

## From a Whisper to a Roar

Interview Summary	
<b>Name:</b> Jamie Wildman	<b>Date:</b> 17.06.2019 <b>Age:</b> 69
<b>Key issues:</b> Butch lesbian/ gender stereotyping. Stonewall Riots. Activism: Club scene in London: Gateways, Leather/ SM scene. Impact of Section 28. Working with the NHS to improve attitudes towards lesbian and bi women, particularly butch presenting women.	
<b>Narrative summary</b> Jamie was born in LA and knew from her earliest days that she was different: attracted strongly to girls and enjoyed traditionally male games. She recounts listening to the news of the Stonewall riots and her distress at her mother's homophobic response.  She has struggled throughout her life with gender stereotyping from her mother's early efforts to make her conform and her desire to become an actor, though she did take part in feminist theatre in the US.  In the late 70's she came to London and got a job as a bouncer at the Gateways for two years recalling the club in detail. She was steeped in the club scene, working at various other clubs and in the late 80's became involved in the SM scene and the clubs associated with that.  She lived in other parts of the country, but came back to London in 1986 where she became more engaged politically through the Section 28 campaign, speaking very powerfully of the big march on Downing Street and the emotions of solidarity and community.  In recent years she has become involved in working with the NHS to change attitudes towards women - straight, lesbian and bi – in terms of really listening to them. It took two years for her to get a diagnosis for ovarian cancer which was ultimately diagnosed through a chance conversation with a lesbian friend who was a GP. She particularly advocates on behalf of butch presenting women who she believes are not treated with due respect.	
	<b>Length of interview:</b> 1 hr, 8 mins





Evelyn: Right, so this is an interview for From a Whisper to a Roar, an oral history project conducted by Opening Doors London and supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Evelyn: Today is the 17th of June 2019, and I am interviewing the wonderful Jamie Wildman

Jamie: Jamie Wildman.

Evelyn: Great, so could you just start by telling me maybe a little bit about your early life and how you came to an understanding of who you really are?

Jamie: Oh god, I didn't know we were going to go back that far. I grew up in Los Angeles, California, and as I was discovering who I was, it mainly just came organically. I had a physical attraction towards my friends, my girlfriends, my play pals. And I also liked fighting and playing with the boys, it was perfectly natural. It became physical, we would touch each other, and it didn't feel dirty. And then when I was made to feel dirty, I was made to..I was encouraged to play less with the boys, in that way that, wrestling and fighting I liked doing, and then being more girly.

Jamie: My mother really worked hard to make sure that happened. She bought me teenage magazines, one was called Angele as I remember. I had that for about a year, and then one birthday she said, "Would you like another copy?" And I said, "No," I had to explain to her, but I didn't know how to explain to her that I wasn't interested in that. Yeah, I just wasn't interested in that. But I didn't know how to tell I was interested in other things. I then I remember going to the library, and asking the librarian for a book. I wanted something different, and she must have been asking me lots of personal questions, because I went home with a book by Gertrude Stein, and Shakespeare's love sonnets. So my mother said, "Oh, what have you got?" I showed her and, you know, and I could see her confusion, and she was troubled in the respect that she didn't quite know how to formulate her next few questions. "Who was this person that gave you these books?" I said, "Oh, the librarian". "What was her name?" "I don't know." All this, because I just didn't pay any attention.

Jamie: Often, I think people knew my sexuality long before I did, and teachers. And some kids in school called me a lesbian, lez and stuff, and even while wrestling with a girl in the toilets, and she started to rub up against me, I was horrified because I knew that was wrong. I said, "Get out, get out," she said, "Oh, I'm sorry. I thought that's what you wanted," and I did, but I was horrified that she knew that's what I wanted, and what to do with it all, and how to make it happen, so it took a long time. My coming out story, I'll be brief, it was-

Evelyn: We love a good coming out story.

Jamie: It wasn't good. But the.. I was in college ... there was a lot of 'Me Too' situations going on for me, so it became, going to college became untenable. I had to drop out because of that. But before that, I was living with.. I left home because my father was violent. This famous actor, we were students, and he's now a famous actor. He said, "Come and stay with me," so I did, under the guise that he would leave me alone, which he did mostly.

Jamie: And one morning, we got a knock on his flat door, and there was a gay man and some of the guy's friends said, "Guess what?" And we were trying to wake up, he said, "Julie Garland died". And we were all pretty, you know, it was pretty devastating, and then later I went to my dad's birthday that day and watched the Stonewall Riots on the news. My parents, my mother especially was ... just her comments that I was used to, the homophobic, anti-gay comments were..

Evelyn: So this is 1969?

Jamie: Yeah, and I was already out of the house. I started easing them into my sexuality then. I had a conversation with my mother one night after going out with some women I knew from work, and they were older lesbians, they were about 30 years older than me, really big, butch bruisers. They were fantastic. When I came back, my mother wanted to know about my relationship with them, I said, "They're friends". I didn't

know my mother was as drunk as she was, but she said, "Are you into girls or are you into boys? What is it?" I said, "I'll have a drink with you," so I sat down and explained it to her and burst into tears, she sobbed.

Jamie: And then the next morning..I thought, "Well, that's it. That wasn't too bad," and the next morning she said, "So what time did you get in last night?" And that was after, because I'd moved out, but I had moved back in because my girlfriend and I had a massive split up, so I moved back in.

Evelyn: How old were you?

Jamie: But she knew I was with this crazy woman.

Evelyn: How old were you?

Jamie: I was only 19, [inaudible 00:05:56], 19, considering, knowing that I was gay from the age of about six or seven, knowing I was just really different, and felt different. And, you know, I wanted to be a boy. Everything that was going on, if you wanted to put things into gender specific terminology, I was non-gender specific.

