



The Cool School: Writing from America's Hip Underground

Glenn O'Brien (Editor) , Andy Warhol , Henry Miller , Annie Ross , Jack Kerouac

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The Cool School: Writing from America's Hip Underground Glenn O'Brien (Editor) , Andy Warhol , Henry Miller , Annie Ross , Jack Kerouac

Who were the original hipsters? In this dazzling collection, Glenn O'Brien provides a kaleidoscopic guided tour through the margins and subterranean tribes of mid-twentieth century America—the worlds of jazz, of disaffected postwar youth, of those alienated by racial and sexual exclusion, of outlaws and drug users creating their own dissident networks. Whether labeled as Bop or Beat or Punk, these outsider voices ignored or suppressed by the mainstream would merge and recombine in unpredictable ways, and change American culture forever.

To read *The Cool School* is to experience the energies of that vortex. Drawing on memoirs, poems, novels, comedy routines, letters, essays, and song lyrics, O'Brien creates an unparalleled literary mix tape bringing together Henry Miller, Miles Davis, Jack Kerouac, Diane di Prima, Lenny Bruce, William S. Burroughs, Bob Dylan, Annie Ross, Norman Mailer, Terry Southern, Andy Warhol, Lester Bangs, and dozens of others, including such legendary figures as Beat avatar Neal Cassady, jazz memoirist Babs Gonzales, inspired comic improviser Lord Buckley, no-holds-barred essayist Seymour Krim, and underground filmmaker Jack Smith. His one-of-a-kind anthology recreates an unforgettable era in all its hallucinatory splendor: transgressive, raucous, unruly, harrowing, and often subversively hilarious.

The Cool School: Writing from America's Hip Underground Details

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From Reader Review The Cool School: Writing from America's Hip Underground for online ebook

Branden Vanscoy says

not really my thing.

Mike Hammer says

an interesting collection, a neat idea, cool pieces by some cool people - but it could have been cut in half and focused a bit more, broken into non fiction and fiction and autobiogriography and poems maybe decent book but half of it i skimmed thru

Cindy Rosen says

A great historical account!

Alex Diaz says

The idea behind this collection of writings is inspired, which is why it's getting such a high star rating. Mr. O'Brien has collected the writings of fifty-five (actually fifty-six, but I'll harp on about that in a bit) artists who originated and perpetuated the hipster scene in American society. In all honesty, a large portion of the actual writings collected are disappointing to say the least. In many cases Mr. O'Brien seems to have chosen the most anemic and non-representative examples of the work of the artists in question, though he hits the mark on a fair number of them. However, to the book's credit, almost every artist represented in this collection is referenced in another of the artist's writings, giving a sense of continuity and connectivity between these people over this period of time (1945-2000, roughly) that is otherwise difficult to see. My closing thought is a personal note to Mr. O'Brien, who commits to faux pas of faux pas in including HIS OWN WORK into a collection that includes such legendary artists as Miles Davis, Neal Cassady, Jack Kerouac, Terry Southern, Norman Mailer, Frank O'Hara, Bob Dylan, Andy Warhol, Hunter S. Thompson, and George Carlin, just to name a few. In the end, his inclusion of a poem that pales in comparison to the other work provided is just a transparent, and ultimately pathetic act on Mr. O'Brien's part, the equivalent of writing "Glenn was here" in Sharpie on the bathroom wall of the historical edifice that is this book. Still, props for actually compiling this work in the first place.

Overall Rating: Spottily brilliant, occasionally boring, but well worth a perusal.

Tony Parsons says

The 1940, American culture as seen through the eyes of a beatnik era rather than hippie standpoint of view

(post-hippie). What labels did citizens put on them back then? The U.S. youth are into writing, jazz music, art, sculpturing & poetry reading. This more tame movement later led to the 1960's more radical hippie movement filled with racial tension, free sexual feelings, extreme drug/alcohol users, war/protesting & freedom marches.

A trip through time of the early jazz musicians, their personal ups/downs, scrapes/struggles & what it was like to play in a different juke joint/town about every night.

Living all over the U.S. especially in N.O. I was exposed to the great legends of jazz. Even in the early 70's the beatniks were still around, but then it quickly turned into the hippie movement. Which of course I was a part of. This is a very historical fact finding book.

A very awesome book cover, great font & writing style. A very well written historical times of art of various types book. It was very easy to read/follow from start/finish & never a dull moment. No grammar errors, repetitive or out of line sequence sentences. Lots of exciting scenarios, with several twists/turns & a great set of unique characters to keep track of. This could also make great historical movie, PP presentation or mini TV series (A & E, History channel). No grammar errors or out of line story sequence. Very easy for me to give this book 5 stars.

