

# THE NEW YORKER

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## THE NEW SOUND

BY RENATA ADLER

One of the many things to accelerate in our time is the progress of the generations. It used to be that any given generation was separated from the generations that immediately preceded and followed it by between twenty and thirty years. Now the interval has diminished, not only because people marry and have children at an earlier age but also because the common attitudes and experiences by which a generation tends to define itself have come to vary so widely in so short a span of time. A few simple questions (Who came from the planet Krypton? What is the Breakfast of Champions? What position did Phil Rizzuto play?) quickly identify a generation and set it apart not only from its parents and its children but from its brothers and sisters as well. My generation, for example, is the last to remember the Second World War, and was the first to be subject to the draft in peacetime. We remember the war as something we collected silver paper, scrap iron, and milkweed pods for. (These last, we were told, were used in making parachutes; we became, in collecting them, the most virulently poison-ivied generation.) The war was also something that pervaded our nightmares and our comic books, in which one enemy conveniently identified himself by periodic exclamations of “*Jawohl!*” and “*Achtung!*,” the other by cries of “*Banzai!*” and a habit of disembowelling himself in lurid colors. The end of the war consisted for us of two nights on which we were permitted to stay up late and roam the streets, a morning on which bubble gum again became available, and a succession of weeks in which uniformed relatives came home. For people older than we, the war must have more solid associations, but for people two years younger it is only an episode recounted somewhere near the end of their history textbooks.

Since we were, in childhood, also the last pre-television generation, our tastes in certain respects were formed by comics and the radio. In comics—aside from the war kind—we were the last pre-horror, pre-space, and pre-true-romance generation; in radio, we were the last fans of the Lone Ranger, the Shadow, the Green Hornet (and, when we were sick at home, Helen Trent, Young Widder Brown, and Our Gal Sunday); we were also the last owners of Captain Midnight Code-a-graphs, for which we sent away labels from jars of Ovaltine. Ask anyone five years younger than we about the shortage of bubble gum, the military importance of milkweed pods, or the meaning of “SHAZAM,” and the gap between the generations opens up. And that chasm yawns even in the classroom; immediately after my generation learned to read, the command to “sound it out” became meaningless in most parts of the country. (Now that phonetic reading has come back, we can talk to the very young again.) Unhomogenized milk,

fillings without Novocain, avoiding beaches for fear of infantile paralysis—these experiences separate us from our immediate juniors. High-school dances without the Twist, college years without political enthusiasms, and a youthful vocabulary based on images of heat and extravagance (as opposed to “cool” and neat)—how are we to communicate with those only a few years younger than we? In one thing only, the generation now between twenty-five and thirty seems closer to the succeeding generations than to the middle-aged: we initiated the present era in disc jockeys and the music that they play. This is no trifling matter.

Let’s assume that a former radio addict who kicked the habit in 1954 now switches to WABC, 770 on the AM dial. If he is under thirty and has tuned in during news time, he may think for a moment that nothing has changed: Fred Foy, one of the newscasters, used to be the announcer for “The Lone Ranger,” and another, George Ansboro, used to be the announcer for “Young Widder Brown.” In a few minutes, however, he will hear one of the disc jockeys—Herb Oscar Anderson, Bob Dayton, Dan Ingram, Bruce Morrow, Charlie Greer, or Bob Lewis—and then, the chances are, his mood and *Weltanschauung* will change entirely. To begin with, he is likely to be addressed at once, familiarly, as “cousin,” for it is customary, on jukebox-music stations, to enlist disc jockeys and fans in some sort of group or family. At WABC, listeners are “cousins” and disc jockeys are “All Americans;” at WMCA, listeners are simply listeners, but disc jockeys are “Good Guys;” and at WINS, where disc jockeys are simply disc jockeys and listeners are simply listeners, the disc jockeys show their solidarity by playing basketball as a team and challenging all comers. However that may be, in any given quarter hour, our hypothetical WABC listener will be joining a chronologically mixed but aesthetically unified new generation of about a quarter of a million child cousins, teen-age cousins, and perennially young adult cousins who are listening to the new music—the New Sound—over what has become, according to The Pulse, Inc., a rating service, the most popular radio station in New York. (WOR, its nearest competitor, is a relatively non-generational “talk” station.) Our listener can hear WABC in most of New England and at least as far south as the United States Naval Base at Guantanamo. (Late at night, according to Station KOB, which is bringing suit, he can also hear it as far west as Albuquerque, New Mexico, where it allegedly interferes with local stations.)

Our listener will probably begin by turning the volume down, for, depending on the hour, he may be greeted by astral screams of “*Swing, Charlie, swing!*,” “*All the way with HOA!*,” “*More music and much more excitement, here at Dayton Place!*,” “*Bobaloo, the big fat Daddy Pool!*,” or “*Cousin Brucie! Cousin Brucie! Cousin Brucie! Cousin Brucie! Cousin Brucie!*” There may also be voices—apparently submerged in several feet of water—gurgling “*Your music authority, seventy-seven, WABeatleC!*,” and conversation thereafter always proceeds at fever pitch. The listener may be urgently invited to vote in the “Principal of the Year Contest” (sixteen million handwritten votes were received last year), to send in for a “Kissin’ Cousin Card” or a “Kemosabe Card” (a hundred and fifty thousand requests have been filled in a single week), to participate in a “Beatle Drawing Contest” (seventy-five thousand entries have been received, the winning entries to be exhibited in Huntington Hartford’s Gallery of Modern Art), or to send in a box top—any old box top—“just as a whim!” (A few days later, he may be asked whether he

