

Talent Talk

While fans, performers, and folks in the music business were all celebrating Halloween, **Natalie Cole**, coming off a performance at the New York Met three nights earlier, took the time to play a benefit concert for inmates of the Mid-Orange Correctional Institute, a minimum security



Billboard photo by Chuck Pulin
RONNIE & JERRY—Ronnie Spector joins Jerry Lee Lewis for a duet during a Rock'N'Roll Revival show at Madison Square Garden recently.

Ian Hunter expected to sign with Chrysalis Records soon. The former leader of **Mott the Hoople** is in New York finishing up work on his next LP. **Mick Ronson** is helping. . . **Barry Manilow** fractured his ankle one hour before his scheduled debut at the Olympia Theatre in Paris. But, with ankle firmly taped, he went on with the show.

Paul Anka back from a nine-concert tour of Japan that is being reported as SRO all the way. Top ticket prices for his concerts were from \$35 to \$40 with \$300 ducats sold out for a special dinner performance. . . **Alice Cooper** was the guest on the Halloween edition of the "Muppet Show," seen by about 250 million persons around the globe. . . **Gerry Mulligan** bringing a 13-man band to Storeytown starting Wednesday (8).

Science fiction writer **Michael Moorcock** is expected to tour with the **Hawklords** when the band comes to the U.S. in February. The Hawklord musicians, formerly known as Hawkwind have been characters in two of Moorcock's fantasy novels.

Actor **Beremy Brett** did not rest easy on Halloween because of U.S. Customs. Brett, who stars in "Dracula" at Los Angeles' Ahmanson Theatre, had planned to sprinkle a handful of earth in the coffin in which he relaxes onstage. A vampire traditionally takes his ease resting on soil from his homeland and Brett was having soil flown in from the 14th century gravesite of Vlad the Impaler in Romania on which the tale of Dracula is based. However, U.S. Customs removed the dirt from the box it was mailed in and put a note in its place. The note read that the soil was classified with fruit, vegetables, meats and plants as possibly "upsetting local ecological balance."

Elvin Bishop's new LP, "Hog Heaven," ships this month. Guests on the album include Maria Muldaur and guitarist **Amos Garrett**.

prison 50 miles from New York. The brother of one of her backup singers is an inmate at the facility.

Signings

Eric Clapton re-signs to RSO Records and his personal manager **Robert Stigwood**. . . **Jimmy Castor** to a management contract with Bil-Mar Productions. Agreement is effective with the release of his debut TK/Drive LP, "Let It Out," this month. . . **Cynthia Black** to Orinda Records. First recording will be released in January. . . The **Valentine Brothers** is the first act to be signed to Source Records distributed by MCA. . . Jazz guitarist **Ron Escheto** to Muse Records.

Venture recording group **Creme D' Cocoa** to Warren Lanier Enterprises public relations agency for representation. . . The **Blue Notes** to Fantasy Records with the release of the disco single, "All I Need." . . British folk-rockers **Lindisfarne** to Atco with an LP, "Back And Forth," and a single, "Run For Home," already shipped. . . Singer/songwriter **Tony Joe White** ("Polk Salad Annie," "Rainy Night In Georgia") to Arista with a single produced by **Pete Carr** due shortly. . . Singer/songwriter **Michael Pedicin Jr.** to Philadelphia-based Zane Management Inc. . . Composer **Mitch Johnson** to MCA Music, exclusively. . . Disco/r&b group **Lemon** to Prelude Records with an album due soon produced by **Kenny Lehman**.

Archie Jordan to a renewed affiliation with ASCAP. . . Singer/songwriter **Becky Hobbs** to a recording contract with Phonogram/Mercury

Records. . . **Dennis Wilson** to MCA Records, Nashville. . . **Bill Medley** to United Artists. . . **Bob Morrison** to a renewed affiliation with ASCAP. . . Mercury recording artists **Jacky Ward** and **Reba McEntire** to Dick Blake International for bookings. . . **Rick Nelson** to exclusive representation with the Tulsa-based Jim Halsey Co. . . **Johnny Duncan** to Columbia Records, Nashville. Singer/songwriter **David Lasley** to a staff songwriting agreement with Almo Music. He is celebrating the release of his composition "Love Me Again" as the single track of Rita Coolidge's latest LP (co-written with Allee Willis).

