music

[Carlly Simon: still anticipating...]

Last summer, Cat Stevens came into the Minn Hall around the time of the Tea for the Tiffany's and "Wild World." On the bill with him was an unannounced Carly Simon. As it turned out, the Cat didn't get in until his best nights and the tall, lanky female who preceded him put on a truly amazing set, and stole the show.

Things have changed for Carly Simon since then. Shortly thereafter, "That's the Way I Always Heard It Should Be" was released and became a number one hit, followed by her first album, Carly Simon. Her second record came out last year, and both it and the title cut, "Anticipation," became from the album. So now Carly Simon headlines her own concerts, leaving it for one of her warm-up acts to follow her path.

Such might just be the case with Harry Chapin, who came on the first Friday night at Symphony Hall. Indications from Elektra records tended to indicate that the concept might be the same kind of self-effacing thing for him as the Cat Stevens gig was for Carly.

As it turned out, Harry Chapin put on a very fine set, even if not enough to shadow the like of a Carly Simon. His accompaniment consisted of a cello, tender drum, and second guitar (as Harry also plays guitar), and their adept musicianship added a very appealing sound to his fine writing. He sings with a strong, clear voice, his best asset, and a sense of style which propels with Taylor, and he definitely begins watching. Look for Harry Chapin; he should make it in the music business.

The quality of Friday's concert was one of the worst starting from the very beginning. The crowd was a motley combination of boomercoops (mostly girls), guys andぼいてん, and a lot of middle-aged folks (including much of the Elektra hierarchy, and many friends and almost-inlaws of Carly's). The backing group for her was no less varied, ranging from an acid-rock Bluntschli to a kind of pseudo hip-looking and -sounding New York pianist to a balding bass and guitar player. Even with this confrontation on stage, Carly never seemed to lose complete domination of the evening. With her Amazonian body and rugged simian looks, she tends to enthrall the audience without ever opening her droopy lips. And when singing, the spell is even more mesmerizing, as her voice is incredible; she is one of the best female singers around.

It seems the only fault to be found with Carly Simon is her choice of material. She can belt out a number with the best of them, as well as maintain the right emotion for the softer songs, and, remarkably enough, the backing band seems to fit together well, giving strong support to her vocals even though having

the drummer continually beating balls out of the drums gets a bit amming among a large percentage of the audience. The Beatle's "O-bi-obu"-obla-dia is the same, and various of her lyrics are simply no worse suited. But, when she begins singing her love song (such as "The Lady's Still Growing" or "Kris Kristofferson's "I've Got to File This One") as it comes through, as a powerful, highly emotional, exquisitely off. But she can also put on a truly amazing set, which is how she won the music business.