

happening here?

CONCERT ROCKS ITHACA

By Bill Henk

Score: Cornell two, Ithaca College one. Explanation: The Ithaca College community has been thrice blessed in recent months with that rarest of the rare—successive campus appearances by major recording artists who have of late generally ignored such halls of scholastic wisdom much like the plague.

Cornell captured an early lead in this battle of the two hills, scoring with Paul Simon. IC countered with a concert coup of its own—the Divine Miss M. But Cornell was not to be denied. The announcement soon came that Joni Mitchell had been booked for a February 3 date at Cornell's Barton Hall. The result was, of course, another sellout crowd, albeit a respectful one, some eight-to-nine thousand strong.

Opening the show for Joni was Tom Scott and the L.A. Express. Realizing that for anything as infrequent as a Joni Mitchell tour, the accomplished Canadian performer could have commanded almost any opening act she had wished, the question immediately comes to mind: Why Tom Scott? Why the L.A. Express? Who the hell are they? Well, the answer to that is perhaps a bit more obvious than many would ascribe. An examination of both "For the Roses" and her most recent, "Court and Spark", will reveal the following: "Tom Scott—woodwinds and reeds". In fact, a look at the authorship credits on "Court and Spark" tells us: "all songs composed by Joni Mitchell and Tom Scott". L.A. Express members John Guerin (drummer formerly with the Byrds, and well known for his session work) and Max Bennett (bassist of the Mothers) also play on the current lp. Joined by guitarist Robin Ford and electric pianist Roger Kellaway the fivesome constitute the L.A. Express, incorporating a jazz-rock sound that is pleasant and viable if not altogether new. The audience was nonetheless well-mannered and appreciative, reacting positively to solos well done, tempo changes well executed, etc. Well aware of their primary function on this particular tour, the Express played only 35-40 minutes before announcing Ms. Joni Mitchell.

With Tom Scott and the Express remaining as her backup band, Joni slowly made her entrance.

Wearing a somewhat elaborate bareback gold floorlength gown, Joni was met by scattered oohs and aaahs amidst the swelling wall of applause. Without saying a word she quickly tuned her guitar and launched into "This Flight Tonight", a song from her "Blue" lp. Reacting only with a nod of recognition for the audience's subsequent applause, Mitchell rotated back and forth between guitar and piano, occasionally trading off licks—her full, strong and resonant voice with that just incredible range and depth echoing the guitar of Robin Ford or the sax of Tom Scott. Throughout the night, as in this first set, Mitchell interspersed the new with the old—"You Turn Me On I'm A Radio" and "Woodstock" were split by "Free Man

in Paris", "Just Like This Train" and "The Same Situation" from "Court and Spark".

Joni Mitchell is indeed a songstress of rare talent. She allows her listener an uncommon introspection into her own very personal life. Every song accurately reflects a very part of herself—a feeling, a mood, a retrospection. Each album becomes a veritable slice-of-life statement of her own reality, a self-portrait if you will. She shares with us her loves—and her losses. And we, as her listeners, are able to sympathize and identify her personal tragedies and triumphs with our own. Confiding in us as few other artists ever have, Joni Mitchell has—perhaps consciously, but likely not—struck a rare and inseparable human bond between the performer (herself) and her public. That heartwarming, joyous and ever so distinctive laugh of pleasure that seems to spring so easily flowing from her beautiful lips only serves to make her even the more human and real. And thus we can begin to understand this talented songstress as she continually works her poetic sorcery, capturing human feelings and emotions in a way that only she can: "Caught in my struggle for higher achievement and my search for a love that doesn't seem to cease" (The Same Situation). Those lines in particular caught my attention during the first half of her concert Sunday night. For the critical listener or avid fan there were, I'm sure, ever so many more.