knows anyone who can *use* a warehouseful of box tops.) If he has tuned in during the early morning, our listener will hear Herb Oscar Anderson crooning his theme song, "Hello Again," and reading notices about dogs and persons who have disappeared during the night. ("Dear Nancy, eighteen years old. We're sorry you left. Please come back and we'll forget all about it. Love, Mom and Dad." Nancy usually hears it and comes back; the lost dogs are usually found and returned, also.) In the late morning, he will hear Bob Dayton welcoming his listeners to "Dayton Place" and wishing a happy birthday to many of them. In the early afternoon, there is Dan Ingram, on "Your Ingram Singram" or "Your Ingram Flingram," announcing that he is there "laughing and biting, and scratching." Now and then, Dan will shout "Charge!" or announce a weather report as having come to him from "Peter the Meter Reader and our weather girl Fat Pontoon and her Soggy Stockings." In the evening, there is Bruce Morrow announcing, with terrific intensity, that it is or will soon be "Date Night," and giving all his girl listeners a big kiss (pronounced "mmmwa") as he asks all fans in cars to blow their horns at once. (If our listener has his window open, he will doubtless hear horns blowing all up and down the street.) Bruce Morrow may recount some recent escapade, like a breakdown of his car that forced him to buy a horse from the owner of an applectart and to ride it at full gallop through the Lincoln Tunnel on his way to a record hop in Palisades Park. Then it is time for Bob Lewis, "the big fat Daddy Poo," making weird choking noises to introduce a commercial for an exam cram book ("Kids, have exams got you by the throat?") and announcing record hops as far away as Galesburg, Michigan ("I don't think many of you will be able to attend this one, but . . ."). Finally, there is Charlie Greer, on "Your All Night Office Party," who repeatedly warns the listener, "Don't be a dial twister or I'll give you a Charlie Greer blister," until it is morning and time for Herb Oscar Anderson to sing "Hello Again" again. All the disc jockeys will keep up this continuous stream of chatter, singing with or answering back to records, relaying personal messages to fans, reading traffic reports phoned in by regular "cousins" (like Eddie Schmeltz, a construction worker in Passaic, and Joe Firmata, a hearse driver in Brooklyn), coughing, sneezing, groaning, chortling, or laughing wildly, until our listener is more than likely to be stunned into becoming a new-generation cousin himself.

These twenty-four hours of frenetic, high-pressure, high-volume sound emanate from Studio Three in the WABC radio offices at Broadway and Sixty-fourth Street. The studio is illuminated by fluorescent lights, and around its walls are four clocks—no one of which is quite synchronized with any other. The microphone into which the disc jockey of the hour speaks or sings has a tin horn, of the type used by New Year's Eve celebrants, protruding from its non-functional end. On the disc jockey's left is a five-foot-high, rotating cylindrical cartridge tree, containing small, transparent, rectangular tape cartridges of all the songs that will be played in the course of the hour. On his right are a telephone and a large glass-panelled cabinet, which contains a great pile of sugar cubes for his coffee. In front of him is a panel with red lights that flash when he is on the air, and beyond the panel is a radio engineer, who, as he manipulates tape cartridges and constantly alternates songs and commercials with station breaks, resembles an extremely dexterous short-order cook. Among the main jobs of the sound engineer is that of interrupting whatever may be going on with zany, irrelevant "wild tracks"—phrases clipped from old radio dramas or movie sound tracks or concocted expressly for the occasion. "See the

*zombie*, see the *mummy*, see the *zombie's mummy!*;" "Coach, will I *make the Hall of Fame?*;" "Hello, Edgar;" "Hi *ho, Edgar!*;" "You put in some carbolic acid, some sour *cream*, a little *broken glass*. . .;" "He's got that idealistic type *head*;" "We can *use* him in our *outfit*;" "I'm *sorry* I *asked*;" "That's a real *knee-slapper*;" "Stand *clear*, everybody;" "Oh, how can I *ever thank* you;" "It's *too* much to *take*. It's *horrible*;" "It's *best* that we *part*. [pause] You have another *wife*. [pause] And I have another *husband*. [pause] And *he* has another *wife*. [pause] And *she* has another *husband*. [long pause] Not the *least* complicated sort of situation, *is it?*"—these are among the hundreds of interruptions that occur during the programs, whenever the disc jockeys choose to fling the "wild" tapes to the engineers and the engineers are able to insert them. They not only keep the broadcasts at a high pitch but also protect everybody against the possibility that there will be a moment of unnecessary silence while any of the disc jockeys are on the air.

And underneath it all, of course, is the disc jockey's raw material, the jukebox music itself—approximately eighteen hours of it a day on WABC alone—and it is by this music, the New Sound, that the modern generation of cousins seems to be more or less clearly defined. The New Sound is indeed new—new rhythms, new chord progressions, new timbres, new subject matter for the lyrics. It is a lively, aggressive, often funny, seldom sentimental sound, and though much of it is downright ugly (suggesting to some the epithet "kallikakbox"), much of it is very good. The Sound can be traced back, historically, to 1954, when the late Alan Freed, a disc jockey for WINS, introduced Negro rhythm-and-blues numbers (like "Sincerely," by the Moonglows, and "Rock Around the Clock," by Bill Haley and his Comets) to his predominantly white audience, which had been accustomed, until that time, to popular music of the traditional sort—either straight big-band music or a vocalist backed by a big band—as played, for example, on Martin Block's "Make-Believe Ballroom" (the most popular disc-jockey show of the late forties and early fifties). Freed, who kept time by pounding on a telephone directory, selected music with an ever more pronounced beat. The rhythm section—drums, steel drums, guitars, electric guitars—began to dominate the instrumental groups in all the records Freed would consent to play. Within a short time (and until he was ruined by the payola scandals of 1960), Freed had become the most popular disc jockey on the air; to describe his music, he had adopted the expression "rock 'n' roll;" Elvis Presley had come upon the scene and become the country's leading performer; and the Make-Believe Ballroom sound had been superseded by the Age of Rock 'n' Roll.

