

Guthrie, Chapin keep to expected

By ERIC MOBEY

Arlo Guthrie and Harry Chapin have developed a loyal following over the last decade. Nearly 11,000 of their fans jammed into Pine Knob Music Theatre on Friday to see the pair of troubadours.

The concert presented no surprises. Both men stuck to their traditional styles. Guthrie with his political lyrics and Chapin the omnipresent storyteller.

Guthrie opened the show at 7:45 p.m. while the audience shuffled into its seats like convention delegates. Ignoring the situation, Guthrie delivered several songs before talking to the audience.

Assured that most of the audience was in its seats, Guthrie introduced a song about the Seabrook Nuclear Project. The anti-nuke lyrics drew the attention back to the stage.

GUTHRIE FOLLOWED with the ever-popular "Alice's Restaurant." He explained that he doesn't perform the song much anymore "but events have led me to believe I oughta."

With Guthrie's obvious disdain for draft registration, his execution of "Alice's Restaurant" was generous. After 10 years, the song still brings laughs and a hearty sing-along.

Overall, Guthrie's set suffered from

review

a mushy sound-mix and a late-arriving crowd. Guthrie did rekindle some of the old spirit with "City of New Orleans" but the early distractions drew away from his performance.

Headliner Harry Chapin's set presented exactly what one has come to expect of him. His classic story songs and warm stage presence dominate the show. Even his selection of songs presented no surprises.

Chapin is a songwriter first and a singer somewhere down the line. His voice is akin to that of a ballpark vendor, yet his performances have overcome the lack of vocal agility.

IT IS CHAPIN'S gregarious dialogue between songs that makes him so appealing. He jokes and cajoles with the audience constantly. His fans love this openness and seem to never tire of his stories. They seem to feel a kinship that builds an excitement between the performer and the crowd.

When not kidding with his fans, he's fooling with the band, playing straight man for bassist Big John Wallace's blatant jokes.

Chapin stayed away from politics during his show and stuck to the songs. This was surprising, considering his penchant for political fundraising. His set was very long, covering several songs from his vast collection. As expected, his hits like "Taxi," "Cats in the Hat" and "W.O.L.D." were among the best of the evening.

Chapin shares the limelight with his band, which includes his brother Steve. Chapin said that perhaps the best song from his 10 albums is "Let Time Go Lightly" featuring Steve in lead vocal. Steve's voice is clear and melodic without the roughness of Harry's. This was perhaps the best song of the concert.

Chapin's act is basically the same as always. While this may more than please his cultish fans, it lacks a promise of any new inroads. His voice was hoarse and threatened to give out completely on "I Want to Learn a Love Song."

CHAPIN'S CAREER as recording artist is quite average. He relies heavily upon his concerts and numerous television appearances to convey the Chapin persona.

No doubt his covers are as comfortable as an old pair of shoes, but after a while, even the most durable kicks develop holes and need to be replaced.

Hugh Lawson replacing Dave Burrell in concert

Detroit-born pianist Hugh Lawson will fill in for Dave Burrell on the Thursday "Jazz at the Institute" concert at the Detroit Institute of Arts.

Performances will be at 7 and 9:30 p.m. in the museum's Crystal Gallery. Tickets for each one-hour set are available from the art institute ticket office

at 832-2730. Joining Lawson will be trumpeter Marcus Belgrave and percussionist Roy Brooks. A graduate of Cass Technical High School and Wayne State University, Lawson left Detroit with Yusuf Lateef in the late 1950s.

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