



JONI MITCHELL AT 'RIVERBOAT,' CHUCK AT '7 OF CLUBS'

Joni and Chuck Mitchell: Both are rising folk stars

By ARTHUR ZELDIN
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I think of the folksinging Mitchells—Joni at Yorkville's Riverboat, husband Chuck at Scarboro's 7 of Clubs—as somewhat of a matched set. It's not that they do a duo or the same kind of act; they don't.

But both are tall and fair and spare, with fine bone-chiselled faces. Where she has an excellent sweet soprano tempered with rich lower registers, he has a quality middle-range baritone enriched by shades of masculine sweetness. Where she cloaks absurd humor beneath smily wholesomeness, he hides neat irony beneath clean-cut deadpan.

Both have a quiet authority and an unassuming grace about their appearances on stage. And both have fresh, individual talents whose scope goes beyond that normally associated with people called "folksingers." The Mitchells should, and likely will be more widely known than they are at the moment; here are introductions.

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*"... My gentle relations
have names they must call
me
For loving the freedom of
all flying things."*

This is a line from one of Joni Mitchell's many compositions. "Song to a Scag-gull" (which Buffy Sainte-Marie, who was in the Riverboat audience, will also per-

form in the near future.)

The line is not one of Joni's best, although it is a good one. But it is indicative of her love of nature, the natural freedoms and inevitabilities which influence her every personal mood and many of her best songs.

"Urge for Going," "Winter Lady," "Come to the Sunshine," for instance, are lyrics which tell tales of love or loss or knowingness; but they are songs which would not exist without the portraits they paint of the changing of the seasons.

Joni Mitchell was born and bred of the Saskatchewan prairies, and much of her best music continues to reflect these origins.

As with the songs themselves are a blend of freedom and inevitability—the freedom of language which creates out of simplicity and near cliché a gently unexpected image and mood, set within the inevitability of tight rhyme schemes and progressions.

Joni readily admits that writing poetry and writing songs are two different things. Still, her songs, as songs, are poetry. And the sometimes lilting, sometimes poignant tone of their melodies are perfectly integral both with the lyrics themselves and the capabilities of Joni's voice.

So, despite the fact that her own guitar work occasionally does not equal the richness of her music, Joni Mitchell is a formidable artist.

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"Will Holt says that Brecht's songs always seem to occur in smoky and desperate places, and sometimes it seems the whole damned world is getting to be like that."

This is Chuck Mitchell talking about Brechtian actor-singer Will Holt's and his own affinity for the music of Brecht-Weill. In Monday night's set at the 7 of Clubs, Mitchell did Brecht's "Mandalay Song," "Sailors' Tango," and "The Brandy Merchant."

With his one voice and one guitar, Mitchell did as valid, as theatrical, and as musical a job with Brecht-Weill as Martha Schlamme and Will Holt did a couple of seasons ago in "An Evening of Kurt Weill."

For Mitchell, "folksinger" is a particularly limiting label, even though he does do the occasional Eric Anderson song ("Broken-Hearted Momma") or Dino Valenti's lovely "Let's Love One Another."

No, Mitchell is much more than simply a folksinger: He is a singer, an actor, and an intelligent, tasteful arranger of the variety of musical styles and moods his act is made up of, from shaggy Brecht to lyrical "Fantasticks" ("Soon It's Gonna Rain") to brittly silly Flanders and Swann ("I'm A Gnu").

Even now Chuck Mitchell deserves the kind of concert or cabaret showcase he hopes to be able to have in a year or so.