On the business end, meanwhile, the spread of rock 'n' roll was accelerated by the fantastic growth of B.M.I., a songwriters' and song publishers' society organized by the broadcasting companies themselves, in 1940, as a rival to A.S.C.A.P. From 1914, when it was founded, until 1940, A.S.C.A.P. had been, for all practical purposes, the only performance-rights society for composers of popular music. In 1939, A.S.C.A.P. was receiving a fee from broadcasters equal to approximately five per cent of the industry's income, in return for a blanket license to play A.S.C.A.P. music. In 1940, when it was rumored among broadcasters that A.S.C.A.P. was about to raise its fee to between seven and a half per cent and fifteen per cent, six hundred stations quickly banded together to form B.M.I., which began to enlist non-A.S.C.A.P. composers—many of them unknown and some of them high-school students or dropouts—to

produce songs at a blanket license fee that the stations felt they could afford. In early 1941, when the new A.S.C.A.P. rates were offered to the broadcasters, some seventy-five per cent of them chose not to renew their A.S.C.A.P. contracts. The result was that these stations were unable to play A.S.C.A.P. music and turned to B.M.I. as their principal source of musical material. Although A.S.C.A.P. made peace with the industry later that year, B.M.I. was firmly established in the performance-rights business and served thereafter as the way to financial success for the young, unknown composers—exactly the ones who later produced rock 'n' roll. The impact on the popular-music industry was profound: In 1939, there were a thousand composers and a hundred and thirty-seven publishers (all of whom were represented by A.S.C.A.P.) entitled to fees for performance rights; in 1964, there were eighteen thousand songwriters and ten thousand publishers (some half of them members of B.M.I.) entitled to fees. The price of blanket licenses, meanwhile, had dropped, in the case of A.S.C.A.P. to slightly over two per cent, while that of B.M.I. was established at an average of one per cent. One consequence of all this was the development of a new breed—the hugely successful teenage composers and performers, some of whom rose only briefly out of the professional heap and then sank into anonymity again.

Once rock 'n' roll had swept the nation, there was a pause between the generations, and a standoff: the 78-r.p.m. set stuck loyally by its traditional pop tunes and show tunes; the teenagers bought their Elvis Presley 45s. Then, in 1958, came an important extra-musical development, the hula hoop, and, in the early sixties, the Twist, cutting across generational lines and setting the country, from nursery to geriatrics ward, into agitated, rhythm-oriented motion. (The same hip movements that were considered outrageous when Elvis Presley made his first appearance suddenly acquired respectability.) By 1964, the Beatles had arrived, consolidated the New Sound, and demonstrated once and for all the new affluence of the generation between six and eighteen and its power to take over the airwaves, where the Sound now reigns supreme.

The New Sound, as it has evolved, manages to accommodate a wide variety of old sounds, and what you are likely to hear on WABC now is a musical amalgam—a product of African influences, folk influences, jazz influences, blues influences, West Indian influences, Latin-American influences, Country Western influences, Gospel influences, boudoir influences, nursery influences, and political influences, as well as tape and echo-chambers—but if you have trouble describing a new song to your own satisfaction, let a record review in the magazine *Cash Box* suggest a vocabulary. You may have heard a “pulsating shuffle-wobble ballad,” or a “plaintively harmonic, rhythmic warmhearted romancer with a contagious repeating melody riff,” or even an “infectious shuffle-beat rock-a-cha-cha that’s loaded with commercial ingredients.” If someone is in a nostalgic state of mind, he must buy a record and turn it over to the “underlid . . . a re-release of the pretty, soft-beat cha-cha weeper click of a while back” (“a while back,” in current New Sound usage, is one or two years), or find “on the flip . . . a lilting reworking of the tender folk chestnut.” Pulsating shuffle-wobble ballads, contagious repeating melody riffs, shuffle-beat rock-a-cha-chas, soft-beat cha-cha weeper clicks, and lilting reworkings of tender chestnuts will not come as any surprise to members of the “Cry” and “Hound-dog” generation, but to the pre-45-r.p.m. generation they

may present problems.

he first line of access to the New Sound consists in holding still for a few minutes and catching the words of the songs themselves. This is not easy. The practice of “dubbing over” (superimposing several recordings by a single voice to produce the effect of several voices) and the strongly articulated rhythm of the (predominantly percussion) instruments guarantee that the new songs cannot be understood within their first five hearings. By the sixth, however, a determined listener begins to make progress. It is important at the outset to listen for and filter out nonsense syllables. “Tra la la” has vanished, for the most part, but “sha la la” is in, and there are many other equivalents. “Weem a waffa,” “shoop shoop,” “do wah diddy,” “do lang ooh lang ooh lang,” “da do ron ron,” “rama lama ding dong,” “she ba,” and “yeh yeh yeh yeh” are the current meaningless markers of time, or indicators of inexpressible emotion. Sometimes the words that *do* mean something present problems of their own. Intensive study of a musically splendid recording, “Shut Down,” by the Beach Boys, yields, for the first twenty hearings, nothing intelligible. Five hearings more yields the following:

Tak it up, tak it up, buddy, gonna shut you down.  
It happened on the strip where the road is wide,  
Two cool shorts standin’ side by side.  
Yea, my fuel-injected Stingray and a Four Thirteen  
Revvin’ up our engines, and it sounds real mean.  
Tak it up, etc.  
Declinin’ numbers at an even rate,  
At the count of one, we accelerate.  
My Stingray is light, the slicks are startin’ to spin,  
But the Four Thirteen’s wheels are diggin’ in.  
Gotta be cool now. Powershift, here we go.  
The Superstock Dodge is windin’ out in low,  
But my fuel-injected Stingray’s really startin’ to go.  
To get the traction, I’m a-ridin’ the clutch.  
My pressure plate’s burnin’, that machine’s too much.  
Pedal’s to the floor, hear his dual quads drink.  
And now the Four Thirteen’s lead is startin’ to shrink.  
He’s hot with ram induction, but it’s understood.  
There’s a fuel-injected engine sittin’ under my hood.  
Shut it off, shut it off, buddy, now shut you down.

