

'Jazz' too glossy and too Fosse

By MARY JO SANTILLI
Daily Collegian Staff Writer
The best moments in "All That Jazz" are those that deal directly with showbiz, presenting it as a life where art and real experience are interchangeable, indistinguishable from each other. Put more bluntly, Joe Gideon, the screwed-up, burnt-out, workaholic whose life and character are fashioned to closely parallel director Bob Fosse's own, confesses, "I don't know where the bullshit ends and reality begins."



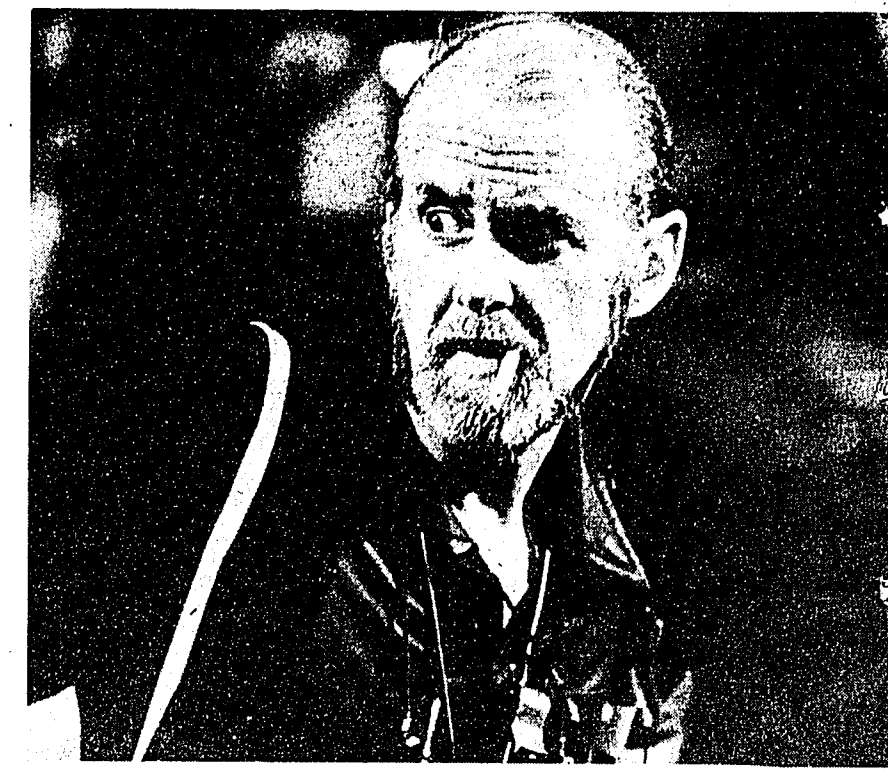
Bob Fosse

"All That Jazz" is not a musical in the conventional sense; Fosse integrates the musical numbers into the storyline to present art and life as one. Though the choreography is beautiful, it is never a pretty sight. Fosse allows us to see his dancers sweat, as in the audition sequence where a stage full of chorus hopefuls vie for the few parts in Gideon's latest production. With George Benson's rendition of "On Broadway" casting a steady rhythm, the choreography expresses the anxiety, tension and great amounts of energy a performer must expend to appear just a little bit better than his competitors.

Much of the film takes place in rehearsal halls and theaters, and cinematographer Giuseppe Rotunno (best known as Fellini's photographer) creates a harsh, ugly realism for these particular scenes. However, what begins as a reflection on showbiz life as seen through veteran Fosse's eyes unfortunately ends up as a hysterical confession, an attempt to exercise his gull, work out his hang-ups and dispel his deepest fears. You see, as Fosse would have it, this Joe Gideon (Roy Scheider, in an unusual role, gives a convincing performance) is a real schmuck, a womanizer, a con. He ignores his child and he's unfaithful to his devoted girlfriend. Gideon is basically wrapped up in himself and his work. And work he does, usually on a couple of projects at one time. Consequently, Gideon abuses himself, living on cigarettes and speed. Of course, the axe eventually falls; Gideon has a heart attack.

