

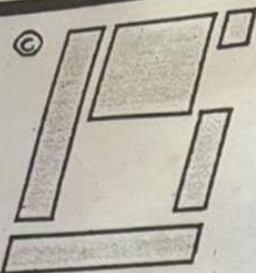
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**GOOD GUYS WEAR SILLY
TIES-KESEY AT UCL.(P.2)**



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Kesey

Speaking to a packed Chemistry auditorium last Wednesday night (the day after the cotton-candy cowboy signed a new four-year contract as male lead in "Ronnie Get Your Gun" - a musical), Ken Kesey came pretty close to the heart of things: "what's at stake is the human soul...a lot of people have been nerds forever".

This was the last European night of a speaking tour that has taken Kesey - author of "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" and "Sometimes A Great Notion", prankster extraordinaire, ex-fugitive, and all-round folkhero - out of exile in Oregon, and he got one thing off his not-insubstantial chest right away: "I always like to tell people about where I come from and right now, I'm ashamed of where I come from...we have to rise up against this monster".

What faces us, in this foul decade when 68% of American students can vote for the jerk who wanted to gun down their predecessors over a decade ago, is a different version of what Kesey and friends were dealing with in the sixties: how, and why do you live in this society? Do you "raise the drawbridge", put the headphones on and live an isolated,

self-centred existence, or do you take risks and sample human life "raw" in all its aspects, however disconcerting, all the while hoping that it won't just be "Work Out With Wham!" - the 12-inch, all over again.

The fate of the good guys in the sixties, according to Kesey, was that they confused being popular with being powerful. While going out and doing it "we fell for the oldest trick in the world". Politicians, in Kesey's book, make a different mistake; they confuse power with force, and the results include a load of bullshit about El Salvador (surely due for a spot of Sacred Napalm now that Ron's been canonised), Afghanistan, and Victorian Values, to name but three. In reality, says Ken, "WE have the power, but we're either too scared or too thick to use it well. He illustrated this point beautifully with an old Oregon folk-tale about a Squirrel tricking a hungry bear into stuffing himself with buttermilk then trying to fly. Now who could argue with that?"

Kesey, himself resembling a genial grizzly in a suit, spoke about politics; writing, "Cuckoo's Nest", (what do you think of the film, Ken? - "Never seen it, I'm afraid"), John Lennon, and another recent tragedy, the death of his son Jed in a State Wrestling Team bus that was un-roadworthy due

to money being spent on "more important things". He laughed a lot, as did we all, because the only thing revealed by this 'guru' was simple, decent humanity (and a line in awful old jokes). Even if this IS the age of corporate masochism and Raquel bloody Welch, at least one old fart has refused to become boring.

Drax.

