

The Myth of the Generation Gap

by Alex Cramer

With spring graduation only a few months away this year's crop of graduates are trimming their hair, shaving their beards, and getting ready for job interviews. As Mother Canada spreads out her thighs, 40,000 university students eagerly prepare to enter the labour market.

What then of the generation gap we keep hearing about? Aren't students supposed to be in revolt against the system? After all one looks at the unkempt appearance of many students and it seems reasonable to conclude that they are "rebels". And, of course, the university newspapers are always full of articles on student power, black militancy, the rock revolution, the new morality, etc.

But looking at the Class of 69, we see only formations of neatly dressed young men and women lining up to give the campus recruiters blow-jobs. What gives here? How can we reconcile what we see with all the articles and speeches on the generation in revolt?

The answer is quite simple, really. Actually there never was a generation gap between the young and the old. What we are witnessing is a huge con game put on by industry and the mass media.

Whenever a magazine is short of a sensational article, it turns, inevitably, to youth and comes up with something like "The LSD Party That Shook a Town" or "Jim Morrison: Apollo in Leather Pants". What all these articles stress is that the youth are in rebellion against the mores of their elders.

This is, of course, nonsense for most youngsters do their homework diligently and keep their noses clean. The boys still want to be popular and the girls all want to go to the prom with the star athlete. Look at After Four and Seventeen and you see a good reflection of the high school mentality. Things don't change much at university as a glance at Playboy and Mademoiselle will indicate. These magazines show the students that the good life awaits them if they play it cool.

Then what's all this bullshit about the generation gap? It's really a question of economics. The youth market in North America amounts to billions of dollars and industries like records, cosmetics, and soft drinks are heavily dependent on the kids. Advertising tries to convince the young that they are leading an exciting life full of rock dances, sharp clothes and fast cars. This life, the ads imply, is unavailable to the oldsters since they don't understand that action is the essence of life.

In a good year, there is perhaps one genuine hippie (one who really drops out of society) for every 1000 youngsters. Being poor and really alienated the hippie can wear outlandish clothes to freak out the straights in the Colonade.

Some of the rock musicians pick up on these styles, add some class and so their clothes become really costumes intended for the stage. Next the boutique owners take up these styles to sell to the hip people who have the break: the CBC-NFB set, the journalists, and the interior decorators. And finally the garment makers adopt certain hip styles and soon Sayvette is selling the stuff.

To believe the magazine philosophers of TIME and LIFE, rock is supposed to represent an expression of social rebellion. Yet today there is no protest pop music and the songs still are based on the themes of love and loneliness. In reality, there is nothing in Canned Heat or Cream which can't appeal to a 40 year old.

AN INQUIRY

Progressive Rock

In the last three years something known as progressive rock (a loose category for blues, folk and hard rock) has emerged and split the rock world into two camps. This has led to a considerable amount of snobbery among university students who do the ego thing by taking pot shots at Herman's Hermits and the Ohio Express.

It reminds me of the early 60's when the folkniks (myself included) would put down the Kingston Trio and the Brothers Four in order to idolize Leadbelly, Pete Seeger and the Weavers. In actual fact the two most popular rock groups, the Beatles and the Stones, are revered by both the AM and FM listeners. And of course we have groups like the Who, the Doors and the Animals with support in both camps.

There is no question that the progressive rock bands are tremendously creative and have a lot to say. But there seems to be little evidence that Procul Harum and the Moody Blues have really hit their listeners. Undoubtedly Jimi Hendrix is the greatest rock artist around, but to most of his fans his music remains a mystery. Hendrix is something like the Antonioni of rock, popular but misunderstood.

The popularity of progressive rock indicates that young people are tired of trite pop songs, but we have a long way to go before we can say that Country Joe and Butterfield have brought about a revolution in consciousness. For most listeners these groups merely represent better musicianship and a more imaginative approach.

Given the proper conditions, rock artists could alter one's consciousness. By proper conditions, I mean that the listener would have had to immerse himself in the other arts: film, theatre, painting etc. To understand the Airplane, it helps if you've seen Godard. Without Bergman, Mayall's Bare Wires is that much more difficult to appreciate. But the most important element in expanding one's consciousness is the use of drugs.

Were drugs used properly, that is, as a tool to self-discovery, then there would be a real generation gap which no amount of bullshit could bridge. But if that were the case, then we wouldn't have 40,000 graduates turning into corporate whores.

As the Excalibur survey pointed out, about half of York students have taken dope. Unfortunately 90% do it for kicks. That is to say they consume pot in much the same way their parents take liquor. Certainly grass doesn't have the same power as acid, but it still can lead to some insights, particularly when accompanied by music. Nevertheless the students get high because it is "fun".

