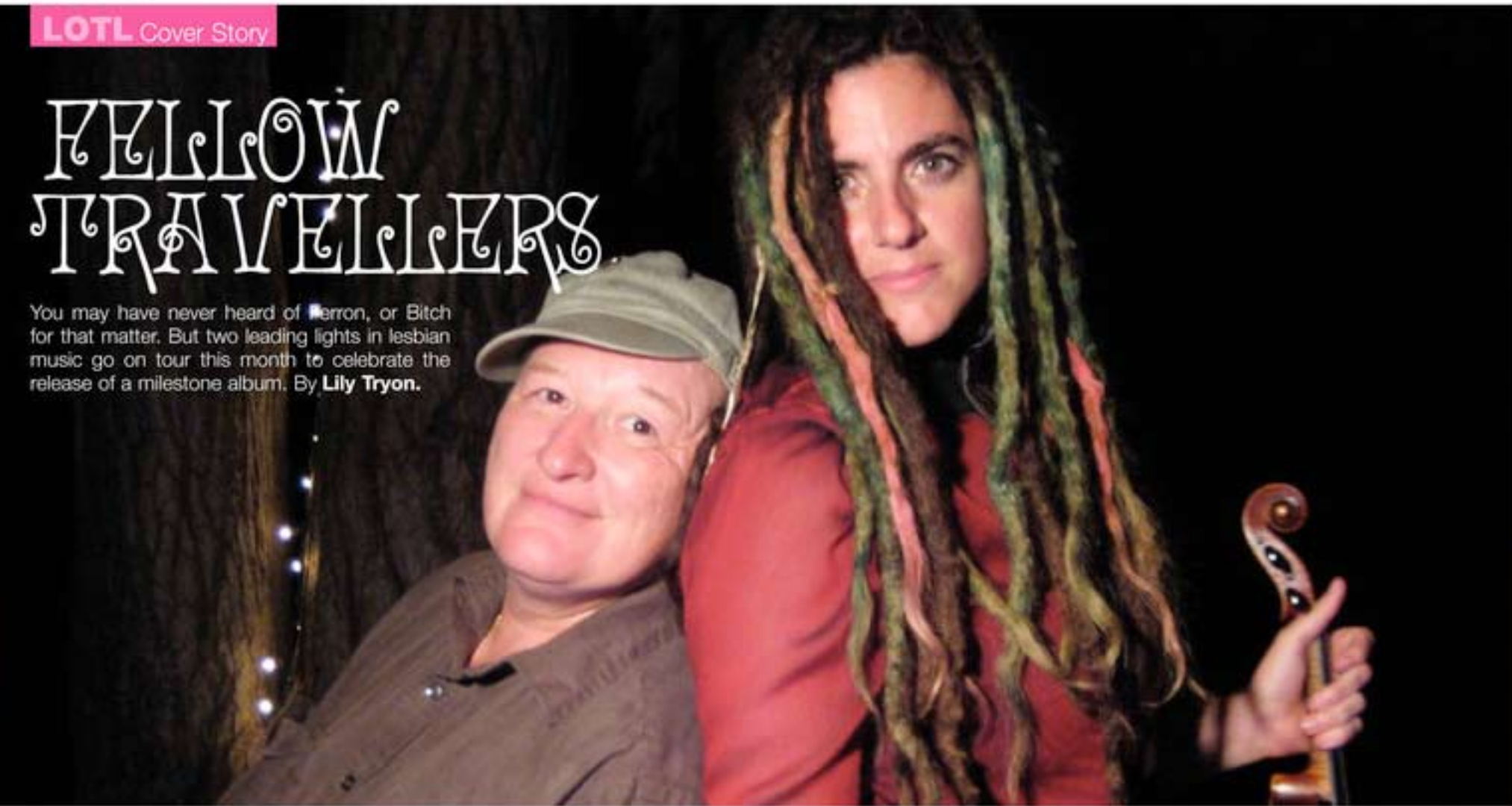


LOTL Cover Story

## FELLOW TRAVELLERS

You may have never heard of Ferron, or Bitch for that matter. But two leading lights in lesbian music go on tour this month to celebrate the release of a milestone album. By Lily Tryon.



Part Indian, from the Vancouver area of British Columbia, and the eldest of seven children, Ferron spent much of her youth in foster homes and at 15, ran away. "We all come in to this life with something to work on," she says now. "For some people, identity and family are not the major issue. Obviously if you're coming in gay, identity is a fundamental issue and it may not necessarily be for yourself. You may be a teacher, you may have the role of helping someone else learn tolerance, acceptance and difference." Ferron is not a teacher. Not literally. But she has helped illuminate the ideas behind human experience through her musical career, which has spanned several decades.

