

Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young Perform at UCLA

BY ROBERT HILBURN

Times Pop Music Critic

Ever since the shift in rock music emphasis from solo performers to groups, England has dominated the contemporary music scene because of such exceptional combinations as the Beatles, Rolling Stones and Cream.

But things are changing. Three North American groups now rate at the highest level of musical ability and popularity. Joining Creedence Clearwater Revival and the Band at the top is Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young, which started the day Saturday at the Stones' free concert in Livermore and ended it before a full house at UCLA's Pauley Pavilion.

In the group's first local appearance since a week's engagement last summer at the Greek Theatre, David Crosby, Stephen Stills, Graham Nash and Neil Young delivered a two-hour concert at Pauley that was an unqualified success.

Though there were some lighting and sound inadequacies, the quartet, assisted by Dallas Taylor on drums and Gregg Reeves on bass, received a series of standing ovations during the extended 20-song set.

Despite some specific differences, the concert Saturday followed much the same pattern as the ones at the Greek Theatre. They opened with only acoustic guitars and finished the evening with a heavy, electric rock sound. They also passed the lead vocals around, often breaking into solo or two-member combinations.

Because each member of the group came from other major rock outfits (Stills and Young from the Buffalo Springfield, Crosby

from the Byrds and Nash from England's Hollies), each is an experienced performer. More important, each is an immensely talented writer, singer and musician.

On the opening "Suite: Judy Blue Eyes," Crosby, Stills and Nash overcame a shaky start (perhaps due to improper microphone balance or volume level) to reach the exquisite harmony that brings Stills' highly personal lyrics into such sharp focus. The song earned the first of the standing ovations.

Though each member of the group contributed much during the solos and combined efforts (particu-

larly Crosby's "Wooden Ships" and "Long Time Gone," Nash's "Lady of the Island" and Young's "Born by the River"), it was Stills who consistently drew the most audience response.

Still in his mid-20s, Stills is one of the most impressive talents in rock. His blues vocals are more daring and his lyrics more universal than almost any one else on the contemporary scene. He is also an exceptionally fine guitarist who does not employ the artificial flashiness that many mistake for artistry in some guitarists.

When Stills sits down at the piano to play "For What It's Worth" and asks the audience to clap hands to the rhythm, there is an immediate response. After the song, he reads some gentle, peaceful free verse about "America's Children" and someone in the audience shouts: "Stills in '72."