

## 'Airport' Expert Escapism

It may be a foolish question, but the critics and even Hollywood seem to be asking it these days in a roundabout way: does Hollywood have a right to make 'em (movies, that is) like they used to? The question was raised most recently by Ross Hunter's "Airport," which is without question a throwback movie, a splashy "Grand Hotel" melodrama, full of unexpected, unlikely plot complications and two-dimensional characters, a movie, adapted with great fanfare from a kitschy best-seller, and which you just know, even if pontifical producer Hunter didn't tell you so on talk show panels, is meant to be strictly escapist fare.

It's a sign of the times that somebody has to stand up for the "escapist" movie. Years of Hollywood's negligently following formula has tended to emasculate the tradition of the escapist film so that now reaction by the intellectuals and pseudo-intellectuals against the "Hollywood ending" and the "Hollywood movie" has obscured some of the basic functions of the movie, some of the marvelous ways the movie can be used—

simply to thrill audiences, simply to catch them up in some situation that may not reflect "real life" or elucidate Great Themes but will create real enjoyment within the confines of a movie house.

The movie—"film," if you must—is, among other things, a story-telling medium, allowing scope for execution of its job that no other medium offers. When a good story, a nifty yarn, comes along, there is nothing like the movie as its vehicle.

And "Airport" is a good story, detailing what happens when a desperate man carries a bomb aboard a Boeing 707. The pulse quickens already, doesn't it? The premise isn't new, but author Arthur Hailey's plot turns (as adapted by George Seaton, who also directed the movie) are wily and inventive.

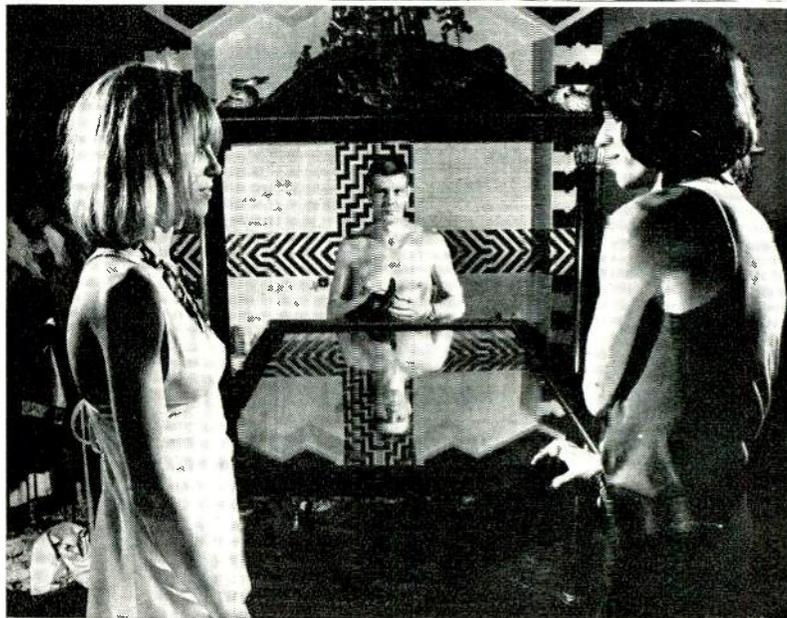
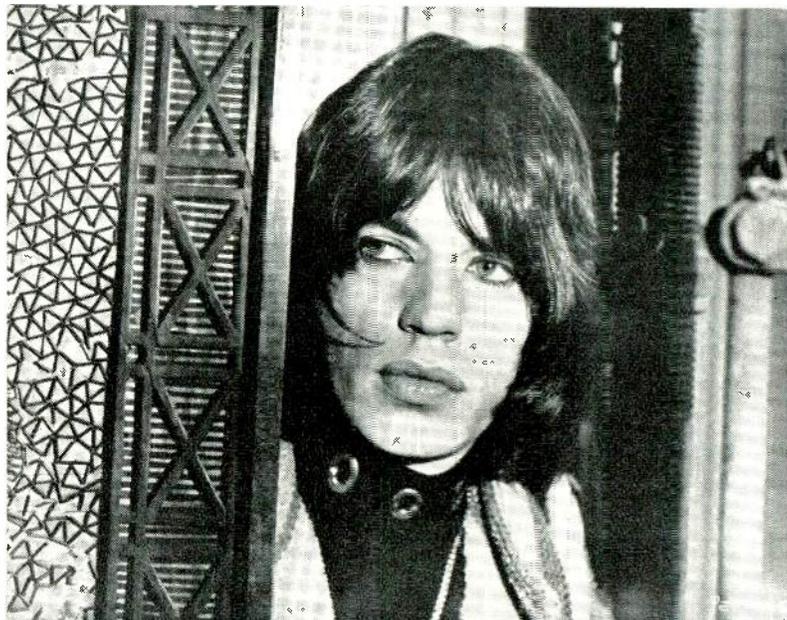
They make the movie the kind the term "on the edge of your seat" was invented for. "Airport" is a "flick," something you see to entertain yourself, in this case, scare yourself harmlessly. And there's nothing wrong with that. No psychiatrist could convince me otherwise.

