

DECOMPOSITION

BY D A LATIMER

Stop the presses, Mac. Rip out this week's copy. Everybody's gone to Bethel this Friday leaving Latimer to hold the bag, and sure enough, *Kiss* gets busted. And *Screw* too, and as far as I know *Pleasure* and *The New York Review of Sex and Politics* into the bargain. I hate to keep harping on this point—it seems as though I'm doing a porn-bust story every week—but shit, they keep doing it. 'Kowabunga! You're under arrest.'

Let us look at the people who keep getting arrested in these obscenity forays (in the halfhour allotted me before absolute deadline), and at the products they publish. Perhaps this can give us an insight into why it's so dreadfully hard to push raunchy papers in this city.

Marv Grafton pushes *Pleasure*, the most financially successful of the five or six pornzines presently on the stands, and also a new publication called *Fun*, which goes under the aegis of a sexy satire magazine. Grafton I don't know too much about, he keeps to himself a lot and tries to avoid the demimondaine circles of the other hip smut publishers frequent. He's a hefty fellow with a moustache, rarely seen without his shades on. I have a suspicion he suffers from certain reservations about the propriety of peddling the shit he peddles, but then, he could be operating on the principle that the less prominence he gives himself the less he'll be hassled by the Administration of Public Morals. *Pleasure*, altogether, is pretty bad. Poor layout, rotten prose, no particular humour and a certain grim earnestness that grates on your foreskin. *Fun* is not much fun either—in a charitable moment, Al Goldstein called it 'a thirteen-year-old's idea of dirty jokes.' Actually, I wouldn't sell the thirteen-year-olds short.

Pleasure probably makes more money than any other pornzine. It gets good distribution because it doesn't fiddle with politics and social comment, nor does it go overboard on the more obscure aspects of sex. It's sort of the Weekly Reader of pornzines, the distributors can carry it around without getting weak in the knees from fear of the Red Squad.

Kiss, on the other hand, has been busted more often than any other pornzine, and the distributors and printers handle it as if it were *plastique*—very handy to keep around, but extremely volatile. It was in *Kiss* that pictures of people fucking were first offered to the population at large, a mistake *Kiss* has been careful not to make again. Joel Fabrikant takes the rap for this one. Jay Fab, as we call him, is a paunchy, muscular type, prematurely bald, who takes regular karate lessons—that sort of guy. 'Why don't you listen to me and do it my way?' he keeps asking the other guys. 'If I'd listened to you six months ago,' moans Al Goldstein, 'I'd be wearing a cement overcoat in the East River right now.' That's what Fabrikant's like.

Layout-wise, *Kiss* is lately climbing to the top of the soggy heap in esthetic appeal. I refer to the layout, which is being done by one of the craziest and best graphic artists on the publishing scene today. When *Kiss* comes out, the other publishers grind their teeth in envy and cut their production staffs' salaries. *Kiss* also enjoys the talents of the finest underground cartoonists, such as R. Crumb, Kim Deitch, and Spain Rodriguez. Your reporter here has been trying lately to scrawl off his own cartoon strip, a parody of *Archie*, to publish in *Kiss* alongside his irregular articles of erratic quality.

The most salient aspect of *Kiss*' content is its predilection for the weird and unusual in matters of sex. Bondage, Sadism, Necrophilia, Pedophilia, Leather Fetishes, Urolagnia, Corprophilia and plain old Scatology are *Kiss*' mainstay. Issues frequently read as if they were put together by the Vienna Masquerade Festival

Committee of 1892. No other pornzine does this, gets right into the roots of sexual tradition the way *Kiss* does. Her star intellectual columnist, Dr. Serge Von Yang-Yeovil, terms *Kiss*, 'The only general-audience magazine today that evinces a sense of history.'

The New York Review of Sex and Politics, on the other hand, is as modern as tomorrow's headlines. Aside from editor D. Melmoth (32), nobody on this one even approaches thirty years old. The publisher, Steve Heller, celebrated his nineteenth birthday not long before he was busted last month and written up in the *Times* as 35. It is Mark Heller and Edwards who pay the bail for the NYRS&P. Edwards is much like Grafton in the matter of anonymity, the caelesthenics he goes through to keep his name and face out of the limelight defy the imagination. Out of respect for his magazine, I will only comment that he has a wife and a darling baby and a singular lack of satiric proficiency. Heller is a sarcastic little fuck of borderline literacy who has no business messing with the copy of Ray Shultz.

But for Shultz, the NYRS&P might be written off as a bum lay. They have plenty other contributors, mostly from the Maurice Girodias-Olympia Press school of artsy porn, but it is Shultz who lends the paper its peppy amphetamine journalistic flavour; his coverage of events like the Gay Power Riots and the Bethel rock festival are the needle in this haystack of erotic spoons and pornographic eyedroppers. Alright, Shultz, let's see you write good similes in a lousy half hour before deadline.

