

Mike Quatro Lets it All Hang Out

or, The Hype is Right

Fifth Estate Collective

1969

Editor's note: Mike Quatro is a Detroit booking agent and promo man for some of Michigan's leading rock groups. Quatro has been hit hard in the last few months by the underground media for being a parasite on the community. The Wayne County Prosecutor's office even went so far as to investigate him for fraud for his ill-fated October 31 Black Arts Festival.

Mike thinks everyone has misjudged him and wanted to tell people his side of things. In a two hour taped interview at the Fifth Estate office Quatro described his world and his problems.

The following is an edited version of what was said, preserved indisputably, by the technology Mike is so fond of It's all Mike Quatro—the man you buy your kulture from.

Where did I grow up? I grew up in Grosse Pointe. I might be really fucked but that's the facts, man you know. What can I say? (Where do I live now?) Grosse Pointe.

I got into show business when I was six years old. I started playing the piano. I took classical lessons. Started playing some popular, and then somebody, some dude from one of the large corporations saw me and said, "Hey, this guy ought to be on TV," so, uh, at that time, that particular dude was very influential with Dodge, which sponsored the Lawrence Welk Show, and so they sent me out there to be interviewed and they liked the way I played so they put me on the Welk Show. I was, like twelve years old. I played de-dee, de-dee, de-dee music, ya'know? I retired from that when I was about fifteen-sixteen. I did a couple of tours around the country as a piano player, and then I went into booking.

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I started a Booking Agency four years ago and I became the biggest Booking Agency in this whole area for rock. But ya'know what? The fucking thing lost money! At the end, by the time I was all done there was so many cancellations of jobs, so much bullshit being slung back and forth, that I couldn't make any money in booking. So I sold the god damn agency. There was so much hypocritical nonsense going on.

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You know why I'm not in booking? I'll give you a perfect example. Uh, the Black Arts Show was not perfect, artistically, because I was booking and I could not devote the time to make sure that every detail was correct.

...

It hurt me inside because I, I feel I'm trying to do something for the good of the people rather than something bad, and the media took the fucking thing, didn't understand my side of it, and made me look like an anti-hero, which is very, very bad for a person.

I feel I've got something to give to the people of the world and I'm gonna give it to 'em. And in return for that, I'm gonna try to make it easier for them to accept it. I'm dead-set against everything that is hypocritical.

I'm as against hypocrisy as anybody in the country. I'm as for the underground movement as anyone in the country. I, however, still insist that I have a right to earn whatever money I can with my own abilities, and if somebody else is not capable of doing that kind of job, then that's why they're not making that kind of money.

I'm not quite as rich as everyone thinks I am, unfortunately. (How much did your Cadillac cost?) Which one? (laughter) Ok, dig, I don't like airplanes. I have to do a lot of traveling to different cities and, uh, I don't like airplanes at all. I'll drive a race car two hundred miles an hour, but I don't like riding-in an airplane when I'm depending on somebody else's uh, handling for my life. So, therefore, I drive in a car. And a car that's comfortable for me is a Cadillac. I've been working since I was six years old to buy that Cadillac, and I think I'm entitled to it.

...

Then too, if you really want to get down with it, I can think of various times when I personally gave money to a band so that they might eat, and hadn't, you know, didn't make a payment on maybe something I owed, maybe a Hudson's charge or whatever.

I just did a rap on CKLW of all places, AM radio, ok, fine, but because of who I am and what I've done in the way of promoting they allowed me to call them on a direct line from San Francisco and tell the people, fifty thousand watts—three states, what it was like at the Rolling Stone's free concert, and why it should be allowed to go on.

Now that's what I call getting down to some of the straight factory workers and letting them know; hey there's something else going on besides a nine-to-five shift plugging on the line. Ya'know what I mean? And there's something else going on besides going to a bar and drinking beer and then going to football games.

If I had a million dollars I would set-up a bunch of free festivals. I would try to do political things. The first thing I would probably do is go into politics and try to put some people into the mainstream of American politics who were, who were aware of the problems and the need for change that we have today.

That would be the very first thing I'd do, and that's my end, that's what I'm looking at in the end result. I hope to be able to get into politics and get something going like that. But you can't do it without money, not now, not unless you tear down the whole country.

My concept of bringing the underground up to the aboveground and making people as free as we'd like to be is to, instead of tearing down the whole house, just leaving the foundation and building a new house on top. I don't go along with the tearing down the whole house and ripping out the foundation philosophy. I don't agree that the function of American democracy is that fucked up.

...

There's a difference, dig? There's a difference between, uh, getting into a thing where you're purporting violence to overthrow a structure. That becomes, uh, anti, uh, that becomes anarchistic, and I don't know if that's correct in any civilized society.

...

It's getting very abstract, man. The point is, revolution is cool, uh, and having people being able to do what they want is cool. But either you want some sort of civilized society or, you want no society at all and everybody is running around on an island, ya'know?

...

