



DREADLOCK ROCK Bitch gets ready to play with her instrument.

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## **Bitch slap**

**The outspoken musician hits us with her debut solo album and a tour.**

By Jason A. Heidemann

Here's a few things you should know about Bitch: She's a multi-instrumentalist (violin, ukulele and bass, among others), she's tired of explaining her name (it was given to her by former bandmate Animal), she's surprisingly friendly despite that name, she's studied theater at DePaul, and most important, she's now touring as Bitch and the Exciting Conclusion, which is not a farewell to her musical career, but rather a new beginning.

"Basically my girlfriend, Daniela, and I came up with the name and the idea for it," she says. "She's not going to be on tour with me, but she helped me think about the aesthetic that I want my shows to be. We think that the Exciting Conclusion is an umbrella [term] for our collaboration together. The Exciting Conclusion is the possibility for all creatures to be existing in complete, utter love."

That girlfriend is Daniela Sea, the actor who appeared with her in John Cameron Mitchell's *Shortbus* and also plays the trans character Max on *The L Word*. Together the two hope the *Exciting Conclusion* will include endeavors that are both music-oriented and cinematic, although at the moment, Bitch seems content with touring in support of her debut solo album, *Make This, Break This* (available on the label Kill Rock Stars).

While the new disc contains the same combination of the personal and political that was evident in her work with Animal, it's also very much her own as evidenced on songs like the moving "Two Girls Strong," the antiwar anthem "Rise" and the deeply personal title track, a farewell to her former bandmate.

"I started making this record even before Animal and I had split up but knowing that we were going to, of course. And it was really like a letter to myself, in a way, while I was going through this huge transition. It was so hard to try and come together for that last album [*Sour Juice and Rhyme*] even though I think it was the best album that we had made."

Bitch has been touring aggressively in support of *Make This*, including stints last year opening for the Indigo Girls and Melissa Ferrick. Her appearance this week at the Old Town School of Folk Music will mark her debut as a solo headliner in Chicago, although she insists her electrifying stage persona hasn't mellowed a bit.

"I'm kind of known to be a wild stage performer. I'm definitely very improv-based. No two shows are the same kind of thing. You can expect some really well-orchestrated music. There's a lot of laughter. There is also a very serious political message. I think we all have such creative sides of ourselves and such strong urges that I think our society really tries to dull us down from. I like to be a bit of a voice for that kind of wild energy. There is a lot of serenity within me and also my show, and I think a lot of it comes from us recognizing each other."

But Bitch is no stranger to this particular venue. It was at the Old Town School of Folk Music where she learned to play the fiddle under the tutelage of Andrew Bird.

"We [were] also labelmates because [Bird is] on Righteous Babe Records and so [was] I. We high five when we see each other."

Her concert also will bring her back to the town where she studied acting at DePaul, hung out in Boystown and and met Animal. It's also a place the New York resident still calls a home.

"I feel like I had a bit more of a family feeling [in Chicago]. It could've been that I was younger and in college, where you have that built-in system. Touring so much, it's hard to have that consistent feeling of being somewhere all the time. I love the gay boys out there. We Midwesterners are very nice people."

*Bitch and the Exciting Conclusion play the Old Town School of Folk Music Friday 23.*