

## Review/Film

## Former Teen-Agers Look Back on 50's Fooleries

"Heavy Petting" is a brief, cheery compendium of teen-age enthusiasms, filtered through the memories of an interesting array of former teen-agers. Though its interviewees range from David Byrne to William Burroughs, the film's heart is firmly planted in the 1950's, when adolescent longings were so fervently at war with social mores.

Drawing from sex-education documentaries ("You all know what sperm is?"), teen-age exploitation films (e.g., "Invasion of the Saucer Men" and "High School Hellcats") and interview footage (Elvis on shaking his pelvis: "Well, sir, you take the wiggle out of it, it's finished"), "Heavy Petting" captures vintage, real-life, blue ribbon-worthy kitsch.

## Adolescent Longings Vs. Social Mores

HEAVY PETTING, directed by Obie Benz and Josh Waletzky, director of photography, Sandi Sissel; edited by Judith Sobol, Mr. Waletzky and Edith Becker; music by various composers; produced by Mr. Benz and Carol Noblitt. Released by Skouras Pictures. At Cinema 2, Third Avenue and 60th Street, and Quad Cinema, 13th Street between Fifth Avenue and Avenue of the Americas. Running time: 80 minutes. This film has no rating.

WITH: David Byrne, Allen Ginsberg, William Burroughs, Ann Magnuson, Josh Mostel, Spalding Gray, Laurie Anderson, Abbie Hoffman, Barry Bartkowski and others.

No latter-day imitation could possibly capture the array of apron-wearing moms, malt shoppe scenarios and hints on pleasant grooming that have been assembled here.

"Heavy Petting" — co-directed by Obie Benz (whose grandfather, the production notes say, invented white bread) and Josh Waletzky (whose excellent "Partisans of Vilna" was in quite a different vein) — is made all the better by its lack of serious aspirations. Rather than read meaning

into the "Just Say No" propaganda of a different time, the film makers are content to celebrate their film clips' exaggerated innocence and revel in the disarming nostalgia of their interviewees.

Mr. Burroughs and Allen Ginsberg sit side by side as Mr. Ginsberg remembers his early anxieties about dating, and a fidgety Mr. Burroughs evades the interviewers' questions. Mr. Byrne sweetly and bashfully de-

scribes his fears that skinny-dipping could lead to teen-age pregnancy; Spalding Gray talks of fooling around with a girlfriend and then going out for a vanilla Coke. All of the interviewees, who include Laurie Anderson, Josh Mostel, Ann Magnuson, Abbie Hoffman and lesser-knowns like Barry Bartkowski (owner of Stan's Auto Body in Carlstadt, N.J.), remember their early dating experiences with affection and humor.

There is also much talk, in the authentic 1950's footage, of how girls

worrying about "the boy problem" should field their dates' advances with conversational ploys ("Tell me, what are you going out for in the track meet next Saturday?"), and of the dangers that lie in wait for "good girls" at every turn. "Controlled, the sex impulse, like the horse, may be a source of power and service," says the narrator of one sex-ed film. Like "The Atomic Cafe," on which Mr. Benz was production consultant, "Heavy Petting" looks back fondly to sentiments no present-day film maker — not even John Waters, whose early-60's "Hairspray" sounded similar notes — could possibly make up.

"Heavy Petting" opens today at Cinema 2 and the Quad. Take a date.

JANET MASLIN



Elvis Presley