

'Most lyrical writer since Dylan Thomas'

## Handicapped Brown deemed brilliant author

By DAVID McCAUGHNA

Deaf Dumb and blind boy  
He's in a quiet vibration land  
Strange as it seems his musical dreams  
Ain't quite so bad.

Ten Years old  
With thoughts as bold as thoughts can be  
Loving life and becoming wise  
In simplicity.

Sickness will surely take the mind  
Where minds can't usually go.  
Come on the amazing journey  
And learn all you should know.

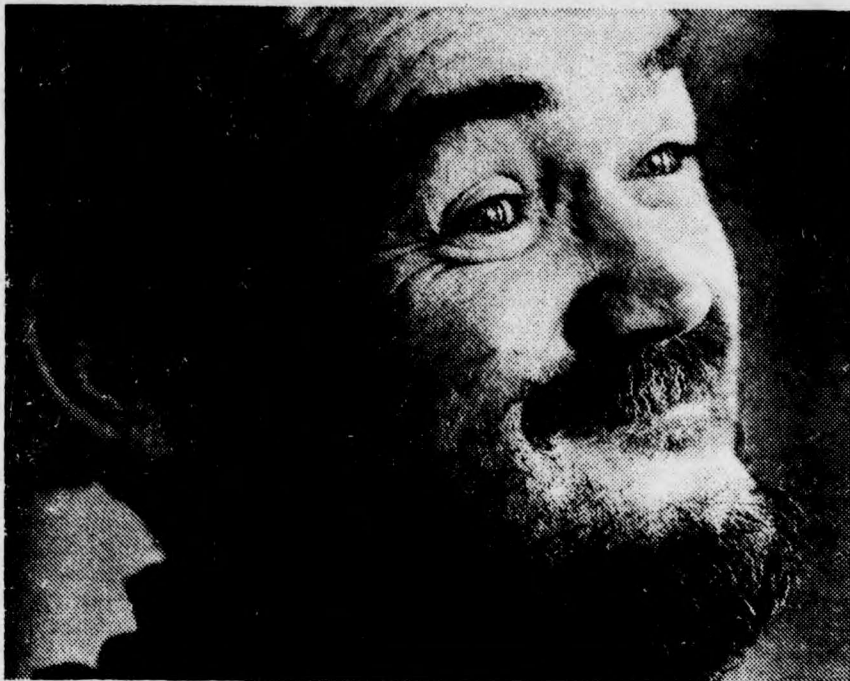
—from Tommy by the Who

Messages are being strung across the transatlantic literary wires from England that a brilliantly marvelous novel is to be published in the fall. It's called Down All the Days and concerns life in a Dublin slum. Those who have read it so far are all fervently enthused.

David Farrar, of the British publishing house of Secker and Warburg, says, "The author has a gift for language that I've never encountered in 24 years as a publisher. The novel is mystical and earthy at the same time — absolutely wonderful. One of my other senior directors who has just read it has been in tears." Sol Stein, who has bought the U.S. rights comments, "He's the most lyrical writer I've come across since Dylan Thomas."

The author of Down All the Days is a 37-year-old Irishman called Christy Brown. On the physical level Brown is little more than a vegetable. He was born with such severe brain damage that he is virtually a helpless baby, he can neither stand or walk, he can't feed himself or use the lavatory without aid. His speech consists of intermittent grunts comprehensible only to his family. He constantly shakes and quivers and saliva drips from his mouth. Brown has been described as an 'amoeba', yet inside this hideous exterior there lies the amazing mind of an immensely creative and sensitive artist. Christy Brown typed Down All the Days with the little toe of his left foot, the only part of his body he can control.

Hunter Davies, a top English journalist and author of the Beatles' official biography, has read Down All the Days and predicts that "it will be a literary sensation. . . it has nothing to do with the fact that the author is a cripple. No one is making allowances for the fact that the author has never been to school or been educated in any way. No one's going to read it just because the author can't use his hands and typed it with the little toe of



Christy Brown

his left foot. Down All the Days will stand on its own and become a classic."

The novel is the first of a trilogy about 18 years in the life of a Dublin family. Little more has been revealed about it except that the hero is a fly on the wall who watches everything pass by or, like Christy himself, the impotent gob of humanity whom everyone forgot was there.

Christy was born into a working-class Dublin family, one of 22 children. He was such an obviously hopeless case that in most instances he would have been shut away in an institution for life. In fact, doctors told his mother that he would never be any more than a blabbering lump and that he should be put away. But she was a brave woman and felt, somehow, that there must be something inside her son.

Her faith and patience was rewarded. One day when Christy was about five he suddenly stuck out his left foot and took a stick of chalk from his sister. It was the first time in his life that he had done anything. It took years but Mrs. Brown taught Christy the alphabet, getting him to practice in chalk on the floor with his left foot. With the help of an outstanding doctor, Christy eventually learned to read. He also learned to paint with his foot and is considered quite a good painter. He sells about a dozen paintings each year to a disabled artists' association which uses them for charity Christmas cards and the like.

Christy first got into print 16 years ago with a slim and apparently mawkish autobiography called My Left Foot. Today Christy curses and spits when the first book is mentioned. It was a saccharine effort, the type of thing grateful cripples are expected to write. The new book, Down All the Days, is the sort of work he wants to do now.

