

Hyper cool

BABY BOOMERS TAKE A BACK SEAT TO THEIR DISAFFECTED, CYNICAL AND TRENDY CHILDREN IN 'X-RATED'

BY RUSSELL SMITH

These days, North Americans in their 20s tend to scream with boredom when well-meaning journalists toss around the name "generation X." The phrase has so obsessed trendwatchers that its original meaning — the nameless ones, the unnoticed generation, the cynical kids without causes or ambitions — has vaporized. Now it means hugely cool.

Interestingly, familiar as the concept is, Xers rarely see themselves — their shared apartments, their dead-end jobs, their fear of toxins, their vague creative ambitions — on TV. Now, with *X-Rated*, a two-hour pilot for a new series by the producers of *Degrassi High*, television is finally tackling this hypertrendy market (CBC; Sunday).

X-Rated centres on the disparate, marginal twentysomethings who inhabit a dilapidated set of apartments called The Epitome — "The Pit" to its tenants. And epitome it is: all the X archetypes are here — the tough bicycle courier, the educated black activist, the irony-obsessed kitschophiles.

Trouble starts when the building's ex-hippy owners, now wealthy and shrewd, allow their son Tony to act as their real estate agent and attempt to sell The Pit.

Tony, played by Gordon Michael Woolvett, younger brother to *Unforgiven* star, Jaimz, is a button-down frat boy, driven by an extraordinary drive to get rich quick. He quickly clashes with the marginal, quasi-artistic, semi-employed tenants, and especially with a globe-wandering earth-mother named River.

"I'm not like Tony," says Woolvett, whose carefully torn jeans and beard

still can't hide his essentially boy-next-door cuteness. "I'm a little more artsy than Tony, a little more sensitive," he says, putting his motorcycle boots up on a chair, "but he's not an insensitive guy. I wouldn't say square, but yuppyish."

The rocker demeanor is not entirely an act: Woolvett's particular artsiness, aside from acting, is music. He plays piano and guitar, has played in several bands and has composed for commercials. But Gordon, a professional actor since the age of eight, is not so different from the

business-conscious Tony — he too is going into real estate, at the age of 22.

Apart from the same California chardonnay hair and blue-grey eyes, River, played by *Degrassi* regular Stacy Mistysyn (pronounced Mis-ti-shun), is almost Tony's opposite — and perhaps that explains the couple's stormy attraction. They waste little time in hopping into a relationship, among other things.

In person, Gemini-winning Mistysyn is cooler, more urban than the gauzy River; she wears makeup and appears to weigh about as much as her black boots. "River seems to have decided what she's going to do and committed herself to that," says Mistysyn in her breathy voice. "I'm still kind of all over the place. I still have to struggle to make ends meet."

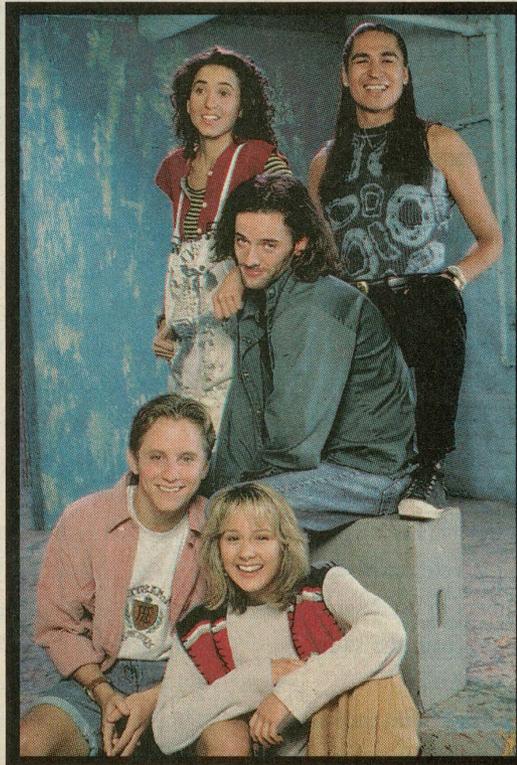
In this, she's a textbook X. Her parents were the ones who listened to the Beatles and Janis Joplin.

This more famous generation — the baby boomers who made the '60s what they were — appears in *X-Rated*, perhaps for the first time on TV, as they appear to younger eyes: ridiculous. Tony's mother and stepfather make a nice living running flaky group-therapy seminars; their garden is always full of aging yuppies chanting "I'm free," and crawling around looking for their "Inner Beast."

The two Xers who play Tony and River think that the film's view of generational difference is accurate. "The boomer's parents didn't get divorced," says Woolvett. "Our generation is dealing with single parents, no parents. The nuclear family is going to become obsolete. Our generation does see the decline and death of religion — I don't believe anything. Show me. Prove it to me. Until I see it, it's not true."

"A lot of people say that twentysomethings are always sitting on their asses," says Mistysyn, "whining about how unfair things are for us. But in this film you'll see that no one's really sitting on their ass, they're trying to make money, they're trying to get a foot in the door."

"Besides," says Woolvett, as if to cite one inarguable fact, "the soundtrack kicks." ❖



WOOLVETT, MISTYSYN (FOREGROUND) AND COSTARS MARCIA LASKOWSKI, JOEL BISSONETTE, BILLY MERASTY