

Peter Tosh 1944-87

Armed robbers shot dead Jamaica's internationally renowned reggae star Peter Tosh at his home in Kingston, police said on Saturday (Sept 12).

They said three gunmen riding motorcycles shot dead Tosh, 43, and another man identified only as "Doc" on Friday night.

Five other people at Tosh's home were wounded, including his companion Marlene Brown and a radio disc jockey known as "Free-I."

Police said the gunmen shot the seven after ordering them to lie on the floor when Tosh refused their demands for money. Tosh, who used to play with the late Bob Marley, died after being taken to hospital. (NZPA-Reuter)

I'll bet they wept in the Kingston Police Headquarters, where in 1978 they took great pleasure in breaking Tosh's arm and putting a wound needing more than a dozen stitches in his head, after busting him in the street outside a recording studio for smoking ganja.

No doubt it'll be written off as just another sorry event in the violent history of Jamaica, a country wracked by poverty and politics. The fact that Wailers drummer Carly Barrett died in the same city and in similar circumstances only a couple of months previously points out the uncomfortable and deadly reality of this little island: the gap between the haves and the have-nots.

During my brief stay in Jamaica last year, there were five fatal shootings, two of them by police in Savanna la Mar, parish of Westmorland, Tosh's birthplace. He joins a disturbingly long list of music stars who have died violently, yet for Tosh such an end seemed almost inevitable. He certainly made enemies in his life-

time, and through his music and lifestyle, openly challenged them all.

Abandoned

Winston Hubert McIntosh was abandoned by his parents as an infant, and grew up in the care of an aunt, who moved to Trench Town in 1956. Having made his first guitar out of a board, a broken tin pan and plastic strings, the lanky, boastful and angry youth began hanging out on Third Street, a haunt of many aspiring musicians. It was here that he found Bob Marley and Bunny Livingston, singing harmonies with one of JA's most influential performers, Joe Higgs. However the individual Wailers later argued their respective contributions, it

was Higgs who taught them to sing together.

Between 1963 and 1974, the Wailers recorded literally hundreds of tracks under a variety of names (in the very early days) and with a string of labels and producers, including Clement Dodd (Coxsone), Leslie Kong and Lee Perry. The raw energy, especially on the Perry sessions, has never been equalled.

The split came after the release of the Wailers' second Island LP, *Burnin'*, when it became plain that Chris Blackwell wanted Marley to be frontman. Tosh quit for that reason, while Livingston opted for a less hectic and more devout Rasta lifestyle, dividing his time between a farm and the studio.

Tosh's first LP, *Legalise It*, was released in 1976, with backing by the Wailers band. He'd signed to CBS, who were eager to capitalise on the success of Marley's watershed 1974 album *Natty Dread* and equally successful *Live LP* of 1975. *Legalise It* left no doubts about where Tosh stood. Still the most uncompromising

Walk, Don't Look Back

Jaco Pastorius 1951-87

Jaco Pastorius was possibly the most innovative electric bassist of the past two decades. On September 12, at age 35, he died in hospital after having been beaten unconscious outside a nightclub in his home town of Fort Lauderdale, Miami.



Pastorius rocketed to world attention when, in 1975, he was recruited from obscure clubland to join Weather Report. The story goes that Joe Zawinul heard a tape of his work and immediately phoned offering an audition. Such was the fretless purity of Pastorius's singing tone that Zawinul thought him an acoustic bassist.

That same year Pastorius not only recorded *Black Market* with Weather Report but provided integral support to Joni Mitchell's *Hejira* and released his own solo set. The former two albums show him pushing the bass forward into the role of lead instrument, while *Jaco Pastorius* enabled him to show off an extraordinary range of ability. In the first two tracks he moves from adapting Charlie Parker to writing for Sam & Dave.

Characteristics of Pastorius's flamboyant style soon became copied and adapted by bass guitarists the world over. Unfortunately, all too many of the acolytes lacked his accomplished musicality, (hence some cynical critics have pronounced Pastorius

as essentially a negative influence on the development of bass playing).

Certainly Pastorius worked best complementing musicians of equal strength. In Weather Report his huge ego was balanced by Zawinul's and in the six years he was with the band he virtually became co-leader, forcing Wayne Shorter into almost a secondary role. Joni Mitchell, on the other hand, deliberately used Pastorius's melodic and harmonic ideas to flesh out her skeletal arrangements. As a duo they could be astonishing.

