

# bitch

feminist response to pop culture

Alison Bechdel, JT LeRoy, butches, beauty queens, and baby-hating  
PLUS: style icons Dolly and Madonna

Style  
&  
Substance



## Kicks Just Keep Getting Harder to Find

I JUST LOVE SNEAKERS. ALWAYS HAVE. BACK IN THE DAY, I used to feel kind of lonely as a female sneaker fiend. I didn't even have a word for my passion; I just knew that my sneakers represented something important about myself.

Nowadays, the sneaker game is much bigger and much broader. As surely as it's not just for boys, it's not just for jocks either. Female sneaker fiends are everywhere—tomboys, fashion divas, old ladies, hip hop DJs, or simply single-minded sneaker freaks—and we're going toe-to-toe with the biggest names in the sneaker subculture.

And what's the response? Well, it's typical of how guys react when the ladies start to encroach on something they thought was theirs (politics, sports, cars): First, they act like we don't exist. Bobbito Garcia's comprehensive and beautiful photo book *Where'd You*



18 bitch ISSUE NO. 32

*Get Those?* documents New York City sneaker culture from the '60s to the mid-'80s, but doesn't include a single woman in the survey. Nike likes to pretend that the only real collectors are men, since anything smaller than a men's size 7 is called "youth," and the fanciest sneakers aren't available in youth sizes. Small-footed sneaker freaks, female or not, are simply out of luck.

The second response is typically that we must just be there to please the boys—we gals can't really be serious. Take *Sole Collector*, one of the leading sneaker-culture mags, which aims to be that refreshing blend of hard-core sneaker love and soft-core porn. The articles might be on point, but it's hard to get past the photos of women clutching sneakers in their teeth as they grovel on the floor.

And even when the shoes are on their feet, they're more reminiscent of the high heels that never seem to come off in porn movies. (And speaking of high heels, how about Ecco Unltd, one of *Sole Collector's* advertisers, whose ad shows us how some nice kicks can get a guy unlimited, uh, access?)

And now we're just getting to that fun third stage of tokenized acceptance: You, too, can be the sign that your guy pal is enlightened when it comes to recognizing female fiends. Hey, one guy had 10 friends whose female friends all liked sneakers too, making him the expert who wrote *Sole Collector's* first article about us. Turns out that "positive rein-



LOVE it / SHOUFF it

forcement from males is what drives most females into collecting." Who knew?

Luckily, we female sneak freaks are a resilient sort. We're out there hunting down the rarest trainers, community-building on [femalesneakerfiend.com](http://femalesneakerfiend.com), and making moves from designing kicks to opening our own shops. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise, and don't step on the ladies.

—Lori Lobenstine