

Mamas and the Papas upstaged by warm-up act

By Peter Parisi
Herald Business Editor

The highlight of last Saturday night's concert by The Mamas and The Papas in Portsmouth was the group's 1966 folk-rock classic, "California Dreamin'."

But it wasn't the version concertgoers heard from the stage of The Music Hall — and it wasn't even performed by The Mamas and The Papas.

It came around 12:30 a.m. — about two hours after the concert ended — at the Howard Johnson's Hotel and Conference Center, where The Wheatones sang the song, with a fresh a capella twist, to and for the

group that had made it a hit record before most of them were even born.

Earlier in the evening, the Wheatones — an 11-member, female a capella ensemble from Wheaton College — had served as the warm-up act for The Mamas and The Papas at a concert to benefit the Prescott Park Arts Festival.

Then, afterward at a post-concert "cast party" at Howard Johnson's attended by both groups and by many members of the audience, the Wheatones serenaded the 1960s hitmakers with a sans-instruments version of "California Dreamin'" that obviously impressed and delighted the quartet.

Truth to tell, in many respects, The Wheatones stole the show earlier at The Music Hall as well, with a breezy

40-minute set of what could best be described as "neo-doo-wop." Especially good were a capella cover versions of The Everly Brothers'/Linda Ronstadt's "When Will I Be Loved?" with its vocal "cymbals," and The Tokens' "The Lion Sleeps Tonight," with its amusing jungle sound effects.

With just one of the original members of The Mamas and The Papas — Denny Doherty — among the quartet that performed for an audience of about 700, "California Dreamin'," "Monday, Monday," "I Saw Her Again," "Creeque Alley," and "Dedicated to the One I Love" bore scant resemblance vocally to the pop classics of the mid-1960s which fans had come to hear.

It was almost as though a group other than The Mamas and The Papas were on stage, performing cover versions of the songs the folk-rock quartet had made famous — and not very convincing covers at that.

The group as now comprised — Spanky McFarland (who took the place of the late Mama Cass Elliot, but whose crude humor was more reminiscent of Roseanne Barr-Arnold), Doherty, Scott McKenzie, and Laura Beebe Lewis — was only slightly more genuine than, say, an Elvis impersonator, and that was only due to Doherty's presence.

The Mamas and The Papas is a mere shadow of its former self.

I take a backseat to almost no one with respect to my affection for the oldies, so I feel I can say that The Mamas and The Papas should either call John and Michelle Phillips out of retirement, or the quartet as a whole should go into retirement.

There will no doubt be oldies-music fans who attended the concert who will strongly disagree with that admittedly harsh assessment. But if they were to be honest with them-

selves, they'd concede that what they really enjoyed last Saturday night was not so much the 75-minute performance of the reconstituted Mamas and Papas, as it was the nostalgia that surrounded the concert.

What the fans were really doing was savoring their fond memories of the mid-1960s — a more innocent and carefree time — evoked not much by the performance but by the songs themselves.

In that sense, it would have been just as effective — and less expensive — to stay home and listen to the nationally syndicated radio show "So Gold Saturday Night."



The new, but not improved, Mamas and Papas consists of a quartet of a potential six singers. Shown here are McKenzie Phillips, Spanky McFarlane, Scott McKenzie and Dennis Doherty. McKenzie Phillips was replaced by Laura Beebe-Lewis for this show.

Clarification

It was brought to our attention that The Seacoast Outreach Pro-



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SLEEPWALKER (R)	1:20-7:40-9:50
BASIC INSTINCT (R)	1:00-6:50-9:30
CUTTING EDGE (R)	1:05-7:10
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My Cousin Vinny (R)	7:00-9:30
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Wayne's World (PG-13)	4:30-7:00-9:30

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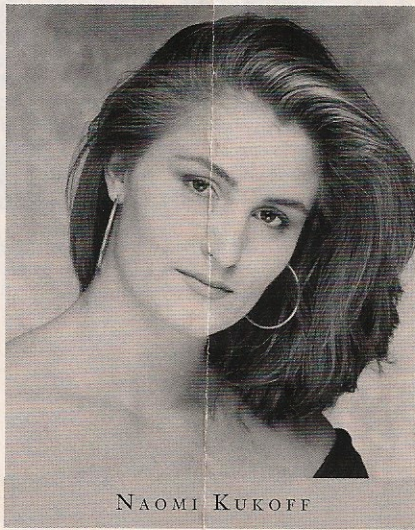
Beethoven (PG)	7:05-9:30
White Men Can't Jump (R)	6:50-9:30
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ROMANCE and QUIET MOMENTS

The opportunity to follow a dream does not come along for everyone. For Naomi Kukoff, though, the chance has not only arrived, but arrived early. At 23, the 1991 Wheaton graduate is turning her dream—a successful singing career—into reality.

"Singing has been my passion forever," says the former Wheaton and art history major, adding that she didn't consider that passion a serious career choice until after graduation. "I had sung in college and high school, and having heard a lot of professionals perform I was familiar with what's involved. It seemed like something I could do."

In the competitive New York City music world, Ms. Kukoff worked with a director and a pianist to put together her act. She also teams up with new songwriters who have



heard her sing and want her to perform one of their compositions. It's hard work, Ms. Kukoff admits, but she has received a lot of support from her family (most of whom are involved in the arts themselves) and from veteran singer Margaret Whiting.

Her investment of time and creative energy has begun to pay off. This fall Ms. Kukoff completed a five-week run of her own one-woman show at Eighty-eighth, a nightclub/cabaret in New York City. She has performed at several other small clubs in the city and, in November, recorded her first demo tape in preparation for making the rounds of record companies.

Looking back, Naomi Kukoff has high praise for Wheaton. "It was such a nurturing and positive environment," she says. "I was surrounded by people who wouldn't let me forget my talent. I know that sounds corny, but it was very important."

—JR