

Neil Young Charts His Own Course

"Maybe some group will come along and be big, you know, but who cares," Neil Young says in his slow country way. "It's just happened so many times now, it's like a 1969 car. Who cares? We all know it's not going to be any better than a '68 car. It may look a little different



Neil Young

but it's the same thing. As far as single artists making it, I just think it would be different. I don't know if it would be any better, but at least it would be different."

Neil has a reason for this philosophical tack since he left the Buffalo Springfield, one of the best American rock groups, last spring and is now charting his course as a soloist. He has just completed his first lonesome album for Warner Bros.-

Reprise and will open at the Bitter End in New York in a few weeks with his solo debut.

"Groups are always changing, breaking up, going through all kinds of last farewell appearances. What they do first of all is they get very funky and everybody really likes them. Then they go down to Hollywood and buy a whole bunch of clothes because everybody likes them and they made a little bit of money. Finally they're right in there with all the other groups 'cause everybody likes them. And then pretty soon they look like all the other groups and they've got all the stuff that the people who like them haven't got and then eventually nobody likes them anymore and they break up and go back to their other clothes."

Neil can say this comfortably because he is not wearing the leather fringed jacket which characterized him during his last months with the Springfield. He is wearing a pattern t-shirt and bell bottom trousers, sitting on the porch of his hillside house which overlooks a rural section of the San Fernando Valley. He likes being out of the city and he likes seeing few people and most of all he likes being out of a group—"I'm ecstatic. It's great."

Couldn't Believe It

"I never wanted to be in a group. I came out here (from his home in Canada) to make it as a single and all of a sudden I was in this group and the group was so good I couldn't believe it. And it was fun." But the fun soon paled as the group ran into financial difficulties with its managers and failed to become prominent outside of California. Neil became unhappy with the sharing of creation—his songs for the Springfield include "Nowadays Clancy Can't Even Sing," "Flying on the Ground Is Wrong," "Do I Have to Come Right Out and Say I," "Mr. Soul," "Broken Arrow," "On the Way Home" and "I Am a Child"—and miserable with the extrovertish demands of a rock group.

When the group dissolved last May, much to his relief, he scraped together enough money to buy a relatively isolated house. Up in the hills of Topanga Canyon he began working on his first unfettered album with the help of pianist-arranger Jack Nitzsche; David Briggs, who co-produced the record with Neil, and Ry Cooder, a guitarist. He is nervous about it, as nervous as if it were the first time he had been in a studio. During the interview he worries about a single which will be released from the album, about the sequence of songs on the record and about the mix—the relationship of instruments and vocals.

Proud and Fretful

He plays it and is alternatively proud and fretful, wanting it to be the best he could possibly do, thinking first that it is, then that it isn't, then that it is and so on. In one section it uses a string quartet, in another a gang of country fiddles and in another a soulful girls' chorus, a diversity which pleases him. He wrote everything, except for one short piece by Nitzsche, and the album sounds good, a distillation of the talent he brought to the Springfield.

Hopefully, Neil Young's album, due out in a few weeks, will show that single artists can make it in rock, regardless of the clothes they wear. It would be a pity if he had to repeat the haberdashery cycle.

New Cover for Stones

The controversy over the literary bathroom wall which was to have been the cover of the latest Rolling Stones' LP, "Beggar's Banquet," appears to have been settled with the Stones coming out second to their British record company. Latest word is that the album will have a new cover, much to the disgruntlement of the Stones, and will be released in mid-November. The record company felt that the cover constituted pornography and has held up release of the record for about two months . . . A new double album from the Beatles will be issued late in November. Advance word is that it is very good . . . Phil Spector, the producer's producer who has been living out his 20s in retirement for several years, has returned to activity with the Checkmates Ltd., whom he will produce for A&M.