

The FRONT PAGE

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Evolution: A Conversation With Alison Bechdel On Politics, Culture, Gay Men And Dykes To Watch Out For

Just in time for the 20th anniversary of Alison Bechdel's groundbreaking comic series "Dykes To Watch Out For," the series has moved from Firebrand Books to Alyson Publications.

Dykes And Sundry Other Carbon-Based Life-Forms To Watch Out For, (October 2003) will be the first book published under the new agreement. The 10th book in the series, it collects strips published in gay, lesbian and alternative papers during the years 1999 through 2002.

Bechdel weathered the closure of former "Dykes" publisher Firebrand Books, and the subsequent collapse of LPC, the distributor that purchased Firebrand, before finding a new home at the Los Angeles based Alyson.

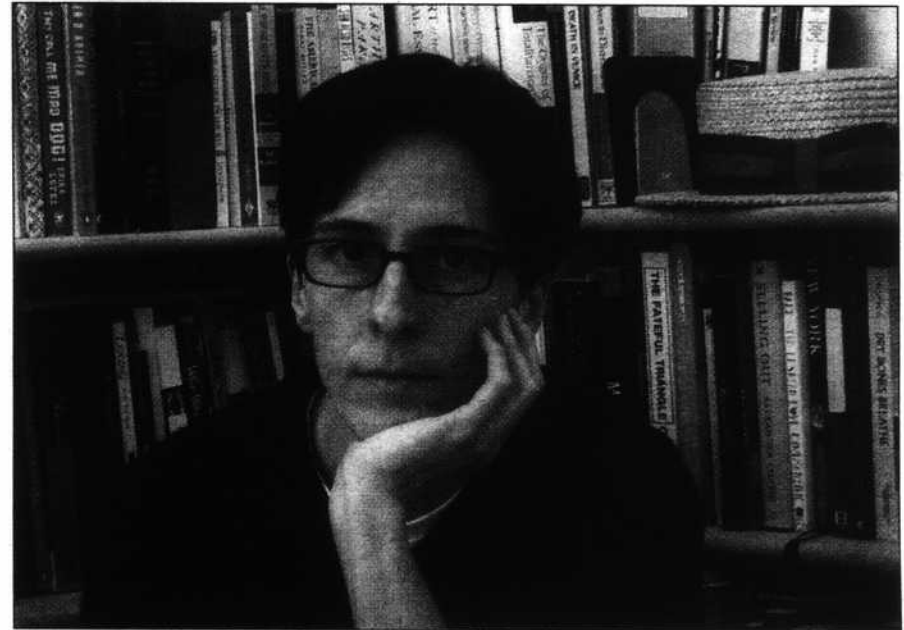
While Bechdel has continued writing the strip she began in 1983, there has not been a new "Dykes to Watch Out For" book since 2000, when Firebrand published *Post Dykes to Watch Out For*. Gay and lesbian booksellers cite the absence of a new title in the series, (which has sold over 200,000 copies) each year as one of the reasons for decreased sales in their stores.

Viewing the past 20 years of "Dykes to Watch Out For" is nothing short of a

social and cultural history of America viewed through the lens of the lesbian and gay movement.

"Dykes to Watch Out For" began in July 1983 as individual unrelated single panel cartoons published in "Womanews," a feminist monthly newsletter. After nine months of single panel cartoons, Bechdel switched to strip format, and after a year began self-syndicating the strip in other newspapers. In 1986 she began writing the strip biweekly instead of monthly, and in January 1987 she introduced the characters of Mo and Lois. The strip has been following the saga of life in their community ever since.

"Dykes to Watch Out For," while unquestionably political, is much more than an editorial cartoon. Unlike "Doonesbury," to which it is often compared, "Dykes to Watch Out For" reaches deeper than the headlines. The rela-



have certainly shared space with the largest cultural and political stories of the last two decades, but it has been the story of their lives that has kept us coming back for more.

Front Page: You write in the introduction to the new book that you set out to write about a subculture, and now that subculture is disintegrating. Some might say it's evolving.

Alison Bechdel: The sodomy ruling yesterday brought up a lot of feelings about this "evolution." Did you hear about the scene in the Castro yesterday? Some gay military vets sang the national anthem, took down the rainbow flag, and raised the American one?

FP: Are you serious?

AB: For real. It's in the NY Times
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