

W**H****O**

In a rare interview with herself, the lady with the fluorescent magenta brain talks about the life of big-time lovers and backstage thrills.

CHERRY VANILLA

The Ultimate Groupie Grows Up



PHOTOS BY: FRANZ KOOSE

CLOTHES FROM PATRICIA FIELD NYC

REGGAE OUTFIT BY LENNY NYC

What's electric red on top and white underneath??? That's right, it's Cherry Vanilla! Premiere rock & roll groupie of the 1970s; anti-war mover in the 1960s; public and private relations consultant to David Bowie; intimate of Andy Warhol and friends; longtime pal of Blondie before she was Blondie; and often a part or originator of the vanguard of what's new and/or unusual on the guerilla side of arts and music.

Who is Elaine Vowray, you ask? Elaine is Cherry Vanilla's alter-ego, just like Cherry Vanilla started out to be the alter-ego of "a nice Irish-Catholic girl all the way" from Woodside, New York. She grew up "all the way" into the foxy lady you see depicted on the following pages. At the sweet age of 37, this is the first time Cherry's ever shed her clothes for the camera. It's a *Oui* exclusive shot in the lush, exotic rain forest of Jamaica.

Back in 1961, when Cherry graduated from an all-girls convent Catholic high school, she just happened to land a job as a general assistant in the radio-TV department of a fast-paced Madison Avenue advertising agency, whereafter she quickly enrolled in New York's famous New School For Social Research where she studied film production at night after work. Within moments, she was a radio-TV producer for several ad agencies producing spots for products like Coca-Cola and denture adhesives.

Always into music as a hobby, Cherry began playing records at a disco club in Manhattan at nights and on the weekends. One evening a man asked her to come with him to the French Riviera to deejay at a club there. The offer was "outrageous and irresistible." She went, spent the summer of 1969 spinning records, then hitchhiked all through Europe. Upon her return in 1970, she began hanging out with a crowd in New York that performed underground plays. In 1971, Cherry got the lead in Andy Warhol's "Pork" and went to London with the play and met David Bowie. That's when her life really changed.

David Bowie was a growing star in England and an avid Warhol fan. He came to see the play, invited the cast to party with him, and ended up picking Cherry's brain about America. Before

long Bowie began, as Cherry says: "to rely on my judgment about other things." Bowie arrived in the U.S. in 1972 and immediately hired Cherry to head his management company, Main Man. He was unknown in the U.S., yet he refused to give interviews and was afraid to fly.

"So I went flying all over the country talking about Bowie and became something of a personality myself. I dressed crazy and wore goggles and said enough about him that by his second American tour everybody knew who he was." Around this time Cherry began meeting and "mixing" with "all these beautiful men" like Kris Kristofferson and Leon Russell and began trading her favors

me to keep using it. Then I wrote something for Penthouse and I didn't want my mother to know, so I used it. Then Bowie and everybody started calling me that and it stuck.

"Bowie had really bright red hair, and I had been experimenting with different colors and wigs on my own. That Christmas in 1973, Pierre La Roche, Bowie's make-up man, gave me a Christmas gift; this outrageous deep pink-colored dye. Well, I was performing more and was into intensifying my image, so I dyed it and have kept it ever since."

Cherry did everything for Bowie, "from answer the phone to iron his pants" including being his sometime lover until 1974 when he got "really big." When they parted, Bowie's manager staked Cherry in a film production company which went bankrupt within a year while trying to produce films of rock and roll stars. Quickly bounding back—Cherry's a devout survivor, in case you hadn't noticed—she produced her own book of avant-garde poetry called "Pop Tart Compositions" at \$25.00 per book in a limited edition. She then sold a paperback edition for \$7.00 and that kept her going for another year.

