

MYTH

Continued from Page 1

mitments or having families. *Time* claimed that twentysomethings were obsessed with entertainment, yet they had not made any substantial cultural contributions of their own.

One year later, Canadian author Douglas Coupland released his first novel titled *Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated Culture*. The book chronicled the lives of three ex-yuppies, who, fed up with their fast-paced urban lives, abandoned their professional jobs and their fat salaries to "cut themselves adrift on the California Desert."

The book wasn't so much about the baby-busters that *Time's* article had chronicled, but the name stuck anyway. Twentysomethings were graced with a new title and a category of their very own.

The media ate it up. And like a tumbleweed, the Gen X idea gained momentum and built upon itself. The tag soon infiltrated the media at large, including newspapers, magazines, books and films.

A small independent film called *Slacker* added fuel to the flame and paved the way for other television programs and movies. Newspapers now use the term liberally: "Generation X Doing Heroin." A rock star who had killed himself became the "representative of the distraught Generation X."

The newest group to jump on the bandwagon has been the advertising agencies. Realizing that the baby boomers would not live forever, ad agencies have recently bombarded the airwaves and print with their own idea of what the Generation X is all about.

Denise Hall, a 28-year-old recent graduate, mother and supposed Gen Xer, calls the media's interpretation of her generation "total bullshit."

Hall says that the media, in particular the ad agencies, have picked up on a catch phrase that does not apply to anyone but have perpetuated the image to exploit the Gen X market.

Mike Healy, a 22-year-old student, musician, computer freak and alleged Gen Xer, also sees the perpetuation of the stereotypical slacker character to be completely without ground.

"Generation X is a marketing tactic," he said. "It offends me. Everyone I know works really hard."

Healy believes the books, the movies, the commercials and the like are not about his generation at all. "It's advertisers trying to define us," he said. "It's just a persuasion tactic."

Advertisers don't deny their interest in the Gen X market. It's a 46 million person, \$125 billion market. Until they woke up to the Gen X, advertisers had been focusing on baby boomers. They realized that unless they removed their baby-boomer blinders, they would risk alienating an important and potentially lucrative market group.

And so the pursuit began, and advertisers bought into the Gen X notion lock, stock and barrel.

Today, it is not the suit-clad businessman who is trying to sell you a car on television; it is the flannel-clad, long-haired, head-banging grungester.

Muscle-bound hunks are a continuing presence in beer commercials, but joining them in the kingdom of beer ads are the pale, intellectual, skinny Gen Xers, who would rather reminisce about TV shows than play volleyball on the beach. After all, television is a defining force in the Gen Xer's life, right?

'Gen X is a conception brought on by the baby boomers. It is an explanation of how their generation is better than everyone else. I've always felt like my generation is defined as not bright and motivated. It's not true, and I resent that.'

— Denise Hall, supposed member of Generation X

Wrong, cry the target audience.

"I'm not on the Gen X track," claims Ben Moebius, a 21-year-old student, newspaper reporter and suspected Gen Xer.

Moebius sees some economic changes that have affected the working world. He agrees with the Gen X sentiment that a suffering economy has changed the way his generation thinks about certain things, but notes that this phenomenon is nothing new.

If anything, Moebius believes that financial hard times and a tight job market have made him and his peers more ambitious, not passively lazy as the stereotype implies.

Moebius notes that his is not the first generation to be labeled as lost.

"There's a lost generation in every generation," he said. In the 1920s, Ernest Hemingway and his fellow expatriates were targeted as a lost generation. They were a generation shattered by a horrific war, a generation that was somewhat estranged from the previous generation, Moebius said. The same applies to the beatniks and the hippies.

Moebius says that of course his generation is different from others, but does not understand why they have been labeled an empty generation.

"The Generation X, slacker tag is not appropriate," Moebius said. "It would be a lot more productive to call us twentysomethings."

Just what qualifications warrant entry to the ranks of Gen X is a mystery to some. Healy has seen the Genera-

tion X defined as people aged 18-29, people aged 20-34 and those aged 20-30.

