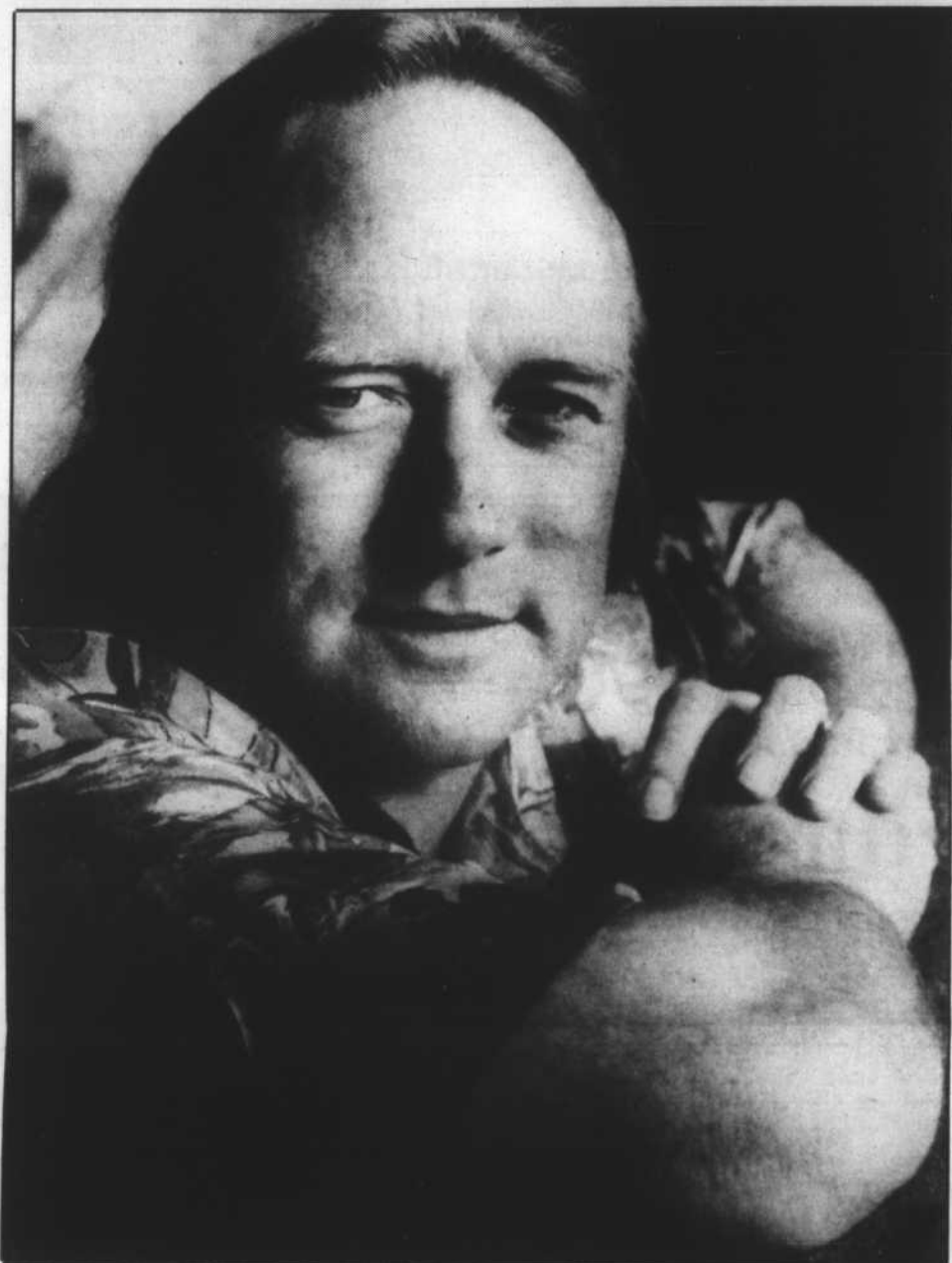


## New album is timeline of turbulent past



Courtesy of Atlantic Records

Stephen Stills, of Crosby, Stills, and Nash. The band featured many new tracks off its new album, "After the Storm," at Woodstock '94.