Somewhere during these years, Cherry performed in several "underground" plays. In "Vain Victory", Cherry's costar was her soon-to-be good friend, Debbie Harry, now known as rock superstar Blondie. In 1977, a combination of restlessness and craving for adventure caused her to form her own band called, what else? Cherry Vanilla. She headed for England and soon toured all over Europe and into

Japan afterwards "sleeping on sheep farm floors and all that." With an uncanny penchant for sourcing new talent, Cherry gathered up a bass player and drummer in England for her tour. These two unknowns happened to be named Sting and Stuart. With a little help from Cherry they went on to form a band you may have heard of—Police.

Cherry returned to New York in 1980 and started writing and participating in conceptual and poetry performances. She continues her long association with the futurists of music and art and always has her fingers on the pulse of something new and fresh.



with them. "It seemed the easiest way to get backstage and meet them and have some fun," she recalls.

Her famous trademark has been red since 1973—her hair's brown everywhere else. How'd she get her electric sanguine locks? "I did some tapes for some kids who worked for Abbie Hoffman back in the Vietnam War days. They were interviews and rock music on tape which were sent to Hanoi along with a package of tapes from Womens Lib and the Black Panthers for propaganda purposes. They told me I couldn't use my right name, so I made this up instantly, never intending to use it after that. Some rock magazines I wrote for really liked the name and asked



*Elaine Vouvray and Cherry
are one and the same
Elaine is just another side
of this delightful dame
Now don't you get confused
as to what part each will play
Cherry is the subject
but the piece is by Vouvray*

VOUVRAY: So, tell me Cherry, how's your sex life?

VANILLA: My sex life's been weird lately. Right now I'm celibate. By the time this interview is published, I might be back to being a nympho again! I lived with one guy for almost five years, then I married a guy I only knew a month. He's a German movie star and almost never here. We've only been together for about two weeks since our marriage and that wasn't even in the real world.

open marriage, sexually?

VANILLA: Well, I don't really think there's any other kind, at least not for people like us. I mean I've already seen and done a lot in life and there are times when I do and don't want to do a lot more, but my husband just turned 22 and I feel in his case, he MUST do a lot more—not because I want to see him messing around with other women, but because I feel he mustn't miss all the wonderful excitement of life...he mustn't feel guilty about taking advantage of an intensely beautiful, sexy moment. I don't want to be made to feel that way, and I certainly don't want to make him feel that way. Life is so short and I don't mean we should all be complete whores, but there's so much ugliness cast upon us in life, we shouldn't miss out on the moments of pleasure when they come. The only thing that stops me sometimes

*Ladies, is your boyfriend AC/DC
or are you currently alone
Yet you still get that old tickle
in your electrical zone
Well, I've come to lay the answer on
ya
Get your pencils ready
May I introduce
with all his juice
your new lover named Eddy
Eddy's short for Edison
a Con-man he is not
Eddy's a straight-shooter
asking why not with each watt
Eddy is a clit machine
tidy and efficient
Eddy comes in handy
when your husband is deficient
Just send us fifty dollars
and a photo of your snatch
Or perhaps a thumb-nail sketch
but be careful not to scratch*



VOUVRAY: What do you mean by that?

VANILLA: Well, we've only ever been on vacation together. Everytime he gets a chance to fly back here, we go immediately to the rain forest in Puerto Rico and play like Adam and Eve, romping in the waterfalls, getting high on nature, no TV, no telephone, no career obligations. It's paradise there, way up in the mountains with giant technicolor vegetation and jasmine and ginger filling the air. We even got married there, at the house of a millionaire friend. Oh it was lovely....*"Chariots of Fire"* was playing and I wore a white lace dress...the champagne flowed and everyone cried...but you see it's all been rather like a fairy-tale. I mean, we've never really had to face any of the day-to-day city problems together. I still live my life back here like I'm single.

VOUVRAY: Does that mean you have an

***"Life is so short and I don't
mean we should all be
complete whores, but we
shouldn't miss out on the
moments of pleasure when
they come."***

is worrying about pregnancy and VD....or when I'm in the mood I'm in now, which is that of a complete workaholic.