Up until this point, the seeds for the self indictment that Fosse eventually embarks upon are already sown (Fosse himself suffered a heart attack through establishing his character as lovable, but unloving and underserving of what he's got and never letting up on reminding us of this fact).

But there are such wonderful moments — and performances. At one point Gideon has a dialogue with his young daughter, played by Erzsébet Foldi ("Why don't you get married again, Daddy?") to which he answers, "I haven't found anybody I dislike enough to do that to..."), as they practice dance moves. In a similar scene Gideon's ex-wife, charmingly played by



Director Bob Fosse

Leland Palmer, reminds him of girls' names — names he had forgotten — with whom he had affairs. All the while she dances circles around him, literally and figuratively. Fosse's doubts about the significance of his own work leads to the best choreography in the film. Gideon is persuaded to use a snappy, but rather ordinary tune in his show. After working with it for some time, he is totally dissatisfied and proceeds to turn the thing on its head. As the dancers perform for his producers, the composer mumbles, "Now Sinatra will never record it."

"I got insight into you, Gideon," says Frankie Man, the star of Gideon's latest film, "The Stand Up" (reminiscent of Dustin Hoffman in "Lenny"? another Fosse film). "You have a deep rooted fear of being conventional."

After Gideon's attack, things really begin to fall apart, and it's Fosse's fear of his own ordinariness that is partly fault. The film owes much to Fellini. Actually, there have always been similarities between the two artists, including a love of the carnival and the burlesque (Fosse's "Sweet Charity" was a musical adaptation of Fellini's "Nights of Cabiria"). But anyone familiar with Fellini's mystical "8½" will find striking resemblances to it in "All That Jazz," including the fact that both are about an artist's self-struggle. Also present in Fosse's film is the all-too-perceptive wife, the money-hungry producer, and not least of all the magical super-woman (here played by Jessica Lange), who in Fosse's case acts as some kind of angel of redemption. But unfortunately she is never more than a device that Fosse uses to amplify his guilt and self doubt, a sort of alter-ego there have always been similarities between the two artists, including a love of the carnival and the burlesque (Fosse's "Sweet Charity" was a musical adaptation of Fellini's "Nights of Cabiria").

'So Long': quiet memory-pictures in sepia tones

By P.J. PLATZ
Daily Collegian Staff Writer
"So Long, See You Tomorrow," by William Maxwell, Knopf, \$7.95, 135 pages.
Remember the kind of dreary rainy afternoon when you finally resolve once and for all to clean out that grungy bottom desk drawer, which by now is practically glued shut with cobwebs and dust and time? So, garbage can (for trash) and coffee pot (for sustenance) at hand, you bravely dash forth into that drawerful of memories.

You come across creased, ripped, tear-stained letters, perhaps an old yo-yo string, a report card from second grade, a front tooth (worth a whole quarter to the tooth fairy), yellowed newspaper clippings of when your brother won second prize with his steer at the County Fair, an old mat-

chbook cover recalling some crazy night when you and your best pal decided to see if the hamburgers were really made of ground-up cats at Joe's Greasy Spoon.
And you find handfuls of dog-eared and yellowing photographs. Antique smiles recalling Great Aunt Linn's 67th birthday party, a cousin's school play, the first day your kid sister came home from the hospital, all dwarfish and wrinkly and pink. And perhaps some snaps of that special friend from junior high who has long since moved away. The memories tucked away in some remote corner of your brain, although cob-webbed and faint, are vital nonetheless.

And like those old photographs taken at Grandma's wedding, the memories are washed in a haze of ivory and sepia tones. These types of reminiscences are conjured with a remarkable intensity of feeling and insight in William Maxwell's "So Long, See You Tomorrow."

