

# The Science Hipsters

Looking Back...

Hank Malone

1967

The title of this article suggests an attitude, which has characterized a generation of adolescents, recently departed. It is, as far as I can tell, a lost attitude, upended and overwhelmed in the maelstrom of homogenized eyes and freak-outs.

Considered as a species, I have to refer to them as The Science Hipsters, young people, like myself, who grew up surrounded by the romantic aura of modern science.

It was a time before any of us felt the moral implications of the alphabet bombs, a time when “genocide” meant you could pay 15 cents at a Clyde Beatty circus side-show and see atrocity photographs taken on some other planet.

It seemed that the important post-war media (comic books, radio programs, movie serials, etc. ) made everything wildly possible for us as children. Supersaturated with headlines that flying saucers were buzzing the White House, we were the Children of the Stars.

These rich thirty minute hypno-emotional journeys haunted the Science Hipsters with the force of their own imagination. We brought our natural “psychedelic” energies to these programs, and converted them into fantastically satisfying worlds that had to be believed to be seen. We believed things into existence. With appropriate sound effects and verbal suggestions, we were transported into worlds of golden towers, fantastic excitement, and bug-eyed-monsters, known to us as BEMs.

We were haunted by an incredible panorama of possibility; every new notion and apparatus was a seven-league-boot-extension of our hungry nervous systems. In the black and white, pop-corn-shrapnel darkness of the Saturday afternoon matinee, the Science Hipsters learned how to suffuse their lives with deep mysteries. As we moved quickly from Walt Disney cartoon features through Flash Gordon and Rocket Man serials, we carefully evolved techniques for preserving our exotic notions about our own spirit world. At the age of 15 and 17 we were putting on the final touches to our philosophy of Life-As-Science-Fiction.

There were, for instance, certain movies that were simply perfect, far better than anybody’s real life. Who can ever forget the super-reality of a film like THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL? What an apocalypse! It was like the Second Coming for the Science Hipsters. In fact, for most of us, it was the First Coming.

There were hundreds of us who had seen Michael Rennie come out of his flying saucer at least twenty or thirty times. And what a great underground password we had—KLATU BARRADA NIKTO. It was the password that could stop the almighty Gort. With that password, not far off in our memories, we could be sure that underlying all the drab everyday events there was the inevitable supremacy of Romance.

Later, there were days when whole gangs of us rode from Detroit to Chicago to New York, meeting scientists informally, attending science-fiction conventions, showing up at strange parties east of Greenwich Village populated mostly by Science Hipsters, including the editors of the now-historic “Fan-Zines”; gossip journals that debated the merits and faults of such movies as THE THING, and ROCKETSHIP X-M.

Looking back, there is no doubt what became of most of us. We were looking hard for some kind of ethic that could extend us further into the world without sacrificing the beautiful personal myths we had inherited from our spiritual-technological environment.

When Kerouac's book *ON THE ROAD* hit the newsstands, and when Allen's poem *HOWL* began coming in limited quantities, it was clear where many of us were going. Something was happening on the West-Coast, something full of Science-Fiction. Most of the Science Hipsters went through some kind of apprenticeship as Beats. Others went "too far," and we began to hear of old friends who had "flipped out" under the influence of esoteric-sounding drugs.

The Science Hipsters were the first kids on their block to taste Peyote and Acid and the marvelous effects of N2. Considering their origins, it seems totally appropriate that it should be them. The promise of the revelation in these drugs was a natural extension of those days when, as ten year olds, they discovered those primitive bibles of every young Science Hipsters—the science-fiction story. It was inevitable that a few of us would, in fact, discover the Stars.

Perhaps the only thing that was not inevitable, considering our origins, was that we became dull and listless. Considering our grass roots of Scientific Romanticism, it seems clear that few of us would ever lose our trivial sense of wonder, despite the "enormous cost" to our "serious" mushroom-clouded civilization.

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