



Full circle

Drinking to dope to drinking

MY MIND is goin' through them changes..." sings Buddy Miles, and we all know what he's about. It seems the world is changing with every blinking of an eye and our minds are hard put to keep up. But are those changes always in a straight line or do they sometimes curve around and come back, making a full circle?

Here's the premise. At Kent State's *Chestnut Burr* office, the lady editor says check to see if the bar scene has come full circle. Kent used to be a big town for drinking but then it seemed as though everyone suddenly turned to drugs. The lady detects the shift back to drinking again. Go downtown and see if it's true, she says.

First let's get some nostalgia.

We're in Kent in the party era of the early '60s. Susie Sweetbuns got her daddy's big Buick for Friday night, so she and the girlfriend put on their hip huggers and angel blouses and join the swarms of "young adults" who shuttle back and forth on Water Street in downtown Kent.

They show their fake IDs at the door to the Kove and get in to listen to the Velours and drink a lot of beer. They sit in a booth with Frank and Joe, who they met at the cigarette machine, and somehow the pitchers of beer keep disappearing. They dance, they talk, they drink, they kiss. Frank's hands keep creeping up under Susie's angel blouse and down over her hip huggers.

After enough beer and enough cheap feels, the panting proposition, "Hey. Let's go to your car." And in the back seat of the Buick two new members of a future PTA are spawned. Kent, the Sin City, has done it again.

A brief spin of the old time dial and we're in Kent a few years later. Down on Water Street, the hippies and freaks are bumping into each other because they've been doing too many reds or sopors. The hair is longer now and the blue jeans carry patches, but the bars just aren't doing the same business. The heads get high and then come into the bar to trip out and listen to the band while nursing a beer.

Down in the dark, behind the bars by the railroad tracks, Bonnie and Tony share a joint. "Wow, man," says Tony. "This is some good shit. Here, lemme pass the smoke to ya." And their mouths meet to exchange the smoke, but it

turns into a kiss. They groove on the sensation of touching each other between tokes. Finally, they go to Tony's place to "really get high," but they have to get up early the next morning, May 4, to join the protest against Richard Nixon's policy toward Cambodia.

What's the scene in Kent today? Well, go down to Water Street and see. The old crowd is still milling about in front

of the bars, but it's not as packed as before. It's not sloppy drunk and noisy as in the party era, and not as paranoid and suspicious as the drug era. There're still people drinking beer here, though, and sometimes you see a joint on the street.

The scene inside the bars depends on the establishment. The old standby Ron-De-Vou is strictly a drinker's world, mostly mixed drinks, and it still gets packed in the wee hours. JB's next door is closed more often than not, perhaps a fitting testimonial to the James Gang, who started there. The Phoenix is a new bar which appears to serve mostly very young punk types and is rarely even full with them. The bartender has little to do but sweep up the roaches in the game room.

The big business on "The Strip" is done by Walter's, the Kove and the Water Street Saloon.

Walter's is called Orville's by everyone who has been around for a while and most nights there's not enough room to peel the label off your beer. The bottles pile up and the conversations are heavy...in quantity, if not quality.

The Water Street Saloon is the home of country rock. Good Company picks out the numbers there to the thunder of clapping hands and heavy feet. Farmer's daughters can be seen with apple cheeks flushed from the exertions of chug-a-lug or the latest barn stomp. The Saloon's fans are fiercely loyal and will chuck a road apple at you if you run their place down.

In the cavernous Kove, the remnants of the drug culture worship at the altar of the bandstand of 15-60-75. The band plays the same dozen blues-rock tunes they've been playing for the last three years, but they play them loud and well—and the crowd loves it. They boogie, they smoke, a few snort, the air is heavy and sweet with the burning hemp, people are shakin' their things all over the place and the



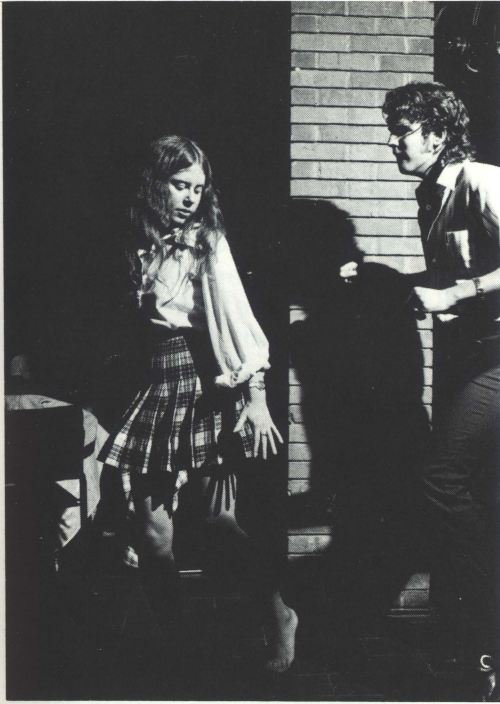
J.R. Baughman



B. Jones



J.R. Baughman



J. Radgowski

I wondered, can one make a value judgement over what is or was or will be better? Can you condemn the street freaks and condone the drinkers?