This song, which dominated the record charts for a number of weeks in 1963, and which is still played on many radio stations as an “oldie but goodie” or a “solid-gold hit from out of the past,” clearly represents a change in spirit and an advance in knowledgeability from its nearest old-style analogue, “In My Merry Oldsmobile.” The older generation, however, is by no means barred from the highways of the New Sound. There is, for example, “The Little Old Lady from Pasadena,” than whom, at the wheel, “there’s nobody meaner;” she finds it impossible to withdraw her foot from the accelerator until she is separated by a full car’s length from every motorized rival. Or, on the same general subject, there is the ageless lyric simplicity of “Wipe Out,” by the Surfari; the song consists of car noises and the words “Wipe out,” uttered only

once and followed by some maniacal laughter and some agitated, though melodic, strumming.

Where there is speed there are hazards, and the New Sound takes ample account of them. The automotive casualties are legion. They began in the fifties with “The Death of Hank Williams,” a relatively low-key account of the demise, by heart attack, of a famous folk singer in the back seat of his chauffeured car. In 1960 came Ray Peterson with “Tell Laura,” the story of a young man who tried to earn in a stock-car race the price of a wedding ring for his fiancée. From his deathbed, and later from his grave, his ghostly voice sang the refrain

Tell Laura I love her.  
Tell Laura I need her.  
Tell Laura not to cry.  
My love for her  
Will never die.

Within months, there was the young man who tried to persuade his girl to leave a car that was stuck on the railroad tracks. She remained loyal to the car, and the result was “Teen Angel”:

Teen angel, can you hear me?  
Teen angel, can you see-ee me?  
Are you somewhere up above?  
And am I still your own true love?

More recently, there have been “Dead Man’s Curve” and “Last Kiss”—in which a young driver, blood streaming into his eyes, asks the question

Where, oh where can my baby be?  
The Lord took her away from me.  
She’s up in heaven so I’ve got to be good. . . .

There are also motorcycle fatalities, one of the most recent being “The Leader of the Pack.” In this one, the girl’s parents disapprove of her association with a motorcyclist. She breaks off with him, reminding him in parting to drive carefully. Roar, screech, crunch:

I’ll never forget him, the leader of the pack.

Although the verbal content of these songs may be far from sunny, they are by no means musically morose. The New Sound, with a beat so distinct and regular that even the most arhythmically inclined teen-ager cannot fail to catch it and adjust his steps to it, is an eminently *danceable* sound, and it is not at all rare to find a roomful of couples shuffle-wobbling to songs with overtones of widowhood, like the Beatles’ “Baby’s in Black [And I’m Feelin’ Blue],” or, more recently, of suicide, like “Terry,” by Twinkle:

He said to me he wanted to be near to me.  
He said he never wanted to be out of my sight.  
But it’s too late to give this boy my love tonight.  
Please wait at the gate of Heaven for me,

Terry.

He said to me he wanted to be close by my side.  
We had a quarrel. I was untrue on the night that he died.  
But it's too late to tell this boy how great he was.  
Please wait at the gate of Heaven for me,  
Terry.

He rode into the night,  
Accelerated his motorbike.  
I cried to him in fright,  
Don't do it, don't do it, don't do it. . . .

One day he'll know how much I prayed for him to live.  
Please wait at the gate of Heaven for me,  
Terry.

With a total incongruity of musical style and verbal subject matter (radio fans can remember from the fifties the musical dirge "Oh Happy Day [Oh Lucky Me]"), any number of harsh and serious realities can be lightheartedly accommodated in the New Sound. Sociological themes, for example, can be treated with a certain subtlety and depth, and social geography, in particular, has lately received much earnest commentary. In the fifties, there was the relatively unthinking treatment of urban neighborhoods in "Penthouse Number Three":

Uptown, in Penthouse Number Three.  
Uptown, that's where I want to be.

Then, a few years later (in a kind of pulsating weeper clik with Casbah undertones), the urban East-West axis came under consideration, with Gene Pitney's "Mecca":

I live on the West side,  
She lives on the East side  
Of the street.  
And though they say that East is East,  
And West is West,  
And never the twain shall meet,  
Each morning I face her window,  
And pray that our love can be,  
'Cause that brownstone house  
Where my baby lives  
Is Mecca, Mecca  
To me.

In 1962, a fine record called "Uptown," by the Crystals, reflected a serious change, and "uptown" acquired the meaning it must have for a large proportion of both the audience and the creators of the New Sound:

He gets up every morning and he goes Downtown,  
Where everyone's his boss, and he's lost in an angry land.

He's a little man.  
But when he comes Uptown each evening  
To my tenement,  
Uptown, where folks don't have to pay much rent,  
And when he's there with me, he can see  
That he's everything.  
Then he's tall, he's so tall he's a king.

Downtown, he's one of a million guys,  
He don't get no breaks and he takes all they've got to give,  
'Cause he's got to live.  
But then he comes Uptown, where he can hold his head up high,  
Uptown he knows that I'll be standing by.  
And when I take his hand, there's no man  
Who can put him down.  
The world is sweet, it's at his feet,  
When he's Uptown.

