

Charity No Occasional Thing for Chapin

Special to The New York Times

EAST HAMPTON—"I guess it's the personal conceit of wanting to have an effect; it makes me feel good," said Harry Chapin, the folk-rock singer-composer who spends almost as much time these days on the "good cause" circuit as he does on the commercial concert stage or in the recording studio.

It was close to midnight in a classroom in the high school here. Mr. Chapin had just finished a two-and-a-half-hour "gig" for the Sag Harbor Youth Center. The \$5,000 he raised that Friday evening by performing with his brother, Tom, and a friend, John Wallace, before an enthusiastic standing-room-only crowd of almost 1,000 will help keep the financially troubled center to which his younger brother, Paul, belongs, alive for the remainder of the year.

Within a week he had made appearances in Huntington for the benefit of the Performing Arts Foundation, in Rockville Centre for the World Hunger Year Foundation and in West Babylon at a Young Explorers club.

Mr. Chapin will be featured at a Lively Arts Festival next Saturday and Sunday at the Harbor Arts Center in Huntington. The all-day program of music, dance and theater performances, workshops and arts projects will benefit the Huntington Arts Council and the Performing Arts Foundation.

"For me to do a paid concert tonight is not going to change my lifestyle at all," he said as he hastily scrawled his name and usually "keep the change," the signature of his first big hit, "Taxi," on the ticket stubs



The New York Times/Barton Silverman

Harry Chapin looking on as Debbie Mayo puts on make-up before a show at the Performing Arts Foundation.

and scraps of paper thrust at him by teen-agers lined up three-deep in the hall to get his autograph.

"The \$5,000 I could clear wouldn't mean so much, but it does for them. Look, maybe it's just my good old-fashioned liberal guilt. You know, I'm trying to find justification for having things go so well, for being so successful now."

Young Man in a Hurry

A young man in a hurry, Mr. Chapin, at 32, is not just anxious to scale show business heights. With a Gold Record for the current "The Cat's in the Cradle," five best-selling albums, and this upcoming Broadway show for which he has written the book, words and music for "an emotional, non-linear recapitulation of the last 15 years," he is already more than half-way up the ladder.

Now, he is into more "meaningful" things.

"I've got six children and if

we are on the Titanic destined to go down a mile away I don't want to be just making music in the ballroom," he said.

Besides occasional charities like Youth Center, Willowbrook or Cystic Fibrosis, and fund-raisers for politicians like Allard K. Lowenstein, Tom Downey and Ramsey Clark, Mr. Chapin is most intimately involved in WHY and the Performing Arts Foundation (P.A.F.).

"It is a heavy philosophical rap," he said. "I think we are coming to the end of our quantitative society. We are beginning to realize that we just can't have more—more cars, more houses, more jobs, more anything. We've got to work on a qualitative society."

A multitalented man who has made films (his documentary "Legendary Champions" was nominated for an Academy Award in 1969) and is writing poetry and screen-

plays along with composing music and performing, Mr. Chapin in his professional life is "trying to be a creator and all of these things cross-pollinate."

"I have been in films for seven years, but only through music was I able to gain recognition. You know, there's a bad and good assumption the moment you 'happen'—that's a terrible concept, 'happening'—that you never existed before. I was 29 when I 'happened' and maybe I shouldn't have before. I probably wrote 400 very lousy songs. And maybe it's better that I was 29 and not 22. I'd have had some false ideas if I had been younger."

"Now, I've got the maturity to handle it—and a wife—she's getting her PhD. in education at Columbia—who is a strong influence. Being a star gets me no points in my household."

Mr. Chapin, his wife, Sandy, and their children (three from her previous marriage, two of their own and an adopted youngster) live in Huntington Bay.

"Look, I'm enjoying all this; my success," he said. "That's the reason I'm smiling a lot. But I was a Joe Slob all my life and just because people cheer now doesn't mean I'm not a Joe Slob any more."