

PERFORMANCE

Joni Mitchell

and the L.A. Express At Hill Auditorium, Friday, February 27th

Joni Mitchell performed a low-key but enjoyable set at Ann Arbor's Hill Auditorium February 27th. Backed by the revamped version of the L.A. Express, minus saxophonist Tom Scott, Ms. Mitchell's hour-and-a-half set centered on her latest album release, *The Hissing of Summer Lawns*. Only three or four tunes dated back beyond her Court and Spark fame, and the new material revealed a very tough, show biz-jaded Joni Mitchell, a stance which failed to elicit a warm response from an audience of die-hard fans—many of



whom had waited overnight in the miserable Michigan weather to get tickets for the show. Joni Mitchell's last visit to Ann Arbor two years ago was during the period when she first began to blossom as a stage performer, and she was moving in a myriad of musical directions. This time she appeared somewhat less inspired and much less interested in "putting on a show." Her stage presence was aloof and less than satisfying, and she did nothing to dispel her public image as "Phony Joni." She appeared to be experimenting with the order of songs throughout the set, and at times the continuity was hopelessly lost. The warmth of many of her most enchanting songs just didn't come across.

One of the few golden oldies she did perform, "Big Yellow Taxi," was lackluster and feeble in its effect, showing that something is missing in this folksinger-turned-popstar. The highlight of the evening was the delicate "For Free" from the *Ladies of the Canyon* album, one of the two pieces Ms. Mitchell performed from the piano. She followed this tune with a haunting tale about the origins of the song in which she immortalized a faceless street musician. Ms. Mitchell explained that the clarinetist had had his instrument stolen and that she, feeling guilty about her success compared with the problems of the struggling young artist, had it replaced. The next day she found that he was handing out the same story again. "I gave you the romance," she waxed emotionally, "now I've given you the reality."

Ms. Mitchell's musicianship has matured, and her rapport with the L.A. Express was easy and

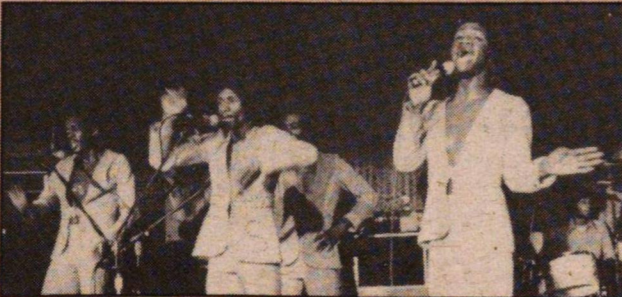
thorough. Her distinctive guitar style has been refined, yet she seems to have deleted the use of the dulcimer—once a much-favored tool—from her show. Unfortunately the reality of her performance unfolded little of the romance for which she has become known.

—Joel Seigel

Dynamic Superiors

At the 20 Grand

Playing before SRO crowds for two weekends at the 20 Grand, the Dynamic Superiors didn't take long to gain complete control over their audience. Non-stop hand-clapping started things off with a pulsating "On and On," and at the set's midway point the Superiors dipped into the classic bag for their impressions of the Marceles "Blue Moon," Lloyd Price's "Mr. Personality," the Chantels' "Maybe," and others. Tony Washington, the falsetto lead of the group, was in excellent form, adding sprinkles of spoken humor to his dynamic interpretations of the group's material throughout the show. His brother Maurice, the man with the deeeep deep voice, sent tremors through the room, while the other members of the five-man unit did equally well while sharing the leads. The group's choreography, rivaled only by more time and perfection, shows that the Superiors have been doing their homework for some time, and their rendi-



The Dynamic Superiors

tions of hit numbers "Shoe Shoe Shine," "Leave It Alone," and "Deception" turned the crowd into a bunch of jumpin' jacks as well. We can only offer our sympathy to those male groups who may have to share the same stage with the Dynamic Superiors—they've got it!

—Gerald Clark

Count Basie vs. Super Sax

At Detroit Light Guard Armory Friday, February 27

The music of Count Basie is coercive, subver-

sive, and happy as a crow in a cornfield. It coerces tired feet into movement and subverts a grimace into a relaxed smile. It is also the perfect music to be cabaretin' to on a chilly Detroit evening at the Light Guard Armory.

