



Up the revolution

Singer and musician Bitch lives to change the world. She spoke with Katrina Fox.

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News of a poetry album released by a lesbian singer/songwriter may induce groans of despair in many a hip young dyke who thinks that kind of music should be reserved for 'wimmin's' festivals and granola lesbians over 40. But in Bitch's case, they'd be very wrong.

Those of you who keep up with watching *The L Word*, despite Australian network TV's less than enthusiastic programming, will have heard some of Bitch's music on seasons three and four. The singer/musician, who's played the violin since the age of four and is also a maestro on the ukulele, bass and keyboard, formed her first band with her then girlfriend, Animal, in 1995. They self-released their first album, which caught the ear of Ani DiFranco, who subsequently released their second and third albums on her Righteous Babe label.

Around four years ago, Bitch and Animal split – both musically and as lovers – leading Bitch to release her first solo album, *Make This/Break This*, last year with her band, Exciting Conclusion, which features her current girlfriend, *The L Word* star, Daniela Sea (Max, the trans man). It's a rich and diverse collection of songs with politically and emotionally charged lyrics about love, war, rape and witches, which channels Joni Mitchell, Tracy Chapman, Patti Smith and even a touch of Leonard Cohen.

"This record is definitely a poetry album," Bitch says from her home in New York. "I think of it as wordy, performative, theatrical punk." The theme of the vegetarian eco-warrior's album is the complex relationship of nature versus urban life.

"Oh gosh, to me I'm seeing everything we do in the world reflects back on how we treat the earth, so my politics start from how we relate to nature," she proffers. "I feel mostly drawn to tearing down imperialism, 24 hours every day! Juggling modern life and the pain we've paved over is a real challenge, and understanding that our basic instincts are to be in the earth and the fact we are living away from it is going to have its repercussions. If we could admit that, maybe we could look at this plague where all



Photo by Jeff Petry

of a sudden everyone is on anti-depressants; we're living in a chemical world and it's hard because we have our own chemistries that are being messed with."

As for the album's title, it refers to "the long road that Animal and I rode down together," Bitch explains. "It's referencing our relationship and all our struggles. This

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album is the first I did since I left that, so it's referencing making something then having to break it; it's also referencing my heart feeling made and broken, and then also moving into the next phase of my life, understanding the fragility of it all and how so many things come down to timing and what we put our energy towards. I'm excited about the new phase in my life."

This new phase, as well as touring with her new band, also includes other projects with Sea – such as a cameo appearance

in [*Hedwig and the Angry Inch* director and star] John Cameron Mitchell's 2006 film, *Shortbus*. "It's kind of exciting right now because we're both experiencing this thing where we're having a few different creative collaborations together but still making it possible that we have this autonomy between us, where we come

together and go," she says.

So, given that she's dating one of the cast, what does she think of *The L Word*? "Some people – I don't know if it's especially around me – feel the need to roll their eyes at the mention of the show," she says. "Everyone has their opinion and some people love to hate it. I'm into the candy of it, and I feel so proud that I'm living in the era where lesbians are being represented for the first time in an out way on TV. It's so cool and radical and we need to keep making more

things that are more representative of us and our niches. Some people say, 'Oh, it's so femmey and LA', and I'm like, 'Well yeah, why not?'"

Then of course, there's her name. Confrontational, to say the least.

"Animal gave it to me," Bitch explains.

"She was like, 'You're the bitch, I'm the animal' and I was like, 'What?' At first I was offended, but being the questioning

linguist I am, I started to question why I was offended, and I thought, well, I did learn from my foremothers and forefathers about reclaiming words, so I've never bothered to change it; it's kind of stuck, I like it and all my friends know me as that. The universe might stop if I changed it!"

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