Steve Heller's one contribution to the NYRS&P is its layout, and it is this that makes the magazine. He manages to mix a lot of sex with a generous amount of heavy politics and make the combination seem somehow apt. Presently he's engaged in a seething struggle with *Kiss* to come out with the finest-looking goddamn fuck sheet on the stands. Power to ya, Steve.

Before we get to *Screw*, I ought to squeeze in a few words about *Metropolitan Swinger* and *Sophisticated Swapper*, Mel Brandon's little advertising broadsides. It was Mel who placed all those creepy *Envoy* ads with EVO early last spring, the four pages of French and Greek Cultural Items in the ass end of every issue. It was the acid test for EVO's advertising people, and they flunked it soundly—the stupid bastards really sincerely couldn't tell the difference between these crawly little closet-queen notices and the grand raunch that appears in our classified section. Finally it dawned on them that EVO was losing a lot of readers because of these miserable things, and they tossed Mel out on his ass.

By that time, *Screw* and *Pleasure* were going strong, nobody'd been busted yet, so Mel took his considerable profits from the *Envoy* endeavor and started shoveling out these two items, *Swinger* and *Swapper*. He won't call them pornzines, but he will very noisily proclaim that they are all of a part with the *Screw* publishing tradition. Every chick's snatch in these two papers is tastefully covered over with a little black square reading *Metropolitan Swapper* or *Sophisticated Swinger*; many of these chicks, who promise unearthly delights to the respondents of these ads, suspiciously resemble professional models who pose for such fortysecondstreet efforts as *Flaming Flicks* and *Lesbians In Action*. Old Mel swears up and down that every offer in his two magazines is for real, but EVO is still getting enraged phone calls from people who wasted their money on those goddamn *Envoy* ads.

Neither of Brandon's brainstorms has ever been busted. When Goldstein was leaving the courtroom at 100 Centre Street after posting bail the last time, he passed the courthouse periodical stand and spied towering stacks of

Swinger and *Swapper*: 'Nice to know what the civil service set is reading these days,' he remarked sagely.

Mel Brandon's popularity with the Administration of Public Morals might possibly be accounted for by the fact that his corporation lawyer is said to be a powerful Tammany official. All Goldstein has going for him is the ACLU, and you know how popular they are with the civil service set. It was Goldstein who, by his own admission, invented the concept of the weekly pornzine. With a little help from his friend Jim Buckley, Al put *Screw* together and made it a synonym for fucking. Never before had the exposed female form been used in such a context. A strange phenomenon called masturbation followed the advent of *Screw*. The word 'sex' was written into the dictionary after the lexicographers saw what marvellous innovations Goldstein and Buckley were bringing to the human condition.

Every week, *Screw* brings us another chapter in the thrilling careers of Jim Buckley and Al Goldstein. Can a good Jewish boy from the Bronx, after flunking a police physical, fighting for God and Mother in Korea, turning out reams of lies for *The National Mirror*, spying on the UAW for the Bendix Corporation and then testifying against Bendix before the NLRB, can this boy, overweight and exhausted at the age of 32, can he make a million dollars out of publishing *Screw*? Can his compatriot, a good Catholic boy from Queens, after losing his shirt on *The New York Free Press*, losing his friends and personal prestige by associating with a crumb like Goldstein, losing his health and delicate sensibilities in the Elisabeth Street booking tank time after time, can he, still comely and soft-spoken at the age of 24, somehow get back on the Right Track? Follow the editorials in *Screw* to learn the answer to this paralyzing dilemma!

All these guys go before the judge next month to answer charges of interfering with the moral development of America's citizenry. The prosecution will cite the number of schoolchildren in New York City—there must be millions—who would read these awful pornzines if they only had the chance. The defense will hit back that schoolchildren have enough troubles of their own, why should a little pussyhair bother them? The DA will retort that all these smut peddlers are in it for the money and nothing else. The defense will put it to the court that Madison Avenue's only in it for the money, why should pornzines be any better? Waxing wroth, the people of the state of New York will throw out every gruesome sex-murder case in the last twenty years and blame it on the proliferation of papers like *Screw*, *Kiss*, *Pleasure*, *Fun*, and the NYRS&P. Respectfully, most respectfully, the pornzines will offer statistics from Copenhagen graphing a 37 percent drop in the sex crime rate since pornography was legalised in Denmark. Finally the judge will complain about court costs and proclaim everyone guilty as charged. It may take a few years, but this is roughly what will happen. Then it'll go to an appeals court, who should laugh it off the docket.

In the meantime, the distributors and newsstand dealers will be freaked for good and all. Watch for a sudden decline in the proliferation of smut on the newsstands, folks. I won't even wax moralistic about it, my disgust with the pigs for doing this is balanced with my disgust for you stooges out there who let it happen without a whimper. You're all a buncha Marv Graftons! Have fun with the *National Mirror*.

Corrections to last week's copy: Johnny Sample is offensive cornerback for the New York Jets, not fullback as stated. Bobby Tolan's name is not Randy, but mud. All power to the people, and ban the fucking bomb.

