

Berry the Berries at Fillmore

NEW YORK—Thunderclaps applause that turned to rumblings of mutiny and deep, dark boos still failed to bring back rock gladiator Chuck Berry, who incited fans to riots of ecstasy with flashes from his big red Gibson and a classic romp through the rock 'n' roll graveyard, once again very much alive and kicking. And though Fillmore East is no People's Park—or even a people's theater—the establishment still thrilled the paid patrons who came out Saturday (7) to see the colossal Albert King and hard rock's the Who.

His head pulled down into his open-colored white shirt, Big Albert King bent the high notes higher, wincing at the pain of hitting high frequencies and squeezing his eyes as the notes climbed his spine like the steel clapper in the test of strength. King held down the stage like a giant, weighted buoy, but his music cut the air with the sweetest, most simplistically penetrating edge. He doesn't play many notes and doesn't have much on his mind, but whatever he has to say he makes clearly understood. His blues magic in "Crosscut Saw" was sheer beauty. King puts each note through a lot of electric change as he plays left-handed and upside down, without a pick,

thumbing and plucking out his blue thoughts through his fingers and bending the strings till they cry "Owwww" with pain. More of the same can be felt and heard on King's latest album on Stax, "King Doe's the King's Thing."

Chuck Berry, who also uses a Gibson and plays the blues, is another story. C. B. has a lot on his mind, most of it contrary to better breeding and middle class morality. A sassy devil, wickedly explicit and loose like a man who has always done whatever he wanted to do, Berry poured merrily through his sagas of sex and women, which to Barry are the same thing. His songs—"Johnny B. Goode," "Roll Over, Beethoven" and "Nadine," to name a few—are socio-sexual daydreams told in the beat and rhyme of Berry's beautiful black poetry. His tough and tender anecdotes, reeled off his slick guitar in bursts of jazz and swing, were delicious, flirting fantasies that jumped through the audience like a hot potato that everyone wanted to get his hands on. Berry is what he sings about.

What King does to a note, Berry does to a measure of music and the meter of his lyrics. Berry gets inside a beat and floods it with a volley of chords, sometimes adding his guitar to the rock 'n' roll rhythm or going against the grain with a new alien, but always melodic, phrase. Still lean and good-looking, Berry return to Fillmore to play at his own revival, doing "the duck," snapping his wit and wailing his street wisdom in sweet remembrance of days without conscience or responsibility, of places he's been to and things he's done. In the end, what lingers is not a vision of his body flashes or even his thick, rich rock 'n' roll guitar, but the

perfect lyrics, whose economy and imagery are the brightest qualities of Berry's prose-poems. "Man, what a great blues cat he is," said Billboard's Paul Ackerman in 1958. More than 10 years later, Berry, now a Mercury artist, can start believing he's living history.

The Who, the English group led by Peter Townsend, rounded out the bill with their high wall of hard rock, now acknowledged as the most potent on today's rock scene. The group, a favorite at Fillmore for their pulverizing instrumental attack and bullying of "I Can't Explain" and "Pinball Wizard," are at present promoting material from their new Decca album "Tommy," a rock opera.

ED OCHS

Underground Gets Lift From McCoys

NEW YORK—The McCoys, firmly entrenched in the underground milieu, gave a strong first set at Steve Paul's Scene Tuesday (10), sparked by Rick Zehringer on lead guitar and vocals. The Vagrants, trying to change their image, also were impressive.

After a good instrumental with a boogie beat, the McCoys lashed into "Jesse Brady," a Mercury single for the quartet. Organist Robert Peterson began this one on harmonica.

One number, which the group has retained from its initial album, was "Stormy Monday Blues," was re-recorded "live" at the Scene in the McCoys'

most recent Mercury LP. Here, Zehringer varied his voice from soft to loud effectively, giving an even pitch to the screaming "Lord, Have Mercy."

Wilson Pickett's "Don't Fight It" was a top-notch rhythm number with the rhythmic patterns capably maintained by Peterson, drummer Randy Zehringer, and bass guitarist Randy Hobbs. Here, Randy Zehringer's solo was more rhythmic than virtuosic. "Daybreak" was a strong closer with all of the musicians shining.

