

cashbox/talent on stage

Sly & The Family Stone The Staple Singers Bulldog

MADISON SQUARE GARDEN, NY — A Sly gig has all the interesting aspects of a psychological jigsaw puzzle. Most of the wonder comes from seeing whether or not the whole picture will come together. Not that it's boring or less than wild when all the edges do match up; it's just a bit anticlimactic, that's all.

It seems that the longer it takes for Sly to get together with his Family (not only in terms of setting-up time, but in light of tuning-up as well), the better his show is. This particular night, he didn't waste much time once he got on stage, and he wasn't quite at the boiling point. So "Hot Fun In The Summertime" came out in a wintery, somewhat off-key vocal, although "Stand" was, as always, an invitation well-taken. He needs some new material to put the sparkle back into his set, and hopefully it will be coming soon.

The Staple Singers and their four-piece back-up once again proved that an act can draw from the power of those in the audience who really care to listen and feel while ignoring the rest who sit back and wait for someone they've come prepared to like. Mavis was foamin' and Pop was his low-keyed gladdened self. "I'll Take You There" predictably got the best response, but their gospel offerings were just as strong. Sisters Cleo and Yvonne are sometimes overlooked in this quartet, which is about as family and together as you can get. Because they understand what support is all about, the Stax act is one of the most tastefully smooth around.

The Decca quintet, Bulldog, opened the show with a disappointing set. The lead vocals were unsteady, and often the instrumental support drooped in the wrong places. Their single "No" came off well, as did their sandpaper ballad, "You Underlined My Life." But, in contrast to their fine debut LP, they seemed rather tepid live. But with their studio technique down pat, it should not take them long to get their stage act together. All the elements are there.

r.a.

Joni Mitchell Steve Furguson

TROUBADOUR, L.A. — Joni Mitchell blends one of the most tender soprano voices with some of the harshest lyrics, skillfully putting abstract ideals that everyone feels into proper perspective. Her sincere, sensitive view of what life is all about is simple, clearly stated, and very moving.

Mitchell devoted a good deal of her show to breaking in new material off of her recently released Asylum album, "For the Roses." Numbers like "You Turn Me On I'm a Radio," "Women of Heart And Mind," and "For the Roses" vividly illustrate that this is one of her finest offerings. Joni Mitchell is one of the few truly professional artists who has weathered the test of time, and it seems inevitable that as long as she has the desire to perform, there will always be an enthusiastic following behind her.

Steve Furguson opened the show with his easy optimistic songs from flowing melodies and universally personal lyrics. His voice is very fitting for the mode of music he writes, carrying a great deal of emotion. His performance included a mixing of piano techniques and styles ranging from his own to a waltz by Chopin.

c.c.

West, Bruce, & Laing Flash Cadillac Mott The Hoople

PALLADIUM, L.A. — Leslie West, Jack Bruce, and Corky Laing: three very familiar names that have combined musical talents into one unit. Unfortunately, reputation isn't everything, and as their Palladium performance indicated, the formidable trio really has nothing new to offer.

This doesn't mean that they aren't good. The total wall of sound just isn't distinctive to the ear as a new concept. Except for "Why Don't Cha," the title cut from their debut album, West, Bruce, and Laing have only continued where Mountain and Cream left off. But even the rendition of "Mississippi Queen" was rather pale when compared to the original. Though the crowd really loved it, the group will have to, and are certainly capable of, developing their own style. With time and concentration, West, Bruce, and Laing can be a powerful force in music.

Flash Cadillac and the Continental Kids were second on the bill complete with zany antics, all the jive cliches, obscenities, grease, and solid rock-in' and rollin' they could muster. Besides mastering old vocal styles and theatrics, the band is very musically tight, as evidenced in their instrumental versions of "Pipeline" and "Tequila."

It's too bad that Mott the Hoople was the opening act. Too bad because they were limited in time. Behind Ian Hunter's moving vocals, is built loud, but fully controlled music, a la Who. "Sweet Jane," a song written by Lou Reed, and "Ready For Love" were standouts, but of course the highlight that pleased everyone was "All the Young Dudes." Mott the Hoople deserve headline status and should not be missed if in your area.

m.a.

Billy Preston Danny O'Keefe The Hollies

SANTA MONICA CIVIC AUDITORIUM — Billy Preston possesses the gift of being able to instill excitement into everything he does, with this talent being consistently reflected in crowd response. Where other performers' efforts to get an audience involved often fall short, Preston excels. Putting people on their feet, clapping their hands, and truly getting into the music is an art that Preston has mastered. Preston mixes the ingredients of a good moving beat backed by a strong brass section, his stimulating charisma that's clearly communicated to the people, and a show that has been polished with time. Included with his favorite hits were cuts off his latest A&M release, "Music Is My Life," with the title song being one of the highlights of the set.

Danny O'Keefe has recently risen in popularity by way of his hit single, "Good Time Charley's Got The Blues." This number demonstrates the finesse in which O'Keefe can approach the folk/country sound of today, but is in no way totally representative of his talent. In his set O'Keefe mixed this mellow style with bread-and-butter boogie, quite an unusual blend, yet held together nicely by good technical know-how. O'Keefe appears to be one of the more versatile performers of recent years, being able to exercise different beats with equally fine aptitude.

It was unfortunate that the Hollies lacked the drive to give a performance that demonstrated the excellence that has earned them such great recognition over so many years. They seemingly had no desire to please the crowd, which is too bad because the ability is obviously there.

c.c.

