

More Than in Your Face

Bad Boy Canadian 'Zine Editors Johnny Noxema and Rex Boy Go Straight for the Jugular With *Bimbox*

BY ADAM BLOCK

The editors of the Canadian-based 'zine *Bimbox* wrote in their second issue, "Magazines like *The ADVOCATE* and *Out/Look* have but one mandate: to systematically render the entire international lesbian and gay population brain-dead." With the release of their third issue, they'd sentenced all "breeders" to death, promising, "Everything that is heterosexual—from organized religion to Ziploc freezer bags—*WILL* be exterminated forever from the face of this planet." By the fourth issue they'd declared war on gay and lesbian culture, announcing, "Fact: *ALL* victims of gay bashing *DESERVE* what they get," and naming the entire staff of *The ADVOCATE* as among those who "should have their heads bashed in with lead pipes."

The provocateurs behind this Xeroxed outrage, editors Johnny Noxema, 23, and Rex Boy, 32, sport requisite Doc Martens, black T-shirts, jeans, and leather jackets with chains. At a meeting at San Francisco's posh Cliff House hotel, though, they prove soft-spoken, even polite.

"We're Canadian," Rex Boy offers almost apologetically. "It's a civil country. We started *Bimbox* for fun, but as it's progressed, it's become more of a forum for our political vision: an expression of anger."

"We still do it for fun," the wiry and kinetic Noxema grins, his eyes flashing. "You know I don't drive around in a pickup truck, hitting clones on the head with lead pipes, but the thought has certainly crossed my mind."

Noxema's immodest proposals have courted controversy, though. An anarchist bookstore refused to stock *Bimbox*. The New York-based 'zine *Pussy Grazer* wrote, "We bash George Bush with golf clubs, not our brothers and sisters (whatever their



flaws may be) over the head with lead pipes." *Village Voice* editor Richard Goldstein concurs, "I think what's presented as progressive politics in *Bimbox* is really self-loathing." But author Dennis Cooper remarks in the 'zine's defense, "They have the most radical, idiosyncratic political stance I've seen anywhere on gay issues. They take these really extreme positions to make people think. It's weird visionary theater."

"*Bimbox* is fueled by a lot of anger," Rex Boy explains. "But there is a humor that literalists don't get. They feel we're condoning violence. But we're just presenting images to capture people's attention and to make them think about why we have to be labeled in the first place."

The duo's anger grew out of a shared distaste for Toronto's stodgy gay and lesbian community—"an overgrown hick town," as Noxema puts it, whose gay scene is "ten to 15 years behind American cities." With *Bimbox* they tooled a grenade to lob in the face of placid Canadian conformity and discovered an international network of like-minded misfits.

Rex Boy, who was diagnosed with cancer at age 15 and lost a leg to the disease, admits that childhood experience helped shape his current identity. "I found a lot of

mainstream gay culture to be very body-beautiful-oriented," he recalls. "I couldn't fit into that group and felt ostracized. People didn't think of me as a gay person; they thought of me as a geek."

Now a successful psychologist, Rex Boy earns enough to allow the team the financial freedom to distribute their 'zine for free and to stay in quite civilized hotel suites along their recent transcontinental expedition.

Noxema grew up in a small East Canadian town with parents he calls "racist, homophobic monsters." He fled to Toronto as a teenager, only to find "no unity between the gay and lesbian communities. They were either disco clones or granola lesbians," he snarls. "They'd march together the last Sunday in June and then return to business as usual. I didn't relate at all."

Noxema and Rex Boy met in 1986 and soon moved in together. Two years later they released the first issue of their 'zine, mailing 100 free copies across Canada and the United States. They dubbed *Bimbox* "the magazine that subscribes to you."

That idea, along with the 'zine's irreverent content (the mock exposé "I Fisted Pat Califia" and the cocksucking collages) quickly found an appreciative audience. In no time the editors were besieged with subscription requests from big cities and small towns. Noxema recalls that after receiving the 'zine, "one kid from Waukesha, Wis., actually came out in his own 'zine. This was while he was still in high school. I could never have done that when I was in high school in a tiny town. I wasn't together enough."

"That was really inspiring," Rex Boy admits. "It spurred us on, realizing that there were these young kids out there getting off on *Bimbox*. We were helping them to come out and to plug into a network of other unusual people."

