

# Lenny Bruce Lives!

Mike Kerman

1969

I don't know if people still buy comedy monologue records. We all know that after a couple of listenings we don't play them until we have company and there is nothing else to do. But a Reprise-Bizarre (Frank Sinatra and Zappa together!) double album *Lenny Bruce The Berkeley Concert* is a service for the many of us who never heard him live.

Lenny Bruce "got down" before anybody thought of the phrase and nobody has taken his place. The record set is both funny and depressing.

Funny, because Lenny couldn't help it. Depressing because he was obviously being brought down by all the legal hassles and repression that plagued him.

Much of the material, recorded in 1965, deals with cops, narcotics, pornography and the law. While his older and classic night club routines like "the prison movie" and "Religions Inc." are not on this album (they can be heard on earlier Fantasy records), he still does some funny bits.

One concerning LBJ's six-month effort to learn to pronounce "Negro" (he could only say "Nigra"); another on Jesus Christ, who won't return because he's only 5 foot 1 inch and everyone expects a 6 foot 3 inch Charlton Heston; or one on "bust developing" ads.

In some ways things have improved since Lenny's death. The underground press continues to grow; the MC5 album on a major label is allowed to contain "fuck" on the jacket. Time magazine informs us there is a vaginal deodorant that will be advertised as just that.

But still Lenny's album can not be played on the radio. While WABX would certainly like to play it, the FCC would have its license revoked in a minute for airing the album's many "shits" and "fucks."

And of course we still have people like Sen. Huber, who sleeps in a chastity belt across the hall from his wife. Like Dylan's "Masters of War" who aren't "worth the blood that runs through their veins," it is the Hubers, Larry Corrinis and Daleys who are the masters of hate. UP AGAINST THE WALL MOTHERFUCKERS, PULL DOWN YOUR PANTS AND LOOK.

Ralph Gleason says it best in the liner notes:

"Lenny Bruce was a prisoner of truth and no society will tolerate the voice which tells the truth about itself because to face the truth is to admit it and force it to change. So it is easier to refer to Lenny Bruce as a dirty comic, as a convicted junkie and a menace to youth. What he was, really, was a menace to THEM."

# fifth Estate

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