Jamie: If you gave me a doll, I used to use them as hammers or wedging things. But my mother gave me porcelain dolls with the eyes that, I know! Scary, really scary, I hated the things, so I remember using it as a hammer, my mother was horrified. I wouldn't get dolls after that, and I was given, you know, male-orientated guns, I was really into guns, I still am. That's ... I'm trying to shorten it.

Evelyn: Stonewall, big thing, 50th anniversary this year.

Jamie: For me, it's huge. Well, I was a little disappointed that there isn't more of an anniversary. I'm not involved with Pride in London anymore, but I don't think there's enough personally.

Evelyn: No, no.

Jamie: And it's my anniversary, it's not GLF's anniversary, it's my particular-

Evelyn: Yeah, and tell me a little more about what you heard at the time. There's so many stories about how it kicked off.

Jamie: It was difficult, because in the 60s, especially in my family, television was on all the time. We ate dinner while the Vietnam War was being shown. It's horrific when you think of it. And the civil rights movement, so a lot of my memories are from television. So I just remember just being frozen in front of the television. Well, we were doing things, we were getting ready for my dad's birthday, which wasn't much, it was just always a thing. So I think I was meant to be taking out the trash or doing something like that, when I just stopped. I was frozen. I was scared. I was angry. And I was hurt.

- Jamie: And I think what multiplied at that very moment was my mother's homophobic remarks. You know, she did the same thing about the civil rights movement. It's a shame, because she was just brainwashed. Normally a really nice woman. Really compassionate and empathetic. But when it came to gays and blacks and Jews, she wasn't having it. So, so I had to deflect, and was just deflecting the whole time, while in my own private moment of grief. It was like, "Where were you when Kennedy was shot?" It was one of those moments for me. And um, I felt it as strongly. Afterwards, I just made it, because I was 19 I couldn't go to bars legally, so it was really hard for me to find my own kind, even though I was-
- Evelyn: I was just about to ask that actually. It was 21, was the age for-
- Jamie: Yeah [crosstalk 00:09:27] so I did a lot of trying to sneak in places. There was a coffee house I used to go to. It was in the 60s, the beat 60s, they had all the coffee houses and stuff, so I found one in Hollywood and I went there on my own.
- Jamie: But none of the..I knew they were lesbians, there were lesbians everywhere. Nobody would talk to me because I was so young, and I was on my own. I didn't know what to do. I just sat there and drank my coffee. The woman, I wish I could remember her name, the performer, was hilarious, she was the owner. She did a lot of really fun entertaining for that time.
- Evelyn: The coffee bars had entertainment going on?
- Jamie: This one did, yeah, I forgot its name. But it was funny because in those days having a [inaudible- cappuccino machine] was a novelty. She'd be saying 'and my next song'.. and you'd hear this [making the sound of a cappuccino machine].. and that was a joke and everything. There was just her, she was the entertainment and the owner. Yeah.
- Evelyn: All right, cool, cool. When you say you knew there were a lot of other lesbians there, how did recognise them, how did you know your tribe?
- Jamie: You just know, I mean they were butch. There were a lot of butch lesbians there. I didn't notice the femmes, because until your radar is more finely tuned, you don't know. There wasn't a demonstration of gayness. There was just a really relaxed...Those women had a job to do, because they were serving and making coffee. So I could watch them without feeling self conscious because they work there, which was ... I think we might want to get back to at some other point, but yeah, as far as, "I'll have a coffee please," that was all I could manage, you know.
- Jamie: But eventually, oh yeah, eventually I met up with a gal I went to high school with and we had an affair and things progressed. And then I met, oh another gal I knew from high school, it turns out she was gay, so then I just started to-
- Evelyn: Build a little network?



Jamie: Yeah, meet my family. But I didn't start clubbing, and I really enjoyed going to clubs. I didn't start doing that until I was 19. Oh there were some friends..Oh that's right, sorry, I met up with a group called Fanny. I'd Google them if I were you. All-female rock band in LA. They came over here and performed. It was a big deal. They were a very big deal.

Jamie: I knew some people that knew them, so I hung around with them, and then other musicians. Yeah, so I was building up a big network, and eventually they would try and sneak me into gigs and things. You know: "I'm with the band," so I'd get to go in and drink beer for free, so that was kinda good. They're still together and the band still play, which is really interesting.

Evelyn: Yeah, I'll have to check it out. Are you still at college at this stage or you entering into the world of work?

Jamie: I was trying. Yeah, I'd been working, I had to work because I was homeless, because, you know, my dad had made me homeless, so I dropped out of college and got a job.

Jamie: But I was doing what we call little theatre, it was you know off fringe, off Broadway kind of thing. Obviously I met a lot of gay men doing theatre, unfortunately I didn't meet enough, or I met one lesbian but she was just weird. So, you know I forgot the question now.

Evelyn: No, I was just asking about work.

Jamie: Oh working, work. I worked at Universal Studios, I worked in Hollywood. I worked in Hollywood, you know, as a ticket seller. It was a throwback, it was a time when cinema-going was still a little bit glamorous in Hollywood. Okay, so the theatre was here, and then they had this little booth in the front, so as you were walking by you could see the ticket seller. That was me. I sat in a little booth. But it was interesting, because it was on Hollywood & Highland, right across from where they had the finger prints in the pavement. People would dress up and walk up and down Hollywood Boulevard, thinking they would be discovered. It was really sad.

