

FOLK MUSIC

# Joni Mitchell sings a sunny anti-blues

By PETER GODDARD

The anti-blues, the folksy, sunny, all's-well, happy half-division of life seeped through all of Joni Mitchell's songs like golden corn syrup, as she opened a two-week engagement last night at The Riverboat.

With all the innocence of a helpless high-school cheerleader, she raised her voice, for all its breathy uncertainty, into Joan Baez-like silver-lame soprano — only to be drowned out by the droning of her guitar chords. And all the skillfully manipulated images of her lyrics (she writes all her own material) would dis-

appear like a washed-out Monet print.

It is unusual in this total-environment McLuhanistic age to run across message folk songs, but Miss Mitchell's songs (at least what I could hear of them) retained a personal message. "I read very little," she said, "and if my songs have been influenced in any way, it is only from what I've read in high school."

And although her songs are at cultural cross-currents with the Irving Berlin-Lerner and Lowe-Richard Rodgers regime, neither have they the Brechtian bitterness of Bob Dylan's writing. Nor do they go off on psychedelic side tracks as have the Beatles'.

In the Wizard of Is she sang of "the happy ending stories that you hear," and in an introduction to Just Like Me, she complained that "there was something missing" in all the protest songs that were being written.

While avoiding the saccharined sentimental sophistication of many of the non-rock popular songs, her's were still too flowery and fanciful. And in this case the medium compounded the message.

"I've know people who've interpreted my songs differently than I have. But although my songs are all my own, they're like most modern music, they borrow everything . . . why, I've even got a blues or two."

But for Joni Mitchell, the blues are the contented blues of a well-bred, well-heeled, well-informed ex-Saskatoon female folk-singer.