

# Mountain, a Rock Group, Rises From a Little Leftover Cream

By MIKE JAHN

A new rock group called Mountain may not entirely replace the late, honestly lamented British band Cream, but it is carrying on the tradition with power and respect.

Mountain was formed by Felix Pappalardi, the multi-talented producer of Cream. He plays bass with Mountain, and is joined by Leslie West on guitar, Steve Knight on organ and Norman Smart on drums. The group is appearing through tonight at Ungano's, at 210 West 70th Street.

Mountain is not a Cream imitator. There are many of these. Mountain's abilities surpass Cream's in several ways. The vocals, most of them by Mr. West, are far superior to what Cream ever managed. Norman Smart's drumming is not at all like Ginger Baker's unique style. And the addition of the organ (Cream was a trio: guitar, bass and drums) adds yet another dimension.

The similarities are in the bass and guitar. Mr. Pappalardi is an emotion bassist. Like Jack Bruce, who played for Cream, his bass snarls and punches in unusual, jabbing styles, rather than following meekly the lead of the guitarist. If the guitarist were a lesser man than Leslie West, Felix Pappalardi would scare him right off the stage.

Mr. West, formerly lead gui-

tarist for the Vagrants, is quite a talent himself. He is a fat mountain of a man, wearing buckskin with fringes and topped by a teased puff of black hair. Like Eric Clapton, who was guitarist for Cream, he leans toward great gobs of chords followed by short pepperings of single notes.

In a manner few rock guitarists can manage, he wrings exquisite emotion out of each note. He seems to strangle it, then relents and lets the sound slip from his fingers. The mark of a really great blues and rock guitarist is the amount of variation he can squeeze out of one note. Mr. West, like Mike Bloomfield, is very good at this.

At Ungano's, Mountain is playing mostly its own songs, blues-rock compositions featuring the interaction between guitar and bass. The group is successfully exploring a plateau Cream might have reached had the group stayed together. That plateau is cooperation and enthusiasm. Mountain has it.

Appearing with Mountain is NRBQ, the Kentucky country-rock band. NRBQ is planning an album with Carl Perkins, one of the early rock stars and a major influence on Elvis Presley.

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