In 1963, the Drifters reintroduced a vertical dimension to the flight from sociological realities in "Up on the Roof," and in 1964 they amplified this notion with "Under the Boardwalk." (Such continuity in songs by a single group, or by different groups, is not uncommon. When the Drifters' "Saturday Night at the Movies" sold a million copies, they made "[Friday Night] At the Club." When Lesley Gore's "It's My Party and I'll Cry If I Want To" sold a million copies, she made "Now It's Judy's Turn to Cry." Ferlin Husky's "Dear John" was answered in "Dear Anne," and Jim Reeve's "He'll Have to Go" was followed by "He'll Have to Stay." The melody usually, but not necessarily, varies from original to sequel.) Most recently, however, an English singer named Petula Clark took note of changes in the social climate with what is almost certainly the best, and what promises to be the most popular, demographic statement of them all, "Downtown":

When you're alone, when life is making you lonely,  
You can always go Downtown.  
When you've got worries, all the noise and the hurry  
Seems to help, I know. Downtown.  
Just listen to the music of the traffic in the city,  
Linger on the sidewalks where the neon signs are pretty.  
How can you lose?  
The lights are much brighter there.  
You can forget all your troubles, forget all your cares.  
So go Downtown.  
Things will be great when you're Downtown.  
You'll find a place for sure Downtown.  
Everything's waiting for you . . . .

**W**hen social consciousness infiltrated the New Sound, a certain personal worldliness crept in as well, and nowhere is this trend more clearly evident than in the new treatment of that old theme unfaithfulness in love. Perhaps under the influence of

the “Frankie and Johnnie” folk tradition, or perhaps because the modern teen-ager is so frequently a married man himself, the old-fashioned love triangle no longer afflicts only couples going, simply and trustingly, steady; it afflicts married couples as well. No fewer than eight recent, more or less danceable hits—“Devil Woman,” “Go On Home,” “Walk On By [Wait on the Corner],” “If a Woman Answers [Hang Up the Phone],” “Smoky Places,” “Walk Away,” “Bye Bye Baby,” and “My Love Forgive Me”—are explicitly concerned with adultery, as the couples contemplate, arrange, renounce, or terminate a rendezvous. Here, for example, is the awkward situation in “Bye Bye Baby”: If you hate me after what I say . . . Here, for example, is the awkward situation in “Bye Bye Baby”:

If you hate me after what I say . . .  
I’ve just got to tell you anyway. . . .  
Should’ve told you that I can’t linger,  
There’s a weddin’ band on my finger. . . .  
Bye bye, baby: baby, goodbye.

This sort of wavering on the matrimonial front seems to have engendered a certain detachment, even heartlessness, in males who are involved in merely non-adulterous triangles. The lover in a song called “She Cried,” for example, recounts how he told his old girl that he no longer loved her, and takes a certain satisfaction in the result. She cried. Encouraged, he made matters a little worse by telling her of his new love. She cried again. Finally, he kissed her (“a kiss that only meant goodbye”), and a full chorus announces triumphantly that, once again, “*She cried.*” (He sings about this scene of rejection with a certain clinical interest, as though breaking the news had been a laboratory experiment with a gratifyingly lachrymose result.)

The girls have not taken such blows to love and marriage lightly. The woman’s voice on the jukebox is the voice of society still, and in the face of male inconstancy that voice is taking on an increasingly hysterical ring. On the one hand, there is a kind of ostrich attitude—“Don’t Say Nothin’ Bad About My Baby,” “People Say [But I Don’t Care What the People May Say],” and “Maybe I Know”:

Maybe I know that he’s been a-cheatin’  
Maybe I know that he’s been untrue-oooh,  
But what can I do?

Some girls are running in desperation to their mothers, who deliver grave warnings of the possible consequences of boy’s inhumanity to girl, notably in “Whenever a Teenager Cries”:

Rain falling from the skies,  
Bluebirds they don’t fly,  
The stars, they’re not so bright,  
The moon stays in at night.  
It seems the whole world dies  
Whenever a teenager cries.  
. . . tears will fill my eyes, etc.

The tears filling the maternal eye, however, are nothing compared to the new glint in the eye of

the daughter, for far more common than the ostrich or run-to-mother attitude toward male infidelity is the development of a truly formidable female aggressiveness. It began slowly, with some tentative statements of policy in regard to the opposite sex—a girl’s shaky resolve, for example, to accost an admired stranger, in “Easier Said Than Done”:

My friends all tell me Go to him, Run to him,  
Say sweet lovely things to him,  
My friends all tell me Sing to him, Swing with him,  
Just do anything for him . . .

Now, I know that I love him so,  
But I’m afraid that he’ll never know. . . .

Tell him he’s the one. . . .  
But it’s easier, easier said than done.

And the leisurely advance of the Shirelles, in “I Met Him on Sunday”:

Well, I met him on Sunday,  
And I missed him on Monday,  
Well, I found him on Tuesday,  
Well, I dated him Wednesday,  
And I kissed him on Thursday. . . .

Then came the swift and brutally forthright proclamations of open season—“Today I Met the Boy I’m Going to Marry” (a clearly unilateral decision) and “I Want to Be Bobby’s Girl,” in which the vocalist, having been informed by a male chorus that she’s “not a kid anymore,” succinctly states her life’s ambition:

When people ask of me,  
What would you like to be?  
Now that you’re not a kid anymore. . . .  
I know just what to say,  
I answer right away,  
There’s just one thing I’ve been wishing for:  
*I want to be Bobby’s girl,*  
*I want to be Bobby’s girl,*  
That’s the most important thing to me.  
*I want to be Bobby’s girl,*  
Etc.