'Westchester 9' Trial Continues

NEW YORK—The criminal trial resulting from the activities of principals in the bankrupt Westchester Premier Theatre is now in its third week in federal court here.

Nine defendants, including Eliot H. Weisman, former president of the corporation, and Gregory J. DePalma and Richard Fusco, said to be undisclosed principals, are charged with a variety of offenses in a 24-count indictment which includes racketeering, stock fraud, bankruptcy fraud and obstruction of justice (Billboard, June 17, 1978).

One defendant, Thomas Marson, will have a separate trial because of illness.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Nick Akerman and Scott Campbell. At least 10 defense attorneys are in the case, expected to last about eight weeks.

Contract Leonetti

LOS ANGELES—Tommy Leonetti has been signed by producer Michael Fisher to compose, arrange and conduct the musical score for "Fantasy Island Jr.," pilot television spinoff of "Fantasy Island" by Spelling-Goldberg.

NEIL YOUNG

Forum, Inglewood, Calif.

The first "Jawa" character from "Star Wars" timidly appeared onstage at exactly 8:30 p.m. It was joined quickly by a hooded bevy of flashlight-eyed friends who helped erect a giant, 30-foot high microphone in stage center.

They finished the job in a rock 'n' roll tableaux parody of the famed Iwo Jima Marines' flag raising, as the final screeching notes of Jimi Hendrix's Woodstock national anthem moaned and died over the pained sound system.

Indeed, Oct. 24 would be no normal Neil Young concert. The "Star Wars" stage motif itself lent fresh conjectural interpretation to Young's elusive lyrics. And practical use of the staged presentation additionally eliminated snafus in sound or equipment by making them part of the show.

To highlight his loose theme of the artist today being overwhelmed by the size of the business and its paraphernalia, Young emerged in a fetal position, curled with guitar and harmonica, from within one of five 40-foot tall road cases onstage. The Jawa troupe had lifted the case top to reveal an equally large amplifier upon which Young reclined.

He eased comfortably into "Sugar Mountain," keyed to the loss of innocence amid thunderous response from the surprised and elated SRO crowd. It was the first of 16 flawless performances by Young in the next two hours, in which the Crazy Horse trio backed him on the rockers.

"I Am A Child," "Comes A Time," "Already One," "After The Gold Rush," and "Rust Never Sleeps" followed in fast succession, all performed acoustically using six-string, 12-string or piano, with harmonica. Young was freed to wander widely around the stage through use of a transistorized microphone built into his harp holder. "Jawas identified as "Road-Eyes," assisted him in instrument changes.

As the enthusiastic crowd roared with satisfaction, the "Jawas" lifted the remaining road case covers to reveal four more giant amps, faithful 40-foot high reproductions of early Fender models. A 20-foot long tube booster onstage suddenly lit up, the drummer, bass player and guitarist of Crazy Horse joined Young and, before the applause died from the acoustic set, the quartet ripped into "When You Dance."

Young's electric playing stunned listeners with its intensity and ferocious attack throughout the night, drawing a half-dozen ovations mid-song by concert end. Perhaps they would have understood better had they known what Young knew before going onstage: His ranch home in Malibu was burning in the recent conflagration there even as he played.

Other outstanding electric numbers in the two rocking sets included "Cinnamon Girl" and undoubtedly the most chilling performance of the evening, "Cortez The Killer," which brought the crowd to the brink of enthusiastic exhaustion.

The separating second acoustic set, its transition again smoothly achieved through use of the "Jawas" stage gimmick, included "Damage Done" and "It's Gonna Take A Lot Of Love," on which Crazy Horse chimed in.

