

Neil Young

Mike Kerman

1969

If you liked Buffalo Springfield, you will probably like the first 'solo album of one of its departed members, Neil Young (on Reprise).

A Buffalo Springfield revival is taking place as people realize that of all the American groups that came out of the "Beatle revolution," the Springfield rank with the very best. Not enough people seemed to realize that when the group was struggling to make it.

Steve Stills, Richie Furay and Young, the group's leaders, thought that sooner or later people would hear and appreciate their music. They did gain a small and loyal following, especially on the West Coast, but the rest of the country seemed too busy digging Tommy James and the Shondells and the 1910 Fruitgum Co.

Looking back at the Springfield's three albums, we can now see the different personalities that made up the group more clearly. While Stills wrote most of their material and had a variety of lyrical themes and musical moods, Neil Young's words were more personal and complex, and his tunes rank with their best. His solo album makes this more apparent than before.

One song, "The Loner," produced with a fuzz guitar, a driving beat and appropriate string backing is similar to the sparkling Springfield sound. The theme of loneliness, solitude, despair and questing dominate the entire album.

These lines are all from different songs:

"I've been looking for a woman to save my life.

"You know when you see him nothing can free him. Step aside, open wide, it's the loner.

"See the drunkard of the village falling on the street.

"Lately I've found myself losing my mind.

"It's hard enough losing without the confusion of knowing I tried, but you've made up your mind that I'll be alone"

and a most telling line about himself and Buffalo Springfield's serious managerial problems:

"I used to be a folk singer, keeping managers alive when you saw me on the corner and told me I was jive."

While Young's lyrics are often bitter his music is light but powerful, not "heavy" or "hard" but good, melodic, firm, ballsy music. It is unusual music for today. There isn't a hint of blues, no long instrumental breaks, and sincere personal lyrics that can have meaning for us.

Nothing on this album is wasted, lyrically or musically. It is so tight that five of the eight vocals (there are two instrumentals) are under three minutes and we wish he'd given us more.

Neil Young has given us further proof that those of us who liked the Buffalo Springfield so much were right and this is like a fourth Springfield album in some respects. But alone, Young has shared with us more of himself and I think we are all richer for it.

fifth Estate

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