

Interview with X Tape 1 Side 2  
Interviewed by Elise Chenier  
Transcribed by Jody Konarski

[00;00;00-00;05;08]

X:           You want to get fucked. And I said, that' okay. And I want a baby. And I said you know I'm gay, I'm a lesbian; I don't go out with boyfriends. I don't have boyfriends but I want to have a baby. So I said I'll go out with you. And I made him pay me too you know. That's the name of the game down there; you pay. So that's what happened. After I'd had Stefanie, I attempted to turn some tricks. I don't know like in my mind I guess I thought well you've already done it with guy now right. And the woman I was going out with, she was a hooker when I started going out with her. A lot of the woman I hung around were hookers right. And I kind of was going through this I didn't want her doing it. I would do it. I was going to take care of her if you know what I mean. So I said I don't want you to do it anymore, I'll do it. And there was this other dyke, Lisa Cusie, and she managed to get more tricks than most feminine women down there. And she had hooked for ages and still does to this day I think, but whatever. I got her to go with me....we hung out together, the four of us. And I got her to like show me the ropes cuz you know...cuz I was nervous and I was always afraid of getting done in by some maniac right. Like it really scared me, the whole thought of hooking scared the shit right out of me. But I figured...a hooker I would never have made because I had to get so pissed before I even had the balls to crack to them. I just couldn't bring myself to say, you wanna go? So half the time, she'd pick them out. She'd say okay I know what he pays...and sometimes she'd even go and crack them for me right cuz I just didn't have it in me to do that. So I think I turned a grand total of, in about three, four months, a grand total of about four tricks. [it wasn't paying the rent] It wasn't doing nothing. It was like this is not my idea of a good time and not my idea of what I want to do, and that was very short lived. And I had people while I'd be down there playing the part or whatever and the hookers were all saying you gotta beat the guys, rip the guys off right. I just couldn't do it. I could not bring myself to do it. I mean I wasn't about to admit to them that I thought it was wrong and not right no matter whether [inaudible] a trick or not. You know, to beat somebody for their money or beat them over the damn head to steal their money or whatever tricks they used to do...I couldn't live with...something I couldn't force myself to do. I'd just go through with it and get my lousy thirty bucks or whatever it was. So no I wasn't hooking material. [laughter] Especially that type of hard core

street hooker. I mean call girl might be one thing but hooking right off the streets like that. I was scared of disease, I was scared of like I said getting some maniac you know. Cuz I always thought in the back of my mind, why do these men want to go out with dykes. What is this? Why do they want to go out with dykes? And I used to think you're going to get somebody who's crazy and they hate queers.

Elise: Did some of them...cuz I know a lot of straight hookers hung out at the Continental. Did some of them go there because there were hookers there, or did some of them actually go because they knew they were lesbians?

X: Well a lot of the lesbians were hookers.

Elise: Yeah exactly. But you're saying you were wondering why they went out with dykes. Well I am thinking they went to the Continental in that area because there just were a lot of hookers there.

X: Yeah I think a lot of the tricks, maybe to this day, I don't know what it was. But quite often you'd have a feminine person sitting beside a dyke and the femme going crazy trying to grab a trick and really pretty and everything, cracking all this no, no, no, no, and the guy's looking at the dyke. You wanna go? You wanna go? Right. And some of the butches, believe me, they were better at the business than some of the femmes.

[00;05;09-00;09;37]

X: Like Lisa. She had steady's..regular steady tricks for years. It was nothing for her to go out in one night and turn eight tricks.

Elise: Do you think maybe the men who went out with butches were closet homosexuals or something? Like they were attracted to them because they were boyish looking?

X: No, I don't think so. I think they were heterosexual and I don't think they were having any trouble at all with their sexuality.

Elise: Yeah. It's bizarre eh?

X: Maybe just a bit of curiosity and a bit of a challenge. I'm sure that they would have said to buddies that they think we're men because we dressed the way we did. We didn't think we were men. We knew what we were. We were dykes.

