

## Steppenwolf Savage Darlings

NEW YORK—Steppenwolf, West Coast hard blues quintet, bullied home its "savage soul" message to Fillmore East patrons Friday (8), outblasting the Buddy Rich Big Band and the Children of God, who shared the bill with the Dunhill group.

John Kay, Steppenwolf's lead singer who admits that, when at its best, the group sounds like a "wild animal or a dragon," snarled and snorted his solos with abrasive abandon. The results were loud, animalistic and some of the finest rock yet to boom through Fillmore. Suffering from an Elvis syndrome of suggestive dips and wiggles that more resembled deep kneebends, Kay nevertheless graded Fillmore as one of the best blues beltors to play here. His clarity of phrasing, rising out of his lion's roar like laryngitis practiced to the point of purity, lifted "Magic Carpet Ride" and "Hootchie Kootchie Man" to the intense heat of excellence.

The quintet, who look like draftees from a Hell Angel's

motorpool, play with the angry ecstasy of a thousand motorcycles gone amuck. Hard blues, sinister psychedelics and rip-roaring rock numbers pinned the listeners to their seats by the eardrums. Steppenwolf's play featured the heavy organ gushes of Galdy McJohn, tommy-gun stick work by Jerry Edmonton on drums and Mike Monarch's biting guitar riffs. Nick St. Nicholas handled bass and harmony, while Kay doubled on second guitar and harmonica.

Formerly a Canadian group called Sparrow who migrated to L. A. and San Francisco during the West Coast rock rush a few years ago, Steppenwolf has emerged from the battle of the bands as a major force in rock, weathering the trends to establish themselves as best sellers with their two Dunhill LP's and singles, "Born to Be Wild" and "Magic Carpet Ride." Led by composer - singer - guitarist John Kay, endowed with the vocal authority of a drill ser-

geant, Steppenwolf has proved to be a serious rock contingent whose music is impressing audiences with its rugged blues base and outstanding musicianship. Steppenwolf's other numbers, including "Somebody Else Will," "Don't Step on the Grass," "Sookie Sookie" and "Desperation"—all enhanced their image as a precision and peerless rock outfit. Only an extended version of "The Pusher" fell flat, as a long preamble of forced feedback lapsed into a dull electronic monolog.

A&M's Children of God, currently recording their first LP, kicked off the show with rock and soul numbers, which suffered from mediocrity, if anything. Cris Sigwald is an excellent rock drummer, while lead guitarist Gil Silva proved to be the talent of the lot with a compelling soul vocal on "The Children of God," the group's theme and last number. Buddy Rich demonstrated his virtuosity on the drums as the evening's second act.

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