

# HOW TO SPEAK HIP

BY DEL CLOSE AND JOHN BRENT

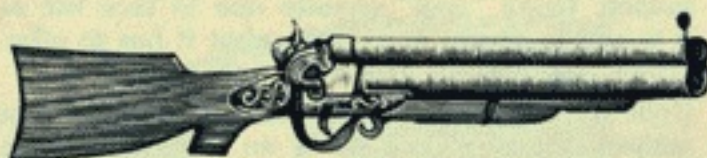
## INTRODUCTION

This is your Hip manual. Use it carefully and wisely. Carry it with you as you set out to investigate for yourself the fascinating world of hip.

In this manual you will find a Dictionary of Hip. A thorough reading of this dictionary will familiarize you with a number of useful Hip expressions, since it is simultaneously a dictionary and a phrase book. Many of the more tricky words are used in sentences, much as you might hear them used on "the Hip scene."

It must be borne in mind at all times that Hip is not just a language but an attitude—indeed, a whole culture unto itself. If some of the definitions in the dictionary seem inadequate or puzzling to you, please remember that the true hipster has the Taoist's aversion to pinning down the changing world. To define something completely is to embalm it intellectually. Subtlety of perception is hip—as when a jazz musician blows a particularly "wild" chord change and the hipster voices his appreciation by laughing quietly, or murmuring "Oh, yeah!" But it is hipper to "dig" the change and forget it than to do a post-mortem analysis of "just what happened there, musicwise."

## THE SCATTER-SHOT THEORY OF HIP COMMUNICATION:



In the English language, we have enormous difficulty with definition. There are entire branches of philosophy and logic devoted to little else but defining terms. Science has all but abandoned English as being too imprecise, preferring the language of Number.

The language of Hip cleverly sidesteps this problem. Where in English we are concerned with communicating *exactly* what we want to convey and nothing else, the hipster is satisfied if what he says manages to *include* what he means. Imagine the difference between shooting at a dime from twenty paces with a .22 rifle, and with a 40-gauge shotgun, and you will have a rough approximation of the difference between English and Hip.

Hip is a language of thundering generalities. It is more concerned with intense emotional states than with specific ideas, and in this respect can be said to be anti-intellectual.

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### ABOUT THE HIP VOCABULARY

It is not only difficult, but almost impossible to ascertain the exact meaning of many Hip words or expressions out of context. A change in the vocal inflection can change the meaning of a word to its own opposite. "Bad" can mean "good," "straight" can mean "twisted," etc. Depending on the context, the word "freak" may mean anything from "dangerous sex pervert" to "someone who likes ice cream." "The Man" can mean either the police or the narcotics salesman. It pays to listen carefully. If, when talking to a hipster, you have *no idea* what he is telling you, it is usually safer to say "I'm hip" or "It's cool" than to ask him what he is talking about.

Since Hip is such an emotional language, often hipsters will use words with a cavalier disregard for their actual meaning, retaining only their emotional connotation. In this wise, the late Lord Buckley once described an annoying fog in Chicago as "an illiterate cruddy amaze on the streets."

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### "COOL" IN THEORY AND PRACTICE:

Hipsters are much maligned by an unknowing public for being "cool." It should be pointed out, however, that "cool," when used in the Hip sense, does *not* mean withdrawn, cold, and non-reacting. Cool refers to an attitude which might best be described as poised and self-possessed, or unruffled. When a hipster "blows his cool," he loses his poise and succumbs to hysteria, anger, or the prevailing mood of the moment.

A hipster's "cool" is often spoken of as a possession—perhaps a hipster's most cherished possession. One's "cool" enables one to face life as it is and to accept graciously what it has to offer. "Cool" has several subsidiary meanings.

Cool it: Stop it, behave normally, change the subject, leave. "Cool it" is an urgent warning.

Cool yourself, or cool your brains: Relax, stop "coming on."

It's cool: It's all right, or okay. "That's cool with me."

Be cool: Be careful.

Cool that stud: Get rid of him, shut him up.

Is he cool? Does he know what's happening?

Will anything we do upset or shock him?

Is he a cop?