There's a difference between a dyke and a man. Right? But they didn't, they couldn't grasp that. So I think for some of them it was just to be able to say to their buddies...I had that one right. Dykes were supposed to hate men and not like sex with men. Another thing they didn't understand is ninety-eight percent of hookers can't stand sex with men. They can't. Even the straight ones. I mean you're there for the money and that's it. It's like a job you know and that's it and that's all. Tricks to this day, I don't think tricks really get it. You know what I mean? [yeah] They really don't get it. They can't help it; they're male. Really they can't help it. I always had this fear in my mind that maybe the reason with some of them is because they were crazy and they hated us. I don't know, I was always scared of being murdered in some room because some guy didn't like us.

Elise: But generally you are saying that a lot of the John's were really, really friendly?

X: A lot of them were really great people. They were there for what they were there for and the women were there for what they were there for. A lot of the hookers and the ones that were long time hookers, in fact every one that I know of, they all had what was called a Mark. A Mark was someone you went out with on a steady basis and you didn't have to go to bed with them every time you met them. They'd spend other money on you and didn't stuff and if you went to jail, they'd bail you out.

Elise: So the time that you were down around the Continental and stuff like that, you knew Jackie right?

X: Jackie?

Elise: Jackie Robbins.

X: Oh yeah.

Elise: So at that time did she have a lot of women working for her? Or a lot of women were giving their money to her and the relationship has been described to me as they were supposedly providing some kind of protection to the women. They would watch the clock...I mean that's how they justified getting their money.

X: I don't know who told you that they were giving protection cuz that's garbage. Not like we see in the movies where a pimp they say well part of my role is this. No, no. they were...Jackie and some...there was a few...they were really rough

son's of bitches. They were living in some kind of dream world. I never, I never, in some ways I never fit in there. Like if somebody new, if a new little butch came, especially a butch would always get it. If they came into town and go to the bar there was this crowd that was Jackie and Mitch, and Shirley [inaudible], and Shirley Mitchell too in those days. She was a creep in those days; she was a little asshole. They were really hard, really hard.

[00;09;38-00;17;29]

X: At first in fact I was afraid of them. I was petrified of them in fact. I would never let them know that.

Elise: But their whole reputation was based on intimidation right?

X: Intimidation and fighting all the time. But like I say somebody new would come in and a nice person and wouldn't cause any trouble and it wouldn't take more than two or three hours and they would be hollering across the table to them. And next thing you know there'd be three or four of them piled up on one little poor little dyke half the size of them pounding the shit out of her. And they were all like that. And most of them too with their girlfriends. Like some of them went with women...like part of me I felt guilty in a way because most of the women I went with were hookers and they were basically, you could say, they were supporting me. I used to get jobs but I couldn't hang on to them because it used to drive me insane to be at work and have them downtown and in the bars and in the clubs and everything. I couldn't mix the two, I couldn't get it. But these people would literally beat their girlfriend's up and be really rough and be like I want two hundred dollars tonight. And then a lot of them like Jackie and that, they'd go with one woman, but the women they'd be with would be aware that they'd have these other women and they'd pretend to go with them. Like it just fuckin took them for a real ride. They'd pretend they were going with them and they'd only meet them every day long enough to collect the god damn money. It was nothing for them to grab a woman and throw her up the alley and say you're fucking around and spending all your money on dope and booze. I need money for my car, I need money for this, that, and the other thing right. And yes, of course, all of us down there...sometimes before I ever went out with Stephanie's father, before I ever got sexually active with men, quite often one of the women would come to me and say, Lynn I got a trick, will you do me a favor? Will you go and will you just keep six and watch. And we'd time them because everybody I think had that little theory in the back of their minds of