By Jill O'Brien  
Staff Reporter

It seemed fitting that Crosby, Stills and Nash, who played their first major gig at Woodstock in 1969, returned to play at Woodstock '94, marking the 25th anniversary of both the superfestival and the supergroup.

This August, at Woodstock '94, CS&N received flack for not playing some of their classic songs; instead, the gods of harmony plugged a new album.

"The name of the new album is 'After The Storm,'" Stephen Stills said during an interview.

And yes, the name is signifying the band's weathering 25 years of storms together, he said.

CS&N has been a succession of storms and hurricanes: battling personal demons or waiting out jail sentences, hot tempers, Neil Young's comings and goings, reunions and revivals. Each episode is a part of rock history.

During a television interview, Stills recalled the story of how the legendary trio first joined together.

"We're sitting in Mama Cass' dining room and David and I started playing. 'In the morning when you rise, do you think of me?' and Nash joined in," Stills said. "Then when me and David were driving home, we're going, 'How are we ever gonna do this?'"

"We didn't know Graham wanted to quit The Hollies. Oh, God, it was wonderful. 'How are we gonna? Can we? Should we?'"

"So we finally asked, 'Do you want to come play with us?'"

Nash replied with an enthusiastic, "Yes!"

Record agent David Geffen set about untangling contracts to bring CS&N to Atlantic Records. He freed Nash from The Hollies, and Crosby from The Byrds.

Stills was already free, having disbanded Buffalo Springfield, a country-rock band, in 1967.

Elements of country music prevail, no matter what album Stills plays on. This is especially true of his last acoustic release, "Stills Alone."

"I do country, obviously, and when you've got a band and you're doing 'Helplessly Hoping,' someone goes, 'Gee, whiz, that sounds just like Garth Brooks with harmony.' Of

course it does," he said. "It was a country song to begin with."

His love for country is real, not an affliction, he said.

"I was a cowboy. I actually worked on a working ranch when I was a kid."

While growing up, Stills also lived in Costa Rica, where he was constantly exposed to Latin dances and rhythms, he said.

As a result, his music often reflects the strong, pulsating beat of the Flamenco guitarists.

"Living in Latin America probably did more to influence my playing than any one person," he said. "Like mamba and samba, there are specific dances — about ten of them — and they're like ancient African beats ... folk songs translated over the years from different countries all around South America."

"When you live in a central place like Costa Rica, you end up absorbing them because they're on the radio all the time."

Stills' songwriting is as diverse as his playing, dating back to his early days with Buffalo Springfield, when he wrote "For What It's Worth," an eye-to-eye account of the 1967 Sunset Strip Riots in Los Angeles.

"I'm a chronicler. I'm more like a reporter than a newsmaker. I'm an observer. There's an important distinction," he said, reflecting on the many events that CS&N have chronicled.

"The Berlin Wall was the best one," he said. "Good news for a change."

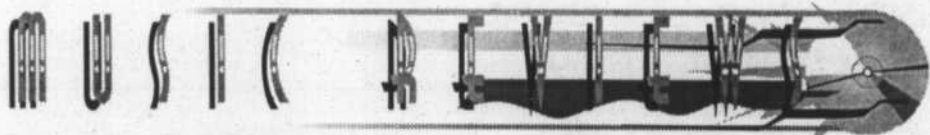
Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young's political, environmental and poetical ballads include "Ohio," "Chicago," "To the Last Whale," "Barrel of Pain," and "Woodstock." The latter actually was written by Joni Mitchell.

On the group's new album, Stills wrote the song, "It Won't Go Away."

