

# Talent On Stage

## CROSBY, STILLS, NASH & YOUNG JONI MITCHELL

GREEK THEATRE, LOS ANGELES— "Hey, you with the spotlight — not yet!"

Those were the first words uttered by Stephen Stills, of Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young, directly before the group's first major appearance before a live audience, at L.A.'s Greek Theatre last week. Stills' phrase, happily enough, was never further from the truth. This is a group that should be in the entertainment spotlight to stay.

C. S. N & Y proved themselves to be a supergroup in almost every sense of the word. The single quality they lacked was the over-pretention and ego-infested attitude that generally heralds a new "super" accumulation of musicians.

They opened their set performing solely with acoustic guitars — no other instruments and no overbearing amplifiers. As the songs unfolded (primarily from their first Atco LP, although one of the highlights was their version of the Beatles' "Blackbird"), C. S. N & Y proved themselves to be more a co-op than what one normally envisions as a group. Different numbers spotlighted different members; some with just Crosby and Stills, others with Crosby and Nash and one with just Stills. As one of them spotlighted, the others either provided soft accompaniment (instrumentally and in scat harmonies) or left the stage.

Then Neil Young, the newest member of the group jokingly referred to as "the world's most lyrical law firm" (Nash, with tongue-in-cheek, preferred

to call it "Music From Big Ego"), emerged and added his steady guitar and strong vocals. It was a perfect complement to the rich harmonies of the rest of the group.

The band switched to electric instrumentation next (adding bassist Greg Reeves and drummer Dallas Taylor) and performed some frenzied renditions of other cuts from the album along with some somewhat unspectacular new material. Throughout the set, there were no long solos or unnecessarily-drawn out instrumental passages; it was the kind of "one for all, all for one" spirit that's lacking in so many of today's groups.

The set ended with Joni Mitchell, who opened the show with an hour to herself, returning to join C. S. N & Y in a highly revivalistic version of Dino Valente's "Let's Get Together," immediately getting the entire crowd (much younger, incidentally, than the usual Greek Theatre audience) into a moving sing-along.

Miss Mitchell's set was as enthrallingly beautiful as one would have expected from listening to her recordings. Accompanying herself on guitar and, later, piano, she spun a beautiful and poignant lyrical web; from her show-stopping acappella on "The Fiddle and the Drum" to rousing renditions of her twin hits "Both Sides Now" and "Chelsea Morning."

It was, all-in-all, one of the most listenably-entertaining concerts presented locally in quite some time.

p.s.

## THELMA HOUSTON HINES, HINES & DAD

ROYAL BOX, NYC — Like a cigarette commercial, Miss Thelma Houston has "come a long way" since she first played New York, and that was only a few months ago. At that time, Thelma was the new Jim Webb find; now she's the guest attraction who's tearing up the Americana's nitery with Hines, Hines & Dad.

The pairing of these two disparate acts is rather like that which greeted Madison Gardeners who were shaken by the teaming of Herb Alpert with the Checkmates, Ltd. One is sheer entertainment; the other is positive-power and majesty in rhythm and contemporary delight.

Completely relaxed in her manner, Miss Houston just opens her mouth, her throat and her heart with emotional and musical tremors that are absolutely shattering. She not only handles Jim Webb material with a phrasing and expression that makes it doubly communicative and understandable; but she has become an instrument by which Webb can expand his own ideas (as with material such as "Cheap Lovin'"). In her Dunhill

lp, "Sunshower," Miss Houston reflects Webb as Dionne Warwick does Burt Bacharach. On stage, though, she is her own woman, expanding on "Didn't We," "Everybody Gets to Go to the Moon" and other LP selections and climbing into non-Webb material such as "Aquarius" or "Gentle on My Mind" to show confidently what she can do with songs more familiar to the 25 years and over viewers.

The amazement is Thelma, and Miss Houston is a "Sunshower."

Hines, Hines and Dad, on the other hand, are a totally different act. Judged on the same scale as their co-billed Royal Box mate, they lack the vocal electricity to compete; but theirs is a special charm that gives them the top billing.

For the duo, on stage, and Dad drumming through most of the act, the show's the thing — and a marvellous thing indeed. Comedy, audience participation, spectacular dancing and singing in the nostalgia bag are their forte; and they've got their own thing down so pat that it is really a pity it can't be captured on records.

## SPOOKY TOOTH

SALVATION, N.Y. — Once the 'in' disco in N.Y., Salvation has fallen prey to the whims of the jet set (as do all such clubs) and is seeing hard times. To try and recapture its former glory, the downtown club has begun experimenting with a live music policy, and, surprisingly, the club is one of the most comfortable rock emporiums we've experienced. Built in the multi-level style of an amphitheatre, overflowing with soft cushions, Salvation lets the listener escape into his mind, untroubled by the usual hustle and bustle of a night club. The new policy seemed favorable to the patrons, for Spooky Tooth drew a capacity turnout.

A&M's Spooky Tooth, a five-man Anglo-American venture, is on the verge of stardom, with only the push of a mild hit single needed to send them soaring to the stratosphere. In addition to a fine lead guitar player in Luther Grovesenor (who's overcome

his tendency to emulate Eric Clapton), the group has two outstanding vocalists in organist Gary Wright and pianist Mike Harrison. In fact, it's the almost riff-like vocal interchanges between Wright and Harrison that give the group its unique flavoring.