Jamie: But there were a lot of drag queens, that was the thing, it really opened my eyes. They worked the street, they were prostitutes. There was a place that sold larger dresses and larger outfits that was just a few doors down. But I had to chase them out of the toilets, which broke my heart. The manager said, "Go up and tell that queen to get out of the loo," so I heard..I went in, there was no one there, there was somebody in the stall. I said, "I'm sorry, I'm going to have to throw you out. I've been told to come in and get you," and they said, "Where am I supposed to go?" And then I heard all this Velcro and I felt really bad. And I said, "Okay, I'll tell you what. Finish what you're doing and then leave," and I don't know what to say because I'm working here. That broke my heart. It really did. It really made me think about, you know, gender dysphoria. It made me think about being trans or just being a

transvestite, as they were known then. But at that theatre, they showed the film ...

Evelyn: Some Like it Hot?

Jamie: No, no they showed the film, Christine Jorgensen, they showed her film. I forgot the name of it, it might have been The Christine Jorgensen Story. They showed that and she came, so I got to meet her.

Evelyn: Wow.

Jamie: I didn't like the film and I told her. I said, "I didn't like the acting," she said, "Every aspiring actress is a critic". I thought, "God, you've got my number, haven't you?" Oops. As far as work experience, that was exciting.

Evelyn: This would be ... we're into the 70s now?

Jamie: We're getting into the early 70s, yeah.

Evelyn: Was the feminist movement on your horizon at this stage? Or did it not impinge?

Jamie: It was around. It confused me because they were so radical, really. But what was around was Lavender Menace was around. The Mattachine..

Evelyn: Tell me more about Lavender Menace.

Jamie: Lesbian Tide. Hang on. The Mattachine Society. There were things to get involved in. But I didn't, I wasn't that way inclined then.

Evelyn: I know a little bit about them, but not very much, were they women's groups or specifically lesbian groups?

Jamie: Lavender Menace was lesbian and gay, I think. Don't quote me on this.

Evelyn: No, but [crosstalk 00:17:03].

Jamie: And the Mattachine Society was started by a gay man. He is the one who started the pride ceremonies, I just found this out.

Evelyn: Oh, right.

Jamie: I know, it's mind boggling that at our age we don't know this. Yeah, he started The Mattachine Society in 1962 or something, and then after the Stonewall Riots he organized the first Gay Pride March, not parade.

Jamie: Where am I? How did I get ... just through the high school friends that I knew, and then going off into theatre, and the rock bands. There was another group called Bertha. They were lesbian, and that was great fun, so I met their friends. It was just that kind of a thing. That's political, I think, that's pretty darn political-



- Evelyn: Yeah, I think it's that my concept of political and activism in our community is very broad, because you can be an activist walking down the street looking in a certain way, so yeah, I'm interested in ... and music is quite political and quite strong.
- Jamie: So also for me at that time, I was trying to find my way as far as creatively. I'd be the only lesbian in a theatre group, and that was awkward for various reasons. Did I fit in as far as what Hollywood wanted? I tried to do that for years. But it didn't work because I couldn't do it, and it also didn't work because it was heartbreaking for me.
- Jamie: So anyway, I'd started moving away from that and doing my own thing theatrically. And then, I think it was in ... yes, it was in 1974, around then, where I actually found my feet and started doing my own thing, and feeling better about doing my own, I did mime, and I also joined a theatre company called Instant Theatre. The theatre director, Rachel Rosenthal, she encouraged gender blending. She actually said, "I'm amazed by your floating genders," because there were gay men, and there was me, I was the only lesbian. But we would just flow and make different costumes, because we made things up. I might be playing a male-centric person, or I might be playing an animal. It was really, really creatively uplifting for me, especially in the Hollywood confines.
- Jamie: From there, I met some radical lesbian feminists. They're still at it, they're teaching now, doing film. There was a place in Los Angeles called the Woman's Building and people like Kate Millett and Judy Chicago was really involved in the Woman's Building. I had all these icons, these academics that scared the living daylights out of me, because they were just so intelligent or so astute, and you just didn't mess up, which I did a lot. I joined a group there called The Waitresses. We did..We used the feminist agenda as a part of our performance group. We all wrote things, so I wrote, did the publicity and directed for that for a short time. And what it was, was inequality in pay, sexual harassment, we used all that stuff, and used a waitress as a symbol. It was brilliant, we came here [UK]. What happened was, we came here to perform and I fell in love with this country.
- Evelyn: We're mid-70s?
- Jamie: Yeah, just towards the late 70s.
- Evelyn: Oh, late 70s now. Yeah.
- Jamie: ~~And uh, my girlfriend at the time, she slept with this man, so I thought, "Oh, interesting," made friends with him, then married him so I could stay in the country. Oh, that shouldn't be common knowledge, I could get thrown out. I'm British now, nah, nah. So I was able to stay and then everything went south. No, it was really, it was hard work.~~
- Jamie: And then I got a job at The Gateways. In those days obviously, we had the Gaypers (gay newspapers) We had Gay News then, and we had, I think there was Sappho Magazine, but I didn't know where to get that.

You had to find one of those things to find out where you were going. Anyway, I met this American woman at The Gateways called Sandy Horn, and she'd devised one of the first lesbian places you could visit in Berlin, if you were Berlin. But she got her information from people that had visited. She worked really hard, she put together this book and I worked with her. But anyway, that's how I got to know various different places to go and meet people.

Evelyn: We're late 70s, and-

Jamie: I'm at the The Gateways.

Evelyn: You're at The Gateways. For future generations who do not know what The Gateways was like, we had a quiet little doorway in a side street, did we not?

Jamie: Yeah. It was a side street. It was a cellar, so it was below ground. On the ground floor, they should have had their store, they should have had all the crates and things, they did, but there was, well, there was a tiny little back entrance to this place and that's where people went in. They didn't use a proper front door. That was only open on a Sunday afternoon, we'll get to that.

Jamie: So what happened was, because it was so quiet, people had to ring a buzzer. The door was green, ring the buzzer and we'd go up and say ... I can't remember if there was a little door you opened to see. But I think we just opened the entire door and said, "Are you member?" And if they were gay they got in. If they weren't we said no. And that was my job.