He calls his supposed generation "a generation with no name, no background and no similarity ... a mainstream conglomeration of people ... that has too many variables and is defined only as having no definition."

A recent study by the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research found that the Generation Xers are "no more a real demographic phenomenon than the tree nymph." The study found that the slacker moniker was nothing more than a myth.

The study echoed the cries of twentysomethings, who found themselves unwillingly painted as lazy, cynical deviants: "Survey data don't show anything — anything — generationally distinctive. Any sense that the work ethic is less vital among Xers is just not borne out."

Still, some twentysomethings do believe that the slacker lifestyle is alive and well in 1994. Jennifer Larson is a 23-year-old recent graduate, lab technician and accused Gen Xer. Though she does not see herself as a typical slacker, she sees people around her living a semi-Gen X life. "I believe in Gen X," she said.

Like Moebius, Larson believes that economic hardships have robbed her generation of some of their potential.

"The baby boomers have all the jobs," she said.

Many of her college-educated friends are unable to find work in their fields. "They take whatever they can get," Larson said, and perhaps this adds to the disillusionment and dissatisfaction that Gen Xers are known for.

Larson believes, however, that the media interpretation of twentysomethings has gotten out of hand. While Gen Xers may represent a small portion of today's youth, they are by no means indicative of the majority of today's twentysomethings.

Larson believes the media has so amplified the Gen X idea that it is accepted as reality. "The media shapes this reality in many ways," she said.

Hall believes that the Gen X myth is a sort of generational sibling rivalry between baby boomers and their younger brothers and sisters. Instead of the traditional sibling weaponry — fists, nails and teeth — the older brothers and sisters are using a more powerful weapon: the media.

"Gen X is a conception brought on by the baby boomers," Hall said. "It is an explanation of how their generation is better than everyone else. I've always felt like my generation is defined as not bright and motivated. It's not true, and I resent that."

Healy worries that the media's influence will leave an indelible mark on his generation, a mark he does not wish his generation to bear. He, like many other reported Gen Xers, does not want to be known as an empty generation whose only cultural identity comes from a television set.

Healy knows that his is a vibrantly creative generation, but if the media continue to define them as the Generation Empty, perhaps the definition will stick.

Cash
For Textbooks
Mon.-Sat.
Smith Family
Bookstore
768 E. 13th
1 Block From Campus
345-1651

SELF SERVICE COPIES
ALL DAY EVERY DAY
3¢
The Copy Shop
Open Mon-Fri 8-7 Sat 10-4
Between Patterson & Ferry - Right on 13th
485-6253

TUESDAY, 6/28
SURPRISE NITE!!!
(we don't know either)
WEDNESDAY, 6/29 \$6
Off The Wall presents ...
THE TREVOR WATTS DRUM ORCHESTRA
8:00 p.m.
THURSDAY, 6/30 \$3
KPANTS BRACKET
BABY SNUFKIN
POP SECRET
7:30 p.m. SHARP!!
FRIDAY, 7/1 \$4
Ska kings ...
MUSTARD PLUG
with funk rockers
SILICONE JONES
MUST BE 21 OR OVER
JOHN HENRY
342-3358
136 E. 11th

Learn How To Save A Life
Community Adult CPR/First Aid Workshop
Get Certified NOW!

\$10 Fee Includes:

- 4 Hour Class • Instruction Booklet
- Red Cross C.P.R. Certification Card

• For registered UO students only
• Cancellations must be 24 hours in advance or student will be charged for workshop
• C.P.R. classes held in Student Health Center Cafeteria

CPR Classes:

- June 29 - 5:00-9:00 pm
- July 6 - 5:00-9:00 pm
- July 7 - 5:00-9:00 pm
- July 18 - 12:30-4:30 pm
- July 20 - 5:00-9:00 pm
- July 21 - 5:00-9:00 pm

First Aid Classes

- June 29 - 5:00-9:00 pm
- July 7 - 5:00-9:00 pm

Register Early! • 346- 2770
Sponsored by the Student Health Center Health Education Program



To enroll in a First Aid Class, you must also sign up for a CPR class or be certified.