

arts/entertainment

Abdicated king of reggae wails and philosophizes

Tosh's Lincoln stop rocked 'n' rastafarized

By Pat Higgins

Peter Tosh, the most popular figure in reggae music today, delivered an excellent performance Wednesday night before an enthusiastic crowd of approximately 2,000.

Tosh's latest album, *Wanted: Dread and Alive* is up to No. 50 on the *Rolling Stone* magazine charts, which is higher than any other authentic reggae act has done (excluding the Police, etc.)

concert review

Tosh is making such a concerted effort to conquer Babylon that he is touring the United States to an extent that he even played Pershing Auditorium.

Pershing was in its best form, however, with a curtain down the middle that created an aura of intimacy, and not incidentally, a better sound. The management literally rolled out the red carpet for Tosh.

The only drawbacks were the reserved seating, which together with the efficient usherettes hindered attempts to dance until the end. Also the concession stands ran out of beer 20 minutes into the opening set. Critic Lester Bangs once wrote that he wanted to lead a drinking branch of Rastafarians on an exodus back to the Seagram's distillery in Ontario. From the anguished moans, a good portion of the audience would have followed Bangs.

Marley heir

Tosh carries a lot of emotional baggage as the heir apparent to the late Bob Marley, who was the first Third World pop star. Tosh and Marley were associated together in the Wailers years ago, and co-wrote many songs. Tosh did include one Wailers song, "Get Up, Stand Up," at the close of his first set. It was the highlight of the evening with a memorable opening riff, and the overtly political lyrics had everyone singing along.

Before the show Tosh was sporting roller skates and a Porsche racing jacket. But on stage he wore a running suit in the colors of the Ethiopian flag which fit his image somewhat better.

As could have easily been predicted, the seven-piece back-up band was incredibly tight. The guitar player cut loose with some solos worthy of Jimi Hendrix or Ernie Isley. However, the rhythm section was dominant as they laid down the big beat. Nobody can play better than a bunch of Rastamaniacs cooking away.

Tosh danced like an athlete, as he would run in place or make soccer-style moves. He was aided by a cordless microphone that allowed him to wander all over the stage.

More motivated

The opening act was local favorites Blue Riddim, and they had a fine set which pulled an enthusiastic encore. Blue Riddim appeared more motivated than they normally are at a club.

Tosh's music is powerful, of course, but the lyrics oc-



Peter Tosh

Photo by Jon Natvig

asionally leave something to be desired. For instance, two songs were simply paeans to marijuana; "Legalize It," which is not to be confused with the other one "Legalize Marijuana." Not to be heretical, but this is 1981, after all. What next, flowers in you hair?

When Tosh opened for the Stones in 1978 he made a point of lighting up during "Legalize It." He didn't do that here, which may be a tribute to our boys in blue.

Tosh's performance concentrated on his recent solo work. Particularly fine were "Walk, Don't Run," which originally was sung with Mick Jagger. The band more than adequately handled the harmonies. "Mystic Man," with its spiritual message and anti-hard drug lyrics was very powerful. The first encore "Steppin' Razor" was a great threatening boast of a song.

It was culturally mind boggling to watch the 99 percent white audience, many in Hawaiian shirts and Toppers, singing along with Tosh's revolutionary message. Nonetheless everybody had a good time.

Reggae must realize spiritual potential-Tosh

By Casey McCabe

Walking around backstage, Peter Tosh is visibly tired. He's in the middle of the longest reggae tour ever undertaken, 55 cities and 75 shows ending Oct. 27 in Florida.

But despite the fatigue brought on by a cross-country bus tour, Tosh is ever alert to the motivation behind it: to expose as many people as possible to the hypnotic spiritualism of reggae.

So far it has been an unqualified success. Halls all over America and Europe have been selling out and celebrities pop up at almost every show; Stevie Wonder, John McEnroe, Chris Rea, Ben Vereen, Robert F. Kennedy Jr., Angela Davis, the O'Jays, Ryan O'Neal and Farrah Fawcett are just a few of the curious cross-section. The fact is that reggae is hot and the consensus from the fans, the press and his peers is that Peter Tosh is the top of the heap.

This status has been giving Tosh some anxiety. Despite the accolades that pour in about his dynamic live performances, Tosh takes offense to the headlines proclaiming him the new King of Reggae.

No king needed

"Reggae don't need no king," says Tosh, tucking his dreadlocks underneath a crocheted beret. "Reggae needs potential and qualities. If you can't bring music spiritually what can you be in reggae?"