Evelyn: Yeah. Did they have to prove they were a member? Did they have to-

Jamie: Oh, yeah. Sometimes they had member cards, they were very proud about it. I think a membership cost £5 for a year, and that was a lot, that was a fair amount of money.

Jamie: But if they weren't a member they had to show some identification and then sign their names in our book and then pay a fee. Members could bring in guests. That kept the club going, that was the only way they could make it a private member's club, an exclusive members club. That was the only way they could keep it exclusively gay or lesbian.

Evelyn: Did you have times when people were trying to get in, who knew what it was and were deliberately trying to get in?

Jamie: Maybe on a Sunday, because on the Sunday the main door was open, so if you were walking along the street, "Oh what's that?" And you could hear the music. Yeah, I was a bouncer so I'd have to run up the stairs and catch them before they ... because it's really hard to take somebody out of someplace if you have to get them upstairs.

Jamie: Yeah, so I would come up the stairs to say, "Sorry". There was only trouble once, and that was a woman who was extremely drunk and

angry, because I think by the time she got to me she'd been refused drink, so she was just really angry. I had to drag her out and she was big. She was eight feet tall, no it was just the stairs, trying to get somebody up stairs when they're angry and drunk. And I was only ..at that point I wasn't yet 30, so I felt ill-equipped to deal with somebody who was in their 40s and big and drunk. But I learned.

Evelyn: Yeah, absolutely. The management of-

Jamie: The management of The Gateways?

Evelyn: Of The Gateways, who was it ...

Jamie: Man they were just...

Evelyn: ... what were they like?

Jamie: I wish you were interviewing them instead, I really do. Smithy was American. She was here with the Air Force, the US Air Force. She went AWOL, and I think she went to The Gateways and decided she wasn't going to go back. She was just going to leave the service. And then Gina, who was the owner of The Gateways, said that, "Maybe that's not a good idea. You'll just end up in prison," so Smithy went back, and eventually they became friends. I think they were lovers. People were unsure, so you'd have to ask somebody else about that. But by the time I met them, they were very, very, very good friends, and bickered. They were family. It was really evident to everyone. Smithy and Gina. Gina and Smithy. That was all you needed to know.

Jamie: Smithy was California and she was butch, so that saved me in a way, because she was older than me, and she took a liking to me, and she took me under her wing and taught me the ropes, as it were. Gina was grand. She thought she was grand, but she was Italian-Welsh and an actress. In that respect she was grand. Her dresses...She always wore a frock, as she called them, but they were always ... they were glamorous for that kind of setting. And sometime in the cold heart of day, they were a little tacky. But she was formidable, extremely intimidating, but if you got on her good side she'd stick by you forever. So that evening I had to drag a woman up by the stairs, I was catching my breath and she said, "Would you like a drink, darling?" Normally I'd have to say, "Oh, I'll just have an orange juice please," I said, "Yeah, I'll have a brandy. Make it a double". But yeah, a heart of gold, both of them, absolutely.

Jamie: And The Gateways itself was an eye-opener for me, because I came from Hollywood and Venice Beach and just ... bohemian kind of, when I came it was the butch and femme, there was no in between, except for me and my friends, so we had to be a little careful about how we presented ourselves. If we were too feminist they got a little cross. "We'll have none of that here." They didn't want politics involved in the club, and that was good in a respect, because once in a while you'd find out, I found out a bunch of people I was talking to were all

Conservatives, which didn't make sense to me. You're gay, how? So that was the end of that kind of thing.

Jamie: Apparently a couple feminists came down and they were asked to leave because they wanted to stir up, they wanted to raise consciousness. But they were radical, and that wasn't appreciated. So, it was kind of..it was old school, and it was refreshing and real. But at the same time a little disappointing if I'd seen the feminist, the gay liberation, which it didn't seem that they were liberated. They were stuck into fixed roles, and I found that a little awkward at times, to say the least.

Evelyn: Physically what was it like down there? Obviously no natural light.

Jamie: No natural light. Physically it was dark, and apparently when it was in the film The Killing of Sister George, according to Gina, she didn't like it because they made it look darker and dingier than it was, so she had it redecorated by the time I got there. It had these horrific paintings of various characters that came down to the club on the walls. It was atrocious.

Jamie: And some fairy lights, which I had to climb up on top of a couch and hang precariously. But we had just a few fairy lights. The DJ booth was just two decks, maybe it was just the one deck. I think it was just the one deck, and she had a stool to sit on in just a little corner, and that was it. There was a fireplace, but I don't remember a fire ever being lit. But people liked to hang on the mantelpiece.

Evelyn: Yeah, and a bar, I presume.

Jamie: The bar was tiny. It was tiny, it was so small. I thought, I think the capacity was 150 to 200, and on a New Year's Eve I know we had more than 400 people down there. It was scary. There were four people behind the bar.

Jamie: Okay, this couch and maybe this chair, okay, so you get an idea. It was about a meter and half, maybe two meters. Two meters, let's be generous, the bar itself. And we had four people behind there trying to serve drinks-

Evelyn: Oh my gosh.

Jamie: -to all these 400 people.

Evelyn: So a fairly restricted menu of drinks, I presume?

Jamie: Yeah. They had three beers, bitter, mild and lager, and they had spirits. But we didn't do cocktails. Yeah, there was a draft beer and bottled beers [crosstalk 00:32:51]. But if you had a pint of Guinness, you could go back and do a couple of shots.

Jamie: I used to take drugs, so I'd smoke some hash before I got there, or even eat some hash while I was there, and then maybe take some speed and

have a couple drinks. It was nice and social and you're having a good time. But if I didn't get the balance right, sometimes I was a little too drunk, so I'd have to go and take, you know, ... not my proudest part, but it was the 70s, so it's what you did. Yeah.

