Choreography and music energize Hair

Hair, starring John Savage, Tommy Dorsey, Don Dante, Ann Jillian, Beverly D'Angelo and Dorsay Wright. Directed by Milos Forman, produced by Jack and Jane Weis, is a United Artists release, now playing at the Sack.

By David Shaw

Now that the Academy Awards have been bestowed on films that deal with the Vietnam War (Coming Home and The Deer Hunter) and a plethora of similar material in the near future (Coppola's forthcoming Apocalypse Now, for example) Amidst a flood of generally imitative films Hair stands out as a fable that speaks loudly and clearly of the mythical quality that prevents the film from seeming dated. A statement is made about the war, but it soft-pedaled among the easiest music and dance routines the musical solely concerning the war would seem absurd.

Hair opens in rural Oklahoma, where Claude Bukowski (John Savage) is boarding a New York bound bus, where he will be inducted and sent to basic training. He stumbles across a hippie "be-in" in Central Park to the time of his departure the screen explodes with energy, sweeping from one musical set-piece to the next, leaving the viewer totally breathless.

Most of Hair's energy stems from the choreography of Twyla Tharp, whose form performances are particularly well suited to the characters and the actor's abilities. The difficult steps seem effortless, as if the movements arose spontaneously out of the characters, motivated by an inner energy. Tharp's work is at its best in the dances for "Aquarius," "( Ain't Got No, ' Black Boys / White Boys)," and the sequence during Claude's dream trip (in which Tharp pays homage to the priests). And, of course, there is the music. The Great Macpheline-Gerome Raphael team's score remains virtually unchanged, save some rearranging to create a fuller sound, as opposed to the sparse orchestration of the play. Sometimes this altering works to a song's advantage, other times it does not. The reworking of "Aquarius" transforms it from the AM radio hit it used to be into a blockbuster tune with a heavy funky feel; the delivery by Ren Woods makes this song unforgettable. "Easy To Be Hard" benefits in the same way; a perfect arrangement and a phenomenal singer, this time in the person of Cheryl Mills. "(Hair)" has also been receiving extensive airplay.

There are the songs that lose because of their arrangements, in particular, "Good Morning Starshine" suffers from a score that makes it sound like a country-western ballad. Other tunes have verses removed for brevity's sake ("Manchester England"), and some songs are missing altogether. Of the missing numbers, the omission of "Ali" and "Frank Mills" is unforgivable while the deletion of "Don't Let It Down" and "My Conviction" is understandable.

The acting, what little there is, is excellent, although it doesn't take tremendous talent to portray a hippie. What the cast should be judged on is the quality of the singing voices (after all, this is a musical), which are more than adequate. This comes as no surprise when one realizes Woof (Don Dacus) is a former rock vocalist for The Shirts, and Treat Williams played the lead role in Grease. The only voice that seems absurd is John Savage, who absolutely butchers "Where Do I Go From Here?"

In spite of its minor shortcomings, Hair manages to shine out as a brilliant, if somewhat understated, celebration of the Sixties which should be seen by any child of the Seventies.

Sheik Yerbouti a Zappa masterpiece

Sheik Yerbouti — the homonym of the title and the album cover form an obvious visual pun — is a double album featuring a fresh, bold, and slightly off-the-wall approach to production, in that almost all the tracks were recorded live in London, New York, Berlin and other towns outside of Northern California that I can't remember the name of" in German. Sweden, with various amounts of studio overdubbing. The musicians include one old associate, namely, the powerful and talented Marco Bozzi, vocals, bassist Patrick O'Hearn, drummer Tomasz Stanko, and keyboard player Tommy Mars, with all of whom Zappa has been touring for about one and a half years now, and guitarist Adrian Belew, who was with Zappa on his last visit to the Boston area last October.

Also appearing are Peter Wolf on keyboards, Ed Mann on percussion, David Ocker on oboes, and a host of background vocalists. Ed Mann is at least the equal of the quarterback of the percussion and cymbal section. Terry Bozio, who along with Eddie Jobson forms the Zappa alumni con- stellation of the newly re-formed group, The U.K., and who also recently appeared as the drummer on the latest Brecker Brothers album, is at his very best on Shek Yerbouti. U.K.'s gain will be Zappa's loss.

Of the sixteen musical tracks (there are two more short tracks of studio banter very similar to the guitar duets on Sheik Yerbouti, not worth noting), all but three are songs. The instrumental suite is the usually superb "Mambo in China." The remaining songs are the rock of all other rock albums, and the soundtrack to the film. Although there is nothing especially new or novel in the lyrics, the music and the arrangements are. In particular are the unique for Zappa primarily in that most of the remaining songs are tributes to "musicians singing about how it feels to be a musician." Zappa proves that it is still possible to talk dirty and influence people without matching such lyrics to crude, trashy "wave" musicianship.

Sheik Yerbouti by Frank Zappa, Zappa Records SRZ 2-1301.

By Steve Keplenson

Among nature's rarest wonders can be counted the free lunch, the forlorn housewreck, and rock albums that actually surpass their promotional hype. Frank Zappa's Sheik Yerbouti, true to the radio style of art, is in very much a masterpiece of production, and more.

With the recent release of Step By Step, as propelled and boring an album as there ever was, we have probably seen the last of Warner Brothers' rip-offs of Zappa's albums. And at a time when most rock lyrics have reminisced of the seventies. It is unsurprising then that "This is No Cure, No Solution" is a devasting jab at junk nihilism with a heavy dose of condescending me-generation narcissism mixed in. Bozzi handles the vocals with panache. "Dancing Foot" — the one song to have received substantial airplay. There is no more about the movie. The acting, what little there is, is excellent, although it doesn't take tremendous talent to portray a hippie. What the cast should be judged on is the quality of the singing voices (after all, this is a musical), which are more than adequate. This comes as no surprise when one realizes Woof (Don Dacus) is a former rock vocalist for The Shirts, and Treat Williams played the lead role in Grease. The only voice that seems absurd is John Savage, who absolutely butchers "Where Do I Go From Here?"

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City of Tiny Lights" and "Baby Sakes" are well-written, original songs that are unique for Zappa primarily in that they have nothing nasty to say about anyone. "Tryin' to Grow a Chin" may be the best all-out rock and roll Zappa has ever written, owing much of its success to the unmatched eccentricity of the composer. The album closes with a number that is even more "(Hair)" a gentle mile to all those poor, ugly sloven living which almost sounds symphonic, even with the gratuitous insult to any Narcaguas in the audience. It also contains the album's best solo solo.

Sapient rock-and-rollers will enjoy discovering that Zappa's "punk" or "protest" music is as diverse as that 50's oldie "I Wonder Who Wrote The Book of Love." The 1973 syn- thesis of the last bit of the 1974 Bob Dylan and many others. This is an album for people who can appreciate a good balance of virtuosic instrumentalists, some raucous lyrics, some scathing social commentary, rock, rock history, and jazz. Do not, however, play it for your parents.