From the opening "bab-doodie-dah-dwee" the Basie band swung and swung even harder till you thought they'd never come back. The reeds were singing and the 'bones were growling, the trumpets spit their sassy licks across the hall and the Count, restrained and ambassadorial, played minimally but soulfully in the background.

Native Detroitier Al Grey, still in the Count's trombone section after all these years, strutted to the fore, plunger in hand, to engage the attentive audience in a conversation-semonizing-solo on "I Don't Get Around Much Anymore." If you weren't looking you'd swear someone was up there laughing and scolding, crying and flying with a rhythmic vocabulary unknown to most players. And if that wasn't enough, tenor magician Jimmy Forrest stretched out on "Body and Soul" in an unaccompanied cadenza that told the history of soul in three fiery minutes.

Butch Miles, boy-wonder of the big-band skins, played with a sureness and excitement mindful of his predecessor, Sonny Payne, a tough pair of shoes to fill. Freddie Green still brandishes a near-lethal rhythm guitar and a Buddha-like facial expression that reads "I've seen and heard it all before." And when he wasn't smiling and waving to an adoring floor, trombonist Curtis Fuller was adding his strong and personal blowing to the affair, especially on a relaxed "I Can't Stop Loving You."

As if all this wasn't enough, Supersax was on hand trading off sets with the Count and bringing back the steam, jump and bop of Charlie Parker. It's a little like looking at a faded photograph of Bird: Supersax plays unison transcriptions of his solos. And while one is ever-mindful that nobody really plays like the man himself, they are all skilled musicians in their own right.

Warne Marsh surfaced with the band and played so hard he had to keep his tenor on dry ice between sets, "Scrapple From the Apple" was done swingingly and featured pianist Lou Levy sounding like Bird's own Do-do Marmarosa.

The concert was a presentation of "The Men Who Dare," some committed folks who turned the proceeds into scholarship funds for those in need. We was swingin' for a cause, if you can get next to that. Sweet labor.

—David Weiss



Count Basie

Keith Jarrett

And At The Power Center Saturday, February 14

Keith Jarrett appeared at Ann Arbor's Hill Auditorium on St. Valentine's day and revealed his heart in song. Appearing with his band of some years—Charlie Haden, bass; Paul Motian, drums; and Dewey Redman, saxophones—Jarrett created some complex and intriguing music. The first half of the program was devoted, predominantly, to new material, except for a short take from the recent *Death and the Flower* album. Although somewhat conservative compared to his previous performances, the compositions were quite colorful and Jarrett displayed his ever-growing ability to play the soprano sax, playing melodic lines in unison with Redman as the rhythm section provided a tight foundation.

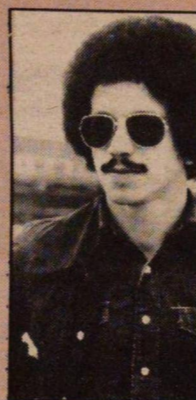
After a brief intermission Jarrett returned alone on stage, performing a half hour piano solo. This was what many folks in the audience had come to hear, and they were not let down as Jarrett exhibited magnificently the gifts he was blessed with, continually weaving colors and moods in what appeared to be a spontaneous outburst of creative emotion. It is in this vein that he reveals his true genius, and for many it was the most moving portion of the program.

The rest of the band rejoined him and they finished what was more than two hours of inspired music. Along the way they performed "Le Mistral" from the *Treasure Island* album, showing increased ability to manipulate old material in new and vital ways. It was while playing this familiar material that the individual band members, Haden especially, felt confident enough to wail. For an encore the quartet performed

the delicate "Introduction" and "Yaqui Indian Folk Song" off the same album.

A note of thanks should be paid to the Eclipse Jazz staff. They are mostly young and "less experienced" but were able to book a great show in a great hall and pull it off with few hassles. The Eclipse people were responsible for bringing McCoy Tyner to town during the fall, and promise Cecil Taylor for an April 15th date at the Power Center—some great music for a town that has long been denied.

