

# Look, listen and learn with The Toll's music

By ALLISON PIKE  
Staff Writer

In this day and in this society we are bombarded daily by songs that set out to do little more than entertain for three or four minutes — songs that are hits today and forgotten tomorrow. If the "ooh, baby baby's" and the "yeah, yeah, yeah's" of modern popular music have gotten you down, check out The Toll — your cherry in the bin of rotten apples called popular music.

The Toll consists of two cousins, Brad Circone and Rick Silk, along with Brett Mayo and Greg Bartram. In their four years together, The Toll has developed a complete, professional sound. Its debut LP on Geffen Records hardly sounds like the work of novices. But what stands out most is this band's intellect. It's a band that makes you want to think. With provocative, poetic and often riveting lyrics, the songs conjure vivid images and symbols.

Lead singer Circone delves into the heart of his emotion and shouts his feelings at the top of his lungs almost Jim Morrison-style. Circone says he isn't a good poet: "I use too many symbols." Many would probably disagree. But he says his lyrics would be nothing without the complimentary music of his bandmates.

The Toll certainly has a big sound

— one that would be hard to contain in a small nightclub or bar. The musical style never bores — it makes the listener live and experience as the music does.

"We want the listener to drift away with thought," Circone said. One tool the band uses to accomplish the emotional connection with the listener is the narrative form of songwriting. There are three such songs on the debut LP titled *The Price of Progression*.

The cut "Jonathan Toledo" begins with Circone asking: "How far has the white man gone to drive the stake into the ground?" Circone leads the song into a narrative about a scene he and his cousin viewed in Santa Fe, N.M. — elderly ladies lined up against the wall of The Plaza in Santa Fe selling blankets.

If you have ever traveled to Santa Fe, most likely you have seen these women, and most likely you didn't think much about it. You might even have bought a postcard of these women. But Circone and Silk saw more. Both have Indian blood and grew up with a grandfather who instilled them with Indian tradition.

In the song, Circone says the women have their backs against the wall "because they're afraid we're gonna stick another knife in them." He paints a cynical picture of how the Indians have been treated, but the song is not one-



The Toll demonstrates an intellectual rock style on its new album, "The Price of Progression."

sided. Circone also presents the point of view of the white man.

"We wanted to express views," said Circone. "We wanted to tell a story, but not preach. We don't want to be that strident."

All of The Toll's songs are aimed at "expressing views." In "Anna-41-Box," Circone tells in a feminine point of view about a middle-age woman trying to break the "servile chains" put on by her husband. The narrative portion of the song features Circone vocally enacting a sex scene between the unwilling Anna and her husband — an act that Anna proclaims is the "crucifixion of womanhood."

"I thought it was amazing," said Silk of Circone's female viewpoint. "I couldn't believe how Brad had

gone over the edge in being a woman."

Circone says he didn't find it hard to make the adjustment. "It wasn't difficult to step into a womanly pose," said Circone. "Loving a woman, those things rub off on you."

For "Living in the Valley of Pain," Circone assumed the voice of a child to delve into religious guilt and Catholicism. Circone and Silk were raised as strict Catholics, and say this song came from interpersonal experiences. Jameson Rain is the main character, a youth who struggles for creative freedom, but is punished by the Catholic church and his parents for trying to be an individual.

"It's a miniature example of

what we went through," said Circone. "Catholic American grandparents don't want to hear songs like 'Anna.' It's a lashing out at the consequences of trying to be creative. It's individuality vs. Catholic and sexual guilt."

The other six tracks on the LP are shorter, a little lighter, sometimes even danceable. "Word of Honor" is sung with an Alarm-type enthusiasm. "Stand in Winter" is a good old rock 'n' roll song that shouldn't be too far from radio airplay. The Toll is committed, though, to avoiding producing what Circone calls "otherwise formula, homogenized songs."

"This LP is a questioning, a share in feelings. That's what rock 'n' roll should be — a coming together."

## GRAFFITI

By MATT BIVENS  
Associate Editor

Last week, Cathy McHugh made a promise she almost couldn't keep.

At the end of her column of girls' restroom ramblings she

rashly announced that, "in the interests of being fair, next week's graffiti will be devoted to men's restroom writings. I promise."

