

Contributed by Thelma Blitz, 4/14/10.

After conferring with Tuli and Tuli's wife Sylvia Topp, who appears in this video and was happy to see it, I am able to give you some information about the Revolting Theatre and your video of it. This video was known to the Videofreex who made it as "Revolt in Montreal." It was shot with a portapak, an early video camera, on March 5, 1971 after a large blizzard in Montreal. Nevertheless, Sylvia tells, a large crowd came to the theatre.

The Revolting Theatre was a countercultural troop led by Tuli which toured, mostly colleges, in the '70s enacting advertisements and similar ridiculous things found in mainstream culture to point up and challenge their absurdity. "Revolting" had the double meaning of "distasteful" and "with a mind to pacifist revolution," something Tuli and others at that time hoped there soon would be.

The cast was Tuli; his best friend and collaborator, the late Lannes Kenfield (Aka "Lanny"); Tuli's first son, Joey Sacks; Liz Reisner; Tuli's wife Sylvia Topp; and Sandra Mobray Clarke, aka "Sandy Nisson."

The introduction, the Revolting Theatre song, is performed by Tuli, Lanny, and Sandy. "The Theatre of the Real," also the name of a public access show hosted for many years through the '80s with Lanny, was so called because it dealt with real and not made-up "found" material.

The first act is Tuli doing "Caca Rocka," a song from the third Fugs album on ESP-disk, 1966, the *Virgin Fugs*. It satirizes stupidity of pay toilets and what results when you don't have the coin for one. By implication, it satirizes capitalism as well.

The second is Tuli satirizing regimentation in the school system. Dressed as a schoolboy, he enacts a song from his 1966 solo ESP-disk album "No Deposit, No Return,"-- "Social Studies." The Marine Hymn "From the Halls of Montezuma" plays in the background as recorded Tuli sternly reads a directive by a teacher to his students which he found in the street printed on paper in the west 70's of Manhattan.

Next, Tuli, pacifist, reads a message from the Rabbinical Alliance of America who came out against peace demonstrations against America. This was during the Viet Nam War when a great anti-war protest movement flourished.

Still in a Jewish mode, Tuli as rabbi chants as Lanny and Liz humorously enact the ancient Jewish Code of Family Purity which reflects a phobia against menstruating women. At the end of the skit, after the husband refuses the company of his wife, in obedience to the law, she goes off with the rabbi whose drawers conveniently drop.

The next skit is Lanny as a policeman, with Tuli as a frightened citizen making a telephone report of a bomb threat. Where does the man live? Forty seven miles north west of Saigon! (It was during the bombings of the Viet Nam War.)

Next Lanny dramatizes Mark Twain's famous War Prayer, a scathing satire on religious justifications (e.g. the 'spirit of love') for the abominations of war.

Lanny and Liz then confer the Fickle Phallus of Fate awards on the Laugh In program for helping Nixon get elected president, on Rowan and Martin and the producer of "Flying Circle Finger of Fate."

Next, a tongue-in-cheek musical prelude to an anti-police brutality satire. The song used is "Johnny Law, helping every one he can." Tuli and Lanny are on screen.

JOHNNY LAW

(Red Simpson - Doyle Holly)

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They call him a Flat Foot they say he's a square
But when you're in danger Flat Foot he's there

He's a Johnny Law he's Johnny Law
A he's a Johnny Law a helpin' everyone he can

If a thief should rob you and take all that you own
Flat Foot's gonna git him and put him where he belongs

He's a Johnny Law he's Johnny Law...
[guitar] Flat Foot he's a workin' man just like you and I
Except he's got a mighty big job tryin' to keep us alive

He's a Johnny Law he's Johnny Law...

You can talk about him say just what you please
But if we didn't have old Flat Foot what would happen to you and me

Without Johnny Law

Johnny Law he's Johnny Law he's Johnny Law
A he's a Johnny Law a helpin' everyone he can

Tuli poses as "Joe Bolton," the "good guy" cop who's nice to children. He reads from a police magazine about "chemical mace non-lethal weapons." He's interrupted by a word from his sponsors, "Fuck Communism," which Lanny insists he bleep. Tuli changes it to "Fuck Bleepism."

He returns to testing and evaluating the new “non-lethal mace” on “Mrs. Cohen,” played by Tuli’s wife, Sylvia Topp, and Tuli’s son, Joey, wearing an ape-man mask. They fall together, Joey humps Sylvia, the nice policeman can’t stop them and so joins in.

Next, Tuli and Lanny visit the Revolting Restaurant as waitress Sandy reads the menu, some culinary gross-outs imagined by school children on the Lower East Side.

The last footage sees Lanny backstage with Joey, Sylvia and Tuli. Lanny asks a fellow whose name we aren’t sure of what he thought of the performance. Would it make a good training tool for the John Birch society, a right wing organization of its time, Lanny asks ironically.

Tuli and Lanny sing more of the Revolting Theatre anthem. “Revolt, Revolt, Revolting Theatre, judge or fornicator, we televise it. The things you are about to see you better believe it, They are too real and ugly for...”

Finally, Lanny has an award for Judge Holland, who gave one year in jail to a man who only wanted to kiss his wife.