

Stars of
Music
makers

THE

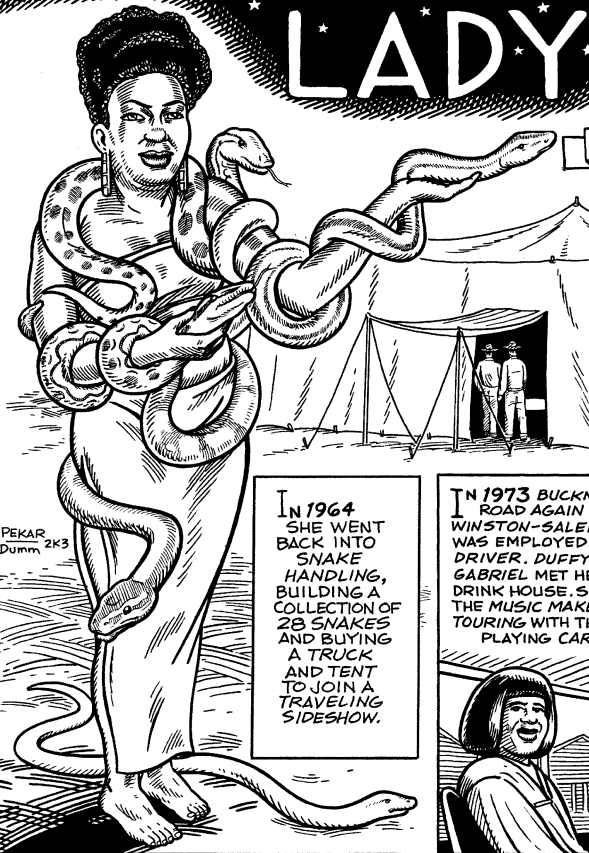
SNAKE LADY



**WILLA MAE
BUCKNER.**

BORN IN 1922 IN
AUGUSTA, GA., RAN AWAY
FROM HOME AT THE AGE OF
TWELVE TO JOIN AN ALL BLACK
TENT SHOW, AND LATER LEARN-
ED TO STRIP, SING BAWDY
SONGS, SWALLOW SWORDS
AND HANDLE SNAKES. SHE
PLAYED A NUMBER OF
CARNIVAL SHOWS IN THE
SOUTH IN THE EARLY PART
OF HER CAREER.

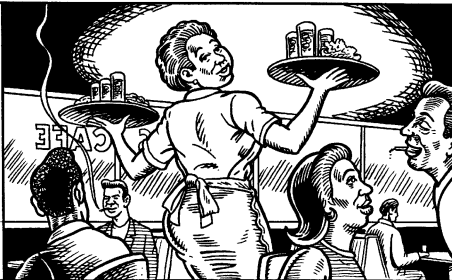
STORY BY HARVEY PEKAR • ART BY GARY DUMM



I**N 1964**
SHE WENT
BACK INTO
SNAKE
HANDLING,
BUILDING A
COLLECTION OF
28 SNAKES
AND BUYING
A TRUCK
AND TENT
TO JOIN A
TRAVELING
SIDESHOW.

PEKAR
Dumm 2K3

I**N 1946** SHE
SETTLED IN
SPANISH
HARLEM. IN
NEW YORK
SHE WORKED
IN RESTAUR-
ANTS AND DID
DOMESTIC
WORK WHILE
STUDYING
FOREIGN
LANGUAGES AT
NIGHT SCHOOL.



I**N 1973** BUCKNER QUIT THE
ROAD AGAIN AND MOVED TO
WINSTON-SALEM, WHERE SHE
WAS EMPLOYED AS A CITY BUS
DRIVER. DUFFY AND GUITAR
GABRIEL MET HER IN 1989 AT A
DRINK HOUSE. SHE WORKED INTO
THE MUSIC MAKER AND BEGAN
TOURING WITH THEM. EVENTUALLY
PLAYING CARNEGIE HALL.



H**ER HEALTH TOOK A TURN FOR THE
WORSE IN 1999 AND SHE PASSED
AWAY IN JANUARY, 2000. SHE WAS
MOURNED BY MANY FRIENDS, SOME
OF WHOM REMEMBERED HER LINE:**

"I DIDN'T LEARN
ANYTHING, BUT AT LEAST
I SAW SOMETHING."

