

"Further."  
—Neil Cassady—

## Bird's words



### Elliott Lefko

On the inside sleeve of Tony Bird's second album, *Bird of Paradise*, is a picture of a blood-orange sunset looming over a horizon of trees and brush. The fiery image is pervasively savage. On the top is written:  
*With my mind so tormented in  
her province I wandered  
While beauty and pain mocked  
my stride  
For to feel so much freedom  
where no freedom exists  
Was too much in the Cape of  
flowers.*

Like an x-ray, the picture and lyrics illuminate the soul of the man's creativity and inspiration. Just 33 years old, Bird was born and raised in the country of Malawi in Southeast Africa. He attended boarding schools in Rhodesia and went to Britain to complete his higher education. After studying with the Scottish Forestry Commission, doing various musical gigs in London, and spending several years on a geophysical survey ship circling Africa, Bird returned to his home. Sparked by a new perspective on the plight of South Africa, he devoted much of his writing to the continent's antithetical natural beauty and political dissonance.

Bird's music is a potent brew of

folk rhythms sweetened with gorgeous melodies, which underline the vivid imagery of his lyrics. Most of the images naturally are drawn from Africa. *The dawning sun is shining on the Outeniqua hills*

*In the morning air they seem so  
near I can almost touch their tips  
The valleys twist are filled with  
mist in a sea of pinkened sun  
and a bokmakerie calls at hand in  
a rippled scale of song.*

This past summer, Bird played the Mariposa Folk Festival on the Toronto Islands. His hypnotically calm presence was radiant, hooking audiences unfamiliar with his work. "Mariposa was a great festival," says Bird. "I enjoyed the intimacy that you get. The audiences are open. It's a very healthy thing playing for them. It's a music festival. There's all kinds of music here and it's all relative."

Throughout the body of Bird's work are songs about racial tension and the ugly tragedy that marks Africa. It is in such a role that his story-telling ability begins to flow. A recent example is his song "Black Brother" about civil war in Zimbabwe. I asked him if he was angry because blacks were killing blacks, or because they were killing at all? He burns on recollection. "The

killing of any kind is unfortunate. The colour doesn't matter."

*Oh mind you ain't-a-wanderin'  
in somebody's bad dream  
If you're not part of the answer  
Well you're part of the scheme.*

"In South Africa you have people in the Army who are not fully aware of what they're defending, what they're fighting for. It's a very hypocritical situation."

At this point, Bird has recorded two albums. The first, simply *Tony Bird*, was recorded in England in 1975. It's only available on import now. Interestingly, the producer was a man named Tim Wilson, now dead, who also produced the earliest efforts of Bob Dylan.

More recently, last year's *Tony Bird of Paradise* was a critical success, but it didn't receive any airplay and is now deleted. Although Bird has had problems selling albums, Columbia Records is not anxious to dump him. A top-level Columbia executive discreetly took in Mariposa, keeping an eye on their investment. Columbia figures Bird's critical success augers good things ahead.

Bird doesn't seem acutely concerned over the situation. He's already begun work on a third album. "I have two more albums worth of songs ready. I like to have plenty on reserve. I don't like this pressurized thing of having to write for an album."

The future for Bird lies in playing his own material. He doesn't intend on singing other people's songs. He justifies his position in a song called "How Much More Do You Want?"  
*And you may think that I'm a  
failure*

*That I never made the grade  
But I got to think about askin'  
"Where are we goin' anyway?"  
Yes I just listened to my body  
I faced myself as I cried.  
It said "You gotta understand  
You'll never be content  
If you can't be satisfied."*

Tony Bird plays the El Mocambo Feb. 6 and 7.

## Keating reading

### Michael Monastyrsky

Canadian poet Diane Keating appeared at Winter's College on Jan. 16 and gave a reading of her works before a small audience consisting mostly of faculty.

She began with poems from her 1978 publication *In Dark Places*, an appropriate title considering the sombre tone of the writing. This atmosphere is surprising as most of her poems are set in the safety of the home. Keating seems to be asking, just how safe is the home?

To paraphrase a line from the title poem: armies may move, men commit suicide, but these are small things compared to the thoughts of the mind. These thoughts are expressed in nightmare images such as the "minotaur who waits in the core of your brain" or "black-winged creatures."

It was often difficult to know what the images specifically represented, but this seemed to be done purposefully. In introducing "Ash Wednesday", which deals with the determinations to leave an "ashen hole," Keating said that writing helped her deal with the problems of this

place, but that she was not sure she had risen out of it. Similarly, her poems confront the emotions caused by certain ideas without necessarily identifying the ideas.

Keating's delivery helped

transfer these emotions to her audience, who responded with spontaneous applause. She concluded with "One Godly Day", which described the creative process, a process she has mastered well.

## Rat chat



### Dr. Rat

Give 'em back! Three Philippine gongs disappeared from Room 011 Winters recently. They are irreplaceable. Anyone with any clues as to the gong's whereabouts, please contact Professors Steve Otto or David Lindov of the Music Dept. at 3654. Replies confidential. Remember—it could happen to you, or you, or you...

