Wimmin's Comix

by Diane Noomin

Editor's Note: The following text is a transcript of Diane Noomin's presentation at the 2003 UF Comics Conference. In some cases, scans have been made of the comix she refers to. For the most part, however, we've had to rely on screen captures from video of Diane Noomin's presentation. We are in the process of acquiring higher-quality images and will update this page when they become available.

1. This [Figure 1] is the first Didi Glitz strip that I ever did. Didi Glitz actually started out as a Halloween costume. I think we were going to a costume party at Gilbert Shelton's house. I found a blonde wig at the Salvation Army and this is what I came up with. My roommate at the time was Willy Murphy and he called me Didi. He was the only one that ever called me Didi. So, I was Didi for the night. And, Glitz, I guess is self-explanatory now--at the time that I did it, I was constantly asked where it came from.

Figure 1. "Restless Reverie"

2. Here is Didi Glitz. It's Didi Glitz in "Restless Reverie" and I'll read it: "Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday I have my hair done. My hobby is drinking. Togetherness is really important." So that's the existential theme.

Figure 2. Wimmin's Comix Covers, Issues 1-3.
3. The next slide is *Wimmin's Comix* 1974 [Figure 2]. I'm trying to do a chronology; that's the way I organized it. (The first slide was also 1974.) The editor of *Wimmin's Comix* was a cartoonist named Shelby Sampson. I was also in *Wimmin's Comix* issues 2 and 3, and I was at the first meeting of the *Wimmin's Comix* Collective when the editor who was chosen was Pat Moodian, who was basically a biker chick who was living with Larry Todd, who did *Dr. Time*. A lot of the women who were at those meetings, at the *Wimmin's Comix* meetings, were connected. It was sort of a circle of friends and a lot of the women who were rooming with men cartoonists who decided that they wanted to be cartoonists. My first example (I'm not even showing it) was based on some of the doodles I had done, and the reason I went to the first *Wimmin's Comix* meeting was because I had met Aline Kominksy at a party and I showed her this sort of anguished book of poetry and doodles. And she said, "Oh, I'm starting *Wimmin's Comix*. Why don't you come to the meeting." Everything was pretty wide open. I met a lot of other women like Michelle Brand, who was married to Roger Green, and Lora Fountain was was Gilbert Shelton's girlfriend. I can't remember if they were all at the first meeting or not. I know Pat Moodian was and Terry Richards—who was the wife of Ted Richards who did *Dopin' Dan*—Lee Mars, Trina Robbins, Sharon Rudhal, and Willie Mendez. These are all people who were in the first one.

4. We spent a lot of time coming up with a title—it doesn't sound like we would've had to spend a lot of time on it, but we did. A lot of the discussion was over "C" or "X" and eventually, later on, as sort of political correctness came more into focus for some of us, the name was changed from *WimmEn's Comix* to *WimmIn's Comix*. I actually don't remember what issue that was. Anyway, this is the story, this issue—I don't think it had a theme; later on they all had themes.

5. [reads] "Being aggressive had no meaning in a woman's life until she had the possibilities a man does. Now women move into all areas of living, including crime. -- Dr Leon Salsman, Clinical Professor of Psychology at the Psychology Medicine in New York." [Figure 3]
6. That was my inspiration for the story, that and the fact that I could never walk into a bank without thinking that people would suspect me of wanting to rob the place. So, Didi is pregnant and in dire need of money and this is her disguise outfit.

![Figure 4. Wimmin's Comix, Issue 4](image)