Spooky's set consisted of material off their first album (on Bell) and their currently-charted "Spooky Two" LP (on A&M), plus an unreleased original which will be part of an electronic LP, currently in production. "Evil Woman" was the highlight of the set, but plaudits should also go to their non-hack treatment of the Bee Gees "New York Mining Disaster 1941" and their own "Sunshine Help Me." Spooky Tooth is loud without being obnoxious, violent without being tasteless, and together without being stale. How sweet it is.

a.r.

## SPIRIT TEN YEARS AFTER JOHN MAYALL

THE ROSE PALACE, LOS ANGELES The general idea of audiences demanding new and original material each time they see their favorite groups perform is quickly fading into pop oblivion. At least, this was the case last weekend at The Rose Palace, as capacity crowds were enthralled by the musical tightness of Spirit, Ten Years After, and John Mayall; all who played sets largely composed of their past "hits", but performed with the utmost of enthusiasm and taste.

Spirit, led by the guitar virtuosity of Randy California, is still probing that thin barrier that divides the idioms of jazz and rock, essentially utilizing jazz techniques to slice some of the inherent rawness out of rock. It succeeds quite well, particularly on such numbers as "Fresh Garbage" and "Mechanical World", where drummer Ed Cassidy's delicate brush work mixed perfectly with the weaving patterns of California's guitar, employing tastes of fuzztone and tapeloop echo to its best effect. Although these numbers were remnants of the group's first Ode album, the enthusiasm and instrumental bridgework they employed made them well worth listening to again.

Alvin Lee still dominates the sound

of Ten Years After, his staccato bursts of guitar imitating the head beat of Al Kooper's "I Can't Keep From Crying, Sometimes" and Lee's own "Help Me". Ten Years After would seem to be one of the strongest instrumental groups going, particularly evidenced by an impressive counterpoint duel Lee had with his bassist, I Lyons, as the organ faded out and drumming was confined to mere punctuation midway through the upb "I'm Going Home". Like Spirit, I employs a lot of his earlier material in his sets, but the overall effect, judged by crowd reaction (they stormed the stage en masse on hearing the familiar chords of "Spoonful"), is just as powerful.

Through a mixup in booking, Prador's John Mayall showed up with the rest of his new group and ended being backed by Ten Years After minus Alvin Lee. The set was actually a musical regression for Mayall, as stuck exclusively to the genre of bar blues and performed cuts largely from his early albums. The audience didn't seem to mind, however, as the bing heads and tapping feet were permanent fixtures throughout his performance.

## RICK NELSON

BITTER END, N.Y. — The great rock and roll revival is upon us and the entire business seems caught in its web. The recent Elvis special (and the King's powerhouse Las Vegas opening); N.Y. appearances by the Everly Brothers, Jerry Lee Lewis, Little Richard and Chuck Berry (with Fats Domino coming to the Fillmore in two weeks); disk revivals of those 1950 oldies; Sha Na Na; the Beatles' recent work; and numerous other journeys into the past are all indicative of this trend. The musical validity of all these events precludes their being referred to as nostalgia, but it is inevitable that a wave of 1950's nostalgia should soon follow. (Maybe re-runs of the original American Bandstand show?)

Rick Nelson is almost a step in that direction, but he just manages to stay on the edge of the border separating validity from nostalgia. Rick might almost be called the first Monkee, a made-to-order star through the medium of television (we found ourselves casting furtive glances around the Greenwich Village coffeehouse expecting to find the ever-present faces of Ozzie and Harriet, cheering their son on) but if we did that it would be with the kindest intentions. For like almost all of our peers, we grew up with Rick Nelson and he is still that good looking kid from next door, making his way in the hard game of show business. We can't help but admire his spunk and cheer him on to success.

What Rick Nelson is offering the customers is not the heavy soul of Elvis or the tight harmonies of the Everly Brothers, but a form of good clean fun rarely available (or accept-

able) to the younger generation, but most certainly welcome. His older stir up pleasant memories of the past, but some of the material, most notably "Travelin' Man," "My Bucket's Got A Hole In It" and "Believe What You Say" stands on its own merits. Rick Meizner's free-flowing bass lines and the harmonies contributed by Meizner and lead guitarist Alan Kemp add the right touch of today, without becoming lost in the search for tomorrow. Pat Shanahan on drums and Rick Nelson on rhythm guitar round out the instrumental sound.

As for the new material in the set, Randy Newman's "I Think It's Gonna Rain Today" got an outstanding reception, and while we cannot find fault with Rick's treatment of Dylan's "Tonight I'll Be Staying Here With You" or Tim Hardin's "Lady Came From Baltimore," we took exception to his use of Dylan's "I Shall Be Released" and Hardin's "Red Balloon." Both these songs require a certain sensitivity and perspective which Rick has not yet attained (few artists have). A minor objection, in any case, which should not overshadow the return of a highly enjoyable performer.

Nanette Natal, a newcomer to the singer/performer ranks (she's signed to Vanguard) opened the show and played one of the clearest, most professional voices we've ever heard at the club. Although we were not impressed by her self-penned material, Miss Natal has the goods to become an important interpreter of today's sounds.



Orpheus Plan Musical See in Sculpture Gallery

MGM recording group Orpheus Plan seen here at their recent sell-out SRO concert at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. Left to right: bassist Eric Gulliksen, drummer Bruce Arnold, drummer Harry Sandler, and guitar Jack McKenes, currently on the charts with their single "Find The Time."