

Joni Mitchell enraptures 3,000 fans

By BOB SMITH

The good vibes were almost palpable Wednesday evening when Joni Mitchell played and sang for about 3,000 enraptured fans at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre.

On piano, guitar, and dulcimer Joni played her own accompaniments for a lot of new material, much of it from her recent Reprise album. Even after one has heard her songs several times, and listened with careful concentration, she still manages to evoke new images with successive performances.

Her voice has a liquid, clear quality, and occasionally on vowel sounds, particularly something like "ow", there is a haunting Gaelic tinge. Her low notes are often bell-like in timbre.

As she moves through the logical but unpredictable intervals, that is, the spaces up or down from one note to the other of her composition, there is evident an elfin gawkiness, almost a yodel or some other form of voice-breaking sound. Believe me, it all fits in her scheme of things.

For me her most carefree flights of vocal fancy occurred when she used the dulcimer.

Joni sang nearly two dozen songs, and



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—Ralph Bower Photo

what a spectrum they spanned. She made vocal sense out of electricians' terms strung together: input, output, black tape, etc.; constructed a love song

out of holy wine titled A Case of You; diffused holiday memories of the Mediterranean throughout the theatre with a song about a mean old Daddy called

Carey. Its opening line: "The wind is in from Africa".

The crowd reacted with rolling waves of applause and brought Joni back for two encores, one a response to a shouted request, The Drummer and The Fiddler done in the difficult a cappella manner.

The final song, The Circle Game, revolved around a rather corny trick that came off. Joni was accompanied by supporting star Jackson Browne and both her managers, Elliot Roberts and Arthur Aturo.

The evening of quiet sounds began with a relaxed 45 minutes by Browne, a Los Angeles native in his mid-20s.

His vocal and instrumental styles were as spare as his slender frame. Here for the first time, he was remarkably at ease throughout the set, alternating guitar and piano behind a strong dry voice.

Several times he had a strong impact on the audience; once with a religious song in waltz time written by a friend, John David Souther; then with the unusual Jamaica, contrasted with the boogie guitar of Little One, then he wrapped it all up with powerful closers, Song for Adam and My Opening Farewell.

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