

The Band: Farewell to Rock of Ages

By Ben Kamhi

After hosting a Thanksgiving dinner for over 5,000 last Thursday at San Francisco's Winterland Arena, and performing more than four hours of music during the concert billed as "The Last Waltz," The Band initiated their retirement from the stage after 16 years of rock and roll.

With the most prestigious group of rock stars ever assembled on a single stage, the Band's farewell performance — perhaps their best ever — became a monumental celebration of rock as well as a superb testimonial to the Band's undisputed excellence. Even the presence of Bob Dylan, could not overshadow the Band during its finest hour.

Along with Dylan, Joni Mitchell, Muddy Waters, Neil Young, Neil Diamond, Paul Butterfield, Van Morrison, Dr. John, Bobby Charles, Stephen Stills, Eric Clapton, Ron Woods, Ringo Starr and Ronnie Hawkins all joined in the Last Waltz.

Winterland's doors opened at 4 p.m., and the Band's guests filed in (at \$25 a head) for a catered Thanksgiving dinner and dancing to the 38-piece Berkeley Promenade Orchestra, against a setting of ballroom decor. The dance floor was filled, but few of the rock fans actually waltzed. Bay Area Pianist Dave Alexander spelled the orchestra intermittently with his bluesy, barroom styled boogie.

The band opened fire shortly after 9 p.m. with "Cripple Creek," then proceeded with a twelve-song volley, with support throughout the evening from a six-piece horn section. Consecrating the Band's seven-album repertoire in its final performance (though the group will continue to record together), the initial impact of the opening number was overpowered by the increasing energy and momentum of each of the twelve following songs.

Leading the Band, guitarist Robbie Robertson, usually shy in his stage manner, was every bit as bold last Thursday as he was brilliant, and his ear-to-ear grin was equally irrepressible. Robertson's licks were crisper, cleaner, tighter

Somebody will say the devil will take my soul.
But that's a bunch of shit...
I don't want to hang up my rock and roll shoes.



SAYIN' BYE-BYE TO THE BAND — (left to right) Dr. John, Joni Mitchell, Rick Danko, Van Morrison, Bob Dylan, and Robbie Robertson.

Photo by Ben Kamhi

and louder than ever. While his guitar-work was hotter than simmering shit he relinquished his lines with a subtlety as yet unsurpassed rock.

Rick Danko's gangbusting bass and Levon Helm's steady drum pulsations provided strong rhythmic surges, while keyboardists Richard Manuel and Garth Hudson added their own richly flavored elaborations. And with Danko, Helm, and Manuel sharing the vocal duties, both the harmonies and leads effected were velvet smooth.

Without interrupting the set, Arkansas rockabilly singer Ronnie Hawkins, who originally formed the Band as the Hawks, his back-up group, started an hour and forty parade

of quest stars.

Following Hawkins exit, Dr. John appeared, finally at right place at the right time along with Bobby Charles, and later blues harpist Paul Butterfield.

Muddy Waters, a veteran of the Chicago Blues since the thirties, delivered the most dramatic performance of the gueststars. Together with Butterfield and Robertson, Waters presence constituted an unbeatable blues combo. After his first number, Both guitarists Clapton and Woods (the new Rolling Stone) could be seen in the audience howling for more.

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Theater

Major Barbara' Loses Shavian Wordplay in Uncomfortable Setting

By David Hodges

There are plays on words, there are words on plays: a review. There are plays without words. There are wordplays, there is Shaw, Bernard Shaw who plays with words, not actions, at least in the current production of "Major Barbara," as directed by graduate student Donna Lee Crabtree.

Not that Shaw never uses actions in his drama, but he uses them sparingly, always to support the intent of his words. Shaw cannot help it if he revels in language, whether it be philosophical, dialectical, merry or tragical. And as such his drama, "Major Barbara" in point, is ill suited for theatre-in-the-round, (note the UCSB production), which requires unstrained movement to arouse the interest of a four-sided audience — a dreadful beast, or bore perhaps.

"Major Barbara" can always entertain with the strong support of the words, it could be read in a monklike monotone and still retain interest. For within the play each idea combats its opposite, morality vs. immorality, charity vs. greed, and war vs. peace, of course. Each character is fitted in moral armor and sent to battle their antithesis.

The plot is simple, the ideas complex. Barbara, daughter of Munitions magnate Andrew Undershaft has joined the Salvation Army. Adolphus Cusins, a charlatan professor of Greek, falls desperately in love with her, and despite his own dubious religiosity takes to carrying a drum for the Salvation Army Band. Meanwhile back on the home front, Mrs. Undershaft, who hasn't seen her husband, by choice, for some years, is trying to

make her son Stephen heir apparent to the Undershaft industries, despite the bothersome tradition that allows no blood heir to assume control of the industry, but rather a foundingling which Mr. Undershaft has yet to find.

