

Jackson Browne keeps on moving

By ERIC MOBEY

As other musicians and songwriters struggle to find a musical niche in the '80s, Jackson Browne keeps a steady foot on the pedal and just keeps writing and performing dependably good songs.

Browne's recent performance at Pine Knob Music Theatre in Clarkston was a fine example of his staying power. In a two-set concert with no warm-up act, Browne merged several songs from his new album "Hold Out" into his standard repertoire.

Unlike most new material that is introduced in concert, these songs went over, and with a good reason. It has been two years since Jackson's last album and he was due to produce. The wait was worth it.

Browne's newest works fit well musically and lyrically. He has gone beyond his personal encounters with family and the road. "Hold On Hold Out" and "The Boulevard" are realistic glimpses at life in the inflationary '80s.

THE STAGE PRESENCE of Browne is more relaxed and self-assured than in previous Pine Knob appearances. He talked to the crowd more and seemed eager to please. He even changed a few songs around at the last minute to fit the mood.

As always, Browne continues to employ the finest musicians, singers and

review

stage crew. The lighting and sound were perfection. You simply never get a bad sound mix at a Jackson Browne show.

Throughout the show the visual backdrops added to the theme of each song. For "Before the Deluge," color slides of nuclear cooling stacks and anti-nuke protesters were projected onto a three-way split screen.

Other backdrops included a blow-up of the album cover of "Late for the Sky," a desolate desert highway for "Running on Empty" and a complex cloveleaf overpass for the shade-of-the-freeway feel of "The Pretender."

One of the most clever uses of the split-screen backdrop was a time lapse photo introduction of each band member.

NONE of the effects was overpowering but merely an adjunct to the mood of Browne's music. On every tour, Browne manages to assemble a band that takes his music one step further.

With a drummer like Russ Kunkel and keyboardists like Craig Doerge and Bob Payne (formerly of Little Feat),

you can't go wrong. Add bassist Bob Glaub, vocalists Rosemary Butler and Doug Haywood, along with Stringman David Layton, and you have a band of elite.

An all-star band indeed, yet their collective eggs stayed intact, none trying to outdo their allotted role.

Midway through the second set, the band and Jackson fused together a string of songs that could only be called power rock. This part of the set began with two new ones, "The Girl Could Sing" and "The Boulevard."

These were quickly followed by an intense version of "Doctor My Eyes" and "Running on Empty." The timing was impeccable.

After such a display, it seemed only appropriate that Browne would splice

in a ballad. He chose "Sleeps Dark and Silent Gate." A solemn paradox to the previous mood, but it felt like a cool shower after a hot summer day.

LIKE THE TITLE of the new album, Jackson Browne is a "Hold Out." Some people call him a romantic or say his music is depressing. I find him to be a realist with a gift for capturing personal and sociological moods and weaving them coherently into contemporary songs.

He speaks to a generation of people who enjoy life but know the tragedy of taking it too lightly or too seriously.

We no longer have to say a prayer for the Pretender, just wish him luck with his hold out.

Summer theater festival begins

"Harvey," Mary Chase's Pulitzer Prize-winning comedy, and "An Almost Perfect Person," Judith Ross' play about politics and sexual equality, opened at 8:30 p.m. Wednesday as part of the Wayne State University Summer Theatre Festival.

"Harvey" is being presented in the Hilberry Theatre and "An Almost Perfect Person" in the Studio Theatre, downstairs at the Hilberry Theatre on the Wayne State University campus in Detroit. Both productions continue at 8:30 p.m. Wednesdays-Saturdays through July 19.

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