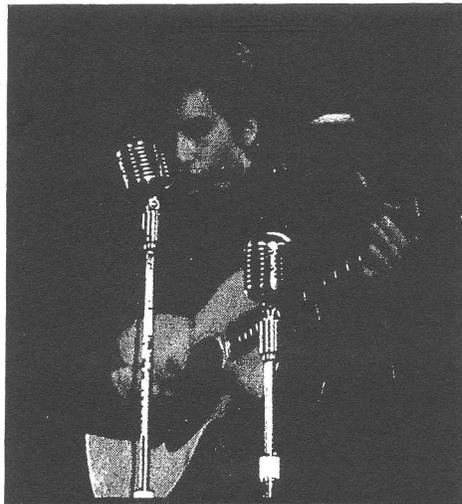


# The Counterculture

1965: ROCK MUSIC PROVIDES A VOICE FOR THE COUNTERCULTURE

THE YOUNG PEOPLE WHO STRUGGLED FOR SOCIAL REFORM IN THE 1960S HAILED BOB DYLAN AS THEIR GUERRILLA MINSTREL. He fought for social justice with a guitar and a song. More than any other musician of the time, Dylan gave popular music a social consciousness. Many agreed that he was the spokesperson for his generation. In a 1962 song, Dylan asked one question after another about racism, war, pollution, apathy—the major issues of the day:

How many roads must a  
man walk down  
Before you call him a man? yes, 'n'  
How many seas must a white dove sail  
Before she sleeps in the sand? yes 'n'  
How many times must the cannon balls fly  
Before they're forever banned?  
The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind,  
The answer is blowin' in the wind.  
—Bob Dylan, "Blowing in the Wind," 1962



© JOHN LAUNOIS/BLACK STAR

## Music Icon

Bob Dylan's music caught the mind, heart, and beat of a generation.

Then in 1965 Dylan changed his tune. In albums such as *Bringing It All Back Home* and in an appearance at the Newport Folk Festival he signaled that change by playing half his music on an acoustic guitar and half on an electric guitar backed up by a rock group. The reaction was electrifying. Where had the old Dylan gone? Who was this new hard-driving musician with tousled hair who sounded so sarcastic, so sneering, so accusing:

How does it feel,  
To be without a home,  
Like a complete unknown,  
Like a rolling stone?

—Bob Dylan, "Like a Rolling Stone," 1965

Once again Bob Dylan had caught the heartbeat of American youth, even before they felt the beat themselves. His unbridled energy, explosive anger, and rejection of what had gone before were signs of the arrival of

## AS YOU READ

### Vocabulary

- ▶ counterculture
- ▶ generation gap
- ▶ hippie
- ▶ commune
- ▶ cultural diffusion
- ▶ entrepreneur

### Think About . . .

- ▶ the beliefs and values of the counterculture.
- ▶ how communes prior to the 1960s were similar to or different from the counterculture communes.
- ▶ the cultural aspects of the counterculture that were adopted by society at large, such as diet, fashion, music, and pop art.

the **counterculture**, a culture of young people with values that ran counter to those of the established culture.

## Profile of a Generation

### Youth Reacts to Tradition

The 1950s had been a turbulent time politically. The majority of American youth, however, did not seriously challenge the social order of the time. Of course, that age had its social critics, writers such as Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg, who turned their backs on the social and cultural values of their time. These critics, however, were few in number and did not gain many followers.

In the 1960s the first of the baby boomers became teenagers. Having grown up during the cold war, many of these young people felt they were living on the edge of disaster. The threat of nuclear war was ever present as was the possibility of fighting in a faraway jungle war. Many blamed their elders, who included not only their parents but everyone over the age of 30, for creating the world in which they lived. The differences in attitudes between people of different age groups, or the **generation gap**, became a divisive force in society.

Music was perhaps the main instrument of communication within the young generation. Listening to and discussing the new music—rock and roll—was the way these young people identified one another as members of the same group. The affluence that carried over from the 1950s and the availability of small, cheap, portable radios and of record players meant that teenagers could listen to their own music while parents were tuned in to something completely different.

