detail, and somehow, 35 years on, that seems a rather meager aspiration. Slavish imitation, campy retrospection—these are scarcely noble ideals. That said, however, I must admit that it's rather marvelous stuff, a flawless fake. The script, direction and settings are all spot on. Charlotte Rampling looks gorgeous in the Lauren Bacall role, Sylvia Miles hams away splendidly as an alcoholic widow and Jack O'Halloran, a former prizefighter whom I used to watch manhandle a series of hapless British heavyweights a few years ago, is perfect as the gigantic, lovelorn Moose Molloy.

And then, of course, there is Robert Mitchum. Not only is his version of Phillip Marlowe magnificent throughout (even better than Bogart, I thought, if that is not too unimaginable a heresy), but he also provides by far the most mesmeric moment that I've seen in any film this year, my hands-down winner of the 1975 Cold Sweat Award.

The moment in question occurs right at the outset of the picture. As the credits unfurl, the camera tracks slowly through a skid-row street filled with bars, pool halls and flophouses, all most eerily lit in a kind of sepia wash. At last, it stops at one hotel and starts to climb, and there, standing at a second-floor window, dimly lit by the neon sign below, is Mitchum. A cigarette droops from one corner of his mouth, he holds a half-empty glass. His clothes are rumpled, his jowls sag, his eyes hold infinities of weariness, indifference, stale disgust. And he just stands there. Doesn't move a muscle. Simply Mitchum, being Mitchum, being Marlow. In that single flash, he summons up the entire Chandler world, and the film is made. Bring on the Oscars, I say.

Music

David Cassidy: Growing pains and tuna fish torment

By Janet Maslin

Such a sad story, and so much premature grey sprinkled through the mod coiffure of the 25-year-old former teen dreamboat who's telling it. . . . David Cassidy is speaking so solemnly that the first thing a stranger peering into his hotel room might wonder is: who died? (The stranger's second question would perhaps concern Cassidy's perching atop a couch so that everyone else is at knee-level.) A bewildered frown makes his elfin face less pretty than photographs, and he's so slight he looks frail. His lavender shirt, borrowed from a younger brother, is uncomfortably small, and he wears the kind of overpatched, ginghamy jeans that look just-so if you're on Sunset Strip and just-silly anywhere else. Somehow, the jeans make the story even sadder.

Word had it that David wouldn't want to talk about the old days, but word had it wrong: He's so eager to clear the air that he can go on for an hour virtually uninterrupted, stopping only to . . . sigh. "It's really hard . . . for me to tell this story . . . because it's so . . . involved," he begins, very breathily. "I was 19 years old when I started doing this, and when I was 19 years old I didn't have a *clue*." Things are different now, he explains with melancholy candor, but you can't . . . understand that . . . without having a little . . . background.

Six years ago, with various stage and television credits behind him, Cassidy was signed for the role of a cute kid three years his junior in a then-forthcoming TV series called *The Partridge Family*. His contract specified that his name and likeness could be used freely in connection with the program, a provision that eventually led to David Cassidy shirts, dresses, comic books, lunch boxes, bubblegum cards, love beads—"hundreds of different items, I can't even remember them." But that was not nearly so trying as the fact that David "really had nothing to do with any of it. I was totally manipulated on one level, inasmuch as, being an actor, I had a contract to show up at such and such a time and say what they gave me to say, like everyone else in the Screen Actors Guild—it's part of the plan. And that's what I did: I showed up and . . . said my words, 'Hi, Mom, canIborrowthekeystothecar?' But it was unique inasmuch as there was music in the show. And I was really the only one on the show that . . . *sang*. So the records are really *my* records. I mean, when they talked about the records between the producers and the company, everybody would say, 'They're David's records.' But they were made for a television show, they weren't made for me. I mean, I never made a record as an *artist*."

Nor did he make any with a producer he liked; he was assigned to Wes Farrell, who Cassidy says put his own songs onto the albums for the sake of the royalties and who "uh, produced . . . one record . . . over and over again. He only knew how to make one record. . . . Well, it's history." It could have been worse: There were half a dozen gold albums and singles, and by

David Cassidy: a face-lift is under way for the former teen dreamboat.

the end of his second year David had progressed from a paltry $600-a-week scale to $1 million or $2 million a year. "Financially, it was very rewarding," he concedes. "But I became very quickly disenchanted with the situation. I had my name on it, but it had nothing to do with *me*. So it was really . . . very . . . frustrating."

After two years (his contract with Bell Records ran for four), Cassidy began to complain, albeit rather wispily. He called the president of the company, whom he barely knew, and said, "Uh, I want out. Music is moving, everything's moving. To stand still is to compromise." But the president—who, unbeknownst to Cassidy, had signed a deal with Farrell promising him the right to produce the singer indefinitely—talked him into making another album, which David remembers as "a lotta jive, a lotta compromise."