Thank you for the free book
Tony Parsons MSW (Washburn)

Donald says

Well, this book is most definitely cool! An excellent collection of writers, poets, and musicians that illustrate different eras and contexts of being "cool". I really enjoyed reading my old favorites, like Kerouac, Thompson, and Burroughs, and I loved being exposed to new material, like Mezzrow, di Prima, Wurlitzer, Dylan, and Owens! This book has stories, song lyrics, poems, essays, reviews, and comedy routines, so it is very diverse, and very entertaining. And the flow between pieces has a nice vibe and tempo and they seem interconnected. I am glad I read this, and will proudly add it to my collection!

Christopher Sutch says

O'Brien traces the lingo and lifestyle of "hip" and "cool" with some intriguing and enlightening excerpts from various nonfiction, fiction, and poetic sources. The most interesting pieces were those that traced an "origin" for hip (if there is such a thing; some of the lingo and ideas that run through this anthology date back at least to the 1840s) through the memoirs of jazz musicians like Mezz Mezzlow and Miles Davis. While O'Brien sticks to the culture as it played out through the early 1960s the anthology feels cohesive, but after that some of the pieces seemed a little arbitrary (if not beyond the lines of "hip" as defined by O'Brien in his introduction). So the latter third of the book doesn't seem like it holds together (or talks about the same culture) as well as the earlier portions. On the other hand, this is one of the few places you can get a reprint of Norman Mailer's "The White Negro" (aside from its original source of course), which became somewhat important for race and masculinity studies in the 1990s and early 2000s.

David Rullo says

This should have been right up my alley...beat writers and beyond, artists outside of the mainstream. Instead it falls flat. The editor felt the need to put himself in the collection and it shouldn't be. Convinced of his own humor, O'Brien is too clever by half but his piece just isn't that good. In addition, the inclusion of so many nonwriters felt forced. At one point I was convinced if you used like as an adjective, adverb, subject and conjunction and said it more than 12 times a page you were getting in the book. America's hip underground might include Lester Bangs, Andy Warhol, actors from the films of John Waters but a literary anthology shouldn't. Plus, because O'Brien wrote for Rolling Stone and Spin his instance on including pieces by Lester Bangs and other "hip" writers and reviewers from "underground" magazines he views as not quite clever and humorous enough to get him/them shows an agenda and bias I just couldn't get behind. If you're looking for a good anthology pick up The Beat Reader and pass by this one.

Haven Gordon says

I won this book from a goodreads giveaway months ago and it accidentally got buried under my piles of homework assignments (sorry).

I feel in love with this book from the first page. It was an awesome read from cover to finish. Glenn O'Brien takes his readers on a tour of the original hipsters and what it meant to be cool.

Liviania says

When THE COOL SCHOOL was pitched to me, I feel in love with the concept. A collection of writing by the original hipsters, about what it meant to be cool. And not just the Beat poets, but jazz men and comedians and more, including people outside the movement who criticized it. The pieces range from prose fiction to poetry to nonfiction, from excerpts to complete works.

I think Glenn O'Brien did a decent job of assembling a plurality of voices. Names reoccur between pieces, giving a real sense of how the scene fit together and how people from different groups knew and thought of each other. Figures like Bird, Charlie Parker, loom large as their trailblazing influence is taken in and reflected. There are several black writers, and author there is no editorializing aside from short introductions to each piece, it is easy to see some of the tension around white men copying black slang, music, and attitudes.

There are several women included in the anthology, although not Carolyn Cassady, possible the best known female Beat generation writer. The blurb mentions the "sexually excluded," but they were less in the anthology than I expected. Allen Ginsberg is the most notable exception there. (I triple checked the table of contents just to be sure I hadn't missed a piece from him.)

The writing is arranged by chronology, I believe, which works fairly well. It allows for a clear progression of ideas. Sometimes I wished for another arrangement, as Del Close's piece on vocabulary would've been great at the beginning. I could read large chunks of THE COOL SCHOOL at once, but did prefer to take breaks.

While there are a great many voices on display, the anthology's raison d'être is pieces that explore the scene. It takes awhile for any sameness to set in, but it does if one tries to devour the whole anthology at once.

I enjoyed THE COOL SCHOOL. I am always in favor of primary sources, and I liked the range presented here, even if I did think the net could be cast even wider. I was familiar with some of the writers, like Miles Davis, Frank O'Hara, and Lenny Bruce, but there are also several where I'll have to seek out more of their work. THE COOL SCHOOL is a great introduction to a generation, and a nice reminder that the fifties weren't all poodle school and milkshakes. There were people shaking things up and making their voices heard.

Mills College Library says

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David C. says

mostly stupid