### Beliefs and Values

Not all the young people of the 1960s hopped on the counterculture bandwagon. For that matter, a few of those who did could no longer be considered young. There was no such thing as a typical member of the movement, and different counterculture groups had different goals. What the members of the counterculture did have in common was a rejection of the prevailing middle-class values, the attitudes and beliefs of what they called the “Establishment”—people and institutions that represented power, authority, and the status quo.

In the counterculture’s way of thinking, the older generation was inhibited, so the young placed a premium on “doing your own thing.” The Establishment was materialistic, so the youth culture attempted to break from habits of regular employment and consumerism. Better, so the thinking went, to make what you need, share what you have with others, and



© CHARLES GATEWOOD/THE IMAGE WORKS

**Questioning Authority** The generation gap was not unique to the 1960s. Conflict between young and old is a common theme in history. *Why did young people in the 1960s feel they were living in danger?*

not want what you do not have. Science, technology, and the emphasis on reason were blamed for bringing the world to the brink of nuclear disaster, so the counterculture stressed intuition and inner feelings over intellect.

### New Views

**Hippies**, as members of the counterculture came to be called, searched for peak moments, or emotional highs, in sex and drugs. Their rejection of more conservative morals against premarital sex, plus the availability of the birth control pill, opened the door to a new era of sexual freedom. These new views attempted to separate sex from love. Some of the flaunting of the new sexuality, such as explicit song lyrics or public nudity, were self-indulgences meant to shock the older generation; however, there was a price to be paid. For example, venereal disease climbed at an alarming rate among young people during the 1960s.

The self-appointed guru, or spiritual leader, of many drug users was Timothy Leary, an academic dropout who experimented with the mind-altering drug lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD). He was fired by Harvard University for violating a pledge not to involve undergraduates in his experiments. Leary then became an advocate of drug use and coined the slogan: Turn on, tune in, drop out.

The use of LSD declined when word got around about its unpleasant side effects, “bad trips,” and possible genetic effects. Meanwhile, the smoking of marijuana, also known as grass or pot, increased. In the absence

of today's scientific evidence of marijuana's dangers, its proponents favorably compared the use of the drug to the older generation's use of alcohol and tobacco. Some marijuana users moved on later to more powerful and more harmful drugs.

### New Religious Movements

In their rejection of materialism, many members of the counterculture embraced spirituality. This included a broad range of beliefs, from astrology and magic to Eastern religions and new forms of Christianity. Many of the religious groups centered around charismatic leaders, individuals who possessed remarkable personal appeal. Some of the religious groups had strict rules against drug use and premarital sex. Their centers, therefore, were frequently refuges to young people searching to recapture their lives from drug abuse.

Although not all religious groups were authoritarian in structure, some were. In these groups, the leader dominated others and controlled their lives, sometimes to the point of arranging marriages between members. Religion became the central experience in the believer's life. The authoritarian figure was a sort of parent figure, and believers formed an extended family that took the place of the family into which a member had been born. Some followers seemed to reject many aspects of their previous lives when they entered these groups. This could lead to painful conflicts. Parents accused religious sects of using mind-control methods; some attempted to recapture and deprogram their children. Also at issue was the right to choose one's own religion, even when that religion was at odds with widely held beliefs about individual free will.



Sharing In this New Mexico commune, as in others, members shared food and eating space. About how many communes existed in 1970?

© LISA LAW/HE IMAGE WORKS



Age of Aquarius Counterculture youth often went beyond the boundaries of customary behavior. The use of drugs was one development that troubled older people. What did many members of the counterculture use to replace materialism?

Two examples of authoritarian, mind-controlling religious groups that attracted considerable attention beginning in the 1960s were the Unification Church and the Hare Krishna movement. Both were the offspring of established religions, and both were imports from abroad. Members of the Unification Church were popularly known as "Moonies," after their Korean-born founder, the Reverend Sun Myung Moon. He claimed to have had a vision in which Jesus told him that he, Moon, was the next messiah and was charged with restoring the Kingdom of God on Earth. The Hare Krishnas traced their spiritual lineage through Swami Bhaktivedanta, founder of the American sect, to a Hindu sect that began in fifteenth-century India and that worshiped the god Krishna. In dress, diet, worship, and general style of living they tried to emulate Hindu practitioners of another time and place.