Though Young and company tried to get away with only one encore, "Rust Never Sleeps" performed electrically for its second go-around, the crowd would not be denied. The troupe returned for "Tonight's The Night." **RAY HERBECK JR.**

BILLY JOEL

Forum, Los Angeles

Joel forever shattered his earlier "Piano Man" image with a rocking 2 1/4-hour set Oct. 30 which at times rivaled Bruce Springsteen's recent appearance here in onstage energy and dynamics.

Like Springsteen, Joel is backed by a super sax player (Richie Cannata), whose thunderous solos charged many of the 24 numbers, particularly "Until The Night," a rocker from the new album. Cannata later switched to organ for an excellent keyboard duel with Joel, who alternated between pianos during the set.

The energy level was enhanced by Joel racing up and down ramps and around the stage, most dramatically on "Big Shot" from the new LP. It was also aided by the intense, impassioned way he dug into his keyboard.

Joel, 29, performed songs from all five of his Columbia albums, backed by a five-man band. He was also assisted on "Stiletto," a dark, forboding song on the new album, by five men doing fingersnaps. The men, dressed to look like tough street punks, were "imported from New-

Talent In Action

ark, N.J." Joel joked, in a remark typical of the loose humor that pervaded the show.

A bluesy "New York State Of Mind" was another highlight, with Joel doing his justly renowned Joe Cocker impression, complete with dark shades and a cigarette. The number featured the only instance of set decoration in the show with a backdrop of a Manhattan skyline.

Of course even with his new diversity, Joel still performed "Piano Man," his gut-wrenching 1974 torch song, as his set ran the gamut from hard songs to soft. Other ballad highlights included "She's Always A Woman," with a melodious flute solo, and "Just The Way You Are," probably the best and most-covered song of the year.

Joel also demonstrated a streetwise "Rocky" rapport with the crowd, raising his dukes and beckoning the security guards to let the patrons crowd the stage, as if to say, "These are my people." This common man image was evident in his closing remark to the audience, after four encores: "Goodnight, Los Angeles, and don't take any shit from anybody."

Joel, now in the middle of a 12-week, 44-city tour, performed without an intermission or opening act. The house for his one-night only performance was full, except in the topmost seats. **PAUL GREIN**

JOHNNY MATHIS OAKRIDGE BOYS

Royal Albert Hall, London

Mathis did absolutely nothing to dent his reputation as currently the U.K.'s favorite balladeer with an immaculate performance here for a packed house, Oct. 17. Mathis is a regular European visitor these days and has a massive following.

But a potential bill-topping, new-to-Britain act was on show here. The Oakridge Boys, four singers with backup musicians, are essentially from the country-gospel field and have won many awards recently for vocal expertise, and they were accepted enthusiastically and warmly into the pop-crossover territory.

It is a slick but relaxed, powerful but sensitive performance. The quartet is clearly at home with uptempo swingers, with a tremendous gospel closer, "Have A Little Talk With Jesus," but there is equally strong appeal in the ballads, notably Don Williams' "You're My Best Friend." Comedy was added here and there during its 24-minute, eight-song set, but not overdone, and the chat was minimal though gratitude-tinged both for those country awards and for the obvious warmth of this audience of some 4,500.

More frequent visits to the U.K. and continental Europe could easily push this highly-professional team into the pop-country big-time.

As for the impeccable Mathis, working with a 26-piece orchestra for leaving space for solo items with harp and guitar, he turned over the demanded old hits, mixing in new songs with equally inevitable high class lyrics, and including one duet with Deniece Williams via an off-stage tape.

Mathis and musical director Frank Zottoli presented a superb 70-minute, 21-song display of artistry, charm and taste. One can only marvel at the man's consistency. **PETER JONES**

LITTLE FEAT ERIC KAZ-CRAIG FULLER BAND

Vanderbilt Memorial Gymnasium, Nashville

Kaz, best known for his songwriting efforts on behalf of other artists ("Love Has No Pride," "I'm Blowing Away"), and Fuller, who was the founder and original guitarist of Pure Prairie League, showed good musical rapport onstage together as they constructed a driving and fast-paced set Oct. 25.

Backed by members of former Cincinnati band Wheels, Kaz-Fuller cranked out a churning eight-song set of original material, half of which was culled from their recent album collaboration on Columbia.