"Uncool" refers to actions which are socially inappropriate, gauche, foolhardy, or dangerous.

The following list may prove useful.

It is uncool to claim that you used to room with Bird.

It is uncool to claim that you have Bird's axe.

It is even less cool to ask, "Who is Bird?"

It is uncool to nod on the street waiting for the light to change.

It is uncool to let anybody know that your uncle is a registered pharmacist.

It is uncool to buddy with a known fink.

It is uncool to ask, "Where'd you get it?"

It is uncool to let anybody use your place as a forwarding address for packages from Mexico.

It is uncool to wear shades after sunset—unless you *should* be wearing shades after sunset, in which case it is uncool to take them off.

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### PARANOIA:

It is possible that "cool" behavior can be carried to an extreme. One who is constantly preoccupied with remaining "cool" at all times and with "the cool" of his friends, begins to slip towards paranoia. The word "Hincty" is occasionally used to denote this state, but the term "paranoia" (or "paranoid") is so applicable to Hip society that it has been adopted into the Hip vocabulary directly from psychoanalytic terminology. When every knock at the door, every footstep in the hall, every car parked across the street means "Police!", a hipster's "cool" may be said to have blossomed into paranoia.

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### POLITICS AND HIP:



Nowhere in the world is there less political activity or political consciousness than on the "Hip scene," with the possible exception of the Laotian Buddhists. Occasionally a voice will be raised in protest against police brutality in public parks, or in favor of legislation aimed at legalizing marijuana, or hospitalization rather than jail sentences for narcotic addicts, but these sporadic bursts of activity are rare. Perhaps this stems from the hipster's basic distrust of authority in any form. Most hipsters believe, for example, that a person must have serious psychological problems in order to become a policeman.

It would be absurd to attempt to organize hipsters into anything resembling a pressure group. The single instance that comes to mind of political-action-in-concert will serve as an example. During the 1960 Republican National Convention in Chicago, there appeared on the floor of the convention hall an odd assortment of people carrying signs and placards reading "Independent Republicans for Stevenson" and "Draft Stevenson Now." They were summarily ejected. The demonstration was, of course, a "put on."

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### METAPHYSICS AND HIP:

Hip, to the external observer, seems distinctly non-Western in its orientation. This is reflected in the fascination that Eastern mysticism holds for many hipsters, and in the fact that many members of Hip society are interested in Zen Buddhism, Yoga, the teachings of the Bagavad-Gita, Vedanta, and Islam. The teachings of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky are highly regarded, as is Subud.

The Hipster, feeling disillusioned with and disenfranchised by materialistic Western culture, supremely cynical about our accepted institutions and traditional idols, is forced to turn inward for his answers. "Dig yourself" is a Hip byword. Perhaps some of his methods are questionable; i.e., a too-literal interpretation of Rimbaud's dictum, "To arrive at the unknown through the disordering of *all the senses*, that's the point," and perhaps these methods will never produce great art or a great body of literature. But the hipster is not interested. He invests his energy in his life.

The concept of "dues" may be worth mentioning here. Many hipsters are musicians, and consequently, dues-paying union members, since a musician cannot perform professionally unless he is a paid-up member in full standing. Thus we get such Hip expressions as "That cat pays his dues" compliment for a good performer, or for someone who lives up to the responsibilities he has chosen for himself. The expression has broadened in meaning, however, to the point that it might be considered as the basis for a Hip Metaphysic.

"Dues" are the sacrifices that "a cat" makes to live as he wishes to live; "dues" are the automatic and impersonal punishments that accompany "goofs" and oversights. One hipster summed it up rather neatly. "Say you're a bad, evil, rotten stud, man. You go around spreading badness and rottenness and evil. So what do you expect to get back, man? Everybody treats you like a bad cat. But you don't dig that, because *nobody* digs being treated like that, so you get back at *them* by treating them like they're a bunch of bad cats for putting *you* down, which is what they put you down for in the first place. You dig where it's at?"

The dues for being a bad cat are *being a bad cat*, that's all, what can I tell you?"