getting a maniac for one thing right. Or keep six too because of cops or whatever right? So people just did that for each other. But they didn't do it like it was some business they had on the side. That's garbage. And as far as them protecting them, they were just bullies period, out to get into fights and shit. That part of me, I hated that part of them. I really did. I really hated these people when it came to that. I really and honestly did. I guess in some ways I was a hypocrite. I would drink with them, laugh with them. I would not have anything to do with ripping a guy off, following some guy in an alley and beating the shit out of him for his money. Or, this juvenile pimp sort of attitude that they had with a lot of the hookers and all that. It was nothing for them if a hooker...cuz a lot of the young hookers they were just drugged up all the time and they'd pass right out. And they all had a habit of keeping their money in their bras. And I'd see people like Jackie Roberts and think nothing like ha ha ha ha, and just go up to them while they're passed out at the bar, you know, in a seat and just rifle through their god damn money and take it all or just...rob them. And give the look like if you say anything...like that sort of thing disgusted me. It's something I never did understand. I never did understand that. I remember the one person I was most afraid of was Mitch. She was strong, she was tough, she was a big, fat woman. And I had known them for a number of years. And we were sitting there, I remember, and this real cute little dyke came in and they started their shit. One of them got up and came over and threw her on the floor. And just like vultures, they were there. And Mitch turned right around and looked at me and said c'mon, and like I just looked right at her and said, you don't fuckin need me Mitch. I said there's fucking four of you on her now. Why the fuck don't you just leave her alone? And after I said that, I was shocked myself that I did because Mitch looked at me like she wanted to just grab me and eat me up you know. But I didn't care anymore, I was fed up with it right. I was fed up seeing it because there was no excuse for it as far as I was concerned right. Needless to say I was shaking in my boots but I thought I don't care. She never said a damn word and the next day, cuz see I never really hung with Mitch. The next day when I come in and I was kind of nervous to go in and she was sitting in her little king pin spot there. I said down and about ten minutes later she said, Lynn, and I thought here it goes. She called me over and bought me a beer. Never mentioned that, nothing, and from then on was always friendly to me and never said a damn word to me. No I just couldn't sit indefinitely and see this kind of horse shit go on you know. But I don't know maybe somebody you interviewed like Roberts might have told you something. And if she did, she's full of shit. I'm sorry and I would tell her. [yeah] I would tell her straight up, Roberts, you weren't anybody's protector, you were a fucking low life

female pimp. That's all you were and you beat the shit out of people for no reason. And you didn't give two shits about anybody. Saying it the way it was right. And that's the only part of downtown that really depressed me was that end of it. Especially seeing women treat other women that way. Most of them were on heroin or speed right. Like a number of the straight women had boyfriend's you know, the same, beat the shit out of them for their money and everything. Like for me, the real pimp you see on the movies and on tv, like they were over on [inaudible]. This was your real pimp sort of thing right.

[00;17;30-00;23;05]

X: We used to go over, there was one bar and sometimes we'd all go down there. It was a piano bar and we used to get tired of the same thing so we'd go over there. Mintz's I think it was called, Mintz's Tavern. We used to go there. We were surprised they'd even let us in but they did. And we'd sit and drink and listen to this guy playing piano, you know, for something different.

Elise: Did you ever go down to places like Lectro's or the Rido or...

X: I didn't. It wasn't my...I didn't like them, I don't know why. I went two or three times but I didn't really like them. But I'm like that today. I get liking one bar and that's it. Like when The Shay was there, I didn't bother with any other bars. I find my comfortable place and that's it. I kind of always have all of my life and maybe because of my childhood. Home is always where I'm at at the time, and um, I dunno. And I don't like anything, I've never been, like, those places were a bit classy, like a lot more classy and somehow I felt more at home in the dirty, grungy, old Continental Hotel. And just like my friends were my family and so that's where they were and I didn't choose to be anywhere else. In fact, I guess for years and years I must have lived in some kind of a daze thinking that we were all the lesbians in Toronto, period or something. We weren't. I mean I realized that years later. There was all kinds of lesbians doing other things. Not everybody drank their face off and not everybody went to bars and clubs. But that is the only kind of life I knew for a number of years, as far as lesbian life. To me, that was it. That's what it consisted of right. And some of those nicer bars, somehow I just didn't feel like I fit, in there, you know?

Elise: So you didn't have much of a relationship with gay men, there wasn't much of a...

X: Oh yeah, the Melody Room and all that, I did shows with all of them.

Elise: Oh, that's right. So tell me about that. How did you get into that and what were they like? Tell me all that. Did you get paid for doing it? No? It was all gratis?

X: No. I just loved doing it anyway.

