

Stephen Stills & Neil Young

Poco

PAULEY PAVILION, UCLA — The home of the UCLA Bruins basketball team became the home of the almost-extinct three-act-for-five dollars concert last Sunday night; the show started at approximately 8:15 p.m. and lasted until nearly 2 a.m. The house was packed to near its 10,000 seat capacity and fully 95% of the audience (average age approximately 20) stayed glued to their seats for the musical marathon. Ten years ago Flo and Eddie were Turtles, and later Mothers. Stephen Stills was less than a year away from joining with Young, Furay, Messina and Dewey Martin to form Topanga's historic Buffalo Springfield. And a few years later Messina and Furay joined with Rusty Young and George Grantham to form Poco. Ten years later, today, the present incarnations of three of the finest groups to emerge from the local canyons are, with best apologies to Paul Simon, "still creatin' after all these years."

It must be stated, however, that the p.a. system's quality was also circa 1965; little bottom, muddled midranges, and too much treble made the vocals hard to follow at times, except during the acoustic songs.

Aside from the lack of vocal clarity, the concert ranks among the very best of the year. Stephen Stills headlined with his backup band and special unannounced guest Neil Young took the stage with the group amidst tumultuous ovations; they opened with "Love The One You're With" and followed immediately with "Johnny's Garden"; "... it's clean and it's quiet/only trouble was I had to buy it..." The band sounded tighter and more coherently energetic than the Manassas band a few years back and was excellently complemented by Young; though he was not fully rehearsed, to say the least Neil was quite familiar with the music. "This is the new Buffalo Springfield!" Stills exclaimed as he and Young launched an electric version of "Wooden Ships." We have heard it was there that Stills (playing a Gibson Firebird), Young and Donny Dacus (both playing Gibson Les Pauls) crystallized some of the best guitar interplay we've heard since "Southern Man" from the Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young tour album "Four Way Street."

Stills' backup band this time around was manned by Tubby Zeigler on drums, Joe Lala on congas, timbales and percussion, and George Perry on bass; both Lala and Perry are from Florida and show that even though Stills lives in Colorado, his days recording for Atlantic at Criteria Studios in Miami have had a lasting influence, particularly evidenced by the excellent Cubano-flavored percussion Jerry Aiello was the keyboardist and was exceptionally tasty in his solo bridge during "Wooden Ships."

After a short break, two stools were set at center stage for Steve and Neil, who made no bones about their desire for quiet during their acoustic set; the portion of the crowd seated festival-style on the floor of the Pavilion took a full five minutes to sit down and be quiet. After picking a little banjo lead with Young on acoustic rhythm, our spines tingled at the opening notes to "On The Way Home"; Neil's vocal on his song belied the fact that he's recovering from a throat operation — clean and pure. Stills reached for his Dobro and picked a new song titled "Tree-top Flyer," a beautifully bluesy ballad about a gun smuggler running the Mexican border flying low through the canyons to avoid detection.

Neil sang lead on a song he wrote for

Flo & Eddie

"the first car I ever had, and my last old lady" called "Long May You Run"; Stephen did some quick-pickin' on Robert Johnson's "Crossroads" before playing Fred Neil's "Everybody's Talkin'." After commenting that he wished he'd written the song, he played with so much feeling the result was as if he actually had written it.

Stephen Stills was lambasted a few years ago for singing social and political protest songs belong the sixties by critics who believed that contemporary music's social consciousness was restricted to that decade; indeed we need it more in the complacent seventies than we did then. In keeping with that, Stills rededicated "Word Game" to presidential aspirant Ronald Reagan (when written it was dedicated to Spiro): "Can you imagine that turkey being president?"

Another very short break preceded the last electric set, which Stills started off with about two minutes of fed-back guitar soloing, and with the advent of Jimi's birthday last week the solo was probably an impromptu tribute to the immortal energy and spirit of Jimi Hendrix; "Old Times, Good Times" live on every day. Immediately following was "The Loner" from Young's first post-Springfield solo album; Neil's fiercely intense but tasteful leads were so high that past songs of junk and death were completely left behind. "Turn Back The Pages" followed and was introduced by Stills, as "the single that nobody bought."

Stephen Stills' beautifully paced concert closed with Flo and Eddie assisting with vocal harmonies on "Suite: Judy Blue Eyes" as the first encore, and as the never-say-die audience swayed under the weight of 2 a.m. eyelids, Stills, Young, Flo and Eddie were joined by the band for an acapella "Find The Cost Of Freedom."

Opening for Stills was Poco, which after a few personnel changes since formation in early 1969 has maintained and improved upon the high-quality vocal harmonies developed in those days; original member Rusty Young continues to show why he is one of the very best — and one of the very first — pedal steel players in rock and roll. Tim Schmit plays bass and his lead vocals and top-end harmonizations are signature Poco. Original Poco drummer George Grantham and Paul Cotten, who joined the band in 1970, layer their backup with technical Poco excellence and the entire band projects the positive good-time energy that has given phenomenal longevity to the band both on vinyl (seven albums) and in live performances. Rusty got out from behind his pedal steel to front "Bad Weather" playing a slide guitar with a wedge-shaped neck which gave an effect combining the sounds of steel and slide on one instrument, and with a phaser, no less. Excellent set by one of the very first and foremost country-rock bands.

The evening began with a reasonably well-paced set of Flo and Eddie's parodies, "Turtle's Gold," and exemplary material from their "Illegal, Immoral, and Fattening" album; Howard Kaylan and Mark Volman maintain the ability to lampoon themselves as well as others. The nicest surprise was the new material, including "Kama Sutra Time" and "Livin' In The Jungle," which shows without a doubt that Flo and Eddie are writers of quality songs today as well as in the past, and that they will continue to be in high demand as long as they continue to perform.

s.p.