## Living Arrangements

Young People Live in Groups

Looking at American society in 1967, author Joan Didion wrote:

Adolescents drifted from city to torn city sloughing off both the past and the future as snakes shed their skins, children who were never taught and would never now learn the games that had held the society together.

—Joan Didion.

*Slouching Towards Bethlehem*, 1967

In San Francisco such adolescents gravitated to Haight-Ashbury, a district near Golden Gate Park. In New York City they concentrated in the East Village.

### City Hangouts

A common practice was for individuals to organize into groups that shared living quarters, without regard to sex or marital status. Many coffeehouses had a "pad"—a room with a few mattresses on the floor or horizontal space sufficient at least to roll out a sleeping bag—where anyone who wished could "crash" for a night. The Diggers, a loosely formed group in San Francisco, operated a "free store" of used clothing. Something was always happening in the street—a performance by a free theater or an unplanned concert. Drugs were readily available.

Thousands of young people converged on the cities during the summer; some of them were disturbed runaways. City hangouts became crowded. In the fall of 1967 some particularly violent murders shook up everyone. Small groups began retreating to the country, where they formed **communes**, communities that shared property in common.

### Rural Communes

The practice of people with similar religious, political, or cultural ideals retreating into the countryside to create their own utopian community has a long tradition in American society. Two highly successful examples were the Shakers, a religious order founded in the 1700s, and the Harmony Society, which lasted from 1804 to 1906.

At the height of the modern commune movement in 1970, the *New York Times* estimated the number of rural communes at more than 2,000, though few of them had more than 30 members. Some held meetings, wrote out bylaws, and discussed the ideal community. Communes such as Twin Oaks near Louisa, Virginia, for example, responded to the new women's liberation movement by eliminating distinctions between women's work and men's work. Any member was as likely to work in the kitchen as in the fields.

Other communes, as one observer noted, searched for "Eden rather than Utopia."

They sought out secluded spots of natural beauty where commune members could act as they wished without disturbing their neighbors. They also praised spontaneity and resisted making decisions, imposing order, or doing anything else that resembled planning or organization.

Community relationships were prized. One member of a Vermont commune described her experience:

The things that make up community are terribly subtle; it's the little things . . . someone getting his hair cut on the porch, the children around sweeping up the hair, each taking a turn snipping . . . making dinner with a crew once a week, remembering who's a vegetarian and needs a special meal. Expanded consciousness of others . . . nothing big and spectacular. The scenes that move me are the little things about our life together.

—Rosabeth Moss Kanter,  
*Commitment and Community*, 1971

The problems that arose on the Edenlike communes often stemmed from lack of organization. Without rules regarding visitors and new members, the communes were often overrun by the curious or the "weekend hipster." Privacy was in short supply. So was money, and without an economic base such as a home industry, some residents were forced to work outside the commune to raise cash. Despite the counterculture rhetoric of equality, women were often assigned traditional cooking and child-rearing roles. Nearly all of the communes were short-lived, or changed members frequently.



Marching to a New Beat Drama, color, and public display were important elements of the counterculture. What kinds of entertainment took place on city streets?

© GREGG MANCUSO/STOCK BOSTON

# Counterculture and the Mainstream

## Counterculture Affects the Mainstream

Those whom the counterculture influenced responded in various ways. The radicals rejected mainstream American culture and dropped out for a few years or permanently. The moderates enjoyed aspects of the counterculture such as the music, yet managed to hold down demanding jobs. In cities across the nation some young professionals in the 1960s lived together in familylike urban communes. During the day they practiced law or accounting, and in the evening returned to the house or apartment they shared with like-minded professionals who sought an alternative lifestyle.

While many, if not most, members of the counterculture generation eventually returned to more conventional lifestyles, the mainstream adopted some aspects of the counterculture in a process called **cultural diffusion**. Examples of cultural diffusion can be seen in aspects of the mainstream's diet, fashion, music, and art.

