

HOW RICKY ESCAPED FROM THE GTO'S

Interview and photos
by Cynthia Newman

When you're lost in the sun in LA and it's Eastertime too, and you can't see the top of the listless palm tree next to the Forest Lawn billboard, you might pause a moment and consider the GTO's, a rock and roll footnote. Miss Christina and Miss Mercy and Miss Lucy, wanting to be not just good groupies but the *best* groupies ever, all things to all musicians, formed the GTO's, who went on to Big Things at the Landmark Hotel in LA and in dressing rooms and motels all over.

Then the GTO's (the initials stand for Girls Together Outrageously) were discovered by Frank Zappa and they became *artistes*, supergroupies—in fact, they became a *group*. They made an *album*. The faint tweedle of dissolving stereotypes could be heard as the freaky GTO recitative poured through the stereo. Zappa had thrown up another mirror for America to reflect upon.

Ricky Prescott was a GTO in training and what follows is her own words about what it was like, why she's not a GTO anymore, how she happened to enter a drag queen contest, and about the clothes she now designs for herself and others, and why.

What was being a GTO all about?

Basically, they want liberation from the usual modes of dress and what one should do. They're completely doing a breakthrough in not just music but their ideas. They feel that clothes aren't something you wear on certain occasions. Clothes are a part of how you feel everyday. It's just being yourself. They want to express their childhood dreams. Music is a way of life and experiences. It's how you feel about what you're going through, who you meet, what you do, how you feel about the world today, situations you don't like, ways of living you don't like. They want life to



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be interesting for them; they want to travel around. They want to give the woman's side.

Most groups are made up of male performers who give the man's side. The GTO's want to show what women go through. Women's Liberation as much as the Man's Liberation. The Beatles, the Stones, any of the male groups are showing what the young man of today wants to do, what is important to him. And that's what the GTO's want to do; they want more liberation for the women.

So where the groupies live off of the life style of the male groups, the GTO's are more independent and have their own ideas and want to express them. They're not parasitic as I'd say most groupies are. They're enjoying life and being paid to, and to be freaks, to entertain. They're artists as well as groupies. It's a 24 hour thing. If you know entertainers you know what flipped out people they are, very sensitive, hard to live with. They have a million complexes. The GTO's fought continuously. A lot of competition within themselves.

What was expected of you in getting to know members of groups?

There were very heavy pressures. I was being checked all the time to see if I were GTO material. They wanted to know if I could meet and get inside groups, get to know them in any way—verbally, sexually, or whatever. I found the pressures, especially the sexual pressures coming into play all the time. There was such competition. It wasn't as important to me to prove myself sexually as mentally. But for a lot of girls it was important—just one more way to get to know them. It was really degrading. It really turned me off to that music scene.

Is that why you left?

It was just too hectic a life. I didn't like the dope scene. In the music business there is a heavy dope scene going on. You take dope to be in, not for your personal enjoyment but for status. It got too overbearing between drugs, competition of groupies. You couldn't get to meet people because there were these groupies constantly hanging around. It was just too hectic. You'd get up around one or two in the afternoon, and you wouldn't go to bed until three or four in the morning. Never any rest. You were constantly scheming on who you were going to meet new. And every day, because the GTO's wanted to get

known, we had to be outrageous. After a while, I got tired of having to dress in a new outlandish costume every day. It was very nerve-wracking. It's not the way I, myself, want to get into music and express myself. It's too superficial, especially the LA scene. Too many social scenes, too many name droppers; it's not a natural way to live at all.

Tell me about the drag queen contest you were in.

It was a costume ball at the Palace Theatre in North Beach. It's the only legal time that they can dress up in women's clothes. It's against the law you know. So they have this big ball and show underground flicks. I placed third.

Did they know you were a chick?

No, not at first. Not until I got up on stage. But it was cool. I still placed third.

What were they looking for?

Just the best-dressed queen. Some of them are really beautiful, too.

Do you feel comfortable wearing your clothes in places where people are pretty straight and tend to stare?

It doesn't bother me. I'll dress down a lot of times just so I won't have to go through the changes. But they go through more changes than I do. It doesn't bother me because I wear what I want. It's an everyday thing. People will look at anything that's a little odd. I don't care as long as they're laughing. I'd rather see them laugh than cry. It's a projection of my free thought. A lot of people say they want to do things but they're really afraid. You can't be inhibited physically, mentally, or spiritually. You just can't talk or read about it; you've got to do it. You have to do what you really feel has to be changed. Because you help other people too. The liberation in dress is great. We have all different dress lengths, all different colors. We're not afraid to use different materials, old and new, to dress creatively. Life is so boring that these extra extensions, like white face makeup and black eyes or glitter, drawing pictures on your face, are things to keep you entertained.

How did you get into leather?



To Grandfather & Grandmother, Love, Linda, 1961

I started working with leather because of the change in texture from ordinary materials. It's earthy, it feels really good—very sensual, I learned how to work with it from watching other people, and I got some tools and taught myself. There's also so many different colors today.

What kind of leather things do you make?

