Talent in Action

BRUCE WILLIS
The Ritz, New York
Tickets: $12.50

BILLED AS "the return of a legend," television superstar Bruce Willis arrived in town for his debut Manhattan concert amid a blase of media hype. Despite the buildup, however, Willis appeared confident and comfortable on stage, displaying the cocky charm that has ingratiated him with TV-viewing audiences.

Supported by a thoroughly professional backup band, the Heaters, Willis kicked off his 50-minute set with a cover of "Secret Agent Man." Sporting a trench coat and shades, Willis made obvious references to the character he plays in the popular TV series "Moonlighting." Not surprisingly, this elicited enthusiastic response from the sold-out crowd. Willis may be an entertaining performer, but he is a merely adequate singer, possessing little more than an average r&b vocal style. His rendition of the Drifters' "Under the Boardwalk," though serviceable, paled beside the original. And on duets with June Pointer ("Respect Yourself") and Ben E. King ("Stand By Me"), Willis seemed to falter, letting the stronger vocalist take over. Other guest artists on hand at this date were Billy Joel, who played keyboards during an encore number, and saxophonist David Sanborn.

Whether Willis will garner serious musical recognition with his debut Motown album, "The Return Of Bru-no," remains to be seen. In concert here, the overall effect evoked memories of the Blues Brothers.

NADINE REES

PETER CASE
Club Lingerie, Hollywood, Calif.
Tickets: $10

EX-PLIMSOUL, PETER CASE created a sold-out hometown audience to a delightful folk-oriented set at the trendy Club Lingerie, but you didn't need a ticket to enjoy his act. Before the show, the artist took his guitar to the streets, playing and singing in the brisk night air to about 100 unfortunate literally left out in the cold in front of the packed club.

Inside, Case delivered an energetic acoustic set that drew heavily on songs from his Geffen debut album. The material did not suffer from its nonelectric presentation. For the most part, Case played solo, but he was sometimes accompanied by Martin Etzioni, formerly of Lone Justice, on mandolin and Andy Williams of the Williams Brothers on guitar.

Case romped through such.poi-

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