7. In the story, she ultimately gets away with the robbery, takes a cruise to Rio, and has her baby, and lives for awhile, happily ever after. In comics, there's no great need for continuity, so I don't have to explain the next time you see her that she's not in Rio, not pregnant. This was 1975, this is "Bingo Bondage," published in *Arcade* #1 [Figure 5] by the Print Mint. This was just fun for me. The fact that I could do anything I wanted, it was exhilarating and I felt sort of privileged to be asked to be in *Arcade*, because at the beginning, I was playing catch-up a lot and I was new to cartooning. My first comic strip, I drew horizontally instead of vertically, so I didn't know the rules.
8. So, this was in the half-page section of *Arcade*. This was the first *Twisted Sisters* comic, 1976; Aline Kominsky and I did it. An interesting fact arose for me when I started looking at this and organizing this lecture. I noticed that between the last story "She Chose Crime" and this comic, #4 in 1974 [Figure 4], I was not in another *Wimmin's Comix* until 1984, ten years later. I think I knew that there had been a gap, and I knew I had done other things. But I hadn't realized that it had been ten years. I think that the ten years came about because I think maybe the *Wimmin's Comix* Collective took the path that many women's or political collectives do over the years and became a hot-bed of bickering and power plays. Aline and I found ourselves on one side of a power play and we decided. "Well, fuck you, we'll do our own comic." Basically, we felt that our type of humor was self-deprecating and ironic and that what they were pushing for in the name of feminism and political correctness was a sort of self-aggrandizing and idealistic view of women as a super-race. We preferred to have our flaws and show them.
9. This is *Twisted Sisters* [Figure 6]. Aline did the front cover, I did the back cover, and Last Gasp published it. This next slide is a jam that Aline and I did on the inside cover. It's Didi and Blanche in "Hot Air." This is a close-up of Didi's "Priority Pie" on the back cover [Figure 7]. [reads] "Love Affairs: 21.7%, Sex: 1%, Double Vodka Martini's: 7%, Utterly Gorgeous Outfits: 19%, Lavicious Interior Design Schemes: 17%, Career: 2%, Trips to Miami Beach: 11.3%, Politics: .3%, Sausage and Anchovie Pizza: 6.2%."
10. This is 1976, me as Didi [Figure 8]. I acted with an actor named Jim Turner, who was in the Ducksbreath Mystery Theater, which was a comedy group based in San Francisco. And he's actually now on an HBO TV show called "Arliss," and I think he's the comic foil. This was in episode one of eight "Zippy for President" TV episodes that aired on PBS in San Francisco on a show called "Video West." This was directed by a guy named Eric Nelson, who now produces "Ripley's Believe it or Not" on the Discovery Channel. In this episode, I pick up Zippy in a bar and I take him home and have my way with him. In this photo, its 10am and I've already had a few cognacs to get me ready.
11. This [Figure 9] is from *Lemme Outta Here*, a comic book that I edited in 1978. By editing at that point, it just meant you got a publisher to agree to do the comic, and then you go and ask the people that you want to be in it, and then you tell them how many pages to do. This comic did have a theme of growing up in suburbia, growing up in America, and wanting to escape that. The cover is by Michael McMillan and some of the other artists in there are: Aline Kominsky, Mary K. Brown, Kim Deitch, Bill Griffith, Justin Green, myself, and Robert Crumb. In a way, this was my answer to *Arcade* because I started to feel more like I knew what I was doing, and I didn't want to be in the half-page or the one-page category anymore. So for this comic book, Aline and I had the long stories and the guys had the shorter ones.
12. This story [Figure 10] is Didi's life story; it's called "I Gotta be Doing Something Else: The Didi Glitz Story."

13. This is Valerie Reynold, who played Didi Glitz at the Lady of the Laughs, which is a Women's theater collective based in San Francisco. They did everything...
themselves—the sets, the writing, the production. They came to me and said, "We like the comics; we'd like to base a play on them." And I said, "Fine, but I have to be totally involved in it," as a control-freak cartoonist. So it was an interesting lesson in trying to write a play communally based on my stuff, and it was actually amazingly exhilarating to see the character come to life and be in a full-fledged musical comedy with backdrops that I designed. And I roped in all my cartoonist friends to help paint. Bill helped paint, and Kim, Sally Cruikshank (who did Quasi at the Quackadero) and Spain and Paul Novedes did a velvet painting to hang in Didi's living room. It was Didi's giant keen eyes, and I still have it hanging in my studio. This was in 1981. In 1982, we took a cabaret version, which means no scenery, which weighed a ton. It was like inventing the wheel. We made these giant backdrops that turned and were painted on both sides and made of plywood. We did not take into account that we might change venue.