While stoned, rather than seeking each other out, they play head games. "Wow, look at the New Humanities building. The architect must be a head."

"You should see the Yellow Submarine stoned."

And on Monday, in the coffee houses, the conversations are something like. "We got stoned Saturday night and saw the Bubble at the Downtown. What a trip!" There is very little difference between this and the office where I worked last summer in which the clerks would boast about how many beers they put away over the weekend.

Acid

Acid has the power to change the di-

rection of a person's life. But most people want to use it like grass so they split a tab into 2 or even 4 parts which is just enough to space one out nicely but not strong enough for the user to confront himself. The question I hear often is whether sex is good on acid rather than does acid crumble the ego so that genuine love is possible.

It's fairly obvious that grass will be legalized (or at least no one will be busted anymore) in a couple of years. And it's quite apparent that grass will become something like a beverage, rather than a badge of rebellion. As it stands now, because it is used secretively, many students think that they are part of an exclusive cult, little realizing that the students on the floor above, who look like real "Glen Cambell-types" use dope just as regularly.

Young people think that they speak a different language from their parents. After all the youths say things like "what a down" and "good vibrations". So obviously they can't communicate with their parents. Slang expressions have a way of becoming hackneyed fairly rapidly. Everyone wants to be hip so they are used by many adults.

At Harry Rosen's you can hear admen say "I think the Red Cap TV campaign is really outasite." or "My creative director at Maclaren's is very uptight."

But the best scene is hearing your middle-aged professor say that "Ezra Pound will blow your mind." What I'm really waiting for is for him to say "I'm going to do you up with an easy final exam." When I hear that I'll jump up and shout "Kick out the jams," and I'll declare the classroom a liberated zone.

Most of the hip phrases come from rock musicians who transmit the words from Negro slang. If you want to be the first on your block with a new phrase just listen to some old blues. Then when you're tired of the word "put-on", you can say "jive", for chic you can call her "main squeeze" and to say 'outdo', you have "cut" (e.g. "Man, Jimmy Page really cuts Jeff Beck".)

In no time the slang of the hip enters common language, and so the status seekers look for new words. It's a game which the young and no so young play. The point is that there aren't two languages for the different generations.

Finally I want to discuss radical politics. I have little to say here that Godard hasn't already said in La Chinoise. The radical students go through the motions of involvement, preparing leaflets, petitions and demonstrating once in a while. But mostly they stick to their books, and when they graduate they sell out just like everyone else. Since they were never really serious about their radicalism, they don't have any pangs of conscience when they cop out.

The radical students don't have much of an intellectual background; they read a Frantz Fanon book and then proceed to sprinkle their talks with slogans and cliches. Causes vary from week to week depending on which is more fashionable. One week it's Czechoslovakia, the next is grapes and the following it's a Peterboro newspaper strike.

"Where have all the rebels gone, long time passing?"

"To Westinghouse, when will they ever learn?"

But I don't want to end my article on a cynical note. The point is to forget the horseshit about we vs them. You only build up your ego thinking that you are hip while the adults are square. There is a gap. But it's between people, not generations. In trying to be hip you only put facades between you and others. Perhaps if we take off our bandanas, mustaches, sunglasses, and cowboy boots, we can also take off our masks. And then maybe we can begin to bridge the real gap.

**V-E-R-Y
I-N-T-E-R-E-S-T-I-N-G**
(But Informative)

Especially if you're in the Market for an engagement ring. A FREE BOOKLET outlining what you should expect and get when you invest in a diamond. It outlines how you can save a great deal of money on this purchase. We are Direct Diamond Dealers.

YOU CAN BUY ON A DIRECT BASIS

Phone, write or drop in for your Free Copy of "The Right Ring For The Left Hand".

HUGH PROCTOR & CO.
Gem Dealers Appraisers
921-7702
The Colonnade Bldg.,
131 BLOOR ST. W., SUITE 416.

**YORK
FORMAL
FEB. 13
TICKETS \$5
at Coffee Shop**

**"SURELY
THIS
IS
AMONG
THE
MOST
EROTIC
OF
MOVIES!"**
—CUE MAGAZINE



NEGATIVES

PETER McENERY · DIANE CILENTO
GLENDA JACKSON IN "NEGATIVES"

RESTRICTED IN COLOUR

Saturday and Sunday at:
2:00, 3:50, 5:40, 7:30, 9:20

cinacity
YONGE AT CHAMBERS 822 9055

Saturday Night Late Show
Underground & Experimental Films
THE LES LEVINE MOVIE
AT HOME
2 BY MEKAS
AND MORE
11:30 P.M.