

mented in the recent issue of her fanzine, *Interrobang?!*, in which she and many noteworthy musicians (Pauline Oliveros, Randy Nordschow, Nicole Panter, Maggi Payne), reflect on music and transcendence. (Interestingly enough, the fanzine is only available in the downloadable format of an Adobe Acrobat file — making it free for the computer savvy!)

Below are her responses to a few questions that I emailed to her. They touch upon a few of her contributions to punk and women's histories — as she continues to make history today.

What was your involvement in the Riot Grrrl D.C. scene circa 1991?

I'd always loved ideas, which is one of the reasons I'd gotten involved in punk. Obviously, I loved the music, but the ideas were just as important to me. After I'd moved to San Francisco in 1990, I received a letter from Ian MacKaye telling me I should read these new angry girl zines — like [Tobi Vail's zine] *Jigsaw*. I met Kathleen Hanna soon after — when Bikini Kill toured with Nation of Ulysses — and we began talking. It turned out Tobi Vail had read *Interrobang?!*. We all realized we had a lot in common. I'd participated in discussion groups in San Francisco for friends to debate topics that affected us personally and politically, similar to what Cynthia [Connolly] and I had previously organized.

So when I went back to D.C. that summer, I wanted to continue this kind of activist work. It just so happened that both Bikini Kill and Bratmobile were in D.C. that summer, so we got together and talked about different personal and philosophical issues. I'd read this book *Writing a Woman's Life* by Carolyn Heilbrun and wanted to spread her ideas, about how women needed to live their own adventures and write their own stories. ... I facilitated discussions on everything from sexuality and relationships to civil disobedience to feminist theory and capitalism to groups such as the Diggers, Situationists, and Black Panthers.

We also talked a lot about women in music. It was a very heady time! So much that was happening revolved around a group house called The Embassy. I encouraged girls to get their ideas across and to be creative. One thing that came out of this was more zines. Another was that we had girl jams at The Embassy, where I played music with Kathleen, Molly Neuman, Allison Wolfe, and Christina Billoette, and we all switched around on instruments. Kathleen suggested we get a band together for Girl Night at IPU in Olympia, and this led to Suture.

What was it like playing guitar in D.C.'s first all-female punk band, Chalk Circle, from 1981-1983?

Fun, exhilarating, exciting, scary. We didn't know what the hell we were doing! I knew how to play guitar because I'd gotten my first electric guitar when I was 13, but I had no idea how to be in a band. We had the motivation to just get up on stage and do it, so I look back at that time very fondly. We listened to other all- or mostly female bands like the Slits, Modettes, Bush Tetras, and Kleenex/Liliput, so they became our inspiration. I'd wanted to avoid the typical role for girl guitarists at that time,

which was to sing and play acoustic guitar, and that band allowed me to do that. Even though we ran up against a lot of ignorance, like guys saying to us, "You're good for girls," or not liking us purely because we were all female, we persevered and learned a lot. It was completely liberating.

How old were you when you first got into the D.C. hardcore/punk scene?

Seventeen. I'd gotten Patti Smith's "Gloria" 45 when I was in high school and started listening to punk after that, but didn't know anything about local punk. In my senior year I saw an ad in a local music mag for a volunteer to help with a new local record label, Limp Records. I recognized the owner, Skip Groff, from his record store Yesterday and Today, which was one of the few places in the D.C. area to buy punk records. So I contacted him, started helping him out on his label, and then he hired me to work at the store once I graduated high school. That's how I met a lot of people and found out about bands like the Bad Brains and Teen Idles [Ian Mackaye's band before Minor Threat].

What are your sound performances like?

I do different types of performances. Some are in the context of sound installations, others are collaborations with other musicians and artists or even the audience. They all revolve around using sound as a material and incorporating specific actions to trigger or manipulate the sounds. I've also done a lot of recorded music recently that I think of as a different aspect of my other sound work. I still play guitar, but nowadays I'm just as likely to create on the computer. ... I try to explore the viewer/viewed dynamic in different ways. For example, I have an installation, "I'm Here I'm Gone," where the audience creates the piece, both visually and aurally. My only part is to enter the space at specific intervals and document the event by taking Polaroids, which are then exhibited on the walls. I compose the situation and let others perform.

How did you and Banned in D.C. co-author Cynthia Connolly (Dischord Records, Venus No. 7) decide to confront sexism in punk/hardcore in an issue of Maximum Rock'n Roll (in 1988)?

We were frustrated with the idea of MRR's "Women's Issue" because we thought every issue should include women! And we thought that if we were going to talk about women's issues, we had to include men. So we decided to document a discussion group among a lot of the males and females involved in the D.C. punk scene at that time. We thought it would be interesting to come up with some questions about our music community and how females were perceived, and to ask these questions in two separate moderated groups: first with the females, then with the males. Then some of the females and males got together for a third group to discuss the different answers. It was a real eye-opener! I think it made a lot of the guys realize for the first time how things in our tight-knit music scene weren't that much different from mainstream society.

To read the other half of this interview, visit the Venus Zine Web site at www.venuszine.com.