Poor, silly Cathy. At first, she looked at the chance to explore The Great Unknown of the men's room as an adventure of sorts. True, a potentially embarrassing adventure — Cathy's a girl and all — but an adventure nonetheless.

But someone pointed out that

a column about men's rooms written by a woman wouldn't be very believable. People would call up and ask if the column was true, just like they do for Police Roundup (which is true). The phone lines would be tied up for hours, Cathy's journalistic credibility would be nothing but a wistful memory, Student Congress would defund the DTH...

So here I am. Writing about what other people write about on the walls of restrooms.

In between restrooms, I came up with some really stunningly insightful things to say about graffiti and the people (I use the term loosely) who indulge in it:

■ Many people who write on restroom walls think they are really deep, leaving jewels of wisdom for the less erudite to lap up while they sit with their pants around their ankles. For example:

"Man must rise above the heavens; only then will he truly understand the world in which he lives." — Socrates.

Gee, thanks for sharing that with me. Truly, I'm a better person for that pointless snatch of Greek wit, especially since it's been taken completely out of any context that could have made it meaningful or enlightening.

■ Most people who write on the walls of toilets plagiarize shamelessly:

"I offered my honor, She honored my offer, and all night long, I was on her and off her."

Sure, it's poetic and a nice image. It's also on every restroom wall from the Lenoir Commons to the Hardee's in South Hill.

■ Most people who write on the walls of toilets cannot spell and have lousy handwriting.

I don't have any really good examples of this, but I felt it

needed to be said.

■ Of all the people who write on restroom walls, the funniest and wittiest are those who are responding to other graffiti writers.

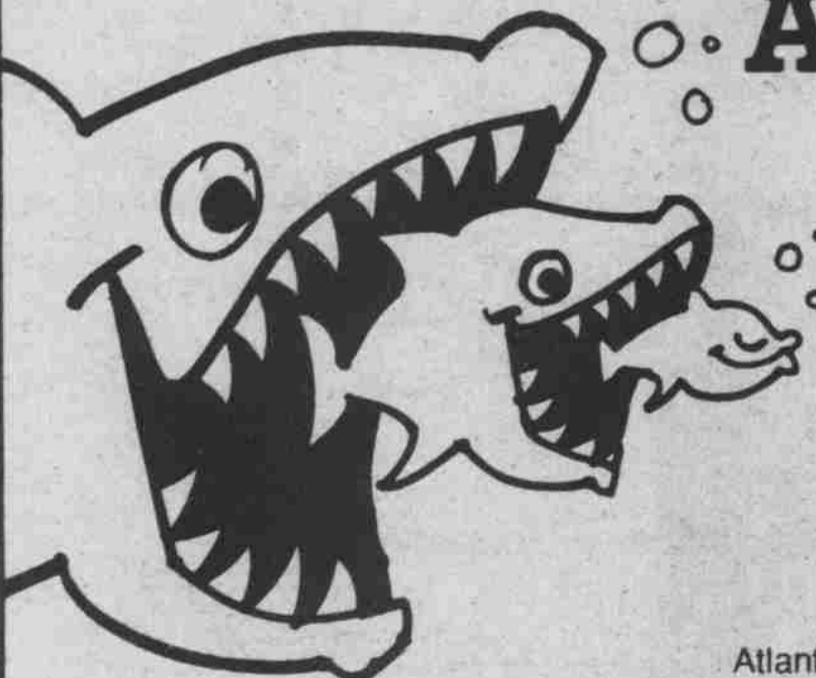
When you're sitting there in the stall, whistling and twiddling your thumbs and scanning the sports pages, you can't help but notice the surrounding so-called thoughts of the restroom literati that came before you. And there's always that itch to respond, to tell all these twits what twits they are. But then again, you don't want to sink to their level.

So, I have to cheer for those souls who — in one brief, pithy line — make a preceding graffiti-geek look as dumb, pretentious or illiterate as he deserves.

For example, there is this response under the Socrates quote:


"I drank what?" — Socrates. Now that's sort of funny. At least for graffiti.

Let me close this hellish chore with a confession. This isn't a sample of campus graffiti — it's all from the Lenoir Commons men's room. It was the only one deserted long enough for me to copy down the pointless ramblings of these sad losers. I certainly wasn't going to sit there and copy graffiti in front of people. I mean, I have my pride.



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