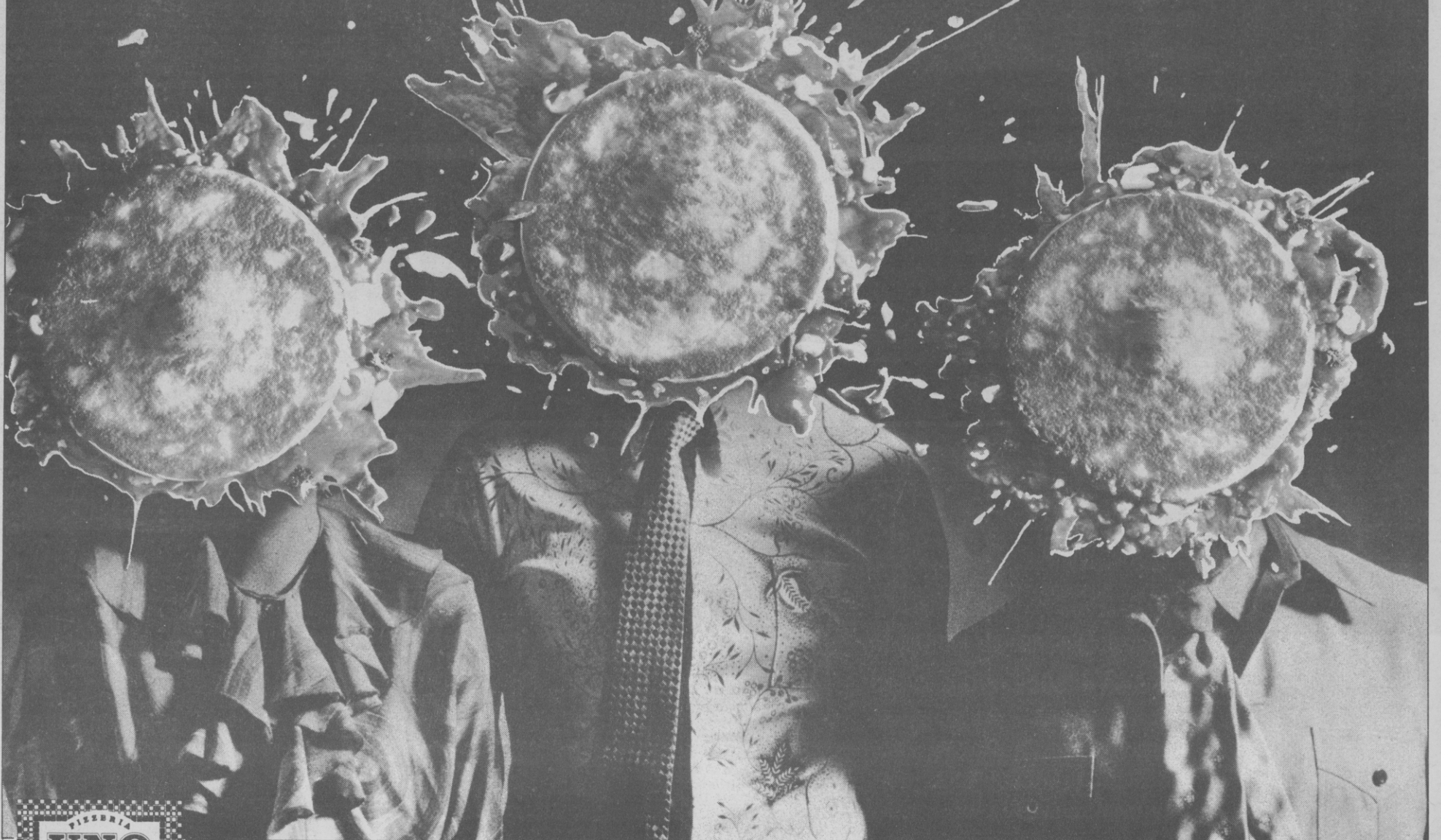
But if Pastorius was a genius on his instrument, there is evidence he could also be an obnoxious human being. When this writer saw Weather Report in Copenhagen in 1979, Pastorius took a solo that occupied nearly a quarter of the entire show, so long in fact that the other band members left the stage. One of Australia's top session bassists, himself deeply influenced by Pastorius, pronounced the man "a complete arsehole" after meeting him.

After 1982 Pastorius quite Weather Report, led a big band to Japan and then soon after began to drop from sight. Apparently he returned to Fort Lauderdale and began drinking heavily, almost giving up music entirely. Nonetheless the news of his death has been a genuine shock to those who love his music. I've been replaying his records and marvelling.

Peter Thomson

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