

Tuli Kupferberg (1923–2010)

Anonymous

Winter 2010–2011

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Tuli Kupferberg is gone. We always had an appreciation for his sense of humor, as expressed in his band The Fugs and his cartoons. He died at the age of 86 in Manhattan.

The Fugs exemplified a certain time and place. They formed in 1964, and frequently played at Vietnam War protest rallies, and had a knack for the “Theatre of the Absurd”. They never took themselves too seriously, which allowed them to have a good time playing music.

Tuli’s comics were on the crude side of things — like the lyrics that were written for various songs by The Fugs — in many ways. Even so, they still make me laugh.

Tuli’s understanding of poetic forms and the structure of music was impressive. Kupferberg drew on his Eastern European and Jewish family background to aid his creativity. At various times he sent us his parasongs. Here Kupferberg took old Jewish songs, made a parody of them and kept the traditional melody. He also made parasongs of selective contemporary tunes.

Tuli shared our love for Omar Khayyam’s Rubaiyat. He produced a wonderful rendition of it in song form.

Along with occasional short notes, cartoons, parasongs and financial contributions, Kupferberg also, at one point, sent us a copy of his book entitled Teach Yourself Fucking. It is a collection of his cartoons. With the book he included a note declaring that we could use anything he sent our way. He didn’t want us to include his name as source credit because he was “already listed as a subversive on too many government lists”.

Kupferberg was one of the last bohemians, in the best sense of the term. The life he lived was a reflection of his ideas. His spirit and sense of humor and creativity will be missed.

So long, Tuli.

The following is Tuli’s poetic masterpiece, “Morning, Morning”. It is from the second album of The Fugs. Put to music, this is one of the most hauntingly magical songs I have ever listened to.

Morning, Morning **(poem) by Tuli Kupferberg**

Morning morning
Feel so lonesome in the morning
Morning morning
Morning brings me grief

Sunshine sunshine
Sunshine laughs upon my face
& the glory of the growing
Puts me in my rotting place

Evening evening
Feel so lonesome in the evening
Evening evening
Evening brings me grief

Moonshine moonshine
Moonshine drugs the hills with grace
& the secret of the shining
Seeks to break my simple face

Nighttime nighttime
Kills the blood upon my cheek
Nighttime nighttime
Does not bring me to relief
Starshine starshine
Feel so loving in the starshine
Starshine starshine
Darling kiss me as I weep

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