

Peter Tosh

“Are some flowers more beautiful than others? The garden is beautiful. Do I prefer brother over brother? Comparisons are part of this political world. Where there is one, there is no conflict. Where there is two or more, there is conflict. Two is the devil. Conflict begin with the devil. We count 0 to 1, then back to 0. It is a circle.” - Peter Tosh

Born Winston Hubert McIntosh, in 1944, Peter Tosh had a rough beginning in life, born to parents who were too young, and not ready for the responsibility of raising him. So, he was raised by his aunt. Outspoken from an early age, he earned the nickname Steppin' Razor from Reggae musician Joe Higgs. At the beginning of their association, Higgs was Tosh's music tutor. After forming The Wailers with Bob Marley, Bunny Livingston, Junior Braithwaite, Beverley Kelso and Cherry Smith, Higgs taught the group to work together and they enjoyed some measure of success. By 1966 however, Braithwaite, Kelso and Cherry had left the band and in 1974, the Wailers parted company so that the remaining trio could pursue individual solo careers.

Having suffered an auto accident in 1973, Tosh's personality became more irascible and outspoken than it was even in his youth. Contrary to Marley's messages of peace and unity, his stance was far more militant and out-going, decrying political hypocrisy and injustice wherever he found it. This earned him the ire of the Jamaican police on more than one occasion, but by the same token, it, along with his stance on the legalization of marijuana, earned him the adoration of the Rastafarian community. In matters of faith, even if he did not agree with Marley's particular methods and views, he embraced Rastafari along with Marley. Already a vegetarian, the Rastafari edict about not eating meat sat quite well with him.

In 1983, Tosh went into self-imposed exile in South Africa, seeking the aid and spiritual advice of local tribal figures, ostensibly to work things out in his own mind. Harkening back to his outspoken and confrontational nature, Tosh participated in the international opposition to South African apartheid by appearing at several Anti-Apartheid concerts. Here, his work gained new ground by reflecting his stance in various songs like "Apartheid", "Equal Rights", "Fight On", and "Not Gonna Give It Up".

In 1987, it seemed as though Tosh was experiencing a career breakthrough, a revival, if you will. Sadly, this was not to be. A trio of men came to his home in Jamaica, after he had returned from Africa. They demanded money that he did not have, and so one of them, becoming frustrated, shot him in the head.

Four years later, Nicholas Campbell released a documentary entitled *Steppin Razor – Red X*, based on a series of spoken-word recordings from Tosh himself. The documentary chronicled the musician's life, music and untimely demise.