

Go! Arts

Comedy with a rhythm method and blues

BY ADRIAN CHAMBERLAIN
Times Colonist staff

Risque tunes are nothing new, of course. In particular, rhythm-and-blues artists of yesteryear loved playing with sexual metaphors.

Take, for instance, such treasures as Tiny Bradshaw's *Big Ten Inch Record* (later covered by Aerosmith), Dinah Washington's *Big Long Slidin' Thing* (a trombone, naturally) or *Lemon Squeezing Daddy* by the Sultans.

Enter Vancouver's The Wet Spots, performing this weekend at the Comedy Cellar in Victoria. This comedy duo — inspired by vintage R & B stars as well as icons such as Josephine Baker and Marlene Dietrich — takes listeners on a musical trip to the valley of ribald. The Spots' original tunes include *Smack My Bottom*, *The Kinky Neighbour Song* and *Wherever You're Going (I'd Like to Come)*.

Cass King, 31, seems eminently qualified to be a purveyor of suggestive song. As well as being a singer with The Wet Spots, she's a former sex columnist (she penned the *Organ Grinder* for the newspaper *Terminal City*) who now doubles as retail manager for a Commercial Drive sex shop, Womyn'sWare. Her partner — both off-stage and on — is John Wood, a singer-guitarist who's played with such bands as The Orchid Highway (psychedelic pop) and Something About Reptiles ("anarcho-Turkish" gypsy music).

The inaugural Wet Spots CD, *Ribbed for Pleasure*, is a collection of seven songs that are relentlessly cheeky, but never smutty or profane. What makes their comedy work is the marked contrast between the Doris Day sweetness of the singing — embracing such nostalgic styles as vaudeville and bossa nova — and the satirical kick of the sex-

SHOWTIME

What: The Wet Spots
Where: Comedy Cellar (759 Yates St.)
When: Friday, 9 p.m., Saturday 8:30 p.m. and 10:30 p.m.
Tickets: 412-1020

obsessed lyrics.

Do You Take It sings the praises of a sexual practice considered unorthodox by some, then declares: "You're beautiful and curvy/ But unless you're kind of pervy/ There's no way you and me are going to last." *The Kinky Neighbour Song* bemoans neighbours who rap on the wall to protest loud love-making happening on the other side. In the song, The Wet Spots promise to serve these neighbours a friendly gin and tonic "and serve it up as a nice colonic."

King and Wood first met 14 months before founding The Wet Spots in July of 2002.

"We started writing songs and, of course, they're really frankly sexual. Because that's kinda how we are," said King, who favours slinky dresses and fishnet stockings.

She contends that many people view sexuality — especially alterative sexuality — as something dark and even subversive. The Wet Spots aim to inject a little humour into the whole discussion. As well, says King, they try to educate a little on the side. For instance, the ditty *Public Service Announcement* advises listeners not to introduce potentially toxic devices into body cavities.

Alternative sexuality is King's bread and butter. She gigs up to 14 times a month with The Wet Spots. Her days at Womyn's Ware are spent dispensing

advice and selling customers such items as vibrators, dildos and nipple clamps. ("You may be pleasantly surprised," a brochure for Womyn'sWare cheerfully advises, "by the erogenous potential of a simple nipple clamp.")

Before King starting working at Womyn'sWare, she assumed her clients would be young, single, multi-pierced folk of indeterminate gender. In fact, the average person seeking the garden-variety dildo is aged 35 to 45, married and probably drives a Volvo.

"Suburban people have very interesting and varied sex lives," says King. "It's just that we don't assume that of our neighbours."

The Wet Spots have performed at everything from fairly staid spoken word events to burlesque shows and fetish clubs. With the latter, the Spots find themselves in the unusual position of sharing the spotlight with the audience — many of them flamboyant members of Vancouver's bondage/sadomasochistic scene.

On occasion, even mainstream comedy clubs get a little hairy for The Wet Spots. King recalls performing at Lafflines comedy club in New Westminster. After singing *Threeway Rendezvous*, a paean to the delights of *ménage à trois*, the duo joked that any audience member was welcome to come home with them for a threesome.

A mustachioed man in a plaid flannel jacket and a baseball cap promptly volunteered for the honour. King still isn't sure whether he was serious.

When The Wet Spots reprised *Threeway Rendezvous* at the same club months later, a group of young people announced the song had inspired them to subsequently rush home for an orgy.

"We went home and found Web-cam pictures on our e-mail," said King approvingly. "They just went right ahead."



Cass King and partner John Wood get down and bawdy as the Wet Spots.