Reggae Rhythm

The music of reggae is emotional, and one of the top practitioners of this music is Peter Tosh who takes swipes at the power structure through his music.

By Stephanie Sheppard

Reggae is a music that entrances with a hypnotic beat and rhythms that combine the bass of R&B, the drums and percussion instruments of Africa and a scratchy guitar that is somewhat reminiscent of country/western music.

However, the music is much more than that for in a world where the most popular music talks of "shaking your bootie" or "come on baby, let's push push in the bush," reggae's lyrics speak of liberation, justice, peace and one love.

For many this is the icing on the cake; beautiful, danceable music with a relevant message.

One of reggae's foremost artists is Peter Tosh. Peter was a member of The Wailers, a well-known group that helped evolve Jamaica's music form into the well-loved reggae of today.

Bob Marley, Bunny Livingston and Peter achieved success after striving for years in the ghettos of Kingston. At the top, Bunny and Peter left to form their own agroups.

Peter says, "Each man has his own song to sing and I, man, have mine to sing." Luckily for us.

Bob Marley is well known in the U.S. because of broad promotion, tours and hit albums.

Tosh labeled a rebel among rebels has been slower in getting recognition. Still, in Jamaica, some consider Peter Tosh the favorite for his outspokenness is legendary.

At a "Peace Concert" in April 1978 Peter was on stage with Prime Minister Michael Manley and Labor Party leader Edward Seaga. Blasting away at the system Peter called both men names and blamed them for the people's oppression.

While the crowd cheered this action, needless to say, it did not endear him to the government. He

has been brutalized by police more than once.

In October 1978 he was beaten

by the police and suffered broken ribs, a broken arm and a severely split head wound. Only after local citizens stormed the police headquarters demanding his release was the brutality to end—temporarily.

Peter says he is rebelling against inadequate distribution of the earth's resources, political victimization and illegal in-



IN ACTION — Peter Tosh goes through "his thing" during a performance. He incorporates the martial arts in his act.



Peter Tosh

crimination. He is fighting for equal rights and justice for all, the awakening of black moral and the teaching of black history.

All this is evident in his songs. The lyrics are filled with demands—'I don't want no peace, I want equal rights and justice."—'I can't stand it no longer, the wicked get stronger."— and the highly spiritual belief of the Rastafarians, a religious sect in Jamaica.

While a lot of his songs are politically motivated, many are also spiritually uplifting.

On the new album "Bush Doctor" which has gone gold in several countries abroad is a song which says, "Stand firm, live clean, let your works be seen." Another says, "Do you remember Moses? Him not dead, him not dead."

This latest album is his third after leaving the Wailers. Bach has been successful, but "Bush Doctor" and recent tour has been a highly acclaimed critical success.

It is easy to understand why especially after viewing a live performance. Peter Tosh really puts on a show. Tall, lean, dark with dreadlocks falling about his shoulders he makes an impression before he even opens his mouth.

Dressed in a martial arts outfit he incorporates martial art forms into his dancing and stage performance.

He is dynamic and his deep voice full of authority as he sings his message music — sometimes preaching, sometimes pointing.

His band, Word, Sound & Power, consists of a tight group of some of reggae's best. They keep the reggae rhythm flowing smoothly while Peter and three

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-WACs Overseas

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doughnuts the Red Cross served while we were waiting to embark. Eventually the great moment arrived and we trudged up the gangplank to a ship shrouded in darkness, singing out our first names after the sergeant called the last names, and then checked us off the list.

"We were guided immediately to our staterooms (staterooms?!) without then knowing the name of the ship (it was the II de France, we learned later), what it looked like, or where we were headed. And we had no opportunity for a dramatic farewell to the States, we were ordered to remain in our rooms and go to bed.

"The next morning when we awakened, the liner had pulled off and we were at sea, with nothing around us but water, water, and more water." (The battalion arrived in Europe in February of 1945, under the command of Major Charity Adams).

"On February 12 we set foot on Scottish soil and promptly boarded a train for Birmingham, England."

The 6888th CPD, the only black WAC battalion to serve overseas in World War II, was welcomed in England by its commanding officer, then Lt. Col. Adams, who had flown to England in January to prepare for its arrival, and by Brigadier General Benjamin O. Davis, at that time the only black general in the United States Army.

"Although we arrived in Birmingham late at night, a large number of the Birmingham citizenry were on hand to observe and welcome us. One of our first acts was a march to a big open field for a parade and inspection by Brigadier General Davis.

"We were billeted in an old abandoned school house, somewhat the worse for wear. It had been quarters for soldiers before our coming."

Before the women's arrival, the central directory operated with enlisted men and civilians and reported itself "swamped by mail" and with an undelivered backlog of over three million pieces.

"The job of our battalion was to keep up the addresses of our fighting men. Under the general command of Lt. Col. Adams, executive officer Noel Campbell and the working command of Capt. Mary P. Kearney and Lt. Violet Hill, the WACs cleaned out the backlog of letters and packages we found piled up like mountains when we arrived, then keeping up with those constantly arriving."

The unit broke all records for redirecting mail. Each of the two eight-hour shifts averaged more than 65,000 pieces of mail. Long-delayed letters and packages reached battle casualties who had been moving too frequently for mail to catch up to them.

The battalion, which consisted at peak strength of 824 enlisted women and 31 officers, was stationed first at Brimingham, England, later at Rouen, France, and finally Paris, France.

"After we had been in England about three months, news came that we were to move on to France; and very early one Sunday morning, again in full packs and other regalia, we were routed to a train which took us to a Southampton port and a small ship."

"This was a short trip and the next morning when we were allowed on deck, we got our first look at LeHavre, France. It was a shock to say the least. In the water were hulls of small boats, twisted, broken and incongruous-looking remains of a bridge; rubble with the frame-work of houses. It wasn't hard to believe the news reports of the fighting that had gone on there.

"That night, after the train had pulled up and stopped a number of times we arrived at Rouen, France. Trucks were waiting and we were whisked away to our new quarters, which turned out to be one immense old building known as Caserne Tallandier and said to have once quartered Napoleon's troops, surrounded by smaller ones and an eight-foot wall with a tall iron gate.

"We found Rouen much like LeHavre. Rubble everywhere, shells of buildings, and debris. We never saw actual warfare but with what was around us, it was not too hard to imagine what it was like.

"Still Rouen had much of interest. We saw the oldest clock in

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