◀▶ KENT K

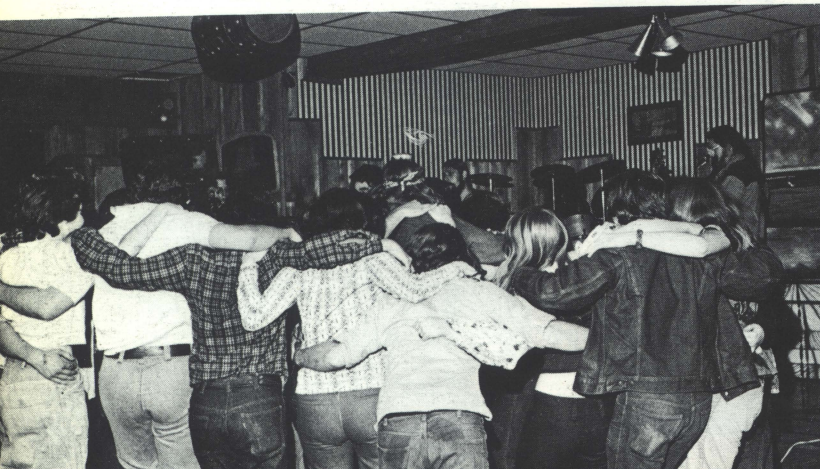
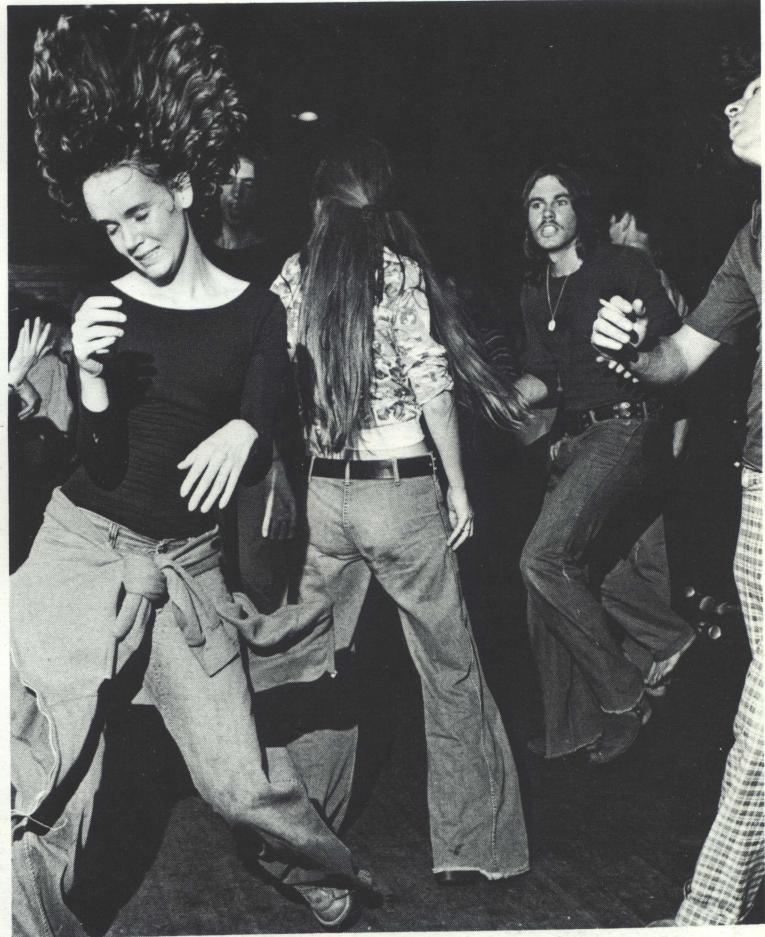
FEATURING ...

15.0

Are the changes always in a straight line or do they curve around, making a full circle?



Photos by J.R. Baughman



(Continued from page 51.)

drinks flow moderately.

The truth of the matter is, the further away from Water Street you go, the straighter the crowd and the heavier the alcohol flow. The Deck and the Towne House on Main Street serve as mid-way points where you get some alcohol freaks and some heads. This is where the true "college crowd" begins to be evidenced.

The clothes are cleaner, the language more educated even if more artificially obscene. The people who frequent here avoid downtown except for cheap thrills.

Closer to campus are the Krazy Horse and Friar Tuck. These are student bistros where the beer flows just as it used to downtown, the same old games are played, ploys used. The people here take drugs sometimes, but drinking's safer. It seems more moral somehow--or at least more legal.

I wandered the cold and dark streets of Kent in search of truth, talked to many people and bartenders. I wondered, can one make a value judgement over what is or was or will be better? Was the party era happier than the drug era? Is our present "mixed bag" any better than either? Can you condemn the street freaks and condone the drinkers?

My mind raced with the myriad possible answers. Should I go cover the Dome and talk to the dancers? Or the Loft for a beer and pizza? Maybe Pirate's Alley or the Blind Owl? The on-campus Rathskeller?

Was there really any purpose at all in talking about the Kent bars and their different scenes? As I groped for the truth, I spotted a shadowy figure in a dark alley. He seemed to radiate a force that drew me nearer. I searched his face. Was it? Could it be? Yes, it was! Turk! The old legend Turk who rode a Harley hog that was dirtier than a sow's underbelly. Turk, who rode with the Hell's Angels until he was kicked out for being too polite, who was known far and wide for his skill at pulling a wheelie from his bike parked on its kickstand.

I presented my dilemma to him and waited in the hopes of enlightenment. "Whazzat again, man?" he replied.

"The bars," I said. "What's the scene? Is it booze or drugs, are we coming full circle? What does it all mean?"

"Oh." And the Turk thought. "Listen," he said, and I craned closer to hear THE TRUTH as presented by this man of the world. "The important thing is that you get fucked up...ya know what I mean, man?"

Even while I pondered the subtle meaning of his reply he interrupted my thoughts. "Hey, let's go down to the Toilet Bowl an' get loaded."

"The Toilet Bowl?" I asked. "What bar's that? I don't think I know it."

"It ain't no bar, man. It's under the bridge next to the river. They throw so much shit in there, it's just like your toilet, man."

I'll drink to that.