The Temptations Kool & The Gang Swiss Movement

APOLLO THEATRE, NYC — In what may be easily described as a blockbuster of a show, The "Mighty" Temptations, to the delight of an opening night (Nov. 22) SRO crowd, once again demonstrated why they are continually rated as one of the best performing groups. The Temps—stating it simply—"Get Down". In other words, they are super cool. They have that professional capability of taking a tune and turning it into a thing of beauty, both audibly and visually. "Smiling Faces Sometimes", which was included in their second show, a hit by Undisputed Truth, is one example of The Temps ability to give a piece of material their own special stamp. Other selections in their second set, such as "Ain't No Sunshine", "Take A Look Around" and "Just Your Imagination" are also treated to matchless choreography and delivery.

The tune that everyone was waiting for, which had nearly everyone standing at the sound of the first note, was "Papa Was A Rolling Stone". The Temps incredible delivery of this great tune is a work of absolute perfection. The audience was carried away by this emotionally packed number.

Second on the bill was Kool & The Gang. Although they did not do anything too original they are a together group. "Stop, Look And Listen" and

Mom's Apple Pie

WHISKEY, L.A. — Mom's Apple Pie, featuring a three-man brass section, battled a formidable sound system in its west coast debut. Due to extreme over-amplification—even for the Wiskey—it's difficult to objectively evaluate the group's musicianship. It's unfortunate that this young, promising group, subjected themselves to the distortion their music suffered at their expense and that of their listeners. Vocals were jumbled to the point that one gave up even trying to understand them.

Good 'n' loud" are neither synonymous nor mutually exclusive. If Mom's boys can find that middle ground, they'll make it.

l.g.

Film Review: Elvis On Tour

MGM's "Elvis On Tour" documents Elvis' recent, triumphant 20-city tour of the U.S. Utilizing well the technique of cinema-verite and split-screen the feature (1 hour, 45-minutes long) is a remarkable account of the hold the 37-year-old star has on his original public and the children sired by that generation.

However commendable the documentation of Elvis' triumphs on stage, the film fails to deliver a revealing image of the star, which one might expect after 17 years superstardom and today's penchant for portraying a performer in more than his performing light. Interestingly, Elvis' New York press conference amounts to a quick cut in the film, and if a greater portion of it had been used, the production could have served as more than a satisfying procession of Elvis and his entourage. His appearance at Madison Square Garden, in fact, is not even included. Besides the tour footage, there are black-and-white stills of Elvis as a child and rock 'n roll star, a humorous series of kissing sequences from his MGM films and the inevitable Ed Sullivan TV appearance from the waist up.

One looks and listens with appreciation, but "Elvis On Tour" would make more sense if we knew more about the man than the mania.

i.l.

"Pay Attention" came across and the crowd was digging what was going down. In my estimation, they still have a great sound and if they put together some good originals they could easily be right back in the running. They do have a "now" sound.

Swiss Movement, 4 soul guys being produced by embers of The Temps, is a group with a sound and talents that should carry them a long way. In their set they included, "One Night Affair" and "Pusher Man" and without doubt, one could sense The Temps influence on this RCA recording group. A super smooth delivery was given to, "Take A Chance On A Sure Thing". The week long stand of this show kept the Apollo humming. It was a sure thing, and catching these acts was one way to herald in the festive Holiday Season.

d.d.

ROQ Concert

COLISEUM, L.A. — The 'Ultimate' ROQ Concert/Festival sponsored by the Burbank-based Top 40 radio station for the "benefit of the Free Clinic" was a veritable disaster. The night was cold, the natives were restless, and the working order fell behind schedule before it began. As if on cue, thousands of kids spilled from the stands, jumped the fences and surged onto the field in front of the platform stage. The producers were helpless to do anything but go on as planned. Stevie Wonder pulled things together and was sensational in his hour-long set; but as he exited the stage the snell was broken and not even Chuck Berry could put it together again.

After damages and artists are paid, the Free Clinic will be lucky to see a dime. However the greatest price was paid by the youthful audience, exploited in their naivete. Outside the Coliseum hundreds of policemen were making mass arrests for marijuana possession to the tune of 300+ young people who just wanted a good time and maybe help the Free Clinic for the price of a ticket.

We know who lost. Who won? l.g.

Film Review: Payday

Country music and the radio industry will not be doing tailspins over this "sensational" (in the journalistic sense) piece of base filmdom. It paints the picture of an upcoming country star, Maury Dann, who spends a lot more time popping pills, boozing it up and ravishing women than he ever does thinking about the music business, let alone performing as a part of it.

In one scene filmed on location at Montgomery's WHHY (the Alabama station is actually contemporary, but the film depicts it as stone country), payola comes in the form of a bottle of Wild Turkey. The disk jockey has the same tastes as Dann—again, the music plays a minor role.

Shel Silverstein wrote four tunes for the film's original score, but you really have to strain to hear three of them. Ian & Sylvia wrote the title tune but again, it's real easy to miss because of the way the motion picture is edited.

So instead of getting an honest picture of country music or country radio, the viewer is treated to a lot of "R" -rated action: a murder (committed of course by Maury Dann who also keeps his mother in bennies), and a chubby road manager who has orgasms over pots and pans while "star" is enjoying quite another kind in the back seat of his Cadillac. All in all, a gone-astray country version of "Superfly."

r.a.