

with this new political alliance [between environmentalists and local, established interests] is that it lends the legitimacy of an environmental crusade in the public interest to what is otherwise a selfish and provincial concern . . ."

As for the Sierra Club, its class character is very significant indeed:

A recent survey of Sierra Club membership showed that fully two-thirds of the main wage earners in members' households came from the following occupational groups: lawyers, doctors, dentists, other professionals, college teachers and other teachers, managers and executives, and engineers. More than half the members have had some postgraduate education, with 18 percent having a Ph.D., law, or medical degree, and 21 percent a master's degree.

This is not a typical cross-section of people who buy homes in new tract developments. Highly educated professionals and executives can usually afford the high cost of a house in an established, desirable suburb with an attractive environment. Their opposition to homebuilding is usually opposition to someone else's opportunity to buy a moderate-cost house. And the environment they protect is an environment they can afford to enjoy. The Sierra Club membership survey spoke clearly about whether its members were concerned with everyone's environment or only with their own. When asked, "Should the Club concern itself with the conservation problems of such special groups as the urban poor and ethnic minorities?" 58 percent of the members answered that they either strongly or "somewhat" opposed such involvement.

Frieden's book is not without flaws. He should for instance patch up his price theory: "Cost-push" does not determine the price (costs affect price, of course, but only by influencing the available supply), and speculators do not affect the level of market prices in the long run, but merely help prices to adjust to their true supply and demand values faster. But Frieden's contributions are broad, innovative, and more than enough to compensate for these goofs. He is not afraid, moreover, to tie the environmental protection hustle to the general regulatory rip-off. In doing so, he makes a fascinating distinction between the old, dingy, and obviously nefarious agencies, staffed by industry yes-men quivering in the face of The Interests, and the new breed of self-righteous incorruptibles who kowtow only to their fellow true believers. The do-gooders, Frieden shows, have plundered the average American even more successfully than did the do-badders. This book just might make you nostalgic for the bad old days. ■

F I L M

HAIR, directed by Milos Forman.

The party's over

STEPHEN HARVEY

AT THE TAIL END OF THE long-gone sixties, Hollywood repeatedly tripped over its own well-shod feet in trying to catch up with the barefoot disciples of the Now Generation. A series of flaccid movies paid groveling tribute to the young—mainly because that presumably was where the money was—while failing utterly to grasp what the hubbub was really about. One of the few trendy entries that made any sense at all was Milos Forman's first American effort, *Taking Off*, in which his observant gaze surveyed a landscape of suburban matrons and pinstripers and their moon-eyed runaways with an evenhanded measure of irony and affection.

As an outsider only recently emigrated from Czechoslovakia, Forman possessed the emotional distance needed to view the subject dispassionately, finding warps in the social fabric that his American colleagues were unable to see. In fact, Forman's gift for perceiving well-meaning absurdity on both sides of the generation gap (remember the generation gap?) backfired, at least from a commercial standpoint. Unlike a number of those movies that came out firmly on the side of the Day-Glo angels, *Taking Off* was a financial disaster, and it took several years for Forman to find the backing for another project.

Then came *Cuckoo's Nest*, and we all know how that turned out. And now there's *Hair*, which, thematically speaking, brings Forman back more or less to where he started from. Yet I'm

afraid that *Taking Off* is destined to remain his most valid testament to that tie-dyed era all the same. To the probable corporate joy of United Artists, which backed *Hair* to the tune of twelve million dollars plus, this movie is simply the sixties viewed through rose-colored granny glasses. This tribute to antimaterialism is likely to keep its producers in Cartier love-beads for the rest of their lives, and with good reason—in terms of sheer energy, buoyancy, and imagination it does more to resuscitate the movie musical than all the song-and-dance duds of the last five years combined. Few recent movies of any genre could boast as many moments of real pleasure as this affords.

Nevertheless, somehow, *Hair* leaves you feeling unfulfilled once all the revelry has ended. Its surface brilliance is nothing to scoff at, but all the filmic razzle-dazzle in the world can't quite compensate for the absence of a unified and distinct point of view—if only everyone involved had refrained from searching for new ways of being clever just long enough to think about what they wanted to make of the material they'd taken on for themselves.

If there was one aspect of this property that should have been exploited to the hilt, it was the fact that its aggressive air of contemporaneity ten years ago makes it such an utter period piece today. *Hair* no longer has the power either to shock or to proselytize, because the raunchy innocence it sought to celebrate now looks merely quaint at best—rather like the skylarks of an earlier and equally self-romanticized "Lost Generation." In retrospect, the real poignancy of the sixties was the very transience of the mood that marked those times: The notion that its cultural reverberations would resound forever was the greatest delusion of all. It's impossible to look at the show's assembled archetypes of hippiedom in the same way now as audiences did back in 1968—how can you really sustain a note of jubilation when you know that what you're celebrating is long since extinct? More to the point, what might have seemed sweet and ingenuous (at least to some) in those distant times is bound to have more complex overtones nowadays.

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ONE OF THE LEAST ATTRACTIVE attributes of the youthquake of yore was its smug self-righteousness, yet the movie doesn't really comment any further on the mores extolled in the original play—it merely replicates them. Youth still represents untrammelled purity of soul and idealism of spirit, while age and/or any form of social conformity carries the indelible taint of stone-hearted venality. You're still supposed to think that our communal heroes' efforts to *épater le bourgeois*—breaking up a suburban *fête champêtre*, stripping the clothes and stealing a car from some dumb military drudge—are simply cute and disarming because their targets are somehow less than human, and therefore don't count. Meanwhile, sweet kids pass out acid cubes in the park, and all is unmitigated rapture.