Patti Smith

THE ROXY, L.A. — In the beginning there was the word. The means of expression. The tool of the poet. The vocal way of the wise man and the fool. Then came the mixing of media as the elements of sight and sound and the word was important but not quite as before. But the word as prime mover came full circle last week at the Roxy as Patti Smith gave forth with the best argument in the world for the ten thousand words being worth more than a picture.

Patti Smith's very being is rock and roll in the most poetic sense. During the course of her set she force-fed a steady stream of savage rock sound and street conscious lyrical runs that drove home a lifestyle weaned on the consciousness of Kerouac and the fire of Hendrix.

Quickly evident in her performance was a mid-sixties mentality and stance that relied on the harshness and simplicity of basic rock as a springboard for her lyrical assault. Typical of this approach was her interpretation of "Gloria" and "Land Of A Thousand Dances" as a driving ground gave way to desperate snatches of thought. To Patti Smith it was intensely. Express yourself or perish.

The street consciousness continued as her between song rap turned quickly into a poetic duel with the audience. It was being cute and barbed; spitting on the stage and drinking from a patron's scotch. A theatrical naturalness. Planned but not quite so.

A strong factor in favor of Patti's poetry approach to music came out in the projection of her lyrics as their speed of light flow allowed for instant comprehension as instantly formed tales took the spotlight only to be nudged aside in favor of the next. It was as if mass communication had been instantly reduced to a one on one level.

Every once in awhile you get a feeling about a performer and their chance for success. It's the vibes or a chill at the base of your spine. In the case of Patti Smith it was a feeling of the past meeting the present and auguring for the future.

For as Patti Smith left the stage a vision of influences made itself felt. It was the vestiges of Morrison and Hendrix, and Kerouac. They were looking down on The Roxy stage and smiling.

This bitch poet was doing it right.

m.s.

**Iron Butterfly
Baby**

THE STARWOOD, L.A. — Over the years the brute force aspect of rock and metal has been magnified as the major appeal of the music to audiences. You know the trip; volume plus seventy story riffs over self-indulgent feedback equals instant acceptance. In their "In A Gada Da Vida" and "Unconscious Power" days The Iron Butterfly were often accused of such lava spewing but, at their recent Starwood gig, the latest incarnation showed that there's always been a method behind the madness.

The Butterfly (an MCA spawn) relied, this night, on a strong mixture of blast furnace riffing and alternating keyboard runs to turn in a set that ran down progressive alleyways while maneuvering in some classic power stances.

The backbone of the band's rock musculature centered around the interaction between lead guitarist Erik Braunn and keyboard man Bill De Martines. Both factions took turns at lead passages before leaping to a sup-

portive, but strong adjunct to the progressive goings on.

The long savored Iron Butterfly fallout and rock rain was presented in the driving antics of drummer Ron Bushy. Bushy's animated thumpings mirrored the sweat stained persona of the rock drummer in its finest sense while providing a riveting net from which the music played.

The Iron Butterfly at The Starwood was proof that it is possible for a band to look musically backward and forward at the same time.

Proving a non-stop show opener were rock and roll's answer to hit and run, Baby (a Mercury carnivore) laid down an aggressive rock assault as the better results of riffs colliding were much in evidence. A solid base of Texas blues was solid mortar for a continuous exercise in glass shattering raunch. Baby, the byproduct of being raised on rock and roll.

m.s.

Joe Stampley

THE PALOMINO, L.A. — The more creative elements of country music have gotten that way by incorporating a whole lot of foreign influences into the genre while maintaining a firm grip on all the things that make good country and western music what it is. Joe Stampley's recent Palomino gig was a prime example of how country cross pollination can be made to work.

Stampley (an Epic the bus is out back), during the course of his set, searched out the country oriented facets of rock, soul and minute edges of jazz and blended them into a vocal stance that succeeded beyond the expectedness of his performance by adding that fine touch of exotic to the proceedings. In this area the jagged remains of the black man's burden fit Stampley's singing like a glove as his forays into introspective and laidback moments took on an immediate soulfulness.

Stampley's fusion of country and rock worked by virtue of a couple of strong outings as an Elvis cum Jerry Lee rock pounding moved in and out of some class country poses for an all around even flow of both. Add to this a most unobtrusive backbone of swing and Stampley's quest for musical balance was reached, no pain no strain.

Stampley's board presence waxed

easy to take this night as an easy audience patter and some barbed exchanges with his band opened up some non-self-indulgent holes in the crowd's reception.

Joe Stampley at The Palomino showed off the true potential of being creative and entertaining at the same time.

m.s.

**Hodges, James & Smith
"I Heard That"**

AQUARIUS THEATRE — Last week Hodges, James & Smith had a sneak preview of their new musical comedy entitled "I Heard That." The girls portray three sisters: Lottie, a hooker, Darlene, a booster, and Hannah, a welfare queen. None of the girls have anything going for them until they run into their new landlord played by Allan Mann. He convinces the girls that they should and can do something with their lives and he becomes the girls' manager.

The theme of the play has the girls going through the trials and tribulations it takes to become a famous singing group. The show is loaded with great songs, especially "Love Baby."

The play was written by William (Mickey) Stevenson and Victoria Stevens, with the music and lyrics by the same plus Sammy Friedman. The director was Lonny Stevens.

j.l.