Evelyn: Absolutely.

Jamie: There was that, so that made me friendlier and enjoy myself. But I wasn't allowed to drink while I was working. But that was the thing, I had to learn these new codes. "Would you like a drink?" That kind of meant they're in. "Oh, I bought the barmaid a drink". If you bought a round of drinks, obviously you'd ask the barmaid if they wanted a drink. If I was serving behind the bar, it got to the point where I had these, I said, "I'll have it for later," so I'd have to charge them, pour it, put it aside. But I had all these drinks filled up, and Gina didn't like it, so I had to start asking for orange juice. It's a shame.

Jamie: Anyway, so I did that until, I did it a couple years. I got fed up, because I was drinking and taking a load of drugs, I wanted to stop doing that, and so I found a job that took me around the country. I got to meet lesbians outside of London, which was good fun. Yeah.

Evelyn: What was the job?

Jamie: The job was a Theatre company, and I was a dog handler, so I wasn't doing anything creative, my own creativity at that time. But it was good. I wanted to travel, I liked dogs.

Jamie: I got to go to Liverpool. We did the midlands and the south, and then because of my drinking I was sacked, so I missed out on going up north. But it was thrilling. It was fantastic, because I got to meet lesbians and gays outside of London, and that was good for me. I enjoyed it.

Evelyn: And then did you end up coming back to London from there?

Jamie: Yeah, eventually, yeah. I lived in Birmingham for three years because I'd fallen in love, and when that ended and I decided I needed to come back to London. I was just missing it here. Just going to close the door [an interruption in the room] yeah. I came back to London. I did various jobs, and then I started working at a gym, and fortunately it was frequented by a lot of gay men and some lesbians, so it was even more so. So then I got more into the political scene, before Clause 28. I came back to London in '86, so through the gym and through just going to various clubs and things like that. And when Clause 28 came in, I just put my foot down and said, "I'm not having this," like we all did. And then I started going on marches more and becoming more involved that way, because I was so darned angry.

Jamie: It was a beautiful thing in a lot of respects, because like everyone says, it did bring us all together. When I was traveling with the Theatre company and I'd go to gay bars with the boys, because obviously there were gay men in the Theatre company, and the lesbians, I'd go to their

clubs, but I remember walking in and hearing guys call me fish, and just being really disgusting towards me. And then unfortunately they started getting sick, so I got involved that way as well, supporting gay men and-

Evelyn: Through the AIDS crisis.

Jamie: Yeah, but not as much as some others. But-

Evelyn: What sort of things did you do?

Jamie: Then? No, I just went on marches and I just didn't turn my back on them. To be honest, I can't remember doing much until I got involved in the 90s.

Jamie: But in the gym, I working with gay men. I did what I could. I would comfort them or listen to them, in that respect, just as a friend. I couldn't see my way to be involved as an individual, and I hadn't yet found a group, do you see what I mean?

Evelyn: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jamie: So I didn't do that until, like I said, until the 90s.

Evelyn: But really, 70s for a lot of the community marked quite a split between the men and the women.

Jamie: God yeah, it was awful.

Evelyn: You were working with guys at Theatre, so on a personal level, but the broader level, there were huge divisions in the community.

Jamie: Yeah, it was awkward for me because I was meeting lesbians, radical lesbians, really radical lesbians outside of London that were separatists, so I thought, "Well, this makes sense. Maybe I should be a lesbian feminist separatist".

Evelyn: And not have anything to do with men at all.

Jamie: Yeah, so I started becoming really unpopular in the Theatre company because of my views, and anger, I was very angry. But I just got sacked, so that didn't do me any good.

Jamie: But yeah, the gay men in the company, they were lovely. But like I said, just being taken to a club and being treated that way.

Evelyn: Yeah, you were pitched into that broader world where the men didn't like the women, and the women didn't like the men at that stage.

Jamie: At all. Yeah.

Evelyn: And then we moved into the 80s.



Jamie: But it was really strange, back to The Gateways, if you had a gay man friend, you can bring them on a Sunday lunch.

Evelyn: Oh, I didn't realize.

Jamie: Sunday lunches, I remember after we did the show, men coming up and saying how much they liked the song the Gateways Girls , and they said that they loved coming down there.

Jamie: Or they were so upset that they couldn't come because they'd heard so many good things about it. But yeah, the boys were really welcome on a Sunday lunch. It was a great atmosphere, really nice.

Evelyn: Yes, so that was Sunday lunch. What was the timetable the rest of the week for Gateways? Was it on every night? Was it-

Jamie: In the beginning it was just weekends, and then they extended it to Wednesday night, and then it was five nights a week.

Jamie: But they were so slow, because other things were popping up at that time. Because the Gateways was the only club..I think they realised that a little too late, the timing was a bit off.

Evelyn: Yeah, once they had some competition.

Jamie: Yeah, I just used to go down there all the time, but because I worked there it was more exciting for me to go somewhere different.

Evelyn: Well, I hadn't heard of the Sunday lunches before this.

Jamie: Had you not?

Evelyn: No.

Jamie: Oh no, it was gorgeous. It really was, because we had [crosstalk 00:40:27].

Evelyn: Was it the front entrance?

Jamie: This was the main entrance. The boys got the main entrance. Yeah. The door was just open, so like I said, anybody could come in.

Jamie: Once, it was really unfortunate, a homeless woman tried to get in and we weren't nice to her. We didn't make fun of her or anything, a couple people made comments because she hadn't washed. But she was nuts and I had to get her out. But looking back, it wasn't, it wasn't a very humanitarian thing to do. But we didn't know. It was my job, so I had to do it.

