Cowboy Junkies delight with sad charm

By GREG REIBMAN

There were no sudden mood swings, no wild abandon, no ear-swatting solos and no surprises at the Cowboy Junkies' concert last night at the Berklee Performance Center. Instead there was just one soulful country ballad after another. That's the way this Toronto-based band likes it.

One year ago, the group had an underground hit with their tender cover of Lou Reed's "Sweet Jane." Last night's sold-out show -- and their new record, "The Cautionary Tales" -- establishes Michael Timmins' songwriting talents and confirms that his group likes playing at mid-tempo only.

Musically these space Cow-boys owe a debt to the Grateful Dead, John Coltrane and every country music artist (including opener Townes Van Zandt) that has ever penned a sad song. Their charms are subtle; their approach is low-key but also somewhat pretentious. And it's hard to figure out how such a young band can come up with so much material.

Even their set had a back-porch hominess. At center stage was a small table, white table cloth, a rose, candle, wine glass and chair for singer Margo Timmins.

The other Cowboys -- Margo's brothers Michael (guitar) and Peter (drums), and Alan Anton (bass) -- sat or stood around in a semicircle. Four part-time members added lovely flourishes of accordion, fiddle, harmonica and slide guitar.

Margo was captivating and charming. Her delivery offered the right balance of purity, lon-

COWBOY ROCK: The Cowboy Junkies are still riding the success of their first album, 'The Trinity Sessions.'

omeness and defiance. Songsmith Townes Van Zandt also makes a career in reflection. But the gravel-voiced Texas路 Texas road tunes stem from years of hard traveling, hard drinking, hard loving, hard luck and hard work.

New Kids join KISS blowout

Now Kids on the Block, Perfect Gentlemen and Rick Wo

have been added to the all-star line-up of performers scheduled for KISS-108's 11th anniversary party at Great Woods on June 2. They will be part of a segment dedicated to local talent producer Maurice Starr, the mastermind behind all three acts. KISS-108 management added that still more names will be announced for the show.

— DEAN JOHNSON ☆☆☆

Dolly Parton is negotiating the development of a Dollywood Theme Park in Hakata Prefecture, Japan.

The concept calls for Dollywood II to be of as many as seven theme parks in what is seen as one of the largest vacation destinations in the world.

John Candy will star in the $18 million comedy "Over My Dead Body" to begin production this fall for Dino De Laurentiis Communications. Eugene Levy is the director.

Written by Babaloa Mantol and Lowell Ganz, "Over My Dead Body" will be directed by Eugene Levy, who also contributed to the screenplay.

Canadian rocker Bryan Adams has once again pushed back the release date for a follow-up to his 1987 smash "Into The Fire." Adams initially intended on getting the album out by early '89, then September '89, then spring '90, and is now aiming for late October or November.

A&M Records reps explain that Adams scrapped all the work he was doing with producer Steve Lillywhite (of U2 fame), switched to producer Matt Lange (The Cars), but hasn't been able to come up with the sound he's looking for.

Sting is at home in England rehearsing and writing songs, reading material he bring to the studio later this year.