![Figure 12. Stage Design for Didi's Bathroom](image)

14. This is the stage design [Figure 12] for Didi's bathroom and Kim [Deitch] might remember painting those fish. In the show, Didi has robbed a bank, gotten away with it, moved to Miami, and taken her girlfriends with her. She buys a bar with her stolen loot and redecorates it onstage while the dancers are sort of singing, "Don't just relocate, redecorate!" tap dancing, and turning the sets. It was not easy. Another thing that happened was that every time that something happened in the play that reflected one of Didi's obsessions—as depicted in the pie—a spotlight would come on and spin and point to the section and you would see, you know, Didi having a bubble bath.
15. This was in, ten years later, 1984. In *Wimmin's Comix* Issue 9, which was published by Last Gasp and it was called "The Women at Work Issue." I decided to make Didi a private eye. So, this is "Utterly Private Eye" [Figure 13].
16. This is 1985, "Rubberware" [Figure 14]. This is interesting, like taking something from my work and putting it into the play, like taking something from the play and putting it into my work. This was the "Politically Incorrect" issue of *Wimmin's Comix*, issue 10. The editor was Joyce Farmer, who was the perfect person to be the editor on the politically incorrect issue. She was the editor and contributor to a comic called "Tits and Clits." Last I heard, she was a bail-bondsperson in Southern California—just as a sidebar.

![Figure 15. Closeup of "Rubberware"](image)

17. Now, this is a closeup [Figure 15]. Les Nickelettes did the song onstage; my parents came to see it. We've got all these wonderful weird sex toys and they were exactly like that singing those lyrics. I'm not as brave as Kim, so I'm not going to sing it. But, the lyrics are:[reads] "You've got that rubberware deep in our hearts, for those who never stop and those who don't know how to start. We've got that rubberware feeling deep in our hearts, it will place your popularity at the top of the charts." The music and lyrics were by one of the Nickelettes. It was sung to a sort of 1960s girl band beat, like the Rhonettes.
18. This is 1986, *Weirdo* #17. The editor was Peter Bad. This is a twelve page story, "Didi has an Orgasm." [Figure 16 - 17]

19. This is Didi, sort of sublimating her frustrated sex drive and she has a lesbian fish dream. She's woken out of it by a phone call from her sister, who she knows she's supposed to meet and have lunch with. So, her sister convinces her to join a group that will help her to have an orgasm. Her sister has the problem, too, and sort of drags her along. This was total late 1970s San Francisco, where you could say things like "sex-positive" and not think about AIDS.
20. This was great progress for me—to be asked to do a cover for *Wimmin's Comix*, because I'd been pretty much persona non grata for such a long time. So, this [Figure 18] is the "Fashion Issue" and the publisher was Renegade Press. *Wimmin's Comix* went from Last Gasp to Renegade to Rip Off Press—really lasted for such a long time and we kept running out of publishers who were willing to spend money on it since it didn't sell very well. The editor of this issue was Dori Seda.
21. Now, this is from *Wimmin's Comix* #12, 1987, editors Angela Bocage and Rebecca Riley. This is the "3D Issue," and it came complete with glasses. This is "A Blonde Grows in Brooklyn in 3 DiDi." [Figure 19]

![Figure 19. Wimmin's Comix #12](image)

22. This is from *Wimmin's Comix* #14, by Rip Off Press [Figure 20]. This was the "Kvetch Issue" edited by Karen, No, I'm sorry, this is the "Disastrous Relationship Issue." This is actually Didi's story of the classic—her recounting her disastrous relationship. This was based on—all the various disastrous relationships were actually based on things I had experienced. This one guy actually recognized himself and was flattered.
23. This is the back cover of *Weirdo* in 1989; *Weirdo* #26 [Figure 21]. I think the editor at that time was Aline Crumb. This is pre-Photoshop, pre-scanning, pre-computers. So when I look at it, all I can think is that I must have been seriously depressed when I did this, because I sat on my back steps, coating M&Ms with clear nail polish and then gluing them down on black construction paper. This is Didi’s choice place to be depressed. It contains hopelessly romantic songs by Bobby Finton, Don Ho, and Jim Nabors on the jukebox.
24. This is *Wimmin's Comix* #15, "Coming of Age in Carnarsie." This is the "Little Girls Issue," [Figure 22] edited by Phoebe Gloeckner and published by Rip Off Press. This is strictly autobiographical with no Didi in it, but I think you can see some of the origins.
25. This is a four page story [Figure 23] I did for Real Girl #1, which was a comic edited by Angela Bocage for Fantagraphics and we were just having fun with it.
Figure 26. "A Life in the Bagel Belt"

Figure 27. "A Life in the Bagel Belt"

Figure 28. "A Life in the Bagel Belt"
26. This is a solo comic I did in 1990 with Rip Off Press and it's basically reprints with one new story and that new story was called "A Life in the Bagel Belt," [Figures 24 - 30] which really delves into the Long Island Life Ethos. This is Didi just saying, "Honey, let me redecorate your life."

