

SHOWCASE

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Jello Biafra shock treatment intends to educate

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Jello Biafra is glad the Challenger exploded.

The former Dead Kennedys lead singer even wrote a spoken word piece about the tragedy, titled: "Why I'm Glad the Space Shuttle Blew Up."

It isn't that Biafra takes morbid pleasure in such tragedies. His actions indicate he cares a great deal. In 1986-87, Biafra — on First Amendment grounds — fought misdemeanor charges brought against him by the Los Angeles city attorney for distributing pornographic material to minors. The charge centered around the Dead Kennedys' *Frankenchrist* LP, which includ-

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ed a poster reproduction of "Landscape #20: Where Are We Coming From," a painting by H.R. Giger (best known for his "Aliens" set design). Though acquitted in August 1987, Biafra still works diligently with the No More Censorship Defense Fund.

Biafra writes his spoken word material intentionally to shock, he said in a phone interview from San Francisco. "I think any art that isn't used as a weapon is not art at all," said Biafra.

But it's also intended to educate.

"Why I'm Glad the Space Shuttle Blew Up" is based on an article that appeared in *The Nation* magazine and was later voted one of the 10 most censored news stories of 1986, he said.

In his usual rapid-fire fashion, Biafra explained: "What happened was, the next scheduled shuttle after the Challenger was set to go up in space carrying a payload of 46 pounds of plutonium as a way of sneaking Star Wars into outer space without telling the Soviets or the group the Reagan administration fears even more than the Soviets — namely the American public and the American press."

"If that one had exploded in-

stead, there would have been enough radiation in our atmosphere to cause cancer in the entire world's population.

"The thing that scares me the most is, they apparently are planning to put the plutonium on the next scheduled space shuttle anyway."

Although he hasn't worked with the Dead Kennedys since their break up in 1986, Biafra will be presenting about an hour's worth of spoken word material Tuesday at the Roxy, 9009 Sunset Blvd., Hollywood, (213) 276-2222. Joining him on the bill are author Danny Sugarman, former Doors keyboardist Ray Manzarek, poet Michael McClure, Jane's Addiction's Perry Farrell and '60s guru Timothy Leary.

His material will include selections from his spoken word album *No More Cocoons* (on Biafra's Alternative Tentacles record company) and possibly a new piece about Lt. Col. Oliver North titled "Love American Death Squad Style." He will talk about the trial also.

Tuesday's performers will cover a variety of poetic styles. However, "I don't think it's going to be extreme ends of the spectrum," said Biafra. "For that you'd have to get a soldier of fortune poet on the bill as well, and then the audience would be at risk because they usually like to speak with their guns rather than their brains."

Biafra's philosophies contain



JELLO BIAFRA, formerly lead singer of the Dead Kennedys, will be presenting his spoken word material Tuesday night at the Roxy (9009 Sunset Blvd., Hollywood) along with Timothy Leary, Ray Manzarek and Michael McClure.

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grains of the original intentions of the '60s counterculture. "One of the things we're taught from very early on is the fact that we need to cheat on other people and that we need to possess a lot of material things in order to be happy — and that isn't really true.

"(We need to) just say 'no' to this whole society we're brought up in," he said. "People are brought up to believe that no change is worth working for unless it comes as quickly as switching the channels."

"It wasn't the '60s that failed. It was the '70s that failed the '60s because people got lazy."

And the New Age Movement is about as far from '60s sensibilities as you can get, said Biafra. "The New Age Movement is pure and simple fascism. It's a great way for people to just hide in their own cocoons and wait for some totalitarian leader to make all their decisions for them."

Biafra doesn't watch television, nor does he listen to commercial rock radio. "Bands like U2 and REM bore me to the point of tears," he said. "I would

much rather listen to something interesting, inspiring and confrontational in the sense that it stimulates the brain and inspires you to think."

Still, rock'n'roll is a viable form of expression, he said. "People like me take it very seriously because it's the music we like the most. I think rock music basically is rebellion and a lot of what the corporations feed us as rock music has none of the real spirit whatsoever."

Those people who care about honest music, however, must search it out on alternative radio stations and alternative record companies.

And according to Biafra, beauty in art doesn't cut it anymore: "The best art is the art that inspires me to think. It may not be pleasant, but it's effective."

Nowadays, art needs shock value, and Biafra intends to provide it. However, it may be awhile before he does it through the medium of rock'n'roll.

Because of the aftereffects of the censorship trial, "I haven't been able to write a song for two years," he said. "There's still so

many loose ends to be cleaned up."

Eventually he will write some songs and bring together a new band. "But people should not expect something overnight," he said.

For now, he's putting his time into his record company Alternative Tentacles as well as the No More Censorship Defense Fund (P.O. Box 11458, San Francisco, CA 94101). Occasionally, he does spoken word performances.

Concerning his material, Biafra didn't cite as influences Allen Ginsburg or Walt Whitman — two other artists who had their works censored — but rock'n'roll lyrics and magazines. He often writes about things he reads in clippings people send in to the Defense Fund.

"I think I get my inspiration from people like Rev. Vernon Cayten of Niles, Ohio. To me this is poetry in motion," said Biafra.

"What Rev. Cayten did was to declare the Easter Bunny a pagan god and burn a 5-foot rabbit effigy in the town square to prove his point."