

# Gossage tells all

**Close to the Charisma: My Years Between the Press and Pierre Elliott Trudeau**  
 By Patrick Gossage  
 McClelland and Stewart  
 review by Juanita Spears

Pierre Elliott Trudeau is an enigma. For almost twenty years the press dogged him in the hopes that they would catch a glimpse of the real Pierre Trudeau. However, this extremely private man successfully kept the door to 24 Sussex Drive hermetically sealed, separating his public life from his private one.

Patrick Gossage's *Close to the Charisma* chips away at that seal. Based largely on the diaries he kept during his five and a half years as Press Secretary to Trudeau, the book is one vivid anecdote after another. It recalls important, as well as comic events during the Trudeau era and gives insight to the love/hate relationship that exists between political power and the media. This is not a history book. More so, it is a recount of a young man who goes into a job over his head, his misadventures, and accomplishments as he grows with the job.

It is obvious that Gossage was totally awe-struck when he first arrived at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). By the end of the book much of the awe has rubbed off (but not totally) and has been replaced with an intense loyalty and respect for his former 'boss'.

Gossage arrived at the PMO in 1976 with little journalism experience and no political experience. Therefore, his observations are touched with a certain naivete not yet toughened by the political rat-race.

However, for those who are interested in politics it gives interesting insights into the day to day inner workings of the PMO and the political system.

Because these anecdotes were drawn from his diaries, Gossage warns in the preface that people were described as they were perceived in the heat of the moment, sometimes quite uncharitably.

However, if you're looking for 'dirty details' you'll be disappointed. Even though Gossage isn't exactly complimentary in some of his recollections at times, he is never malicious, and comes across in some ways as an innocent ingenu.

The book is divided into two sections. Part one covers the years from 1976 to the electoral defeat in 1979. The second part recounts the events from Trudeau's time as the Official Opposition leader into the early days of his permanent retirement.

Although part one gives the more candid observations, the flow is seemingly constricted by the date by date entry

format.

It is obvious, even without the sectioning of the book, where the recorded diaries leave off and Gossage's recollections take over. The second half of the book flows smoother and reminds you less that you're an outsider eavesdropping on private thoughts.

The overall tone of the book is conversational and is very easy to read. One doesn't need to be a political science major to follow the events he records. He quite often footnotes background material to make his points clearer. However, at times names and initial short-forms seem to appear out of nowhere leaving the reader flipping back pages to see if they had missed something.

Gossage is not a threat to Pulitzer Prize hopefuls, but his personal enthusiasm comes across the pages in his vivid descriptions of the many famous people and events on Parliament Hill. *Close to the Charisma* offers much insight into the personality of the man behind the rose, his work habits, his sense of family, his personal disappointments, and his passionate visions for Canada.



Patrick Gossage gives insights to the 'man behind the rose'.

photo Geoff Haynes

## Shriekback fans abandon ship

**Big Night Music Shriekback**

review by Dragos Ruiu

Shriekback is back. Shriek.

Their new album *Big Night Music* was released at the end of October. This was a time for the world to rejoice and faithful Shriekback fans to mourn.

Uh Huh, fellow fans we have been discarded.

On the positive side of all this, is the fact that this is the very first Shriekback album that will have mass appeal. The normal folks out there will like it.

First, the history:

Shriekback have five albums, now. (*The Infinite, Jam Science, Care, Oil and Gold*, and the new one) Nobody seemed to actually know much about the band until this latest tour. (They are currently playing in T.O.)

Shriekback fans are an obsessive lot; they would scour record stores in the hopes of finding something by, or about this mystery band. This obsession was born of the music; a slow, deep dark and heavy mix of rhythm and bass.

Their music is (or was) about dark, evil things; things that live in the night and in

your worst nightmares. Shriekback were unique. Their brand of music was in a vein of its own. Uncopied.

DJ's (the alternative variety) loved to call these guys *techno rhythm*. Nobody actually knew where these guys were from or how many albums they had. It was a mysterious band that played mysterious music.

On their credits one would find such exotic devices as Linn Drum machines, Fairchild Light instruments, and the whole gamut of digital sequencing and production equipment, way before they became the trendy thing in music. The ignorant would call their music repetitive and too heavy. The fans knew that out there, the dark represented by their songs really existed, and laughed at the ignorant.

Now, it isn't clear who is laughing. The new credits are missing one Carl Marsh, lead singer for about half the old songs, and Linn and Fairlight programmer. What Shriekback has added is a horn section, backup singers, piano players and a veritable plethora of others called the "Big Live Band". (gak!) More importantly there is a poetic little notice that says "Big Night Music is entirely free of drum machines, sequencers, Fairlight Page R's — digital

heartbeats of every kind." etc . . .

ARghhh! They ripped out their own heart. Their new music goes from darkness to dawn. It's true, every once in a while you get a brief glimpse of the old evil, like on the tracks "The Reptiles And I" and the brutally excellent "Sticky Jazz" but the menace is just not there.

They have switched to atmospheric, mood music (Blechh). But more importantly, their music is happy now. It is choral and melodic. It can probably be performed live. It is simpler. The inhuman rhythms are just not there. There is no bite to it. Mellow! Better, by some people's estimation! (non-fans)

K-Lite might even play it. The radio stations out there should re-examine Shriekback. They can play this stuff now. One friend even asked me if the track "Pretty Little Things" was Prince (double GAK!) singing.

Shriekback . . . PRINCE! I think I will cry. Record "Sticky Jazz" on those old tapes, then sit and be truly depressed.

Treasure those old records fans, that's all we'll ever get. Sigh . . .

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