

THE 24th MICHIGAN WOMYN'S MUSIC FESTIVAL - 1999

TRANSCRIPT

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1. A NATION OF WOMEN

We were a group of five; that got in my Chevy van. We had a back seat, and we took camping equipment. Tent, coolers; and we made a mattress in the back. And then, we had to put something in the back of the van.

That said we are on our way to Michigan.

Michigan or Bust, you know.... And rainbow stickers were not in yet, so we had to put a sign in your car... And on the way we would see people, going there; and we'd be tooting the horns and we were just... you know, rolling along to the festival

It was a nation of women , and that I think was most memorable

"Have a good time at the festival.

'Number Three'.

Welcome to Michigan.

Welcome, Welcome.

Hello."

Putting up the tent was fun... It was like living in a big tenement. Tent City. You know, it was tent city. You could tell some.one, I'm right near the red tent; and the next morning, the would be 400 red tents.

Whoo hoo. We're gonna tell you what's going to happen during the time that you are here. After that you are going into the next tent and you are going to sign up for work shifts. Two work shifts that are four hours long.

It was fun chopping food with everyone. That was really nice, 'cause you got to meet different people and hang out. Heh heh heh... I loved the food. We had a lot of tofu, and a lot of rice.

This is my seventeenth festival and my fourteenth festival working here; and... it's absolutely a part of me. I do everything that I can to be here and I never miss it. I'm the clean up mama and this is my territory and has been for like - six years. And over here we do dishwashing with all the clean food after we cook for five thousand women.

“ We’re the kitchen witches and we’re here to say: we’re the clean up bitches, and we do it our way. “

I don’t know how I heard about it. Umm. But, maybe, being in the city, we heard about it.

Umm... Online? We were just sitting around. I knew that it happened every year.”

“I was very intrigued; you know, ‘cause she showed me the pictures... and I was dying to go.”

Things are so well organized; and all of the work seems to be cooperative and thought out. I mean,,that has really been impressive upon me”

I’m having a good time so far; and we’ve learned how to mop a tent with a t-shirt. So things are good. Found some really good camping sites. And I like the way that they take care of the older women, the women with children, things like that. It’s really inclusive, and the women of color tent and all that. So I like it. For my first time, it feels really good.

All the different tent areas; you had the RV, you know. And there was a wooded area.

And there was a spiritual area...

I can’t remember the other ones. S & M area, drug free, drug tolerant.

I loved being in a women only space.

You know, taking a shower - outside; and not being concerned about any thing
Its just a good feeling. It’s a good place to come and exhale.

I can’t walk around like this in the world, and not be afraid that I’m going to be attacked by some crazy person. It’s so fun to be free, and comfortable and appreciated.

I had to get over the culture shock first. The festival culture shock that is... because you really don’t have anything like this in Australia, so you don’t really have safe spaces were women walk around doing whatever, in whatever. And it’s sort of like for the first day my eyes were hanging out of my head and then after that I got used to it. Heh Heh.

It’s kind of fun. It feels neat.

I feel like this is really the only opportunity that we get to strip down naked, try on different colors; you know...

Where else can you come and have only women on the land? And it’s also a place to really come see what is happening next. I feel here is the place where the next round of politics is bubbling up. The next round of art is bubbling up. The next ways that the

culture is changing are happening here. It's kind of like you can come here and see what's going to be out in the culture in the next twenty years

2. THE WORKSHOPS

Remember the Workshops? We all would say where are you going - Well, I'm going to this one... and that one. I went to tons of workshops

Going to these workshops and hearing women talk; and being in a really comfortable, safe space...

You're all my children. Yes.

Clapping. You belong to me.... Is there anyone who would like to ask a question?

I don't know whether it transformed me. I loved being in a woman only space. It was safe. It was provocative in that ideas came up.

Today, I'm doing a workshop on Y2K; and why I want lesbians and women to prepare everywhere.

I've been in martial arts for... since 1971; and I thought it would be something I can partake give to other people. And just teach, and I love doing it. I love teaching women.

I just finished doing anal sex and pleasure workshop , and the other one that I do is sex toys 101.

I've sniffed on the edge of the Lesbian PolyAmory one. Which has been cool.

Music: "Rat tat tat Drum beat"

It's like a community thing; and everybody quilts. And everybody does stitching. And at the end of the festival; and one lucky Dyke goes home with the quilt.

You went to all the political ones. I went to all the fun ones.