27. These are all true stories told to me by my best friend, who went to high school with me and who wanted to be an archaeologist, but ended up as an interior designer. She lived in Oceanside. I'd go back to visit her and she'd tell me—it was liked she wanted me to write down these stories. She's telling me all these horrible things about her son and all these horrible stories about her life, and I'm sympathetic and I'm thinking, "Keep telling me these things." And we'd drink manhattans and she wanted me to take it, and I wound up taking stuff and this is pretty much a direct quote.
28. This is from "Young Lust" #7, "I Had to Advertise for Love" [Figure 31]. The romance comics look is so much fun that its very seductive and it makes you want to do more of it. In this case, it was for Young Lust.
29. Next, this is 1991, and the way this came about is Aline Crumb and I thought we'd like to do an anthology of work that deserved to be seen in a different context. When I've been reading you, showing you these slides, a lot of the slides have been from Wimmin's Comix and pretty much the stuff that was in Wimmin's Comix just disappeared from view. It was like being invisible. The work—I don't know if it was because it didn't sell well or the editing group policy was that you could refer friends. If you have a lot of good work in the context with a lot of work that isn't of the same quality, you sort of lose sight of the work that deserves to be seen, in my opinion. So, as editor, the first anthology—Aline had decided to move to France and I had decided to go ahead with it. I made a dummy and went to New York and with Hubert Lofman stick-to-it-ness, I got a deal with Penguin (Viking-Penguin as they say). It was really a big thrill. It meant we were getting out of the Underground. It was the illusion that we were getting out of the Underground and into the shopping malls and we did—for a very brief time—manage to do that. Penguin heaved a sigh of relief when they sold the first print run and they didn't run another. I think they sold out in eight months, and I was very naive and shocked when they wouldn't reprint it. I thought maybe the advantages of a big publisher weren't quite as much as I thought they were.

30. Anyway, in this first Twisted Sisters: A Collection of Bad Girl Art, this was all previously published work, and when it came out, it got a huge response and
people were saying, "Where did all these strong women cartoonists come from." And a lot of them came from *Wimmin's Comix* and a lot of them came from *Weirdo*, and a lot of them just—I think most of them pretty much had been in either *Wimmin's Comix* and *Weirdo*, except in the case of Anita Brown. She was in *The Lay Brown* and she was pretty visible. I'm going to tell you who these self portraits are in case you don't know.

31. [Naming self portraits from Figure 32] Phoebe Gloeckner (who, for some reason, thought she looked like Jimmy Cagney), Dori Seda, Aline Kominsky Crumb, Carol Wasenbeck, myself, Christine Critter, Lee Binswanger (who didn't go for self-deprecating), M. K. Brown, Mary Fleener, Carol Lay, Penny Van Horn, Carol Tyler, and Julie Dusay.

32. This made a difference in my life. I think, before this I felt invisible. And after this, I felt that not only had I helped all these other women become visible, but I was really proud to be part of this group. I was really proud of it and glad to be in it, and that was the only reason I did it. I got asked a lot of questions about, "How did you choose artists, and how come you have no lesbians in there?" At various book signings, you have different audiences. And basically I did this: if I liked the work, I put it in. I think this, pretty much, is the *Arcade* philosophy that Bill was talking about last night—if he and Art liked someone and trusted them, they asked them to do the work. In this case, it was much simpler. The work already existed and I just had to get permission and they got paid again.

33. This [Figure 33] refers to George Bush senior and its from 1992 in a magazine called "The Nose," which came out in San Francisco in a lampoonish sort of
magazine. It originally came out for *Details* magazine, and that was before Art was the editor there. And it was very interesting to me because I had never been exposed to the world of fact-checking, and I had to call the Watergate Hotel to confirm the name of the barber at the Atomic Lounge. They were sort of nit-picky, which was sort of entertaining for me and fun. In the end, I gave it to "The Nose." It was fun to have two pages of color to play with.

