

PENTHOUSE

02242

THE INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE FOR MEN

APRIL 1977 \$1.50

CC

**JIMMY BRESLIN SAYS
PUT EXECUTIONS
ON LIVE TV**

**NICK VON HOFFMAN SAYS
LIFE IN WASHINGTON
IS CAPITOL PUNISHMENT**

**GARNER TED ARMSTRONG:
THE PROFIT OF DOOM**

**LIVING WITH (SOB!)
A SMALL PENIS**

**THE FIERCE PHILLY FLYERS:
ASSASSINS ON ICE**

**COPS FOR HIRE:
A DEADLY BUSINESS**

EXPLORING S&M

Austria 53 S
Belgium 86.00 BF
Denmark 15 DKr
Finland 8.50 FM
France 11.00 FrF
Germany 7.50 DM
Greece 125 Dr
Holland 5.90 Hll
Israel \$1.50 U.S.
Italy 2100 L
Japan 850 Y

Bound for Glory gains from one major asset—the absolutely authoritative performance of David Carradine as Woody—and several minor ones, beginning with those of Melinda Dillon as his wife and Gail Strickland as the other woman temporarily in his life, until he leaves her, too. Next come the canny understatement of mood and the controlled anger of the social comment. Much of the action takes place among migrant farm workers in southern California, whom Guthrie tried to help organize, and their misery falls under the same lucid scrutiny that is focused on Woody's career.

However, my problem with the movie has something to do with that lucid scrutiny, which uncovers insufficiencies but lacks the energy to make up for them. Ambivalence is, finally, not a very satisfying artistic stance, and Guthrie eludes the movie, as it were, as troublingly as he eludes his family and his would-be promoters. He escapes, really, into the film's background—and of course that background is something marvelous to know.

It's the same in the other Ashby movies, which work to demythologize their heros by complicating

them in rather small-scale ways. Nobody is judged, exactly, but everyone is slightly diminished, because we've seen more but really know less about them than when we began. The most poignant scenes—and they are very poignant—are always in the process of fading out of view. If you compare this with the poignancies of *Islands in the Stream*, where everything is seen face on, handled, cherished, even explained, you will begin to understand the difference between a director who makes uneven but potentially major films and a director who makes very expert minor ones. Schaffner's movie is full of richly sentimental recognitions; Ashby's is full of subtle regrets. I wouldn't give up either, but I know which I prefer.

Of the two stuffed monuments to the mythology of the movies that dominated the winter film season, *A Star Is Born* and *King Kong*, I much prefer *King Kong*. Even the most determined Barbra Streisand fan is going to have trouble justifying the perhaps twenty minutes of film time wasted on unnecessary reaction shots—showing Barbra's reactions—and excusing what isn't done

with the talented Kris Kristofferson, as her doomed, ex-rock-star husband. A lot of the quality of the famous 1954 George Cukor-directed, Judy Garland-James Mason version of *A Star Is Born* depended on its trust in a—probably anachronistic—Hollywood community. That community has been lost (along with Cukor, Garland, and Mason) in the new version, which keeps substituting depersonalized rock-music performances and recording sessions. Streisand's success bears almost no relation to Kristofferson's failure; so the dramatic crossing of the story fails to generate much meaning at all. Box-office receipts will no doubt prove me wrong, but this may be the time when Streisand's career of self-aggrandizement finally stops bringing in returns.

King Kong, on the other hand, is nothing but returns, some of them funny and all of them fairly sophisticated examples of clever calculation. My film-fan friends complain about the quality of the special effects in this remake as compared with the 1933 original. And the critics have complained about the campy wisecracks characterizing the—rather mutual—affair between the gorilla and the girl. I'll pass on the special effects, but I'll defend the girl (Jessica Lange), because she's a knock-out and because she strikes the right balance between fear and abandon in dealing with the big ape whom she has subdued. Somebody in the writing-directing team of Lorenzo Semple, Jr., and John Guillermin had the bright idea of making the girl an attractive careerist who is sexually very eager. In this version of the story, it's not beauty that kills the beast, but rather innocence in search of experience.

The movie keeps making sense to me, despite some excesses, and even despite the \$24 million in production costs that everyone finds so evil. Considering how we spend money in our society, *King Kong* seems the most virtuous of temporary diversions.—Roger Greenspun

WORDS



THE WAY WE WERE

Back in the good old days, when words meant something, nostalgia was a vague and rather gentle emotion, a hankering backward that tended to be somewhat unspecific and that was always inexpensive.

But times have changed, and hardly for the better. Nostalgia is now a leading growth industry, along with sex and camping. The change is an impressive testimonial to the energy and competence of American merchandisers, who are busy proving these days that they can sell absolutely everything.

I can't think of a blessed thing, from the air we breathe to the holes in doughnuts, that some genius has not figured out how to hustle for a dollar. These hustles take three principal forms: (1) the transformation of the imperfect, as with air fresheners and purifiers; (2) banishment, as of bad breath or of body odor; and (3) merchandising, as with everything that anyone might be persuaded to find a use for.

If you want to look at it that way, nostalgia has been approached from all three of these capitalist perspectives. Conventional psychotherapy, or shrinkage, consists of little more than the transforming of an individual's past into something he can live with. The *au courant* "awareness" shrinkage, however, consists of banishment. Merchan-



Jessica Lange with Kong: innocence in search of experience.