



Photo by Matt Meyer

Christopher Cross brought a polished but unenthusiastic show to the Memorial Coliseum Sunday

Style lacking at Cross show

Christopher Cross has talent, there's no question about that. The question is: where does it belong?

Some artists are stunning on stage, projecting a sense of excitement in their music that doesn't quite come across on vinyl. Others are true masters in the relative safety of the studio — where overdubbing and proper mixing can cover a multitude of sins — but completely fall apart when it comes to performing in public.

Judging from Cross's performance at the Memorial Coliseum in Portland on Sunday, he doesn't fit into either category.

A relative newcomer to the national music scene, Cross has had a very impressive string of hits from his debut album. Unfortunately, after "Sailing", "Fly Like The Wind", "Say You'll Be Mine" and "When You Get Caught Between The Moon and New York City" are gone, you're left with a number of tunes that are good, but not really first-class material.

Although most of his songs rely heavily on lush studio productions, Cross and his five-piece backing band adapted them to the harsh realities of live performance extremely well. With the help of synthesizers and an array of percussive instruments, the band was able to reproduce the studio sound with impressive accuracy.

The imitation was almost too exact. Those who like to hear the songs "just like they are on the record" can save money and listen to their stereos. Most concertgoers expect a little diversity, a little ad-lib, and a little excitement. These were in short supply on Sunday night.

Christopher Cross is not very exciting to watch. Short, pudgy, and curly-haired with a bald spot, he is not exactly your typical rock star. It would be somewhat ridiculous to expect him to do a show like Bruce Springsteen, but Cross seemed abnormally staid. While singing, he stands motionless at the microphone,

gazing blankly at the crowd. During guitar solos, he strolls idly a few feet and turns slightly, staring at the ground all the while.

Surprisingly enough, these solos (and an impromptu rendition of "Happy Birthday") were the highpoint of the show. Cross displayed impressive talent in his guitar solos, which were always fast, precise, and fairly imaginative. These solos were the only obvious departure from the recorded versions of the songs, often stretching the tunes to ten minutes.

The other members of the band were equally talented. With the exception of some flute riffs that were badly out of tune, the backup band carried their part of the show with quiet competence. Although it would have been nice to see them put down their guards and really take off, they never distracted the audience with unnecessary flamboyance, which is often a mistake backup bands make.

One problem developed, however, with the mixing of the sound. It's a basic assumption among concert sound crews that the audience should be able to "feel" the beat in any rock tune. The sound crew Sunday night was no exception. While this preoccupation with the beat usually doesn't hurt the overall sound, it ruined an otherwise superb job of mixing. Cross's voice is unique, with its lack of enunciation and laid-back feeling, but it becomes totally unintelligible when the drums are pounding over them. As a result, many of the lyrics were garbled on the faster tunes.

Otherwise, the sound was superb. Harmonies were incredibly sweet, instruments blended nicely, and everything went together to produce a sound tighter than many albums can attain.

From that standpoint, Cross was a definite success in Portland. From a visual standpoint, however, Cross has a long way to go before his show matches the level of quality set by his music.

By Matt Meyer

Frank zaps back into Eugene

Hold on tight, Eugene, Uncle Meat is back in town!

Frank Zappa will bring his legendary guitar playing and his notorious brand of humor to MacArthur Court at 8 p.m. Sunday for one of the most unusual evenings of entertainment to hit Eugene this year.

No matter what people may think of Zappa's off-beat personality and cynicism, they all

seem to agree about one thing: he can play the guitar. Combining elements from a variety of styles including classical, jazz, rhythm and blues and rock, he accompanies his satire with incredible sounds from his guitar.

Zappa's satirical brand of music began in the 60's, where his socio-political barbs brought him a cult of loyal fans and a wealth of enemies. He's

continued in his tradition, and his songs poke accusing fingers at everyone from swinging singles to "pure as driven snow" WASPs.

All seats for the concert are reserved in a special amphitheater format. Tickets are still available at the EMU Main Desk, Meier and Frank and Everybody's Records. Tickets are \$8 and \$9.

Frampton cancels

Peter Frampton won't be bringing his rock show to Eugene tonight as had been earlier announced.

Frampton had been scheduled to appear at 8 p.m. at the Lane County Fairgrounds Performance Hall, but the concert was cancelled due to lagging ticket sales.

The concert, produced by Starline Presentations in conjunction with KBDF-AM, has not been rescheduled.