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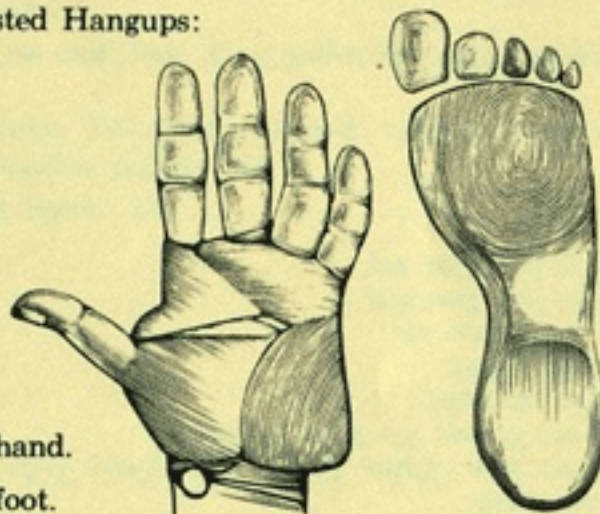
### THE HANGUP:

It is possible to become "hung up" on almost any object by following the instructions below. We recommend this exercise to serious students of Hip.

Exercise: Choose an object. Any object, but preferably one that is fairly interesting looking, at least for now. Pretend that your attention (focus of concentration) is a stream of water. Play this "stream" over the object, letting it trickle into crannies and recesses, and splash over flat sur-

faces. Soon you will begin to discover that the object is much more interesting than it was before, and previously overlooked, or taken for granted. If something distracts your attention from the object of your concentration, don't force your concentration back to where it was, but investigate the object *in relation* to the distraction. Continue this exercise for at least fifteen minutes. No matter how ridiculous or pointless this may sound, after a few repetitions of this exercise, you should be able to hang yourself up for hours.

Suggested Hangups:



Your hand.

Your foot.

Reach over the back of your head and feel one of your eyes from above and behind—upside down. Try to think of something you can't remember.

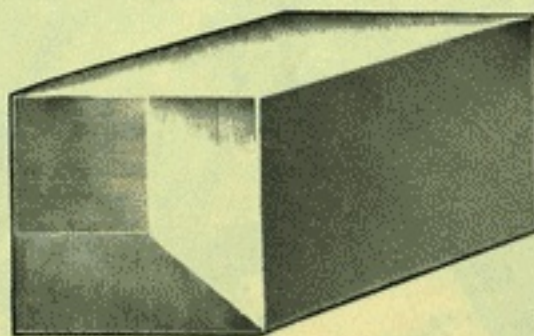
Tune your television set to an empty channel and watch the specks. (This is "Channel X".)

Complete this list: Ford Maddox Ford, Jerome K. Jerome, William Carlos Williams. . . .

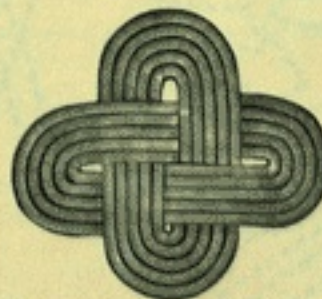
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Examine this drawing:



Copy this figure:



Try squaring the circle.

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**USEFUL FACTS:**

**JAZZ PERSONALITIES:**

Bags—Milt Jackson  
Baby Ray—Ray Charles  
Ball—Cannonball Adderley  
Bird—Charlie Parker  
Diz—Dizzy Gillespie  
Lady Day—Billie Holiday  
Prez—Lester Young  
Trane—John Coltrane

**CURRENCY:**

Ace: One dollar  
Deuce: Two dollars  
Nickle: Five dollars  
Pound: Five dollars  
Dime: Ten dollars  
Twenty-five cents: Twenty five dollars  
A bill: One hundred dollars  
Bread, geets, grease: money  
Geets: Telephone slugs  
Coins: A small amount of money, non-specific.  
Short line: Not enough money. Up tight: No money.  
Time: Any time before four-thirty in the afternoon is too early.