Unfortunately, there isn't any system yet that's been created, gentlemen, that is not—somebody's above somebody else. Even in communism or socialism or any—somebody's still gotta make certain decisions, and that puts that person on a higher plane than the other fellow who's not making that decision.

...

Somebody has to be in the position of saying, "Well, now, your job is to do this, because that's what you do best."

...

The more influential any one person in this culture gets, the more he'll be able to control situations...that's exactly the whole idea of getting a man in the position of being able to pull some political power and keep things going in the right way, that's exactly the whole idea.

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If the entire institution was torn down I would find my place as, as a getter together of bands to put on festivals, for nothing—the same as everybody else, and I would live just like everybody else—off the land.

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ON PIGS:

My exact words to a city when I go into a city to throw a, uh, event, are, I get together, from now on at least, and I have done this in the past, I get together with the city police chief and I make sure that if he's gonna send in people, I try to get it together with him if I can, "Hey now, listen. If you see a kid smoking dope, for Christ sakes, let's not bust him. Take the stick away—the marijuana, if you got to, and don't bust the kid, I don't want any busts here."

If I can't do that, then there's fucking nothing I can do, because there is a law that says, ya'know, you can't smoke marijuana.

...

I call Detroit police "pigs," also, when they do things I don't like, ya' know? That's very definately. I call any armed guard or anything of that nature a pig.

...

...the only reason I requested any guards at all would be to guard so they don't rip-off with sinks and towels dispensers and shit like that. That's the reason and that's where the guards are supposed to stay.

...

Dig this, I know that there are pigs who would think of nothing better to do than to go out and shoot-up Colored people's houses and White Panther and Black Panther headquarters. I know a lot of pigs like that. I know it's a fact.

I also know that there are some pigs who have gone to college and have studied sociology and psychology and who know when to use violence or when to use strong-arm tactics and when not to...I'm saying there is got to be a few pigs around who know where their heads are at. Who are sympathetic to the underground. I really do believe that, man. They're in a minority situation which means you have to put underworld-type freaks in the police department, that's all.

There are pigs who are good. You cannot define a policeman as a pig just because he happens to be a policeman.

My question is, I don't like guns for anybody, including police. I think it would be fine if we could talk the police into throwing away all their guns...violence begets more violence in my eyes. That's exactly the way I feel and I don't think anything's gonna change that. I say take the guns away from the police, take the guns away from everybody like they do in England, nobody's got guns.

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Guns, uh, as I see it, are kill instruments. Absolute kill. It seems to me that with our present day technology and science somebody could invent bullets that were, rather than killing, they were just knockout shots, and that would, you know...

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CONCERNING THE BLACK ARTS FESTIVAL RIP-OFF

In retrospect I would have done anything I could of, if I had to shoot that cop that was pulling the plug I would have done it, man. I would have done anything I could that'd let the show finish, and I would have put Tim Leary on the Stage anyways, I would, I wouldn't give a shit.

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ON AFRO-AMERICANS

I think there's been a little over-reaction on both sides.

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The Black colony? You mean, uh, Negroes? Ok, Well, I think that, uh, Colored people? Whatever. I'll be very honest with you. Uh, I think, uh, I really think that, you know, back when I was in high school, well, when I was

about fourteen-fifteen, I think I had some prejudice towards Colored, I really do. I, I think I just kind of got out of it when I was about sixteen-seventeen. I started to open my eyes then.

I employ Colored people in, in my day-to-day activities. I have friends that are Colored people.

...

The solution? Exactly what's happening now. More and more personal freedoms, guaranteeing that there is no prejudice in business or in their day-to-day existence. And making them a regular part as any other person. They're just human beings, that's all, and they should be treated as such.

...

I'm very concerned about this Huey Newton. I'm not sure whether he actually did kill this guy or not. I just haven't been able to ascertain, but if he did kill the guy, then I think that he deserves to be where he is. If he didn't kill the guy, then he should be out. Anybody who kills somebody deserves to be, you know,—Why the fuck do you kill somebody, you know? That's a very bad thing to do, man.

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ON THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE

(Vietnam) I think the original intent was, supposedly, to stop the influence of communism. I think that was probably the original intent. I'm not even sure of that anymore. As an idea, that maybe wasn't such a bad idea, but from there it just progressed to sheer idiocy.

I'm not so sure that China is a great danger, right now. They got a tremendous amount of people and they seem to have little concern for human life there. I'll say that for 'em. They seem to have very, very little concern for human life.

They have—they have said that in their own statements that they don't give a shit if it takes five million people dead to make communism all over the world, whatever, they have said things like that. America hasn't killed any five million people.

...

What do I think of Cuba? I think Cuba is just riding along on its own inefficiency, right now. And if it doesn't do something economically it's gonna be a defunct country. (What have you read on Cuba?) Uh, I, I've read, uh, stuff in the newspapers, in the magazines, and I've read some, uh, encyclopedias.

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My impression (of Che Guevara) is he is some kind of underground cultural hero, but why I don't know. He, ah, evidently led some kind of revolution, or something.

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