

# ENTERTAINMENT

Profiles: Anarchistic Aislin

## Cartoonist shoots darts at smug majority views

By AGNES KRUCHIO

He lit a cigarette, his umpteenth one that day, and, looking out over the Toronto skyline said with a shudder, "I've got to get out of here."

Aislin, the editorial cartoonist of the Montreal Gazette, and, among many other things, a fellow of Bethune College at York, dislikes the limelight that was only too profusely showered on him that day. His film and brainchild, The Hecklers, was about to be released to the CBC brass and the public, and he was in Toronto for a whirlwind of interviews, receptions and screenings.



Most favourite subject

Spotlights don't sit to well with Aislin, as indeed they don't sit well with any cartoonist. "You have to take the perspective of the little guy," says Aislin, "and what the events of the day may mean to him; otherwise you become a sort of elitist jokester, with in-jokes that only the well-informed elect can understand; I've made that mistake once."

Indeed, even the name he uses (properly pronounced Ah-Shlinn) is not his own, but that of his seven year old daughter. "It's something to hide behind," he laughs, caught. His real name is Terry Mosher. A brief experiment using his real name ended quickly when the letters in response to some cartoon or other came addressed to his real name, and made him "feel naked and exposed."

He is a gentle, softspoken man with an impish smile, who is "forever giving things away", and who has an irreverence for anything established. He reserves his toughness for the politicians he caricatures. His insights are ruthless, and he has no pity on the overdog. Some have called him the best political cartoonist in Canada today.

IT'S JUST A QUESTION OF TIME...



His conversation is sprinkled with observations about the state of the world that would leave anyone else with bouts of depression; he resolves them with a laugh.

"That's why we all smoke or drink," he says, echoing one of the cartoonists in Hecklers. "We know that we are preying on the pain of the world. If there were no wars or conflicts, if this was a perfect world, we'd be out of a job."

"Watergate was great," he says, "because, for a cartoonist it was a feast." In a perverse professional sort of way, he was also sad to see Nixon go. And besides, he says, "What do you do with a Ford? A Ford, I ask you?" Such a non-descript, bland face.

It takes quite a while to get a new politician down pat, he says, and some personalities one may never get quite right. He thinks it's an evidence of Trudeau's slippery nature that after all this time he still draws him differently every time. "He is a chameleon," he says, "very careful not to make the kind of mistakes the opposition makes every day. He is very difficult to pin down."

Stanfield? "A piece of cake." The Queen? Some have accused Mosher of being unpatriotic, even of being a traitor, when a cartoon which he considers quite innocuous was printed in the Gazette showing the Queen manipulating a ventriloquist's Prince Philip doll. (The letters were pouring for weeks after that one, says Mosher.)

"I have nothing personal against her, but that's just the problem; I can't relate to the monarchy," he says. "Very few people can."

But his all-time, most favourite subject is Jean Drapeau, and he has had plenty of experience lampooning the autocratic mayor during his two years at the Gazette, and the two years at the Montreal Star before that. "He seems like he should be in the court of some czar. He somehow does not seem to belong to this century."

When developing a caricature of someone, it's the "aging of the face that one reads," says Mosher. "It's the stress marks that give the person away." He believes that everyone over certain age is responsible for the kind of physiognomy he has.

"But cartoons don't destroy politicians," he says. It's only what he himself says and does that can do that. He does not believe that



Cartoonist Aislin is flanked by the most often caricatured politician in Canadian history John Diefenbaker, and Ian McLaren, producer of The Hecklers.

cartoonists have any real power. They are no more than what the little of his film suggests; hecklers, who may or may not call attention to the inequalities of the world. He doesn't want to meet and get to know a politician, nonetheless, for "what happens if you like him?" he posits.

Born in Ottawa in 1942, he is Toronto bred, is married to a French Canadian, and has two daughters, who, he says, "are great little people". He got his art training at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Quebec City, but didn't really learn to draw, he says, until he started travelling up and down the length of the North American continent, drawing for his meals.

It was then, he says, that

caricaturing first occurred to him; drawing exaggerated pictures of his subjects amused him. He started drawing dandruff on all his subjects, which today has become his trademark: big or small, they have dandruff all.

"It helps to bring the great down to a human level," he says.