**SUPPLEMENTARY READING AND LISTENING:**

Books:  
*Science and Sanity*: Korzybski  
*Language in Thought and Action*: Hiakawa  
*The White Negro*: Mailer  
*Naked Lunch*: Burroughs  
*Growing Up Absurd*: Goodman  
*The Psychoanalytical Theory of Neurosis*: Fenichel  
*Gestalt Therapy*: Goodman, Perls & Hefferline  
*Square Zen, Beat Zen, & Zen*: Watts  
*The Horn*: Holmes  
*Knowing and the Known*: Dewey & Bently  
*Poetics*: Aristotle  
*Jazz Titans*: Reisner  
*Drugs and the Mind*: de Ropp  
*The Theory of Conscious Evolution*: Ocspensky

**RECORDS:**

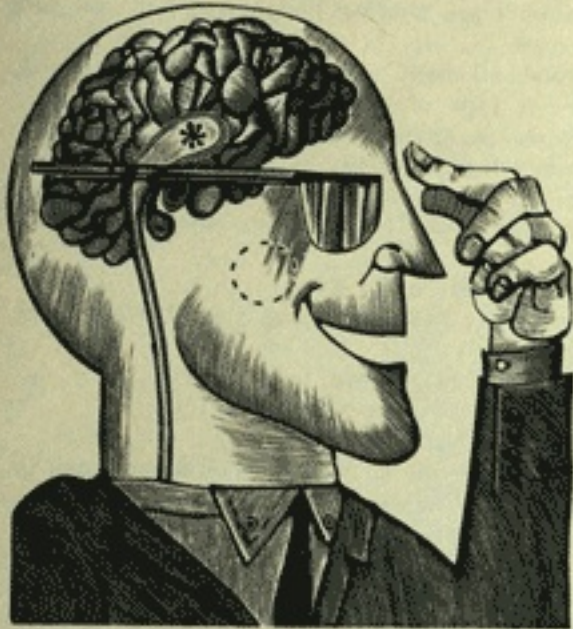
*Euphoria*, Vols. 1 & 2: Lord Buckley  
*Way Out Humor*: Lord Buckley  
*The Wide Weird World of Shorty Petterstein*: Jacobs  
*Word Jazz*: Nordine  
*Take Five*, with Ronny Graham (Final Band, *Harry the Hipster*.)

**PERIODICALS:**

*The Village Voice*, New York (Weekly)  
*The Realist*, New York (Monthly, or something)  
*The Evergreen Review*  
Etc.



**TEST QUESTIONS:**



Place the correct word or phrase in the blank in each of the following sentences:

1. I was busted by the \_\_\_\_\_. (Stash, Fuss, Geets)
2. Marvin is my \_\_\_\_\_ buddy. (Tight, Fink, Soul)
3. I need a lift, did you bring your \_\_\_\_\_? (Old lady, reefer, short)
4. I'm up tight, can you lay some \_\_\_\_\_ on me? (Heat, changes, bread)
5. Get out of here, you're \_\_\_\_\_! (Turning me on, bringing me down, holding)

**TRUE OR FALSE:**

When you're burned, the best thing to do is call the police.

You will be welcome wherever you go if you come on strong enough.

Your pad should be cool at all times.

If you groove in your bag, stick to it.

That's the way it is, man, that's the way it really is.

Translate these sentences into hip. When translated, each sentence should be no more than four words long.

1) He heard a car outside, and he jumped up and down and screamed and knocked over furniture and made everybody very nervous and then ran down the back stairs yelling, "They're after me!"

2) I don't have any money, and my wife left for Detroit with the car, and left the kids, and the rent is due, and I can't afford to hire a baby sitter so I can go out and look for work, and I don't know *what's* going to happen.

3) He's the kind of a guy that would try to get you arrested if he got mad enough.

4) I'm sorry I'm late, but the building caught fire and the old lady on the top floor was trapped in her bathroom, so I helped the firemen break in through the kitchen window, and we dropped her into a net just before the wall collapsed, so that's why I wasn't here earlier.

5) What are you telling me a long story for? I know all about that. I've known about it from the beginning. Now listen: Here's what really happened . . .

Parts One and Two, Five points for each correct answer.

Part Three, Ten points for each correct answer:

Total possible points: 100

Passing Score: 100

Part One: Fuss, Tight, Short, Bread, Bringing me down.  
 Part Two: False, False, True, True, False, False.  
 Part Three: He blew his cool.  
 I'm up tight.  
 He's a fink.  
 I got hung up.  
 I'm hip. But dig.  
 I'm hip. But dig . . .



