

In Britain this week: Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young, who played a sell-out concert in London on Tuesday; and Joni Mitchell, friend of the group and one of the world's best contemporary folk singer-songwriters. Disc meets the visitors . . .

GENTLE, shy Joni Mitchell flew into London last week with her friends, Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young, to do her last concert for a long, long time.

Since fame caught up with her and propelled her to become one of America's top three female folk-singers—along with Joan Baez and Judy Collins—Joni has been fighting a losing battle against time. With constant touring she finds she has no time for her home or for her writing, and a long rest is vastly overdue.

"I would like the luxury of a day with nothing to do, so I could wake up and say 'what shall I do today?' It's been years since I could do that," said Joni, smiling nervously.

She was talking at a party given in her honour by her record company in London. Dressed in a long green skirt with a green velvet top and her long fair hair in pigtails, Joni looked 10 years younger than her official 26. On her left-hand was a collection of cameo rings which she twisted as she apologised for smiling ("I always smile when I'm nervous"). Her manager, a hippy happy American named Elliot, kept popping up at her elbow to help out and bring ginger wine.

"I need a rest," explained Joni. "I'm going through a change as an artist. I'm beginning to write on the piano which is a much freer instrument, and I want to learn the concertina and the violin."

"True I've had two weeks off between three weeks of touring, but when you know you're going back on the road there's so many things to do—every minute becomes vital—and my writing suffers. As a woman I have a responsibility to my home and it takes me a week to get the house re-perking."

"My personal life is in a shambles, and it's hard on me knowing I'm not giving anything to people I love."

Home for Joni is a house of her own in Laurel Canyon, near Los Angeles.

"Most of my friends are musicians—I'm not very social. I'm a very solitary person, even in a room full of people I feel completely alone. You need solitude to make anything artistic. You need the focus which you can't have surrounded by people."

Nevertheless, between tours Joni has managed to write many beautiful songs that have been recorded by so many other people that even if you don't know Joni Mitchell you will certainly know some of her songs. One that she should be justifiably proud of is "Both Sides Now," sung by many—most notably Judy Collins.

"When I first started Judy Collins was a great influence on me, so of course I was so pleased when she sang that. But she was really beautiful to me two years ago at the Newport Festival. She was singing

## JONI: 'MY PERSONAL LIFE IS A SHAMBLES'

by Caroline Boucher

one of my songs, so she asked me down as her guest which was so generous."

Unlike Judy, who now appears in concert with a small backing group, Joni still prefers to accompany herself.

"I think a backing only waters it down," she says. "Other people onstage take some of the responsibility from

you, and I also think it takes some of the dynamics from you."

"I'm very possessive about my own art—I think everyone is. I know how I want it to be and I have a very total picture of it. It's expanding now and I can see other instruments. I can't write music though, I sing different parts into a tape recorder. If I had two years off I'd probably go back and learn composition."

Unlike Joan Baez and Judy Collins, Joni is not a great demonstrator for peace.

"I'm interested—everyone wants peace—but it's like some people go to church on Sundays and some don't, but they're still Christians."

"I feel that a lot of people actively working for peace do it for the wrong reasons—they are saying 'look at me, I'm working towards peace', and they are abusing the word."

Joni's concert is at London's Albert Hall on January 17. Try to go. Her spirit is refreshing.



Joni Mitchell arrives in England with ex-Hollie Graham Nash

# America may turn into a bloodbath, says David Crosby

by Penny Valentine

ONE OF the most exciting and creative groups to come out of America in the last year—Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young—may be living in Britain by next year. And they will be only the spearhead of a vast exodus of American youth and talent.

There was once a song that Paul Simon sang that went: "We're off to look for America . . ." America—supposedly the land of opportunity and the Good Life. Supposedly. Because today America is a sad and frightened country. And the America of the young is non-existent.

There are signs, many people believe, that soon American will explode inwardly into a bloody battle—and when that happens all the creative forces will flee to Britain and Canada.

Politics and pop music have never been far from each other. Music has always been a reflection of the times we live in. And the musicians purveyors of that reflection.

Like Paul Simon, Crosby, Stills and Nash went to look for America.

