

2019

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Recommended Citation

Anderson, Jim, Remarks on 1968, Richard Neville and his book Play Power, *Counterculture Studies*, 2(1), 2019, 30-42. doi:10.14453/ccs.v2.i1.13

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Abstract

An account by OZ editor, journalist and artist Jim Anderson on his role in the production of Richard Neville's *Play Power* (1970) and events around 1968.

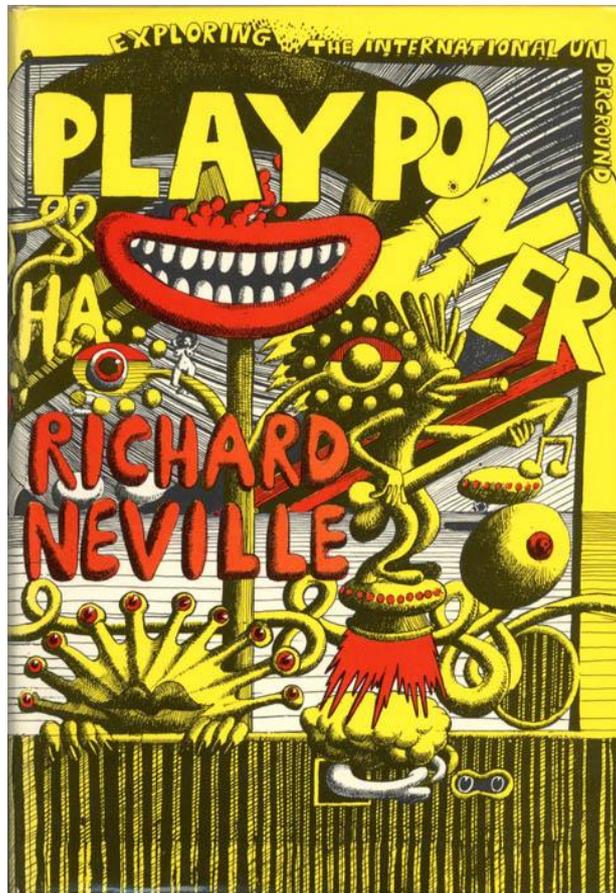
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Remarks on 1968, Richard Neville and his book *Play Power*¹

Jim Anderson



NOTE: 'THIS COPY of PLAY POWER DOES NOT CONTAIN THE UNDERGROUND ALMANAC POSTER GAME HEADOPOLY AS A PROHIBITION NOTICE HAS BEEN IMPOSED ON IT by the Commonwealth of Australia Department of Customs and Excise. MARCH 26 1970

¹ The title of Richard Neville's book *Play Power* was a variation on flower power, a popular phrase at the time. Richard Neville, *Play Power*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1970, 300p.

Looking Back to '68

I have never been a certified student of the Sixties. When I finished my law degree at the University of Sydney in 1962, I vowed I was never going to study formally again. But that left me free, of course, to enrol in the education of oneself in the so called school of life, for which the only thing required is an endless curiosity, and of which I have just enough of to keep me going, decade after decade. That curiosity had me forsake the tedium of what Macquarie Street offered (including the concealing of my sexuality) for the bohemian world of the drinking artist, and leave Australia for the wider world and London in January 1963. Which brings me to this 50th anniversary of the unforgettable year of 1968. It was one of several unforgettable ones in that decade of social upheaval and change, seismic shock, or 'The Big Shake Up' as Roger Hutchinson put it in his 1992 book *High Sixties*.² This is one of my three favourites written about the era, and of which Richard Neville briefly declaimed:

"It is *THE* best book yet on the period: friendly, fair, wise and thorough.... More than the music, the movies, or my acid flashbacks, this book evokes summers of love in London like it was yesterday, and makes me want to do it all over again. Hell, why not!"

The second of my favourite books is Jonathan Green's cleverly entitled *All Dressed Up*, which came out in 1999 and was named after the John Lennon remark made during his December 1970 interview with *Rolling Stone* editor Jann Wenner:

² Roger Hutchinson, *High Sixties: the summers of riot and love*, Mainstream, Edinburgh, 1992, 206p.

“...nothing happened [in the Sixties]. But we all dressed up.”³

The phrase or idiom, which Green lets hang half way, is of course: *All dressed up and nowhere to go!* Implying that with, for example, the OZ Trial over and the editors vindicated on appeal by the end of 1971, the flower children’s flowers dead and lying on an unknown victim’s or Viet’s grave, the 1968 Paris students riots long forgotten - that the Sixties were done and dusted and it was time to move on. Well, the 68ers did move on, but we found that ever since we have been carrying the Sixties along with us.

