

Steppenwolf Split Is Fact; Form Two Groups

LOS ANGELES—The split of Steppenwolf (Billboard, Feb. 19) was confirmed here this week when the five members of the group split into two groups, both of which will be managed by Reb Foster Associates here and booked by American Talent Intl.

John Kay, acting as spokesman

Goose Creek Ending Tour

NEW YORK — Goose Creek Symphony, whose Capitol single "Oh Lord Won't You Buy Me a Mercedes Benz" is riding the charts is concluding a month-long tour of colleges throughout the south.

Goose Creek, who played for the National Educational Conference in Kansas City, Mo., recently, winds up the 17-date tour with shows at Virginia Polytechnic Institute, Blacksburg, Va., Friday (18); Limestone College, Gaffney, S.C., Saturday (19); Virginia Commonwealth College, Richmond, Sunday (20); Campbell College, Blues Creek, N.C., Monday (21); Georgia Tech, Atlanta, Friday (25); and Winthrop College, Rock Hill, S.C., Saturday (26).

The band will travel to Los Angeles during the first week in March to record their third album for Capitol at the label's studios there. While on the West Coast, Goose Creek will also play club and college dates in California and Oregon.

Church Choir In Musicor Bow

NEW YORK—The St. Thomas More Folk Group, a Long Island Factory Church Choir, will make its record debut on the Musicor label. Their first single, "Come Back Home," which features a 10-year-old soloist named Nancy, was written by Bobby Goldsboro. The record was produced by Steve and Bill Jerome.

The St. Thomas More Folk Group was organized when the St. Thomas More parish was founded five years ago. Services are conducted in a one-story factory building in the Vanderbilt Industrial Park in Hauppauge.

for the five-year-old group, said that all members of the Dunhill Records West felt that they had reached a "plateau as members of Steppenwolf." He stated that working as Steppenwolf "locked in the group to maintain an image" which the group felt was creatively confining.

Leader Kay, who will shortly show his first solo LP on ABC, will operate a group under his own name which will include Kent Henry and George Blanda, currently with Steppenwolf, along with Whitey Glen and Hugh O'Sullivan, formerly with Bush. The two other principals with Bush joined the James Gang recently.

Goldie McJohn and Jerry Edmington, Steppenwolf veterans, are joining Rod Prince and Roy Cox, formerly with Damien, in a group called Manbeast. Manbeast has not made a recording affiliation.

The Kay group debuts at the Bitter End, New York, March 15-20; moving to Alice's Revisited, Chicago, March 24-26; and a date at the Troubadour here early in April.

Agency Set in Polka Field

NEW YORK—United Polka Artists has been formed as a talent agency specializing in the polka field. The agency, located in Florida, N.Y., already has 21 polka bands in its fold. Included are such bands as Marion Lush, New Brass, Jimmy Sturr, Stanky, Walt Solek, Ray Henry, Dick Pillar, Frank Yankovic, Walt Groller, Larry Chesky, Frankie Chop, Wesoly Bolek, Johnny Prytko, Stan Skawinski, Bernie Goydish, Dryger Bros., Frank Gutowski, Gene Wisniewski, Frank Wojnarowski, Jolly Rich and Johnny Haas.

Promoters can now write or call the agency to find out which bands are available on a specific day. The agency will also tell promoters when bands will be in a specific area. Schedules for all member bands will be made available, and the agency will also provide advertising material including posters and newspaper write-ups.

WILSON PICKETT

Copacabana, N.Y.

"He deserves every sequin on that silver suit," suggested one Wilson Pickett fan. Downstairs on the Copa oval, it's dinner time, as Pickett, not terribly Wicked next to a bunch of filet mignon in the dark, applied his famous crunch and roar to "Don't Let the Green Grass Fool You." The slick Pickett's grand opening, Feb. 10, drew Bill Cosby, Aretha Franklin, Melba Moore, Dionne Warwick, Billy Taylor, and dozens of other Pickett-ers, who discovered that Wilson can float a ballad or throw a soul fit and attract plenty of attention.

Even at ease, without sweat, Pickett's change from the alphabet soup of "Check Out Your Mind" into the flames of soul is still one of the most basic changes in soul music. He can tap soul almost at will, and yet his powerful voice hardly ever leaves the grooves of his many million sellers, though there's something definitely right about his "Never My Love," "Never Can Say Goodbye" and "Blowin' in the Wind." Atlantic's Jackie Moore opened the show and showed she could do it too on "Precious, Precious." Wade Marcus conducted the 14-piece Midnight Movers for the live recording date.

ED OCHS

KRIS KRISTOFFERSON

Philharmonic Hall, New York

Everything is falling into place for Monument Records artist Kris Kristofferson. Having spearheaded the invasion of the new Nashville music into the national mainstream, he is now rocketing inexorably into the outer reaches of the superstar galaxy.

Kristofferson's stage presence has become considerably more polished, as was evident at his sold-out concert at Philharmonic Hall on Feb. 13. He bantered with the audience in a relaxed manner, punctuating his songs with an offhand, salty wit. And he has written a half dozen impressive new tunes.