What's really curious is that while such attitudes are allowed to survive intact, the visual trappings that surround them are strangely out of sync. The weightless, ever-precise elasticity of Twyla Tharp's choreography, however exuberant, bears little resem-

blance to the earthy anarchy of sixties' popular dance—even the clothes and makeup of this chorus of meticulously drilled would-be Be-In kids often smack more of Soho boutique chic than sixties thriftshop funk.

Part of the confusion, I think, stems from the cross-purposes imposed on Michael Weller's script—the desire to preserve the freewheeling melodic flow of the original while beefing up the story sufficiently to fulfill a movie audience's expectation of a semblance of plot, and broadening the visual horizons beyond the confines of the stage.

The Broadway *Hair* was little more than a series of lyric soliloquies and chorales bounded by the walls of an East Village crash pad. The movie airily spans the continent as it follows the odyssey of rawboned, upstanding Claude (John Savage) from the Oklahoma prairie to Manhattan and his impending military induction. Venturing hesitantly into Central Park, he is dazzled by the sight of the dewy debutante Sheila (Beverly D'Angelo), then befriended and enlightened by the life-affirming Berger (Treat Wil-

liams) and his ethnically and sexually balanced retinue—one black (Dorsey Wright), one platinum-haired androgynous (Don Dacus), and one wistfully expectant—in more ways than one—groupie (Annie Golden). Together with Claude, these footloose naifs pursue Sheila to the verdant wilds of split-level New Jersey; when he's drafted, they venture to the Nevada desert to cheer him up during basic training.

This frail narrative is both too much and not enough. Although the list of principals has been considerably streamlined, there are too many ensemble musical detours to leave the characters enough time to take root beyond the emblematic stage—they and the young performers impersonating them are a congenial bunch, but never individually very arresting. At the same time, the writing is so flavorless that as the movie winds down, the script consists of little more than a series of arid pauses between those juicy numbers—surprising, considering that Weller's *Moonchildren* was the most vivid and telling of all the theatrical elegies to the sixties.



IT'S ALL SO FRIVOLOUS AND insubstantial in texture that when the movie does try, belatedly, for a patina of seriousness, it comes too late to be anything but a perfunctory afterthought. The tableaux of the macabre legacy of our Vietnam misadventure—a sea of helmets disappearing into the dark maw of a transport plane, and then an ocean of anonymous white crosses—are beautifully rendered but they don't go far enough. The film ends with masses of mournful protesters decrying the carnage, which implies that the Age of Aquarius would truly dawn once Vietnam was behind us. But the sad truth was that while the war fed the ferment of the time, its conclusion sounded the death knell for the sixties once and for all; the quiet on the war front was soon to breed conformity at home.

But then, logic is not this film's strong suit anyway—if it were, Claude would have faced the draft board in unsullied Tulsa rather than decadent Gotham, and his autumnal park encounter wouldn't be followed a few scenes and a handful of on-screen days later by a Happening taking place amid what is obviously the first blush of spring.

Yet, paradoxically, *Hair*'s lackadaisical abstraction is finally not only its greatest limitation, but also its most delightful feature. Its patchwork collage form may handicap *Hair*'s sense of drama and social pertinence, but it's a wonderful concept for a rousing escapist musical. *Hair* doesn't mask the incongruities inherent in the movie musical genre—it positively embraces them. Nobody is concerned about making the songs and plot mesh in a "believable" way—the music surges through every fissure, and Forman makes the numbers take flight with a momentum that accelerates the drive of Galt MacDermot's now familiar score.

There may never have been a musical adapted from the stage which so exulted in the movies' freedom from the rigid boundaries of space and time imposed by the theater. The camera-work and editing contribute as much to the shape and cadence of the songs as do the melodies themselves, creating a world in which everything we see can be shaped to harmonize with the music we're hearing. An Afro-haloed soprano belts her rhapsody to the Age of Aquarius, and we whirl around her in an ecstatic 360-degree sweep; Berger and troupe let loose with a rambunctious ditty and the steeds bearing New

York's Finest prance and canter in unison. The whimsically carnal "White Boys, Black Boys" takes its cue from a vignette of draftees stripping for inspection, then flashes between lusty trios of white and black girls in the park, and spit-and-polish army brass admiring the spoils of war.

Forman's visual metaphors for MacDermot's rhymed tales in miniature are by and large so apt and witty that the few misfires are that much more conspicuous: In obvious desperation to find the right slot for the title number, he illustrates this ode to hirsuteness with, of all incongruous things, a stylized jailhouse rumble. Sometimes, too, the performers get swamped by all the gimmickry and pizzazz, but Forman knows how to leave well enough alone when he has someone really special to showcase. Here it is Cheryl Barnes, a singer of deceptively prim demeanor with a voice like a sunburst.

When she lays fervent siege to the plaintive "Easy to Be Hard" you don't want to be distracted from such radiance for an instant, and the rapt close-ups with which Forman frames her bring the excitement to the boiling point.

At moments such as this, *Hair* embodies the liberating high proclaimed by the play more exhilaratingly than the original ever did. I would have been satisfied if last year's *The Wiz*, *Sergeant Pepper*, or *Grease* had displayed even a particle of the taste and mastery of this movie. Yet, as a saga of a vanished time (as opposed to *Grease*, which in its "Laverne and Shirley" way celebrates something that never actually existed), *Hair* needed more than a handful of glittering fragments to make it a truly satisfying movie. Like its blithely oblivious heroes, *Hair* is all dressed up in multicolored raiments, but it doesn't really go anywhere. □

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