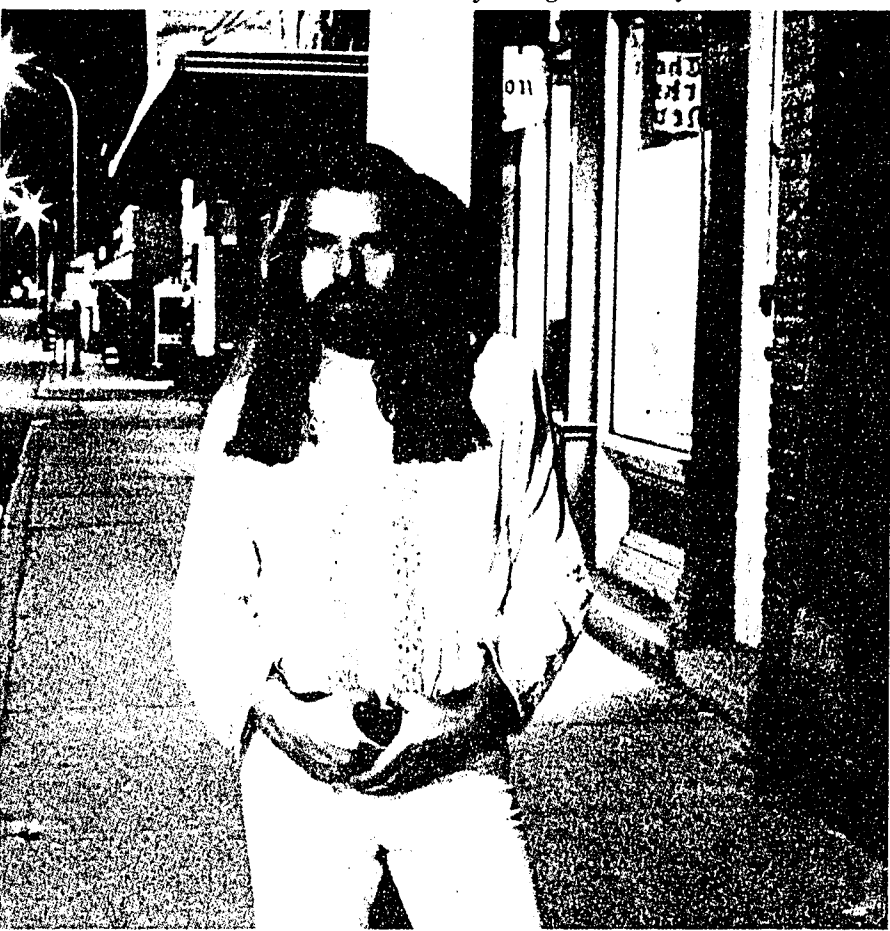
The story of a quiet boy's growth in the dust-blown Midwest during the early '20s is merely the canvas on which Maxwell creates his memory-pictures in a muted rainbow of sienna, amber, ochre and gray.
This past is not a jumble of broken toys or dreams shattered like Christmas tree balls; recalled it is a turmoil, it is gently, fondly recalled through the dust-covered lenses of a sensitive prose, written by an unidentified "I," allows us to see the world through the youthful eyes of the reminiscing narrator: "The house was too new to be comfortable. It was like having to spend a lot of time with a person you didn't know very well."
Perhaps the most touching sequence is viewed through the wise brown eyes of the farm dog, the boy and his family must move into town, uprooting themselves from the life of five o'clock milking and egg collecting. The dog is locked in a shed, and only hears the fast talk of an auctioneer and the buzz of the buyers as the home that she once knew is sold to strangers piece by piece: "and the animals seemed to be leaving! First the cows, that she had the privilege of rounding up every evening of her life. And then the sheep. She could hear them bawling with fright. Then the hogs. And finally the horses, which was too much. How was the man going to plow without them?"
The dog's feelings are so subtly paralleled with those of the boy's, and so beautifully rendered with compassion and tenderness that Maxwell makes us think twice before we'd ever unwittingly believe that a dog can get no emotion! A unique quality of "So Long, See You Tomorrow" is that in the center of all these tenderly wrought memories lies a murder, the result of a jealous husband's rage. The murder actually did occur, the details of which were drawn from the newspaper files of the Illinois State Historical Library.
It is both daring and profound that Maxwell should take such a chance at mixing fact with fiction; but the result (lucky for us) is a gracefully prosaic and memorable novel.

