adding everyone in town to the Popstitutes just to squeeze them onstage.



great also because there was some reason that you had to do it. You might know the reason. I might even know the reason. I like to pretend I have an all-knowing eye for figuring out people. If you give them a chance you'll find the value. I also want them all to become big stars if they can. To receive the recognition, the reward, to make a difference. When you start with some silly idea and watch it grown til 300 people are going ape, well it's just something else to take pride in.

We were creating entire showcase cabaret evenings. So we started our own club. We just wanted a place to play the records we want and have the kind of video we want. We didn't want to worry about it or try to get a lot of people to come. That's how we opened the first Klubstitute at the Crystal Pistol. Bad was a great bartender and Fruitfly, Tyler-Bob, and Tony Vaguely did decor. And Remix played records. But a lot of people put talent, time and energy into making it happen.

RVP: It's like having a party where you don't have to clean-up after yourselves. don't want to hang out in every bar in town looking for talent. I'd rather see my friend, who's never performed before, get up and do anything then see something that's booked all over town. I want a supportive atmosphere for people to try things. I don't want them to be harshly judged for what they're doing. I want them to be appreciated. If you're on stage, you must want to be there. If everyone likes what you do, well, that's great. But, if they don't like it and you do, well, that's

Any artist in our culture must deal with all types of insecurities and pitfalls. There are a lot of negative people wanting too much from one very fragile artform. One of my brothers died of AIDS a few years back. I'm HIV-positive and I do take care of myself now. I'm also an alcoholic-addict and now I'm in recovery. Showbiz is famous for being a rough life but is it really any better or worse than any other? You can always walk away but you don't stop wanting to create. It's easy for me to say I love it! I know I'm just lucky.

RVP: I think Diet would be the best President. I'd absolutely vote for him in place of the present candidates.

TBA: He wouldn't like the job.

