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## Ladies on the Couch Article

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This Issue in Four Sections

# READER

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CHICAGO'S FREE WEEKLY

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*Ladies on the Couch* is billed as an "uncensored two-woman comedy that explores the simple lives of two gay women." Although it promises to be somewhat politically challenging, this show—directed by Susan Messing and starring Kari Finn and Susan Howard—is more cute than threatening, and that seems to be a good thing. In a series of vignettes and songs, Finn and Howard explore lesbian relations in a lighthearted, wholesome manner that reminds me of a show I saw in June about a young boy's coming of age in Moline. The overall message goes something like, "Sure, dealing with your sexuality can be painful at times, but there are also some tender, funny moments and they're worth putting onstage."

Homosexuality is fertile ground for theater, maybe because there's drama in homosexual relationships that doesn't exist in heterosexual relationships. *Ladies on the Couch* incorpo-

rates a lot of these themes in a series of vignettes that poke fun at the struggle of lesbians but still take that struggle seriously. The first scene consists of a conversation between Finn and Howard in which Finn refuses to be aggressive toward heterosexuals in any way because she doesn't want to give lesbians a bad name. Another turns social convention on its ear by creating a world where being gay is the norm and public displays of affection among heterosexual couples are the subject of much discussion and disgust. Some scenes are about mating rituals: two women sit uncomfortably on the couch, struggling like a pair of 12-year-olds with the desire to make a pass at each other; one woman refuses to marry the woman she loves because her parents would object—not because she's gay, but because she's not Jewish.

In between scenes Finn and Howard play the guitar and sing a couple of tunes about growing up gay. The two are accomplished performers. They seem comfortable onstage, and they thoroughly enjoy performing. At times their attitudes seem almost too light: the penultimate monologue is a pretty fiery piece, one that ends with the two of them exclaiming "Fuck you" to the audience even though their anger doesn't seem to run that deep. But this is a play that offers more honey than vinegar, and in doing that makes a controversial subject a little easier to swallow.