### Dr. Ratafarian

Why haven't you bought your tickets yet? Leroy Sibles is coming to Toronto this Saturday night for a special concert and there are still plenty of tickets left. Formerly of the Heptones, Sibles' cool spirit represents the best of reggae. Doors open at 8 pm, special guests Johnny and the G-rays. Tickets \$6.60 in advance (at Bass) and \$7.50 at the door. 550 St. Clair Ave. W. at Vaughn. Reggae got Soul non.



## Schlock Tock with Gary Cohen

My fond addiction to Schlock began rather early in life and has always been something of a thorn in my butt. There was a discomfiting, red-faced stigma attached to my obsession which elicited the same response from people as ordering the wrong wine for dinner, wearing socks on the beach or farting in public. It just isn't done.

It wasn't until 1966, with the release of Woody Allen's *What's Up, Tiger Lily?* that my anxieties receded. Allen's farce hit the Schlock right on the head. Schlock was in vogue and my fragile self-confidence remained intact. The stigma had been lifted.

In *Tiger Lily* Allen takes a Japanese B-adventure flick and dubs in his own ludicrous dialogue to create an outlandishly convoluted plot about the frantic search for the world's most mouth-watering egg salad recipe.

In a deft stroke Allen unleashed the comic implications of the genre. It had been tried before, most notably by Roger Corman, first in *A Bucket of Blood* (1959) and again in *The Raven* (1963). But the chic, sophisticated Allen had the power to sway the aficionados, unlike Corman who belonged to the genre and was perceived as something of a leper.

In his excellent book, *The American Cinema, Village Voice* film critic Andrew Sarris comments on Delmer Daves, much of whose work (*Susan Slade, Parrish, Youngblood Hawke, A Summer Place*) fits solidly into the Schlock or Camp category. Sarris writes, "Delmer Daves is the property of those who can enjoy stylistic conviction in an intellectual vacuum. The movies of Delmer Daves are fun of a very special kind. Call it Camp or call it Corn."

Though many Schlock films lack even the stylistic conviction attributed to the work of Daves, the point that Sarris makes is valid when looking at the genre. The Schlock film is not a bad film per se. Whatever the film's flaws, its place in the fraternity hinges on its ability to create comic possibilities.

Good films absorb the audience, while Schlock alienates through its anachronistic and outlandish tendencies. The viewer reinvests himself in the film at a new level—that of the ridiculous, the absurd, the exaggerated—the level of comedy.

It is from this perspective that Schlock allows film-goers to participate in a cinematic experience that is unique to the genre, as any *Rocky Horror* fan can attest. The audience helps to reshape the film and it is out of this milieu that the "fun of a very special kind" is created.

What follows is a brief beginner's guide to Schlock, which hopefully captures the spirit of the genre. If you get the chance, turn on the tube, relax, and enjoy...

### The Brain That Wouldn't Die (1963, Dir. Jason Evers)

There is an old adage that maintains that the lawyer who defends himself has a fool for a client. With some modifications this axiom can be applied to Jason Evers' twin disaster as director and star of this hysterically preposterous flick about a 'gifted' doctor whose fiancée (Virginia Leith) loses her head in a car crash—literally. But this young surgeon never says die. He keeps the head alive and then plots to find a new body. Evers' performance is catatonic throughout, while Leith gives good head.

### Hot Rods to Hell (1967, Dir. John Brahm)

Young punks terrorize a middle-class family (Dana Andrews, Jeanne Craine, Mimi Farmer) on a peaceful Sunday outing. The malcontents so disrupt the status quo that eventually the audience and the heroes feel justified and relieved when daddy butchers the unruly hooligans. If you find anything serious about this film, you probably think that the Mod Squad had 'social significance.'

### They Saved Hitler's Brain (1965)

They really shouldn't have bothered. Herr Adolph reappears—from the neck up—a little shorter, but full of fascist vim and vigour. And guess what? You bet—he wants world control, the little tyrant. It's hard to believe, but the title of this clinker could very well be its most redeeming feature. If they had dropped this bomb on the Fuehrer it probably would have brought him to his knees a lot quicker than the Allies did. Too bad it wasn't released in 1940.

### My Blood Runs Cold (1965, Dir. William Conrad)

This one stars Troy Donahue who, for me, is the consummate schlock hero. Troy looks like a California beach on a Sunday afternoon; young, idealistic, disarmingly naive, bronzed and handsome, with panty-watering, sea-blue eyes and sand pebble hair. Oh yes, and he has talent. Troy, miscast as a homicidal maniac in this anemic thriller, which probably only succeeded in scaring the hell out of its distributor, comes through by delivering his typical one-dimensional characterization. Joey Heatherton is his luscious, quivering victim. You can presently see her in Serta commercials—in bed, where she probably does her best work.

### Faster, Pussycat! Kill! Kill!

Director: Russ Meyer  
1966

