JUMPIN' JACK FLASH Michael Giltz

The only gas in Jumpin' Jack Flash is provided by Whoopi Goldberg. She steers an enjoyable, lighthearted course through this comedy-adventure vehicle, but the rest of the movie's fuel tank is empty: empty of plot, empty of suspense, empty of character.

Whoopi plays Terry Doolittle, an intelligent, highly motivated person who's job involves working at a computer and transferring funds among international banks. Terry also happens to be a jive-talkin', streetsmart girl who "knows where it's at." Late one working day, someone called "Jumpin' Jack Flash" taps into Terry's computer line and leaves an enigmatic message, She quickly deciphers the code, only to find herself receiving desperate pleas for help from a man who claims to be a British spy trapped in Eastern Europe.

Terry soon finds herself plunged into a world of late-night meetings, kidnapping and international intrigue. A new employee suddenly pops up at the place where she works and — gosh, I never would have guessed—turns out to be a spy. (I won't say for which side.) The rest of Jumpin' Jack Flash is just as easy to second guess.

Her choice of material could certainly be better, but Whoopi Goldberg's ability to make this empty-headed story passably entertaining bodes well for her future. However, David H. Franzoni, J. W. Melville, Patricia Irving and Christopher Thompson — the Gang of Four who wrote this mess—should have no future.

CHILDREN OF A LESSER GOD

Michael Giliz

As an actor, William Hurt certainly has his peers. Dustin Hoffman, Kevin Kline and Harrison Ford spring to mind, just to name a few. But no one in this decade has made such consistently good films at such a consistently fast rate.

Hurt scores again in Children of a Lesser God. He plays James Leeds, a man dedicated to helping others and — more succinctly — a man dedicated to love. It is a deeply romantic film and the best love story since An Officer and a Gentleman.

Jim's impressive credentials would allow him to work anywhere, but he chooses a position at a school for the deaf. There he works with a group of teen-agers, helping them through the difficult and frustrating process of learning how to speak.

Though Jim and his students begin to make progress, he finds himself drawn more and more to the solitary figure of the beautiful young woman who serves as the school's janitor. He finds out from the principal that her name is Sarah, "the brightest student we ever had."

Sarah was born deaf and never learned to speak. At first, Jim only wants to help her do so. But, though she spurns his offer, they soon fall madly in love.

"You are the most mysterious, passionate, beautiful, angry woman I have ever met," he tells her. And he's right, for Marlee Matlin is wonderful as Sarah.

Perhaps the most memorable moment in this memorable movie is when Sarah goes skinny-dipping late at night. The scene is shot from her perspective, so there is no sound. She drifts this way and that as the camera dreamily follows her movements.

8, APPLAUSE, October 24, 1986

Movies

from page

It's an excite moment, both sensual and sad It's sensual because Sarah's a beautiful woman. And it's sad because we are given a small glimpse into a strange and private world, a world we can only begin to understand.