

## 35 Going on 18

Esquire magazine is brash, impious, mischievous, outrageous, scatterbrained, uneven, immodest, naughty and adolescent. And it is also great fun—for both its readers and its editors. "I dream up ideas on anything I want and for the most part assign them to outside writers," says John Berendt, 28, an associate editor who went directly to Esquire from the Harvard Lampoon. "It's pretty much like the Lampoon, very casual."

Next month Esquire celebrates its 35th birthday with a typical mixture of irreverence and pretentiousness in a 302-page issue dedicated to "Salvaging the 20th Century." The cover, a macabre montage, shows the faces of John F. Kennedy, Robert F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. attached to three models standing in a graveyard. The cover springs from an article by William Buckley Jr.: "The Politics of Assassination." One inside feature quizzes congressmen on their tastes (Karl Mundt likes Lawrence Welk), and contributors offer their advice on how to rescue civilization.

But Esquire is far more than a graduate Lampoon. Despite its pop slippancies and its facile impieties, Esquire is one of the brightest and most imaginative forces in journalism. It seethes with so many bizarre ideas—some good, some bad—that a number of its graduates have left to start magazines of their own: Hugh Hefner of Playboy; Clay Felker of New York and Ralph Ginzburg of Avant-Garde. Esquire was one of the first patrons of caricaturist David Levine; it gave Gay Talese the space in which to dissect The New York Times, and it provided Rex Reed a showcase in which to pick apart the movie colony. In 1960 and 1964, Esquire dispatched Norman Mailer to cover the political conventions, and this year it sent a team to Chicago that included playwright Jean Genet, novelist William Burroughs and satirist Terry Southern. Their twelve-page report, devoted almost exclusively to the turbulence outside the convention hall, will appear in the November issue. And Sen. Eugene McCarthy has promised to write "An Open Letter to the Next President" for the December issue. (Esquire pays a base rate of \$1,000 an article with bonuses for exceptional talent.)

**Hair:** "We try," says Arnold Gingrich, 64, Esquire's gentle and dapper publisher, "to be first with everything." That's about the only sense in which Esquire is still the "fashion" magazine for men that Gingrich and the late David Smart started in the fall of 1933. "From the start we had to live down the image of being a fashion magazine," says Gingrich, "and so we had to put some hair on our chest." During the Depression "hair" was cheap and Esquire signed on such authors as Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald and John Dos Passos as contributors for a pittance.

But with the war the magazine's quality declined and it became best known as a pin-up magazine, symbolized by "Eskey," the dandy with the upswept mustache and the ogling eyes, and best remembered for E. Simms Campbell's harem cartoons and George Petty's larger-than-life beauties. "We had to boost the morale of the boys," says Gingrich. "Also, it was a way of convincing the War Production Board we were entitled to more paper." Esquire's "pin-up" reputation still lingers—despite the fact that Eskey has been reduced to a dot over the "i" in the magazine's name and Hefner, who wrote subscription solicitations for the magazine in the 1950s, has long since run off with the nude girls.

Gingrich and Smart quarreled after the war, and Gingrich left and the circulation dropped to a little more than 700,000. Then, Gingrich returned in 1952. "We made a conscious effort to get the youth market," says Gingrich, "and so we hired a bunch of Young Turks and let them fight each other."

**Irony:** The survivor of the brawl was Harold Hayes, now 42, a native of North Carolina who worked as a UP reporter before going to Esquire in 1956. As editor, Hayes is now the dominating force on the magazine. Although Gingrich reads every piece four times before Esquire goes to press, he leaves the ideas up to Hayes and his half-dozen post-graduate activists in the back room. The system works well. While the average age of the magazine's readers has dropped from 40 to 33, circulation has risen to a record high of close to 1.1 million. And advertising revenues have climbed from \$6.5 million in 1958 to \$10.9 million in 1968. "We have tried to build a personality that's unique and recognizable," says Hayes. "I see us as unbiased and basically rational with a posture that tends toward irony." Esquire covers are created by George Lois, 36, of the New York advertising agency Lois Holland Callaway, Inc. "Hayes gives me an idea of what's going to be important and what might be fun in an upcoming issue and I dream up a cover," says Lois. "Usually, it's not too much trouble to get people to pose because the smart people understand showmanship."

Esquire's covers and, indeed, the irreverent tone of the magazine, offend everyone's sensitivities some of the time and the older generation's most of the time. "Most issues have one or two good articles," says Dwight Macdonald, 62, who has been writing movie reviews and political commentary for the magazine since 1960, "but they also have a lot of trivia. The covers are too 'socko'; the whole layout is too 'socko.'" Says Gingrich: "There are so many excesses in the world today, particularly an excess in the cult of ugliness. There is so much anti-art, anti-beauty, anti-everything." Well, what about Esquire itself? "Today," says Gingrich, "everything shocks me."

## CBS or COP?

Who says the Chicago police don't like newsmen? During the recent demonstrations policemen posed as photographers and reporters. By passing as newsmen, it seems, they could collect unobtrusively information on protest plans and protest leaders—and possibly evidence to prove Mayor Daley's conspiracy theories.

But the Chicago police department is hardly the only law-enforcement agency that practices the ruse. Lawmen all over the country slip undercover and disguise themselves as newsmen, particularly when they are tailing black militants, student activists and other dissenters. In Chicago, the police department's photographers are called, euphemistically, "evidence technicians." Policemen also attend news conferences called by radicals—armed only with cameras, tape recorders and phony "working press" cards. In the thicket of mikes, the speaker is hard put to know which one is CBS and which one is COP.

By all accounts, however, the undercover police quickly retreat when challenged. At a draft-card-burning ceremony in Washington, an unfamiliar newsman with a tape recorder claimed he was from the International News Service, which merged ten years ago with United Press. After the newsman was identified by The Washington Post as an FBI agent, Attorney General Ramsey Clark told J. Edgar Hoover to instruct all FBI agents "that under no circumstances are they ever to pose as members of the news media." During New York's Labor Day parade CBS-TV correspondent Martin Agronsky flushed out two phony news photographers, who had been assigned to photograph demonstrators. One of them said he represented the Press Association. When the correspondent tried to film them, the pair hustled away. Later a police captain admitted they were detectives.

**Credibility:** Newsmen are hardly blameless. "Police reporters have gone along with this for years," says Nicholas Pileggi, a veteran New York AP staffer. "There's been such tremendous collusion." And, of course, reporters have often posed as policemen to get a story. Belatedly, newsmen are beginning to realize that the role switching is undermining their credibility. Who's the real newsman? Who's the real policeman?

The American Civil Liberties Union, basing its case on a claim of invasion of privacy, has filed suit in Rochester and Buffalo, N.Y., and in New Orleans, where the ACLU contends that local police have posed as newsmen. "It causes a decline in public confidence in the press," says Paul Chevigny, an ACLU attorney, "and interferes with the ability of the press to collect facts."