

# Moments of beauty from Joni Mitchell

"... now comes the morning, wet with the kiss of evening."

Aglow in a soft spotlight, Joni Mitchell sang the words in a voice as crisp and fresh as the morning she was singing about. It was a moment of sheer beauty.

But it was not the only such moment this 23-year-old native of Saskatoon provided last night as she opened a one-week engagement at the Riverboat coffee house in Yorkville. In her first set she sang six songs, each one her own composition and each endowed with its own share of the Mitchell magic.

Visually, Miss Mitchell was the epitome of what every producer of television beauty cream or shampoo ads must dream about: high cheekbones; lustrous, blonde hair; full lips and brilliant smile. But don't let just the looks of this girl dazzle you. Listen to her.

Miss Mitchell sings in a clear, soprano voice of extraordinary range and flexibility. She displayed all of these characteristics when she sang her favorite song (and now one of mine too), *The Urge for Goin'*, in which her voice proved to be a delicate instrument playing subtle counterpoint to her masterfully played guitar.

But Miss Mitchell also turned out to be a composer and poet of talent that far outstrips most contemporary writers in the folk idiom. Her melodies are by turns stirring, soothing and haunting. The mood is always coupled with beautifully simple, yet highly evocative poetic imagery.

In *The Urge for Goin'*, she sings of the sun that turns "traitor cold" in winter, or her love with "summer-colored

skin", using metaphors reminiscent of a Robert Frost or Dylan Thomas. And in David, she evoked an appropriate air of joyousness with the lyric: "The song that he was playin' Was nothin' less than prayin'- And nothin' more than sayin'- I'm alive."

It is a rare pleasure to hear a young performer as accomplished as Miss Mitchell. She is another performer's performer, one of that unusual



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breed who is admired by her fellow singers.

In her audience last night were Phil Ochs, Buffy Sainte-Marie and David Ray, the last of whom was moved to strum an imaginary guitar as Miss Mitchell sang *Night in the City*, a song inspired by Yorkville.

Miss Mitchell, a comparative newcomer to club work, also seems to have a natural gift for establishing rapport with her audience. Hopefully she will manage to remain honest, avoid glibness and hipness and will return again soon to Toronto. —M.S.