Elise: I mean was it more formal than, you know how they have karaoke now?

X: Oh yeah like we rehearsed and everything. Arley, who was the love of my life, in those days, and I can't remember if I started doing them first, honestly I can't remember if I was doing them first and then when I met Arley, if she started or whatever but we were doing them right from the time we were together, we did them, together. Like I'd do the male numbers and she would do the female numbers. And um, her, she really, like I just was myself, I didn't have to.... But with like her she just loved it man. She loved it so much, honest to god. And she'd buy outfits for it, and just the whole bit. I remember her doing Candles in the Rain, right...

Elise: Elton John? No that's Candle in the Wind...

X: Candles in the Rain, it was, oh gosh I can't even remember who sang that, way way back, but anyway, um we had a house that we rented right at Broadview up at seven forty Broadview, right beside the Dominion, the Loblaw's store there. Some have...they have offices and that in there now but, big house anyway. Even her daughter comes now. She's dead, but her daughter brings the kids, and I've sort of taken the place of her mom now, right. And she was there a couple of months ago, right, and we were talking about it all and she said, I remember you and mom. She says rehearsing and rehearsing for those shows, and everything, right, and she says and you would get us kids doing it and the kids would get up and mime and everything, right, with us and practice, and that.

Elise: So she had kids?

X: Oh, yeah, yeah, Arley had three kids. Anyway, but I remember with that in particular, oh god, she got wood and she built this, built this stand, I think, it had candles, right, painted it black and she went out and she bought material and she had a sewing machine that I bought her and she made this thing with a black cape, and silver, and just the whole bit, right, like she was just right

into it and loved it, just loved it. And she was good, she was real good at what she did.

Elise: So did she actually sing or did she lip sync?

X: Just lip sync, yeah.

Elise: And how about yourself?

X: Just lip sync.

Elise: So who did you lip sync?

X: Oh gosh, Neil Diamond, I did just about every one of Neil Diamond's.

[00;23;06-00;29;15]

X: It was only last year that somebody bumped into me and said I'll never forget you doing Red Red Wine. The most I did for that is I just set myself in a chair right. I sat in a chair and I had this, we couldn't have alcohol in there so I got this water and food coloring and a wine bottle and made it look like it was almost empty right. And it's funny but that person, and quite often that's the one song people...even the last few when I was going to the Shay, and people bring up...because I've done some in the last few years too for AIDS benefits. I've done it twice...see everybody for years wanted me to do Wayne Newton. I guess to because when I was younger, and when he was young and he had that real high voice and everything and my hair was just like him and I really did look like Wayne Newton. And my voice too, people said like talking and that. And I still do get that sometimes. People say you remind me of someone, and even old ladies have said it to me right. Wayne Newton [laughter] and people used to bug me to do Wayne Newton. I'd say no, I don't want to do Wayne Newton. Somehow I just didn't want to do Wayne Newton songs. So I never did. I never ever did. And Carrie got me, what was it, last year what's that one that she sings quite a bit...on Young Street? [On Young Street, there's a new one called Cockatoos] No, this one's not new at all. Big huge...[Colby's?]

Elise: Oh, um..I know the one you're talking about.

X: Anyways so I had already done at the Shay twice with Denny. Denny did Dolly Parton and I did Kenny Rogers. We sprayed my hair and the whole bit right.

And I hadn't done it in years. I hadn't done it in years right. At first I'd say no I don't want to do that. C'mon, c'mon right. I got a tape of it and everything. So Carrie knew that I had done them and that I would do whatever I can to help with AIDS so.

Elise: So at the time when you started doing it were you the only one doing it?

X: I was the only one for a bit yeah. I was the only woman.

Elise: Had there been women before you that had been doing it?

X: Not that I know of, no.

Elise: In Toronto?

X: I don't think so.

Elise: Did you ever go down to Buffalo?

X: No.

Elise: Cuz it was an American....like a lot of women did it in the States.

X: Yeah.

Elise: So why did you start? Did you know other women doing it or did you think that you were the only one?