### Diet

The rapid growth of health food stores and of vegetarian restaurants across the nation, along with the availability of many new food products, can be credited partly to the counterculture's interest in diet and food production. The back-to-the-land movement made consumers aware of the advantages of stone-ground cereals and organically grown produce. New items in the American diet, such as yogurt and ranch-fed chicken, became available in supermarkets. Environmental concerns prompted people to analyze the economics of feeding a nation on beef as opposed to fish, poultry, or vegetables. Some adopted an exclusively vegetarian diet.

### Fashion

The counterculture generation, as one observer of the 1960s noted, dressed in costumes rather than in occupational or class uniforms. The colorful, beaded, braided, patched, and fringed garments that both men

and women wore turned the fashion industry upside down. The international world of high fashion took its cues from young men and women on the street. Men's clothing became more colorful and women's clothing became more comfortable.

Protest often expressed itself in clothing. The counterculture adopted military surplus attire not only because it was inexpensive, but also because it expressed rejection of materialist values and blurred the lines of social class. For the same reasons, clothing of another age was recycled, and worn-out clothing repaired with patches. A mark of high distinction was to wear a patch that had been patched.

Ethnic clothing was popular for similar reasons. Beads and fringes imitated Native American costumes; tie-dyed shirts borrowed techniques from India and Africa. Ideally, each person created his or her own costume, but specialists became **entrepreneurs**—small-business owners—and sold their products at street fairs and rock concerts.

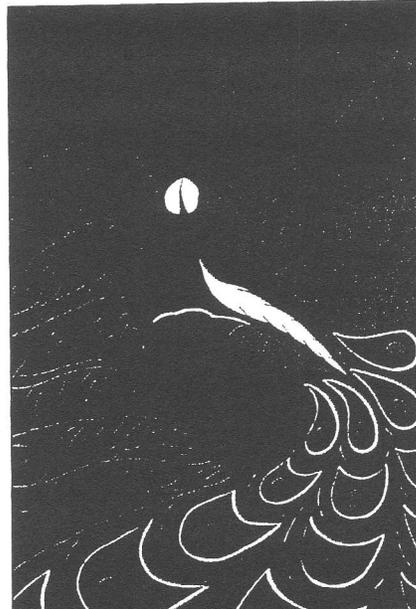
Perhaps the most potent symbol of the era was hair; a popular 1967 musical about the period was titled, fittingly, *Hair*. Long hair on a young man was the ultimate symbol of defiance. Slogans appeared, such as, Make America beautiful—

give a hippie a haircut. School officials debated the acceptable length of a student's hair—could it curl over the collar or not? Once the initial shock wore off, longer hair on men and more individual clothes for both men and women became generally accepted. What was once anti-Establishment clothing was soon mainstream.

### Music and Dance

Counterculture musicians hoped that their music—rock and roll—would be the means of toppling the Establishment and reforming society. It did not succeed because rock stars and their music were absorbed into the mainstream where the music brought material success worth billions of dollars to performers, promoters, and record companies.

Rock and roll was an international phenomenon that combined African American music with elements of popular white music. In the early 1950s only African American musicians played rhythm and blues (R & B), a high-energy music that emphasized the beat over the lyrics. When a few African American singers such as



© 1967 BILL GRAHAM #75, ARTIST: BONNIE MACLEAN

**Psychedelic** This colorful poster advertises *The Yardbirds*, *The Doors*, and others. What effect did counterculture musicians hope their music would have?

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Chuck Berry and Little Richard began to add lyrics that spoke to the trials and tribulations of adolescents, they created a whole new audience.

Sam Phillips, a Memphis recording engineer, said in 1951, "If I could find a white man who had the Negro sound and the Negro feel, I could make a billion dollars." A few years later he found that man in Elvis Presley. Not only did Presley have the sound and the feel, he also put on an electrifying show, dancing wildly while singing and playing his guitar. Other white performers such as Buddy Holly soon joined Presley in stardom.

Meanwhile, in England, four young men from Liverpool with working-class backgrounds began learning popular music by listening to the recordings of African American musicians. Calling themselves the Beatles, they took England by storm in 1963 and a year later made their American debut on the Ed Sullivan TV

show. "Beatlemania" soon swept the country, inspiring many rock and roll imitators.

