

# Entertainment

"Here comes success..."  
-Iggy Pop-

## Rock 'n roll preacher

# Jack's jumping jive

Stuart Ross

"Oscar Wilde once said, 'Give me the luxuries of life, and I can accomplish anything.' I love that phrase, but I say, and this is John Lincoln Coughlin talking, 'Give me the conveniences and I can accomplish anything.'"

Coughlin, known as Preacher Jack since his early twenties, has spent most of his life as that rumpled guy hunched over a dilapidated upright piano, filling a noisy, seedy bar with tinny, heartfelt boogie-woogie.

But the thin, blonde, 6-foot-

plus-plus piano-thumping evangelist wouldn't want the luxuries—he believes in the struggle: "It makes you stronger. If you go up the ladder of success so fast, you might not get to take those gradual steps and appreciate. It'd be like you giving me a painting before I get a number of prints to study and appreciate. And if you get too many paintings, the first one loses its value."

The Preacher, who was in Toronto recently to promote his first album on Attic, with the help of the sizzling New England-based

Maynard Silva Band, comes from a family of choir-singers. His earliest influence in hometown Malden, Mass., was the Baptist hymn, around which he sculpted his basic three-chord pattern, which he has never abandoned.

Now 38, the endlessly-speaking Jack remembers when he dreamt of becoming the second Jerry Lee Lewis. He was 17 and playing with his three-man combo, The Jupiters, at St. Luke's Lutheran. They closed with "A Whole Lotta Shakin' to Do", which is still in the Preacher's repertoire.

Preacher Jack is simply an astounding entertainer, a captivating showman. He doesn't compromise in any way at all. And he's always stood in respectful awe of the great entertainers before him. He told me about the man that provided him with much of his earliest inspiration: "The kids would say, 'Hey! Let's go play ball!' and I'd say, 'Not right now, I'm entertaining thoughts of Liberace at Carnegie Hall.'"

Sounds like something out of the movies. Much of the Preacher's life does. The man, in all his sincerity, is pure actor. Talking about another of his loves, the horror film, he lurched about the room, enacting entire scenes from Karloff's *Frankenstein* and Linda Blair in *The Exorcist*. Reliving the latter, Jack throws himself onto the Westminster Hotel bed, screaming Blair's lines as he re-enacts a levitation.

His fascination with the horror genre stems from his obsession with the relationship between Good and Evil. Once, in a Catholic cemetery, he saw a rat climbing over another "deceased" rat in a tomb. The experience horrified him. "So I wrestled with that rat. I became that rat and I thought of my nasty side, and I fought it off right on the stage through my music. I performed an exorcism."

"If you get into the evil side and play with it, you're giving the Devil attention. The Satanic Force is at work and right now I strongly



Cutler, Silva, Lynch, and the Preach plunge into Canadiana.

believe he's got a foothold in the temples and he's trying to upset the Scriptures. And if Christians aren't careful, we're going to really be in serious trouble. Because it's easier to be bad than it is to be good. And by good, I don't mean, 'Ha, ha! Look at my halo!'

But the Preach doesn't want to appear a prude: "I'm still into the flesh. I haven't given up womanizing. Good Christians can rub belly buttons—as long as it's handled with respect."

Jack's pet project at the moment is preparing a definitive, detailed volume of portraits of George Washington. He began buying prints when he quit drinking ("I used to suck down 9000 Buds a night") and steeped himself deeper into Americana. "The drama of the eyes. The buckle on the shoe. The hand on the sword."

His present back-up band has great respect for the Preacher. Waiting for Jack to arrive at the hotel, we watched *Galloping Gourmet* and talked. They've been working with the Preach only since Labour Day, and, says guitarist Maynard Silva laughingly, "You should try spending 12 hours in a van with him." Silva is quick to add, "He's a really positive person, though. He's so full of energy—but it's positive energy."

After an hour, we were about ready to declare Jack missing. As Brian Cutler, the band's drummer, explained, "I think he sometimes gets lost getting into the van." We pulled bassist/cook E. J. Lynch (who makes a mean spaghetti) away from the T.V. and searched all

surrounding coffee shops, junk shops and bookstores.

But in the end, Preacher Jack will be playing rock'n'roll. Hank Williams, Sr., Elvis ("and I don't mean Costello"), and Jerry Lee will be jumping from his fingers, along with his own very fine compositions. "Using rock'n'roll music as a vehicle is my way of getting the message across—to let them know that even though I'm pretty 'cruel', the Big Boy gave me the talent."

And the Preacher certainly has everything it takes to become an American rock'n'roll legend. Billy Graham would be proud.



The mad and eccentric Preacher Jack performs dental work on himself while playing "Tutti Frutti."

## Flamenco-ist flirts with fame

Heather Whyte

What conceivable connection could there be between Walt Disney and flamenco music?

In the mind of Juan Tomas, one of Toronto's best-known flamenco guitarists, and a former York student, there is an important connection. "I am a dreamer and a fantasist, and I think the fantasies of Walt Disney affected my wanting to be in the arts," said Tomas.

He liked the way the music worked so well with the actions of the Disney cartoons. This bond may seem a little obscure, but the interaction between physical movement and rhythm is the basis from which flamenco music originates.

Tomas, who began his career at 16 as a rhythm and blues guitarist with David Clayton Thomas, sees the cultural roots of flamenco as similar to those of blues. The repression of the people involved (in this case, the Gypsies) allows a greater freedom for the musician to be innovative within the set form of the music. Tomas states that this freedom was the main inspiration for his transformation to flamenco music, rather than to

the classical or jazz form.

He became frustrated with the Northern Ontario bar scene as a teenager and decided to study flamenco in Spain. After completing his studies, Tomas returned to Canada and has done numerous public performances, as well as television, radio and recording work.



Tomas believes that there is a market for flamenco in Canada, as there is in Europe and the United States; "it's only a matter of time." Therefore, his plans include the release of his first album in the near future. This commercial aspect is

not the main reason for Tomas' interest in obtaining a Canadian awareness of the flamenco style. "I have to establish," he says, "not necessarily myself, but the art form a little more strongly in our culture than it is right now." The major problem, he believes, is that we are still a very vocally oriented society and cannot fully appreciate the value of strictly instrumental music.

The guitarist has been noted for being a reclusive person. Commenting on his life-style, he said that "to be a musical artist, you are alienated from society, but you have the confident inner feeling that you know some secret that no one else does." He believes that the greatest disadvantage of his profession is that people cannot conceive a musician's job as being "real" work, therefore they label him as a "freak". Tomas says however, "I feel a certain security in the knowledge that I have acquired a profession that I think is very worthwhile when a lot of people are, I think, kind of wasting their lives."

You can see Tomas in concert tomorrow night at U of T's Hart House Theatre, 8:30. Tickets \$5.

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