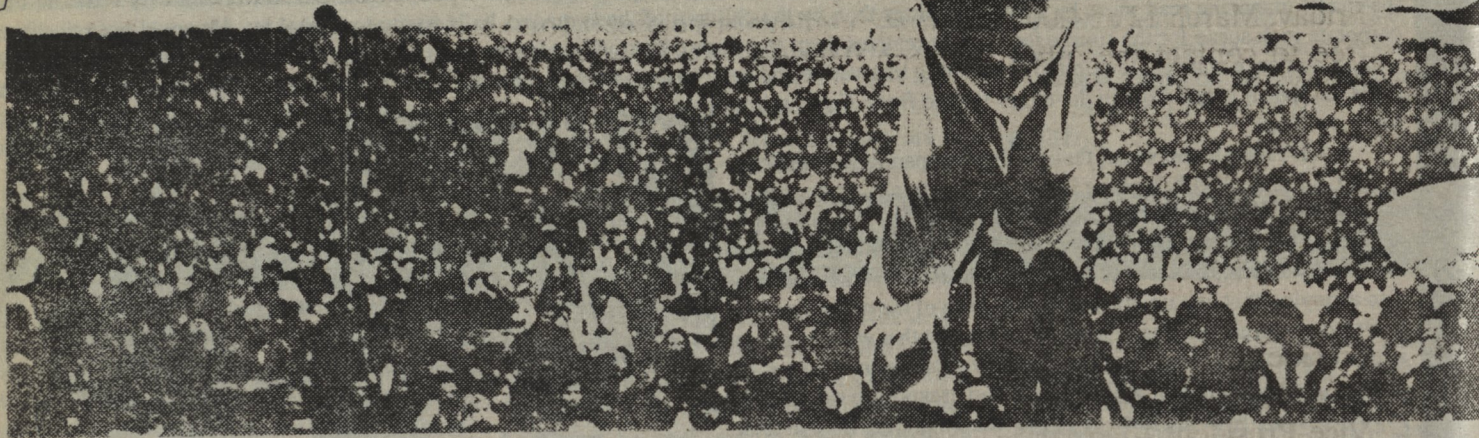


# TALKIN' 'BOUT MY GENERATION



by Lisa Thompson

There have been a lot of things written in this newspaper of the past year on the subject of our generation's identity, or lack thereof. We are the twentysomethings, the children of the very first baby boomers, who were born in the seventies and are coming of age in the nineties. Reams of articles have been written about us (but, of course, not as many as about the baby boomers...nobody can do it like the boomers, don't you know!), discussing our lack of a definitive culture. Having read many of these articles and discussed their ideas among other members of my age group, I heard a commercial on the radio the other day.

I think this particular commercial summed up, more succinctly than anything else I have heard, the problem at hand here. (And I will note, before I go any further, that I think that the problem is not with the culture of the twentysomething generation, but rather with the baby boomers' perception of us, themselves, and reality.) The text of the commercial ran like this:

(Glenn Miller background): The 40's wowed 'em with swing!

(Loud guitar background): The 60's wowed 'em with rock 'n' roll!

And the 90's wowed 'em with the Shopper's Drug Mart Wow Sale! This week pay only \$2.49 for ABC laundry detergent!..

You get the idea. Now, yes, it's only a rather silly commercial, but, really, if the people writing that commercial thought that there was an overwhelming cultural phenomena sweeping the nation in the 90's, they wouldn't have suggested that a sale on laundry detergent was the only thing we have to compare with the heyday of Swing. I don't think that this is realistically a problem of our generation not forming their own concept of identity and culture, but rather of the baby boomers, who still control the airwaves, not recognizing that it's there. It's not entirely their fault. They have spent the last 30 to 50 years of their lives listening to reports that tell them that they're in control of everything, and that their control has overwhelmed and dominated the world and the market, and will continue to do so until the very last boomer is pushing up the daisies (instead of wearing them in their hair!). Why would they ever think of giving up the global power they've been told they were born into?

Obviously, there are an awful lot of people out there who fall into

the boomer category. Obviously, that has an effect on the way this generation operates. But just to think in terms of reasonable logic, our generation has other things to plan for than getting training to work in the gazillions of nursing homes the boomers are going to be needing. We're only starting to take our places in the business world and broadcast images of our identity into the NEXT generation. (Notice how all the TV shows about life as a twentysomething are written and produced by boomers? To put this into terms that the boomers in my reading audience can understand: think how silly images of Sixtiesesque culture looked to the people who were actually living it--Like, groovy Daddy-O!) Some changes are going to come about, fast and furious. A prof of mine was reading out names of the students' favorite bands the other day. He knew who The Doors and Steppenwolf were, of course, and who Michael Jackson, U2, and Kriss Kross were, but he had never heard of Pearl Jam. Time for a reality check, here, folks! This is the generation that bred Pearl Jam, Sloan, and Eric's Trip. In Canada, this is the decade when Canadian music finally moved beyond Anne Murray and the Expo '67 CAA-NAA-DAA song. We're an environmentally conscious generation that does not need to grow buckwheat behind our ears to feel pure. And probably one of the biggest things about us, while it may be our media downfall, is that we don't have a need of a North America-wide common cultural experience to make us feel legitimate. It seems that everything we develop is pooh-pooed by the boomers, because they did it some way that they think is more special. Notice how nothing ever can compare to how it was in the 60's? Boomers have formed an exclusive club for themselves throughout the Western world, and membership is based on a life experience of a single decade that they've decided is important, not just to those who happened to think about it, or notice, or care, but to everyone everywhere.

You know, I'M pretty certain I know what my parents will say if they read this article. "You're not saying anything new, you know? Everybody talked like that in the '60's. It's been done to death. Knock it off." Well, nobody can ever say anything truly new--the best they can do is re-say the same old thing from their cultural perspective. From my cultural perspective, I say there's more to my generation than a sale on laundry detergent. ●