



Stephen Stills & Neil Young

NEIL YOUNG

A Retrospective

Below are the major recorded works of Neil Young (in approximate chronological order). Young spent his formative musical years playing Canadian clubs as a solo performer, after one foray into the pop field with a group known as Neil Young and the Squires. He met Stephen Stills in the early 1960s and headed for LA in 1966, when the two formed Buffalo Springfield, a seminal hippie band which also helped spawn the country rock sound. Springfield lasted a couple of years, recording such classics as 'Broken Arrow', 'Rock 'n' Roll Woman', 'For What It's Worth' and 'I Am a Child'. Young returned to Canada when Stills joined David Crosby and Graham Nash. He went into seclusion for about a year before releasing ...

Neil Young (Reprise, 1969)
A disappointment when compared with Young's Springfield work, it drew heavily on Dylan for its recording and composition approach, but suffered from indifferent musicianship and production. Only 'The Loner' has survived the test of time. The rest is rather maudlin and dull. But while recording this album, Young met up with a West Coast three-piece band called the Rockets. Renamed Crazy Horse, they backed young on:
Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere (Reprise, 1969)
Released seven months after *Neil Young*, this remains one of his definitive works, combining Young's keening vocals with the rough 'n' ready electric backup. You could call it Young's *Blonde On Blonde*, since it marked the transition of his sound into the modern rock idiom. Young has paralleled Dylan in his quirky dabbling with assorted musical forms. This album produced 'Cinnamon Girl', 'Down By the River' and 'Cowgirl in the Sand', all of which speak for themselves.
Not long after, Young teamed up with Crosby, Stills and Nash to form the original supergroup. They made a major impression at Woodstock, their second-only live performance, and cemented their reputation with *Deja Vu*, their sole studio LP, which finally laid the hippie dream to rest. Young contributed the standards 'Helpless' and 'Country Girl', before leaving to record:
After the Gold Rush (Reprise, 1970)
Crazy Horse were augmented for this LP by guitar whizz-kid Nils

Lofgren. It produced some of Young's most enduring work and the critics fell over themselves in praise. Happy, it ain't. The bubble of peace and love had been decisively burst by Vietnam and while Young's compositions were rich and compelling, they forecast a decade of change, not all of it good.
Look at mother nature on the run
In the 1970s ...
Harvest (Reprise, 1972)
After a delay of some 18 months, people were expecting big things of this album — and some were disappointed. Young ditched the hard rock sound to record a countrified LP, backed by a loose gathering of musicians of that ilk, known as the Stray Gators. When it worked ('Heart Of Gold', 'Old Man', 'Out On the Weekend'), it evoked images of America that are timeless. Dustbowl depression and a reassessment of values. 'The Needle and the Damage Done' is one of the most vivid anti-drug songs ever recorded, while the sole rocker, 'Alabama' (assisted by Crosby and Stills), continued the redneck putdown of 'Southern Man'. Young's fan have been divided ever since on which has been his best work, country or rock.
Journey Through the Past (Reprise, 1972)
A retrospective double LP, issued as the soundtrack for a very dull movie. Historical interest only.
Time Fades Away (Reprise, 1973)
A messy live set recorded from seven different gigs, featuring the Stray Gators with Crosby and Nash as guests. Young was evidently living a hedonistic life at this time, trying to drown the pain of deaths through junk of Crazy Horse guitarist Danny Whitten and CSN&Y roadie Bruce Berry. He later toured with another version of Crazy Horse, featuring Lofgren. The LP which finally exorcised the heroin demons (Young himself always shunned narcotics) was not released until later. First came:
On the Beach (Reprise, 1974)
A much maligned and debated-upon LP, containing the infamous "pissing in the wind" line. With 'Walk On', Young revealed the sardonic wit which had always been just below the surface:
Some get stoned, some get strange ...
This LP should be seen in its historical context, Young being the detached observer, watching Middle America tear itself to pieces with Watergate. If 'Vampire Blues' isn't dedicated to Richard Nixon I'll eat the chapeau. Musically, it bites equally as hard. Young on the attack again.
Tonight's the Night (Reprise, 1975)
Released roughly two years after its recording by a reluctant record company, this album suffered initially because time had

dulled its immediacy. The title song was often performed three times in one concert during the 1973 Crazy Horse tour, as Young held up the bodies of Whitten and Berry for all who glamourised drugs to see. Still the uneasiest of listening, reportedly recorded in one-take sessions, a flawed masterpiece, but a masterpiece nonetheless.
Zuma (Reprise, 1975)
Chronologically followed *On the Beach* and saw Young's comeback to commercial acceptance (something he only chased actively during the CSN&Y days). Crazy Horse rocked harder than ever on 'Drive Back' and 'Cortez the Killer' was another epic in the vein of 'Down By the River'. Zuma introduced Neil Young to a new generation.
Long May You Run (Reprise, 1976)
Billed as the "Stills-Young Band", Young and Stephen Stills cut an amiable country rock set which may have to be viewed more closely in light of forthcoming releases. The title track gained wide airplay, but after Zuma, most people gave it a raspberry.
American Stars and Bars (Reprise, 1977)
Another LP which starts arguments, because its sound is

so diffused. Judging by the cover, Young was spending a lot of time in hick town bars, quietly laughing at the goobers slobbering into their beer. If you thought Young incapable of writing something straightout hilarious, listen to 'Saddle Up the Palimino'. And have we forgotten 'Like A Hurricane'? Contradictory, but a display of good humour and sheer craftsmanship.
Comes A Time (Reprise, 1978)
A bland exterior hid some fine lyrics, with Young sounding genuinely happy, for a change. The title track reflected on newfound domestic joy, while 'Human Highway' and 'Goin' Back' showed that Young's view of America's soul was undimmed.
Rust Never Sleeps (Reprise, 1979)
In which Neil Young discovered punk rock and paid tribute to the Pistols, also nodding backwards to Presley. This LP followed a period in which Young said he headed "towards the ditch," because the people there were more interesting. The songs were written during 1977 and 1978, slammed onto vinyl as harsh, unrelenting landscapes; American history dissected ('Powderfinger', 'Pocahontas'), American dreams shattered ('Thrasher', 'Sedan Delivery') and the ultimate dream

...? Depends whether you're out of the blue or into the black. Young hedged his bets there, but still produced another masterpiece.
Hawks and Doves (Reprise, 1980)
After *Rust Never Sleeps*, just about anything would have been an anti-climax. *Hawks and Doves* barely got off the ground, although its rather oblique slashes at militarism were topical enough. Muddy production and comparatively weak songs added up to a mediocre album.
Reactor (Reprise, 1981)
Indifferent but solid rock music, not a standout song to recommend. A contractual farewell, perhaps.
Trans (Geffen, 1983)
Probably inspired by Young's encounter with Devo. Whatever, neither electronics nor Young gained anything significant.
Everybody's Rockin' (Geffen, 1983)
Maybe it was a sincere Young tribute to rockabilly, the music which spawned all which has come since. He didn't look very serious on the videos and Geffen Records have since said "You must be joking," in very legal terms. What will this man come up with next?
Duncan Campbell

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This is the scene.
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