I last met them before they set out—at the beginning of last year. There was an air of exciting warm comradeship, an air of adventure.

Two weeks later they were to return to America. "We knew," says Graham Nash now, "that the time was right to present them with a force both creative and positive."

He was right. And nowhere BUT in America could they have found their voices and music so readily acceptable. Today they are acclaimed as the biggest thing to have hit the American scene, and their one appearance in Britain—

on Tuesday night—was a sell-out.

But despite this, they find themselves changed. They are today ostensibly a group—something they swore they'd never be, having all just emerged from unhappy group scenes. And they also find themselves in a position of reflecting the fears and despair of all American youth.

They arrived last week and settled in a luxurious flat in Kensington. Today there are six of them—three more than the original plan. There is the added force of Neil Young, drummer Dallas Taylor and bass player Greg Reeves. Greg, who had still not arrived on Thursday ("He just happens to have missed the plane for the second day running," Neil Young remarks drily), was responsible for a lot of the excellent bass work on Tamla Motown records.

Dallas—in C-N-W check shirt, with dark powerful face—once accompanied John Sebastian. Neil, skinny in white shirt and a compulsive boiled egg eater, was with Stephen Stills in Buffalo Springfield.

Apart from occasional verbal battles between David and Stephen, little has changed. They still pick up their guitars and play while they're talking, bang on a piano and beat out drum rhythms. They

are still excited about what they're doing:

"If you remember, we weren't going to be a group," says Graham. "But one morning it just got out of hand, and because we have always believed in presenting the album sound on stage, we had to augment the people on the session into the act—and become a group."

After only one album by the original three members, the sound changed. Many people think this was wholly due to Neil Young.

"Of course our sound changed," says David. "Neil's influence is amazingly strong. He'd be a strong influence in a dog fight! The new album we're just finishing is one we like to think of as the first by a new group. And if we can maintain this marvellous air of excitement and involvement on every album, then it's wonderful."

So from the original conception of the group, Crosby, Stills and Nash have moved a long way.

Has their immediate success surprised them?

"Not really," says Graham. "Of course, success is nice but I'm happiest just seeing the 17,000 smiling faces we get at concerts."

"It's important right now to make people smile and still keep them thinking. There is so much black around—the war in Vietnam, stuff like that—that we do have a duty to say things on stage. But at the same time our songs don't take on the form of protest. You can't do it. Protest songs don't work."

They just work against themselves. You blow the whole thing. So our songs are grey rather than black or white. The kids in America know we think the way they do.

So Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young find themselves the most formative group in America—and possibly the world. They represent a new, young race of people.

It is somehow a frightening position, and they feel its responsibility. Their position is in many ways comparable to that of the Beatles a year or two ago.

The fact that the group are so big goes a long way to prove that America is still a place where big creative forces can be born. This has come about, says Crosby, because of a backlash escalated by the war and the underlying existing violence in America.

"The worse things get in America—and they ARE getting worse—then the more powerful the good creative force gets. As the extremes widen so some things improve. That's why Woodstock was so wonderful—all those people gathered in one place and not one iota of violence."

"In Britain there's a stream of creative music, but it isn't propelled as quickly as in America because things aren't so bad here. At least the British Government represents the people—and now with votes at 18 it's more likely to be so."

"In America, government people would sooner lock themselves in their homes than face problems. The young are frustrated because they're not stupid. They can see the blood bath coming and there's nothing in their power to stop it."

"We've had three of our best leaders mown down in front of our eyes. John Lindsay (Mayor of New York) is about the only person worth voting for, and I fear they'll get rid of him soon. The situation is getting out of hand."

"The sad thing is that the youth of America is blamed for everything. Yet the kids we know LOVE America. They believe in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. They just don't believe in what's happening now. How can they believe in Vietnam, the murder at home?"

"Civil war is, I think, nearer than Mr and Mrs America want to believe. Wholesale slaughter—and I'm just working out which way to jump to miss the bullets."

"Of course the American young will split. They bear no arms and no malice to their neighbour. They'll go to Canada and Britain."



CROSBY: "War is near"

