

# Neil Young Comes to Play in Concert

SAN FRANCISCO—Unlike so many veteran "superstars" in rock these days, Neil Young didn't simply replay his old hits Wednesday night at Winterland, take a couple of casual bows and then slip off into the night, lamenting—at least privately—the whole time that touring is such a bore. Happily, Young, one of the most valuable figures in contemporary pop music, had several new songs with him Wednesday and, most important of all, an obvious desire to perform. He didn't step on stage at Winterland just to accept the audience's ready applause, but to earn it.

It's often hard to be effective in concert with new, unrecorded material. For one thing, the sound system usually prevents the unfamiliar lyrics from being clearly understood and, secondly, the audience is so fond of the hits that it becomes impatient for them. But Young sang seven new songs Wednesday (and, presumably, at other stops on his current tour) and turned them—through the vigor of his performance and the quality of the tunes—into the highlight of the evening. The songs, particularly "Time Fades Away" and "Don't Be Denied," make his next album one of the year's most anticipated record events.

Through his association with major rock groups (first the Buffalo Springfield and then Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young) and in his own solo role, Young has built one of the most impressive bodies of work in rock—songs filled with emotional expressions of personal search, desire, love and occasional social comment. His last album, "Harvest," was the most popular album of 1972 in most year-end sales summaries.

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One can get a feel on the closeness between a rock artist and his audience by how early the audience begins lining up at Winterland for a concert. The earlier the hour—so that it can get closest to the stage in Winterland's festival seating arrangement—the more important the artist is to the audience. For the average rock show, the line begins forming about 2 or 3 p.m. For Young, the line began at 9 a.m.

But Young is almost the antithesis of the pop star. His whole manner on stage keeps reminding you the music is what is important. Most other popular figures—from the Stones to Presley—keep reminding, in a variety of non-musical ways, the audience that it is in the presence of a star. But Young simply walks on stage without introduction and begins playing.

Following Linda Ronstadt's lively 40-minute performance, Young opened with a brief acoustic set. He was accompanied only by his own guitar as he sang "Sugar Mountain," "I Am a Child" and "Tell Me Why." Joined by his band (Jack Nitzsche on keyboards, Tim Drummond on bass, Ben Keith on steel guitar and John Barbata on drums), he moved into the electric portion of the evening.

On "Old Man," Young showed how he is able to combine vocally delicate and intense feelings so easily in the same tune. It's an extraor-



**NEIL'S BOYS** —Backing Neil Young, right, in Winterland performance are, from the left, Ben Keith, steel guitar; Tim Drummond, bass, and Jack Nitzsche on the keyboards.

dinary display of control, emotional range and originality. He followed with "Heart of Gold" and then gave the evening's first solid jolt of rock 'n' roll with a blistering version of "The Loner."

After four new songs, Young was joined by David Crosby and Graham Nash, who remained—playing guitar and providing vocal support—for the rest of the concert. But their appearance was more important for what it suggested (i.e. the possible reunion of Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young) than for what they actually contributed. Indeed, their manner between songs was gabby and silly to the point of distraction.

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While plans have been laid for a Crosby, Stills & Nash album and possible tour, Young was scheduled to tour Europe later this year, a schedule conflict that would have prevented him from joining the reunion. But he has canceled the tour, thus freeing him, if he so desires, to join the others. He seemed to enjoy singing with Crosby and Nash Wednesday, so the outlook appears good.

Crosby and Nash backed Young on "Alabama," three more new songs and a long, vigorous version of "Southern Man" that deserved the standing ovation and demand for an encore that followed. This is Young's first tour in two years and it was every bit the major event that his past history and talent suggested it would be.

His concerts tonight at the Anaheim Convention Center, Sunday at the Inglewood Forum and Monday at the Long Beach Arena are sold out.