David also recalls having been miserable: He says he was overworked (18 hours a day, what with acting and recording, plus concerts on the weekends), underfed ("I wouldn't even take dinner breaks—they'd send me in a tuna fish sandwich, that's what I'd *eat*") and generally neglected (his girlfriend left him and nobody cared when he had his gall bladder out). His dealings with Bell grew more strained; when he ran into the president for the first time in a year, "the first thing he said to me was, 'How are you, David? You should've been at The Troubadour last night, Melissa Manchester was great.' " He went without recording for 15 months and maintains that when he did release an album, Bell spent "maybe $5,000 promoting its most popular act, not nearly enough to get the record played by radio stations that hadn't thought much of Cassidy in the first place. He finally took the most drastic step imaginable by asking the teen magazines to please stop writing about him. But even that didn't work: When he posed for some spectacular nude photographs for *Rolling Stone* ("This was before Burt Reynolds did it, I guess it was pretty revolutionary"), "the magazines all made personal apologies on my behalf, 'David feels *so* bad. . . .' They did it to save themselves, though, not to save me. You know, when you see creeps making millions of bucks off little kids who don't know any better, it's hard to justify it."

David's contract ran out, and so did he. He had "an emotional breakdown," nursing a case of the flu for three or four months. During this period, he sat in his room wondering What It All Meant, subsequently coming up with I Gotta Be Me, or something to that effect. Fortunately, he found a kindred spirit in Ken Glancy, the president of RCA records, who said this when he signed David to the label: "RCA recognizes the potential of a multi-talented individual like David Cassidy, who has weathered a unique type of superstardom very early in his career, with the result that his concentration can now be directed towards becoming an artist of very lasting significance."

And now the face-lift is under way. David has a new haircut and he's on a promotional tour to meet RCA's local brass, because if they like him better than his previous "fabricated image," they may work a little harder to help him than the crew at Bell did. There is a single with an uncharacteristically blunt title, "Get It Up for Love," and a concept album to make the transformation complete. Entitled *The Higher They Climb, The Harder They Fall* and co-produced by David and ex-Beach Boy Bruce Johnston, it's the stilted but surprisingly tuneful story of an ordinary Joe who becomes a teen idol, only to lose his girl and . . . and you've heard this part already, haven't you? Only thing is, David says that while the album is "so idealistically perfect, so wonderfully perfect from the point of view of a small town boy who eventually personifies the American Dream," he also says it isn't necessarily about him. "It could be about Elvis, Gene Vincent, me—anybody."

David's liner notes are supposed to be flip ("Alas he finds that it's lonely at the top; he desperately searches for the love of a woman to abate his teenage passion. . .") because, he says, the whole album is faintly satirical. But what comes through most clearly is the confusion of someone who's trying to play it both ways. Cassidy can poke fun at his former status as a fave rave, but the mockery is mitigated by constant reminders of just how famous he used to be. The album's hero may wind up sleeping on a park bench (a certain amount of self-pity is also evident), but we're never allowed to lose track of his stardom. The very newspaper he's sleeping under carries a story about him.

"I look at it as being . . . amusing," Cassidy maintains, though the album is full of bitterness toward his ex-flame and ambivalent digs at both himself and his audience. He professes surprise at suggestions of any of this, looking quizzical and concerned about intimations that his former fans may not like or understand his introspective bent, or that he may be deliberately seeking a different and older following. "Yes . . . well, no," he says, when asked if he would be content to have the album sell several million copies, but only to girls between the ages of 8 and 12. "I wouldn't be disappointed if they would only *listen*. I would be disappointed, yeah, if it were only bought by girls who had bought David Cassidy records before. They'd be buying it because of something that was fabricated five or six years ago, and that would not be a success in my eyes. But this is my first honest effort, and I accept full responsibility for it."

An RCA representative sees it a little more clearly. "If David sold a lot of records but only within that age group, one segment of our company might be happy, but they would also realize that they'd failed. If, on the other hand, he sold anywhere from 150,000 to 300,000 copies to an older audience, I'd consider it a success. The change isn't going to be easy and it may take him a while, but I think he can do it. I'd say that a good number of the songs on the album stand on their own.

"But you have to remember what the bottom line is: We're in business to sell records. The guys who work on the seventh floor of our building, in accounting—they don't care if Hitler buys all of them. If a lot are sold, they're going to be overjoyed."

***Still Caught Up,** *Millie Jackson* (Spring). Jackson is a tough, husky-voiced soul singer with a unique gambit: On one side of the record, she's a wife; on the other, a mistress; and neither woman has much to do but squabble over the same man. Who gets him? Well, when Jackson (who makes a wonderful actress) tried this out before, on *Caught Up*, the story ended with the amicable breakup of a marriage. But this time she waxes moralistic, sending the girlfriend off in a straitjacket after the couple patch things up for the sake of their young son.

½*A Star Is Bought, *Albert Brooks* (Asylum). A comedy album whose avowed intention is to worm its way into the good graces of every possible kind of radio station. Its highlight is a would-be FM segment that has Brooks "jamming" with blues guitarist Albert King, who accurately pronounces Brooks "a mighty funky buffoon."