Evelyn: Yeah. That's sad. All right, so we're back in the 80s now, and the community is beginning to come together over-

Jamie: A little bit. Yeah, I got involved with the leather scene towards the late 80s. That was interesting because I was becoming more and more radical, and finding a smaller pond to swim in. That caused friction between lesbian feminists because they thought we were being violent. But we were just dressing up. I talked to somebody recently, and I said something about SM practices and she looked at me and she said, "I just wanted a little slap and tickle," quite literally, just slap and tickle and sex.

Jamie: Some radical feminists barged their way into a women's leather club night and decided to wreck the place, and I asked somebody, I don't think she was involved, but I said, "Why would they want to do that?" She said, "Because of the violence!" I said, "You're completely missing the point here".

Evelyn: Yeah, they're the ones who are doing the wrecking. Where was the leather club?

Jamie: It was in... During that time, in the 70s and 80s and some of the 90s I think, I don't know how it is now, before women had their own clubs and they were providing them themselves, gay men had the money. If there was a club in south London that was on on a Wednesday night, we'd all go to that, because it was new and it was bigger and that kind of thing.

Jamie: That happened a lot, and I think gay men owe us a lot of, they should support us more because of all the money we spent in their bars and clubs. But it was in, what? It was in The Market Tavern in Vauxhall. Not the Vauxhall Tavern, but the Market Tavern.

Evelyn: Yeah, the Market Tavern.

Jamie: It was a pub.

Evelyn: Was it Chain Reaction?

Jamie: Yeah. It was the only one at that time. And-

Evelyn: That was quite a wild place, I've heard.

Jamie: I was scared to death. I remember going in and just getting a drink, and I was sweating buckets. I think I was wearing black jeans and a leather jacket.

Jamie: But I was so nervous that somebody was going to leap out and make me do things that I really wanted to do, but I was scared. And nobody did anything, it was a little disappointing. No, they had cabarets and they had ... it was just a safe, fun, raunchy place to be.

Evelyn: Yeah, I heard that it was very, very raunchy.

Jamie: It was very raunchy, very, very raunchy. And eventually I befriended a bunch of people, and we created our own family. We really did. I still

see them from time to time. And sometimes I would do cabarets, various offshoots like the Clit Club. The Clit Club started in a strip club just off Gower Street, and that was amazing. It was run by a lesbian woman. It was a straight club during the day obviously. Suzie Krueger was so clever, she just said, "I want to do a night," and it was fabulous.

Jamie: A tiny little stage with, Suzie had strippers, little performances, I did a little performance. It wasn't glamorous but they had tables, little tables for your drinks and little chairs all around. I loved it as a club. For me, it was very bohemian. I could see it being popular in the 50s and 60s, and I love that thing. So that went on, Susie created the Clit Club, that was for leather dykes. And then she went on to do her bigger thing. I worked at Venus Rising. That was huge, at The Fridge . Stop me if I'm going off track.

Evelyn: No, no, no, interesting. Well, the thing is that in terms of activism all of those social spaces for women were, for me, a form of activism, a social activism in the way that it brings the community together, the way that women are able to meet other women and have fun.

Jamie: There was that, but there was, it was early days of networking as well, so you could meet somebody and say, "Oh, you're into doing this? Well, have you met so-and-so? She's writing a book," that kind of thing. Those were the places where we'd do it.

Jamie: The thing that was so great about Venus Rising is that there were political dykes there, there were separatists, there were leather dykes, everybody was there, everybody. And there were very, very few fights. There were arguments and maybe somebody would throw a beer on somebody. But there was, you know. the Fridge was huge, and they'd have dancers and stuff. Obviously we didn't have the internet, so people would pass out flyers. They'd stand outside so they'd pass out flyers for their club or their activity or their book selling. That's the only way to do it. And also in the 70s, there were little groups, not so much a book group, but like Sappho used to put on.. they would have authors and they would talk. You had all these different things going on from the feminist movement that was pushed into the lesbian movement.

Jamie: But also, I became fascinated by how we found these things out. Like Nick says in the show, "We made flyers," yeah, that's a big deal, because you got a mimeograph machine, or you'd have to have some letaset. You had to put the thing together, old fashioned, 19th century, let alone 20th century technology.

Evelyn: No internet, no mobile phones.

Jamie: Exactly, so we had to work really hard. You'd write somebody's phone number and put it in your pocket, or write it on your arm. That was the end of it.

Evelyn: If you didn't look after it you never saw them again.

Jamie: Yeah. But anyway, so it was really good when Pink Paper was created, then you had Time Out and you had the gay section of Time Out.

Evelyn: Did you have any connection at all with Kenric at the time?

Jamie: Not me, it wasn't for me. Kenric did have, they would come down to The Gateways once a month or something. They were all very, very different from where I was coming from.

Jamie: I'm glad they..there was some founding members that are still in touch, and I know of one. But I don't know why, but I just didn't gel with them.

Evelyn: They weren't very raunchy.

Jamie: They weren't raunchy, and I think they saw me as a bit of a nuisance. When I would go to the book clubs and thing and I'd see them there, it was just edgy, you don't go there.

Jamie: I think maybe they were conservative, that's the word I'm looking, they were very conservative. Maybe they saw me as radical when I didn't feel that I was.

Evelyn: No, but you might have been radical in comparison to them.

Jamie: Maybe. I remember Amy Lane and Simon Cassel from Ducky, they put on a night, a Gateways night, it was about, I don't know, about five years, six years ago, I don't remember, at the Camden Centre.

Jamie: Some of these old gals that were in the Gateways in the 70s and stuff, they're not out of the closet. They're still living their conservative lives, church going types. And that's just not me. But really nice women, but different.

Evelyn: Definitely. We're fighting the good fight with Section 28.

