

Bethel Pilgrims Smoke 'Grass' And Some Take LSD to 'Groove'

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BETHEL, N. Y., Aug. 17—A billowy haze of sweet smoke rose through purple spotlights from the sloping hillside where throngs of young people—their average age about 20—sat or sprawled in the midnight darkness and listened to the rock music.

The smoke was not from campfires.

"There was so much grass being smoked last night that you could get stoned just sitting there breathing," said a 19-year-old student from Denison University in Ohio. "It got so you didn't even want another drag of anything."

In the argot of the drug scene — and the Woodstock Music and Art Fair was the focus of that scene in the northeast this weekend — "grass" is marijuana, and getting "stoned" is getting high on it.

"How many of the crowd are smoking grass?" scores of youths were asked in a spot check of the situation.

The almost unanimous response was: Ninety-nine per cent.

Many people who are not, as the young people say, "into the drug scene," find it incredible that marijuana can be so prevalent and so widely used despite the fact that its sale or possession is illegal.

By the tens of thousands, youths smoked marijuana in "joints"—which are hand-rolled cigarettes with marijuana inside—in water pipes, brass pipes, hookahs and ornate Indian pipes.

They smoked quite openly, not fearing to be "busted," at least not within the confines of the 600-acre farm where the action is.

State troopers said, however, that they had made at least 80 arrests here on narcotics charges, including about a dozen on the festival grounds on a charge of selling.

In explaining the few arrests on the fairgrounds, one policeman said there were not enough jails in the county to hold those breaking the law.

"Grass" was not the only thing used here. There was also—unfortunately for scores of youngsters, and deadly for at least one so far—LSD, popularly called acid because of its chemical name, lysergic acid diethylamide; amphetamines like dexadrine, popularly called "speed"; and assorted other drugs that are "dropped" or "popped" or "toked" or sniffed or swallowed.

To most people not acquainted with the drug scene—which includes most of those on the far side of the "generation gap"—what went on here was simply incomprehensible at best, and a flagrant violation of law and morals at worst.

But there were few people in the throng here who agreed. Nonetheless, there was worry and sometimes scorn for the "freaks" who put almost any chemical into their mouths, lungs or veins.

'Grooving' on the Sounds

A number of the youths here said that the so-called "soft drugs," like marijuana, some milder forms of hashish and, on the strongest side, mescaline, were used primarily because they produce a euphoria and, in the setting of rock music, allow the users to "groove" on the sounds.

This means that the electronically amplified vibrations are heard almost to the exclusion of any other extraneous sounds. It is a kind of intense concentration, according to many of the marijuana users who came to the festival.

When the "stoned" listeners "groove" on the music what happens, as one 22-year-old mathematics major from Boston College put it, is this:

"You can hear every sound, every click of the guitar pick. When you get a really heavy group [a heavy group, roughly translated, means one that uses hard driving bass notes and complex percussion rhythms] you can feel the music actually hitting you. Most of the rock music nowadays is played by stoned people for stoned people."



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AHHH! Weather was sticky and water was scarce. Some put it in bottles and went looking for the thirsty.

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