I went to political ones. That's true. That's true. Yours were hot and heated and heavy, and argumentative.

I did all the racism workshops the antisemitism workshops, the dis-ability workshops....

The a...

There was a history one? Wasn't there an archive?...

The child sexual abuse workshops.

This women had the whole - twenty women; crying and bawling, and blowing their noses in handkerchiefs. It was so emotional.

I went to a self defense intensive that was two days long. It was great. It gave us an overview of different kinds of martial arts; and some street fighting things; including just sensing, not only how to react, but how to prevent things.

Most women were attacked real close up. So if somebody comes up real close to you; you want to get closer to them. So here you track up, you have their chin up, and here you just bring them down. Straight down.

What we enjoy the most is that we are able to teach them one of two, or three or four forms of Latin American dance.

If you want to get very close to each other, like we have right there, make sure that one of your legs is between the other person's legs.

Okay now, try an inverse

I enjoy sharing my culture, sharing my music, sharing my dancing and sharing my spirit.

You had some hostile space. With the...

with the Women born women. Remember some of the signs on the workshops said "Womyn born women only"

It's a beautiful thing. We always think that it should be women only born. So, that's our two cents.

There's a group camping out outside the gates here now. Camp Trans... For women who have made that change. They've changed over, they are men now; and they miss coming here to the festival.

Like this woman I know who is biologically a man, but she acts her life as a woman. She wanted to come. She is just so, like miserable. She can't be here; I mean, she has a penis.

Sometimes we get a little bit confused. Who is a woman,? A transgender, A transsexual. That's for the very deep thinkers and publishers to debate. As a dancer, I like to enjoy all of this women spirit around me.

I know that a percentage of women will have an epiphany right here on this land, their lives will change, it will never be the same again, and it will 'most always be incredibly for the better

For me it was a workshop I went to on Lesbian Parents. And so, at that point I said, you know; wow; this is cool. This is what I want to do. I am going to have a baby! And it was after that workshop that I decided I'm going to be a parent. And that was a revelation in my life. That was was the most important thing that came from Michigan for me.

In come from India; and these things they never really got discussed.

But the important thing for me is being part of creating this place that launches women into their true lives; into who they truly are...

“ Drumming sounds “

3. SEPARATIST UTOPIA

Well, I was a lesbian. That's what possessed me to go. To be with women, and my friends. And... And it's great. It's small town lesbian community. And it's wonderful.

Music: “Sing a song for her freedom, I want to sing about her love”

I feel like I'm in a really hot spot when I come here. Even though there not that many women, here there's only five thousand, everyone here is so committed to their beliefs, and like to sort of bringing this utopian vision into reality; that it's exciting.

Ah, To me it's a celebration of women - of womyn's bodies, of womyn's music, of women's history. It's a safe space in which we are able to learn from each other. In which we are able to express ourselves freely and creatively, and Its amazing, spiritual, educational opportunity for all women.

Michigan is about women experiencing freedom; to be ourselves, to be empowered - without the immediate threat of male violence.

I have to be here. Find the space to take back to my community, the health and healing that I gather.

I have made a concerted effort to live in women's community and lesbian community.

Just being here gives me a sense of calm and peace. And It's sort of my - where I ground myself every year.

It's a good feeling. It's a good place to come ad exhale. Mmmm. Ah heh
Song: “What goes up must come right Down...”

This; for a whole week - just women - is brilliant. You really get a your sense of identity back.

I feel like having Michigan here has been such a gift for the young ones. And particularly for my niece. To be able to experience it. Thirteen years.

It's a safe place. It's a wonderful place. My daughters have grown up here with me.

There's this trend of empowerment of women that every one who comes here sees the things that women can do and is thrilled by them; and feels like we can do things ourselves we might not have thought we could do before.

You know, women only can do all of these things. In mean, such a big event. And all the physical work and you know, all kinds of work; women do. And this is really a very nice experience for me.

It is so thrilling to see the next generation of misbehaving women take it their way, make it their way.

"Travel into a world that began - with the power - The power - of vibration" [loud]. Huh! Ugh!

Develop music festivals that are produced by, and for lesbians, bisexuals, okay. Ah... women.

I think that Michigan is the sort of thin edge of the wedge of lesbian culture. Like, I think what happens here is that there is sort of this older community and there's kinda younger women; and they come in and there's a lot of clash; and there's always a lot of debate about whatever the hot issues are - whether it's SM or trans issues; and that things start getting hammered out here. And then gradually it gets into the rest of lesbian culture. So, I feel like I'm in a really hot spot..