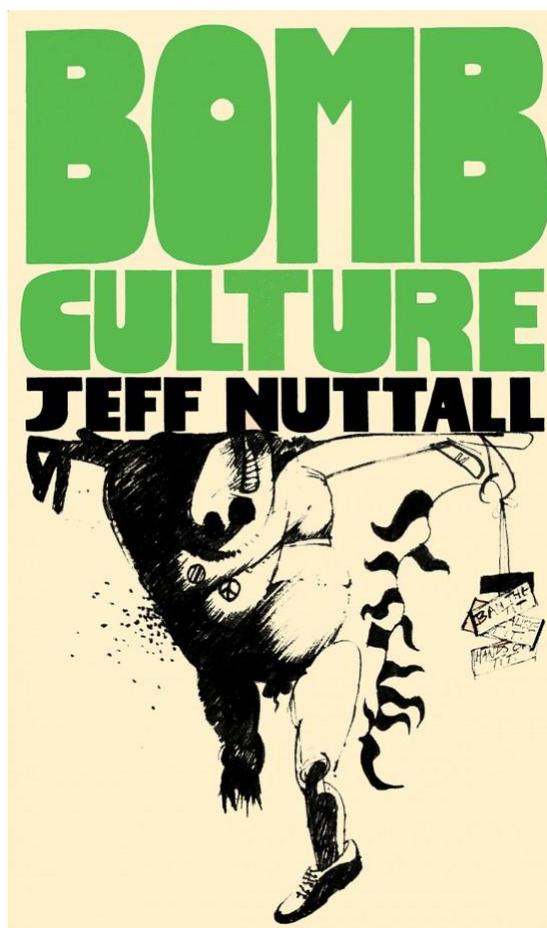
The changes that the great seminal decade rang in were no ball and chain. Generational change was in the air. We were bored with what our parents had to offer, to the point of violence and to the ingestion of mind-changing drugs. We therefore seized the time.

Jonathan Green begins his definitive tome with “We live in the shadow of the Sixties”, but we might also say, “We live in the light that the Sixties shone. A light that has been for the undeniable benefit of humanity and for our slow but hopefully inevitable progress in our inner and outer life as human beings.” Always two steps forward, one-step back - like we have now with say, President Trump, the current back stepper and another kind of motherfucker. Which brings me back to Richard Neville’s *Play Power*, the first London book about the phenomenon that was the psychedelically infused Sixties.

³ Quote taken from Jann Wenner, John Lennon: The Rolling Stone Interview, *Rolling Stone*, 1971; Jonathan Green, *All dressed up: the sixties and the counter culture*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1998, 482p.

Play Power

Play Power was published in early 1970, but written in the heat of battle between October 1968 and throughout most of 1969. Jeff Nuttall's book *Bomb Culture* came out in 1968 but it looked back to a slightly earlier era - that of the beatnik, Aldermaston protests and marches, and the fear of Nuclear Armageddon.⁴ Four years older than Richard, I was caught in midstream, mired in a duffle coated nihilistic beatnik world, emulating Kerouac, dreaming of being a writer on the road, living in Tangier and other destinations on money I saved as a teacher in London on a tax-free salary.



Jonathon Green in *All Dressed Up* noted that Richard himself in *Hippie Hippie Shake* dealt with *Play Power* 'with alacrity', and Roger Hutchinson did not mention it at all.⁵ The chapter headings tell you little about the unique style of OZ but much about the content of *Play Power*, which was not all encompassing. Perforce:

⁴ Jeff Nuttall, *Bomb Culture*, Paladin, London, 1968, 252p. A review by David Widgery is included in the December 1968 issue of OZ magazine.

⁵ Richard Neville, *Hippie, hippie, shake: the dreams, the trips, the trials, the love-ins, the screw up – the Sixties*, Minerva, Port Melbourne, 1996, 376p.

Carry on Motherfuckers - a general survey of the international Youthquake of the time, touching on:

- The Yippies and the debacle that Chicago's Festival of Life became;
- the Nouveau Paris Left Bank;
- Viet Nam provided the Movement's spine. For the first time there were widely circulated front-line images, so horrifying that America in particular was split in twain.
- The political assassinations of 1968 were linked both to the war and to a society in decay. Again, images inspired artists, energised resistance and revolt worldwide
- The Living Theatre's Paradise Now; the counter culture in action and the real deal
- Radical therapist R.D. Laing and the dodgy Trinidadian Michael X as London's Black Panther were as strange as bedfellows in the pages of *Play Power* as were Macrobiotics and the Neville speciality - the perfect lamb roast dinner on Sunday.
- The dogged and celebrated street mantra was '*drugs (or revolution), rock and roll, and fucking in the streets.*'
- Climate Change, the great moral issue of to-day, had not even climbed aboard the slow train coming in 1968. Viet Nam was the moral issue of the time.

