

One rock concert and a burger to go

arts
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Alok Sharma

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by Marc S.
W a r s h

Originality is the most striking feature of Dread Zeppelin. This band's concept is to combine several musical styles which are foreign to one another, creating an amusing originality out of the fusion.

The three main styles used by the band are reggae music, Led Zeppelin lyrics and Elvis Presley-styled vocals. This act is the weirdest thing to the stage since Tiny Tim.

A highly polished act, its creativity and stage show are first class, considering the small venues it plays.

The recent concert at the No-name Student Centre Club (recently named The Underground) was astonishing. I have witnessed many gigs, but nothing as weird as this.

Lead vocals are handled by the King himself, Tortelvis, a way out Elvis impersonator who from time to time breaks out of the rasta rhythms and Zeppelin lyrics into a frenzy of Elvis gibberish. He dresses like Elvis. He walks like Elvis. He even has a personal water-boy on stage, Jimmy. Tortelvis even plays a couple of drum solos.

Three guitar players and a makeshift bass player handle the strings. One axeman, dressed like a psychedelic ballet dancer, played amazing Jimmy Page guitar riffs, all done with a rasta vibe. One guitar player, wearing a Hawaiian grass skirt and bikini underwear, thrashed up and down stage, jammin' to the rhythms.

The drummer of the band, Fresh Cheeze, was a solid 4/4 player. At the back of the stage was a Rastafarian keyboard player. During such monumental drum solos as "Moby Dick," this hopping and hairy man would pound out his rhythm on bongos.

His keyboard playing was actually very important. This man was Dread Zeppelin's reggae backbone.

Most of their sets were composed of the music from the band's two albums, *Un-Led-ed* and *5,000,000*.

There is no doubt that this California-produced band is talented. They are also outrageous enough to sell records somewhere. I would call it a fad. But how far can this fad go? After seeing this act once, you wouldn't want to venture out a second time. Rastafarian-Zeppelin-Elvis fusion is okay for one or two records, but can they go for two or three more? I would say no.

During an interview with Tortelvis, I posed this very question. The reply was simple and astonishing. "We were thinking about Polka and Black Sabbath."

concert

Dread Zeppelin
The Underground
Tuesday, October 15

arts

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W. P. Kinsella deals with the idiots

by Harry Rudolfs

"I've been dealing with idiots all day," rants W. P. Kinsella, author of *The Miss Hobbema Pageant* and *Shoeless Joe*, about the shortcomings of his publisher, Harper-Collins. Kinsella is shocked to hear that his new book, *Box Socials*, is unavailable in Toronto. Then he launches into a tirade about why it's better to do readings at American universities than Canadian universities.

"Canadian universities are too cheap to pay properly. They'll pay \$200 plus transportation, whereas American universities pay \$2,000, \$3,000 or \$4,000."

He believes the Canada Council has created this inequity. As a whole, the Canada Council is a shame, he says.

"Having one set of grants for Quebec and one for the rest of Canada is ludicrous. Nine tenths of us are fighting for half the money. What kind of literature has ever come out of Quebec?" Kinsella asks.

"None worth mentioning," he answers his own question.

The subject of grants to Canadian authors seems to fire a coal of indignation within the author. "I've never received a major Canada Council grant. Hundreds of people who aren't fit to shine the keys on my typewriter have received grants." At the same time, he is willing to admit, "So have many writers who have deserved it."

Kinsella is vague about how to make the Council operate more efficiently, but is damning in his condemnation of what he calls the incestuous nature of the organization. "The Canada Council ends up being controlled by a little clique of academic drones who pass money among themselves. The people that get grants are the nitpickers who fill out the forms. Real

interview

Author W. P. Kinsella talks about his dislike of Canadian literature, his dissatisfaction with the Canada Council and his unqualified love of baseball.

writers don't have time for that."

Kinsella is equally pessimistic about the state of Canadian culture, specifically Canadian literature. When asked if there is anything characteristic about the Canadian short story, he replies, "Being depressed and angst-ridden, I suppose."

Does Canada have a distinct culture? "I hope not," Kinsella says, "and I don't think we should develop one. I consider myself a North American writer. Everything I write is for the American market — and the Japanese." (Kinsella's books sell well in Japan.)

"What a colossal waste to write for the limited market we have here [in Canada], when we have the big North American market," he continues. The author has been a staunch supporter of the Free Trade Agreement. "Trade barriers are only a hindrance to the economy. Mel Hurtig's book is full of the worst possible lies," Kinsella editorializes.

Apparently, there really is a Hobbema, Alberta, the setting for many of Kinsella's Native stories, although Kinsella admits he's never been there. He insists the characters in his stories are products of his imagination.

He feels the criticism levelled at him for appropriating the Native voice is unjustified.

"It's not an issue. It should not even be discussed. There should be absolutely no limits to writers. Anyone can write from anyone's point of view. The politically correct movement will ooze back under the rock that it oozed from."

This is consistent with Kinsella's political views. "I'm right wing on practically every-

thing except women's rights and abortion." He excoriates those American writers who did not support the Gulf War. "I was dragged to a P.E.N. meeting," he says, "and they were traitorous — anti-American — traitorous! Those kind of people are all the same. I wonder how they feel now that they know Iraq was within months of creating an atomic bomb. They probably don't care."

Kinsella's voice takes on an almost reverential tone when he talks about Iowa, where he did his graduate studies. "It's the only place I ever felt at home."



W. P. Kinsella, the angry man of Canadian literature, in his younger, wilder days.

Some of the mid-west American values the author holds so dear are reflected in his book *Shoeless Joe*. "I write love stories that are peripherally about baseball. *Shoeless Joe* is really a love story about the people and the land," he says.

At the time he wrote the novel he thought there was a void in good baseball fiction. At the same time, he had no way of knowing how the book would be received. He explains: "If it [*Shoeless Joe*] hadn't been successful, I wouldn't have written any more baseball stories."

Kinsella speaks enthusiastically about baseball. He likes the Atlanta Braves in this year's World Series — curiously, only one of two American baseball teams to bear the moniker and logo of North American Natives.

"Avery, Glavine and Smoltz are so good," he says. With those names, one can almost hear "Tinkers to Ever to Chance." "Good pitching always beats good hitting," philosophizes Kinsella.

The writer ends the interview with some advice for bush league writers: "Read, read, read, read and read and then read some more. And, if you find something that excites you, take it apart and find out what the writing did to excite you. Then put that to use."

Kinsella's new book, *Box Socials*, is a comic novel set in rural Alberta about a farm boy who almost got a tryout with the St. Louis Cardinals.

Kinsella will be reading at Harbourfront on Saturday, October 26, along with American novelist Peter Dexter and Pakistani writer Bapsi Sidwa. Harbourfront's International Festival of Authors, which runs until October 26, features writers from around the world. For more information, call 973-4760.