

OUT ON THE TOWN WITH LIZ & SYDNEY

Photo: Michael Waisfeld



LADIES OF THE EVENING—Andé Whyland and Dany Johnson

LIZ & SYDNEY:

They met at the taping of a cable TV show, *The Wild World of Jeff Turteltaub*, where they got drunk, destroyed the set and were asked to leave. Some years and clubs later, Andé Whyland and Dany Johnson are still together, going to parties, working the clubs, shooting photos, writing on downtown dyke culture and doing lots of other things.

Sydney: Dany and Andé started working and hanging out back in the early '80s at Club 57, which they describe as "a social club in the basement of a Polish church," at 57 St. Marks Place. "Ann Magnuson was the manager, and we formed the Ladies Auxilliary of the Lower East Side to plan the schedule for 57," says Dany. "We would meet at Ann's house to plan the whole month of performances, films and contests. One of the performances was a Nell Campbell show with the president of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* Fan Club, Sal Piro." Dany would deejay there on WOW (Women's One World Theatre) nights, and Andé took her first pictures. She became the house photographer and put on several performances and slide shows.

Club 57 wasn't really a pickup scene, but some people met there. The club was mixed, filled with filmmakers, band members, writers and, according to Andé, *not* "boys in their underwear," as she describes the current gay scene. Andé blames the inflated housing market, in part, for killing the creativity of the scene. "The rents were low, and anyone could move here and make a living doing anything." At the same time, the whole West Village clone scene was hap-



By Liz Tracey &
Sydney Pokorny

pening, and, as Dany said, "the East and West Village did not mix."

Liz: This was displayed in the formation at the time of a small but visible movement called Fags Against Facial Hair. One *Village Voice* writer actually took before and after pictures (with and without his moustache) for publication. Keith Haring was loosely affiliated with the group. The affinity group stenciled East Village sidewalks with "Clones Go Home" and planned a picket of the Saint on opening night; unfortunately, it may have been too loosely affiliated—they couldn't get it together enough to do the action.

Sydney: In the beginning, the other clubs, like the Mudd Club, "didn't respect us." Tension existed between East and West and an unofficial club war also existed between the more mainstream clubs and Club 57. Dany says that when people from the Mudd Club came to Club 57, "they had to take a lot of shit from us, because they didn't want us in their club. For Halloween, we built a haunted house and charged \$1 to get in. Some nonmembers (from the Mudd Club) knocked it all down, and we had to chase them out of there. Club 57 was kind of an anti-club club. If the owner of the Mudd Club came to 57, we would harass him by throwing things at him. When Mudd Club started to slide, they changed their attitude about us. They asked some of us to work there—I took over Anita Sarko's job, and John Sex performed."

Liz: Dany and Andé are of two minds about the lesbian scene of that time. Dany's favorite bar was Bonnie and Clyde's (now a comedy club on West 3rd Street), which had a "cute crowd" and women playing pool. But the West Village really wasn't their scene. As Dany says, "I came here to be a punk, and here were all these dykes in suits." She once witnessed a woman yelling at her girlfriend for hugging a pole.

Andé, on the other hand, liked and still likes the Duchess—which she feels

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hasn't changed all that much since she began going out.

And now? They definitely think the girls' scene is a lot more wild: At Channel 69, the *My Comrade/Sister!* magazine party, the women who participated in Strip-O-Grama (a game show) had to put some clothes on before they could play—and once on stage, they put the men to shame. They also favor Cave Canem (for the neighborhood feel and the shows, though it unfortunately closed recently), the Duchess and the Cit Club.

Sydney: Andé thinks that the guys' club scene has gotten stale in the past few years. "It's just all these boys in their underwear. Everybody talks about how they saw this cute guy or that cute guy—that's what makes a good party."

Liz: They work with Les/Linda Simpson not only on Channel 69 (which is actually becoming a cable TV show) but also on *My Comrade/Sister!* as well. Les had released his first issue, and Dany called him for an advertisement for her record company. Simpson had the idea for *Sister!*, and with Dany and Andé's input (and Whyland's photography), it

seemed less a good intention than a companion magazine. They have become more and more involved as each new issue comes out—and it's getting easier to get help as *My Comrade/Sister!* has gotten recognition and respect. "At first we couldn't get anyone to photograph," says Andé. Now, they have begun to do their own soliciting for contributors, and Simpson still has many ideas for both of the sections. Dany describes their ideal audience: "Girls who are not assholes" and "lesbians who sleep with women." ▼



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