

# **Wake Up, America!**

Abbie Hoffman and The Joint Chiefs of Staff

1969

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H3Ju6ft65GQ>

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1. Our National Anthem
  2. Malachy's Bar and Grill
  3. Texas Tweezers
  4. The Drug Company
  5. Ave Maria Jesus
  6. Jerry Rubin
  7. Flush for Nixon
  8. Chicago
  9. Washington at Valley Forge
  10. Religion of Sorts Out of Doors
  11. God Bless America
  12. The Only Dope Worth Shooting
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Big Toe Records, 1969

Abbie Hoffman sings with his friends

The Joint Chiefs of Staff

"I feel like a famous Indian Chief of the Fagowee nations, who led his tribe for 40 years in the desert amidst starvation, hunger, famine, strife, plague – finally staggered up to the top of this mountain, drug crazed, looked out and pounded his chest and said, 'Where the f... are we? Where the f... are we?'" sez Abbie.

With special thanks to malachy McCourt, Bob Fass, Alex Bennett; WGSU-FM, Geneseo, N.Y., and KUT-FM, Austin, Texas.

Recorded in Texas, N.Y., Philadelphia, Canada, and ZBS.

Engineer: Virgil Snakeskin

Artwork: Peter Bramley

Stuck together: Bob Booger

Music: The Joint Chiefs of Staff

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Abbie Hoffman's only LP, "Wake Up, America!" was originally conceived as a means to raise money for his defense in the Chicago 8 (or 7, or 10, take your pick) trial that followed the antiwar demonstrations at the Democratic Convention held in the Windy City in 1968. The anarchic energy of the record is remarkable and exhilarating, as is its message of freedom and direct democracy. Left-wing public

intellectuals like Hoffman have disappeared from modern (or should I say postmodern) society, much to its detriment. Hoffman's generous spirit and willingness to allow others to criticize him were a refreshing and distinguishing characteristic of the New Left, which laughed at the rigid, humorless orthodoxy of the Old Left. Indeed, Hoffman avoids preaching on this record, and it is remarkable how entertaining it is, coming from a man who was not an entertainer. While some might scoff and say that the fact that this record does not propound a political program is a sign of the New Left's fatal weakness, Hoffman and his ilk were to be commended for not shoving a program down the people's collective throat but, rather, for inviting them to join in a collective determination of the political, economic, and cultural route that they wished to take. This overarching democratic impulse was the essence of the New Left and what made them such a threat to both the capitalist and bolshevik establishments.

Listening to this record fills me with nostalgia, not for the 1960s but for a time that never was. The revolutionary and cultural movements of the 1960s all died out due to their near universal forswearing of the use of force and loose or nonexistent organization. The 1960s have had a superficial influence on our culture, but the seed that was planted at that time failed to take root, partly because of the faults of the those in the Movement but also because of the powerful resistance of the Establishment, with its tremendous resources of capital; its highly developed cultural, political, and economic institutions; and its capacity for long-range planning. While the New Left had some success in the cultural sphere, it completely failed in the political sphere, and its attempts at economic organization were limited to experiments in communal living that were often of a more reactionary than progressive character. Naturally, its commitment to democracy made long-range planning impossible. The future vaguely envisioned by the Movement thus failed to materialize. The New Left has largely taken refuge in academia and the alternative media and has produced a body of criticism that could be referred to in constructing a framework for a new society, but what is lacking today is the essential visionary element, which seems to have died out with Hoffman and much of his generation. The rallying cry of the French students in May 1968 was "All Power to the Imagination," but the courage to imagine a future that is not a mere repeat of the past is lacking in Americans today. – Joseph Magil.

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