An example of the change in the Vagrants was the instrumental "Thelonious Monk," a progressive jazz number replete with improvisation. Lead guitarist Tommy Cosgrove, organist Mark Klingman, and bass guitarist Stuart Wasserman all were sharp in their solos. Wasserman's long hit was especially impressive.

The Vagrants' variety was demonstrated by the country "Kirkpatrick's Defeat," the spiritual "Everybody in the Congregation" and Ray Charles' blues "I Got News for You." Cosgrove's vocals were strong throughout as was the group's steady instrumental work spearheaded by drummer Roger Monsour, the only member left from the original group.

FRED KIRBY

Ian & Sylvia Duo Wed to Perfection

NEW YORK—Not even last-minute bugs in the amplifier system and broken harpichord strings could stop the country singing team of Ian and Sylvia, MGM Records artists, from turning in a highly successful opener Tuesday (10) at the Cafe Au Go Go.

The couple, oozing professionalism from the tips of their guitar-strumming, ivory tickling fingers, to the soles of their patent leather dancing pumps, triumphed over the first night foul-ups to breeze through a racy, fun-filled, sing-a-long repertoire of songs which left their

audience screaming in the aisles for more.

This exciting, young husband and wife team from Toronto, does not rely on gimmickry to put their show across. In fact, Sylvia appeared on stage as chicly clad as a schoolmarm on her way to a Sunday School bazaar. Even members of the Great Speckled Bird, the duo's accompanying band, were (shoulder-length hair not withstanding) conservatively attired.

Their tunes, most of them written by the couple, offer a wide variety of refreshingly

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Van Zandt Effective Artist - Children & Ralph Excel

NEW YORK — Townes Van Zandt was effective at Steve Paul's Scene on June 5, an accomplishment that can only be pulled off by a superior folk artist. Two pop groups, the Scene's usual fare, also had fine sets. The Children of God were excellent, and a new group, Ralph, showed considerable

promise. More will be heard from this bluesy unit.

Van Zandt relied heavily on his initial Poppy album and, since this album has superior material, his judgment proved good. "Snake Mountain Blues" was a strong beginning. The tender "She Came and She Touched Me," the poignant "Like a Summer Thursday," and the telling "Our Mother the Mountain" were other top tunes from the album, whose title is the last number.

The young artist, who displayed a fine folk voice, also went pop with Muddy Waters' "Mojo Hand," a gutsy number. A&M's Children of God opened with their title tune, "Children of God," in r&b style. This unit continues to shine with strong vocals and solid instrumental work as the drum, guitar and bass solos in this number demonstrated.

FRED KIRBY

N. Sinatra to Intl. Aug. 28

LAS VEGAS — Nancy Sinatra will follow Barbra Streisand and Elvis Presley into the new International hotel here, starting Aug. 28.

Mac Davis will write special song material for the act, which marks her nightclub debut here. Her father is signed to Caesars Palace and has just concluded his second engagement there.

The International is slated to open in July.

On another matter concerning a second Reprise artist, Don Ho, the Hawaiian singer, currently working at the Flamingo until June 5, will play dates in four California cities before returning to Honolulu to begin taping the five Kraft Music Hall TV shows he will host. He is slated to work in San Francisco, Friday (6); San Diego, Saturday (7); Sacramento, Sunday (8), and Fresno, Monday (9).

COFFEE HOUSE CIRCUIT PERKS

NEW YORK—The third annual Coffee House Circuit conference will be held Monday-Tuesday (16-17) at the Forum Theater in Lincoln Center and at the Bitter End in Greenwich Village. More than 200 delegates representing 300 schools will attend.

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Signings

Vibist Gary Burton signed with Atlantic, where Joel Dron will produce his first album. . . . Sam Russell, singer-arranger, joined Imperial with VME Productions producing his disks. . . . London's Michael Allen signed with George Scheck for personal management. . . . Jimmy Velvet to Royal American Records, the label's first pop artist. Velvet's debut single is "It's You."

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