Group Grope - Fun it was, and perhaps a necessary waltz outside the religious strictures towards sexual enlightenment and freedom. Richard speaking up for the power of the erotic and the three way. Germaine Greer working towards *The Female Eunuch*. A yet unreconstructed Richard still makes a case for 'The way to a girl's mind is through her cunt.'" There was the sexual explosion helped along

by The Pill but The Long March of the Woman towards equal billing was barely simmering. 50 years ago the Me Too Movement was not even froth on a daydream. (To adapt a literary phrase of the time)

And God Chose Pop - The Rolling Stones free concert with celebrities and butterflies for Brian Jones in Hyde Park. The Neville pivot to The Who and Chuck Berry concert at the Albert Hall, all on a single summer's day. Richard's personal take on the day make for exciting reading.

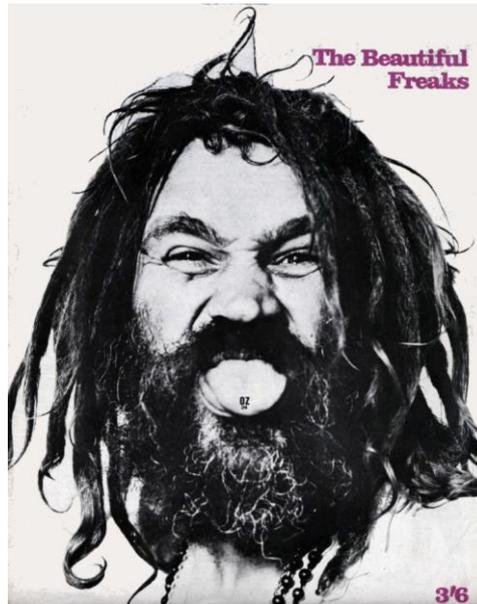
Johnny Pot Wars Gold Sandals and a Black

Derby Hat - As Bob Dylan sang "Everybody must get stoned," Timothy Leary wrote "Every time you take LSD you put all your chips on the table." The Legalise Pot Rally in Hyde Park and the Summer of Love.



Figure 1 Martin Sharp, *Legalise Pot*, poster, 1968.

Otis Cook (aka Lee Heater) King of the Hippies in Marrakesh Kathmandu and Goa, not to mention Richard's back room, gets star billing. He appears on the cover of *OZ* magazine, London, November 1969. On Lee's tongue, the *OZ* logo as a tab of acid.



The Underground Press ('Guerrilla' as Richard labelled it, a friendly CHE-like word which has gone out of fashion. These Trumpist days it would *The Terrorist Press* or the *Fake News Press*. Richard found Tariq Ali, Black Dwarf and the radical left, low down on his Play Power totem pole.. David Widgery, who wrote frequently for *OZ*, was a famous exception. There were a couple of others.

The Hippie Trails – The Road to Kathmandu and all those other places you can't go to so easily these days, and those you can like Vietnam and Cambodia. 50 years is a long time span. Wars back then came to an end. Now they go on forever and the civilian streets are at one with the battlefields. London streets and squares (particularly Grosvenor) were also battlefields but in an entirely different context. The days of 1968 were filled with righteous and impassioned protest.

The Politics of Play - Richard's 'Far out, man'! idea, which really boiled down to something very simple, it was PLAY if you found the JOB that you really enjoyed doing - the rediscovery of the creativity and innocence of childhood coupled with the purposeful experiences of life as a fully realised authentic adult. EmPOWERment Richard's inspiration was *Homo Ludens [Man the Player]: a*

study of the Play Element in Culture by J. Huizinga (1949).⁶ Just like about everything else in the book, this idea of the *Power of Play* came in on a wing and a prayer. That is, on Richard's natural sociability, his wandering feet and his wandering, gleaming eye, his interest in his many writer friends' ideas and his ability to get him or her to work them up for an article in *OZ* – mostly for free. Richard, famously, became known as someone more than others, who was in touch with the Sixties zeitgeist.

A whole bunch of Appendices that probably were the inspiration for Tony Elliot's *Time Out* magazine.