The final ingredient in the rock and roll mix was the addition of lyrics that spoke to the fears and hopes of the new generation and to the widening rift between the young and their parents. Bob Dylan provided these lyrics, as did the Beatles and many other musicians; while spirited performers like Janis Joplin made songs seem to come alive.

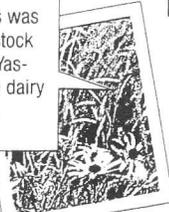
The use of electrically amplified instruments also drastically changed the sound and feel of the new music. One master of this new guitar sound was Jimi Hendrix, a musician from Seattle who lived overseas and achieved stardom only after returning to the United States with the influx of musicians from Great Britain.

At rock festivals such as Woodstock, in August 1969, and Altamont, in December of that same year, hundreds

## THE WOODSTOCK FESTIVAL, AUGUST 15-18, 1969

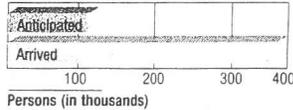
On one hot weekend in 1969, 400,000 of the nation's youth gathered for the "Woodstock Music and Art Fair, An Aquarian Exposition." The event made headlines around the country, shocking adults and raising young people's hopes for a peaceful, alternative culture.

**Before:** This was the pre-Woodstock scene at Max Yasgur's 600-acre dairy farm in Bethel, New York.



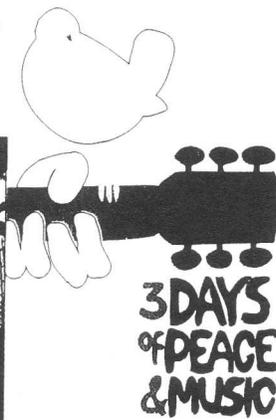
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ARCHIVE PHOTOS

### Woodstock Concertgoers

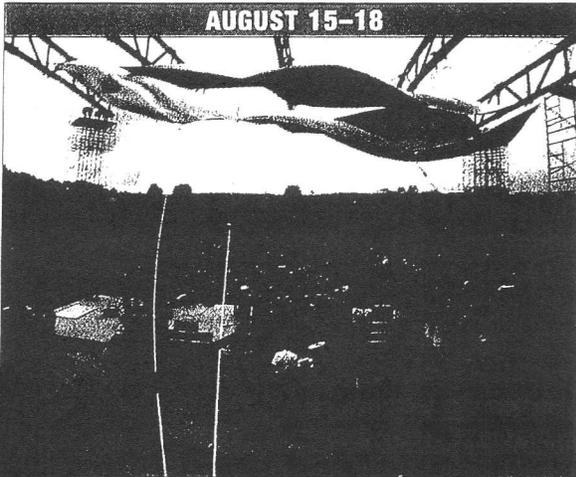


### "The Woodstock Nation"

The promoters vastly underestimated the audience that their festival would attract.



Roads became so jammed that people abandoned their cars and walked as far as 10 miles to the site.



© J. MARSHALL/GAMMA LIAISON



© SHELLY RIJSEN/BLACK STAR

**The Music** Musicians included Jefferson Airplane, the Grateful Dead, Janis Joplin, Joan Baez (left), and newcomers such as Santana. Music ended at 2:00 A.M. on Friday; on Saturday and Sunday, the music went all night. Jimi Hendrix went on at 8:30 A.M. on Monday.

**After:** All that was left was mud and debris, but the memories were strong.



© DELO Y. HERNANDEZ/STIGMA

Despite rain and crowded conditions, the mood at Woodstock was one of fun and friendship. What was the "schedule" of music, and who were some of the performers?



COLLECTION OF JOHN JENNINS III

Pop Art Andy Warhol's reproductions of images of famous personalities, such as this one of Elizabeth Taylor, made icons out of the familiar. What role did many pop artists want observers to take?

of thousands of people got together to celebrate the new music. Though the fast-paced, energetic beat of rock and roll was made for dancing, the style of dancing had changed dramatically. Each individual danced without a partner, surrounded by others who also danced alone—a perfect metaphor for the counterculture, which stressed individuality within the group.

