

Social change through sound

Believe in the magic and it will set you free

By RALPH J. GLEASON

It's four years now and what John Sebastian said is still true. Believe in the magic, it'll set you free.

There is nothing really new in the idea that deep and positive changes in society can come about through sound rather than by muscle. Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun, an 18th Century Scot, is the one who said: "Give me the making of the songs of a nation and I care not who makes its laws."

But it is excruciatingly frustrating for grim, joyless anti-poetic ideologues to accept it. They are still too rooted in the rhetoric of the last age and imprisoned in the bare cells of logic. We have come far beyond politics. The thing that is happening now is para-political and much deeper in its ultimate effect than any political thing that has happened so far. More so even than the anti-war movement, which was not every truly political but something much deeper to which politics attached itself.

The labels are shifting, as Ken Kesey observed a long time back, and as Dylan once said, there's no left wing and no right wing, only up wing and down wing.

During the Who's appearance at Fillmore East early this summer, a plainclothesman leaped on stage and attempted to take the microphone and stop the show. He got his ass kicked off stage.

During the Who's appearance at Woodstock Abbie Hoffman attempted to take the microphone and make a speech about what a bum trip and commercial type the festival was. He was offed immediately.

Moral: Anybody's your enemy who's trying to get you killed, even if it's your commanding officer — Catch 22.

Music gives us community, a community that politics has never given us. Much of the verbal philosophy of the art/music people may sound superficial and some of it possibly is. Certainly some of it has not as yet been thought through. But in the face of a world history that says revolutions self-destruct to become in another form

the oppression they aimed to destroy — ("I had to rearrange their faces and give them all another name"), this age is finally insisting that the way of art is greater than the strength of destruction and violence.

Music has become in this age not only the entertainment but the religion, the educational system and the community, a network of electricity linking people together by invisible chains of sounds. If you would communicate to the upcoming generation, do so through music. As a carrier of information it is unequalled in history. Ideas, attitudes, rhetoric, illuminations, emotions, and the web of feelings and thoughts that make up the background against which the world is seen — music transmits. This background is not contributed by the underground publications but by the music and its messages.

We have to remember that. The music is what is really important and has done a very great deal towards changing the nature of America, and the world, too, for that matter. New York and mass media woke up to see the crowds at Woodstock, two and a half years after the Be-In Golden Gate Park (just as a recent political confab was called "A Meeting of the Tribes," two and a half years after the Be-In was titled "A Gathering of the Tribes.")

It is now too late to turn back. As Bob Neuwirth said three years ago at his first San Francisco rock show, "It's breaking out all over." It is and it has and it will continue to and neither the direct opposition nor those who wish to co-opt it and gain control and use it for their own end of violence and destruction will be able to handle it.

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A vast social revolutionary movement is underway which will in time effect a giant revolution in our society without the necessity of barricades in the street and civil war. (It ought to be noted, incidentally, that despite all the rhetorical posturing about power coming out of the barrel

of a gun and the rest, nobody, thankfully is stupid enough to shoot cops.)

This movement, like the Gulf Stream, is wider and deeper than it seems and on the edges it throws up flotsam and jetsam which appear violent. Some of those on the edges of this movement will insist on standing on soap boxes singing the Marxist-Lennist Rag and Papa Ooo Mao Mao and other hymns to mythological figures (remember that Lenin said he wouldn't live in a commune; he couldn't stand that many people all the time.) Some others will wrap themselves in the Panther rhetoric and attitudes and pretend that they are oppressed and exploited like the genuinely oppressed and exploited black people, but they are simply political Canned Heat, that's all. We can't let them mislead us, we can't let them keep us from feeling and thinking.

The music will set you free. We know this. We have tried and it works. The weekend benefit to wipe out the deficit of the Wild West, which had been shot down by the crazies' hysterical behaviour, was a marvelous, beautiful and utterly groovy time. Totally, and prudently as a matter of fact, absent were any of those opposed to the Wild West. We were free those nights even though we were not in the park and it was the music that made the community, linking us all together with its sound.

"Free" is another word we must re-examine along with "community" and "exploitation" and the rest. The old definitions as well as the old forms, the times and old labels are changing. What will emerge is still not precisely clear but it is beginning to take shape.

And the first thing it demands is trust and love, the same two things that began it all and have survived the counter-revolution of the rip off. The last remnants of the dying structures will make a lot of noise and a lot of fruitless, though sometimes violent, gestures. But it will end and they will end with it. Believe in the magic.

Edward Bear as Canada's perfect group

By PAT KUTNEY

Early this year, when asked by one of my fans what I thought of Edward Bear, I replied, "Yeah, they're a nice band." Edward Bear competently performed good material that was suitable for their talents. They were nothing to rave about and jump up and down over, but they couldn't be faulted. None of their material was maudlin or pretentious.

But, in the intervening months, the Bears have surpassed my quotation. Edward Bear has not been content to rest on their laurels as most Toronto groups have. At the end of spring, they started to get more gigs and were able to live at a slightly better than subsistence level.

This increase in work and its consequential monetary gains, coupled with the group's decision to manage themselves, resulted in positive effects which have yet to show signs of dying out.

The Rock Pile and Electric Circus began booking Edward Bear on a frequent basis. It was like water and fertilizer for a dormant seed. It was the impetus needed to attain "bigger and better things."

Edward Bear began expanding their repertoire. They made their old numbers which were often simply structured into more



complexly meshed arrangements. Though, Edward Bear made their instrumentals more intricate, the songs have not lost any of their

aesthetic beauty. They have developed to the point where they are, perhaps, unsurpassed as musicians in Toronto.

I have yet to hear them do a song exactly the same twice. Their instrumental breaks are spontaneous, emotional, and logical,

rather than the forced works of many of their colleagues which are little more than hand (and foot) gymnastics.

It is this musical adeptness which keep their concerts constantly interesting to the staunch Edward Bear fan.

Edward Bear have emerged from hibernation as prolific songwriters. Their music has variety and inventiveness as assets.

By shunning the flowery and elaborate when common sense dictates that simpler language will more easily impart the ideas of their contemporary commentaries, Edward Bear has attained the commendable stature of such luminary lyricists as The Nice and Ray Davies of the Kinks.

Nor has Edward Bear allowed themselves to be affected by their growing success. Rarely enough, there are no internal squabbles to speak of or swelled heads to worry about.

Edward Bear makes no mistakes. They have no shortcomings. Such a statement cannot be made about any other Canadian-based group or too many other groups for that matter. Edward Bear's album, Bearings, which has just been released, should be an excellent showcase for their talents.

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