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My Generation

Griffith REVIEW
Issue 13 (Spring 2006)

O'Hanlon, Creed

Abstract: Everything was different when I was a kid. There was no such thing as a colour television or a personal computer, and the internet hadn't been invented. If you wanted music, there was the "wireless" or what my grandmother referred to as a gramophone and the rest of us called a record-player. Discs were vinyl - twenty-minute-a-side LPs and smaller, three-minute-a-side 45s - and musicians recorded them on two- or four-track reel-to-reel tape. The first portable transistor radio was

sold in the USA just two months after I was born, but neither eight-track stereo nor videocassettes were even imagined yet. MTV was launched when I was in my twenties, not long before the first compact disc and the cellular mobile phone. "Touch-tone" phones with digital keyboards turned up in the USA in the early '60s. Until then, every phone used slow, rotary dialling. International voice communications were carried only on terrestrial cables, not relayed through satellites, and you still had to ask an operator to connect a call. Facsimile machines - we hadn't yet learnt to call them faxes - were the size of a coffee table, with a bit-rate that transmitted a single typewritten page in ten minutes. Even time was analogue. I was a teenager when the first digital watch, the Pulsar, with its bulky, faux-gold casing and red LED display, went on sale. There were no microwaves, no pocket calculators and no game consoles (arcade games were large and electro-mechanical, like pinball machines). Credit cards were for the rich - Diner's Club, Carte Blanche and American Express - and there were no bank cards, no automatic teller machines, and no point-of-sale processors. A bank's customer records were still kept in a file drawer. Your signature was your main form of ID.



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To cite this article: O'Hanlon, Creed. My Generation [online]. Griffith REVIEW, No. 13, Spring 2006: [220-237]. Availability:
<<https://search.informit.com.au/documentSummary;dn=452832395911921;res=IELLC>>
ISSN: 1839-2954. [cited 24 Jul 18].

Personal Author: O'Hanlon, Creed;

Source: Griffith REVIEW, No. 13, Spring 2006: [220-237]

Document Type: Journal Article

ISSN: 1839-2954

EISSN: 1839-2954

Subject: Baby boom generation; Manners and customs; 1900-1999;

Database: LITERATURE & CULTURE COLLECTION



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