Another female vocalist announces not just an ambition but a *fait accompli*: “I Have a Boyfriend!” —and any girl who does not already possess, or who breaks ranks in the pursuit of, this valuable commodity is likely to incur the wrath of a whole female chorus (choruses in the New Sound tend to perform as did the chorus in Greek tragedy; they comment on the action, sometimes representing Fate), notably the Shirelles, in “Foolish Little Girl”:

Foolish little girl, fickle little girl,  
You didn’t want him when he wanted you.

Well, he's found another love,  
It's her he's dreaming of  
And there's not a single thing that you can do.

When the foolish little girl in question keeps protesting softly, "But I love him, I still love him," the implacable chorus simply shouts her down with a shrill "Nyah, nyah, nyah, nyah, nyah, nyah!" "Nyah" is itself, of course, an unmistakably little-girl sound, and the fact that the hunting age is diminishing yearly is evidenced in many lyrics besides this one—for example, the predatory nursery song "My Boy Lollipop."

Confronted by all this (increasingly precocious) female ferocity, masculine confidence seems to have ebbed a bit. Men are demurring that their mothers told them to "Shop Around," or are consulting "Father Sebastian," or are entreating friends to "Tell Her No," or holding interior pep rallies ("Talk Back Trembling Lips"), or devoting themselves entirely to drag racing, or threatening to leave for "Surf City." Others are becoming solicitous ("What's the Matter with You, Baby?" "What in the World's Come Over You?") or conciliating ("Daddy's Home," which, reassuring as it is meant to be, has the subdued but ominous refrain "rat-a-tat-tat"). Some are regressing to boyhood fantasies that yield readily to psychoanalysis:

Puff, the Magic Dragon lived by the sea,  
And frolicked in the autumn mist in a land called Honah Lee.  
Little Jackie Paper loved that rascal Puff,  
And brought him strings and sealing wax and other fancy stuff. . . .  
Together they would travel on a boat with billowed sail.  
Jackie kept a lookout perched on Puff's gigantic tail. . . .

And others are resorting, in desperation, to medicinal expedients:

I took my troubles down to Madame Ruth,  
You know, that gypsy with the gold capped tooth.  
She got a pad down at 34th and Vine,  
Sellin' little bottles of Love Potion Number Nine.

I told her that I was a flop with chicks.  
(I've been this way since 1956.)  
She looked at my palm and she made a magic sign.  
She said: "What you need is Love Potion Number Nine" . . .

I didn't know if it was day or night,  
I started kissin' ev'rything in sight.  
But when I kissed the cop down at 34th and Vine,  
He broke my little bottle of Love Potion Number Nine. . . .

Unless the kissing of cops (and their subsequent breaking of bottles) can be interpreted as symbolizing a distrust of authority figures, there seems to be little overt rebelliousness in the lyrics of the New Sound. Elders (parents, prelates) are constantly being consulted for advice in new songs, and "Abigail Beecher [Classroom Teacher]" is as swinging a character as "The Little

Old Lady from Pasadena.” There *is* one mild and minor revolutionary with the name—made famous in a quite different context—“Charlie Brown” (“He called the English teacher ‘Daddy-o’”). And there is a couple terrified of parents in “Wake Up Little Susie” (they fell asleep at the movies, and no one at home will ever believe *that*). There are many couples who are fleeing and hiding for one reason or another. But, by and large, the New Sound is, at least on the surface, a law-abiding, civic-minded, elder-respecting sound. Under the surface, however, a kind of half-conscious, half-articulate revolution-by-ellipsis seems to be going on. It is expressed through lyrics that can be interpreted as hinting at forbidden practices (prostitution in “The House of the Rising Sun,” drug addiction in “Walk Right In,” and marijuana smoking in “Puff, the Magic Dragon”), which are never directly referred to in the songs themselves; through song titles that are suggestive and lyrics that contain double-entendres; through the theme of self-destruction in songs in which lovers meet sudden death; and through the primitive tempo and the high noise level of some of the music. Transgressions against authority are seldom frankly acknowledged. (In a song called “Give Him a Great Big Kiss,” when a chorus suggests to the soloist that her boyfriend is “bad,” she feels called upon to explain that “he’s good-bad, but he’s not evil.”) What direct violence there is is done to the laws of grammar, and there seems to be a trend toward superficial obedience even in this realm: a current song is called, magnificently, “It Was I.”

Some of the New Sound—exemplified in such records as “Rhythm of the Rain,” by the Cascades; “Little Children,” by Billy J. Kramer; “Keep Searchin’,” by Del Shannon; “Dawn,” by the Four Seasons; “Fun, Fun, Fun,” by the Beach Boys; “Pretty Woman,” by Roy Orbison; “Don’t Think Twice,” by Peter, Paul, and Mary; “Hello Stranger,” by Barbara Lewis; “Needles and Pins,” by the Searchers; and almost anything by Petula Clark, Elvis Presley, Ricky Nelson, the Beatles, Peter and Gordon, or the Everly Brothers—has already acquired musical standing among musicians who are not themselves connected with the New Sound. And the names of some of the other performers—the Zombies, the Kinks, the Gestures, the Righteous Brothers, the Soul Sisters, Solomon Burke, Adam Faith, Marianne Faithfull, the Miracles, Major Lance, Travis Wammack, the Contours, the Orlons, the Chiffons, Bent Fabric, the Jelly Beans, Reparata and the Delrons, Ronnie Dove, Bobby Bare, Bobby Bland, the Honeycombs, the Dixie Cups, the Butterflies, Ronny and the Daytonas, Gladys Knight and the Pips, Martha and the Vandellas, Brian Poole and the Tremeloes, Alvin Cash and the Crawlers, Patty and the Emblems, the Tokens, the Supremes, the Temptations, the Quotations, the Vibrations, the Serendipity Singers, the Exciters, the Wailers, the Reflections, the Beau Brummels, the Radiants, the Cookies, the Murmaids, the Sapphires, the Pyramids, the Shangri-Las, the Rivas, the Chariots, and the Spaniels—seem to entitle them to a hearing on the ground of poetry alone. Finally, the sheer eclecticism of the New Sound—the incorporation of various musical strains, the unlikely combinations of instruments (for example, guitar with steel drums and trumpet), the persistent phenomenon of white performers trying to sound like Negroes and (through dubbing over) of a single performer sounding like many, the occurrence of English groups with names like the Nashville Teens (and with Negro-American accents), and the generally wide range of the subject matter of the lyrics—makes for a creative ferment and may lead anywhere.

