

# Stills Static Without Young

When Neil Young and Stephen Stills decided to join forces for a summer tour, it was an apparent attempt to recapture the spirit of the Buffalo Springfield and Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young. But Young's throat problems forced him out of the tour, and the Stephen Stills Band—which carried on without Young and played the Inglewood Forum Tuesday—merely recaptures the spirit of a Stephen Stills solo album. It's a disappointing substitute.

In general, Stills' vocals were too strained on the electric songs and too thin in the acoustic segment. And while the backing band—which included Joe Vitale on drums and Flo and Eddie on harmonies—is a tight and accomplished unit, it lacked a catalyst. Second guitarist George Terry limited himself to safe, conventional guitar work, never really pushing Stills the way Young would have.

The music sometimes seemed to owe more to Montrose than CSNY, with Stills constantly soloing over a hard rock base. While this approach was exciting and fitting on some songs, it was employed with too little discrimination, rendering long stretches of the music too similar and undistinguished to be of much interest. And the acoustic segment—initially welcome—was itself too long.

But much of Stills' material remains strong, and the song selection was a definite crowd-pleaser, ranging from the Springfield's "For What It's Worth" to a ragged but spirited "Suite: Judy Blue Eyes" to an exceptional new Neil Young song, "Long May You Run." Stills' guitar-work, too, can be exciting, even when it's not shown to its fullest advantage. With more variety, with a stronger voice—or, best of all, with Neil Young—the Stephen Stills Band might display some real strengths.

The second-billed Marshall Tucker Band, firmly rooted in the Allman Brothers tradition, brings one stylistic innovation—a flute and saxophone player—to its genre. While the band proved itself to be a skilled exponent of the Southern rock style, it is hurt by its decision to turn every song into a long jam.

—STEVE POND