

The Scene

FREE WEEKLY

ENTERTAINMENT

FEBRUARY 21-27, 1974

Northeastern Ohio

Vol. 5, No. 7



Hello, it's me,
Todd Rundgren and
my new album is
reviewed on
page 6



SOFT MACHINE
Smiling Dog Saloon
February 18

Soft Machine were very good in concert at the Smiling Dog, but it was not quite the show I had expected. Most of the band's records (and especially the latest one, from which I thought the band would draw its material) feature keyboardist Mike Ratledge and reed player/pianist Karl Jenkins. But in their first set Monday night, those two were far from the focal points of the group.

It was drummer John Marshall, bassist Roy Babbington and a very recently

added guitar player (whose name I didn't catch) who supplied the show. Both Marshall and Babbington created infectious rhythms, and with equal ease turned out fine solos. Even when Babbington fed his bass through Ratledge's synthesizer, the result was not the gimmicky type you might expect.

That guitar player was astounding. He was unbelievably fast and very clean at the same time. From the first few bars of his solo in the band's first tune, it was clear that he was going to dominate the show. Occasionally his leads became monotonous in their speed, and I longed to hear him play a simple lick, but most of the time I was captivated.

The remaining two members, Ratledge and Jenkins both soloed, but seemed to be content to simply provide the backbone of the band. Their soprano sax/synthesizer

interplay and piano duos were very effective.

As far as material performed, I wasn't able to recognize any of the numbers from Soft Machine albums. The compositions, unfortunately, weren't much, but the sensitive presentations of them by the band made up for their structural weakness.

Oh, yeah, guitarist Bill DeArango and his trio (Skip Hadden on drums and Ernie Krivda on reeds) opened the show with their music that DeArango claims no one will understand for awhile. I didn't understand it.

Mark Kmetzko

JACKSON BROWNE
LINDA RONSTADT
John Carroll Gym
Feb. 15th

Linda Ronstadt opened the show, commenting that "This is the third time I've been to Cleveland since this fall. "Her set was tight, but hardly as effective as Browne's exceptionally well-balanced material and dynamic performance.

Linda Ronstadt, in a short blue dress, did her best, but had to blow her nose between several numbers. As usual, things like "Love Has No Pride" and "Don't Cry Now" prove that her newer material suits her much better than the hit-and-miss styles she tampered with in the past. Probably the highlight of

her set, which included several, terribly embarrassing jokes, was her version of Rick Roberts' "Colorado."

"Take It Easy" set the pace for Jackson Browne's dynamic set. It showed the talented David Lindley (who would eventually play guitar, piano, dobro and slide guitar) on electric fiddle and Doug Haywood on bass and vocals. Jackson's drummer, obviously not one of the musicians who were FOR EVERYMAN (as were Haywood and Lindley), fell behind on a few parts, but eventually caught up and held his own. "I Thought I Was A Child" and "Jamaica, Say You Will" were absolutely beautiful.

Jackson managed to babble between several songs, often explaining himself into silliness and finally just resorting to playing the song when his logic failed. Other than that, his music was mostly handled with reverence.

Toward the end of the set, Linda Ronstadt's guitarist and drummer were called in to augment his band. Now, with two drummers and an extra piano and guitar player available, the band launched into "Redneck Friend," his rousing and rocking tribute to Greg Allman. He closed the show with Chuck Berry's "Sweet Little Sixteen," as if to prove that even old, serious-looking Jackson Browne can rock and roll — which he can.

Two encores were all he could handle, but "These Days" finished things up perfectly. A totally enthralled audience and a very tired band seemed to thank each other as cheers calmed down and the stage was emptied.

Jim Girard

JONI MITCHELL, TOM SCOTT & THE L.A. EXPRESS
Music Hall
February 13

Despite her egotistical attitude, Joni Mitchell managed to put on a pretty damned good show last week at Music Hall. When one is a "legend," (as is Mitchell) it's often hard to live up to a critic's expectations, but the lady's performance was all I had hoped for.

Although she touched on some earlier material ("The Cactus Tree," "For Free" and others), most of Mitchell's 90-plus minute concert was built around her "new period" stuff, that is, her last three albums. Most of the time she was wise to intersperse the new songs with older ones, lest the former's dryness (let's face it, they aren't

great melodically) get boring. The concert was well-arranged. Mitchell's band, Tom Scott & The L.A. Express, opened the show with half an hour of their own fine jazz/rock. Then Mitchell emerged from the wings to join them for a half hour of her light rock tunes. After intermission, Mitchell returned and did 50 minutes of solo things (accompanying herself on piano, dulcimer and guitars) and the finale again featured her and the band together.

It was only during that long solo period that Mitchell's music wore thin. A near-hour of her introspective, and somewhat monotonous, songs was a bit



Joni Mitchell

Scene photo by Gayne Petranek

much for me. Saxophonist Tom Scott and company should be greatly commended. Although they were not much when it came to soloing (except at times for guitarist Robin Ford), they were super-funky as an ensemble and a joy to experience. Their work behind Mitchell was excellent; in fact I wonder if she would have been anywhere near as good had they not been there.

A comment about the earlier reference to Mitchell's attitude. I resented the horrible snobbishness she exhibited during the first half of the show ("thank you's" were non-existent) but I guess I can forgive her in light of her fine overall performance.

Mark Kmetzko



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RANDY MYERS

The Scene
Circulation 65,000
Copyright 1974
by Northeast Scene
Office 1314 Huron
(below Publix Book Mart)
Cleveland, Ohio 44115
Phone: 241-7550
Pub. Richard J. Kabat
Assoc. Pub. Daniel M. Kabat
Editor Jim Girard
Ass't Ed. Mark Kmetzko
Sales Mgr. Val Kaiser
Circ Mgr. Lawrence Marecki
Dean Kulhanek
DEPARTMENTS
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ADVERTISING
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SUBSCRIPTIONS
\$9.50 one year, \$5.50 six months. Send name, address and zip code with check or money order to Subscriptions Dept., The Scene, 1314 Huron Ave., Cleveland, Ohio 44115.



Scene photo by Gayne Petranek