Kristofferson interspersed material by other writers among his own songs. There were two delight-

ful John Prine compositions, Jerry Lee Lewis' "Once More With Feeling" and "Rainbow Road," a moving tune by Donny Fritz, Kristofferson's pianist. At each familiar opening chord of the artist's earlier self-written selections, the crowd burst into grateful applause.

Kris Kristofferson is a good songwriter because he risks being bad. There is always the danger that a Kristofferson tune will collapse into sentimentality. But the writer chances that disaster, and, most often, the song avoids banality and emerges as a tender gem, shined to a bright luster by Kristofferson's performance.

DAN BOTTSTEIN

MANCINI & FOX

Castaways, New York

Gus Mancini and Neal Fox have only just begun to perform in the New York area, but it is already apparent that they are possessed of considerable talent. Appearing at the Castaways in Manhattan's Yorkville section, Mancini and Fox displayed a virtuosity in both material and technique that is rare in newcomers. The duo's first album is on Event Records, which is distributed by Polydor.

The artists are equally at home in blues, rock and jazz motifs. Fox's electric piano is ozone-clear and he sings in rough-edged blues tones. Mancini is adept on both guitar and saxophone, and his vocals nicely compliment Fox's.

Songs which evinced the pair's free range of style were "Country Woman," a finely-honed blues tune; "See You on Sunday," a sweet rock ballad; "Hand Me Down Phrases," from the first Mancini and Fox album, which gears the artists' names as its title; and "Paradise From Now On," a rueful soft rock number which observes how time runs out on one's dreams.

In addition to the duo's quality musicianship, Fox's lyrics are a solid plus. They often flash with wry wit, an all too infrequent phenomenon on the rock scene. Mancini and Fox have made a most auspicious debut.

DAN BOTTSTEIN

MERRY CLAYTON

BOBBY GOSH

Bitter End, New York

The Bitter End became a house of funk on Feb. 9 when Merry Clayton and Bobby Gosh moved in. Miss Clayton, who topped the bill, practically demolished the place with her intense, gospel-stepped vocals. She was immeasurably aided by her backup group (keyboards, guitar, bass, drums, and tenor sax on several numbers), upon whose thundering rhythms she rode like a daredevil.

In such songs as James Taylor's "Steamroller," and "Love Me or Let Me Be Lonely," the artist projected a fierce sexuality which was liberated, to say the least. She rendered her current Ode single, "After All This Time," with wonder for the joys of love maintained. The highlight of Miss Clayton's set, of course, was her all-out, batter-down-the-walls version of "Gimme Shelter," which she recorded both as a backup singer with the Stones, and as a solo.

The unremitting frenzy of Merry Clayton's act needs tempering with a bit of change-of-pace material, if for no other reason than to give the audience a chance to breathe.

(Continued on page 16)

From The Music Capitals of the World

DOMESTIC

NEW YORK

Lalo Schiffrin has been signed by Clint Eastwood's Malpasco Productions to score and conduct the music for "Joe Kidd," a Universal Pictures film scheduled for summer release. "Joe Kidd" will be the fifth Eastwood picture for which Schiffrin has composed and conducted. . . . NRBQ, on tour with B.B. King, hits the Civic Center Music Hall, Oklahoma City, on Thursday (24). Group moves on to Dallas; Norman, Okla.; and San Diego, prior to opening at the Whiskey Au Go Go in Los Angeles, on March 29 for five days. A new NRBQ album will be released in February, backed by a promotion campaign by the act's label, Kama Sutra, and the Sidney A. Seidenberg management office. . . . Morton D. Wax & Associates has been assigned broadcast promotion duties for "Inner City," the original cast LP on RCA Records, by Joe Kipness.

Veteran songwriters Ruby Fisher and Johnny Warrington have gotten a headstart on America's bicentennial celebration in 1976. At the end of February, the Sam Marx Music company will publish their collaboration on "America: 200 Years Young." . . . Shelter artists Alan Gerber and Freddie King hold forth at Gaslight Au Go Go Wednesday-Saturday (23-26). . . . Motown song-

writers Nicholas Ashford and Valerie Simpson have joined ASCAP. . . . Chris Farlowe has become lead vocalist of Atomic Rooster. . . . Dick Lavsky has created the music for a seven-minute medical film for AT&T. . . . Metromedia's Hillside Singers tape a segment for the Mike Douglas Show on Thursday (2).

Stan Dragoti has signed Sacha Burland to compose the music for "Dirty Little Billy," which Dragoti directed as the initial film on the WRG/Dragoti Film, Ltd. schedule. The score will utilize instruments popular in the West in the 19th Century, such as the harpsichord, dulcimer and tack piano. . . . The Connie De Nave public relations firm will now represent the Starday-King Organization and Good Medicine Records, distributed by Starday-King. Connie De Nave has added two other accounts, Up With People and Eleanor D'Antuono, a principal dancer with the American Ballet Theater. . . . Sergio Franchi has appointed Joe Petralia as his record promotion representative. Petralia is promoting Franchi's new Metromedia LP, "Sergio Franchi," and goes to the West Coast on Tuesday (22) to do advance work for the singer's upcoming appearance at Harrah's in Reno, the Grove in Los Angeles,

(Continued on page 18)

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