An intermission, stretching on to 40 minutes, followed "Woodstock". When Mitchell came back she was solo and attired in a brilliant purple floor-length gown of goldish trim. Still without

uttering a word in a way of greeting, she began with "Cactus Tree" from her "Joni Mitchell" lp. "Big Yellow Taxi" was next, featuring a somewhat amended and slightly altered final verse:

"Late last night I heard the screen door slam
And the big yellow taxi took away my old man—again"
And into the chorus: "Don't it always seem to go/That you don't know what you got till it's gone....."

At long last rapping with her audience, Joni related the story behind the song "People's Parties". Switching to dulcimer for "All I Want" and "A Case of You", she returned to the guitar once more for "For the Roses", a song she intro'd as "another in a series of who biz rejection songs", again giving her audience an intriguing behind the scenes look at the inspiration for much of the lyrics. Tom Scott's off stage flute matched the lp note for note as he accompanied Joni on "Cold Blue Steel and Sweet Fire". It was back to the piano one more time for "Blue" before finally finishing the solo set of the show with "For Free".

The full band then returned, assisting Joni on material from the new lp. Mitchell continued to musical chairs with the guitar and piano before finishing strong on the acoustic with "Clouds" and "Raised on Robbery"; everybody going all out on this grand finale. The audience rose to its feet for this rollicking number, the only song of its tempo Mitchell has ever recorded. And Joni, for her part, seemed to be having a grand old time.

The applause thinned to a dull roar as the matches were lit. A few thousand matches and several minutes later Joni returned, cigarette and coffee cup in hand. Going straight to the piano, she offered "Blonde in the Bleachers" before coming front and center for the finale, "Twisted". The pop/vaudvillian reading of "Twisted" more resembled a combination of the styles of Bette Midler and the Pointer Sisters than anything Joni has ever done. Its rendering here, at the close of an evening's worth of beautiful music however, was quite a surprise. Although it no doubt ranks as my least favorite Joni Mitchell song of recent years, neither I nor anyone else in attendance had any real cause to complain. Two hours plus of extraordinary music, an understanding and respectful audience, and a very human and enchanting performer. One could hardly ask for more.

AMERICAN FILM COLLEGE THEATRE FESTIVAL

By Rick Bernstein

The American Film Theatre was heralded as films with culture that would bring back the thousands absent to the movie house. So far it has been a critical success but, with the exception of the initial two entries, it has fallen short of entertainment. The very reason that audiences fled, the lack of satisfying entertainment, is the very reason the film *Luther* has failed.

This play-adapted from John Osborne's play of the same name, is devoid of any feeling or emotion. Stacy Keach does the best he can to hold together this loosely scripted and under-directed production. But even his tremendous talents were not enough.

The play is based on the life of Martin Luther the rebellious monk who places his faith in the scriptures and not the hierarchy of the church. He spreads the seed of revolution in the common man, and fighting is soon at hand. But instead of supporting his followers he encourages the existing powers to subdue the fighting.

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The director, Guy Green, tries to make Luther an introspective and eternally dissatisfied character, with the use of psychosomatic fits and reoccurring constipation. But the character vacillates, serving to confuse the audience to the point of distraction. A minor character becomes narrator of the film, on a play which proves to be disjointing despite the hopes it would clarify and give a sense of unity to the play. The director removes all color of emotion by having the characters underplay their roles. Because of this we rarely empathize with any of the characters. Only a couple of performances shine through the murky mess. That of Hugh Griffith, who played the part of John Tetzl is one. Tetzl sold indulgences, money in exchange for pardoned sins, and represents the very essence of the church that Luther hated and wished to change.

Luther's father had wished him to be a lawyer. Instead, Luther is "lost" to a monastery and there Luther makes his father proud, in spite of his original opposition. Patrick Magee is splendid as Luther's father, displaying all the correct emotions.

Even though the director had a less than lavish budget to work with this picture is a total waste, basically because it didn't stir any emotion in the viewer. The audience does not fully identify with its hero and can't evoke the slightest tear in this tragedy.

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