**W**ABC is not, of course, the only station to propagate the New Sound. Stations all over the country thrive upon it. In New York, there is still WINS, where rock 'n' roll first gained its wide acceptance, but in 1961 WINS staged a Sinatra Marathon, which, for the first two days, enjoyed a huge success but which, in the weeks thereafter, caused fans under thirty to desert the station in such numbers that its ratings have never quite recovered; and a few weeks ago, Murray the K, its most popular disc jockey (famous for his convention of putting "iaz" after the first letters of words, and for introducing the expression "It's what's *happenin'*, baby" into the modern disc-jockey idiom), announced his intention of leaving the station and touring England with the Biazeatles (who have designated him honorary Beatle Number Five). WMGM used to be a popular New Sound station, but in 1962 it changed its name to WHN and began to play a soft, Muzak-like sound, from which its ratings have never fully recovered, either. WMCA is now WABC's nearest New Sound rival, and seems to be broadening its New Sound listenership. There is also WWRL, a highly successful Negro-oriented radio station, which plays Gospel and rhythm-and-blues numbers under the general heading "Soul Music." But WABC has one advantage over every other New Sound station in New York. It belongs to the A.B.C. network, and thus has access to facilities that the non-network, independent stations do not enjoy. This advantage was apparent, for example, on the Beatles' last visit to New York, when WABC alone had the facilities to broadcast directly from Delmonico's, where the Beatles were staying. Outside the hotel, on the night of the Beatles' arrival, there was the usual crowd of shrieking teen-agers. As the Beatles entered the lobby, one of the girls tore off Ringo's St. Christopher medal. Ringo was upset, and appealed to the WABC staff members at the hotel to help find the medal. They in turn began to broadcast appeals to their listeners, and two of the WABC disc jockeys emerged from the hotel, in the hope of finding the over-avid teen-ager in the crowd that still pressed against the barricades in front of the hotel. Sure enough, she was still out there, screaming. The disc jockeys quickly captured the girl, and, on an inspiration of the moment, and with her coöperation and her mother's permission (given on the telephone), took her to a suite in the hotel. Then, for the rest of the night, the station broadcast moving appeals for the return of the medal, and frantic telephone interviews with fans who claimed to know its whereabouts. Within hours, the other New Sound stations had unsuspectingly cribbed the appeal. In the morning, WABC produced the medal and the girl, who was more than compensated for her night away from home by a joyful reunion with Ringo (and ample coverage in the press). With such facilities, such ingenuity, and such presence of mind, it is not surprising that WABC should be New York's most popular radio station.

One curious aspect of the New Sound is the process whereby the radio stations choose the songs they will play for the public. At WABC, whose procedure is fairly typical, the disc jockeys meet every Tuesday morning at ten o'clock in the office of Rick Sklar, the station's program director, to select the numbers for the following week. Mr. Sklar is a brown-haired, green-eyed man of thirty-five, who worked for WMGM in its heyday, and WINS in its heyday. His office is a comfortable place, full of chairs, a desk, a sofa, and some hi-fi equipment. Behind the desk hangs a large reproduction of the Mona Lisa (a leftover from a Mona Lisa painting contest that WABC held some years ago), and in the Mona Lisa's hand is a transistor radio. On top of the

desk lies a paperweight in the shape of a football helmet, and on the walls of the office are various framed awards from Chambers of Commerce, Army and Air Force recruiters, youth groups, and Mayor Wagner, the last for WABC's cooperation in the city's Stay-in-School campaign. By the time the disc jockeys enter the office, however, all the frames have been turned askew by Dan Ingram, who performs this prank every Tuesday morning, knowing that the program director cannot bear to see a picture that is not hanging straight. Mr. Sklar carefully and rather resignedly rights the frames, and the morning's session begins. The meetings are top secret, but a log is kept for future reference by Ellie Lewis, Mr. Sklar's young secretary, and Jim Maher, the young man who is the station's record librarian.

The group has before it a variety of national and local record surveys, and piled up on a cabinet that contains the hi-fi equipment are about fifty new releases, which were brought in on the previous Friday by salesmen for the record companies. (These salesmen, being under terrific pressure from the companies they represent, often put substantial pressure on the station to play a song. Since the payola scandals, however, this pressure is mainly of an emotional sort, and tears at sales interviews are not uncommon.) What the local surveys show to be the top twenty records will be played automatically, and certain other records, ranging back, usually, to about 1960, will be played as "solid gold hits from out of the past." It remains for the meeting to choose a few new records to play—only a few, for a large number of unfamiliar records played in rapid succession provokes, in WABC's experience, instant tuneoff—and, from these, to choose a record to be played hourly, as the station's "Pick Hit of the Week."

Once Herb Oscar Anderson, Bob Dayton, Dan Ingram, Bruce Morrow, and Bob Lewis (who range in age from twenty-seven to thirty-five) are on the scene, Rick Sklar puts a record on the turntable. (Charlie Greer, having been up all night at the Office Party, rarely attends these sessions.) At a recent session, it was "Thou Shalt Not Steal," by Dick and Deedee, No. 23 on *Record World's* "100 Top Pops" for the week.

