

his need to tell a very personal story. But that the sage and measured tones of the talk-show moguls and evening news magnates arbitrarily elevate Woods to a heroic rating while relegating the rest of the truth—about 99% of the story—to the cutting-room floor, really enhances the agony involved in the African dilemma: Woods, a white opponent of the white regime, receives a welcoming em-

brace from our American media, while Jeremiah Chirau, a moderate Rhodesian Senator and black tribal chieftan, was refused a visa by our State Department. In the media silence following this incident you could almost hear that inevitable tread of terror descending on the blacks of southern Africa when Mr. Wood's *compañeros* came to establish the new social and moral order. □

The American Scene

Defense

A new chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff has been instated by President Carter. He is David C. Jones, a U.S. Air Force general. He displays a keen understanding of the country he is expected to defend. According to *Time*, when a USAF airperson won a nude beauty contest in Florida, causing some unfashionable consternation in the upper echelons of the flying establishment, Gen. Jones annulled the problem: "Well, she wasn't in uniform, was she?"

Postscript

In the book *The Children of the Counterculture*, John Rothchild and Susan Berns Wolf checked over various communes, collectives, and expanded "families," the legacy of the glorious, revolutionary '60s. The *New York Post* sums up their findings:

"What they found in many of the communities were children who were neglected and abused, victims of treatment that would be judged cruel by most parents. The authors were struck by the boredom, apathy and melancholy of the children, many of whom showed signs of emotional disturbance and psychological disorganization . . . In a

number of the rural communes, the parents seemed bent mainly on keeping the children out of their way. Themselves still children, they sought gratification without sacrifice, as if it were possible to deal with the young without fully accepting their presence in our lives."

Values

"When I was growing up you respected your parents. If they told you to be home at a certain time, then you were home. Today people think differently—they act differently. Poor people used to have shined shoes and combed hair—now they go out on the street looking any which way. They are filthy, they use profanity, they don't respect their elders. It's just a new era. I call this the 'Dope Era.' But things are going to change. It takes time, but life goes in cycles. We need stricter laws, a different kind of court system. Then people will change and this chaos will stop . . . people will regain their initiative and their values. It's just a matter of time."

These are the words of Mr. Les Matthews, 57, a black journalist from Manhattan, a staff contributor to *The Amsterdam News*, Harlem's modern-day Damon Runyon. *Village Voice* called him, in a profile, a "sentimentalist." □

Hope

Some heartening opinions about moviemaking from John Milius, an up-and-coming young filmmaker, known for the naturalism of his scriptwriting:

"Look at *Julia*. It's preachy, liberal preachy, a female macho film . . . If you want to see the difference between generations, look at the differences between any of our movies and *Black Sunday* or *Marathon Man*. They're violent, yet they're liberal; they're chic, yet they're exploitative. They're really foul movies by the Bel Air circuit. It's easy to be cynical. It's hard to be corny."

Not long ago a 33-year-old man, Paul Schumacher of East Meadow, N.Y., saw a 65-year-old woman being attacked by a mugger. He gave chase, was stabbed in the following fight, helped the woman up, said to her: "I have your bag, madam . . ." and died of his wounds. How about a movie about this little incident? The Liberal Culture critics would certainly call it corny. They hailed *Bonnie and Clyde* or Robert Altman's *Thieves Like Us*, as deep, humane and morally enriching.

Something Is Rotten in the State of Denmark

The June 15, 1978 issue of the *Rolling Stone* contains:

- a piece by Mr. Patrick Buchanan
- some pictures which clearly allude to, but not unveil, Mr. John Travolta's masculinity as an antidote to both homo- and bisexuality.

Someone aptly said that the rock subculture of the last decade was concocted out of threat, excess and androgyny. Mr. Buchanan embodies persuasiveness and moderation in today's world. Mr. Travolta seems to millions to be the fierce opposite of androgyny. What has happened to *Rolling Stone*? Ideological confusion? Or looking forward to new profits from the old/new (conservative?) values? □

Stage

A Ballet Ensemble on a Couch

A Chorus Line; conceived, choreographed and directed by Michael Bennett; written by James Kirkwood and Nicholas Dante; music by Marvin Hamlisch.