X: No. You see when I was at high school and all I did used to sing in groups and everything for dances. In fact, when I first sat down to see my first show, I didn't know what lip sync was. I had a few drinks...I probably didn't connect in my mind that this is the exact background music. So these people can't be really singing right. [yeah] Cuz they were pretty damn good at what they did and I was half pissed. Anyway, when I did realize what lip sync was all about, so on and so forth right, um and I think there was always a bit of ham in me when I was young...I liked the stage. And also the songs especially, like I hardly every did any fast songs. Everything I did, pretty well, was love sick shit. It really was. [yeah] But it was something I felt and I sort of um, I related to. Songs that I would related to a lot right. Like I say I don't remember how I ever did my very first. Sarah, I think was the woman who ran the club then.

[that's right] And I think maybe just talking or something and whatever.

Elise: So the drag queens were doing their shows?

X: It was all drag queens. It was. I had only seen drag queens. Right after I started doing I remember one girl, Sue Traverse, she started to do some and Arley was one of the only women every doing them too.

Elise: So when you did these shows, like what was the club like with the drag queens? Was it mostly male, mostly women, or would you say equal mix?

X: It was pretty well fifty fifty. It was pretty well mixed.

Elise: And how did, I mean thinking about how contentious an issue drag queens are today, was it...

X: They were very loved. [yeah] I'm personally very disappointed in the change. In certain changes in the gay community...for me I'm just I don't know, cuz I'm from the old school I guess. Like I find it really difficult that any gay men's bar or any gay women's bar will not let a guy in in drag. [yeah] To me, it's hypocritical, it's morally wrong.

[00;29;16-00;35;05]

X: Don't be crying the blues to the straight population about how we want to get equal treatment and equal this and equal that and then be drawing our own barriers within our own community. [yeah] To me, that's dead wrong. And I miss it myself. I love the queens. I mean sometimes some of them can get on your nerves, sure, but some lesbians can get on my damn nerves. [yeah] I don't really like how we are so distinct with our gay men's bars and gay women's bars. I don't like it. I think it's okay if we have a couple of gay men's bars and a couple of gay women's bars you know that are basically exclusive. Cuz it's kind of nice to have your own space, whatever. But I would prefer if ninety percent of all gay clubs in Toronto were very mixed. And we shared our things together more like we used to.

Elise: So you think it was more shared?

X: Oh it definitely was.

Elise: See that's..

X: There's a competition. There's some kind of competition now. I feel a competition that we never used to feel.

Elise: Well I think things are really different but I just want to try and get at what you're saying because my sense is that the Continental was like ninety percent women, at least of the gay people there.

X: Yeah but that was a straight hotel.

Elise: Yeah but I mean it was like home to

X: Street type lesbians took over at some point, and that's all that was. It was never a gay bar.

Elise: No, but it was like a claimed lesbian space is what I'm saying. Like lesbians claimed it.

X: Well no there wasn't that attitude. If guys come in fine and they sat with us.

Elise: But basically.....

X: I think they chose not to go mostly because they were afraid of the straight guys. Straight men never give lesbians near as much trouble as straight men will give gay men. And I think because so many of the queens walked around the streets in broad daylight and they were in drag all the time in those days. And I'm really sure that some of them were just scared shitless to be at the Continental because it was a very rough spot. It was something that you really have to have experienced to know how rough that place could be. See at the very same time that we had the Continental they had the back of the Parkside. They had the back room of the Parkside long before the first lesbians started to go into the front part of the Parkside. The men had the Parkside before the women started to integrate into the Parkside. And Charley's was basically men. But I'm talking more of the clubs. Not so much even the bars. And then we had the clubs and there was no distinction. See we'd go to the Continental and some other places right. And the men would be here and at the Parkside the men were all in the back. It was the men's room in the back and they'd all be there. And some men would come sit with us and we were friends with gay men and whatever. But after bar time, party

time at clubs was all completely mixed. And there was no, I mean sure there would have been some individuals who didn't like faggots, and would make comments maybe, but overall we just mixed so well. And in fact there was no such thing in any literature or any signs that were put up it was never ever lesbian and gay ever...it was all gay.

Elise: But lesbians didn't call themselves lesbian then, they called themselves gay though.