Each character defends their beliefs with a passion. Unfortunately this was not apparent in the UCSB production, there was a subdued air about the actors that didn't cohere with the words of the play. Only Undershaft, played by Stephen Harding, achieved a credible portrayal of a ruthless, but sensitive businessman with an almost utilitarian outlook. Karen Calvert as Major Barbara seemed quite mild compared to her supposed religious passion and dominant personality. Her lover Cusins, played by Ron Boronkay, exhibited none of the stuff that would make him doggedly follow Barbara. In all, the actors did their best to smother the power of the language with irrelevant actions which failed to support the faltering play.

Shaw instructed his actors to merely read the lines, nothing more. Perhaps this is a simple understatement, but its fundamental message of paying attention to what is said was overlooked in this production.

It is unfortunate that Director Crabtree accepted the conventions of arena staging for this particular play. Shaw's verbal intrigue finds an uncomfortable home with the four-sided beast breathing down his neck; the tension is even greater for the actors tasked with carrying his message. Yet it is a credit to the author, as well as several of the actors, that the language manages to persevere.



SHAVIAN DILEMMA— Karen Calvert as Major Barbara joins her mother, Lady Britomart (Susanne Standish-White) in a bit of Shavian wordplay.

Photo by W. Swalling



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The Band's Last Waltz

(Continued from p. 17)

But Clapton quickly disappeared from his seat, resurfacing onstage after the Waters set. Clapton warmed up with "All My Pastimes," and began to cook on "Further On Up the Road," only to get

burned by Robertson's complementary work, still searing and more inventive.

Neil Young, Joni Mitchell, and Neil Diamond were next on the lineup, allowing the Band to slow down from the grueling pace it had maintained thus far for the

tamer sounds.

During a forty-minute intermission, several Bay Area poets, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Emmett Grogan and Michael McClure recited their works as a farewell tribute to the Band.

When the Band returned, Hudson led an expedition into the outer limits with ever-changing keyboard improvisation, "The Genetic Method," which evolved (as it always does) into a thundering rendition of the "Chest Fever."

"The Last Waltz," composed so recently that cue cards were within the Band's eyesight, was debuted, but the unfamiliarity of the melody stunted both the audience's enthusiasm, along with Manuel's proficiency, apparent when he missed his verse. "The Weight" followed, then Robertson announced the Band's next guest.

No introduction for Bob Dylan was necessary. Together the band and Dylan struck up a brief five-song medley, which started and ended with "Baby Let Me Follow You Down," with "I Don't Believe You," Hazel," and "Forever Young" sandwiched between. Carefully, Dylan avoided any classic works, preventing the Last Waltz from turning into his show.

The entire cast of guests, including the unrehearsed Englishmen, Ringo and Woods, returned for the "final" number, "I Shall Be Released."

With the concert officially over, Robertson then invited the audience to his "party." Eager to

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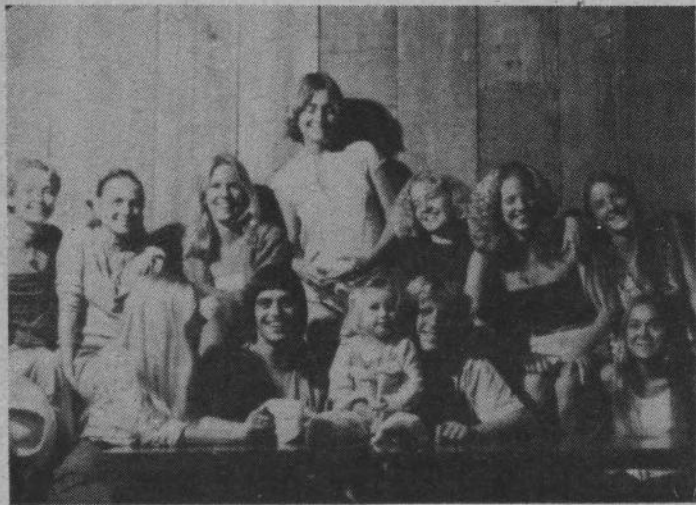
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The Band

(Continued from p. 22)

boogie, Ringo kept pounding out a drumbeat with Helm while various guests, including Stephen Stills, began wandering onstage.

When the jam finally ended, at close to 2 a.m., the crowd remained, demanding more. The Band returned, once again, singing their last number onstage together, "Don't Do It." Regrettably, the Band had neglected to sing "(Don't Want To) Hang Up My Rock and Roll Shoes."



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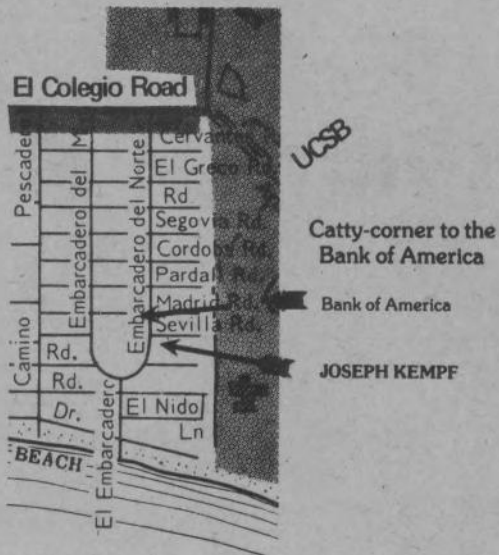
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