

# FRAMED BY W. DART

Robert Duvall, *Apocalypse Now*.



## Apocalypse Now

Director: Francis Ford Coppola

Coppola's film certainly has had its share of publicity. It has been a long time getting to us (the first U.S. release date was April 1977 — it finally appeared in August 1979). It was extremely expensive to mount (\$30 million was quoted) and boasted the legendary Brando on its cast list, playing Colonel Kurtz, the focal point of the film, and the object of Martin Sheen's assassination pilgrimage.

The film has a strong literary background. Director Coppola and screenwriter John Milius have reworked Joseph Conrad's novella *Heart of Darkness* into the context of the Vietnam conflict. The parallels between the book and film are many and varied, ranging from such minor details as the shower of arrows which hit the ship just before it arrives at Kurtz's compound, to the final words which both Coppola's and Conrad's Kurtz utter ("The horror, the horror"). In view of the controversial ending of the film, it is worth noting that Coppola did at one time consider following Conrad's model and have the Martin Sheen character visit Kurtz's widow back in the United States.

The film is essentially a mood piece, a giant expressionist canvas on film. This is evident from the very first scene with Martin Sheen in his Saigon hotel room, a brooding montage of facial close-ups, electric ceiling fans, balletic sequences and violence.

Once Sheen is on his way, a voice-over narrative gives the film an elusive quality not unlike a Raymond Chandler detective novel.

Apart from the boat journey up river to Cambodia, there are two major 'events' in the film. The first is the helicopter raid on a Vietnamese village to the music of Wagner, engineered by Robert Duvall who looks like a vision from a John Ford movie with a surfing fetish — a parallel madness to that of Colonel Kurtz.

The last quarter of the movie concerns Kurtz: a weighty, measured performance by Brando, at the head of his little Montagnard empire, quoting T.S. Eliot and waiting for the inevitable end. The question is whether this portion of the film is a satisfactory development from what precedes it. Is it a massive miscalculation? Should Coppola have filmed an

epilogue with Kurtz's widow, instead of the spectacular destruction of Kurtz's empire which is shown over the end titles?

Twelve years ago, Kubrick's *2001* was equally controversial in a similar manner, but both films are thought-provoking works. It would be nice to describe *2001* as a film about the future, and *Apocalypse Now* is a slice of past history, but there is an uncomfortable feeling that Coppola's vision could also have some futuristic elements in it.

## Just A Gigolo

Director: David Hemmings

What a confused piece this is! Despite quite lavish mounting and a promising subject (decadent Berlin in the 20s), David Hemmings' film doesn't quite make it. Even the casting coup of the decade (David Bowie, Kim Novak and a heavily-veiled Marlene Dietrich) fails to excite. Characters are sketchily presented and the tone of the film wavers all over the place, the worst miscalculation being a graveyard scamper. After a fine debut in Noeg's *Man Who Fell To Earth*, Bowie needs to choose his celluloid projects a little more carefully.

## More American Graffiti

Director: Bill Norton

Further adventures in a mid-60s time warp with those zany kids from the original *American Graffiti*. The film has little of the natural charm and flow of George Lucas' original. What Norton has done is to juxtapose four different narratives scene by scene, producing a latter-day *Intolerance* in terms of pop chic. The adventures of Candy Clark amongst the hippy set are filmed in unrelenting split-screen process, the Cindy Williams/Ron Howard escapade with student politics is highly unconvincing to say the least, and Charles Martin Smith's Vietnamese episode would almost work if it didn't try to hard to be funny.

## Hair

Director: Milos Forman

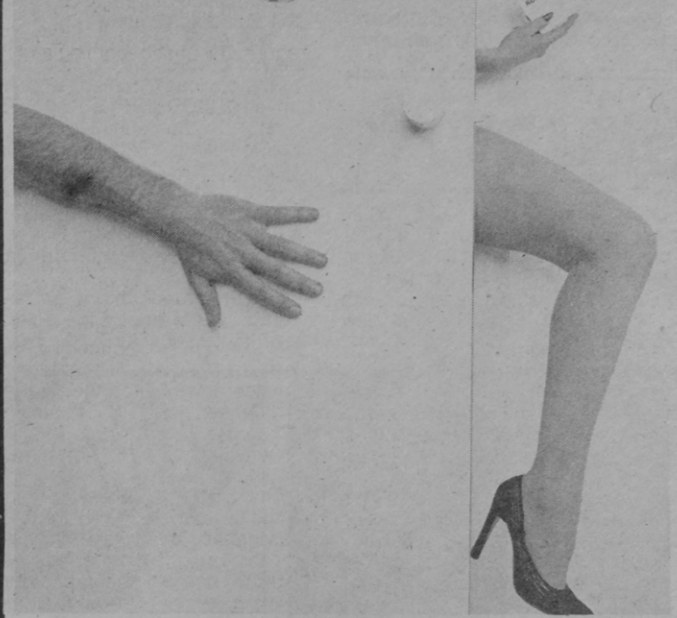
Forman's filming of *Hair* has come in for a good deal of criticism. It poses considerable problems. It is now a period piece — flower power, hippies and "counter-culture" now seem terribly quaint and touching. The film has been straitjacketed into some semblance of a plot to aid audience comprehension, a plot which gets uncomfortably heavy-handed in the last five minutes of the film. But the performances are fresh and energetic, Twyla Sharp has provided some exhilarating choreography here and there and, above all, there is Galt MacDermot's fine score, as fresh as it ever was. My favourite number? Probably "Black Boys/White Boys", with the girls' vocals wittily juxtaposed with those of the army recruiting board.

William Dart

# RUSSELL MORRIS BAND



## FOOT IN THE DOOR



# A FOOT IN THE DOOR

# DON'T WATCH THAT WATCH THIS MADNESS



THAT  
NUTTY  
SOUND

ONE STEP  
BEYOND...

MADNESS



Featuring The Hit Single  
**MY GIRL**



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