

CROSBY, STILLS, NASH, & YOUNG at Wembley

by Robin Denselow

CROSBY, Stills, Nash, and Young are the American entertainment phenomenon of the year. Temporarily reformed, after a three-year split, they have not recorded an album of new songs but instead have toured around the American stadiums, drawing audiences in their tens of thousands. On Saturday American big business, vast scale rock came to London, when CSNY played Wembley Stadium. The official estimate of the crowd was 72,000, who had each paid £3.50 for a 10-hour show that for mere starters included The Band and Joni Mitchell.

In the abstract, a musical event on that scale may sound absurd or slightly horrific, but, I suspect to the amazement of all concerned, it worked triumphantly. All the elements were right: a gigantic stage at one end of the pitch bristled with amplifiers

and electronic hardware, ensuring that the sound balance and quality was near-perfect; the sun shone; there was no hint of trouble from the crowds; and the music provided a constantly varied, fresh and technically dazzling encyclopaedia of American rock.

- CSNY played for three and a half hours, made no attempt at a stage show, and acted as if they were giving a casual recital in a friend's back room. Their appeal was in many ways that of the Beatles: each of the four is well-known, has a distinctive personality, and has written excellent songs. Yet they fitted together like a jigsaw, both in the electric sets and when they took turns with the acoustic guitar, with one playing solo and the others helping out with immaculate harmonies. And whatever they were playing there was always a strong melody somewhere near the surface.

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