



THE OUTLAWS: Bobby Seale, left, Annie Sprinkle and Townes Van Zandt en route to fringe fest.

The fringe-dwelling follies

Four-date series unites political, social and musical 'revolutionaries'

Fringe-dwellers, cloistered page-turners and song-spinners, and those desiring unconventional sensory inspiration or cerebral stimulation, would do well to consider a pilgrimage to the Bathurst Street Theatre at least once next week.

Beyond The Fringe is an eclectic and interactive series showcasing the words and wisdom of four dynamic yet very different individuals. "Each one is a sort of outlaw, a revolutionary or visionary — whether it be political, social or musical," says co-organizer David Redfern of Mushroom Entertainment.

The series fires up Monday with the former chairman and co-founder of the Black Panther Party, Bobby Seale, now the director of Advocates Scene Inc., a national community organizing network based in Washington, D.C.

Seale, who was a consultant on Mario Van Peebles' recent film, *Partners*, will speak on black activism from the '60s to the '90s and engage with audience in a discussion of issues of and strategies for social change.

Activism takes a decidedly different swing Thursday night, when sextuplet, performance artist and former prostitute Annie Sprinkle titillates and educates with a provocative show-and-tell entitled "My Body Is A Temple For A Multi-Media Whore." Prolific in more ways than one, Sprinkle is a filmmaker, photographer and therapist, who has placed articles in magazines as far-ranging as *Hustler* and *Utne Reader*.

Toronto's own folk poet-laureate Bob Snider hosts an evening with legendary Texas singer/songwriter Townes Van Zandt on Saturday, Feb. 3. With more than a dozen fine albums to his credit since 1968, Van Zandt has inspired a wide spectrum of artists, including Toronto's Cowboy Junkies (with whom he collaborated), Lyle Lovett and Seattle grunge band Mudhoney.

And on Friday, Feb. 2, poet, prose-stylist and rock musician Jim Carroll



JIM CARROLL: Poet/musician's writings are the source of two recent films.

None Of The Above

JENNIE PUNTER

spins a few tales and takes questions from the floor. On the phone from his New York home last weekend, Carroll says the upsurge of media interest in "spoken word" in the last few years has, at least, brought poetry to a wider audience.

"Before there was 'spoken word,' I was doing poetry readings, so it's not that different to me," he says. "The guy who lays claim to the phrase is from the West Coast, and it seems to suggest something that is more exclusive or elitist — but a lot of it is just word crap."

"When I was a very young poet, 16 or 17, in the late '60s and '70s there was a boom in poetry, the biggest since the Beat scene. So it goes through cycles."

In the years before releasing three albums with the Jim Carroll Band in the early '80s (1980's *Catholic Boy* featuring the single "People Who Died"), Carroll was a part of the vibrant New York poetry scene, which included fellow poets-turned-musicians Lou Reed and Patti Smith.

Carroll is still best known for *The Basketball Diaries*, a chronicle of his

turbulent adolescent years, written in the mid-'60s and published in its entirety in 1978. Early excerpts of that work and other Carroll writings brought the teen prodigy acclaim from beat icons Jack Kerouac and William Burroughs.

Last year *The Basketball Diaries* was made into a film, starring Leonard DiCaprio. While Carroll was less than delighted with the final product, he does have high praise for the screen adaptation of his short story "Curtis's Charm," a Canadian independent feature directed by John L'Ecuyer, who introduces Carroll next Friday.

"John has a really good literary sense," Carroll says. "I was pleasantly surprised when I saw it. But it's still an interesting trick how he got a whole film out of it."

"Curtis's Charm" was originally an adlib monologue that I did at a reading. After I told it six or seven times I could see a short story there, and so I started to write it out.

"I have around six pieces like that, and each time I get more out of the story," he continues. "It's difficult to do without a safety net. You have to have a certain energy from the audience."

"Curtis's Charm" appears in Carroll's last book, *Fear Of Dreaming* (Penguin, 1993), which includes two previously published poetry collections, *Living At The Movies* and *The Book Of Nods*, as well as new poetry and prose.

Carroll is currently working on two novels ("the ideas came at the same time, so it was a blessing and a curse") and has recorded four songs, an enjoyable experience that may entice him back into the rock 'n' roll ring.

All the *Beyond The Fringe* performances at the Bathurst Street Theatre begin at 8 p.m. Tickets are sold separately at Ticketmaster (870-8000), with prices ranging from \$14.90 to \$16.80.

▲ Insomniac Press presents an evening of spoken word that should keep you wide awake. The event, hosted by poet Michael Holmes and featuring Death Waits, Gil Adamson and Lynn Crosbie among others, happens 8 p.m. Wednesday in the musty, comfy confines of the Imperial Public Library (58 Dundas St. East).