



Twee: The Gentle Revolution in Music, Books, Television, Fashion, and Film

By Marc Spitz

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New York Times, *Spin*, and *Vanity Fair* contributor Marc Spitz explores the first great cultural movement since Hip Hop: an old-fashioned and yet highly modern aesthetic that's embraced internationally by teens, twenty and thirty-somethings and even some Baby Boomers; creating hybrid generation known as Twee. Via exclusive interviews and years of research, Spitz traces Generation Twee's roots from the Post War 50s to its dominance in popular culture today.

Vampire Weekend, *Garden State*, Miranda July, Belle and Sebastian, Wes Anderson, Mumblecore, *McSweeney's*, Morrissey, beards, artisanal pickles, food trucks, crocheted owls on Etsy, ukuleles, kittens and Zooey Deschanel—all are examples of a cultural aesthetic of calculated precocity known as Twee.

In *Twee*, journalist and cultural observer Marc Spitz surveys the rising Twee movement in music, art, film, fashion, food and politics and examines the cross-pollinated generation that embodies it—from aging hipsters to nerd girls, indie snobs to idealistic industrialists. Spitz outlines the history of twee—the first strong, diverse, and wildly influential youth movement since Punk in the '70s and Hip Hop in the '80s—showing how awkward glamour and fierce independence has become part of the zeitgeist.

Focusing on its origins and hallmarks, he charts the rise of this trend from its forefathers like Disney, Salinger, Plath, Seuss, Sendak, Blume and Jonathan Richman to its underground roots in the post-punk United Kingdom, through the late '80s and early '90s of K Records, Whit Stillman, Nirvana, Wes Anderson, Pitchfork, *This American Life*, and Belle and Sebastian, to the current (and sometimes polarizing) appeal of *Girls*, Arcade Fire, *Rookie* magazine, and hellogiggles.com.

Revealing a movement defined by passionate fandom, bespoke tastes, a rebellious lack of irony or swagger, the championing of the underdog, and the vanquishing of bullies, Spitz uncovers the secrets of modern youth culture: how Twee became pervasive, why it has so many haters and where, in a post-*Portlandia* world, can it go from here?

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Editorial Review

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Rob Sheffield



Marc Spitz

Rob Sheffield, author of Turn Around Bright Eyes, Interviews Marc Spitz

Rob Sheffield (RS): Where does twee come from?

Marc Spitz (MS): Long answer: Twee, the aesthetic, is born during and just after World War Two. Its key figures saw combat and cruelty and destruction. They were scarred by it but not broken. They responded with creativity and sometimes whimsy. I'm speaking of Disney, who was overseas during World War One and made films to rally the troops during the Second World War. So did Theodore Geisel aka Dr. Seuss. And Salinger, maybe the most influential Twee figure, who was a solider and saw the horrors of both combat and the camps and later suffered a nervous breakdown. These are the godfathers of the movement, the ones who responded to horror and pain with creativity. Short answer: Brooklyn. Just kidding.

RS: Your last book, *Poseur*, documented your rock & roll youth in gloriously excruciating and hilarious detail. Is writing a book about twee a continuation of that project? Is there something autobiographical about Twee?

MS: It's funny because I knew I would be going from one book into the next and it was kind of like going

from the dark into the light. I knew there'd be Steiff bears and Sundays records waiting for me at the break of the forest if I could only avoid being eaten by my Elliott Smith LPs (or bears). I had the Twee gene, put it that way, but I also had, like yourself, the reporter gene so I had to hope the latter was dominant.

RS: Why has twee become such a defining style for our moment in history? What's so twee about the 21st century?

MS: A few things, really: the world got scary on Election night 2000 and then scarier and scarier and sadder and it kind of drove us into a sort of collective bedroom. And our laptop cameras became our diaries, and our books and records our friends and ways of coping. Then there's the marketing aspect. I write about the famous VW Cabriolet commercial that features Nick Drake's "Pink Moon," in the book. It's not much of a jump from that to the Garden State and Juno soundtracks winning Grammys and going platinum. Cool got uncool once the Strokes started to disappoint. Finally there's a real estate issue, which is not exclusive to Brooklyn. It became too expensive to live and make art in as Jeff Daniels would say in *The Squid and the Whale* "the filets of the neighborhood" so you find enclaves and parties and cafes and ultimately the Times and tourists outside and a lot of these artists are not "city hip" so it seems like twee is spreading.

RS: Who are some of the greatest heroes and icons in twee history?