**ANSWERS:**

**IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS FOR READY REFERENCE:**

Fire Department _____	
Police _____	
Doctor _____	
Psychoanalyst _____	
Bail Bondsman _____	
Lawyer _____	
American Consulate _____	
Cool Friends: X _____	
Y _____	
Z _____	

— NOTES —

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## DICTIONARY OF HIP WORDS AND PHRASES

**Ace:** A dollar. Also, a friend. "I'm tight with him, he's my ace buddy."

**Action:** What's happening. "What's shakin' baby, where's the action?"

**Axe:** Musical instrument. Also, any tool with which you make your living.

**Amp:** Ampule.

**Amphetamine:** A powerful stimulant.

**Amphetamine head:** Habitual user of amphetamine. They are noted for their never ending stream of chatter, their misguided energy, and their unreliability.

**Baby:** A friendly form of address used for persons of either sex.

**Bad:** Good. "Monk blows bad piano, man." Also, occasionally, bad. "He's a bad face, man, and I don't want him around."

**Bad News:** A dreary, unpleasant, or dangerous person. "Here comes Mr. Bad News."

**Bag:** Very general term for set of circumstances, a complex of behavior patterns, etc. "I'm going to Mexico to study the teachings of Gurdjeiff." "Oh, you're in *that* bag!"

**Ball:** Pleasurable experience. "It was great, I had a ball."

**Beatnik:** A term coined by Herb Caen of San Francisco to describe the self-proclaimed members of the Beat Generation living in the North Beach area. A much abused term, now mostly applied to teen-age bohemians, or anything else that's funny looking, or whom you don't happen to like. Similar to "Communist" in that respect.

**Beat, to:** To steal. "He beat me for my short." He stole my car.

**Behind:** Under the influence of. "I get very goofy behind lush, so I don't drink." Also, as a result of. I'm very strung out behind no sleep.

**Bill:** One hundred dollars.

**Blow:** To play any musical instrument. "He blows bad guitar." Also, to make. "My old lady blows nutty scrambled eggs." Also, to lose. "Be here by 5:00 or you'll blow the gig." "I blew my watch." I lost my watch.

**Boss:** Very good. "That Mercedes is a boss short."

**Box:** Phonograph.

**Boxed:** High, stoned.

**Bread:** Money. "Lay some bread on me, baby, I'm up tight."

**Bug:** To annoy or irritate. "Don't bug me, Jim."

**Burned, to be:** To be cheated or swindled. "What happened to that project in which we invested twenty dollars a piece?" "I'm sorry, boys, I got burned, what can I tell you." Also, angry.

**Burn down:** To create an atmosphere in which no "action" is possible. "Nothing's happening on East 3rd Street, man, all those uncool people burned it down."

**Bring down:** A depressing person or thing.

**Busted:** Arrested *for a reason*. "Charlie the Gizzard took a fall, man,—he got tapped in that big bust last June."

**Cat:** Male hipster.

**Changes, tough:** hard times.

**Changes:** Originally, musical chord changes. Now, refers to psychological or emotional changes. "Man, when you came through that door in that ape suit, I went through a terrible change."

**Changes, to put through:** To do purposeful violence to a person's state of mind. To disorient. To startle and amaze. See "Put on" and Riff."

**Chick:** Girl.

**Chops:** Embouchre, or lips. Extended to mean any part of the body used to play an instrument. A pianist's chops are his hands, a tap-dancer's chops are his feet. And his shoes are his axe.

**City:** A suffix used for emphasis. "You went to the Elk's meeting—what was it like?" "What can I tell you? It was Clyde city."

**Clyde:** An offensive square, a hick.

**Come down:** To return to normal from a high.

**Come on, to:** How one presents oneself. To say that someone "comes on strong" means that he has an overdeveloped personality. Also, to make sexual overtures. "So I was trying to sound her, but she said, 'Don't come on with me, baby, my old man's outside'."