X: Everybody called themselves gay.

Elise: Lesbians didn't start calling themselves lesbians until the seventy's right?

X: Yeah I can't even, I don't even know when it started you know. In fact I remember when I started to see signs and notices about it and it confused me. How come that sign says lesbian and gay? What do they mean lesbian and gay? We are all gay you know. And I didn't understand it. And a younger lesbian was explaining the political part and I got in a real shit mood about it. I didn't like it. I didn't like it myself. Why are we doing this? Are we drawing a line here in our own community? See it's always bothered me. Because I've been on those first marches and everything and being beaten up by the cops and beaten up by men on the street just because I was a dyke and stuff right. And the part of fighting for all our rights and everything and where we did stick together much more..for me the whole lesbian and gay thing...just for me and I may be totally off, but I felt there was something wrong here. Why are we making these divisions amongst us.

[00;35;06-00;40;25]

X: We are all gay. I don't give a shit. I'm a lesbian but I'm gay. As far as what gay means, I'm gay, right. [yeah] It's not just all men that are gay. We are all gay and I'm pretty sure that any older lesbian will tell you that they feel the same way right. I don't understand this distinction. But I mean there are certain things I do understand. I've got into so many heavy duty arguments with really far left feminists, like what I consider extreme far left feminists. I'll go to my grave not agreeing with their way of thinking, you know. Because when they talk sometimes I feel these vibes from them and I sense very deep hatred for men. Like I make my comments. No I always have, I'll make my comments right, but when push comes to shove, I don't hate men. If I hated men then I have no right having all the gay male friends I do. They are men, I don't give a shit, they are men. I have had no opportunity to have any kind of life with my

brother, but if I did...like I've said to some of them when we've gotten into some heavy duty arguments right I'd say just back off there, just wait a minute. Do you have a father? Yeah. Do you love your father? Yes. Do you have a brother? Yes. Do you love your brother? And then I say well how can your head be in the space that it's in, so anti-man? I said your father is no different than a lot of other men. Your brother is no different than a lot of other men. I said there is good and there's bad with all of us. I don't care whether you're straight, heterosexual, where you're coming from, there's good and there's bad. To me, that's an issue that's different. It's an issue of morality. You know, of your own morals. You either have them or you don't. I don't care what sex you are. Maybe cuz I've lived more and you know what we talked about earlier, maybe I've seen how rotten women can be. Just as rotten and mean and cruel as any man could ever hope to be, right. And on the other hand, I've had heterosexual friends, male, who would do anything in the world for me. And they've known all along what my sexuality is and some of them would do more for me than some of my lesbian friends. For me it's like...and I'm very outspoken too, like I don't care if every lesbian here in Toronto were to get up tomorrow and say one thing, if I don't feel it and I don't believe it, I don't give a shit, I'll stand up by myself and tell them sorry I'm not with you on that.

Elise: Well look what happened with the situation with Mitch right? Like if you were ever under pressure to do what everybody else was doing and you didn't right?

X: I could never. I mean I followed the crowd when it came to self-destructive things. Like the heavy cocaine and some of the stuff that I allowed myself to get into. When I think back on all those years, like they say, I was a ship with no anchor. I was just floating. I just didn't have any sense of real direction. I think I was unwinding so much from my years of abuse in the home that I reveled in the fact that I could run my own life. Like to this day I can't stand bullies. If there's one thing I can't stand, and they all know it, the ones who know me, like I'll jump down their throat so fast if I catch them bullying somebody. Like I'm right on top of them. Like I shame them and I tell them straight up. You may be homeless, that's fine, but that's no ticket to be a fucking asshole or to not care about other people right. And when they try and con me with some of their shit I tell them straight up. Like if an incident happened between two guys and I get the one that really did start it I tell him don't fucking lie to me, don't lay your shit on me. Just come clean and admit that you were a prick. And then maybe we can sit down and figure out why were you a prick, what's bugging you, something's underlying. There's a

reason people act like pricks too sometimes right. I said unless you're just a natural born prick. [laughter] These guys they're so used to me after ten years.

[end of tape]