—Joel Seigel



Keith Jarrett

David Bowie

At Olympia Stadium, Feb. 29-March 1

The unexpected storm in Detroit March 1st only seemed to heighten the excitement around Olympia Stadium, where David Bowie drew upwards of 10,000 people into the rain for his second night at the giant ice arena. The undisputed king of glitter rock and roll brought his 1976 touring company to the Motor City without glitz or glam, but it seemed to make little difference to his many fans as he took the stage dressed in casual black slacks and a vest, with a white open-at-the-neck shirt, to deliver hit recording after hit recording.

Bowie craftily

intermingled songs from his new *Station to Station* album with old favorites "Suffragette City," "Panic in Detroit," "Diamond Dogs," "Five Years," "Fame," and any number of others, demonstrating his theatrical bent by acting out the more dramatic features for his frenzied audience, a mob which started to get out of hand during Bowie's urgent "Stay If You Want To." He reached out and took a long-stemmed red rose from an admirer during "Diamond Dogs," and on "Wham-Bam-A-Lam" Bowie offered his Little Richard impression complete with unbuttoned shirt, torn-off cufflinks and vest.

Bowie's band—Tony Kay, keyboards; George Murray, bass; Dennis Davis, drums; Stacey Hagen and Carlos Alomar, guitars—turned in a workmanlike backing performance, with Davis especially outstanding, and Bowie built his way through a crowd-pleasing set which culminated in the two Iggy Pop-identified numbers "Sister Midnight" (very funky) and the well-known "Jean Genie," both played as encores for the still-raving fans. Waving kisses, Bowie danced off-stage and back into his main career as a movie star well assured of a turnout for his first film, *The Man Who Fell To Earth*. And that's where you'll see him next, if you see him anywhere at all.

—Edwenna Edwards



David Bowie

Billy Cobham / George Duke

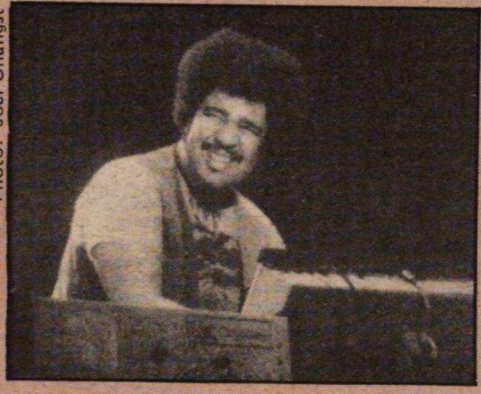
At The Showcase Theater, Feb. 27 The valiant efforts of Probity Productions

to broaden and enliven the Motor City Music scene received their first sell-out shot in the arm last week with the appearance of Billy Cobham and George Duke's recently synthesized ensemble. For those who are close to the whole jazz-rock explosion, it was a good opportunity to see two of its leading proponents in action. Unfortunately, equipment foul-ups and sound problems left the musicians without the full ability to hear themselves, which certainly detracted from the overall effect. Nonetheless, the evening had its high points.

Even if you feel, as does this reviewer, that "jazz-rock" frequently is swept under a tired rug of monotony and repetition, you have to hand it to Billy Cobham—the cat has enough energy to raise the roof, pounding at his skins with unmatched intensity. Of course, drummers like Elvin Jones are far more sophisticated in their approach, but Cobham gives it a hell of a workout.

Some of the more interesting moments of the evening came with the bass solos of Alphonzo Johnson, formerly of Weather Report. Alphonzo has a completely unique and lyrical approach to

—Robert Parker



George Duke



Billy Cobham

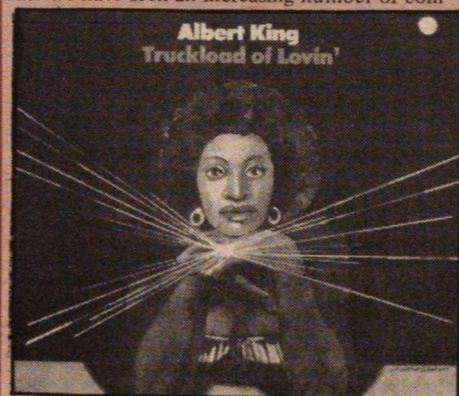
'Sides

Albert King: Truckload of Lovin' (Utopia/RCA) RCA; Luther Allison: Night Life (Motown); Otis Rush: Cold Day in Hell (Delmark)