VOUVRAY: But aren't you horny?

VANILLA: At times, I guess...but then I have Eddy.

VOUVRAY: Who's Eddy?

VANILLA: Why thank you for the cue, I thought you'd never ask.

*We'll send your Eddy air-male
His amps are bound to thrill
And all you have to do to please
him
is pay your monthly bill!*

VOUVRAY: An electronic clit machine?

VANILLA: Yes, very sophisticated device, doesn't even require insertion, just a little black vibrating ball. It really hits the spot! Then, of course, there are other things which get me off...like riding horses naked on the beach and having big old cows lick my tits and magic buses with reggae music. I like adventure, you see, delving into unknown territory. I like the hot weather and the islands, especially Jamaica, and especially when it rains. I like to pose for sexy pictures, especially when the photographer is almost a stranger and gorgeous! All these things get me off. I can climax many

times just carrying on with my work.

VOUVRAY: You call this work?

VANILLA: I call it "lucky work". It's work alright, but it's a far cry from an office or a factory. I've always done lucky work. I mean, it's not like you don't have to put in the hours, the anguish, or the tears—it's just that at least when you do, there's a bit of glamour at the end. Some people have to work really hard and never get the romance or the glamour at the end. I find writing, acting, singing, even making deals and contracts to be very glamorous. I love my meetings with my lawyer....sitting there, 40 floors up above the New York City skyline discussing rights, royalties and re-runs. I guess I've seen too many movies, but to me life will always be like that. Sometimes I see myself as Doris Day or Gidget, and sometimes I'm like Anna Magnani.

VOUVRAY: Anna Magnani, when's that?

everyone. Of course this isn't possible, since so many people close themselves off to me. I mean, some people just see my red hair and that's it. They don't wanna know what's beyond. I suppose in some ways it acts like a perfect filter, because the ones who love it and can look into my soul, they're the only ones I wanna know anyway. I don't have time for narrow minds. I just keep hoping they will one day see the light. I try to be an example of the "free spirit", though I know I will never be perfect, or perfectly free. Mostly I just try to be me, and after all that is the most that one can hope to be! I'm into truth, telling it, living it, being it—as much as possible. And as the years go on, I have less and less patience for anything phoney or false, even from myself. I just won't take it anymore! HA HA, we started with sex and we somehow got into truth...next we'll be talking about God!

between the two. My hobby is photography and I recently discovered that spray-painting gold around the edges of an ordinary photograph can change the simplest snapshot into a fantastic dream-like image. Imagination is my God. The mind is more precious than gold. I rely heavily on the power of the spiritual world, but I sure dig the enhancement and riches of the material world. I find that when I'm really cookin' on a high mental flame, the physical plane just falls into place...and I know that when this material world is all gone, one thing will remain—and that is space! Why don't I just read you my little poem about it all. It's kind of a concept, a philosophy....and I've always felt that kind of thing comes across best in little child-like rhymes. So here's one for ya. It's called, of course, "The Golden Edge".



VANILLA: Oh, when I'm cooking, I guess...or going through a tragic broken heart or poverty. I love to cook, and rich or poor, I always manage to eat well. I like to make everything from scratch and keep myself as pure and chemical-free as possible, but then every once in a while, I take extreme trips into drugs, alcohol, and McDonald's...just so I can still feel naughty about something. I think you've always got to feel naughty about something, in order to make it fun...and if you're a person without many rules in your life, then I think it's really fun to make a few of your own and get yourself off by breaking 'em! And, it's all so innocent. I mean, no one ever hurt anybody with an Egg-McMuffin! I try not to hurt anyone, and if I hurt myself, well that's my business. I respect everyone else's ways, as long as they don't hurt anyone and I try to relate that to

"I wrote Kris Kristofferson a sexy four-line poem, blatantly inviting him to take me back to his hotel. He played no games and accepted."

VOUVRAY: Yeah, let's talk about him (her?) for a while.

