

Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young at Greek

BY ROBERT HILBURN

Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young—pop music's new supergroup — is starting its career at the top and is giving every indication of staying there.

Its opening Monday night at the Greek Theater was a triumph of the first order as the group gave a staggering display of individual and collective talent.

When Crosby, Stills and Nash was signed a few weeks ago (Young wasn't with them yet) for the current engagement, it looked like a major gamble for the Greek.

Though there was interest in the group because of its founding members, it had yet to make its first album (now out and in the top-10 nationally) or its first public appearance

Standing Ovation

But Monday's "sold out" sign and lengthy standing ovation were indications that Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young have lived up to, if not exceeded, all expectations.

CSNY is composed of David Crosby (an ex-Byrd), Steve Stills (part of the old Buffalo Springfield), Graham Nash (formerly of the Hollies), Neil Young (also an old Buffalo Springfield plus Dallas Taylor on drums and Greg Reeves on electric bass.

In the namesakes, CSNY has four strong writers, musicians and lead vocalists. One of the most impressive things about the groups is its resulting versatility. With so much writing and performing talent, the group, unlike many current outfits, is not limited to a narrow musical path.

Talents Spotlighted

There was a deliberate attempt Monday to spotlight the talents of each of the four principals in CSNY. During the first part of the show, Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young alternated in sets of two and three using only acoustical guitar accompaniment.

Stills' "Suite: Judy Blue

Eyes" and "Four and Twenty," Nash's "Lady of the Island" and Young's "I've Loved Her So Long" were highlights of a rich exhibit of the gentler aspects of today's music.

After this impressive beginning, CSNY took on a totally different, hard rock sound during the final third of the show when a rear curtain opened to reveal a wall of amplifiers, electric guitars, drums, organ and electric bass.

Big Move

By the end of the evening, Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young, on such songs as "Wooden Ships" and Young's excellent "Sea of Madness," had moved a long way from the simple acoustic background and sweet harmony of "Suite: Judy Blue Eyes."

In the process, they gave the Greek Theatre audience a generous sample of the strength and creativity of pop music's newest supergroup.

Though overshadowed by Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young, Canadian singer and folk-poet Joni Mitchell, best known for "Both Sides Now," drew good response as she opened the show.

In person as on record, she is sometimes difficult on first listening. Her voice, haunting at times, can be distracting at other times as it changes rapidly from highs to lows.

Portraits of Life

She is, I believe, foremost a writer. Her best songs, including "The Circle Game" and "Chelsea Morning," are intimate portraits of life.

As the evening continues, however, the voice seems to make more sense. It begins to carry the words of her songs with a warmth that reaches out into the audience.

By the time she sings her final number, "Both Sides Now," she has melted her voice and lyrics into a strong unit.

She and Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young continue at the Greek through Sunday.