Kinks still as good as ever

Sleepwalker — Kinks (Arista)

By Claudia Perry

The first of their recent albums may be a conceptual single, the Kinks' Sleepwalker shows that lead singer songwriter Ray Davies has lost none of the wit that has characterized his past work. The album is also a departure from the sloppy production that had been synonymous with the Kinks since Ray began doing his own mixing-board work in 1969.

The break with the past has not been total. The songs are reminiscent of those on Village Green Preservation Society, the first of the Kinks' concept albums. "Life on the Road" is a remarkable example of their concert approach. Stripping it of its complicated harmonies, it focuses on Ray's songwriting talents instead of production. Inventive and technically splendid, "May" is one of the best guitarist Ray Davies has written.

Lead singer Brian May provided a good deal of the musical excitement. His singing during "Dream Rock" was more than incredible. Having built his guitar and most of the sound-recording equipment, he played multiple-pair harmony for a time that seems off time for the enraptured audience. Inventive and technically splendid, "May" is one of the best guitarist Ray Davies has written.

Lead singer Freddie Mercury is vocally much more inventive here. His vocal parts are as arresting as May's guitar work. Mercury also displays a technical virtuosity.

Record review

Rumours, new Fleetwood Mac not bad, but more of the same

Rumours — Fleetwood Mac (Warner Brothers)

By Robert St. James

Fleetwood Mac, in their new release, Rumours, have taken the evening ways that made their last album, Fleetwood Mac, a huge success. In fact, they have even improved since that chart-topping album was released nearly two years ago.

The eleven songs on Rumours are strong throughout, giving the group's individual members the chance to display their talents that has catapulted them from obscurity as a blues band to the forefront of the pop music scene.

A major disappointment, though, is the absence of "Silver Spring," the flip side of the single "Go Your Own Way." A strong musical foil for Buckingham's is established by the founders of the group, John McVie and Mick Fleetwood. Their consistency creates the firmest percussion in Rumours, and McVie's handling of the bass line is particularly noteworthy.

The other three members of the group are guitarist Lindsey Buckingham, Christine McVie, John's estranged wife, on keyboards, and Steve Nicks, who sang the smooth hit "Rhiannon." The three alternates on vocals.

Fleetwood's"s five guitar work unimpeded himself with his performance on piano during "I Was Made to Love Her," the visual component of Queen's show is as awesome as their music. Their electric performance during the first encore, Fog carried the style for "Now I'm Here," as he did. The second song in the encore, "Stone Cold Crazy," was enhanced by the judicious use of stage lights.

But all the visuals did not rely on lighting. Freddie Mercury's and lead singer antics were campy. His best moment came at the beginning of the second encore. Dressed in a kimono, he strutted his way to the front of the stage. While belting out "Big Spender," he stripped down to his red-and-white striped shirts with red suspenders. For the rest of the encore, Queen performed Elvis Presley's material, with Freddie just as exuberant as if this were the first show of the tour.

Though Mercury's antics were campy, drummer John Deacon and guitarist Roger Taylor should not go without mention. Taylor took his drum solo but standard rock'n'roll. Guitarist Brian May and lead singer Freddie Mercury are the most noticeable members of the group. Bassist John Deacon and drummer Roger Taylor are the ablest if not flashy support. Their technical excellence, and musical electrics and stage effects for the encore, make sure that the show today was just an encore of the show that most bands would consider their début.