Seger's latest lacks variety, energy, luster

By BRUCE BECKER
Daily Collegian Staff Writer
When Bob Seger picked "Against the Wind" as the title for his latest album he couldn't have done a better job. Not only is the album as lackluster as the title suggests, but Seger has gone totally against everything that brought him instant fame after the release of "Night Moves."
It's not that his latest effort is a bad album, it's just that it lacks the variety found in earlier Seger offerings. None of the songs are innovative and only the superb musicianship of Seger and his cronies, the Silver Bullet Band and the Muscle Shoals Rhythm Section, save the album.
The only two songs on the album that are infused with any energy at all are "Long Twin Silver Line" and "Betty Lou's Gettin' Out Tonight." Both are reminiscent of the kind of song that established Seger's reputation as a serious rocker such as "Rock and Roll Never Forgets," "Feel Like a Number," "Kalamanda" and "Get Out of Denver." But even on these songs the lyrics are listless and prevent serious comparison with earlier Seger classics.
Part of the problem seems to be Seger's use of the Muscle Shoals Rhythm Section. He once said he was disappointed with "The Famous Final Scene" on the "Stranger in Town" album because the Muscle Shoals hand was too good. Seger said he wanted to vary the beat more on the song but the band's timing was so good they couldn't miss a beat. And, while the reputation of the band is impeccable, you have to wonder if Seger doesn't have the same trouble on this

album. Technically, the songs are perfect, but much of the excitement of Seger's music comes from the frenzied, wild guitar and vocals — an aspect that is lacking on his latest.
With the exception of "Long Twin Silver Line" the Muscle Shoals songs are repetitive, lifeless and boring. The single from the album, "Fire Lake," is perhaps the best example of this. Despite backing vocals from Glenn Frey and Don Henley of the Eagles the song is no different from the "Uncle Joe" described in the song who was "afraid to cut the cake." The song, while listenable, just doesn't cut it. "No Man's Land" is a poor attempt at describing life on the road, and the other Muscle Shoals songs "Good for Me" and "Shinin' Brightly" can best be described as boring.
But the problems are not just limited to the Muscle Shoals band. The Silver Bullet Band has obtained quite a reputation themselves but this album will do nothing to gain them any more respect. The performance on the title track is adequate but if ever a song needed some variety to it this is the one. Of course, Seger's lyrics again are nothing spectacular: "And the years rolled slowly past/And I found myself alone/surrounded by strangers I thought were my friends/I found myself further and further from my home/And I guess I lost my way/There were so many roads/I was living to run/And running to live/never worried about paying/Or even how much I owed."
Two of the other Silver Bullet songs, "The Horizontal Boy" and "Her Strut" also lack the imagination, both lyrically and musically, to make them work. One

noticeable absence from the band is the keyboard work of Robyn Robbins who played piano on such songs as "Brave Strangers" and "Feel Like a Number." When Seger and Robbins teamed up it usually meant excitement — something "Against the Wind" could desperately use.
There is one song worth hearing on the album, however. "You'll Accompany Me" is a haunting ballad that manages to rise above the repetition that infests the rest of the album. It is the only song on the album that was produced by Seger and Punch who also produced "Hollywood Nights," "Feel Like a Number," and "The Fire Down Below," to name a few. While no one aspect of the song is particularly spectacular, the song is rather intriguing and leaves hope for Seger fans that maybe the group hasn't lost its talents after all.
After waiting almost two years for another Seger album his fans could have expected more than what they were given on "Against the Wind." One has to wonder whether Seger has matured at all musically since "Stranger in Town" or if he's stagnating. Perhaps he's just melting out. For the first time since his days with the Bob Seger System his picture does not appear on the cover of the album — a far cry from the portraits that adorned "Live Bullet," "Night Moves" and "Stranger in Town" — and the only picture of him looks like he's burned out.
It's a shame, too, because Seger gave us some of the best rock of the '70s. And while "Against the Wind" is an engaging album for anyone who never heard Seger before it can only be judged a disappointment by die-hard Seger fans.



Bob Seger

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