

Meet the SYMPLES

THE AUSTIN
CHRONICLE

By Anna Hanks

NOVEMBER 9, 1998: Austin's recent pop-ulation explosion very well may have been the result of a shipping error at J. Crew. Think about it. How else could so many young, well-groomed professionals have washed up here on the shores of Slacker Heights? It truly boggles the mind.

Tragically, despite their high profile, members of this group are often referred to as "Yuppies." A misnomer, really, because during the period that Yuppies roamed the earth, this nascent group was busy swilling ketchup as a vegetable. Not exactly Yuppies. It would be more accurate to refer to these babies as SYMPLES -- Stylish Young Modern People Living en Splendor. Tragically, despite good upbringings by hippie parents, these Generation Xers are making money and spending it loudly on themselves. Like Mammy's saucy red-silk petticoat, you can hear the rustle of crisp dollar bills when they walk by.

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Unlike Yuppies, Symples aren't worried about accumulating their first million, they are worried about having a good time. Yuppies had the assurance that if they were good to commerce, commerce would be good to them. For the Symples, it's a matter of selling yourself to this week's highest bidder. The Yuppies had casual sex -- the Symples have casual employment.

With steady employment unlikely, Symples are pumping maximum fun from every ducat. Gather ye Rolexes while ye may. While many a Yuppie had a burning desire to be on the Forbes 400, Symples just have burning desires. With any luck, I'll never have to find out if they prefer to be shaken or stirred by an intimate encounter.

Members of this group aren't hard to spot, or at least smell: Having dismissed burning one hundred dollar bills as passé, they have taken up cigar smoking instead.

The term "simple," as our acronym is pronounced, is a perfect one for this decade. Stylish minimalism is in, wretched excess is out. Sackcloth instead of sequins. Subtle is the buzzword of the day. A beige-on-beige pattern isn't a paradox.

Like the term "Yuppie," the term "Symples" was arrived at through extensive marketing research. This time, the marketing research was centrally mine. Last week I was run down in front of the organic eggs by someone else's sense of entitlement.



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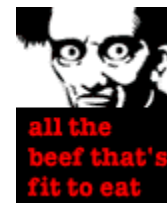


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With this scientific marketing research behind me, I arrived at this acronym through a conglomeration of traits that members of this group share.



S -- Stylishness: Our Symples are a paradigm of fitness and grooming. There are more grooming products in a Symple's bathroom than condiments in his kitchen. He spends a lot of time climbing stairs going nowhere. The female of the species often has a hungry, peevish look.

One example of this stylishness is the "Chic Simple" series of books that guide the clueless through a perfect life. Titles include: "Chic Simple Accessories," "Chic Simple Storage," etc. Doubtless the series will soon, er, expand to include "Chic Simple Sex" -- telling you how to best choose a condom that best matches your date's complexion. The most popular color: blush.

Y -- Young: A symple is young, but he tends not to have any young. Someone else's applesauce is not an accessory. Additions to the family generally consist of a litter of bouncing baby Beanies.

M -- Modern: Our Symples are hip to every trend. They spend more on cocktail onions every month than I do on rent.

P -- People: If you wish to debate this point, feel free.

LeS -- Living en Splendor: To our Symples, the Pottery Barn is ... symply irresistible. Many Symples live in special apartment homes constructed especially for them. Luckily these complexes have big gates so that the poor dears don't get out and hurt themselves. So thoughtful of the architects, yes?

Despite the shortcomings of the Symples, they do have their benefits. Some of them are quite decorative. Many of them have pleasant dispositions and play well with others. And never has a Symple been known to run with scissors -- they're much more likely to incapacitate you with a lethal martini.

Proposing a new demographic group is often a shock to the reader. There are inevitably questions, such as "Will the Symples always be so simple?" Of course they will, even if their beautiful world vanishes into the winds of La Niña. But when the economy goes bust the Symples will need a guidebook for downsizing their desires. Might I suggest Chic Simple Bankruptcy. It never hurts to plan ahead. But frankly, my dear Symples, I don't give a damn.

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