

*Artifacts

WHERE MUSIC & CULTURE COLLIDE

SCENE STEALER/SCOREBOARD/SCREENTIME/KNOW YOUR PRODUCTS/WORDS OF WISDOM/FIELD NOTES

HARP

May 2007

THE SEA WORD

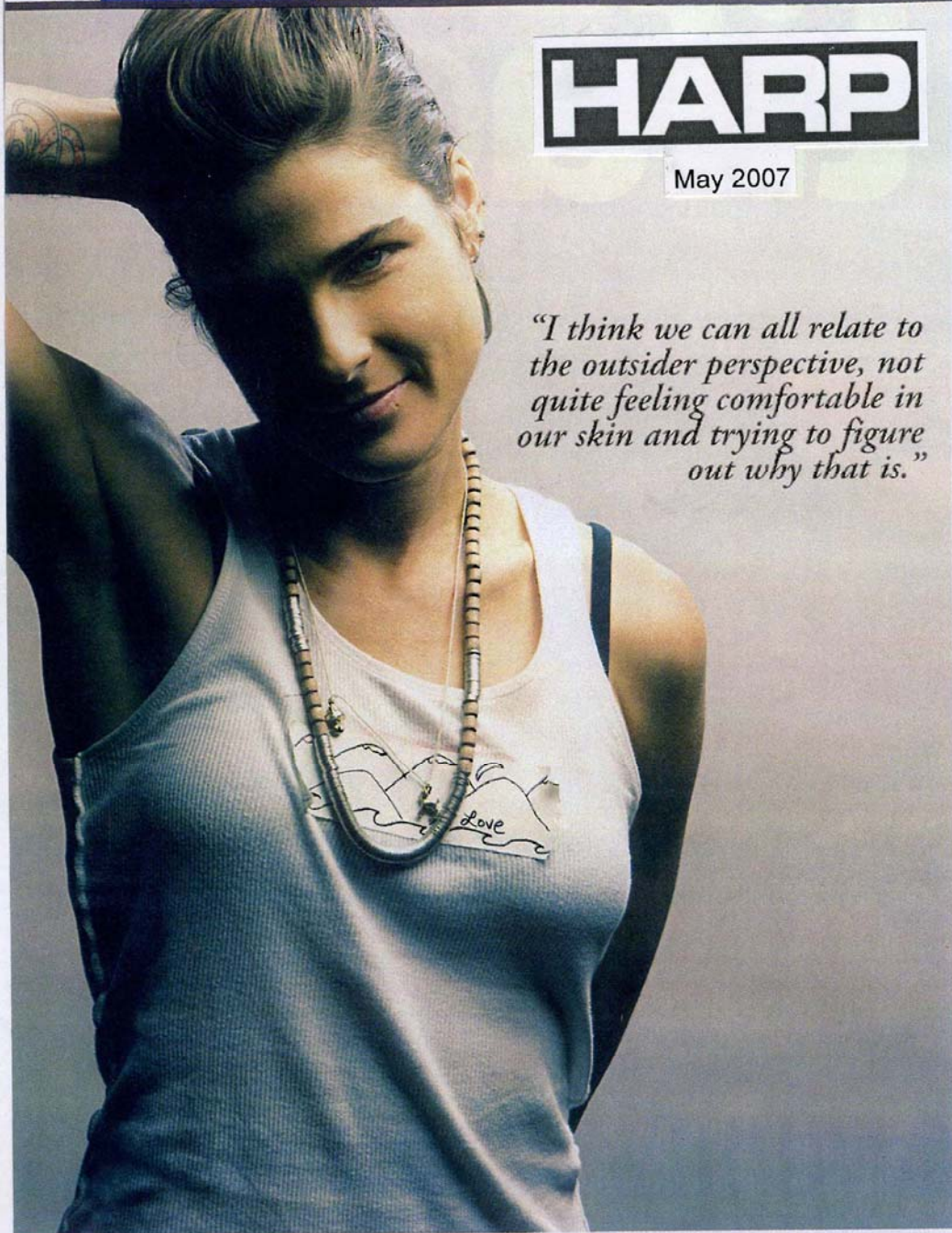
*Actress-musician-every(wo)man Daniela Sea blows up the screen on *The L Word* and in *Itty Bitty Titty Committee*. BY GILLIAN G. GAAR*

IN THE EARLY '90S, WHEN SHE WAS all of 16, Daniela Sea left her home base of Los Angeles for Berkeley. "I didn't know anybody there," she says, "but I was always kind of an outsider in L.A. I was just searching for people who were like me." Unsurprisingly, Sea found her way to the Gilman Street Project, the legendary all-ages, volunteer-run venue best known for hosting Green Day in the band's early days. "You used to go every Friday and Saturday night," Sea recalls. "It didn't really matter who was playing. I'd been going to punk shows in L.A., and they had a real different vibe about them. Gilman was more politically orientated and more artsy—there was a kind of a sweeter energy about Gilman."

