



Photo by Mike McGee.

Joni Mitchell held 9,000 persons in the palm of her hand Monday night at Memorial Auditorium.

Concert in review

Mitchell casts spell over sold-out house

By PETE OPPEL

Joni Mitchell did something Monday night at Dallas Memorial Auditorium that no other woman in show business could accomplish.

In fact, there's probably only one man in popular music who could do what Joni did. That man was on stage Monday night, but wisely Bob Dylan played only one song—a tune on the piano in the backstage dressing room—and for the rest of the night remained behind a black curtain tapping his cowboy boots to the music of Joni Mitchell.

For this was Joni's night.

She coaxed a badge off a policeman's chest and coaxed love and admiration from the 9,000 persons who sold out the auditorium.

Joni Mitchell sang 21 songs, including her one encore number, concentrating on the songs she included in her last two studio albums. She sang seven numbers from her last album, "The Hissing of Summer Lawns," and six from the studio album before that, "Court and Spark."

SHE ALSO SANG three songs from "Ladies of the Canyon," two from "For the Roses," one she wrote for her live album, "Miles of Aisles," and two new compositions, both of which were in a less jazzy vein than her recent efforts and both of which reflected back to her more personal style of writing—something she escaped from on "Hissing."

Both of the new compositions were tinged with humor. The first concerned a woman hitch-hiker and her battle with the preying male "coyote" and the second was a plea to "come over and talk to me."

But what Joni Mitchell can do that no other woman in the business can is stand alone on the stage with just a guitar and hold an audience that size completely spellbound. Joan Baez was able to do it a long time ago, but she can't anymore.

THROUGH MOST of her 110-minute set she was supported by one or more members of the L.A. Express. But after her three opening numbers, "Help Me," "Love or Money" and "Free Man in Paris," she sang the next six without any outside help. On the first three, "For the Roses," "Cold Blue Steel and Sweet Fire" and "Big Yellow Taxi," she accompanied herself on the guitar. On the next two, "Shades of Scarlet Conquering" and "For Free," she accompanied herself on the piano. She returned to the guitar for the sixth one, one of the two new compositions.

During her two piano numbers a large group of people clustered around the stage to take pictures. It seemed to annoy Miss Mitchell to the point of almost forcing her to break her concentration in mid-song. After the security force wisely coaxed the photographers back from the stage, Miss Mitchell added a new wrinkle to "For Free" just for the those selfish few: "And I'll play for you if you'll listen to me."

MISS MITCHELL'S soft power was so evident that it elicited a formal apology from one man in the audience who, during the regular pre-concert frisbee throwing madness hit a woman in the face with a flying disc, formally apologized. "I hope it didn't ruin the concert for her," he said afterwards. "It certainly tainted it for me."

After Miss Mitchell's encore of "Twisted"—the only song of the 21 she sang she didn't write and one in which she made passing reference to Dylan as one of her "looney friends waiting back in the wings"—she bent down at the foot of the stage and picked up three long stem roses that were hurled from the audience and a package someone placed there for her.

She then spied a policeman and after several seconds of coaxing, convinced the officer to unpin his badge and give it to her. Miss Mitchell placed the badge on top of the package and the roses and walked from the stage.