

SHELL SHOCKED

Lyrics to Die For

By Art Stevens

I've decided to become a songwriter. And the reason is that I can't understand a single word of rap and other forms of contemporary music. All I'm able to discern is loud drum beats, screeching acoustical guitars and screaming singing groups. My theory is that since no one can understand the lyrics of contemporary music anyway the words don't truly matter.

Instead of constantly asking what the singers are saying you simply begin to accept the fact that lyrics to a contemporary song could just as well be the recitation of the telephone directory. I can write any words I choose and no one will understand them anyway once they're played.

So here's my first song.

My heart is a breakin'

And the burger's rare

My fate's in the stars

Milwaukee's beers

"Come say what you mean

And walk where you walk

Love's just a sandwich

Embracing the roses

Think about livin'

Dyin's the man

But lip service can blend you

Tomatoes in a can.

I walked into a recording studio with my new lyrics and found someone who could pair music to my lyrics. She was all of twenty years old with stringy hair and an old guitar.

She was referred to me by my neighbor's grandchildren once they agreed to critique my lyrics. They said that she's a budding music genius looking for that one big hit to launch her career.

She worked by day as a waitress and hung around recording studios in her spare time to find the right lyrics to inspire her. I showed her my lyrics and she said that she didn't care what the words meant so long as she could put music to them. She did. The music was atonal. It sounded like an exploding washing machine – clothes and all.

I didn't care if the music didn't sound like "That Old Black Magic" so long as someone, anyone, recognized the brilliance and originality of my lyrics. I had spent countless hours probing the universe and experiencing heartbreak to come up with just the right words to usher in my golden age as a hard rock lyricist. This young lady was my ticket out of shuffleboard and ennui.

She brought in an acid rock band and ran through some arrangements. Then we were ready for a trial run. They rehearsed my song and as I expected I couldn't understand a single word they were singing. The sound was guttural and jungle like. The percussion out-sounded the singers. The decibel level was that of a Super Bowl game. My ears hurt. But when the group finished the song they gave me a series of high fives and welcomed me to the world of hard rock. They told me my lyrics were so inspiring that they would give up their jobs as plumbers and go out on tour immediately as "The Fidel Castro Five." They said that once my new song made the charts teenagers would see me as an icon.

I liked their enthusiasm and gratefully acknowledged their lack of musicianship and creativity. The young lady who wrote the music, such as it was, was jubilant. She said that she thought she had now found her way out of the diner and onto a bigger stage. She asked me to begin writing more lyrics. I obliged.

Where air mass congeals with love

Your heart delivers an eclipse

But love being what it is

Can only harm the pure.

So learn the rules of life

Be true to your hunches

The Man knows where you're at

And spices and pearls beget.