"I don't hear it," said Dan Ingram.

"I dig it," said Bob Dayton. "That's always the kiss of death."

Rick Sklar sighed. "All right," he said. "Play something else."

Rick Sklar's secretary put on another record—"Breakaway," by the Turtlenecks.

"What's he saying—'Break a leg?'" asked Bob Dayton.

"Well, you see, Bob, it's this theatrical thing," said Dan Ingram.

"Very funny," said Rick Sklar. "What's next, Ellie?"

"'Moody Blues,'" she said.

"Don't talk baby talk, Ellie," said Bob Lewis.

"I can't help it. That's what it's called," she said.

“Sounds like the epitome of abomination and putrefaction,” said Dan Ingram.

“Speaking of ‘Moody Blues,’ did you know octopuses turn blue when they get excited?” asked Bob Lewis.

“Yes,” said Dan Ingram. “And some dinosaurs are no larger than a chicken.”

“*Must* we have this, fellows?” asked Rick Sklar. “After all, this involves people’s careers. Put on the Wayne Newton record, Ellie.”

“Has his voice changed yet?” asked Dan Ingram, seriously.

“No, but they’ve put the Beach Boys behind him,” said Rick Sklar.

“Where’s Newton himself?” asked Bob Dayton after the record had been playing for a while.

“They must have buried him.”

“He the guy singing ‘ooh-ah,’ or what?” asked Herb Oscar Anderson.

Rick Sklar shook his head, and called for another record.

“I don’t hear it,” said Herb Oscar Anderson.

“It’s on the Barf label,” said Bob Dayton.

“More fun than an open grave,” said Dan Ingram.

“Fooh pooh,” said Bruce Morrow, and laughed.

“Forget it,” said Rick Sklar. “The year is 1947. It’s not going to happen.”

“I certainly don’t fall out over it,” said Dan Ingram. He walked over to the window. “New York is a rumpled Cadillac fender,” he said.

Rick Sklar tried a new record—“The Boy from New York City,” by the Ad Libs:

Tell you about the boy from New York City.

You ought to see how he walks. . . .

He has the finest penthouse I’ve ever seen in town. . . .

“Sounds to me like a thousand mules,” said Dan Ingram.

“You’ve got to hear it as you hear it on a transistor,” said Rick Sklar, and he turned the treble up and the volume down.

“It’s going to be a mother,” said Dan Ingram.

“Yeah, it has the Dan Ingram Seal of Upheaval,” said Bruce Morrow.

They agreed to play “The Boy from New York City” the following week.

Rick Sklar later dismissed a song called “Jolly Green Giant” (on the ground that it sounded like

a disguised commercial for canned vegetables), a song called “Twine Time” (on the ground that its lyrics contained lines that were in questionable taste), and a song called “Letter from Vietnam” (on the ground that it was just plain terrible). Everyone had coffee, and Bruce Morrow put five sugar cubes in his cup.

“I’ve got a song for you by Jerry Lewis’s son Gary,” said Rick Sklar, and put “This Diamond Ring” on the turntable.

Ellie and Jim got up and began to dance.

“It’s a wild one,” said Dan Ingram. “Scares away the old folk. I like it.”

“How old is Jerry’s boy now?” asked Bruce Morrow.

“Ninety-two,” said Herb Oscar Anderson.

By the end of the session, the disc jockeys had dropped eight records that had been played during the preceding week, and had picked up eight new ones. They had also decided to ask Shirley Ellis, singer of a hit song called “The Name Game” (“Shirley, Shirley, Bo Birley, Banana Fanna, Fo Firley, Fee Fi, Mo Mirley, Shirley”), to do a “Name Game” record based on the names of the WABC disc jockeys. As “Pick Hit of the Week,” they had selected a folksy, danceable re-release of an old weeper click about nuclear fallout—“What Have They Done to the Rain?,” by the Searchers.

With that, the meeting broke up.

“Don’t talk too much on the air, boys,” said Rick Sklar. “The audience may want to hear the music.”

Everyone laughed.

From Studio Three, over radios scattered through the WABC offices, everyone could now hear the current “Pick Hit of the Week”—“The ‘In’ Crowd,” by Dobie Gray, rather cheerfully truculent in tone:

I’m In with the In crowd. I go where the In crowd goes.  
I’m In with the In crowd, and I know what the In crowd knows.  
How to have fun any time of year. Don’t you hear.  
How to have fun dressin’ fine, makin’ time,  
We breeze up and down the street.  
We get respect from the people we meet.  
They make way, day or night.  
They know the In crowd is out of sight.  
I’m In with the In crowd. I know every latest dance.  
When you’re In with the In crowd, it’s easy to find romance.  
And we work out at a spot where the beat’s really hot.  
Yeah, we work out. If it’s square, we ain’t there.  
We make every minute count.  
Our share is always the biggest amount.  
Other guys imitate us, but the original’s still the greatest.

We got our own way of walkin'.  
Got our own way of talkin'.  
Gotta have fun any time of the year.  
Don't you hear?  
Gotta have fun, spendin' cash, talkin' trash.  
Girl, I'll show you a real good time.  
Come on with me and leave your troubles behind.  
I don't care where you've been.  
You ain't been nowhere till you've been In  
With the In crowd.  
We gotta a whole way of walkin', a whole way of talkin', yeh.  
In the In crowd.

The In crowd seems to be a young crowd, with a distinct sense of urgency, affluence, hostility, solidarity, and power, and whatever “the In crowd knows,” and whatever is being said in the whole new “way of talkin’,” the In crowd seems to be making its own highly individual adjustment to the shuffle-wobble realities of its time. ♦