

Musical Misery

By Roy Kristoffersen

It was evident that, for the most part, Winter Weekend went down the drain and, with it, went the February 20th concert which was held at the Memorial Gymnasium and was to feature Chuck Berry and Crazy Horse. The theme of Winter Weekend might have been "For A Better World Tomorrow," but the theme of the concert was "Can Do No Right!" This is not a downer on the concert committee because, on the surface, they appeared to have booked one of the better concerts that Plattsburgh has ever seen. Instead, I speak of the little factors that, when put together, either make or break a concert. While these factors began to fail one by one, the concert was being lead to a slow, agonizing death.

The concert was delayed one hour till 9:30 as a result of the non-arrival of Chuck Berry who probably got caught in the weather somewhere between here and Albuquerque. Thanks to heavy ticket sales the weekend of the concert, the Gym was filled to near capacity. The real problem came when 9:30 came for there was no Chuck Berry and people were advised that refunds could be obtained before the concert began.

Now that the first problem was out of the way and nothing could be done about it, the concert was ready to begin or was it? Well, it always helps if the lights are off. They did go off, too, and then on again and off again and on again, etc. If a desired effect was supposed to come from this playing around, I don't think it achieved its purpose!

Once this was taken care of, Chuck Berry's scheduled backup group, "Billy Joe," attempted to go it alone. They opened their set very well considering the circumstances. Their opener contained a folk-like sound which carried over very well. The group is composed of four men: folk guitarist, bass guitarist, drummer and their lead singer on piano. In their next number, "Billy the Kid," a harmonica was put to use quite effectively. The number could best be described as rock ala Lee Michaels which showed much talent and versatility on the groups part. The only drawback to that second number was its being dragged out at the end. "Long, Long Time," their third number, was another change to a style of ballad deluxe. The song showed deep feeling in both the vocal and instrumental interpretation.

One of the stranger drawbacks this group possesses is their insecurity on stage. At times they seemed unsure as to what to do. The pause between songs became so long that someone in the audience yelled, "Play On," and play on they did.

"Everybody Loves You Now" showed some strong guitar-work, but sounded like a copied style. Also, rather than going all out, they seemed to intentionally restrain themselves which hurt their style of music in certain instances.

What is a concert without some humor. Their next number was a "New York City version of 'A Boy Named Sue'" which was very amusing and loved by all. They followed that number with some humorous blues-work (they said that everybody wants to hear blues) in a song called, "The John Wayne Blues." This song was also very funny with the base of humor being ventriloquism. The song ended in a pitch of dynamism that brought the house down.

Then, it was serious once again with Billy Joe "rockin'" once again. It had to be one of the best songs in their set. They finally let themselves go and the results were fantastic. The tempo changed once again when the lead singer soloed on "I've Got To Begin Again." A very nice ballad style comes from this moving piece. The piano work done in this song is similar to that of Carole King's. "Captain Jack," the song

which followed, painted a visual picture of everyday life from a standpoint of reality. The music was blended exceptionally well in this piece. The finish was great but again the tendency to drag the song out hurt the quality. With that number, Billy Joe had completed their set. The crowd, though, was not going to let Billy Joe get away without an encore number. So it was that they came back to do an old Stones' song, "Honky Tonk Woman." The crowd loved it and went crazy. It was the best rock they showed all night.

Overall, Billy Joe seemed to gain confidence the longer they played. The reactions of the crowd seemed very important to them. They need a little better blending, for the most part, and balance with their sound. The instrumentation and vocals were very good from start to finish. Anything that seems to be wrong with Billy Joe only needs experience to iron out.

After the intermission, Crazy Horse opened their set with a song called, "Dance, Dance" which was okay but nothing spectacular. The number did contain country and western overtones which, if eliminated, might have made the song better. Crazy Horse is a five man group: lead guitarist, rhythm guitarist, bass guitarist, drummer and piano player. Their next number was written by Nils Lofgren (formerly of Crazy Horse, now with Grin) and, in "Feels So Fine," Crazy Horse laid on the audience some great, driving rock with an Indian drum beat predominant throughout. "Cause It's Wednesday" contained a wild guitar break within the piece which captured the audience. It was the best they did up till then. Their next number was almost a direct opposite being lackluster and sounding like a little bit of nothing. There was good guitar work, but the vocal portion ruined anything that was good instrumentally. They then threw out to the audience some mood music in "Going Home." It was a ballad and the first song that was actually sung decently. "You All Miss Me When I'm Gone" is back to country and western (unsuccessfully I might add). The song came out so-so with the vocal down the drain once again. "Feels So Good To Be Strong" is not them at all. Boogie-woogie coupled with honky tonk piano just doesn't seem to cut it with the college crowd. Their next tune sounded pretty good until they started singing again. It, undoubtedly, pulled the music down (quality-wise). I noticed around this time a fair minority of people leaving. I doubt it was because of their bed-time! They really blew it on themselves when they did "All The Little Things That Count." The song had a blah beat and a lousy vocal performance to match. They once again tried to solve everything with a guitar break, but, after awhile, that can become a bore, too. At this time, almost everything sounded sing-songy

and again, while the guitar work was good, better use of the piano and drums would have given them a well-rounded sound. They finished out their set with some boogie-woogie with the piano player singing lead. Despite a fairly lousy set, Crazy Horse was called out to perform an encore number. It was this song that was one of their best. The reason being it was an instrumental. Some heavy guitar and some more boogie proved to make it a good number. They then decided to do a few songs for Chuck Berry (whether in honor of him or in disgust, I'm not sure) and went into "Johnny B. Goode" which brought the crowd to its feet. With everybody going wild, it was clear to see that this was the best part of the night. People began dancing everywhere including on stage. The same thing happened in another number for Chuck Berry, "Jill, Don't Let Them Steal Your Heart Away." Both songs went over great and ended fantastically. With this, Crazy Horse left the stage with the crowd still wanting to hear more.

Overall, Crazy Horse was very disappointing. Their skill as musicians was unbelievable. I can't recall too many groups better in that respect, but vocally they are hurting very badly. It is clear to see that Crazy Horse misses Neil Young. I even think that in certain numbers they still try to copy him. The only thing that can set this group straight and unified is either a known singer (like Stills, etc.) or an unknown singer with a damned good voice! They weren't bad doing Chuck Berry, but when Crazy Horse does Crazy Horse, be sure to have cotton handy. It has to be a new singer for Crazy Horse or else follow a policy I use myself: if you can't sing, don't try!

Poetry Corner

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(Schedule for the Week of March 14-20)

Monday, 3-14

5 p.m. - Chandu the Magician, episode 1

8 p.m. - Chandu the Magician, episode 2

12 a.m. - Favorite Story - The Valiant

Tuesday, 3-15

5 p.m. - Chandu, the Magician, episode 3

8 p.m. - Chandu, the Magician, episode 4

Wednesday, 3-16

5 p.m. - Chandu, the Magician, episode 5

8 p.m. - Chandu, the Magician, episode 6

12 a.m. - Favorite Story - The Bet

Thursday, 3-17

5 p.m. - Chandu, the Magician, episode 7

8 p.m. - Chandu, the Magician episode 8

Friday, 3-18

5 p.m. - Chandu, the Magician, episode 9

8 p.m. - Chandu, the Magician, episode 10