MS: The aforementioned Disney, Salinger, Seuss, the Eames-es, James Dean (compared to Rock Hudson, Paul Newman, Robert Mitchum etc.), Capote or Capote's literary alter egos (early), Ray Davies, Brian Wilson, Godard, Jean Seberg, The Velvet Underground (esp. when Mo sings) Jonathan Richman, Prince (early), Judy Blume, Roald Dahl, Maurice Sendak, Edwyn Collins, Morrissey, Stipe (early), Calvin Johnson, it goes on and on through Wes Anderson and Zooey Deschanel, who is probably the last great Twee icon.

RS: What is the future of twee? Will there ever be a moment where we see the end of twee as we know it?

MS: You'll notice that most of the people I named above are not minorities. I think like Punk and Hip Hop for a movement to really stick it has to be more inclusive with regard to both race and gender and class. I think the hubbub over season one of *Girls* was actually a good thing. Lena Dunham addressed it straight on. Twee has been building for about a half century and has just peaked so it's hard to say where it's going. Short answer: To Brooklyn.

From [Booklist](#)

In an entertaining, well-told look at what makes us who we are—such children's books as *Where the Wild Things Are* (and even the *Eloise* series), music (e.g., punk), cinema (e.g., *Heathers*, *Clueless*), TV, and much more—Spitz liberally applies the gentle and softly scented appellation, twee, to the chapped lips of contemporary culture. Spitz states that the word twee “is derived from the sound of a small child attempting to say the word sweet,” and then he is off and running (well, probably more like skipping while humming). He posits that J. D. Salinger is “the most beloved Twee Tribe godfather of them all,” Truman Capote is a “Twee touchstone,” Charlie Brown is a “Twee hero” but also “proto-Twee,” and Buddy Holly is a “Twee Tribe forefather.” Here, in 16 chapters ranging from “The Mean Reds” to “Culture Teasing” and covering the years from 1945 to the present, Spitz colors in the Twee movement with quotes, interviews, and

commentary, all delivered in energetic, engaging prose marking, perhaps, “a slow evolution toward a better, kinder, humbler, more politicized . . . human race.” --Eloise Kinney

From the Back Cover

What is the most polarizing and important youth movement since Hip-Hop?

Twee

What?!

Artisanal chocolate. Mustaches. Locally sourced vegetables. Etsy. Birds. Flea markets. Cult films. Horn-rimmed glasses.

What do all of these icons have in common? They are signifiers that author Marc Spitz groups as falling under the umbrella of Twee, a powerful, expansive youth movement that has colored popular culture in surprising ways.

In the same way that Douglas Coupland branded Generation X with his groundbreaking novel, Spitz gives name to a sensibility that prizes kindness over irony, encourages obsessive fandom and collection culture, supports a hunger for purity of craft, and, most important, strives for the preservation of the innocence of childhood. As a result, Twee is divisive, and Spitz shows that there is a tribe of people who fiercely self-identify while others simply cringe.

Twee features exclusive interviews plus in-depth research on Twee touchstones past and present, including Walt Disney, James Dean, J. D. Salinger, Sylvia Plath, Dr. Seuss, Truman Capote, Maurice Sendak, Edward Gorey, Jean Seberg, the Kinks, Judy Blume, Nick Drake, Jonathan Richman, Beat Happening, the Smiths, They Might Be Giants, Nirvana, Belle and Sebastian, Wes Anderson, *Pitchfork*, *This American Life*, *McSweeney's*, mumblecore, Vampire Weekend, Sufjan Stevens, Miranda July, Tavi Gevinson, Lena Dunham, *Portlandia*, and Zooey Deschanel.

Expansive, engaging, and festooned with more than enough kittens, this is the first definitive history of Twee.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Phyllis Peters:

Now a day those who Living in the era everywhere everything reachable by match the internet and the resources inside it can be true or not need people to be aware of each details they get. How a lot more to be smart in acquiring any information nowadays? Of course the correct answer is reading a book. Looking at a book can help people out of this uncertainty Information specially this *Twee: The Gentle Revolution in Music, Books, Television, Fashion, and Film* book since this book offers you rich info and knowledge. Of course the data in this book hundred per cent guarantees there is no doubt in it as you know.

Harriet Dupree:

The book *Twee: The Gentle Revolution in Music, Books, Television, Fashion, and Film* has a lot details on

it. So when you read this book you can get a lot of profit. The book was authored by the very famous author. This articles author makes some research previous to write this book. This particular book very easy to read you may get the point easily after scanning this book.

Jenny Perez:

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Crystal Thomas:

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