The circumstances behind Tosh's coronation by the press may be the most unsettling. The previous "King" of reggae, Bob Marley, died of brain cancer this summer. Along with Tosh and Bunny (Livingston) Wailer they formed the most influential reggae group, The Wailers. The group arose out of the confines of Jamaica in the early sixties to attain worldwide recognition in the last decade. After dissolving their original form in 1974, Tosh went on to record solo albums with a stronger political bent than that of Marley's, and gained a respectable following of his own.

"The audiences are different today because those days (with the Wailers) are a long time ago," says Tosh. "Those days we were experimenting on the music to make the music have its right potential . . . learning off the syncopation within the beat of the music."

"I've been a graduate of reggae music, as an architect," Tosh explains. "So I know what it takes in this time to make the compulsion in the music that people have to accept."

"Once upon a time, in the days of the Wailers, people used to love the music the same way. But we are getting across to more people now because we'll have more reggae music on the radios. Lots of people have heard of Bob Marley since he was dead, not when he was alive."

"I am not no king you see, because I don't want no dead man's title."

Foregoing any titles, Tosh's stature in the reggae world is still impressive. Other acts such as Toots and the Maytalls, Burning Spear and Jimmy Cliff are headliners in their own right, yet have opened for Tosh at various shows. While Tosh admits he doesn't follow the music of many reggae bands, he is warmed by the growing sense of community.

"There are plenty reggae bands out there who are trying to keep this thing together," he explains. "But it takes spiritual activities you know, not just trying to be a superstar or be in the limelight. By the time they get in the limelight, their phone get off the hook."

What Tosh asks of reggae musicians is to concentrate on the "spiritual potential" of the music, a phrase he used repeatedly. Reggae music, he says, should speak of the Rastafarian religion, of truth, of rights, of a quiet distribution of the earth's resources, of the Creator, and of reality. Because reggae speaks of these values it is often labelled political music, an unnecessary title according to Tosh.

Being outspoken

"What they call political is just being outspoken, just speaking the truth," he says. "They will have to realize that people is people and people demand their constitutional rights, respective of who is the ruler."

Tosh has seen the oppression in his native Jamaica, and once again saw the seeds of revolt on a recent England tour during the Liverpool, Brixton and Birmingham uprisings.

"The reason why these things happen is people, after years of oppression, will take it no more . . . when their backs are against the wall."

Tosh's belief in the power and spirit of his music is unquestioned. In fact belief is too weak a word for him. "Belief is 50 percent of doubt," he says. "Knowledge is to know, it means you are certain of what to deal with. I know reggae is an ancient music, millions of years old. It need no influence . . . nor does the sun, nor the breeze nor the sea need influence. So is reggae music."

Guest clashes with new trenders

"It's your party and I'll cry if I want to . . ."

For the first time in years I was stranded without a car. I was in the company of my two friends, Tim and Nancy, who, carrying the majority vote, decided to attend a "new trend" type party.

t. marni vos

As we walked down the leafy sidewalk, the loud, steely music came rolling towards us . . . "love stinks" . . . I knew then that the evening ahead of me would be shared with The Cars, The Police, Metermaids, etc.

"Tim, can't you get your hair to stand up?"

We rang the bell . . . we knocked. At last a sledgehammer to the door brought forth a young man who was the proud owner of a safety pin . . . which he wore with dignity in his right nostril.

My friend could no longer contain herself. "Hi, my name's Nancy, whip it, whip it good."

I too, could not contain myself, "Shutup Nancy. Hi, my name's not important, is this Buffy's 'Welcome State Fair' party?"

"Say what?"

"Listen, I don't think we belong here . . . I mean, it's like I left my Twister game at home, you know what I mean?"

"Hey, no problem . . . Twister?"

"You know what? A blue ducky diaper pin would really go well with your eyes."

"Hey, you're a fry to the max man."

"I'm a fry . . . you must be a poach, this is my friend Nancy, she's a broil and her fiance Tim . . . he's a micro-wave."

"Too much man."

A girl covered with slogan pins and razor blades cut past us and entered the crowded living room. Her pink hair disappeared into the smoke.

Tim started singing old nursery songs . . . "A-do-do-do, a-da-da-da." I knew it was time to leave.

"Tim, Nancy, I would love to stay here, I really would, I mean pink is my favorite color. But to be real honest . . . I hate this party. I mean I could be vacuuming this very moment, you know?"

"Not only that, I think the party down the street has cheese-flavored nachos, and if we hurry we can still catch the continuation of dead air on Channel 3. If you guys are too embarrassed to say anything, I'll just tell that guy that the pains are six minutes apart . . . and if that doesn't work I'll just tell him that . . . that . . . that "mama told me not to come."