

Clapton's Rainbow Concert

Superstars shone, but bash lacked immediacy

By STAN HENRY

Eric Clapton's Rainbow Concert is a solid and satisfying album which, despite its flair and technical expertise, could have been vastly better if it had been put together with the you-are-there immediacy of George Harrison's Concert for Bangladesh.

The collection of superstars that played the Rainbow Theatre is the cream of current British rock, with roots stretching back into the mid-1960s. Guitars by Clapton, Pete Townshend of the Who and Ronnie Wood of the Faces. Keyboards by Steve Winwood of Traffic. Bass by Rick Grech of Blind Faith. Drums by Jim Capaldi of Traffic, Jimmy Kars-tein and Rebop. Vocals by everybody. Whew!

Clapton and friends play like a single unit that appears to have been together for a long time. With the exception of Townshend, most of the musicians have crossed each other's paths over the years in various permutations and combinations of Traffic, Blind Faith and Cream. But the closeness that exists among them is stronger and more vibrant than one might have suspected.

The best songs on the album are a stunning and powerful version of Roll It Over and a slower, more textured rendition of After Midnight. Nearly as impressive are Hendrix's majestic Little Wing and Clapton's obligatory wailing guitar in Presence of the Lord.

And yet it could have been so much more exciting. Because the group is so

closely knit, it's nearly impossible to tell one musician from another. The album is total music without the introductions, explanations or patter that made the Bangladesh Concert seem so true-to-life. All we get is a wall of sound without flashes or distinguishable solos from Townshend, Winwood or Wood.

True, it was Clapton's night to shine. But what went on that night could have made an excellent album, instead of just a very good one.

Nice to hear Spirit again

Spirit is probably the most famous of the unknown groups. It was one

of those underground West Coast progressive rock bands of the 60s that never quite made it commercially. Despite its obvious ability to create music that was far ahead of its time, Spirit lacked the mass appeal of the Grateful Dead, the Top-40 sound of the Byrds or the charisma of the Buffalo Springfield.

The Best of Spirit should do a great deal to reverse this impression. The album is essence-of-Spirit, a recording of superior merit, a must for any collection.

The material, mostly by Randy California and Jay Ferguson, bears a distinctive musical sound all its own. The guitar work is always strong and free-flowing, but in a relaxed and confident manner, quite unlike many of the forced efforts of today. Ferguson's vocals are always effective, whether in the playful Animal Zoo, the mournful Nature's Way or the sinister 1984. Even the bass and drums, too often relegated to the background in most albums, stand out with force and dignity on Best of Spirit.

Unfortunately, whatever interest this album generates will be an exercise in futility. Best of Spirit is distilled from the group's four albums,

when the five original members were still involved. Spirit is now just a shade of its former self, with some of its personnel working on solo albums or in other bands.

But no matter. True rock enthusiasts with no prior experience in Spirit's particular brand of music will find Best of Spirit a challenging, top-quality album that stands up well under repeated listening.

Garfunkel solo album overly sweet

By MITCH FEINMAN

Angel Clare, Art Garfunkel's first solo album since his split with Paul Simon, has been in the making for almost two years.

Over 30 musicians play on this record, including Simon and Garfunkel's former back-up musicians, several 10-year-old Chinese kids from the St. Mary's Choir, and two of the finest guitarists working today, J. J. Cale and Jerry Garcia of the Grateful Dead.

None of the 10 songs is written by either Garfunkel or Simon, and only three of them are outstanding: the ballads Travelling Boy by Paul Williams, Old Man by Randy Newman, and the single, All I Know, by Jimmy Webb.

The rest of the songs are over-produced and dull, with Garfunkel singing as sweetly as a choir boy. Parts of this album were recorded in Grace Cathedral for a churchy atmosphere, full of echoes, with Art's voice blending in beautifully.

The result has only one fault — it is just too perfect. You almost wish for Garfunkel to hit the wrong notes at times. The only departure from this sweetness is Van Morrison's previously unrecorded I Shall Sing, which has a feeling of the Caribbean to it.

Garfunkel's major drawback is his own vocal limitation. He approaches every song with the same style, trying to make everything sound pretty. On some songs it works, on others it does not.

Adjectives which describe this album are pretty, lush, sweet, lovely, graceful, and just plain boring.

Parody of B picture at Village

By BRIAN PEARL

The new play at the Global Village, Bigger than Both of Us by Vancouver playwright Jackie Crossland, is an ironic failure.

The play is a parody of the B films of the 1940s, with all the familiar dialogue clichés. The silly story deals with one of those melodramatic newspaper romances, with a science fiction twist.

The play's style is supposed to be its strength. But instead of satirizing the clichéd style of the B films, Crossland has succeeded in writing a B play.

The small cast of four is supposed to transcend the plot line, but fails to inject the necessary fun and open self-mockery which the show needs.

A play that has to depend on its style of acting more than anything else requires performances of subtlety and careful self-control. The actors seem lost instead, trapped by their own deadpan expressions in paper-maché characters.

There are several songs and dances in the show, including a mildly amusing apache style dance that works because it is unexpected and brief.

The dialogue does often manage to capture the style of the B films in a faintly amusing way, but the play as a whole is both incoherent and shapeless.

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