

Bad Blood and a great Gospel

by Ira Nayman

Over the course of the term, TV Ontario's *Human Edge* series has offered challenging international documentaries on a wide variety of subjects. You had to expect a clunker sooner or later; unfortunately, *In the Blood* is clunkier than most.

The film is a poetic rumination on a modern safari hunt in Africa, the primary objects of which are a buffalo and a crocodile. Film of the hunt is interspersed with interviews with the hunters and archival footage of President Theodore Roosevelt and quotes from his book on hunting; the tone is laudatory to the point of saccharine.

The focus is on Tyssen Butler, an adolescent whose father promised to take him on a safari in Africa. Since his father, George, conceived, produced, directed and co-wrote the documentary, Tyssen naturally gets his wish.

There is one reference to a member of the hunting party who has become disillusioned with the sport,

Something for old and new, clear-minded fans of Severed Heads

by Prasad Bidaye

Every time I sit down to listen to the Severed Heads, I have to make sure my mind is absolutely clear and relaxed. Tom Ellard, the genius behind this project, has a tendency to mesh beautiful sounds with clumsy noises that could easily give any mind a terrible headache.

Whereas his Nettwerk label-mates (Skinny Puppy *et al*) readily accept the label "industrial," Ellard refuses; his latest effort, *Cuisine, with Piscatorial*, is an example of his continuing experimentation with dance and pop, as well as technology.

Though they've been largely neglected by the media, Severed Heads are the missing link between seventies Kraftwerk and current faves 808 State. In the mix, ambient synths flourish one moment and are scraped with Ellard's guttural samples the next.

Tightly programmed drums are thrown together with his warm yet child-like sentiments. It's like Ellard's created soup; hence the title *Cuisine*.

The album contains 18 tracks, and with the exception of the bonus five collectively titled *Piscatorial*, virtually every song is less than 2-3 minutes long. It's an unusual, though welcome, change for Ellard, who in the past has kept his songs longer than six minutes.

The longest song on *Cuisine* is the exquisite "Estrogen," a four-minute piece that features Ellard's voice emulating disco wah-wah guitar. On second listen, it sounds like it may be his interpretation of the sexual act.

Other notable tracks include the live recording of "Twister" and "Finder," where Ellard's voice is amazingly distorted, almost resembling that of Pink Dot Edward Kaspel in his wackier days. A personal favourite is "The Tangler (They Shine Within)," with harmonies that remind me of the Severed Heads' classic *Dead Eyes Open*.

Cuisine is generally a pleasant recording, perhaps Ellard's best. He has finally learned to properly articulate his once recklessly long and numbing mixes, creating precise pop pieces. However, the last set of tracks, *Piscatorial*, revives memories of early

music

Severed Heads
Cuisine, with Piscatorial
Netwerk Records

television

Human Edge: In the Blood
Tuesday, December 10, 10 pm
The Fifth Gospel
Tuesday, December 17, 10 pm
TV Ontario

and there is one campfire argument over whether or not to kill a crocodile (which is recognized as an endangered species in the United States, but not in Tanzania, where much of the film was shot). Species extinction is pretty much glossed over in this documentary.

The hunters are portrayed as conservationists, stewards of nature. Professional big game hunter Robin Hurt often tells the hunters he guides to only shoot the older, presumably non-reproducing members of the herd.

The game is given away during the campfire argument, however, when one of the hunters claims that worries about extinction are "an eastern liberal plot" against the freedom of hunters. Hunting is not about conservation: it's an exercise in western machismo, made safe by

technology.

One scene involves the capture of poachers, who slaughter elephants with automatic rifles and use chainsaws to remove their tusks. We are expected to draw a distinction between them and the hunters, whose methods are more humane; I found the distinction to be more a matter of degree than kind.

In an effort to totally obscure the issue, people on a photo-safari are criticized for domesticating wild animals. While this is certainly regrettable, it seems preferable to what the hunters do (accuse me of eastern liberalism if you must).

In the Blood's manipulative techniques are easy to spot and criticize. Although much of what Roosevelt wrote seems prescient today, he wrote before species extinction was widely recognized; using his writing to justify a modern hunt is inappropriate.

The worst case is the use of Tyssen as narrator. The boy gives safari hunting an innocence it does not merit; since the script was written by adults, this is just a sleazy way of promoting their agenda.

Tyssen and his father are brought closer during the film. It seems a shame that it took innocent blood to do it.

On a more successful, if not necessarily lighter note, *The Fifth Gospel*, which plays the following week, is essential viewing. It connects



Theodore Roosevelt leans against an animal he has just killed in a still from *In The Blood*.

Christianity's attitudes towards people with disabilities to society's attitudes towards them and, ultimately, their attitudes towards themselves.

"What would be more calculated to impress the masses" than for Jesus to heal the lame, the narrator of the film asks from his wheelchair. The disabled became the medium for proof of Christ's divinity. In this theology, unfortunately, disability became synonymous with sin; if you weren't pure of heart, it would show on your body.

Not only did society accept this definition of people with disabilities as inherently evil, but Christians with disabilities internalized this view, believing that their disabilities, even if they had them from birth, were a

sign that they had sinned. This attitude forever freezes people with disabilities in their otherness, stigmatizing them for being different.

The logical outcome of this belief is Lourdes, where the sick and disabled come for miraculous cures. In the dramatic, moving centrepiece of the film, a woman with cerebral palsy prepares to take the waters, arguing with her rational self all the while. In a world where conformity to a physical ideal for able people is essential, the appeal of Lourdes to people with disabilities is overwhelming.

The fifth gospel is an addendum to the Christian bible that preaches self-acceptance and self-love for people with disabilities. *The Fifth Gospel* is a terrific documentary.

TORONTO - BAYVIEW REGIONAL CANCER CENTRE

SCHOOL OF RADIATION THERAPY

INVITES YOU TO AN OPEN HOUSE

SATURDAY, JANUARY 18, 1992

1:00 - 3:30 PM

The Toronto-Bayview Regional Cancer Centre, School of Radiation Therapy offers a future career as a **Radiation Therapist**. Radiation Therapists are a vital part of the cancer treatment team. Therapists work together with physicians and physicists to administer the prescribed course of treatment and instruct the patient on how to cope with side effects. They are skilled in the use of "State of the Art" equipment and possess the ability to administer the prescribed treatment with care, compassion and respect.

PROGRAM FEATURES

- 24 month advanced program for BSc graduates (requires 1 physic, 1 calculus credit)
- An academic program offering degree credits
- An integrated clinical program
- An interactive learning experience

For more information:
(416)480-4561

2075 Bayview Avenue
North York, Ontario
M4N 3M5