

# Good-Bye Mr. Penneman, So Long Mr. Amoros: The Decline of Two American Institutions

Richard Keller

Emporia State University

Civilization as we have known it is dead. We live in a society without values, without certainty, without compassion. Since popular culture frequently is the most telling indicator of a society's direction—upward, static, downward—and since there are two segments of popular culture that touch huge segments of society—rock 'n roll and sport—these two areas indicate parallel paths of descent.

Sport and rock 'n roll developed at different rates but from the late 1950s, their declines have been remarkably rapid and parallel. Rock has transformed from a medium that highlighted the problems and joys of youth to one of brutal, decadent crassness. Artists and recordings such as the Silhouettes with "Get a Job," "Could This Be Magic," by the Dubs, Chuck Berry's "School Days," The Five Satins "In the Still of the Night," and Little Richard's "Rip It Up" showcased adolescent angst, loneliness, love, rejection of authority, and good times with exuberance and elan. Through folk rock, the British invasion, synthetic rock of The Monkees, the drug culture, disco, and MTV we have arrived at 2 Live Crew's talentless arrogance and brutality and women's rap group Choice's, attempts to reach the same audiences.

Sport, likewise, suffers a decline most clearly demarcated by Walter O'Malley ripping the Dodgers from Brooklyn based on one motivating factor: greed. This profit's Adam bred offspring such as Robert Irsay, Bill Bidwell, Al Davis, and George Steinbrenner whose policies continue to effect sport. As with rock 'n roll, the corrupting influence of money and the effects of technology have altered sport, in some cases, almost beyond recognition. A significant segment of the literature of

sport-poems, fiction, and drama—either romanticize or overintellectualize sport so that we become numbed or forgetful of the major problems we see virtually everyday.

In sport we are now left with puerile athletes selfvalidated by huge contracts, intercollegiate sport diseased to its roots, amateur athletics often corrupted, and youth sports infiltrated by win-at-all-costs mentalities. Rock 'n roll is left with vulgarities, racism, brutality, and a complete disregard for human beings. Both sport and rock 'n roll have been capable of such joy and transcendence. They have fallen a great distance and it is sad.