

Los Angeles Times

April 27, 2015

Stills, Young are still rockin'

By JOHN CORRIGAN

Half a century ago, Neil Young and Stephen Stills were regulars on the Sunset Strip rock scene with Buffalo Springfield.

They reunited on the Pantages stage a few miles east of their old stamping grounds Saturday night, delivering a short but powerful set to close out an autism benefit concert that also featured Steve Earle, Shawn Colvin and a raucous guitar auction won by Brad Pitt, whose \$23,000 bid trumped those of auctioneer Jack Black and others to land him a Fender Stratocaster signed by all the performers.

Young, 69, and Stills, 70,

played with chemistry and charisma, two '60s legends who have somehow managed to reinvent themselves again and again, navigating the perils of rock stardom that felled so many of their contemporaries.

"We've been through some things together," Young sang, opening the nine-song set with "Long May You Run," the 1976 song from the short-lived Stills-Young Band.

Young's high tenor was strong, clear, melodic. Stills had more rasp in his voice, and those notes at the top of his range often proved elusive.

But when it came to their fretwork, both men were like old gunslingers showing the

kids how it's done — soloing frequently on songs that included their Buffalo Springfield hits "Mr. Soul," "Bluebird" and "For What It's Worth."

Stills, widely regarded as a virtuoso, played ambitious solos with a deft precision. And yet it was Young, with his simpler runs, who more often hit the sonic peaks — summoning otherworldly growls, demons and shrieks from his battered black Les Paul.

Young's guitar vocabulary may not be extensive, but he's hard to beat when it comes to playing with power and emotion.

Then there are the songs themselves. The lyrics these men wrote decades ago still

have relevance today.

"For What It's Worth," a Stills song inspired by the Sunset Strip riots of 1966, might just as well have been written after the protests in Ferguson, Mo.

*What a field day for
the heat
A thousand people ...
in the street
Singing songs and
carrying signs*

The evening ended with all performers joining the stage to perform "Rockin' in the Free World," Young's song that served as a bitter commentary on former President George H.W. Bush's 1989 inaugural address and its "thousand



TOMMASO BODDI/WireImage

STEPHEN STILLS, left and Neil Young perform at the Light Up the Blues autism benefit on Saturday.

points of light."

This was the third annual Light Up the Blues autism benefit staged by Stills and his wife, Kristen, who have a son with an autism spectrum condition.

"As guitar players and songwriters, these guys mean the world to me," Col-

vin said before taking the stage Saturday night. "This is the kind of songwriting that inspired me to do what they do. It's kind of how I discovered who I was."

"I love that they're still doing it."

john.corrigan@latimes.com