His credits are numerous: he was art director of Take One Magazine, and is one of the founding and associate editors of Last Post. His work appears everywhere: in Punch, the New York Times, Harper's, Macleans, Time magazines, and he has just completed a stint drawing an insert on gay hockey for National Lampoon. "The cheques are appreciated," says Mosher.

He only prepares one cartoon and one only, for the perusal of his editors. "They then can take it or leave it," he says. His cartoons appear on alternate days, and occasionally he gets to take a sketching trip, like the one to the USSR during the '72 hockey series. Over the years, he feels he has been treated pretty fairly by the Gazette, who have printed many cartoons no other newspaper in Canada would have dared to print, he thinks.

Aislin will be here next Wednesday when his film The Hecklers will be especially screened by the NFB for the York community in CLH A at 4 p.m. This event, courtesy of Excalibur and CYSF, will be free.

## Giving social commentators a home, gallery houses cartoons, comic strips

By SHELLEY RABINOVICH

Memorabilia has become a big business in Toronto lately, and the latest shop to cater to the oddity buff is Ted Martin's Cartoon Gallery and Illustrators' Salon. The gallery, located at 221 Avenue Rd. (near Davenport), specializes in editorial and printed artwork from across Canada. Included in the featured artists are Donato (Toronto Sun), Peter Swan (Canadian Magazine), Tony Jenkins (Globe and Mail) and Pillsworth (Star).

"It's all published material," says owner Martin. "We had to have some sort of loose guideline like that to discourage would-be cartoonists from coming in and saying 'would you mind putting this on the walls'."

The gallery is for the political and satirical cartoonist rather than being a showcase for the unpublished or second-rate artist. "I would never want to be thought of as a squelcher of ambitions, but there really is a lot of them (amateurs), so we wanted to stick to the pros."

The gallery is unique in that it tends to stick to the 'commercial' artist rather than being another "artsy" gallery. "There's no definite cutoff point from where commercial art leaves off and serious art begins. In a lot of cases there's more time, thought, patience, and sweat that has gone into a piece of work commissioned for commercial application."

Martin maintains that good editorial cartoonists can help

create a national identity if handled well. "Editorial cartoonists are social commentators. For instance, if Sid Barron lived and worked in England he'd be a household word. It's things like particular traits of a people that good cartoonists catch in their work." Barron, who lives in the West Coast, worked for years with the Toronto Star, and was best known for his 'in' jokes and typically-suburban flavour.

The gallery plans to eventually branch off into comic strip and book art, as well as animated cells from movies. Eaton's, in an exhibition recently, sold single cells from the Disney movie Winnie the Pooh for \$125 each. Said Martin, "These cells were sandwiched between two pieces of glass, nicely framed, and the clincher was a little gold seal inside which read, 'This is an authenticated piece of Walt Disney Art.'" Martin's hope is to negotiate a deal of some sort with Hanna-Barbera studios for the right to sell early Flinstone cells.

"Basically what this is all about is history, especially the editorial cartoons," affirms Martin. "We had lots of Watergate material, but that's all been sold. I should imagine the kids of tomorrow will get a kick out of seeing the parodies of Watergate."

"The best movie on political cartoonists that comes to my mind is the National Film Board's Hecklers," continued Martin. "There must be a good dozen artists mentioned, but they really

have enough material to do a 'Sons of the Hecklers' if they wanted to. Political cartoons were especially popular around the turn of the century."

"But who buys political cartoons, you ask? "Well, most of the stars at Queen's Park have had cartoons bought that have dealt with their lives. Or occasionally we will have, say, a Donato aficionado come in to buy a particular piece. When these pieces are bought, they're bought by people who know what they're buying."

Both the styles and the costs are tailored for anyone's budget, and there are no set prices. Martin's gallery features everyone from Sid Barron and his 'social comments' to Jeff and Carol Wakefield, creators of the Bubblegummers. (Carol is the artist who created the pencil illustration seen in the subways for Grey Coach lines.)

For the person who has everything, the gallery can have an artist commissioned to do anything from an offbeat Christmas Card to a full-scale mural. "It's a sort of public service of ours," said Martin.

Ted Martin himself is a well-known cartoonist and illustrator, featured in the Toronto Sun, Montreal Gazette, Windsor Star, and other papers across Canada.

His gallery is open Monday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., Thursdays and Fridays until 8 p.m.