

Neil Young's 'CSNY Déjà Vu' a Concert Film That Mixes Message With Music

Submitted by [HollywoodChicago.com](http://www.hollywoodchicago.com) [1] on July 30, 2008 - 1:15am

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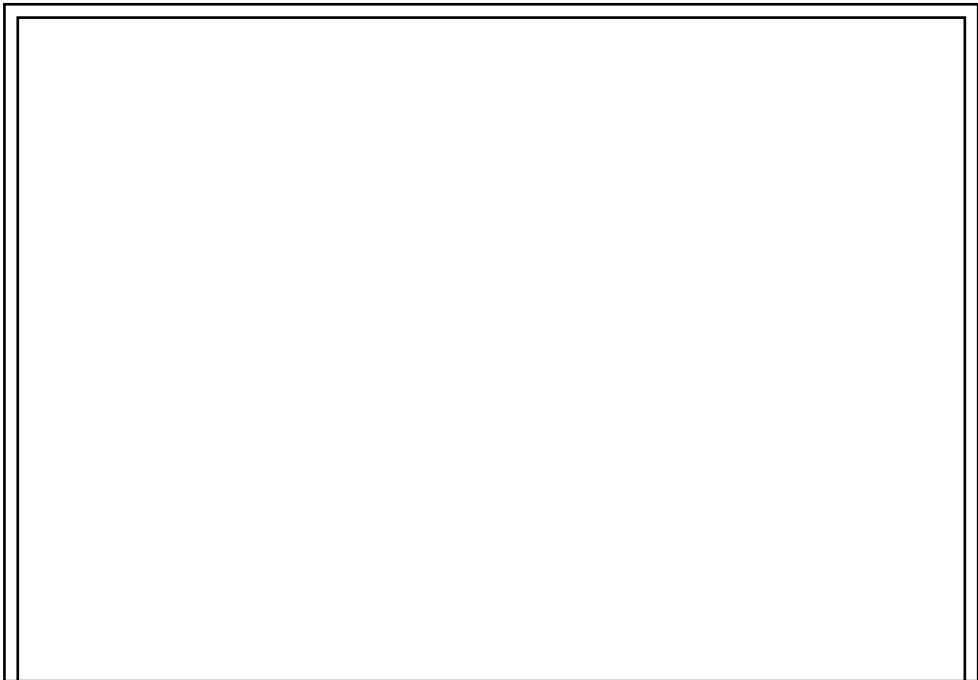
Rating: **2.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – David Crosby, Stephen Stills, Graham Nash and Neil Young (collectively CSNY) have long established their credibility as a rock/folk group of the highest order.

From their debut in 1970 with the album “Déjà Vu” (which is still one of the top-selling albums of all time) to their journey through the 2006 tour that’s chronicled in the new concert film “CSNY Déjà Vu,” CSNY is of a time and place in rock history that represents activism and social change.



The concert film “CSNY Déjà Vu”.
Photo credit: Roadside Attractions





The concert film "CSNY Déjà Vu".
Photo credit: Roadside Attractions

Band member Neil Young is the director of this film. The band travels America from city to city in a "Freedom of Speech Tour" with a basic, anti-Iraq War message. His band mates Crosby, Stills and Nash are along for the ride to help their old friend through the songs defining them and that message.

Interspersed between the concert footage are stories from the road concerning Iraqi war veterans and activists.

Stephen Stills even volunteers to play small fundraisers for any anti-war Congressional candidates who have races in the districts along the route of the tour.

Famous for writing the 1967 song "For What It's Worth" ("Stop, children. What's that sound? Everybody look what's going down."), he trots it out again in context of another war.




The concert film "CSNY Déjà Vu".
Photo credit: Roadside Attractions

Some places along the concert road provide challenges. Counter protests by talk-show hosts and neo-conservatives greet the quartet in several cities. Undeterred, the band defiantly plays Young's new song "Let's Impeach the President" as a climax to every show.


The problem with the film isn't what it's communicating. It is the awkward structure and tendency toward redundancy that director Young practices. It is a hodgepodge of songs, old footage of CSNY and stories of the Iraq War that just doesn't come together with any sense of narrative cohesiveness.

This results in a pacing that softens the anti-war arc by making the film dull and without a proper ending. Despite the large catalog of incredibly memorable songs, there seems to be no fire in the quartet in the umpteenth playing of the hits and the new songs don't have the same reverberation.

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Whether or not you want George W. Bush impeached, Young's plainly titled song isn't distinctive enough to move either side of the argument to action.

Even the footage of the talk-show hosts blathering on in their anti-CSNY mode smacks more of Republican talking-point payoffs than sincere rhetoric. The man at one show who sincerely desires another four years of Bush might want to balance his medication.

While Neil Young and the rest of the boys have legendary status as musicians, this doesn't give them an automatic pass as filmmakers and subjects. As in any message in a bottle, the clearer the glass that surrounds it the easier it is to read. Young's nickname is "Shakey," but in this film, it might as well be "Fuzzy".

"CSNY Déjà Vu," which features David Crosby, Stephen Stills, Graham Nash and Neil Young, opened on July 25, 2008 in Chicago.



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