

**Telenovela Star went from the laundromat to iTunes.**  
**By Kristin A. Smith**

**as dramatic as  
they want to be**

The Stars (from left):  
Hanna Klein, Nikkie  
McLeod and Maggie  
Argyros

Nikkie McLeod began her relationship the way many of us have—by responding to a Craigslist posting. But instead of an awkward first date, a sloppy roommate or a one-night stand, she got a band. A kickass band. A kickass *lady* band: Telenovela Star.

McLeod says she knew right away that the group belonged together. “We really communicated well musically. As soon as I sat down and started to play, it just made sense,” says the 31-year-old drummer.

When McLeod saw the Craigslist posting for an all-girl band, she had just moved to New York City, had no Internet access and was therefore unable to learn the songs that the other two women had sent her. “We basically had to jam,” she says. “Good thing we’re all really good at jamming.”

By the end of the session, everyone on stage agreed that the trio was great together. Centered on McLeod’s heavy drumming, the screaming guitar and vocals of Maggie Argyros and the sexy bass and vocals of Hanna Klein, Telenovela Star was born.

While deciding to become a band came easily, finding a name seemed to drag on. “It was becoming a problem that we didn’t have a name,” says McLeod, explaining that the band wanted to perform but still didn’t know what to call itself.

The struggle to find a name that embodied the group continued until one fateful day when Argyros began talking about the telenovelas that were always playing at her local laundromat. “How about Telenovela?” Argyros asked, interrupting herself. But the name was already taken by a Chicago band. “Well then, how about Telenovela Star?”

## Hot Moments in Rock

**Our totally incomplete timeline of lez-rock. By Jonanna Widner**

Some are overlooked, some are forgotten, others are pinned up on walls around the world: They are the bitchin’ ladies who have rocked our queer little pop music worlds over the years. From the big-voiced blues belters to groundbreaking folkies to distortion-soaked punks, there are too many, in fact, to fit into a single timeline without creating some kind of 700,000-word en-dyke-lopedia. So we’ve crunched and condensed the history of lezzie music icons into a timeline of selected highlights. We may tease ‘em here and there, but we give them all props for changing the world and giving a new generation room to rock.

McLeod says the name “just clicked,” adding that it fit because the group can be “sort of dramatic sometimes.”

The drama is obvious in photos of the band. With their stylish wardrobes and windblown hair, the edgy New York girls photos look like an Urban Outfitters catalogue spread, or perhaps an advertisement for a real telenovela.

When asked who each of the band members would play if they were actual telenovela stars, McLeod gets thoughtful.

“Um...I guess I’d be the gay cousin,” she says, laughing. “And Maggie might be the drama queen. Oh God, she’ll kill me for that. And Hanna, well she’d be the mellow, stable person. Do they even have that on the show?” We agree they must, but can only come up with Brandon from *Beverly Hills 90210* as a possible example.

While none of the band members are Latina, and no one is likely to star in an actual telenovela, the group members represent a variety of cultures: Guitarist Maggie Argyros’ family is from Greece, but she was raised in New York City; bass player Hanna Klein is from Romania; and Nikkie McLeod is from Trinidad and Tobago.

Despite their international backgrounds, there is nothing “world music” about their sound. You can hear the influence of the Pixies and PJ Harvey more than Mediterranean guitar riffs or African drum beats, but McLeod says that even if it’s not recognizable at first, each band member brings her own background to the music. “It’s just ingrained in our psyche,” she says.

Their music is as diverse as they are. Telenovela Star’s 2007 album, *Love, Lust, Sci-fi and Monsters*, is about everything from dating to *Dr. Who*. Self-released, the album transcends garage-band quality and has a polished studio sound.

McLeod says the album (available on iTunes) is doing pretty well, but they aren’t “becoming millionaires off the project.” “Actually,” she adds, “we’d like to sell a lot more.” ■



## Something Up Her Sleeve

Liz Stahler is not just a gal with a guitar—she’s already earned significant recognition as a performer and recording artist. Her first full-length album, *Stitches in My Sleeve*, and the subsequent tour has officially put her on the map. Throughout her high school years, and even earlier, she was writing songs and performing at open mic venues in her hometown. As a 19-year-old college sophomore, Stahler began receiving offers to open for artists such as Dan Bern, Kris Delmhurst and Pamela Means.

“I seemed to keep getting these big opportunities and I wasn’t sure I was ready for them. I just decided to go with it,” she says.

After graduation, she immediately began working on *Stitches*. Following the album’s release, she toured aggressively, nationwide. Stahler has been out since high school and even had the opportunity to speak publicly to her graduating class about being gay. However, she says that as she began her formal career as a musician, she received advice to keep her sexuality under wraps.

“I decided to be myself,” she said. “I just started mentioning being a lesbian as part of my onstage banter.” It didn’t seem to affect her audience’s opinion of her music. “I think every artist wants to think they have universal appeal, but I do feel that there is a broad appeal to my music.”

While Stahler’s sexuality may be out in the open, it is only a side note to her brilliant songwriting and the honesty in her voice, which strikes a mainstream chord. Her voice is a blend of classic folk and intelligent sophistication. It is completely uncontrived. The songs on *Stitches* are achingly beautiful in their lyrical simplicity. Stahler’s music calls to mind a time and place you just can’t seem to remember, but are certain you once knew. — Amanda Quraishi

### 1923

Short-haired and big-booted blues legend Bessie Smith records “Downhearted Blues,” in which she substitutes female pronouns for male when referring to a romantic partner.

### 1928

Smith is upstaged by Ma Rainey, who challenges critics to “Prove It on Me.” Really, though, not all that much proving needs to be done, considering the lyrics read “Went out last night with a crowd of my friends/They must have been women, ‘cause I don’t like no men.”

