

CHICAGO 10: LET'S HIP UP THE YIPPIES!

Written by Dave Crackpot



The other day I was having lunch with a woman in her early twenties. I made a comment about the dot com bust and she commented "We learned something about that in High School Economics." It's amazing how many important events are wiped out by the hands of time. Such is the case with the trial of the "Chicago Seven." Even though I grew up outside of Berkeley just ten years after this event, I had completely forgotten about this Freedom of Speech trial. Fortunately [Brett Morgan](#) (The Kid Stays In the Picture) has blended animation, newsfootage and a pumping, powerful soundtrack to bring the "Chicago Ten" back to life. It opens Feb 29th.

At the 1968 Chicago Democratic Convention, the "yippies" led by Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin staged a peaceful protest and "Festival of Lights." When the protesters marched to the convention center, the Chicago Police force attacked and a full fledged brawl erupted. Rubin and Hoffman, along with six others (David Dellinger, Tom Hayden, Rennie Davis, John Froines, Lee Weiner, and Bobby Seale) were arrested and charged with conspiracy. They became known as the Chicago 7. Yes, I know, that adds up to 8. The media at that time didn't count Bobby Seale or the two lawyers. The ensuing trial became a mockery of justice on both sides of the legal system with the "Seven" attempting to turn the trial into full fledged theater.

Morgan continues as a maverick and innovator of documentary filmmaking. By using animation he has freed himself from, what [Julien Temple calls, the curse of the "talking head.](#) " What we get to see is the actual trial (taken from the transcripts) brought to life by the voice talents of Hank Azaria, Nick Nolte, Mark Ruffalo and Roy Schieder, amongst others. Morgan's inventive take on 3D animation allows the characters (most deceased) to tell their own story rather than relying on the scattered memory of witnesses.

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The second device he uses is ditching any form of period music. Gone is Janis, Jimi and John in favor of Eminem, Rage Against the Machine and the Beastie Boys. By de-hippying the soundtrack Morgan erases the "Love, Peace and Happiness" stereotype of the 60's. It really conveys the White Hot Anger that these "Fuck LBJ" protesters. It also makes the the period more accessible... forty years ago is a long time. The new soundtrack con-temporizes what most of us were only taught in high school. It's sucks you in and shakes you, as if the riots were happening this very instant. In this new light, you feel the frustration both sides of the fight. By staying away from "witnesses" the self-congratulatory tone of most films about the 60's is not present.

Overall, the film is trying to make a call to arms for a new generation. Obviously, without a draft and a lack of powerful, charismatic speakers this will never happen with the Iraq war. There is no way a Cindy Sheehan could ever compete with the likes of the Yippies. Today protests are confined to barbed wire pens and constantly ridiculed. Without a draft the urgency that leads to anger will never equal that of the Vietnam protests. CHICAGO 10 delivers an important message-- to end an Iraq war.. folks need to fight (and I mean FIGHT) a helluva lot harder.