



THE COMPLEAT MUSICAL



BOYHOOD happens only once to every man, and there are those who would try to recapture it the rest of their lives, some by returning to the pathetic infancy of a "second childhood," a few through the world of literature and art. Charles Dickens recaptured his by re-creating the world of his boyhood in his novel *Oliver Twist*, and what he had re-created is now brought to life again in a dazzling film-musical entitled *Oliver*.

"Magnificent" is perhaps the only word that can adequately describe this film. The words and music are superb by any standard, aptly capturing the mood of the situations, painting the characters of those who sing it. The acting is first-rate. Though dominated by a cast of unknowns (unknown that is to the rest of the world, save merry olde England), the performers manage to inject into "Oliver" not only the gaiety of a musical but the liveliness of life itself, its pathos and its joys.

The timeless story of *Oliver Twist* is here, of course, but it is not so much this that you remember. It may be, as one critic described it, "your boyhood." — and the characters who peopled it. Ron Moody's Fagin is every boy's first encounter with worldliness and old age. Oliver Reed's Bill Sikes is the personification of the nightmares that haunt one's growing up. Shani Wallis is big kind sister or maybe Mama — there to cheer you up when the chips are down. And who has not had a boyhood pal of the likes of Jack Wild's Artful Dodger, the playmate who gives you visions of the world if children could only rule it.

Oliver is a prism for all these memories. And for a child, a young man or a parent, that's a hell of a reason to see this film. **FM**