



Squeaky Blonde
(www.myspace.com/thesqueakyblonde)

By Robbie Daniels, Jr.

FREAK SHOW

Outsider artists and gender-bending performers find new audiences online

Less Than A Decade Ago, MySpace and YouTube didn't even exist. Today, MySpace is the third most popular site in the United States. In 2006, YouTube was the world's fifth most popular site and 65,000 new videos were being uploaded daily. Social networks and video sharing sites are now important marketing tools — but not just for the big media companies. Most of the world's starving artists and aspiring entertainers now market their work on these sites, and it's already begun to transform the entertainment industry.

Even the most obscure sub-lebrities now have MySpace pages that serve as 24-hour publicists for their outsider art and music. Instead of paying for advertising, today's artists allow their work to speak for itself through social networking. Any crafty artist can create a MySpace page, which then becomes an attention-grabbing advertisement which costs nothing and yet functions 24/7. A clip or song that is promoted this way has the potential to go viral, thereby unleashing a tsunami of exposure that can reach around the globe in only hours or days.

What first seemed like merely a small cottage industry is now causing a serious crisis for big media. It's like the old *Breck Shampoo* commercial from the 1970s — "I told two friends, and they told two friends, and so on, and so on..." Before you know it, even a poorly-produced electro-clash song made with Apple's GarageBand has the potential to become a one-hit wonder or an underground sensation.

Artists will always suffer when pressured to create on a schedule or accord-

ing to decisions made by shareholder committees. MySpace and YouTube offer a true free-market economy where new artists can experiment and find their own audiences — without compromise. It's a new paradigm for media distribution and promotion and it's resulting in unique and interesting art that would never before have seen the light of day. Under this model, independent artists own their work outright - with no financial commitments to agents, big media companies, or lawyers. Works that are promoted on the Internet can jump-start careers and they've already been known to start mainstream trends.

MySpace is often criticized for being polluted with artistic spam, but it's now easier than ever to control who can contact you. Last year many MySpace members migrated to FaceBook, citing problems with phishing scams, slowdowns, and spam. Behind the scenes, however, MySpace was actually investing enormous amounts of money into accommodating a huge new influx of users and information. This year, that work has

finally come to fruition. MySpace now offers new security measures, faster servers, and less down-time.

Despite its similar growth, YouTube has received much less criticism. This may have something to do with its purchase by Google in 2006. With its cutting edge network of servers scattered across the globe, Google was in a unique position to handle the storage and bandwidth issues that YouTube was facing as it continued to grow in popularity.

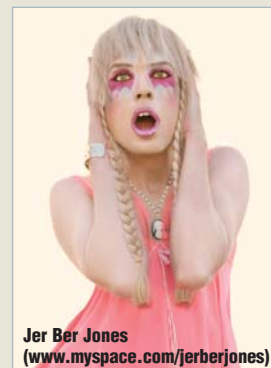
My own paintings, graphics, and country-western-inspired, psychedelic pop music can be found online at www.myspace.com/robbierobbie. I also produce for Jer Ber Jones (www.myspace.com/erberjones), an artist whose MySpace exposure has resulted in her discovery by influential

1980s music label Some Bizarre (www.myspace.com/somebizarrelabel). Some Bizarre is best known for breaking acts like Soft Cell, Blancmange, Coil, Cabaret Voltaire, Einsturzende Neubauten, Foetus, Psychic TV, & the Swans. Jer Ber Jones' single *BOOBS (Dirty Pillows)* will be released onto CD this spring.

Artists who blur gender lines represent one group that has never had much mainstream media presence. Occasional acts — such as Sylvester in the '70s, Boy George in the '80s, and Amanda Lepore today — have found success, but the majority of artists who challenged concepts of gender identity were usually marginalized and locked out of the media mainstream.

But in this new era of online self-promotion and social networking, such artists are finally being recognized for their talented and unique voices.

Calpernia Adams & Andrea James star in the new LOGO television show *Trans-American Love Story* which airs on February 11. Their production company produces a variety of films, including Voice Feminization instructional videos



Jer Ber Jones
(www.myspace.com/erberjones)

DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL... JUST SUCK MY DICK, BRO.

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for trans-gendered women. Calpernia says she doesn't like MySpace, but nonetheless is creating a new MySpace artist page to promote her electronic dance song, *Stunning*. Calpernia and Andrea both prefer FaceBook – but when it comes to YouTube, Andrea is a huge fan. "It is simple, elegantly designed, easy to use, and fun. I'm waiting for the day when YouTube tries a business model where users can earn money with their content. That's when we will see an interesting shift." You can find the girls on YouTube at www.youtube.com/deepstealth.

If you'd like to discover some great MySpace music acts that feature all sorts of gender-bending shenanigans, you won't want to miss Crazy Girl (www.myspace.com/crazygirlband), Vaseline Towers (www.myspace.com/vaselinetowers), LadyLuxe (www.myspace.com/ladyluxemusic), Jackie Beat (www.myspace.com/jackiebeat), Pussy Tourette (www.myspace.com/pussytourette), or Prince Poppycock (www.myspace.com/princepoppycock). And you can earn instant outsider cred by becoming the first person on your block to get hooked on Squeaky Blonde (www.myspace.com/thesqueakyblonde), Jayne County (www.myspace.com/waynejaynecounty), Buck Angel (www.myspace.com/buckangelentertainment), Peaches Christ (www.myspace.com/peacheschrist), or the Toilet Boys (www.myspace.com/toiletboysnyc).

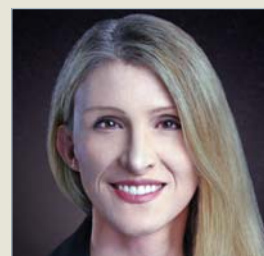
Besides gender-bending performance

artists, traditional art has also benefited from the new media economy on the web. Jason Mecier was once a member of the popular San Francisco-based rock-opera group *Enrique* and he is also the world's most famous bean and noodle mosaic artist. He's currently working on a

project called *Celebrity Junk Drawer* where he is creating 3-dimensional portraits of his favorite people, made out of their junk. Participants so far include Phyllis Diller, Morgan Fairchild, Parker Posey, Elvira, Margaret Cho, Nancy Sinatra, Susan Tyrrell, Tura Satana, Scissor Sisters, Rip Taylor, Joan Van Ark, Perez Hilton, Paris Hilton, and Barbi Benton. When asked about social networking sites, Jason says, "MySpace is a big waste of time." Although admittedly addicted, he compares it to "sticker collecting" and declares, "Anyone who is successful in real life doesn't participate — like Melissa Gilbert and Oprah." We'll be sure to pass that thought on to Melissa and Oprah (via their MySpace pages, of course.) Which should give Jason just enough time to hide his sticker collection. You can find Jason's incredible work

online at www.jasonmecier.com and www.youtube.com/JasonMecier.

Robbie D. is a former child star and horse-back riding champion from Utah who is now internationally known for his paintings and music projects. Besides his solo music, he has also produced for acts such as Jer Ber Jones and Tiny. For more info, visit www.robbed.com



Top to bottom: Calpernia Addams, Buck Angel (www.buckangel.com), and Andrea James (www.youtube.com/deepstealth)