

Locals 'band' together for benefit show

B-GLAD Benefit

featuring Gravity's Pull,
Kid Sister, Prophets of Circe
and Flyin' Mice

February 7, 9 p.m.

Cat's Cradle

Tickets: \$5 at the door

Opportunity is knocking with a vengeance. You'd best be ready. This town hasn't exactly been knocking down doors to show support for its queers in recent years. Now it's here, and it's offering us money. And music — great music.

On February 7, Cat's Cradle will hold a B-GLAD benefit show featuring Kid Sister, Prophets of Circe, Flyin' Mice and Gravity's Pull.

The charming Mindy Dawn Friedman, who will emcee the event, said she was glad to lend her talents to the cause.

"I think it's important to support a group that provides such a vital service to the community," she said. "At a time when hate crimes are on the rise and laws are being passed to discriminate against homosexuals, it is important to provide as many positive and uplifting events as possible to show the strength of togetherness."

Lucy Sweetman

Friedman went on to add encouragement to potential party-goers. "I hope everyone comes out to support B-GLAD and enjoys an evening of pulsating entertainment."

There are two people responsible for organizing this activity ... two people, probably not of this earth ... two people lost in the wilderness of their flyers, phone calls and organizational stress. Karen Lally and Chris Berini are B-GLAD's own personal Social Co-chairs, and they are the pulse that keeps the social blood of B-GLAD flowing.

Lally said she is very excited about the concert. "It's great to see so many local artists and performers supporting us, especially bands that are so popular in the Triangle," she said. "We need to get as many people to the concert as possible, not just for the funding but also to show that a group like B-GLAD can have widespread support."

B-GLAD leaders said they are very appreciative of the bands' efforts to support the queer cause in Chapel Hill. The bands are performing at no cost to B-GLAD.



Ruth Vienneau (l) of Kid Sister says the concert will be 'a real hoot.'

Ruth Vienneau of Kid Sister was excited to be involved. "We have 100 percent support for B-GLAD, and it sounds like it is going to be a real hoot."

B-GLAD leaders said money raised at the benefit concert will not be put to waste. As a student-run organization, B-GLAD is in constant need of funds, they said. Not only is

this benefit going to be the biggest party to rock Chapel Hill since Wonder Woman, but it also puts money into the bank for B-GLAD. And without that extra money, B-GLAD may one day see its office and its programs go spiraling down the commode — all because of an arbitrary decision by Student Congress.

But for now, it is time for B-

GLAD members and supporters to have a lot of laughs and hear some really cool music at Cat's Cradle. And it is time to get a point across to UNC.

B-GLAD is here to stay and to prosper and to have fun. The group is also here to kick homophobic butt.

Don't miss out on the best knees-up this side of the galaxy.

The return of the Paris burn

Paris Is Burning

directed by
Jennie Livingston

Video, 1991



Before I first saw Jennie Livingston's *Paris Is Burning*, a friend recommended it to me, claiming that even though it was a documentary, it was just like *La Cage aux Folles*. As a result, I went to the theater heartened by the notion that I was going to see a comedy, only to find that I was experiencing a very poignant and affecting documentary — one that, although containing many humorous moments, was hardly a non-fiction counterpart to *La Cage*. Recently out on video, *Paris Is Burning* gives the viewer a

Grant Moss

crash course in the society of the Harlem drag balls. The drag queens who compete in the balls are members of different houses — for example, the House of Xtravaganza or the House of Labeija, each of which constitutes a kind of family for its members. Each house is presided over by a mother, who is usually "legendary" (i.e., a veteran who has won a number of trophies in drag competitions).

Livingston shows the balls in all their glory; they transcend their modest settings (YMCA's and Elks Club halls) through sheer (sensory overload). The drag queens present themselves not only in spec-

tacular designer gowns, but also in business suits and military uniforms, as well as many other types of attire. College students, millionaires, aristocrats — the list of different categories seems endless.

The performances at the balls are impressive and run the gamut from the sublime to the ridiculous and back again. Among the more striking ones: Willi Ninja voguing at a speed that would appear to be somewhere around Warp 9; Octavia St. Laurent giving a startling portrait of a fashion supermodel; and Dorian Corey dispensing bits of drag folk wisdom as he applies his makeup with all the concentration of a neurosurgeon.

Livingston's directorial style is noteworthy as well; her use

of fast edits creates some stunning juxtapositions. When she cuts from scenes at a ball to scenes of people walking through New York City, the "normal people" (most of whom are middle-class whites) appear to be as much in costume as the drag queens are with their pretension and demeanor cut to ribbons by the razor-like parody of the queens.

At this point, most of you are probably thinking: "That's all well and good, but you started this review by saying that this movie wasn't a comedy, that the performances are great and that the film is often hilarious. What gives?"

Good question. The problem is that as much as I rejoice in the performances, Livingston forces the viewer to confront the sadness of the situation which most of the

drag queens face.

One sentiment that a number of the queens echo — particularly the younger ones — is that the balls are the only places where they can be themselves. In short, they are trapped in a society in which they are only allowed to be themselves a tiny fraction of the time. All of their energies, perhaps even all of their lives, are channelled into an effort to win a trophy at the ball.

So *Paris Is Burning* is not *La Cage aux Folles*. Instead, it is a well-produced and thoughtful documentary that introduces its viewers to the the Harlem drag ball scene without allowing them to bask in complacency. The ball scene is presented in all its complexity, with no attempt to oversimplify or sugar-coat either the culture or its participants. It's well worth the rental price.