ROY ORBISON
Coliseum Theater
Latham, N.Y.
Tickets: $15.50

ROY ORBISON had little difficulty winning over the near-sellout audience at this recent show in the Coliseum, a 5,000-seat theater in the round.

The legendary Texan enthralled the crowd, playing just under an hour's worth of hits from the '50s and '60s. His three-octave voice has lost some flexibility but retains its pure and warm sound. Orbison still plays purposeful rhythm guitar.

The unlikely looking star—clad in black, with bovine hair and thick prescription shades—and a competent band burned on "Mean Woman Blues," a showboat version of his hit "Oh Pretty Woman," and a sweet "Blue Bayou." "Candy Man" leered fresh as ever, and Orbison blazed on "Down The Line."

Though he recently resurfaced on "Class Of '55"—a project reuniting him with other Sun Records mainstays, namely Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Carl Perkins—and has been working on an album with Will Jennings, J.D. Souther and Jeff Lynne, Orbison didn’t offer anything new at this date.

For that new album, Orbison also plans to collaborate with Huey Lewis. If the new material is effective, the record, due next spring, could be a dandy. This show was a goodbye from an ‘oldie’ whose voice can still chill up the spine.

CARLO WOLFF

LUCIANO PAVAROTTI
Hollywood Bowl, Los Angeles
Tickets: $250, $125, $50, $40

LUCIANO PAVAROTTI sold out the 18,000-seat Hollywood Bowl for this recent concert in a few short hours. It is a measure of his enormous popularity that this was in spite of hefty ticket prices (albeit for a very deserving cause, the Pension Fund of the Orchestra’s Musicians), and the disappointing cancelation by scheduled costar, Dame Janet Baker. Nevertheless, Pavarotti’s performance was almost overpowering and was certainly among the very best seen at the Bowl.

- Most performers might have been awed by the task at hand, namely how to project to the packed further reaches of this enormous open-air natural amphitheater. But not Pavarotti.

Like the rest of him, Pavarotti’s musical personality is larger than life, and when he’s singing in top form—as he was this night—his performance is a magical sight and sound. The singer’s tour ties in with his recent London recording, “Passione” and “Anniversary.”

Soaring into the upper registers for all the appropriate classics, Pavarotti dramatically maintained his way through the tailor-made arias of Donizetti and Verdi. But he also summoned up a wisp in the remnant of “Di Federico” from “I’Alesiana” by Francesco Cilea, proving that his prodigious gifts are still at the service of subtlety and sensitivity.

Following a brief intermission, however, Pavarotti proved that anyone can sink from the sublime to the ridiculous. In this case, it started with the dreadful “Mama” by Bixio. It’s hard to lower your standards after that, but the tenor promptly trotted out more “popular” confections along the lines of “Loisita” by Buzzi and “Non Ti Scordar Di Me” by De Curtis. Somewhere in a marathon of encores, Pavarotti even obliged with a version of “O Sole Mio.”

This is not to say that the singer didn’t do these offerings justice. Quite the opposite, in fact. He sang them brilliantly, and as if they were all masterpieces, verging with Verdi and Mozart and screening American and Italian composers. For his audience, the King of Sefanda substituting for the ailing Joao Sutherland.

But to give the people “Mama” after Verdi’s “Ave Maria” The great Italian composer must have turned in his grave.

IAN BLAIR

ANY GRANT
CHRIS EATON
Starwood Amphitheater
Nashville, Tenn.
Tickets: $10.50, $13.50

ANY GRANT’s recent performance here drew an audience of more than 10,000 comprising an interesting mix of families, Christian dieters and three backup singers. Like Grant, the crowd was clean-cut, polite, and full of energy.

Accompanied by a seven-piece band and three backup singers, Grant had little difficulty satisfying his followers. At some time early on when she sat down alone and played guitar, her songs sparked a powerful punch. The music was boosted by an abundance of lights and an audio system that provided a solid wall of sound.

Discarding most of her early material (except “Father’s Eyes”), Grant concentrated on songs from her recent albums, which are more techno-pop-oriented and less acoustically simple.

Many gospel artists are unable to resist the temptation to preach whenever a good-size crowd presents itself, but Grant avoided that trap, even though one might understand remarks about her Christianity.

Husband and guitarist Gary Chapman performed for (and among other good cause, a perforated eardrum). - Most performers might have been awed by the task at hand, namely how to project to the packed further reaches of this enormous open-air natural amphitheater. But not Pavarotti.

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