Of course, not everything about "Airport" is beyond criticism. The characters in a plotty story should be used only to connect the surprises. When the characters and their relationships—in this case, a couple of dreary infidelities—are studied too closely, the movie slows to an embarrassing pace. In fact, the first expository hour of "Airport" was laughable. And then that sudden intensifying of plot.

A cast of what we think of as "big name" stars (and why is that term becoming a pejorative, too?) spangles "Airport." Especially good among them are Dean Martin as a philanthropic pilot; Jacqueline Bisset as a pregnant stewardess; Helen Hayes as a pixie-ish stow-away (her scene-stealing is awesome chutzpah); Van Heflin as the bomber; Maureen Stapleton as his distraught wife; and George Kennedy as a cigar-chewing head mechanic. Not especially good are Burt Lancaster, who is still gritting his teeth to indicate acting; and Jean Seberg, whose face still doesn't move.

There is an abundance of the late Alfred Newman's music, which, aside from too many ominous chords, is quite effective. (The score, Newman's

## Mick Gives 'Performance'



Mick Jagger (above) of London Records' Rolling Stones has one of the leads in the new Warner Brothers film shot in London, "Performance." Also starring are Anita Pallenberg and James Fox (shown in photo below with Jagger at right). According to studio synopsis, Jagger portrays "a one-time entertainer who has 'dropped out' to live almost in complete seclusion, while experimenting with ultra-modern musical forms. His only companions are two way-out girls."

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### Jarreau Joins Lissauer

NEW YORK — Geoffrey Lissauer, independent producer, announces the signing of singer Al Jarreau to an exclusive recording agreement. Jarreau has begun work on his first LP, with musical development by John Lissauer.

last, is on Decca.)

Vincent Canby, reviewing Universal's "Airport" in the New York Times, said that it would be enjoyed by millions of people who no longer care about the movies. I care about the movies, and I say, that if we lose our ability—or look down our noses at the ability—to enjoy movies like "Airport," then we've lost something very important to the appreciation of what movies are.

—Dave Finkle.

### Bell Distributes Rain Label from L. A.

NEW YORK — Larry Uttal, President of Bell Records, has revealed that Bell will distribute Rain, a new label headed by Chuck Blore. Milt Klein and Don Richman.

First announced product for the LA based label will be "See The Lady With Child" b/w "Love Is a Funny Place" featuring vocalist Jerry Wright. Both sides were written by Wright with lyrics on "See The Lady With Child" by Chuck Blore, Don Richman and Jerry Wright. Blore and Richman collaborated on the latter. Al Capps served as conductor and Blore and Richman produced the sessions.