*Figure 34. "Back to Bagel Belt with Did Glitz"*
34. This is 1993 and this appeared in the last *Weirdo* #28. This is "Back to Bagel Belt with Did Glitz" [Figures 34 - 36] and in this one, I start talking to myself as a character talking to Didi. Once I start, its really hard to stop—I found this very seductive, and I didn't have to think about what I was going to write or say; it just came out. Probably, I'm going to keep doing that for the future. In this case, I had used the tapes from my friend.
35. Next is 1993, *Young Lust* #8 [Figure 37]. I think this was a three page story—Jay Kinney as the editor at this point—and Last Gasp was the publisher. This was true romance set on a miniature golf course, complete with Pompeii and an erupting volcano. "Lava My Life" is just kind of pure sex romp and hole in one and all that.
36. This is 1994, and I had a gallery show in Little Frankensteins, a San Francisco art gallery. This is a golf theme coming up. The gallery was voted the best one hole mini-golf course by the San Francisco Bay Gardening Club. This was a store basically that sold really high-end comics stuff, and it was fun and they decided to do it. First, this slide shows a nine-foot paper-mache Didi [Figure 38] with aerodynamic tits and I did the whole thing. I created it, I painted her, and she sat on top of the miniature golf course during the show. She was very scary and sort of a powerful image.
37. This is the other thing that the gallery did. They did a signed, numbered, silk-screened hand-made Didi doll [Figure 39] that they were selling. And like a version of a paper doll, she had outfits and a little mirror in the closet, and you could take her out and play with her. That was Bliscovitz, and I can't remember the name of the woman that owned the gallery. The opening was really great. They had a pig in the shape of Didi's head and they only served things like Jell-O molds, onion dip, and pink champagne.
38. This was sometime in the 1990s and I can't remember when. This was at a Lollapalooza Festival at the South Bay, and it was very entertaining to me because I actually got carded for beer. It was fun. We did these huge posters [Figure 40] that they had all over the place.
39. This is the back cover of *Twisted Sisters* comic #1 [Figure 41]. Now after sort of feeling unappreciated at Penguin, I decided to go back underground in the second *Twisted Sisters: 2 Drawing the Line* by Kitchen's Press. The only way they could afford to give any sort of advance so that I could give people a decent page rate—as an editor you have to give people a decent page rate and we're talking a very subjective figure; we're talking one hundred dollars was a lot for a page—the way Dennis figured it out was he asked me to do four comics first and he sold those. Then, at the end of whatever period he thought was profitable, he'd do the anthology. I decided that that was fine with me; it was okay with the other artists, and it gave us an opportunity to have four different covers and back covers and to have color. This is the back cover of the one my story was in. This is the one Leonard was talking about.
40. This is the cover of *Twisted Sisters 2: Drawing the Line* [Figure 42]. I'm going to just list the people that were in it first: M. K. Brown, Mary Fleener, Aline Kominsky Crumb, Carol Lay, Caryn Leschen, Fiona Smyth, Penny Van Horn, Christine Prunter, Carolyn Sabich, myself, Debbie Dreschler, Phoebe Gloeckner, Dame Darcy, and Carolyn Swain. This was a really different composition than the first one. I didn't realize, but I had it easy on the first one—it was a lot of work, but all I had to do was say, "Okay, I like the work, I'm going to put it in my book." This was editing my peers, and that was a very tricky proposition. And Mary Fleener called me—she was trying to combine editor and dominatrix and came up with "editrix." It was a challenge. I had to deal with deadlines, and some people can't meet deadlines. And I had to just trust that I would like the stories that people did, and mostly I did. Some people needed some editing, and one story that got the editing that sort of cracks me up was Dame Darcy. She had a word spelled wrong, and I asked her to change it. And she said, "My manager says it's spelled correctly." We had fun with it.
41. This is "Baby Talk," [Figure 43 - 44] true story and using myself as a character talking to Didi—doing those things I was talking about, coming out from behind the cartoon page.