

NAKED CAME POLONSKY:

Sermonette

One advantage of living in a McLuhanesque age is that you are always quite well aware of where you are at. A year ago we were in the age of Woodstock, now a mere twelve months later we are but the children of Altemont. A year ago we were in the age of hard rock, sweating at the hard sounds of Hendrix and Joplin but now we are told that Elton John is our Zeus and the piano his sceptre. Remember the days of the meaningful movie, the likes of Easy Rider and Joe the Hardhat. Well forget that nonsense man. We are now into romance. Rudolph Valentino has been resurrected, and we call him Ali McGraw. And surely you recall when just a matter of months ago our American peer group was throwing bombs at the University of Wisconsin. Well my friends put that match away. All the bomb throwers have mended their ways and have now turned into little Sphocles rummaging through the library stacks in search of the fruits of knowledge. Ah it is a fascinating age in which we live.

Many years ago there was this groovy time when people were doing a lot of writing of books, composing of music and painting of pictures. This period of artistic advancement became known as The Renaissance, which is a pretty classy title to be known under. But I ask you, how many people do you think were the least bit aware of the fact at that time, that their period had been labeled The Renaissance. I bet you only a handful at the most. Now all you 15th Century elitists, just ask the guy sitting next to you what period does he think we're in? Ten to one he responds "Why this is the period of romance, of bittersweet rock and campus calm, with traces of religious resurgence".

Thanks to the chroniclers of our age, Time Magazine and Rolling Stone, we are never lost as to our cultural whereabouts. Why can you imagine the embarrassment of standing at a cocktail party and having the hostess say to you "And what do you think of James Taylor, Charlie?" "Well, Jane, his music is simply too soft for this day and age," Wrong Charlie, you haven't been reading your Time.

Can you imagine the embarrassment of being passed a joint and having the hostess saying to you "Hey Randy man, what's happening in John Lennon's head?" "Well, Chick, Lennon's

head's together." Wrong Randy, you haven't been reading your Rolling Stone.

After all, how do you think those groovy centuries way back then, got to be known as The Renaissance? Some "where it's at" editor for the Parchment Review sent out an Ambitious young current events staffer to cover Michelangelo's freshly painted church roof. Now, this ambitious young writer (Rene by name) was no fool, and could tell that this was no ordinary roof he was covering. So there stood Rene desperately thinking of a name to call this new kind of artistic phenomenon, when a drop of fresh paint dripped from the ceiling into Rene's eye. A dutiful attendant noticing this, rushed over and said "Rene stand over there the paint's drier." "That's it", cried Rene hugging the attendant. "I'll call it Rene-stands." And from this it evolved into the word we know and love today.

So chroniclers do have a profound effect on their time, especially our time. They have made our generation fascinated by itself. Week after week our actions are scrutinized by the press attaching cosmic importance to any discernible nuance of our culture. We are all Narcissus' lunging towards the newstands to see what we have done next. Art, history, literature have no meaning for us. How can they possibly match the excitement of where the Silent Majority's at, what's happening in the youth cult, or what's new in the military industrial complex. Narcissus is our myth for all seasons.

And whereas we find our actions so incredibly fascinating, it is only natural that we wish to label our monthly trends. There was the Age of Involvement with Eugene McCarthy, which has since given way to the Age of Introspection and the teachings of Don Juan. All of which has created a cogent case for conformity. We are all so aware and so fascinated of where we are at, that we dare not, not be there. Time Magazine has become the Old Testament. Rolling Stone the New. They are the new preachers instructing us on how we are to lead out our lives as modern Twentieth Century men and women.

"Do your own thing", they said. And boy did we do it. All of us, together, right on cue.

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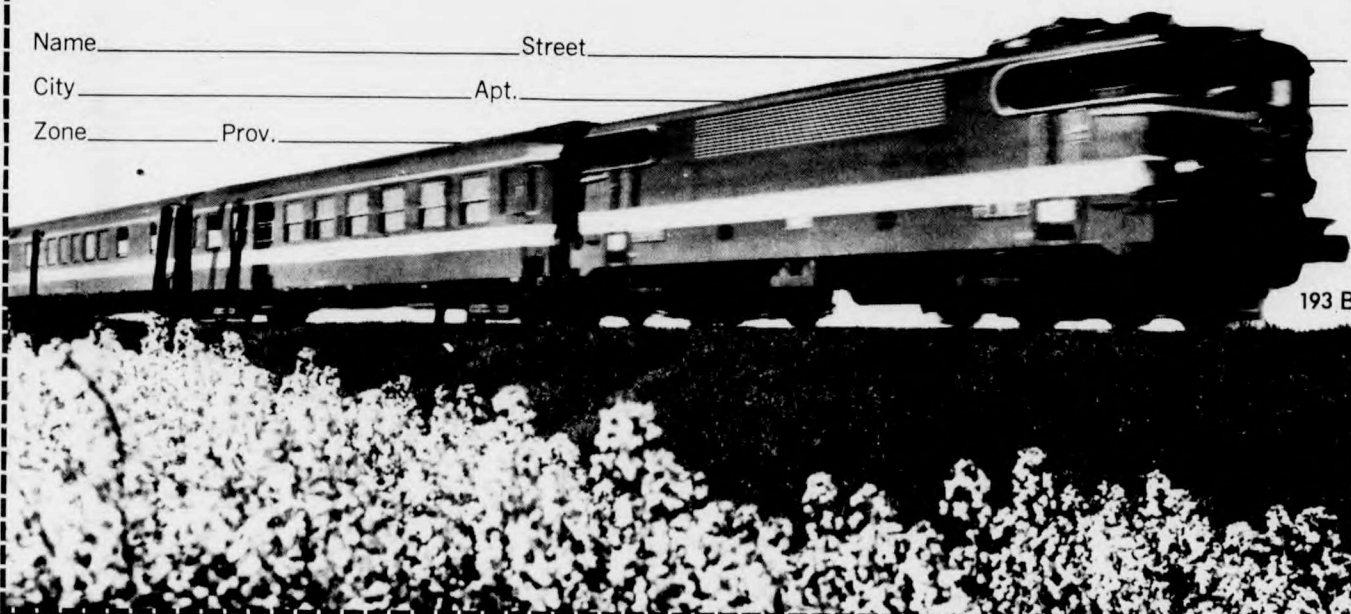
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