### Art

During the 1960s, one art critic observed, the distinctions between traditional art and popular art, or pop art, dissolved. The primary purpose of pop art seemed to be to entertain. The entertainment, however, had a bite to it—a bite that for many gave the art enormous significance. In poking fun at the established culture, pop artists selected many of the same targets as did the counterculture—for example, a consumer society's love of material possessions.

Pop art derived its subject matter from elements of the popular culture, such as photographs, comics, advertisements, and brand-name products. Artist Andy Warhol, for example, used images of famous people,

such as Marilyn Monroe and Elizabeth Taylor, and repeated them over and over. Warhol also reproduced items such as boxes of household cleaning products, making the pictures as realistic as possible. Roy Lichtenstein used as his inspiration frames from comic strips. He employed the bold primary colors of red, yellow, and black, and in comic book fashion put words like *blam* and *pow* into his paintings.

Robert Rauschenberg incorporated actual objects into his art to break down the distinction between art and reality. A 1955 composition titled "Bed" included a real quilt and pillow. Claes Oldenburg reproduced common, everyday objects such as a three-way electric plug or a toilet bowl in giant scale.

Pop artists expected these symbols of popular culture to carry, as art, some of the same meaning as they did in their original form. The artists sometimes referred to themselves as only the "agents" of

the art and said it was up to the observer to give meaning to the work and thus become part of it.

An outgrowth of this philosophy was a new kind of theater staged by pop artists in the 1960s, called a "happening." An artist would set a scene, which differed at each performance, and allow each observer to express his or her reaction to what was presented. The response of the audience became part of the drama, and each performance was unique.

## The Counterculture Appraised

Counterculture Expands  
Consciousness but Takes a Toll

When the music faded away and the crowds at the corner of Haight and Ashbury packed up and returned home, what remained? The young people of the 1960s had forced people all across the country to take a look

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© SHILLY MUSTERBACK STAR

## An Inner Adventure

In the last analysis, was the counterculture a real movement? Not in the sense of the other modern efforts at social reform. These other efforts generally worked within the established social system and advocated organized political, legislative, and economic measures to accomplish concrete goals.

Although there were many in the counterculture who chose to effect change by working within the existing social system, there were also those who completely rejected this strategy. Commune members, for example, hoped that their success in establishing new ways for people to live together would encourage others to do the same. Some people were primarily interested in economic reforms, such as better wages and improved working conditions for the poor. Still others were dissatisfied with their lives and found in the symbols of the counterculture—long hair, peace signs, unconventional dress—the security and status of belonging to a group. All in all, many members of the counterculture were more concerned about their own inner adventures than social reform.

There was one issue, however, that had the power to draw together different elements from the counterculture and beyond. This issue was the war in Vietnam. The war itself, in turn, became the dominant issue on the social and political landscape of the United States, an issue that would reshape the nation's self-image in the decades to come.

**Feeling the Music** Janis Joplin and others used music as a form of self-expression. In what ways was the counterculture an expression of inner adventure?

...inside themselves for a brief moment and to question some fundamental values about the individual and society. Musical sounds were never the same again; colors were forever brighter.

### Dangers and Divisions

On the other hand, casual sex and the use of drugs took their toll. Many plans for social change were never achieved. People learned the hard way that ideals, such as love not war and sharing versus possessing, are not effective unless there is a plan to put them into action. Planning required organization and careful thought, which many rejected as characteristic of the Establishment.

The complications and contradictions in the movement were also apparent in the diversity of its members. Although there were those who were sincerely dedicated to specific goals of social justice for African Americans, women, Native Americans, and Hispanic Americans, even within these groups there were differences in thought and strategy that often undermined their efforts at social change.

## SECTION REVIEW

### Vocabulary

1. Define: counterculture, generation gap, hippie, commune, cultural diffusion, entrepreneur.

### Checking Facts

2. What were the major beliefs and values of the counterculture?
3. Why did urban and rural communal living fail in the counterculture?

### Critical Thinking

#### Synthesizing Information

4. In what ways did the counterculture itself become an “establishment”?

#### Linking Across Time

5. How did the counterculture help change the way Americans today think about food and diet?