The re-entrance of the blues—played by the original artists—into the popular music mainstream has been a long time coming. In the fifties records by Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, Otis Rush, Elmore James, Little Walter, Jimmy Reed, Lightnin' Slim, John Lee Hooker and many other blues greats were played on the same radio programs with Chuck Berry, Little Richard, Fats Domino, Bo Diddley, Ray Charles, and other originators of rock and roll. At the same time records by singing groups—the Flamingos, the El Dorados, the Moonglows, the Cadillacs and scores of others—were an equal segment of the mix, and the occasional jazz hit by Gene Ammons, King Pleasure, James Moody, Bird and some others would top off the programming blend.

Then rock and roll—principally white rock and roll—started to take over the airwaves, and the blues were heard mainly through the interpretations of young British guitarists and singers. These musicians paid explicit homage to their black ancestors, most of whom were (and are) still living, and the occasional blues master—Hooker, B.B. King, Freddie King—was allowed to record for a major label under the sponsorship of a rock star, but the sound of the blues in the original was, in general, very rarely heard in the radio bastions of pop rock and soul.

ABC Records' recent successes with B.B. King and Bobby "Blue" Bland—largely the result of treating their records as pop releases and marketing them in the same way rock records are marketed—would seem to have inspired a few of their competitors to look at the blues once again as a viable commercial form. At any rate we have seen an increasing number of com-

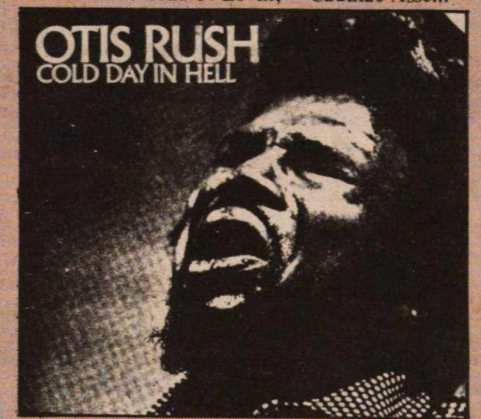


mercially and musically interesting records by several well-established blues masters hit the market in the past few months, and that's a development we would like to encourage.

RCA Records, riding the peak of an amazing wave of success with black music in general, seems to be putting its full promotional mechan-

ism behind Albert King's first release on the RCA-distributed Utopia label, *Truckload of Lovin'* (featuring the single "Cadillac Assembly Line," a testimonial to the attraction the automobile plants hold for rural black workers in the South), and it's paying off with some solid airplay around the country. Produced by top soul stirrers Tony "Champagne" Silvester and Bert "Super Charts" de Coteaux, mixed by L.A. session masters Wah Wah Watson, Joe Sample, Chuck Rainey, James Gadsen, and their pals, the mighty Albert King is still allowed to make his own natural music, and his voice and guitar are heard here in the full strength of their powers.

Most of the material seems to be carried over from Albert's days at the now-defunct Stax Records, which is just fine with King, and even the hokiest stuff (Bobby Eli's "Hold Hands With One Another") is redeemed by the King's powerfully fluid guitar choruses. Back-up voices and strings are heard throughout, and Albert is at his best on "Truckload of Lovin'," "Cadillac Assem-



blly Line," "Cold Women With Warm Hearts," and "Nobody Wants a Loser." Blues purists will shudder in dismay, but this writer wishes brother King all the success in the world with his new label and this fresh, up-to-the-minute approach to the blues.

Luther Allison, the young blues powerhouse who has long threatened to break out of the record industry ghetto and into the pop spotlight, has finally been given a full-scale pop production job at Motown, but the results are not quite so positive as one had hoped. While Luther's previous Motown efforts suffered from a lack of direction and an excess of hackneyed material, *Night Life* goes too far in the opposite direction, impossibly saddling Allison with straight-out pop numbers ("Turn Back the Hands of Time," "Full Speed Ahead," Dr. John's "Hollywood Be Thy Name," Allen Toussaint's "The Bum Is Mine," and Willie Nelson's "Night Life") and a Ray Charles vocal feature ("I Can Make It Through the Day"), none of which are at all suited to his classical approach.