I used to make many belts, vests and purses. I'd have a lot of scraps left over with very beautiful natural edges, and I thought, why not put them together! First, I glued them to place them, then I would punch holes and lace them together. Each time I'd come up with something different. It was like a puzzle. My patchwork coats were worn in the LA and SF production of Hair. I also make patchwork bags. I have one very large one that can be used as a suitcase because I hate suitcases. It's really soft. It's a gypsy kind of a thing. You just swing it over your shoulder and take off.

What's the philosophy behind the way you dress?

Dressing is a way of life. It's an art to me. It's how I feel. I can never find clothes in commercial establishments. They're made for a mass level; to fit an average, and what is an average? Everyone is so individual. I'm so fussy about the way material feels, if they're too starchy, too bulky. Also when you don't have a lot of money you find yourself having to make your clothes. Dressing is an extension of you, so how can you buy a ready-made one? It's an individual thing just like a poem or a song, a picture you draw. You have to feel comfortable and that's one of the most important things in my clothes. I combine the old and the new in my clothes. I like a little antiquing but I like some of the newer fabrics, because they're more together than the older fabrics. Most people just don't have the time. Most people are afraid to wear anything a little different, especially younger kids. They wear what is accepted in their crowd. Fashions have been dictated so long. But now things are opening up. We're finally breaking through so many of

our tight-cast little rules. People are struggling to keep their identity in this mass production world, and clothes seem to be one way of doing it. It's my rebellion.

Do you think there is an exchange of roles going on?

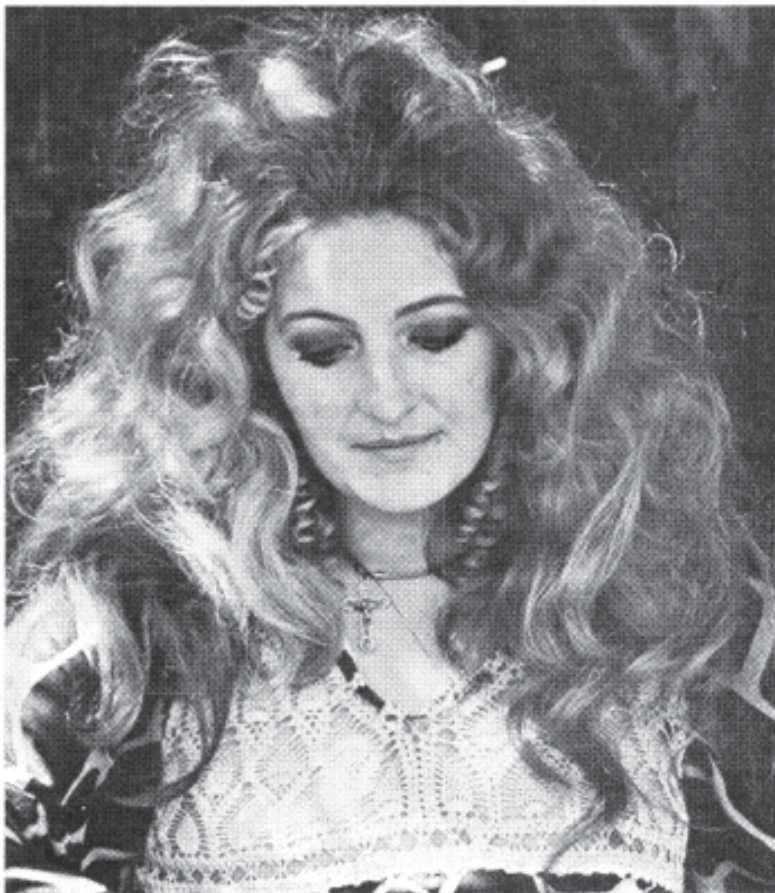
Well, it all boils down to the fact that young men today are emasculated. Everyone is on welfare. They think the government owes it to them to take care of them. The woman is taking over the old masculine role, which she is resenting. She's bringing in the money through welfare or taking a straight job to support her and her old man. Chicks are playing schizo roles. She plays secretary or bank teller eight hours a day, then comes home to her old man who's been hanging out all day. Men need to work at something. I'm not trying to emphasize money but we all need things.

Men are emasculated and castrated. They're rebelling against the role society tried to put them in but they haven't come up with alternatives. So they hang out and let their old ladies support them, which just reinforces their emasculation and the chick's bitterness. We can't just sit around and knock the establishment, which is what these cats are doing. We've got to come up with change and solutions. You can't just turn on and tune out. The men are just perpetrating their frustration. They reject the role so they let their old ladies do it for them. Women still want a man they can look up to.

Do you think there's a rise in bisexuality as a result of this role changing?

Oh yes, a lot of men want to prove that they're not hung up, not uptight about the fact that they might dig other guys. But most of the pressure is coming from the outside. They just want to prove that they're not limited. For most, the bisexuality probably isn't there so much as the fact that they don't want to be too uptight to acknowledge it. So they try to open to it and find out if they are. I'm sure we're all basically bisexual at a latent level but that doesn't mean blatantly sexual.

Things are more open now but we must get through it all and emerge more humanitarian. I really believe that this generation was reincarnated from the children of Atlantis. We've got to make the changes and make a beautiful world. ☺



They let their old ladies do it for them, Ricky, 1970