

And that's not all: you not only don't "dig" the music they go for, but most of the time you can't seem to understand what they're saying. You can't "latch on" to the way they "bump their gums." And they in turn think you're something of a "square."

According to the best testimony available, neither rock-and-roll nor any music, of itself, is "immoral" or "delinquent." These are human failings, not musical ones. But like any music that becomes popular, rock-and-roll appeals to basic needs. And before we can understand why it appeals to our children, we must understand their needs.

**F**OR MILLIONS of our teen-agers, rock-and-roll fills some troublesome gaps—gaps that we adults have helped create. To children growing up in the shadow of hydrogen bombs and guided missiles, our traditional values may seem pale and futile. They have seen their parents' generation conclude the second of two great wars dedicated to bringing about a world brotherhood which hasn't yet arrived. They have seen us devise weapons of war almost beyond belief. Facing the prospect of mass destruction or, at best, more years of "cold war"—and lacking the maturity and perspective to understand the "why" of it all—is it any wonder they lack their elders' belief in the "goodness" of the future and the wisdom of working toward it?

Psychologists tell us the herd instinct—the need to belong, to go along, to be liked and accepted—is present in all normal children. Even if your youngster doesn't wear a black leather jacket or sport long sideburns, he's doing "the thing to do" in the company of his rock-and-roll companions. In his young life this is all-important, for it gives him a needed feeling of security—of belonging—at least for the moment.

And bear this in mind: sometimes we parents make it almost too easy for our children to succumb to their potentially unhealthy inner drives. For one thing, our youngsters enjoy far more freedom today—unchanneled freedom, that is—than we were permitted at their age. They are also living in a time of great national prosperity. They have more money to spend, and they spend it more freely.

In brief, our teen-agers are in the right frame of mind, emotionally and physically, to respond to musical excitement; rock-and-roll is accepted by their friends; and they have the freedom to go where this type of music is played and the money to buy their ticket.

**T**HE ROCK-AND-ROLL epidemic may thus pose some knotty problems for parents. But lest you get the notion it's a completely new phenomenon, remember the torch that millions of kids carried for "The Voice" back in the 1940s. In those

when "Over There" helped us find the courage to fight in 1917, when "Yes, Sir, That's My Baby" crystallized the devil-may-care attitude of the Jazz Age, when "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?" and "Happy Days Are Here Again" told our depression-recovery story, when "I'll Be Seeing You" and "White Christmas" buoyed us through World War II.

And it is true today as rock-and-roll becomes the vehicle through which millions of essentially good kids compensate for their own lack of purpose.

Happily, though, rock-and-roll tells only part of the history of our times. For America's tunesmiths continue to produce a limitless range of other popular music, and this takes its place beside our musical treasures of the past to endow each of us with a rich heritage of song. In this heritage lies one of our best answers to rock-and-roll.

You have already seen how enthusiastic your youngster can get over certain kinds of music. Why not use that enthusiasm as a way of introducing him to other kinds—to the whole tuneful range of American popular music?

At an age when he's likely to be in earnest and probably healthy rebellion against his "old-fashioned" parents, it may be unwise to try to discourage your teen-ager from listening to rock-and-roll. Out of defiance he may only like it better. On the contrary, as parents we owe it to our children to try to understand their music and why they like it,



For too many of our youngsters there is little faith in the future. In their minds there is only today. "Live it up!" is their feeling; the primitive abandon of rock-and-roll music seems to suit that feeling to a "T."

Rock-and-roll also plays another important role in the subconscious of a teen-ager: it provides an outlet (though not always the healthiest one) for the natural bodily and psychological changes children experience as they enter their teens.

Most popular music, you may say, is concerned with the male-female relationship in one sense or another. But during the difficult and confusing time when our youngsters are first awakening to the mysterious attraction of the opposite sex, the insistent rhythms of rock-and-roll, the environment in which it is so often presented, and the suggestive mannerisms of many of its artists seem to excite the love instinct in a far more highly sexed way.

Other forces figure in rock-and-roll's popularity.

days, it wasn't unusual for frantic bobby-soxers (perhaps including some of today's most respectable young wives and mothers) to literally tear the clothes from Frank Sinatra's back. Or perhaps you recall America's antics in the 1920s, the era of "wonderful nonsense"—antics in which you yourself may have joined as an ardent member of an earlier "lost generation."

In other words, there's nothing so terribly new in the behavior of our rock-and-roll addicts. They may seem more uninhibited and reckless than anything you can recall, but then the times we live in are more fraught with tension and uncertainty. The names have changed, but the process is the same. The capacity of music to touch what is real and immediate and thus to reflect our emotions and attitudes—love, hate, pity, humor, even indifference—is as old as music itself.

This was true when "Tenting Tonight" captured the yearning of Civil War soldiers of both sides,

and to encourage them and their friends to bring rock-and-roll into our homes.

But at the same time, with a bit of ingenuity you can raise your offspring's sights to an endless variety of American "pop" music, provide needed emotional release in more wholesome surroundings, even teach a bit of history—and make the "sharpest" youngster love it!

Your radio, an endless source of popular music for singing or listening, is readily available, and if you have a phonograph, piano, or other musical instruments, so much the better. For children of any age, growing up with music can be a way of growing together as a family. Singing or playing or simply listening together can help put rock-and-roll in proper perspective, and help dilute its more unhealthy emotional effects.

And the sooner you start—pre-teen-age, preferably—the better your children's chances of attaining maturity normally and happily.