"Scenester" culture doomed to apathetic, painful demise

by Alexander Hess

Whether it is in the form of excruciatingly tight leg wear, heavily razored bangs or Converse brand shoes, scene culture is gradually seeping its way into the corridors of Parkland High School. One would have a difficult time swinging around a Cobra Starship handbag without coming into contact with some form of social rebel. While, in theory, the scene or neo-emo culture has its roots in legitimate, pressing social issues such as personal identity, sexuality and, in the more collegiate circles, politics, as far as Parkland is concerned, it seems to be a simple matter of student expression and fitting in with peers.

"It is like you can either be preppy or outlandish," said junior Holly Drake, whose thick-rimmed glasses and lip piercing make her own decision clear. Drake cites popular electronica band 3OH!3 as one of her stylistic role models.

However, severely-eyelined junior Vicky Conrad believes that too much influence on one's own style of dress is a negative. "If you just copy how celebrities or people in bands dress, you are not being unique. I try to shake it up a bit," said Conrad. Conrad touches on an interesting and often intensely debated point: whether or not outlandish styles of dress are a product of true originality, or are all scenesters cut from the same, antiestablishment-colored cloth?

photo courtesy of Abercrombie.com

Preppy?

Conservatively-minded senior James Joseph has conflicting views regarding the scene culture and walks along the fine line between approbation and reproach. "These sorts of people in black sweat suits or dresses with the obscenely black makeup and such simply scare me," he said. "It is not really something I am comfortable with to be honest, and sometimes the clothing either has indelicate sayings on it or breaks the limits of the dress code. So I would say my reaction is mainly one of not fear exactly, but of being put off by the style. It is reminiscent of drugs, degradation and the mindless teenage rebellion."

At the same time, Joseph sympathizes with those looking to express their own sense of style. "I can definitely relate. When I dress for debate, sometimes I get stares and some questions about Halloween," he said, referencing the three-piece suits and fedoras that made him a legend on Parkland's debate team. "That is why I say the ones who do not look dangerous are just fine for me."

Even Parkland's dress code lets the sleeping dog of the scene culture lie. Said Mrs. Steckel, "It is not on the front burner at this time. I am more concerned about boys and their underwear hanging out and with pants so far down their legs that they cannot even walk right."

Parkland 11th grade English teacher Mr. Schwartz, while not openly condoning or reproaching the more outrageous constituent, expresses a great deal of tolerance. "It is the student's own personal choice of expression," Schwartz said, "so I would not say anything negative. I might make a comment like 'I like the Mohawk.'"

In an atmosphere of such tolerance, then, it would be difficult to imagine that the heart and soul of scene culture might eventually become snuffed out. It

photo courtesy of HotTopic.com

Outlandish?

is all the more ironic to imagine that it is the culture's own popularity that would lead to its decadence. However, one can easily observe a sort of evening out on the sartorial plane of "preppy or outrageous": skinny jeans are becoming ever more popular, and the trademark side-swept bangs are much more common than they have previously been. These changes can even be observed outside of the "scene" or "emo" circles. At the same time, it seems that the more extreme constituents of the scene are beginning to tone it down as they get older, making arguably more mature, if not less individualistic, fashion choices.

From where the scene stands, it looks upon a slow and painful death by moderation. It will be plagued by would-be scenesters unwilling to go the extra mile to stand out, and antiestablishment expatriots who have since toned it down and will have no choice but to look on as more young people adapt the softcore, cookie-cutter social outcast image rather than a truly unique one.

Whether guyliner will universally catch on remains to be seen.