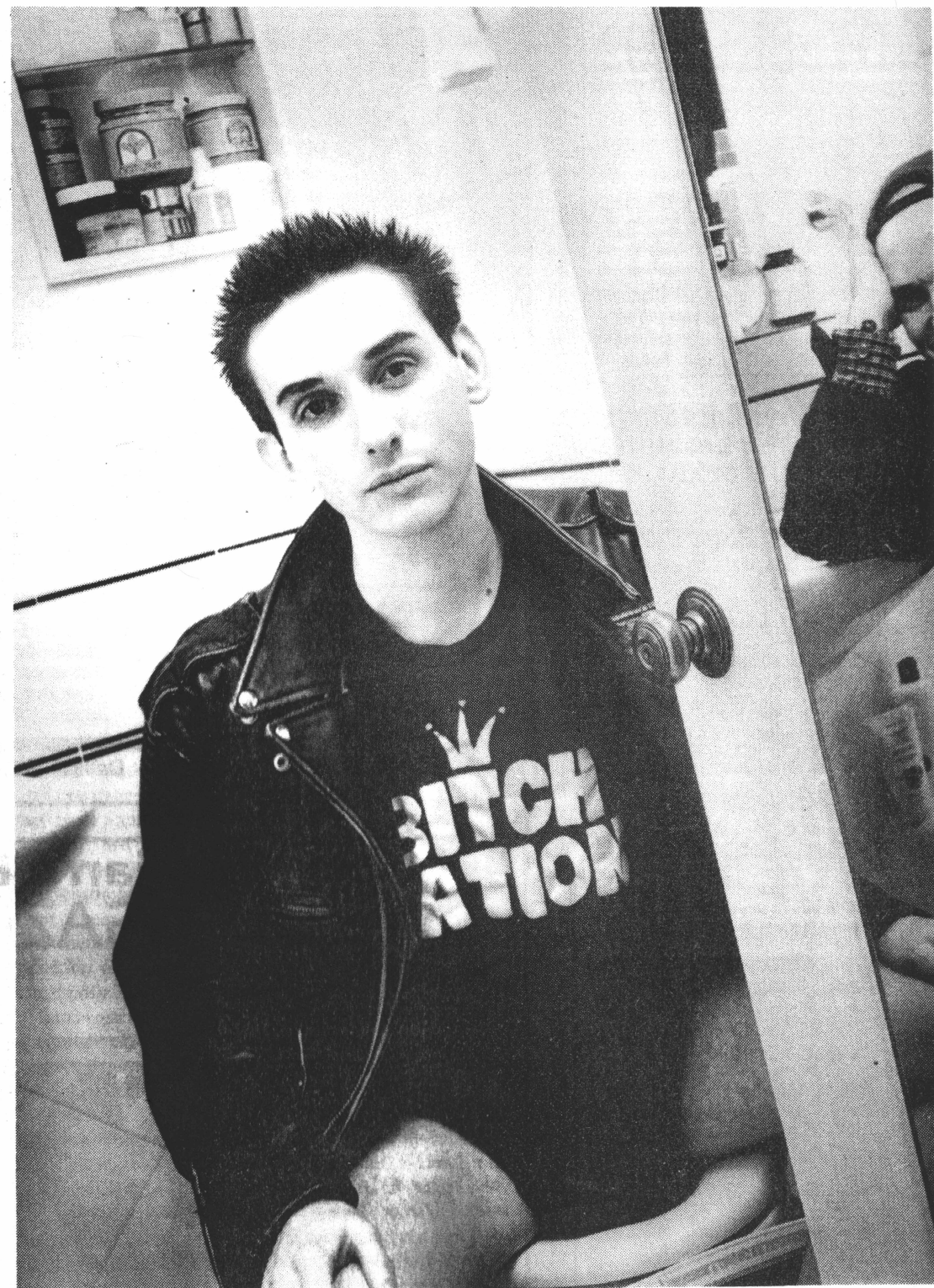
"It's sort of nice to know that *Bimbox* might get to them before they discover *The ADVOCATE* and start growing mustaches and thinking of women as fish on legs," smiles

Noxema.

The *Bimbox* team estimates they've sent out about a thousand copies of each of their past four issues—with articles like "I Was a Sex Object for Gus Van Sant" and a Partridge Family discography as well as pop-up prick and labia posters that got the second issue seized by U.S. customs officials. The 'zine costs \$4 to fabricate and \$2 to mail.

"Have we spent \$24,000?" Noxema grins. "That's insane! But, you know, that's one thing that makes Toronto so comfortable. With the national health program, Rex can treat bag ladies and AIDS patients and still make a comfortable living. We can afford to put out this 'zine instead of pouring money into boats or playing golf or investing in nuclear weapons like most doctors do."

Despite the daunting overhead, *Bimbox* isn't slowing down, though there is some question as to how long they can keep giving away their increasingly ambitious productions to a growing list of devotees. *Bimbox* #5 (the video issue, slated to be distributed on VHS cassette), due out shortly, features Jeffrey Kennedy's Super 8 meditation, *Old Boyfriends*; Candy Pauker's short, *The Junk Food Killers*, about punk girls assaulting a junk-food shopper; *The Lollipop Brides*, Noxema's recounting of the making of queer



Bimbox coeditor Johnny Noxema (left) and sidekick Rex Boy passing quality toilet time "Bimbox is fueled by a lot of anger," says Rex Boy. "But there is a humor that literalists don't get."

Canadian coconspirator Gloria Jones's upcoming kiddie-porn epic; DeAundra Peek's cover of *Starbooty*, Lisa Suckdog's vicious performance piece; and Los Angeles "black-tress" Vaginal Creme Davis's 12-step workshop for those addicted to beauty and glamour.

"We're trying to get away from people thinking that they have to fit into groups,"

Rex Boy reflects, "whether it's groups of clones or Queer Nation cliques. *Bimbox* speaks up for individuality. We spotlight people who have unique voices. Being handicapped and a psychologist, I want to see and to hear from those people."

"And we won't rest," Noxema has vowed, "until we see *Bimbox* on every coffee table in America."