Analyzing individuals—one of the magic ablutions of our pseudo-rational age—is old hat by now. The same Voodoo ritual, allegedly scientific, but only updated, when applied to a collective seems something new, thus interesting or exciting by the standards of modern theatrical values. That is what happens during this spectacle: a choreographic director, assembling a cast for a new musical, begins by asking the applicants to tell him about themselves. They instantly turn into analysts. Some spout shallow clichés about their repressions and anxieties, others tell amusing stories about their experiences. Through beautifully timed techniques, like fragmented dialogues or desynchronized verbal exchanges, they respond in unison to the director's questions, as all they have on their minds is one nagging urge: to get the job. Their communication with the director is impulsive and is translated into excellent choreography. Adorned by the most innovative and imaginative stage setting contemporary Broadway has to offer (the scenery consists solely of an inventively operated mirror background and lighting), this musical rings truer than anything in the rich past of the genre.

Even its attempt to concentrate on the "Me Generation's" psychological cant and stereotypes fails to deprive it of that peculiar American intensity which might be called cultural imperialism. Its success makes the anti-Americanism abroad helpless, and accounts for the bizarre fact that even those who burn American libraries, or paint "Yankee Go Home!" slogans, do so while clad in blue jeans and refreshed with Coca Cola. Like pre-

vious generations, the one in *Chorus Line*, even if amusingly solipsistic, addresses itself to human affairs in a uniquely American way — without excessive profundity, or salutary skepticism, but with endless sympathy, empathy and the will to help. Many think that because the laws of work, market and competition often interfere with the best of human impulses that the so-called American system is to be blamed for many hard facts of life. Though defending the Amer-

ican system is the last thing its authors and producers have in mind, *Chorus Line* extends evidence to the contrary. Not all of the young people we come to like will get the job — their dramatic goal during this mini-drama; some will get nothing for their splendid and ardent performances. The final selection is a prelude to the excellence of a future production — somewhere, sometime. And that's what Americanism of almost every stripe is all about. (ES) □

Screen

Subtle Filth and Salvation through Platitude

Pretty Baby; directed by Louis Malle; written by Polly Platt; Paramount Pictures.

An Unmarried Woman; written and directed by Paul Mazursky; 20th Century Fox.

by Eric Shapearo

This movie, unintentionally, offers a trenchant metaphor. It represents a microclimate in which a child has no chance to live her childhood. We watch a preteen girl being robbed of that crucial component of her life. The consequences of her ultimate introduction to womanhood and whoredom at the age of 12 are unforeseeable, and the movie is not concerned with them. To us, the viewers, they loom as rather grim. Those who created the movie perpetrate the crime they have dispassionately depicted: Mr. Malle and Ms. Platt would vehemently deny this, but putting their work into a contemporary context, the double-leveled metaphoric sense of the movie becomes

Mr. Shapearo reads from Spinoza or Montaigne before reviewing a movie.

painfully clear. In our world of vandalized sexual feelings, childhood becomes the prime victim. The movie is R-rated, children under 17 have only to be accompanied by parents to devour the glamorized fate of Violet, the incredibly beautiful child-whore. Many parents in today's America will consider it an act of enlightenment and progress to serve this movie to their children. How the images of *Pretty Baby* will influence their lives remains to be seen. All we know now is that, in the climate of the utterly permissive atrophy of criteria of the late '70s, Malle's movie both tells and makes the story. It is a part of the never-ending production of human clichés by *Zeitgeist*. A dimwitted New York film critic wrote on *Pretty Baby* that the movie "received a barrage of invectives from do-gooders and know-nothings—" and added that it "inevitably" disappoints for its "approach is cool, almost chaste—the big shock is the lack of explicit sex." This is a particularly odious stance. We have always known that the cinema embellishes anything it touches, that it induces to dreaming and imitation; that film imagery is didactic in an uncontrollable