Jamie: Yeah. I was so pleased I went on that march, because I have a bad back and I have had for, since I came to this country, since 1978, so marching was a big chore. A huge chore.

Jamie: But the energy was incredible, and when we got to 10 Downing Street, we were shouting, "Maggie, Maggie, Maggie, out, out, out!" Sorry, she's really getting on my nerves [interruption in the room]. We were standing outside 10 Downing Street and the horses came, mounted police came to stop us because we just weren't moving. And then I looked down at the other end of Whitehall, and the beginning of the march came back to join.

Evelyn: It made you emotional? [Jamie was emotional at the memory]

Jamie: Very emotional. It was such a thing to witness, not only the anger, but the solidarity. The love. We just couldn't move, so we're shouting, we're shouting and shouting. I learned so much about community that one day.

That moment, because not only as the parade started coming back to support us because the police were coming at us on their horses, they didn't care. People started to be beaten up, and what I noticed was, all of a sudden people had cameras and they were out and they were clicking. And they were gay, they were gay men mainly. They were the ones tall enough to photograph.

Jamie: But it really made me think, "Damn. These are good people. This is a good place to be," but then I had to get out of there. I was holding onto somebody, I thought it was my friend that came with, I was holding on, and this woman went, "Get off me," I was like, "You're not even the person I came with," but because I was scared and I thought I was protecting her. It's a complete stranger who wanted nothing to do with me.

Jamie: But yeah, and then we went from Whitehall, we walked to, god, Kennington Park. A long way. Yeah, and the police came at us again because we had to pass by the police station, so we were standing there going, "Rah, rah, rah, rah," and women started kissing, and the police started to come over to try and break them up. And people said that they were being beaten up, but I just thought, "You know what? I've got to get out of here," because I was up against the railings and-

Evelyn: Yeah, nowhere to go.

Jamie: It was just wrong. Yeah, so that made me angry enough and loved enough. I fell all of that, all at once in that one moment, that I became more involved when I could, yeah.

Evelyn: From the 80s, how does your story unfold going forward?

Jamie: You're getting frisky. What are you talking about? What do you want from me?

Evelyn: No, I just, so you're more involved politically?

Jamie: Yeah.

Evelyn: Yeah, and how does that pan out for you, that's what I mean?

Jamie: Oh, okay. I just kept at it. I think as far as panning out and having to survive financially, and having a bad back, I put those things together and I thought, "All right, what are you going to do?" I couldn't stay working at the gym because it was just physically exhausting.

Evelyn: Too much, yeah.

Jamie: Yeah, besides which, I had to go clubbing at night.

Evelyn: Just had to.

- Jamie: I was forced, it was part of my political agenda, so I left the gym and decided the only way I could continue that kind of lifestyle would be to work as a bouncer, because I'd already done it at The Gateways. In the early 90s, I think it was, I started working for various venues that I've mentioned before, whether they were leather clubs or not, I became a bouncer. I did security work. I did the course. It wasn't an easy course, but it was easier. And before that bouncers were unlicensed, which meant there was no protection and all that kind of stuff, so I thought, "Oh, I better get a license," so I did that.
- Jamie: I worked at all lesbian and gay things, I worked at Venus Rising, Clit Club, Fist and Candy Bar. Yeah, and Candy Bar was, I worked about four nights a week, and it was just a way for me to, I could keep aware of the political scene, the club scene, and meet people. Keep being social, and that was my main job and then I topped it up with benefits and things. That's how that panned out.
- Evelyn: Your political engagement from then, what are the big issues for you in more recent years?
- Jamie: I took a big break and more recently, gee, ask me a different question. That's too vague.
- Evelyn: So, thinking about your involvement in Theatre and in gay Theatre specifically, perhaps?
- Jamie: I did little performances, I did some cabaret performances for Clit Club and Fist, and then my main political agenda then was to get involved with Alcoholics Anonymous to save my life. And I worked for the NHS for about seven years, so that was pretty radical for me. As far as doing..I was mainly surviving and trying to get away from the club scene, and that's been most of my adult life, using that as a focal point, so coming away from that I had to find a more spiritual agenda. I got involved with Buddhism for a while, AA for a while, and then it was more or less a matter of survival.
- Jamie: I didn't do many performances. I wanted to. I didn't fit in in mainstream Theatre here because of my accent and lack of formal education and how I present. I didn't fit in with any of that, so I stopped doing that a long time ago. But even the community Theatre that other people are involved in, I didn't fit in with them either, again because of the accent and my personality didn't fit, so I became really disillusioned with it all. I maintained my involvement with the HIV and AIDS agenda programs, centres, that kind of thing.
- Evelyn: What sort of things did you do for those?
- Jamie: I just did ... charity bucket thing. I think the thing that bothers me about when people do charity, oh that's right, I got involved with Arsenal and then I got involved with the LGBT side of Arsenal football.
- Evelyn: The Gay Gooners?



Jamie: Huh?

Evelyn: The Gay Gooners?

Jamie: Yeah. Yeah, I wasn't a founding member, but I was on the board and worked at Arsenal, so I tried to fit in my political agenda in other things around my health and around whatever I could do for a living, and I scraped by with that.

Jamie: I fought for the NHS and I will always do that. I spent quite a bit of time talking about my lesbian experiences with the NHS, working with the NHS, all that kind of stuff. That became-

Evelyn: How did your lesbian experiences feed into NHS-

Jamie: Well, because of the way I present, and also I know some lesbians that are nurses and doctors-

Evelyn: Yeah, so you were helping to raise awareness of how to support the lesbian community?

Jamie: How to treat us, yeah, and I'm still involved with that.

Evelyn: That's incredibly important.

