

# laura borealis

## somewhere past the northern lights

By KAREN RAWLINES

*I have never met Laura Borealis, but have heard much of her accomplishments and the work she has done. Perhaps it is just her name that gives her the added intrigue, but there is something about this person that creates a wonder -- something like aurora borealis itself. I suppose.*

*She is an artist, a musician, a writer; she has directed music videos for the likes of Thrush Hermit and Sebadoh; she has influenced some very influential people. She was kind enough to answer a few questions over e-mail for me this past fall, and I horribly left them aside, trying to dream up a context for her insights. Recently I decided that her words speak volumes on their own, and any additions would be forced and superfluous. I will let her speak for herself, in her own voice. Listen:*

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**KR:** How do you feel you have grown creatively while dabbling in many media?

**LB:** I would be a lot more successful if I stayed with one medium because it would get all my attention. I am greatly influenced by my environment. Since I move

almost every two years to another city, everything becomes dislodged and I find myself doing something completely different. I never expected to be making rock videos. I never expected to go into art either.

*Where do you see art (in any sense) fitting into today's society dominated by electronically numbed pas-*

**a computer user can't burn all their memories of the past, listen to Kraftwerk all the time, and live in a Miami Vice house, and drive a Ferrari, and tattoo and pierce and take 90's drugs, and bleach their hair and wear Jean Paul Gaultier, without having a breakdown and developing perverse desires to touch dirt or eat leaves or something.**

- Laura Borealis

*sages, with schools debating the eradication of their art/music programmes?*

I never got into pinball, pong or computers. I like e-mail and video editing and stuff. A lot of people get off on being able to communicate to a lot of people relatively anonymously on the computer. I'm not against computers in any way. I just haven't spent the time or had the desire to try to have a go at it. I get a lot of satisfac-

tion out of other things. Computer stuff seems really fragile to me, like some bad guy could erase your stuff, or cut off your phone line, or change what you said and make you look like an asshole. I'd rather have an art show with things.

People will think computers are tiresome eventually. The whole explosion occurred pretty recently. So like

make art, but if people aren't taught to develop something original and study history and theory, then we are going to have things like very sophisticated forms of graffiti, where the majority of the population is involved, things like that, like sophisticated terrorism, really crafty versions of what's around us and on TV. Deconstructions of Baywatch. It's all sort of interesting, but not really mind-altering. Before I took any art classes, I was drawing lame cartoons of Grace Jones's head, and felt like I had a style. The are very barfy drawings.

School taught me humility and observation. I think a lot of people do things haphazardly. Like Vanilla Ice, he strikes me as that type. Like Dumb and Dumber, and Kathie Lee doing her show and improvising lame stories. Huge and uneducated. 10 billion dollars of crap.

*How many items have you published? How did you go about funding these projects?*

Whatever I have put out has been self-published, and because it's expensive, there haven't been very many of them. There is a lot of satisfaction in doing it myself, but it takes a really long time, mostly word of mouth for people to

find out about it.

I'm sure I'll always self-publish things, but I have a couple mainstream projects on the go: a film, music, the rock video thing. At some point it becomes desirable to make a living at what comes naturally to you. Most things I make don't translate well to the general public. My MFA show in Chicago would be a prime example of that.

I've made two little books, a record, two kinds of t-shirts in multiples. Most of that stuff is old. I have a huge backlog of ideas and finished things. Part of the reason why I haven't put this stuff out is because I don't have a permanent address. My record has this useless Chicago PO Box number on it.

The operation Snob Shop has been called SPECIAL CRAP for the next few projects. A few records by bands I'm in -- CRAPPO, CRAPPO2 (with 2 members of Thrush Hermit), and CRAPS (with Rebecca Kraatz). Maybe a colouring book, stickers, shirts...

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*As Laura's answers dwindled away, I could only feel slightly refreshed for her offering of something so real. It isn't the meaning of life or anything, but something strangely real. That's context enough on its own.*

Our nicest thanks to the kind folks who kept us supplied with great entertainment (and sometimes arts) this year: Sony Music, BMG, EMI, Universal, Murderecords, Raincoast Books, Capitol, Virgin, Mercury/Polydor, Columbia, Ramona Records, Corduroy Records, No Records, City Cinema, UPEI Theatre Society, 20th Century Fox, Lucasfilm, Steven Spielberg (sp?), Edwin & friends (love ya babe), Thrush and the 3 Hermits, Laura Borealis, Fastbuck, Rez Sisters, SupahPals, Wayne Manson & his lovely wife Marilyn, 54-40=14, Furnaceface, Graceful Babes, The Fruheads, Big Mama D & the Strawberry Jamz, ThEwoks, Colin M., Rainman, France @ SubPop, Madhat. and all the rest of the industrial moguls who have helped along the way.

oh, yeah. and thanks to sloan.