

## I could hear Sylvester kicking up his rhinestone heels.

BY ADAM BLOCK



Fliers for the Castro Street Fair, held in San Francisco Oct. 7, showed Sylvester, with a halo, grinning down on Jimmy Somerville. When the Scottish ACT UP diva finished his set, I swear I could hear Syl kicking up his rhinestone heels and

screaming with delight.

Jimmy had been threatening to sing the Village People's "San Francisco." Instead he joined forces with the incomparable Connie Champagne. She had finished a ripping rendition of "You Only Live Twice," accompanied by a drag-queen chorus, when Jimmy appeared for a show-stopping duet on "Lover Man." Closing the show, the diminutive duo locked voices on "Adieu," then moved into a hauntingly slow gospel sing-along of "Mighty Real" that busted open into a shimmering celebration.

Keep your eyes on the import shelves for Somerville's greatest hits collection, *The Singles* (London/U.K.), due out this fall. The first single is slated to be a freshly minted cover of the Bee-Gees' "To Love Somebody" backed with a remix of Bronski Beat's "Why." Both are produced by Gabriel Pascal. The two also rerecorded Bronski Beat's "Run From Love" for the new collection.

If Somerville's set on Castro gave me chills, Sister Double Happiness made my dick swell. Gary Floyd, a vocal heir to both John Lennon and Janis Joplin, introduced his stellar new song "Hey, Kids," about blind bigotry and growing up gay. Over a Bo Diddley beat, he towered through the chorus, promising, "In these days when my freedom is up for discussion/The truth, like poison, will be handed to you gently—/Or else thrown in your face!" Floyd finished the set in the unapologetic voice of a person with AIDS with his harrowing "Freight Train."

Sister Double Happiness has a single just out on the Seattle label Sub-Pop: the hard rocker "Don't Worry" backed with an acous-

tic tale of escape, "Wheels A-Spinning." You'll find a full measure of their power on the Oct. 31 release *When the Pyramid Meets the Eye* (Sire), with 22 artists paying tribute to the songwriting skills of Texan eccentric Rocky Erickson. Rocky's cracked visions (sort of EC-Comics on mescaline) are celebrated by a daunting roster, including Z.Z. Top, R.E.M., the Butthole Surfers, the Jesus & Mary Chain, Doug Sahm, T. Bone Burnette, and Julian Cope. Amid even such august company, Sister Double Happiness's cover of "Red Temple Prayer" is a stone standout. Floyd's vocal could make an 8-year-old sprout pubic hair.

There is another anthology hitting the stores at Halloween—the Cole Porter collection *Red, Hot & Blue* (Chrysalis). It's a ground-breaking, if long overdue, effort by rockers in the fight against AIDS. The first single features Neneh Cherry's savage rap about indifference and dirty needles on "I've Got You Under My Skin." The 20 cuts include haunting interpretations by U2, Annie Lennox, David Byrne, Erasure, Jimmy Somerville, k. d. lang, and Sinead O'Connor. A TV special is due Dec. 1.

O'Connor, who turned in the best live performance I've seen this year—a shattering "Last Day of Our Acquaintance" on *Saturday Night Live*—is releasing a new single. "Three Babies" will boast three bonus cuts: a live version of "Troy"; "The Value of Ignorance," originally slated for her last LP; and a cover of Etta James's incendiary assault "Damn Your Eyes."

After carping last month about the lack of openly gay godheads in pop, I got some

good news: a couple of CD reissues and a stunning singer with a long-awaited new release.

Michael Callen's startling debut disc is finally out on CD. *Purple Heart* (Significant Other) includes his intoxicating cover of "Where the Boys Are," his stirring AIDS anthem "Living in Wartime," and his inspired collaboration with Peter Allen, "Love Don't Need a Reason." (Send \$15 for CD, \$10 for LP or cassette, to S.O.R., P.O. Box 1545, Canal Street Station, New York, NY 10013.)

Phranc's 1985 debut, *Folksinger*, has been reissued by Island, featuring her classics "One o' the Girls," "Amazon," and "Lifelover" along with the unreleased outtake "Everywhere I Go (I Hear the Go-Gos)." Phranc took five years between this disc and *I Enjoy Being a Girl* (Island), but she promises her third disc will be in the shops by February.

Ferron, the most celebrated singer-songwriter to emerge from the women's music scene, hasn't had a disc out since *Shadows on a Dime* (Redwood) in 1984—which *Rolling Stone* ranked with then current releases from Prince and Bruce Springsteen. Well, Ferron is back, her voice rich and spooky on *Phantom Center* (Chameleon), and she is on a national tour. On the disc's first single, "Stand Up (Love in the Corners)," Ferron marries folk guitar to rhythm and blues as she announces, "Now I can see love in the woman and love in the man in myself." You too?

In the meantime, have a luminous Halloween. ▼



Connie Champagne and Jimmy Somerville  
They led the crowd in a gospel sing-along at the Castro Street Fair.