People who bought tickets for the show can obtain full refunds from the EMU Main Desk, Everybody's Records and Meier & Frank.

disc-ussion

The Innocent Age Dan Fogelberg

"I think everyone should go to college," Dan Fogelberg said last year in Portland, "but no longer than a week or two."

No matter how he feels about higher education, Fogelberg's latest album, *The Innocent Age*, is more an organized thesis on the nature of life than an album in the conventional sense.

Although many of his earlier albums contain songs which probe certain aspects of life, Fogelberg has never really taken a topic and explored it to its full extent. With *The Innocent Age*, however, he breaks away and develops his theme with the thoroughness and clarity of a well-written term paper. He explores, sometimes autobiographically, man's passing through life, from the innocent and spontaneous days of childhood to the routine-filled days of maturity. He concentrates on our wish to return to our childhood, and the frustration of trying to make time stand still: "Every vain attempt to make it stay/Is destined to fail" (from "Empty Cages").

The Innocent Age is a double album containing 16 songs. Although Fogelberg's theme is rather broad, his train of thought sometimes meanders through a few more verses than

is necessary. After hearing the first verses on almost every song repeated, one gets the feeling that Fogelberg might be padding the songs a bit to justify a double album.

In spite of this, Fogelberg's latest release is an excellent album, and definitely one of his best efforts to date. There is an abundance of exceptionally strong cuts on the album. In



"The Sand and The Foam" he combines a lush blanket of acoustic guitar and cello with some of his best lyrics ever to form a touching ballad dealing with the lost road back to childhood: "Dawn... like an angel lights on the step/Muting the morning she heralds/Dew on the grass like the tears the night wept/Gone long before the day wears old... Gone are the pathways the child followed home,/Gone like the sand and the foam."

As usual, Fogelberg utilizes a variety of musical styles, from classical to Eagle-esque, some things highly reminiscent of Fleetwood Mac, and lots of his own brand of rock. As usual, Fogelberg shines brightest in his more acoustic moments. Among the strongest cuts on the album, most are of this style: "Same Old Lang Syne", "Run For The Roses", "Leader of the Band", and "Only The Heart May Know", a duet with Emmylou Harris.

Many of the songs sound similar to earlier Fogelberg releases. This could result from his habit of playing most of the instruments used on the album himself. Although he's obviously competent on guitars, piano, synthesizers, bass, lead and multi-tracked background vocals, certain riffs and mixes sound awfully familiar.

Nonetheless, he manages to use more original chord progressions than ninety per cent of the recording artists currently around. Between his songwriting ability and his talent for performing, Fogelberg has more talent than any one ought to have.

Although "The Innocent Age" is not a perfect example of a flawless theme album, Fogelberg has been successful in his attempt. While no thesis project is without imperfection, he has done a remarkable job with his

theme, and put out some darn good songs at the same time.

Fogelberg has graduated.

By Matt Meyer

Shot of Love Bob Dylan

What will it take to convince some people?

With the release of *Slow Train Coming*, Bob Dylan's conversion to Christianity became public and beyond debate. Or did it?

Jann Wenner, the top dog at "Rolling Stone" listened to Dylan's album, breathed a sigh of relief, and announced to the masses that *Slow Train* was about faith and doing what was right — themes reminiscent of the Dylan of the sixties. But, Wenner assured, Dylan had not become an orthodox Christian as reports claimed (after all, there was a song about a girl on *Slow Train*); the faith he spoke of was faith in ourselves.

The next year Dylan released *Saved*, a strictly gospel album both musically and lyrically. The rumors subsided, temporarily. Six months later, Dylan was on the road again in England, doing little "religious" material, much older stuff and being joined on stage by Eric Clapton and George Harrison.

"Ah-ha!" cried the desperate, "that 'born-again' bit was a phase." Yawn. No sooner had

the new plague of rumors infested the music world, when Dylan released his new record, *Shot of Love*. The record has been kept remarkably quiet by the critics. It is not surprising.

It may seem unnecessary to dig up history when listening to a new album, but much of the significance of *Shot of Love* stems from the swirling controversy that has surrounded



Dylan for the past two and a half years. Taken out of context, the album loses much of its importance.

There are several things that strike the listener almost immediately. For beginners, the production is typical of many Dylan albums — sloppy. Mis-timed harmonies abound from the opening moments of the first song, "Shot of Love". The clear, crisp production of *Slow Train* is gone, giving way to

Continued on Page 8B

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