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## Hot on their trail

For partners Daniela Sea and Bitch, being sexy means being open to adventures—whether starring in *The L Word*, taking their music on the road, or appearing in the boldly explicit movie *Shortbus* By Kera Bolonik

**S**ince her debut last season on *The L Word*, the sexily androgynous actress Daniela Sea and her fabulous dreadlocked girlfriend, the innovative feminist rocker Bitch, a.k.a. Capital B, have emerged as one of the hottest and most

radical lesbian couples ever to hit the mainstream. The mere fact of this visibility is something of a miracle: With their uncompromised, politically charged artistic vision and their dyke-licious presence, these two are a long way from the glamorous Ellens and Portias of the world.

Perhaps that's what appealed to filmmaker John Cameron Mitchell, who cast them in his new movie, *Shortbus*, before Sea nabbed her *L Word* role as the transgender Moira/Max. In the film, Sea's and Bitch's characters are among a "handful of prudes," Bitch jokes, who don't take part in



Sea (left) and Bitch

the explicit on-screen sex that has created controversy around the film. But Bitch was there for its tremendously well-received premiere at the Cannes Film Festival on May 20. "The film is so moving," Bitch says. "It's like John Cameron Mitchell's love letter to New York City."

Mitchell connected with them in 2004, one week after Sea moved cross-country with Bitch and their mini pinscher-dachshund-Chihuahua mix, Romano, to live in Bitch's Brooklyn, N.Y., apartment.

"Being cast in *Shortbus* sealed our decision to stay in New York," says Sea, who had just started auditioning for acting roles while waiting tables in the West Village restaurant Cowgirl. *Shortbus* was Sea's first acting job—a life-changing event for the Los Angeles native, who hadn't pur-

sued extensive dramatic training in part because she couldn't see acting fitting in with the kind of life she wanted. "What I had seen growing up around Hollywood in the world of women seemed incongruous with the art that I loved," she explains. "But I used to take improvisation classes, and when I moved to New York, I realized how much I missed it."

Detroit native Bitch, on the other hand, graduated with a BFA in acting from DePaul University in Chicago before applying her performance talents to her now-defunct queercore band Bitch and Animal. These days Bitch bewitches her audience with fearless lyrics, a bold, clear voice, and a host of string instruments from violin to bass guitar. Her new CD, *Make This/Break This*, is due out from Kill Rock Stars in October.

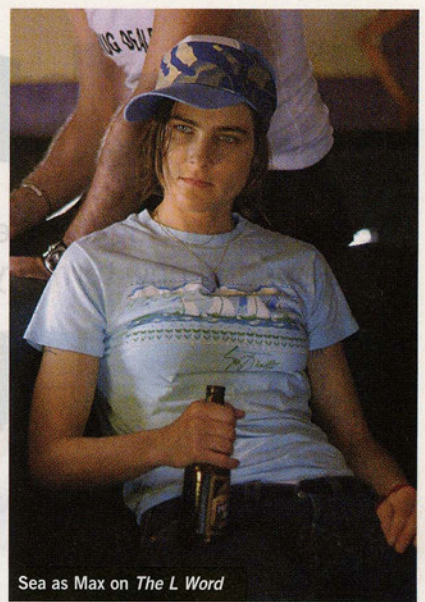
Sea is quick to point out Bitch's influence on her acting: "Being with someone who had been nurtured as an artist and had a positive experience at school and who respects what I do really helped me understand how to take myself and my work seriously."

The two artists have nurtured each other for the past four years, ever since they first locked eyes at the annual National Queer Arts Festival in San Francisco. Sea, who had left home and her hippie parents at 16, had just returned to California to visit her family after what she describes as "vagabonding" all over the world. If not for love, she might never have moved back to the States. "I was living outside a capitalist society, living communally with some friends," explains Sea. "But I saw Bitch perform and I thought, *Wow, she's really deep*. We spent an evening together and I felt everything just converge."

Bitch adds, "We both did."

For the next two years, they lived in Bitch's RV, traveling to gigs, stopping here and there. Because Sea is a vegan, the couple tried to maintain a macrobiotic life on the road. Bitch learned to cook entire meals in a coffeepot when they stayed in hotels. "We were making miso soup at truck stops," Bitch says with a laugh. Sea adds, "In a way, our life on the road became an art form in and of itself."

A former punk rocker and an autodidact by nature, Sea taught herself to play guitar, piano, and pennywhistle, which led to many jam sessions in the RV. "Then Bitch taught me how to harmonize with her," says Sea. "But singing together was just for us, for fun."



Sea as Max on *The L Word*

More recently, Sea and Bitch felt a musical collaboration "organically emerging." This past spring the duo staged their first public performance in New York with their multimedia project the Exciting Conclusion. Enlisting a drummer, Sea and Bitch played weekly sold-out shows at cabaret spot Mo Pitkin's House of Satisfaction in the East Village and at Joe's Pub, where the audience included Tony-nominated lesbian performer Lisa Kron. "I was so excited to see Lisa there," says Sea. "It was the day after her amazing play *Well* closed, and she said there was nowhere else she'd rather be than seeing our show. That blew me away."

Summer is a busy season for both partners: Sea spends long hours on set for *The L Word* (and refuses to divulge any plotlines), and Bitch is performing all over North America, with stops including the San Francisco and Toronto gay pride parades and the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival. But balancing home life and wanderlust has become a specialty. "When one of us is stressing—sometimes Daniela is shooting long days for five days in a row, or I'll be recording for long hours—the other makes the home," says Bitch. "We don't spend a lot of time apart, and we trade off taking care of each other."

For Sea, it's that dynamic that makes her feel grounded. "Whenever Bitch, Romano, and I are together, that's what I consider home." ■

*Bolonik is the author of The L Word: Welcome to Our Planet.*