



# Perspective

By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

East Village, New York, is the home of the hippie. It's midnight and St. Marks Place is crowded with the weird, the freaks, the dirty, the unshaven. They throng the sidewalks and spill out into the streets.

The Electric Circus is going full blast. My publisher, a native New Yorker who reluctantly agreed to bring me into the village, is not prepared for what we encounter inside.

The flashing strobe lights and whirling psychedelic colors pick out the hundreds of writhing bodies, grunting and twisting to the ear-shattering, pulsating beat of a combo known as "The Grateful Dead." Huge murals of naked men and women in lewd poses leer at us from the walls. "God created angels and died," the inscription reads.

In a side room couples lie on the floor. In front of us a boy lets his hands roam over his male companion. On the steps as we leave two girls embrace tightly—mouth to mouth.

Outside we are stopped by two kids in long flowing robes. The boys has a ring in his nose. "Hey man, you got a fix?" We move on.

In one block on St. Marks Place we pass nine cops, walking in threes, and five churches — all locked

behind iron grates. I remember the words of the tall black militant I lunched with earlier. "The church has withdrawn from reality. It's being penalized for too long in the huddle."

A girl, her face showing signs of VD, tries to sell us her sleeping bag. "I need the drugs worse. I'll sleep with some guy in his pad tonight."

Earlier in the evening we sat in Shea Stadium with 35,000 other well dressed respectables to hear Billy Graham. But in East Village Bill Graham is the dude who runs Fillmore East where the "Hot Tuna" plays each night.

A young man looks up at us from where he's sitting on the curb. His eyes are glazed with dope, his beard matted. "Hey man, can you show me the way? I gotta do my thing."

I think of the churchy types in Shea Stadium and remember Jesus words "I came to seek and to save those that are lost."

Down the street the kids from Teen Challenge, along with a handful of dedicated adults, are passing out free books and Bibles. By the end of the year they'll have the book we're writing, "The Lonely Now," to hand out also. It's not much, but thank God, it's something.