

## ORANGE COUNTY

## HILLMAN

Continued from F1

Hillman, the ex-Byrds and Flying Burrito Brothers singer-guitarist-mandolinist, singer-guitarist Herb Pedersen and bassist Bill Bryson. The newer faces are ex-Buckaroo Tom Brumley on pedal steel guitar, onetime Dizzy Gillespie drummer Tim Rogan and guitarist Jim Monohan.

Hillman found the southpaw guitarist playing in a bar near his home and tapped him to join after Jorgenson's original replacement, former Rank and File member Jeff Ross, left. Monohan is a fine player, but unlike his predecessors in the band, he isn't yet a distinctive stylist. He fit in with the band sound, but didn't much influence it.

Instead of trying to replicate its past, the group has shifted toward a softer, bluegrass sound that places the focus even more on its splendid harmony singing.

Along with the more prominent acoustic guitars, mandolin, Dobro and banjo in the arrangements, most of the musical color now comes from Brumley's steel guitar. His playing may not be as dramatic as that of his immediate predecessor Jay Dee Maness, but instead it is rich in atmosphere, swirling through the songs like a



ALLISON V. SMITH / Los Angeles Times

One of the newer faces joining Chris Hillman, left, and band is guitarist Jim Monohan. sage-scented breeze.

The generous 22-song set covered most of the group's finest songs—giving both its hits and obscure treasures equal effort—reached back to Hillman's Byrd days for

covers of Bob Dylan's "Mr. Tambourine Man" and "You Ain't Goin' Nowhere," and bravely assayed several tunes from their new "Life Goes On" album, due in August.

The hits make an impressive heap, given

how hard it is to foist tradition or originality onto the radio.

Desert Rose's songs abound with both. Harmonies can be traced back through generations of corn-fed singers, a bold instrumental approach draws from both bluegrass and the rugged Bakersfield sound, and lyrics were socially conscious years before it dawned on Garth Brooks that he could risk meaning something in a song.

Those hits Monday included "Summer Wind," "Ashes of Love," "One Step Forward," "She Don't Love Nobody," "Start All Over Again," and Pedersen's rendition of Buck Owens' "Hello Trouble." They tackled two other Owens' tunes, "Under Your Spell Again" and "Together Again" to showcase Brumley, who played on the original hit versions in the '60s.

The strongest of the band's catalogue tunes, perhaps because it has been heard the least, was "Twilight Is Gone," the saving grace of the otherwise moribund "True Love" album. Supported by Pedersen's aching Dobro tones and Bryson's melodic bass lines, Hillman, Pedersen and Bryson's harmonies were nothing short of thrilling.

They performed the majority of the songs from the new album, including the pending single "What About Love" and "That's Not the Way It's Supposed to Be," a tune that looks back upon a teen marriage from the

vantage of rocky experience. As such, it makes a weathered bookend to something as youthfully optimistic as the Beach Boys' "We'll Run Away."

One of the new standouts, surprisingly, is the Pedersen-penned "Hold On." Though he usually leaves the songwriting to Hillman, Pedersen has come up with a moving song about the impact of parents' fights on the fragile feelings of their children.

Introducing one of their new songs, "A Little Rain," Pedersen quipped, "Once again we're gonna butt on in and try to give our opinion." The group has never shied from taking a moral stand and fortunately is able to deliver its missives with a warmth that keeps them from seeming preachy.

The best of the new batch is "Walk on By," written by Hillman and Alan Thornhill. Couched in a dark, moody arrangement, Hillman sang of the plight of the luckless and our capacity to ignore them:

*Hidden by the wayside you will find her  
Standing in the shadows of hard times  
It is said that there but for fortune*

*Brother go you and I*

*Walk on by, pretend that you don't see her*

*Walk on by, don't lend a helping hand*

*There's a cold wind blowing through*

*The heart and soul of every man*