"It's a sad commentary on American life," he said. "We've got a whole sub-community in every community, and instead of trying to help everybody, they're just sort of courting it off and made it a free-fire zone."

The chronicler and cowboy summed up CS&N's 25 years together.

"What we've tried to do is what Thomas Paine did just issuing broadsides, and say to the public, 'No, you're not crazy. This is really going on.'"



Courtesy of Geffen Records

Edie Brickell  
"Picture Perfect Morning"  
Geffen Records  
Grade: B

Edie cuts loose, sans New Bohemians.

After Edie Brickell and New Bohemians phenomenal success with "Shooting Rubberbands at the Stars" and the Top 40 showing of "Ghost of a Dog," Brickell is giving a solo career a try with Geffen Records'

"Picture Perfect Morning."

Although pleasant to listen to, the album lacks some of the luster that she (and those Bohemians) managed to capture on her earlier efforts.

The diverse instrumentation that appears on the album makes it stand out from the myriad of soul-pop sounds floating around the airwaves today.

Acoustic and electric sounds merge together on most of the songs and obscure instruments stand out on various tunes. The accordion, conga, triangle, organ and electric piano give many of the songs eccentric backgrounds.

Participation from various artists also adds to the content of the album. Paul Simon, Brickell's husband, is one of the compact disc's co-producers and contributes his musical talents on the acoustic guitar as well.

Barry White adds a deep resonance to one of the album's two releases so far, "Good Times."

The other release is "Tomorrow Comes." This song is one of the album's best tracks because of its ability to mesh the weird sounds of the instrumentation with the melodic tones of Brickell's vocals.

Most of the songs are too slow to sound like much more than eccentric

K-mart music with singing.

One exception to this is the song "Olivia." Although still kind of slow, the darkness of the instrumentation and vocals, combined with some really striking lyrics, makes this song the best track on the album.

"Ice centuries burst into gentle breeze / Somewhere a curse has been lifted / She turned around in her chair and he touched her hair / And the universe shifted."

Not a return to the greatness of the past, "Picture Perfect Morning" still has some good sounds and some great vocals and is probably a must for die-hard Brickell fans.

— Joel Strauch



Courtesy of Atlantic Records

"After the Storm"  
Crosby, Stills & Nash  
Atlantic Records  
Grade: B

CS&N could be finishing up their twenty-six year run as masters of acoustic backed harmonies. At least that is the impression given by their latest venture, "After the Storm."

The album's overall theme is one of an older, wiser person, looking back at what once was, and what could have been. While sentimental in nature, the content of the lyrics does not bog down in a mire of whining. Instead, the lyrics offer a sense of coping with the past, and looking ahead to what may yet come.

CS&N continue to provide the listener with thoughtful, intelligent lyrics as they have for many years. Veterans of the music scene, they convey a sense of maturity that most younger, "rookie" bands have no hope of achieving.

The music is classic CS&N. Established fans will appreciate the dedication to stick with the acoustic sound and harmonized voices that have characterized them for so long. A couple of cuts are reminiscent of

other bands such as "America," but it must be remembered that "America" rode CS&N's wave to fame. Latin based rhythm's influence several songs. The most notable being a remembrance of lost youth entitled "Panama," definitely not to be confused with the Van Halen ditty.

The most remarkable tracks are "Only Waiting For You" and the title cut "After the Storm." "Only Waiting" is an illustration of how suppressing one's feelings over a period of time can not only be harmful, but probably will not work, anyway. While it is indeed a "love" song, it conveys its point with a poignancy so rare in today's angst-ridden, self-deprecating music scene. "After the Storm" deals with pain and loss again, with an underlying tone of hope that takes the edge off of the overt depression of the album.

"After the Storm" is intended for established fans of the band. Listeners who are not familiar with the bands sound or history will probably be inclined to shelve in the space labeled "easy listening." After sounding the depths of the lyrics, they will be hard pressed to find anything easy about it.

— Chad Johnson