Random Notes in the Nineteen Sixty Eighties

Play Power, which was originally commissioned in 1968 by Ed Victor at Jonathon Cape, was written in a rush with Richard constantly distracted by the excitements - political and social - of the era and Ed barking at his heels the whole time to get it finished. Richard had trouble even getting started and sent out for help. Colette St John - one of his Australian friends then in London, sister of Madelaine of later *Women in Black* fame - was working on the book for Richard, but she recommended that I go talk with him as she was unable to do the research he needed. That was October 1968. Richard and I took to each other and I came on board immediately. A few weeks later, I moved from my own flat - in Upper Berkeley Street, Marble Arch, which had been taken over by my Ghanian friends - into his back room in Palace Gardens Terrace, Kensington. There were two tables, my Olivetti Lettera on one, Richard's on the other. There was a single bed overlooked by wallpaper composed of multiple shiny

⁶ Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens [Man the Player]: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1949, 220p.

copies of a Martin Sharp version of the famous Max Ernst drawing of an eagle headed male figure stabbing a knife thru the foot of an up-ended naked woman.

The manuscript went to the supportive but impatient Ed Victor at Jonathan Cape almost a year later. He was unhappy with some of it and wanted major changes.

Roger Hutchinson's *High Sixties*, which I had a second look at on the train on the way down, is a well-considered brilliant book on the Sixties written from a perspective much later in time. He noted that the *Lady Chatterley's Lover* obscenity trial of 1960 was staged in an almost courtly manner and had as much resemblance to the OZ Trial ten years later as did a medieval joust to the Battle of the Somme. *High Sixties* was also interesting in that it linked Jeff Nuttall of *Bomb Culture* to 1968 and the hippie era.



Figure 2 Martin Sharp, Max Ernst, poster, 1968.

Play Power was cobbled together on the run, making great use of the UPS (Underground Press

Syndicate) material that came in every week. Examples that come immediately to mind include the *LA Free Press*, *East Village Other*, *The Berkley Barb*, *The Georgia Strait* from Vancouver and *Actuel* from Paris. Richard read everything with avidity. He then went to the typewriter and banged it all together in some kind of Kerouacian free association effort which I then edited and made slightly more readable. Back and forth the paragraphs went. All the ideas were Richard's with me having none of my own. I still don't have many.

There were constant creative interruptions for Richard's web spinning mind throughout 1969. These included weekend trips to Amsterdam to enjoy an even freer sex and hashish environment; the good life, stoned in friends' country houses; the close-to disastrous meeting with Lee Heater in Marrakesh; Jerry Rubin's London visit and the David Frost television show drama; The Living Theatre in full flood and influence in London with performances at the Roundhouse. Also of note was the death of Brian Jones and the Rolling Stones free memorial concert in Hyde Park, followed the same day with a double rock and roll bonanza at the Albert Hall - Chuck Berry and The Who at loggerheads about who would be the main act. I understand that Chuck Berry gave way on the understanding he got paid in cash on the spot. There was also the first appearance of the Skinheads - anti-hippie hooligans, and the Isle of Wight concert.

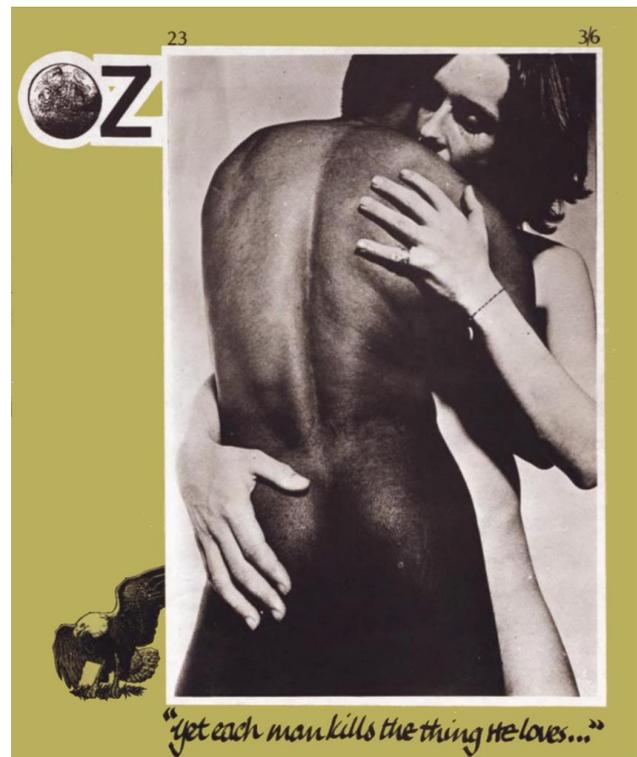
With regard to the Living Theatre performances at the Roundhouse – I witnessed the infamous spitting at the audience incident and how the Livings dealt with the outrage. Rufus Collins was the charismatic spitter whom I got to know a little later. Richard's account of that night at the Roundhouse is one of the most engaging front-line revolution reports in *Play Power*. As I have indicated before, Richard's vivid descriptions on his personal experiences back then are what keep *Play Power* afloat and make it still worth reading to-day.