**Connection:** The man you buy it from, whatever "it" may be. The "Man."

**Cook:** To do what you do well. "When he started blowing piano, I couldn't see nothing happening, but now he's starting to cook."

**Cool:** Safe, good, all right, yes, appropriate. An outlook. An attitude. A type of jazz. "Cool it" means stop it, leave, relax, change the subject, etc.

**Cop:** To obtain, either by purchase or by theft. Many hip expressions owe their validity to being more inclusive in meaning than their English equivalents. See "Old lady."

**Cop out:** Excuse, shield, cover story.

**Count:** The amount. "Was it a good count?" "No, man, I got burned."

**Crazy:** Obsolete term of approval.

**Crib:** Apartment, "pad." Musicians' term.

**Cut, Cut out:** Leave, "split."

**Dig:** Understand, appreciate. Also, to look at or listen to. To pay attention. Often used as interjectory verbal punctuation, to command attention or to break up thoughts. "Dig. We were walking down Tenth Avenue, you dig it, and dig! Here comes this cop. So dig, here's what we did."

**Do up:** To use up or to destroy. "We did up the dope, and then we did up the car."

**Down home:** Oddly enough, a phrase of approval. A "down home stud" is a man endowed with the old-fashioned virtues of honesty and integrity. Down to earth. Solid. Also funky, earthy.

**Drag:** A person or thing that is boring or depressing. "What a drag. What a bring down. I'm drug with this party, I'm going to cut out."

**Dues:** The disadvantages you will put up with in order to get what you want. The punishment for unwise behavior.

**Eye, the:** The television set.

**Eyes:** Desire. "I got big eyes for some scoff, man, I'm starving." Or, more simply, "I'm gonna split, you got eyes?" Meaning, Do you want to come?

**Face:** Person. "He's a West Coast face."

**Fall, to take a:** To be arrested.

**Fall by:** Visit.

**Fall in:** Enter.

**Fall out:** Go to sleep suddenly. "Like, when you said 'Fall by, we thought we'd fall over and fall in on you, but we blew it, we fell out.'"

**Far Out:** Weird, difficult to understand, strangely motivated. "He's a very far out cat, he sleeps in a bathtub full of jellied consomme."

**Fink:** An informer. Lowest form of animal life.

**Flick:** Movie.

**Flip:** To go crazy. Less literally, to "flip" over something means to like it a great deal.

**Forget it:** Expression of contempt.

**Freak:** Someone who likes something very much, or exclusively. A girl who only goes for musicians is a "musi-



S

cian freak." "I can't smoke these cigarets, man, I'm a menthol freak."

**Freak scene:** Swinging, but not monogamously.

**Freaky:** Strange, odd, funny.

**Full, full-out:** Complete, or utter. "It was a full shuck." "She's a full-out freak."

**Funky:** Earthy, down home. When pronounced "Fonky," it means very earthy, very down home.

**Fuzz:** The police. Originally a pickpockets' term, stemming from the fact that police had nothing in their pockets but fuzz.

**Gas:** Superlative. "It was a gas, I mean it was a wig."

**Geets:** Home-made telephone slugs.

**Get in the wind:** To leave, cut out, or split.

**Gig:** Job.

**Good people:** A good person. "I dig Charley, man, he's good people."

**Grease:** Money. Also means to eat, or food.

**Groove behind, to:** To like or enjoy. "I groove behind raspberry sherbet."

**Groovy:** Coming back into use as a complimentary adjective. "She's a groovy chick."

**Hangup:** A fascinating object or concept. Also, a psychological block or personality quirk.

**Head:** Originally, a marijuana smoker, or "tea head." Now, very similar in meaning to "freak." A greedy person is a "Greed head."

