

TELEVISION

A new low in awards shows

BY BLAIK KIRBY

They held the first annual rock awards Saturday night on CBS (locally, Channel 4), and the awkward show seemed to mark a new low in awards programs.

For one thing, most of the winners didn't bother to show up; that's how important they thought it was. The decor was harsh looking and visibly tacky. Critics sneer at the Oscars, but at least they have dignity. Not this one.

Stevie Wonder, who was there, was chosen best male vocalist, and gave the program one of its few moments of class when he feelingly asked the crowd to stand in memory of Cannonball Adderley, who had died the day before.

Elton John, chosen the top personality in rock, was also there—but only because he was hired to be present as co-host with Diana Ross. And he at least didn't try to flim-flam the audience; his verbal shafts made it clear that he was distinctly unthrilled by the program.

Joni Mitchell, the Canadian folk graduate, was named the top female vocalist, but was not there to accept the award, a gold medallion called a Rocky.

Virtually all of the winners, or their nominees, were content merely to say "thank you" and get off. The producers were obviously under instructions to get the program completed on time, and without the unctuous blah that is standard on Oscar shows.

Manhattan Transfer, a nostalgia quartet that has less in common with rock than with Bach, was one of the performing groups. Why? Could it be because CBS wanted to plug the start of M.T.'s mini-series, which got under way last night?



Cher and Elton John were two of the few who showed up for awards.