My life in 1969 became very much the life of Richard Neville and the book, with him the writer and me the editor (or the book doctor as he came to call me). This also meant that what interested Richard also interested me, so I gradually became radicalised - politicised, if you like - in a fun sort of way, without realising it. But just as I was a back room boy on the book, I was also a back room boy on the revolutionary streets. Not a leader but an avid follower. With the book approaching completion in the autumn of 1969 there were breakaway periods from both *OZ* and from Richard and Louise. Sometimes these were to do with the Gay Liberation Front, which formed in London after

the Stonewall Riots in New York June 1969. Richard took a trip to New York and came back with a copy of Angelo D’Arcangelo’s *The Homosexual Handbook*, a do-it yourself appreciation of homosexuality which appealed to Richard in its total wit, and fucking in the streets outrageousness. There came a zeitgeist moment, plucked from the ether as he realised *OZ* could say something about this phenomenon – “Why, Jim is gay! He goes to Gay Liberation Front meetings at the All Saints Hall in Notting Hill. Jim, why don’t we do a homosexual *OZ*? The book is finished, I’m off to Ibiza for a holiday with Louise. Why don’t you edit the issue?”

Gay liberation Front (GLF) and marching down Oxford Street, nervously waving a placard GAY IS GOOD.

By September 1969 I had hoped that my work on *Play Power* was over, and thanks to Richard’s post Stonewall trip to New York, his discovery of Angelo D’Arcangelo’s *The Homosexual Handbook* and his realisation that I was actually gay, I was already on to something else - editing what became known as the *Homosexual OZ*. When



Richard urgently called me back to *Play Power*, I was still in the middle of collecting the gay material. Fortunately the cover had already been shot - two friends of mine, photographed in a close naked embrace; one a West Indian (Sylvester from Jamaica) and the other, an Australian (Martin, known as the Angel of Death, beautiful but addicted to Nembutal.)

Richard Wherrett and I had talked the OZ photographer Keith Morris into photographing the two of us enjoying the gay hangouts in Kings Road and Earls Court, Piccadilly and Soho. Keith pleaded exhaustion long before Richard and I wanted him to. It should be noted that, apart from his photographing a naked Germaine for *Suck* magazine, she in a yoga position with her legs laced around the back of her neck in a deliberate revealing of all her bodily orifices, Keith Morris confessed that the gay assignment with Richard Wherrett and me was the most embarrassing of his career.

The OZ Trial

Warren Hague, the principal orator associated with the Gay Liberation Front, was living with me throughout the six weeks of the OZ Trial, which commenced in June 1971.⁷ Sandals, tinkling bracelets, dangling earrings, an Afro hairstyle, a heavy beard - he smelled of hashish and patchouli oil, wore a flowered silk kimono over jeans and became a feature of the trial. This occurred when Richard, representing himself in court, was permitted a non-legal assistant called a MacKenzie lawyer. Initially he had his close friend David Widgery, a doctor, however David was called away after the first two weeks. I suggested it would be a good subversive idea to give Warren the job. Geoffrey Robertson was against it but Richard agreed. Judge Argyle made his displeasure obvious. A heavily patchoulied

⁷ Warren Hague, a Canadian, was involved in the first Gay Liberation Front march in London during 1971. Some 200 people took part in a small rally in Hyde Park followed by a march to Trafalgar Square, where Hague spoke about his American experiences and the Stonewall riots. Source: LGBT Archive, www.lgbtarchive.uk.

Warren often arrived late, tinkling and jangling as he wafted his way to his seat at the bar table of No 2 court at the Old Bailey, to maximum counter cultural effect.



Felix Dennis, Jim Anderson and Richard Neville during the period between the end of the *OZ* Trial and the successful appeal in November 1971.

Leaving the Beatnik in Me Behind (If Alan Ginsberg could do it, so could I)

One last note about *Play Power*. In Richard's list of thanks to people, including my role as book doctor, he outed me by adding, "I look forward to his first book, *Gay Power*." I blushed. There was never a chance that I would ever write such a book, me being too fast and loose with the facts for non-fiction, and some years would pass before I was fully at home with myself as a homosexual. Eventually I would do my own coming-out story in the form of a blackly comic, satirical novel, *Chipman's African Adventure*, published in 2015 by Valentine Press.