Top Practitioner of Reggae-mylitis

Peter Tosh has become one of the leading exponents of Reggae music since the death of Bob Marley. One of the original members of The Wailers, he is continuing to spread the word.

Peter Tosh

Turn off your radios! Be wary of anyone you don't know! There's a dread disease that's sweeping across, not only in U.S., but the entire world! It's called Reggae - mylitis, and the man responsible for its rapid spread is none other than the Jamaican musician, Peter Tosh.

Tosh began his career at the tender age of three, soon learning to use percussion instruments, the guitar, piano, and harmonica as deadly weapons.

Early in the 60s, he combined his ferocious talents with those of the equally awesome, Bob Marley, and Bunny Livingston. They continued to mesmerize Jamaican audiences until the early 70s, when news of their hypnotic effect on their listeners began to spread throughout the Caribbean and Europe.

The problem was, once you heard the music, it was too late — Reggae - mylitis was setting in! The group called themselves The Wailers and through songs such as "Catch - A - Fire," "Burnin' ", and "400 Years," they decried the plight of the masses of economically ravished Jamaicans.

Many were at the mercy of the few who controlled the wealth of the country. "Get Up Stand Up" (for your rights) co - authored by Marley and Tosh, soon became an unofficial anthem for the poor.

Although the group disbanded in 1974, they were already feared and branded as rabble - rousers by the powers that be. As members of the faith of Rastafari (a way of life — not merely a religion), a group which condones the use of marijuana and all other organic substances, they became literal sitting targets for the Jamaican police.

In 1975, Peter's home was ransacked, and he was badly beaten, all in the name of law and order. Understandably bitter, Peter wrote and recorded "Mark of the Beast," which became a best - seller despite the fact his government banned it from the island airwaves.

Peter's first solo album was a controversial ball of wax, which advocated that the government "Legalize It." He then formed an alliance with a band called Word, Sound and Power, that exists to this day.

It features the primal rhythms of Sly Dunbar, and the beat - keeping bass of Robbie Shakespeare.

Their first album was full of references to troubled Mother Africa. "Apartheid," "Africa," and the title cut "Equal Rights," which proclaimed "I don't want peace, I need equal rights and justice," are prime examples.

Peter continued to champion the rights of the common people through the inclusion of songs such as "Day the Dollar Dies," "Rumors of War," and "Buk - in - Hamm Palace."

Peter started a 52 city North American tour — July 28, in Philadelphia which ends October 12, in Miami. This is the longest and biggest tour of the U.S. and Canada in the history of reggae music.

I asked Peter how he was holding up under the pressures of such a rigorous performance schedule. He replied in a voice that was pure energy and iron will — "Well I just finished touring 26 cities in Europe, and you can imagine the amount of energies.

It was 5 weeks, 26 cities. Lots of energies, my dear! You can imagine how I'm supposed to feel — exhausted — but I don't feel that way at this point." I could feel Tosh revving up!

It was apparent he is the type to

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By Paula Brooks

Dawn Goes to a Concert

By Peggy McCoy

After major U.S. appearances, Peter Tosh inspired thousands of young enthusiastic reggae devotees who jammed into the sauna - like atmosphere of the University of Maryland's Ritchie Coliseum on a Sunday in July.

They literally hung from the rafters giving thanks and appreciation to a giant of a performer, after waiting almost two hours in line.

Warmed up by Unconquered People, a nine piece Washington, D.C. reggae group with an appeal all their own, and whose appearance was personally requested by Peter Tosh, the sellout crowd had maximized its anticipation and dramatic was the entrance of the charismatic Tosh.

Singing songs from each of his albums, Tosh gripped his audience with a gentleness as he began by singing — "Sitting in the morning sun and watching all the birds passing by. Oh, how sweet they sing, and oh, how much I wished that I could fly. And I try."

His well - controlled voice fronted the insistent reggae beat and carried his listeners on a journey teetering on the threshold of pain. He wove a recalcitrant sonic landscape brought forth from personal experience and a more universal notion of liberation from oppression.

No fantasies or dream - like state did he create, but he imparted a spiritual meaning through concrete words — "Live clean, let your work be seen. Stand firm or you gonna feed worm." **Stand Firm** is the song.

There was nothing fragile about the instrumental combination of drums, guitars, keyboard and percussion. They all wove a heavy texture, fluctuating between wild and occasional explosions and contrasting with exaggerated quietness.

When asked before the concert what his music is all about, Tosh explained: "When you deal with the kind of music and songs and words I speak and what I stand for, you are wanted but they cannot make it too obvious because they know what I am dealing with is truth and rights. Because of what I speak about I know that I am wanted and that I will always be wanted until man is free."