Christy's typewriter is his link with the world. It has given him a way of keeping up with his thoughts. Through his writing Christy can live the life his physical condition denies him. In his room he types incessantly and has amassed piles of stories, plays, and poems. He is also a superb letter writer and a move is underway to collect and publish his letters. Here is part of one of his letters which he wrote to his pen-pal Margaret Davies:

Dear Margaret:

So the bold Sol Stein is no egg-head. I'm always wary of intellectual publishers. They offer you patronage instead of hard cash and swear by high heaven to make you famous by the time you've spent your first decade in eternity. I'd like the fruits of my labor here and now. Mister, if it's all right by you while me ole genes and hormones and chromosomes are still healthy and active enough to enjoy themselves. I bequeath my fame to posterity and good riddance to it. I never saw a corpse yet that could sit up and drink a pint of stout however famous he might have been and I like my creature comforts while I'm still a mortal creature. Give us this day our daily

bread and I don't mean the kind you slap butter on. So here's to shrewd Sol Stein and his ilk and may the hair on his chest increase and multiply as long as he looks after my temporal welfare and starts the money rolling in.

Being poor or even semi-poor is such a drag. It's positively degrading and destructive to one of my extreme fastidiousness and sensitivity. I was born to be rich and Rabelasian and to wallow in mistresses and Napoleon brandy and die tragically young in a villa by a lake in Geneva. I was not born to spend my days on cabbage and potatoes and to perish of TB or pneumonia in a damp smelly peeling little dungeon in the concrete wilds of south-west Kimmage with not even a dog, never mind a mistress, to my name.

No, bejesus, I wasn't and if I don't have all I wish myself to have by my fourth decade I'll wrap up this mortal coil once and for all — if not by a bare bodkin then via the ole gas fire and a shilling in the meter. Once you get used to the idea, dying is not bad, but it's so much more acceptable if you've lived a little beforehand. And there are so many lovely luscious women around just waiting to be ... befriended?

I'm glad you're happy about my book. Now that the great euphoria has receded and I return once more to cold reality I am scared as hell about it. . . As of now everyone is saying, well done, how marvellous, bravo, how thrilling, what a clever bloke you are, and thumping me on the back till I'm black and blue, but will they want to know me when the book comes out and they read the bloody thing? They very well might not. They'll probably call me Judas Iscariot and a lot less biblical names for painting such a lurid picture that it's my world too and that I'm in it too, just as lurid and obnoxious and dirty-minded and animalian as any of their other people in it. At the very least I bet there'll be a lot of red faces and uncomfortable silences upon the emergence of my little opus. . ."

Since Christy's mother had died and the doctor who helped him so greatly has gone to practice in Nigeria, Christy has taken to the bottle. But surely he can't be blamed. Being a hopeless cripple, totally dependent on the outside, and inwardly a man with a stunning mind, there can be little refuge in life aside from the bottle. Like the nightmarish bug-man, Gregor Samsa, in Kafka's Metamorphosis, he has a shattering exterior, he needs to be fed and dragged about, and inside is the keenly aware, creative genius.

Christy has warned the world that "I haven't started writing anything yet." Meanwhile we have to wait for the fall and Down All the Days.

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## Rock album reflects religion

"And the ghosts of a thousand suns came shining through the trees; And relieved my soul of all the fears my fathers of the fore had placed there before...I'm not afraid anymore.."

Arising from the depths of the popular West Coast music scene, the trio 'Resurrection' have put forth an album which not only reflects the hard rock core of their particular area, but also reflects the recently revitalized trend towards oriental religious cults which are now flourishing in California.

The medieval chorus-like chant of "God is back in town"; "have you heard the word" establishes Resurrection as being able to create a haunting musical sacrilege breaking into cuts with a similar theme but with rock foundations and distinct blues appendages. The album Aum (Fillmore F 30002) is fairly coherent but suffers the occasional inconsistency with regard to the vocal material. The track Only I Know with its high pitched lyrics and light instrumental accompaniment is the only song that really seems out of place, however.

Overall Rating: C plus —S.G.

On record (The Golden Earing, Polydor 543-091) they display a light rock sound that has obvious indications of being directly influenced by many American and British pop musicians from Dylan to the Beatles. A few cuts, Just a Little Bit of Peace in My Heart and Remember My Friend in particular, resemble the vocal style and orchestrated arrangement of the Bee Gees. The rest of the album, while by no means ever displeasing or boring, retains the air that the listener has heard the songs "somewhere before."

The quality of the production of the album adds to the flavour of the music as the necessary string or brass backing merges with the rock sounds in a manner that results in the creation of particular emotional rises and declines.

Thus the only flaw lies not in the quality of the presentation of the group's material or the production devices, but is rather a matter of a lack of originality, a barrier that can be overcome as Golden Earrings matures and takes a definite direction.

Overall Rating: C —S.G.

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Golden Earrings  
lacks originality

Hailing from Holland, their native habitat, Golden Earrings are not strangers to Toronto. They have in the past, frequented the late Rockpile while a more recent visit to our fair city caught them at the Hawk's Nest.