The group's sound, earmarked by tight four-part harmonies and a solid rhythm section, is country-flavored rock'n'roll reminiscent of Fuller's prior association. This is not surprising since steel player John Call is another one-time Prairie Leaguer.

Members of the group include Michael Bany on bass and high vocals, Michael Wheeler on lead guitar and vocals and Mickey Folger on drums, with Call on pedal steel, Fuller on lead vocals, acoustic and electric guitar, and Kaz handling keyboard duties.

Highlights of the 39-minute segment were "Annabella," "Feel That Way Again," "Fool For You" and a powerful number titled "Let The Fire Burn All Night," which ably demonstrated the vocal and solo talents of the band.

Fuller obliged the crowd with a rousing rendition of his "Amie" and the group had no difficulty keeping the energy high or the audience attentive.

Little Feat guitarists Paul Barrere and Lowell George joined Kaz-Fuller onstage for some instrumental theatrics that had Barrere trading riffs with Wheeler, and Call's wailing steel matching George's slide licks note for note.

It was a promising debut for this group, and with the combined writing talents of Kaz and Fuller to supply fresh material, the band should do well.

Despite the poor acoustics of the gymnasium and a sore throat condition which kept George out of the limelight (and occasionally off the stage), Little Feat nevertheless displayed the impressive musicianship and distinctive sound for which it has become known.

Led by the scorching guitar work of Barrere and the precise and brilliant keyboard masterings of Bill Payne, the band gave a strong performance that ran 98 minutes and covered 12 songs from previous albums, as well as an encore consisting of "Willing," with Call sitting in on pedal steel and guest Sam Bush on fiddle, "Don't Bogart That Joint," and "Feats Don't Fail Me Now."

Little Feat, which has been reviewed in this section recently, is deserving of its emerging star status and proved it can deliver a thoroughly professional concert even under less than ideal circumstances. **KIP KIRBY**

BILLY COBHAM MIKHAL URBANIAK

Beacon Theatre, New York

Cobham is still one of the giants of fusion jazz drumming as he demonstrated in his performance here Oct. 28. The man is a skilled engineer of effective dynamics.

The highlight of the evening featured Cobham soloing with the propensity of his often full-bodied Gatling gun attack. His careful building of tension-and-release also had special impact as he sent electrifying jolts of synthesized sound onto the rhythmic battleground.

Unfortunately, the 85-minute set with its 10 compositions had little else to offer in terms of genuine interest, as filler material was waited out. Certainly Tom Coster injected some tasteful keyboard work, and between the contrasting styles of two guitarists there were occasional moments of fiery excitement. But otherwise the evening was more like a run of the funk fusion mix with sporadic vocal accompaniment.

"Stratus," a classic cut from Cobham's first solo album, was one of the bigger individual let-downs of the evening. The piece never took off. Worse, the song dissipated into a chant celebrating the turning-on of the house lights. This turned off a fair segment of the audience which took the hint and left before the song's conclusion.

Mikhail Urbaniak's opening 50-minute set revealed an underlying conflict between fusion and soul elements that never quite resolved itself.

It is likely the six-piece troupe, augmented by a male vocal trio, was unsettled by the disturbances created by a number of patrons who were victims of a ticket duplication mix-up.

However, sound quality was still muddy, and the sailing lines of Urbaniak's violin, as well as the warm, full-bodied tone of his lyricon, were undermined. Also sharing the stage was his wife, vocalist Urszula Dudziak. Yet it was her one solo exploration of electronically colored scattering and atmospheric vocal painting that proved to be the highpoint of the eight-song set. **BOB RIEDINGER JR.**

GIL SCOTT-HERON STUFF

TERRY CALLIER

Avery Fisher Hall, New York

A full house was on hand to see this latest edition of Scott-Heron's Midnight Band which features a reed man, bassist drummer and two comely female vocalists to go along with the singer-songwriter and his long-time companions, keyboardist Brian Jackson and percussionist "Doctor" Barnett Williams. Unfortunately, this current group lacks the fire and flash of (Continued on page 62)

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