

Lyrics tell the real story

Music is part of the struggle — "people" singers

By TOM (BLUE) SIMON

"in the struggle that we face, we know that no one on their own can be free. for those of us that are stepped upon, to walk tall — we need the strength of each other."

This is a verse from a song performed by a band called Horn, part of a cultural/political symposium held Feb. 18 at the University of Toronto. Entitled Art, Culture and Politics it presented both Canadian and American performers and "movement people".

Barbara Dane, a "peoples' singer", talked about performers' responsibility to integrate themselves with the community they are entertaining. She pointed out that by definition political performers care for people but that it becomes harder to communicate with audiences in a global community.

Dane has travelled and sung all over the world including recent tours in China and Vietnam. She talked about the difficulties of breaking through bourgeois culture conditioning — 'hype' — in both her audience and herself; in the 50's she was a professional blues singer.

There was no hype that day. After talking about stripping away technology, Dane sang an old blues song without benefit of guitar or

mike. With the 200 people in the room clapping, the atmosphere more closely resembled Dane's living room than the sterile lecture hall.

She explains concepts of peoples' struggle and Marxist dialectics by singing real songs about peoples' lives. From old black blues to the Mexican student movement and the Greek resistance, it was clear she was expressing gut feelings. When Barbara Dane said she wanted to die wrapped in a red flag with her gun buried beside her — you knew she was serious.

After the last song Dane summed up her ideas of the task of the global village. "Everybody's got the same goddamn imperialism to knock down." The applause showed that the people present agreed.

"Art under capitalism has become a commodity business", Irwin Silber began. He is the long standing editor of The Guardian, an independent radical newspaper in New York. He said to demystify art is to demystify capitalism and explained that art was ideology and therefore the dominant art reflected the dominant class. Art in society is used to reinforce and perpetuate the ruling class. On the other hand revolutionary art should be designed to bring a new class to power — new ideas to the fore.

Silber felt that the dominant art

form in the U.S. today is the development of modern jingoism. He gave John Wayne's Green Berets as an example. The degeneration of authority and the fear of it is shown by the heap of ritual that surrounds it. Silber said he counted 59 marching bands at Nixon's inaugural.

He talked about the counter culture as an oppositional kind of art that has been co-opted by society. It ridicules ritual and ruling class symbolism and "sews the flag to its ass". The problem is "it creates the illusion that some kind of social change is taking place". Describing counter culture as "a new effort of a dying culture", Silber said it diverts political struggle while giving emotional release.

But he still felt there is a genuine counter culture which is the expression of an emergent revolutionary class. He said that revolutionary art should pose alternatives not just expose the contradictions in society. Artists should participate in the working class struggle and at the same time develop their craft. They should ask themselves the question of art for whom.

David de Launey, one of the members of the band Horn, said he did see a positive function for technology. Horn is a Toronto based politically oriented band that has played at many benefits and sets up at picket lines as well as gigging in downtown bars.

He talked about the difficulties of a radical band trying to survive in the music business where the ruling class owns the record companies, distribution agencies, radio stations and the bars. Launey saw lyrics as propaganda whether for one side or the other. He felt that musicians have to take part in the struggle and that their music should reflect their involvement.

Horn's music does just that. Their opening song was extremely moving and reflected their philosophy. It talked about people wanting to love one another and the need to overcome their fears and joining together in struggle. "Who are your lovers when you're on the peoples' side."

Horn talks a lot about the need for unity instead of individualism, and they do it in an exciting moving way. Their music is very diverse — sometimes smooth ballads, then straight rock and roll and often instrumentals that break up all preconceived patterns of rock bands.



Horn, a Toronto based band, faces the problem of all alternate groups trying to put radical politics into its works. Record companies and promoters are only profit-motivated, says the group. Their new album will be released in two weeks. above page 14

Talking at a later date Horn member Bruce Barron said "We don't try to say let's make revolution now, but we try to mirror reality." The record companies are only interested in saleable records, there often is no point listening to the lyrics."

Their first album, On the peoples Side, will be released on special Records in a couple of weeks. The album leaves no doubt as to which side Horn is on.

Rick Salutin began by saying "We are culturally programmed to not take ourselves seriously." Salutin is the director responsible for last year's Toronto Workshop Production of Fanshen and just recently 1837. He said we suffered from "programmed repression" and in 1837 the problem was to convince

Toronto audiences that they do have a history of working class struggle. Salutin was mainly concerned with the American domination of Canada saying their strategy is "to keep the natives from getting restless." In rehearsing 1837 he was forced to give Canadian actors lessons in expressing anger, he said.

In the discussion period Salutin was accused by a woman in the audience of "down-grading and ignoring Canadian revolutionary history and culture". Silber felt there was a trap in saying all nationalism was progressive. People from the audience talked about the necessity of understanding Canadian imperialism. The discussion ran two hours overtime — showing that people enjoyed this combination of art and politics.

If you can't
smoke it, drink it, spend it or love it
...forget it.

PAYDAY

For Maury Dann Super-Star every day is "PAYDAY"

STARTS FRIDAY! **UPTOWN 1**
YONGE AT BLOOR • 922-3113

SHAWN PHILLIPS



Your Choice... Pick One!

Discover SHAWN PHILLIPS on A & M Records & Tapes



Whichever one you choose — you too will be a SHAWN PHILLIPS fan

AGYU

ART GALLERY OF YORK UNIVERSITY

Ross N145 Mon-Fri 10-4:30 Sun 2-5

COZIC & DELAVALLE

Surfaces to be caressed
The Quebec Filter (slides)
To March 16, 1973

EURIPIDES'

the bacchae

translated by William Arrowsmith

MARCH 1,2,3,4, 8:30 p.m. STONG THEATRE

Tickets: Adults \$2.50, students \$2.00. Advance student tickets \$1.50 available in Central Square now.

presented by