VANILLA: God, Oh God! Well, OK. I believe that God is the goodness that exists in us all, and the devil is the evil depths to which we all can stoop. God is a completely personal thing, but at the same time, a universal string. Heaven must be feeling good and hell is feeling guilty. Each one of us needs a moral code to experience and know the difference

*The golden edge will wear away
the more you touch the pages
It is what is not written
that will last throughout the ages
The feeling there is something
we can not put our finger on
The dreams we try to hold on to
but wake to find they're gone
Love letters in the sand
and castles in the air
These are what life is all about
so handle them with care
And when you do you'll see
the golden edges everywhere.*

VOUVRAY: Well, that's quite deep, isn't it?

VANILLA: You gotta be deep...in everything you do. You gotta reach down to the depths of your soul and put your whole self into it. I feel that way about everything. Everything I do, I try to do

intensely....whether it's making love, making laughs, making dinner, making do. There's no sense living, unless you're gonna make every moment count, count for what, I don't know—whatever is beyond, or because this is all. Whatever you can use as motivation, the important thing is being motivated....keeping that motor running. Did you ever have hepatitis? To me, it's the worst disease in the world, because what it takes away is "the force"....you have all your parts, but no "tiger in your tank!" You're just like a big old dead piece of meat. And that, to me, is the worst. You might as well be ground-up and turned into a "whopper"! (Must give equal time to Burger King!)

VOUVRAY: So, what are you up to right now, Cherry? What does the future hold in store?

VANILLA: Well, the future is a mystery and I think it's best that way, but the present is a present we should be thankful for each day...and the past, it is a traveler...don't try to make it stay! You see, I just can't help falling into verse all the time. I think it's a result of the permanent brain damage I suffered in my youth! Seriously though, I have a big steamer trunk full of notebooks, diaries, cassette tapes and such...and I've just got to edit them down into a form that someone can read. There's all these stories about when I worked for David Bowie and then The Police and all these other great musicians worked for me. There's my three years in London, and all my one-night stands. There's millionaires and geniuses and lots of boys in lots of bands. I feel I've got a story to tell. After all, I have made love to some of the world's most beautiful men!

VOUVRAY: Oh really, name one.

VANILLA: Oh you inquisitive writers! OK, how about Kris Kristofferson...uh, before he was married to Rita, that is. Well, they're divorced now anyway, I guess. He was really beautiful. I only ever spent one night with him, but in that short time he gave me so much affection and love and we had so much fun together. It was back in the early days, before he had muscles or made movies. I met him at The Gaslight Cafe in Greenwich Village, where he was playing with his band. This was even pre-"Bobby McGee" days and I was just so hot for him I couldn't wait for chance or fate to bring us together. I wrote him a sexy four-line poem, blatantly inviting him to take me back to his hotel. He played no games and accepted. He was so easy to be with, so romantic, yet so real. It's one of my favorite rock & roll memories. I think he's a fantastic man. Wouldn't mind running into him again some day. Only now I just don't go pursuing anymore. In fact, fate seems to bring me more than I can handle...and I

AM a married woman! Still, I wouldn't mind just an innocent dinner or a quiet evening together. Ha ha, I wonder if that would be possible?

VOUVRAY: I doubt it! You must have a lot of great rock and roll memories.

VANILLA: Yeah, but let's not get into 'em here. After all, Elaine, we've got to save a little for the next time. Say, I've got some lovely French champagne on ice. What's say we have a little glass or two and I introduce you to Eddy!! come on, we've done enough work for today.

VOUVRAY: Well, it certainly hasn't seemed like work to me.

VANILLA: Lucky work!

VOUVRAY: Yeah, Cherry, we are lucky...luckier than most females, I mean....living life just like—we're living in a magazine!

VANILLA: Why Elaine, I never realized you were a poet!

VOUVRAY: Ha ha, why Cherry darling, I never realized you were a brunette! ■

Article from the February 1982 'OUI' issue