To some, she's a living treasure. The Boston Globe wrote, "Someday, they will call Dylan the Ferron of the 60's." It's a compliment, but the great folk singer was hardly the inspiration for Ferron when starting out. She had other worries. "My life was so small, so concerned with eating and sleeping and surviving that I didn't know Dylan for

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many years and at first felt he was just more patriarch, and maybe even a little spoilt in it, the white boy wine I used to call it. But, whatever he was called in to do, he did it and does it as a

backdrop to all of our lives and I have learned, with my own passage of time, to respect such a degree of focus, over time."

In spite of their shortcomings, Ferron's family was musical, and the young Ferron eventually discovered her own musicality. "I wonder if I even have a singing voice now," she says modestly of her very distinct vocal skills, "but I think playing the guitar helped convince people that I was indeed singing. I personally think that I pray, in the most spiritual sense of the word. When I'm writing songs I'm agreeing to the idea that I'm not alone, that someone is watching, caring, and listening to me...the vanity of it all"

The process of inspiration and writing is a mystery to her. She "hasn't a clue" where it all comes from. "I just get afraid it might stop." Real inspiration comes in the form of many lesbian fans who have helped nurture her. "I was born, brought up and loved by the lesbian community." The wider world is not so generous. "The mainstream music business is

a paid commercial telling what you want before you have a chance to think for yourself. I'm glad it's dying out."

Ferron is currently releasing her - believe it or not - fourteenth album, "Boulder." That's an amazing output, but to many she's still one of indie music's best kept secrets. How so? "I'm a little like raw eel. You wouldn't go out of your way to eat raw eel unless you already happened upon it and liked it. Grassroots experience. I like it."

She currently has a home with her partner in Michigan. "We have a retreat center there. The Fer, for people, for rest, and for artistic expression. Life on the road reminds me that if I'm not careful I'll forget to have a life."

Nevertheless, she's looking forward to her tour with Bitch (who some may know as the girlfriend of Daniela Sea from "The L Word"). Bitch also co-produced the album and will hopefully give Ferron a fresh, new audience. "I met Bitch several years ago, loved her work, we became friends and she recorded me singing her favorite songs and

then took the songs away and got her friends to play on them. So for me, all I did was sing. She did all the hard work... as it should be...she's younger than I am!"

And what does Bitch have to say about Ferron? "I first met her at a festival in 1998 or so. She just sat really quietly in the corner of the room and I don't think said anything. Then, one time when I was touring with Ani DiFranco, Ferron was on the guest list, and Ani was talking about her with Julie Wolf. I chimed in that I didn't know her songs and they both gasped and said I absolutely HAD to. So I did. I'm a huge fan because her poetry is so personal it hurts, which is always the most relatable kind."

It became important to Bitch to produce "Boulder" because she "wanted a record that I could put on for my friends so they could hear what I hear when I sit next to her when she plays. I wanted it to be intensely intimate. I recorded her in her own house. To document the space where she walks and dreams."

if she thinks like a musicologist. It may be because she just launched her own indie record label Short Story Records. "I'm interested in the power that music has to change the world. However I can use my bit of power in that, seems like the only choice."

Bitch put everything she had into producing the album - selecting tracks, arranging, recruiting talented musicians including Ani DiFranco and The Indigo Girls, recording... "I'd say all 6 feet of me went into it. My heart and voice is all over it. "Boulder" is a labor of love, that is for sure!" Her favourite track on the album is "Already Gone" or "Misty Mountain." The prospect of performing these tracks live with Ferron thrills her. "We are very present with each other on stage. We don't make set lists, just feel the moment and let our muse go. I've been told that I bring out the comedian in Ferron. We have an absolute riot when we play. We're friends, and that is very clear when people watch us."

**"Boulder" is out on June 17. Catch Ferron on tour, with Bitch on the following dates in North America:**

JUNE	
6	Columbus, OH Columbus PRIDE
7 & 8	Buffalo, NY Buffalo PRIDE
21	Cleveland, OH Cleveland PRIDE
25 & 26	Cambridge, MA Club Passim
27	Northampton, MA The Iron House
28	Portland, VT Damon Hall
JULY 2008	
11	Vista, CA Avo Playhouse
12	Los Angeles, CA Hotel Café
13	Sacramento, CA Marilyn's on K
14	San Francisco, CA Café Du Nord
16	Portland, OR Doug Fir Lounge
17	Seattle, WA The Triple Door
18, 19 & 20	Vancouver, BC Vancouver Folk Festival

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