

PATTY SPIGLANAN

## NAKED BARBIES/VAGABOND LOVERS

I'd heard of the Naked Barbies for awhile before I got to one of their shows; that finally happened one night at the club Bottom Of The Hill. They started off the set with "Midnight Radio" and I had been thoroughly won over mid-way through the song. It took me roughly about a week to find their CD, and I've been a fan since then.

This interview took place at the Embarcadero, late-July 1998. Since this interview, the Barbies played SXSW in 1999, got a record deal and underwent a name change - now known as The Vagabond Lovers, they released a new CD in May 2000, WHEN I WAS YOU.

I started **singing** in bands at 24; my **first** band was THE OUTSKIRTS (which became THE GRAVELS and eventually ended up as MIDNIGHT RADIO), formed with Eve Decker - that lasted for about 6 years; we broke up when I was 30. At that time, I was feeling pretty disillusioned about playing music - '30 years old, nothing's happened; time to get a real job, get married, have kids', whatever. Usually the point where people quit playing in bands, but I really loved playing music.

When I started the NAKED BARBIES, I decided I would just do it for the love

of music and not worry about anything. I worked with contacts I had from my old band - started out with just myself and the bass player from my old band, playing at just a few clubs. I just kept doing it - the thing is, I'm consistent. I've probably played at least 3 gigs a month, on the average, for the past 13 years.

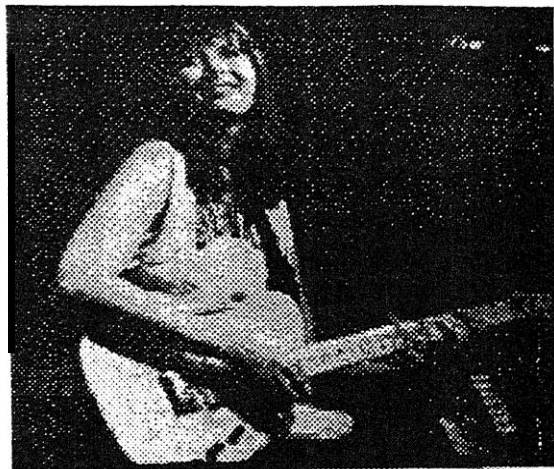
The original *name of the band* was NAKED BARBIE DOLLS - *war the name changed for legal reasons?*

So. After we'd been playing for about 4 years, we were approached by a local artist. He decided he wanted to start a record

company. He'd seen us play, so he approached us & we signed with him to do one disc.

**DANCING WITH VACUUMS (1994), on Weasel-Disc?**

Exactly. He was concerned about getting sued by Mattel, so he actually wrote a letter to Mattel asking them if we could use NAKED BARBIE DOLLS as the name; they wrote back and said, "No", so we decided to drop the 'Dolls'. The reason I picked that name was not because I fell in love with the name - it was a decision I made in about 10 seconds. we were



rehearsing in this loft, & the person who lived there had all these naked Barbie dolls hanging from nooses and such. I said, "OK, we gotta come up with a name - 'Naked Barbie Dolls', alright!" The one thing I learned [from the previous experience of band name changing] is that it's not important what the band name is, it's just important that you keep it - every time we changed our name, we had to put out notices saying, 'Formerly...' It was a big hassle & you lose recognition... It doesn't matter if there's personnel changes. just keep the name.

DANCING WITH VACUUMS did get a good reception. But basically, the guy running Weasel-Disc was just doing it for fun. He didn't really have a whole lot of money to invest in it - he paid for the recording, but that was about it. The most money that record companies spend is for promotion; the actual cost of making a record these days is pretty small - you can make a

really high quality CD and press 1000 for about \$10,000. That's nothing compared to the amount of money needed to promote a record.

After that experience, I realized that it was kind of pointless to sign with a rinky-dink label; they weren't really gonna do anything with the record, plus they own the record. It's so irritating-if I want DANCING WITH VACUUMS CD's, I have to buy them from Weasel-Disc. So after that, I talked with the band and said, "Look, we're not making a lot of money - let's just take the money we're making from gigs and pool it, then we could afford to record our own CD's." so the next 2 albums, TARNISHED (19%) & LIVING INDEPENDENTLY (1998), we just paid for ourselves & made our money back and I own the records, which is pretty good.

You handle a good portion of the songwriting duties.

*I've always written with*

Mike Connor, the keyboard player. When we first stated, practically everything I wrote, I wrote with him. As time goes on, I've been writing a lot more on my own and we've collaborated a little bit less than we used to, but we still get together - we call each other 'Sol' and 'Manny' and pretend we're working in the Brill Building.

Sarah Decker wrote 'Innuendo' and 'Junkie' [featured on DANCING WITH VACUUMS and TARNISHED, respectively]; she's a great songwriter. She's Eve Decker's sister - that's how I got to know her. I like to tap into her songwriting as much as I can.

*In most of the reviews of the band, you get pegged into the "Alternative Country/Americana" slot.*

Yeah. Musically, I write pretty simple songs and I think that's where that country influence comes from. Our music is pretty much straight-ahead rock or ballads. I like country