

WRITE THE NATION: A STATE OF EMERGENCY

Mingus Tourette takes on Bush, the Church, & the State of Canadian Poetry - In a Pink Ambulance

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This fall, when you see a man in a gas mask driving a pink ambulance down your street, be afraid, be very afraid - for Mingus is coming and he's not happy. On October 1st, Mingus Tourette and a volatile band of poets and writers embark on a three-week, cross-country book tour in a fully functional 1986 Chevy C-30 One Ton Pink Ambulance.

"Poetry is in a state of emergency in this country," says Tourette. "Within popular culture, it's almost invisible. There is some great writing out there, but there aren't three poets in the country who don't have other jobs to support themselves. We want to do whatever it takes to change that, and if it means driving 15 000 km in an ambulance, then so be it. People can either get on board, get out of the way, or get run down in the street like a dog."

In addition to a number of small town saloons and various centres of academic learning, Mingus Tourette's WRITE THE NATION TOUR will be stopping in: Edmonton, Vancouver, Calgary, Saskatoon, Regina, Winnipeg, Thunder Bay, Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal. The tour plans to hook up with readers and other writers at open mics, poetry series, university pubs and independent bookstores. In doing so, the tour hopes to right a national perspective.

"The image of the poet in Canada needs a makeover in the public eye," says Tourette. "Poets and writers are the most interesting people I know. They're intelligent, fun, hard-drinking, articulate folk, yet they're often seen as stuffy, ivory-tower types. In other countries, poets and writers are national heroes, yet who do we worship? The Canadian Idol, or worse - the American Idol. Ridiculous."

Such provocative statements come easily to Tourette, who's latest book, *Nunt* (Zygote Publishing, September 2004), has already attracted religious and moral criticism. Packed with tales of murder, apostasy, lust-filled nuns, and absinthe-stoked prostitutes, *Nunt* seems custom built not only to taunt and challenge the right-wing conservatives, but everyone who dares to read it.

"[These] verses have something to mortally offend everyone who reads them," comments Daniel Richler, a literary bad boy in his own right. "I devoured them in one sitting (before they devoured me), struck again and again by their tireless and imaginative violence - passion, really. Tourette wrenches tormented, nihilistic and surreally brutal feelings out of the pornographic and into the poetic. Like drinking yourself sober, there's virtue in the excess."

Mingus Tourette's WRITE THE NATION TOUR kicks off at Edmonton's LitFest this fall and blows into a fine bookstore or open mic near you. For more information about local dates, appearances and interviews please feel free to contact us, or check online for tour updates at www.zygotepublishing.com.

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