**Heat:** Police.

**High:** Intoxicated by narcotics, marijuana, stimulants, depressants, what you will. "Shoe polish is a nutty high."

**Hincty:** Paranoid, overly nervous about the police. "You bring me down when you go into your hincty bag."

**Hip:** To know, to be aware.

**Hipster:** A fully paid-up member of Hip society.

**Hippy:** A junior member of Hip society, who may know the words, but hasn't fully assimilated the proper attitude.

**Hippie-dip:** Derogatory term for hippy.

**Holding:** To have on one's person whatever is needed, usually drugs or money.

**Hooked:** Addicted.

**Hook:** A mania. A Satyr may be said to have a "terrible chick-hook."

**Horn:** The telephone. "Get on the horn, call me up."

**Hung up:** Neurotic. Also, to be in a position in which one is robbed of choice, frustrated. Also, fascinated.

**Hustle:** To work in a field other than your own. "Are you gigging steady?" "No, man, I'm hustling." Scuffling.

**Hustler:** A survival artist, usually with no visible source of income, often engaged in small-time illegal activity.

**In Front:** Before. In advance. "I want the bread in front."

**Into something:** Someone who is putting good creative ideas into his work may be said to be "into something." A high compliment.

**Jim:** An uncomplimentary form of address. A one word put-down. "Cool yourself, Jim."

**Jive:** A fearsome insult, originally in three words. Now, the second two words are usually left unspoken. "You jive . . ." "I can't stand all them jive people."

**Joint:** Marijuana cigaret.

**Juice:** Liquor.

**Juice-head:** A habitual drunk, a lush.



**Juiced:** Drunk.

**Junkie:** A narcotics addict.

**Later:** Goodbye. Also, a derogatory term similar to "Forget it." "Later for that, man."

**Lay on:** To give. "Lay a deuce on me 'til Tuesday." Lend me two dollars.

**Like:** A form of verbal punctuation. The extensive use of this word would seem to indicate that the hipster is unconsciously aware of the fact that he can never communicate *exactly* what he wants to say, and that what he *is* saying is at best an approximation of what he intends to communicate.

**Loose wig:** To be free to "swing" creatively is to have a loose wig.

**Make:** To take. "I make mescaline about twice a year."

**Make, to:** "I made him for fuzz by the way he came on." I guessed that he was probably a police officer because of the way he behaved.

**Make it, to:** To be good. "Trane really makes it, man."

**Make it with, to:** To have an affair with someone is to "make it" with him or her. "I'm making it with Jenny now. Man, she really makes it!"

**Man:** A neutral form of address for either sex.

**Man, the:** The police. Also, the connection.

**Mother:** Friendly form of address. "There you go, mother."

**Nod:** a brief nap. "It's uncool to nod on the street corner waiting for the light to change."

**Nutty:** Nice, good, attractive. Also, a phrase of agreement, or assent.

**Ofay:** Negro term for white person. Pig latin for "foe."

**Old lady:** Lover or wife.

**Old Man:** Lover or husband. This is a significant attitude, drawing as little distinction as possible between lover and marital partner.

**Off, to:** To steal. "Dig the chandelier? I offed it from a church."

**Off the wall:** Weird, unlikely, far out.

**Out:** Similar to, but more complimentary than "far out." "They're a nutty group, man, they blow some out sounds."

**Pad:** A Hip home or apartment.

**Pick up on, to:** To pay attention to, to listen to. "Let's go pick up on some sounds." To take, or "make." "I been clean for a month, I would dig to pick on some pot." To discover. "Ever since Roge picked up on Islam, he's been a different cat."

**Pin:** To examine with full attention. "I tight pinned him, and I make him a full-out fraud."

**Pinned:** Pupils dilated. "Am I pinned?"

**Popped:** Arrested, "busted."

**Pot:** Marijuana.

**Pound, a:** Five dollars.

**Put down:** To reject, to denigrate. Also, an insult. "What a terrible put-down!"

**Put on:** A favorite sport of the Hipster, occasionally vicious. A variety of practical joke in which the victim is not aware that he is being "had." See also, Riff.

**Reefer:** Once meant marijuana cigaret, now refers to a quantity of marijuana. The difference in this case between hip and non-hip depends on the article. It is un-hip to ask for "a reefer," but "Have you got any reefer?" is acceptable. Under certain circumstances, of course.

**Riff:** Originally, an improvised instrumental solo. Now, a conversational solo. "Harold blew a nutty riff about the alligators in the New York subways." A "riff" can be used in a "put on." "Man, I never know whether you're coming in a straight, or just riffing at me."

**Roach:** The unsmoked remains of a "joint."