I'm a lesbian, dyke, separatist out in the world; even here. Even here and out in the world. And Michigan reinforces that every year. Can you believe it?

I would identify as a lesbian, if anything...

You know the word 'lesbian'; or all of these identifying labels are just labels for the box. But there's more stuff in it that defines you more carefully because every one of us is different.

You're a lesbian. I've slept with lesbians. But, people who consider themselves "lesbian"; are you talking about in your attitude, or are you taking about in your sexuality?

I'm not bisexual or anything. But, my friends who are say in a lesbian community, they feel like they are taboo.

I have a problem, if you sleep with men; and you want to sleep with me.

Music: "Vogueing sounds"

How long is it going to take for you to take that T-shirt off ?
She had it off earlier in fact. It. It.. I'm having some issues actually...
But, you know; I am encouraging her to be all that she can be...

It showed me how we are when we're together - without the antagonism and the culture of men.

Michigan to me, is my other family. It's my culture, I'm half hispanic and half Michigan.

Just being here. Oh, My God, This is heaven. Heaven on Earth. I never want to leave. I'll live here the rest of my life. I mean Oh, My God. Every day is just a blast. A total blast.

I think that it's really relieving; and it's also a welcome break. I'm almost not looking forward to going back to the other world - you know; having to strap on my bra, and you know, maybe, put some make-up on...

You know, it's a peaceful feeling. And it was most prevalent for all of us when we got off the land and had to drive to a gas station. And we saw men for the first time in 5 days or so . It was like Wow. We had never even - you know; We forgot about men. And, there they were again. It was a shock. It was Culture Shock. Men, oh my God!

Musical Interlude. If you want it, come and get it. I know how much you do. Girl. If you work it, if you're worthy; I just might give it to you. I am the it girl, and it could happen to you. It girl. I am the it girl, and it could happen to you. It girl.

Hmm. Ha Ha.

Singing " What goes I must come right - down.

4. THE CONCERTS

It was sweet. It was huge. It was huge. A lot of women... Yes.

Music: Amazon Women Rise. Amazon Women, Weaving Rainbows in the Sky

No one really stayed up late for the dances; we were exhausted.

Sweet Honey. Tret was there, probably.

" I'll always be a tomboy girl; I'll always be a tomboy girl. I'll always be a tomboy girl. I'll always be a girl."

Beinvenue vinght quatraeme ans du Michigan

Blu Blu Ochen Horosho

I want to welcome all the women to the 24th annual Michigan Women's Music Festival

Que viva las mujeres

Chig gu whe whe whe whe!

We got the amazing show for you tonight. We've got so much talent, we've got incredible performances. And, then there's the show.

Are you Muchacha crazy too? Were you born muchacha crazy? Me too!

Michigan is also a mikva. Because It's a sacred place; and it's for women only. And we come here to cleanse ourselves, and celebrate ourselves; and get strong.

Oh, yes. Oh Yes. Women who stay wet together can see the future!

Music: Klesmer Band - Viva Schntizenagle.

This warm incredibly accepting loving enthusiastic audience of all women; which was an amazing experience...

Wade in the Water... In the beginning, there was a female sea. For two and a half billion years - oceans, and all life forms were female.

This is a very revolutionary event happening here. That happens every year. 'Cause we are changing the world here! It's more than just pickin' up chicks. We're changing the world through Love and Goddess worship!

Getting back here; some of these women from the cities have never even been in the woods. Yeah. And It can be really a powerful opportunity for them to connect. Um Hmmm.

We fought so hard for turf. I really can't blame anybody for wanting to be on our turf; because it's the best damn place to be in the world.

Best place to pick up women. Absolute best.

This is my 24th Michigan. I've been to them all. In fact I even bought the first ticket sold to the first Michigan.

Come to Michigan Womyn's Festival. It's well worth the experience.

I really want you to come to Michigan with me. Because I want to have this experience with you - not just by myself.

I just had a real good time and wanted to be part of everything. And wanted to know everything and learn everything and go to everything.

That we shared... space and time, and information, and awarenesses and fun, and laughing and crying... It was wonderful. And I would do it again, and again, and again..

Music: "So pack and say Bye. Bye - Bye. Bye, Bye, Bye..."

Music: "Amazon Women Weaving Rainbows in the Sky. Amazon Women. Rise. Rise. Rise. Rise. Amazon Women. Rise."

