

Hair?

Harvey Ovshinsky

1970

When "Hair" first appeared in 1967, at New York's Open Theatre, it promised to be a refreshing, honest statement about ourselves and an emerging life style.

That was in 1967.

Now, three years later, that same life style makes it impossible to accept "Hair" as anything less than a cultural rip-off and a bold faced lie. This conclusion has nothing to do with the production as theatre, because "Hair" is not just another Broadway musical singing about surfer's with fringes or weather conditions in Spain. "Hair's" whole hype is that it's about us and that makes it dangerous.

According to a recent issue of *Billboard* Magazine, "Hair" productions alone currently take in \$1 million dollars every 10 days. This does not include the royalties paid for the 300 different recordings of the score or the payment of \$3 million for the film version and its soundtrack, or even the income from the two original cast recordings.

"Hair" isn't a play, it's a fucking oil well. Michael Butler knew that when he decided to "present" "Hair" on Broadway and when Tom O'Horgan was hired to re-direct the production. O'Horgan's reputation as a theatrical innovator was based on his earlier work with the LaMama troupe and as director of "Tom Paine." With Butler's money and O'Horgan's genius, "Hair" moved uptown. The cast was expanded, songs were cut or replaced and O'Horgan slipped in a 35 second nude scene.

What peace and happiness couldn't do for the box office, pubic hair could.

Now, two years and \$50 million later, "Hair" is in Detroit.

This cast is all local talent, and they look like they're happy, intense people who are enjoying themselves. The problem with watching them is you get the feeling you're being double-crossed. With all its infatuation with love and brotherhood, tickets still cost anywhere from \$4 to \$10.

For us, this is nothing new. We saw it coming with the Woodstock Film, and it was only logical that Detroit "Hair" would continue the rip-off. After all, nobody's upset enough to NOT see it, even at \$10 a head.

Groucho Marx once told a reporter that he wouldn't pay to see "Hair" because he could see the same thing for free by taking off his clothes and standing in front of a mirror. He was right of course, but we don't have to take off our clothes to know we've seen it all before. The Acid trips, Love ins, and Hare Krishna chants are all circa 1967-68, and even the tribe's embarrassing references to Grosse Pointe or Donald Lobsinger can't update it. They're still singing about the age of Aquarius while we've entered a new age of resistance and revolution. While the tribe talks about harmony and understanding, students are murdered at Kent State and Panthers are executed by police.

"Hair" is a peace symbol dangling safely from the neck of the pigs who run this country, a V sign in a sea of fists. Even the police think it's groovy, not at all like the nasty New York production of "Che" or Ann Arbor's "Dionysius in 69," both revolutionary plays busted for obscenity.

Even "Hair's" attempt at guerrilla theatre is disappointing. When the tribe leaves the stage to pass out Be-In "leaflets," people grab at them like they were blessed by the Pope. Three years ago, I saw the San Francisco Mime troupe do the same kind of thing, only instead of handing out multi-color posters, they gave away mimeographed

schedules of anti-draft meetings. That's the way it should be; theatre as a tool instead of a hang out for suburban souvenir hunters.

So, go ahead and see "Hair" if you want, it won't do you any harm. Just remember that at 10 dollars a shot, even Claude and Berger couldn't afford to see it.

fifth Estate

Harvey Ovshinsky
Hair?
1970

<https://www.fiftheestate.org/archive/109-july-9-22-1970/hair>
Fifth Estate #109, July 9-22, 1970

[fiftheestate.anarchistlibraries.net](https://www.fiftheestate.org)