Jamie: Well, now I have ovarian cancer, so what I'm trying to do now is find a way that I can help raise awareness for the medical profession to listen to women. To treat lesbians with respect.

Jamie: To treat masculine presenting, masculine centre presenting lesbians or people or non-gendered identifying people, respect. I'm really trying, I'm trying to calm down about it, but I'm also really quite passionate about trying to get that message across and trying to find a way to talk the-

Evelyn: To ensure that they listen to people [crosstalk 01:00:24].

Jamie: Medical professionals, yeah. It took me about two years to try and get a diagnosis, and fortunately I have a friend who is a doctor who said, "Oh," she just, "Let me feel your tummy. Oh yeah," she went like that, she said, "Okay," asked me a few questions over lunch and said, "Yeah, ask for these tests," I said, "Okay," and then we continued our lunch.

Jamie: And she saved my life. If she hadn't done, if I hadn't just happened to meet, curtains, because they just don't listen.

Evelyn: And so you need that not to be happening to other people?

Jamie: Yes, definitely.

Evelyn: You're working to-

Jamie: Anyway I look back on it, what with my knowledge of how the NHS works and how a medical professional, they'll look at your records and these things weren't joined up because they just don't have the time. If the things were joined up, they might have taken me a bit more seriously or said, "Ah, well this happened to you in 2000, let's see about that".

Jamie: But anyway, at some point I remember going to see a gynaecologist, female, and she asked me about birth control and all that kind of stuff. The usual questions. I said, "No, no, no. I'm a lesbian". "When did you decide to become a lesbian?" I was, what was I? In my late 50s, and I just said, "Are you heterosexual?" She said, "Yes," so I said, "When did you decide to become heterosexual?" She said, "Well, well, I've always been," I said, "Well, there you are. That's how it works". She said, "Well, I'll examine you," I said, "You're not coming anywhere near me," and it was a shame. I thought, "I don't want any other person, human, to be treated that way".

Jamie: But there have been really good times. I don't know if you remember The Audre Lorde Clinic or The Sandra Bernhard Clinic, we had lesbian clinics when there were people that were lesbian-friendly, if they weren't lesbian themselves, looking after our physical health and our sexual health. And that had to be stopped because of funding. We really need that kind of stuff now. There's Gendered Intelligence and there's Clinic Q, but specifically for lesbians, or lesbians of a certain age, I don't think there's about.

Jamie: I think that masculine presenting lesbians are dying unnecessarily because they're embarrassed, or they're not being believed or listened to. That's got to stop, goddammit! If you could help me with that, I'd love it, any of you guys, I'd be all over it. I'll talk, you tell them, I'm not shy about talking. But I'm trying to compile stories of the way women have been treated, especially around ovarian cancer. Not necessarily lesbians, just women. But I'd like to put that agenda across to lesbians.

Evelyn: Yeah, as well, so still-

Jamie: Women who have sex with women, pardon me, bisexual women as well.

Evelyn: So you're still an activist?

Jamie: I hope so.

Evelyn: Yeah, I can see you are. I can see so. Looking back over all the years, say back to, say 50 years ago, they've been enormous changes, say from here in this country from the partial decriminalisation in '67, have you as a lesbian, how have you experienced the impact of successive legislation over those years?

Evelyn: Do you really feel things have got a lot better in some senses? Are you more listened to, in other senses not?

Jamie: Well, what you just said. In some instances I feel heard, but with the rise of the right and what's going on now, I'm scared. I think I'm more scared than I was in the 70s now. It's not going to stop me obviously, but the rise of the right really, it does two things, it frightens and angers me. The anger will balance out the fear, and the defiance and love.

Jamie: That's, like I said, before I get emotional again, that's what I learned from Clause 28 and on the political agenda that we had to fight through then, we were defiant but there was love. You can't fight one without the other, I don't think. As long as I have compassion and empathy, even for a right-wing Nazi, try and figure out, "What's making you tick?" That's where I'm at now. "Okay, that's what your fear is, okay. Well, my anger and defiance and fear, but I've got love going."

Evelyn: Thinking back and expecting me to come today and ask lots of questions, is there anything that you expected to talk about that you haven't?

Jamie: Well, I'm glad you didn't ask me about my girlfriends or lack of .. oh yes, there is. I know, you know that doctor I was telling you about, whose name I didn't mention? There a 90 or 91-year-old former Labour MP who lives in the Lake District with her partner of over 40 years.

Evelyn: Yeah, I know who you mean.

Jamie: I know you do, I hope you do. But I don't think she's getting enough recognition, either one of them. She's going to die, and it would be ... I would really love it if-

Evelyn: So would I.

Jamie: Oh, good. I think, I think, as a legacy for me, getting my voice heard is really helpful, I think, so this is great.

Jamie: And whatever Clare's doing. Clare's been active for a gazillion years, so well done for her. But I can't think of anything at the moment.

Evelyn: That's okay, so finally, think back to that little Jamie-

Jamie: Oh god, you're making me cry again.

Evelyn: -in Los Angeles, what would you tell the younger Jamie from this point looking back?

Jamie: On Facebook, this month, all this month, for my anniversary, my personal anniversary, I've been saying, "Be yourself," and it's hard. It was hard when I was growing up, and it was hard looking back, talking to you about it, especially now.

Jamie: But I think I tried so much for so many years to be somebody I wasn't, even when I was out I was trying to fit into the Hollywood mode or the

academic feminist mode or this or that. And just be yourself and that that's enough, I think. That's what I would tell me.

Evelyn: Excellent. It's been lovely to get to know you as yourself.

Jamie: Thank you.

Evelyn: It's a real privilege for me to hear your stories, so thank you so much, Jamie.

Jamie: Thank you for letting me share it, it's been a pleasure. It really has.

Evelyn: Thank you.