One of the bands Sea caught at Gilman was Bikini Kill, her introduction to the riot grrrl scene, which she later experienced firsthand when she accompanied her roommate's band, Econochrist, to Olympia, Wash., where bands like Bikini Kill and Heavens to Betsy were busy promoting "revolu-

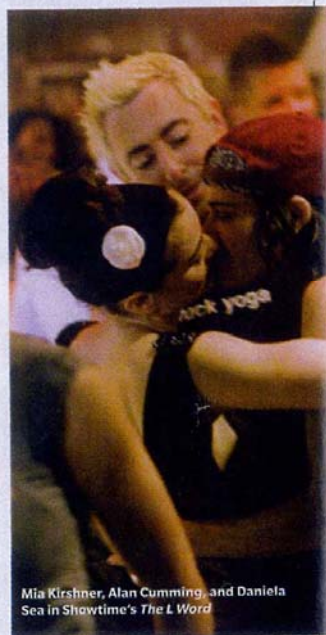
HARP

May 2007



"I think we can all relate to the outsider perspective, not quite feeling comfortable in our skin and trying to figure out why that is."

trion grrrl style now!" Fast-forward to 2007, and Sea and riot grrrl have crossed paths again in *Itty Bitty Titty Committee*, a film Sea describes as "a feminist action movie," directed by Jamie Babbit (*But I'm A Cheerleader*), which



Mia Kirshner, Alan Cumming, and Daniela Sea in Showtime's *The L Word*

boasts a hot soundtrack of not only Bikini Kill and Heavens to Betsy, but also their post-riot-grrrl incarnations, Le Tigre and Sleater-Kinney, plus Team Dresch, Slant Six, Slumber Party and the Need (whose guitarist Radio Sloan also wrote original music for the film). The sharp-eyed will spy Hole's Patty Schemel playing drums in a band called "the Cheerleaders" that appears in the film.

Itty Bitty, which premiered at the Berlin Film Festival in February and had its U.S. premiere at SXSW in March, gives the convention of the teen movie a modern twist. Instead of Annette joining Frankie at the local beach party, Anna (Melonie Diaz), a put-upon employee at an L.A. plastic surgery clinic who's just been dumped by her girlfriend, joins Sadie (Nicole Vicious) and her punk pals in the CIA—Clits In Action—a radical feminist group who engage in such tactics as defacing sexist billboards.

Sea plays Calvin, a soldier just returned from Iraq. "She's kind of lost in a way," says Sea. "And



MORE TO SEA

Man E. Faces

To pass as a man in India, Sea cut and oiled her hair, wore traditional men's clothing and bound her breasts. In Pakistan she lived with a Muslim family and wore the traditional female garb, a chador. She was also a half-man-half-woman in the circus.

Juggle Fever

Acting, music, sexual identities—just three of the things Daniela Sea juggles.

The other is fire.

Nom de Flume

Sea is a pseudonym, chosen to honor the ocean.

The Ze Word

Sea's inventive pronoun 'ze' describes people who are neither he nor she.

When In Romania...

...Sea also lived as a man.

HARP

May 2007

then these girls find her and give her a purpose—she's this explosives specialist and they recruit her! I loved *But I'm A Cheerleader*, and this just seemed like a special opportunity. It definitely wasn't for the money; there wasn't much money to go around. But to be part of something like this seemed really cool. And I liked the character a lot."

For Sea, working on *Itty Bitty* was yet another project that gave her "that good feeling of everything coming back around." Back in the Gilman days, Sea had taken over Matt Freeman's place in the Gr'ups, when he decided to devote himself full-time to Rancid, and her second band, Cypher in the Snow, played shows with Sleater-Kinney. Years later, Sea joined the cast of Showtime's lesbian soap opera, *The L Word*, as Midwest transplant Moira, making the transition to "Max" via some illicitly acquired hormones. And at the club where Max is to pick up his first dose, the band on stage is—drum roll, please—Sleater-Kinney. "It seemed really surreal, because they were part of my reality already," Sea admits. Even more surreal, perhaps, was the subsequent scene, with Sleater-Kinney still providing background music as Max makes out with Alan Cumming's character in the club's back room.

Sea's entire career has seen her moving from the indie world to the mainstream and back again. After touring Europe with the Gr'ups, she toured the continent again with a performing arts troupe. "Instead of touring with a punk band, this was something that you could bring anywhere," she explains. "You could go to a village in the middle of nowhere and hang out with the people in Eastern Europe. It just seemed a practical way to live in another country and experience life, a way to participate instead of being a tourist."

Sea then put her musical interests on hold to pursue acting. Her first film role was in John Cameron Mitchell's racy *Shortbus*, and she made appearances in videos by Scissor Sisters and Bright Eyes, but her big break came when she passed on a reel of her work to a friend who was writing for *The L Word*. Sea landed an audition and five days later was shooting her first scene. Moira/Max added a decidedly butch element to *The L Word*'s femmey landscape, and one could say it was a role Sea had been preparing for all her life; fascinated by pictures of David Bowie during his Aladdin Sane era, she'd later experimented with gender bending by creating a half man/half woman character during her European performance troupe days, and during one six-month period actually lived as a man in India.

"None of my friends thought [the role] was bizarre at all," she agrees. "They're like, 'Oh yeah, that's fitting with your crazy life.' And as an actor, it was a great opportunity; I think we

can all relate to the outsider perspective, not quite feeling comfortable in our skin and trying to figure out why that is. And Max definitely tells a story that's never been told, on TV anyway. And the show itself is pretty exceptional for TV in the sense that it's pretty political."

In addition to *The L Word* and promoting *Itty Bitty*, which is currently on the film fest circuit, Sea has plenty of other projects going, from auditions, to her own screenplays, to occasional performances with the Exciting

Conclusion, "kind of a performance art show" she put together with her girlfriend Bitch, formerly of Bitch and Animal.

"I am interested in trying to show sides of the world that don't normally make it into the media," she says. "Each person's voice or style is unique, and what makes it unique is who's telling it. I like the idea of being this renaissance person, who is a little bit of an anthropologist, a little bit of a musician, and a little bit of a writer." By most standards, Sea's already there. **H**