



Playboys in Paradise: Masculinity, Youth and Leisure-Style in Modern America

Bill Osgerby

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Post-war America was an exciting time. It was an age characterized by backyard barbecues and beach parties, mai-tai cocktails and Ford Mustangs, high school hops, Hawaiian shirts and Hugh Hefner's Playboy empire. This book charts middle-class America's move towards an ethos of conspicuous consumption and sexual license during the fifties and sixties.

Focusing on two of the period's most visible icons--the swinging bachelor and the vibrant teenager--this book looks at the interconnected changes that took place for American youth culture and masculinity as consumption and leisure established themselves as the dominant features of middle-class life. The author draws on a wide variety of popular examples--men's magazines, fashion and style, books, film and music--to argue that the bachelor and the teenager were complementary and interrelated stereotypes that shaped America's youth. Magazines such as Esquire and Playboy, and bands like the Beach Boys, framed and shaped a new meaning of the young American male that contrasted sharply with previous values of sobriety and moderation. This book discusses the images and icons that shaped masculinity in particular. By focusing on the changes both in masculine identity and in the form and representation of youth culture, American life is looked at from a fresh and innovative perspective.

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