When the material fits the maker the music is right on time: "Bloomington Closing," with a gorgeous (though uncredited) alto saxophone

—John Sinclair

THEATRE

Kimathi Performance Workshop: "The Eagle"

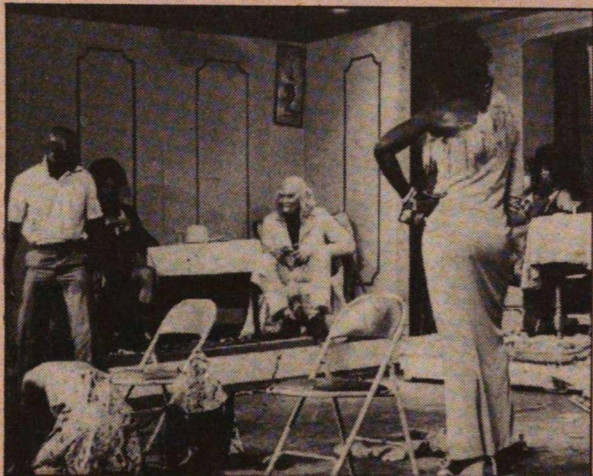
Following a two-month run at the McGregor Memorial Library in Highland Park, the Kimathi Performance Workshop brought its production of Saun-Roland Scott's play "The Eagle" a bit further down Woodward Avenue to Shaw College for three well-attended performances late in February. "The Eagle" is Scott's second dramatic work to be staged ("Prime Time" was also performed in Detroit) and has been selected to represent the Detroit Afro-American community in the 1977 Second World Festival in Lagos, Nigeria, next February.

After an introduction by brother Sahara from the Mwangi Arts Workshop, with which Scott is also affiliated, and spirited poetry readings by Rene Thomas and Scott himself, the Kimathi players took the stage to present Scott's bizarre, surrealistic portrait of a present-day America. Actually a modern morality play allegory dressed in the cartoonlike techniques of the "Theatre of the Absurd," *The Eagle* is set in a decadent high-class restaurant somewhere in America, a place where wealthy white people (played by blacks in whiteface) are fawned over and emulated by various sappy black characters who have found their way into this gateway to white ruling-class culture.

Uncle Sam (Robert White) is here attended by a simpering black flunky, (Saun-Roland Scott) who is charged with recruiting new black prospects to front for his master's system. Richard Nixon (Roy Mac) and a buxom blonde companion (Armand MacDowell) are also on hand, joined at table by an aspiring young black couple (Aisha Bowen and Ron Kelly) who fall all over themselves to please and impress the whites. Two prostitutes, one in whiteface, saunter onto the set looking for tricks; the young black hooker (Roxanna Gordy), done up in Chaka Khan

drag, is chosen by a white lesbian businesswoman (Ida Jackson), while the white whore (Pearl Anderson) shakes her big ass around the room in her own bid for some action. A swishing water (played by Rene Thomas in whiteface) tiptoes from table to table taking orders and bringing drinks, and an old black vino (Atiba Mwangi) staggers on and off the set.

The center of attention is held by a young black couple, John (Earl Fields Jr.) and Laticia (Netfa Nzanga Titelo), who play out a soap-



opera scene in which John is ceaselessly scolded by Laticia for not being proper enough, rich enough, or white-identified enough for her. John is vaguely a former militant, poet, cultural nationalist type who is trying to compromise his integrity in order to tighten up the conventionally desirable Laticia, but nothing he can do seems to convince her of his sincerity.

John's attempts at servility are spotted by the ever-observant flunky of Uncle Sam, who approaches our hero several times with offers from his boss—offers which are, however, loudly and roundly refused. Meanwhile the disgusting domestic melodrama of John-and-Laticia drags on, the gulf between the two growing ever wider as John waxes more and more wildly. Although his heart's desire is not moved by his intensity and conviction, the black woman at the Nixon table slowly becomes transfixed and then trans-

formed by John's irrepressible righteousness. As the tension builds center stage, where John and Laticia are seated, Ms. Bowen rises dreamily from her chair, pulls off her wig and evening dress, and emerges in close-cropped Afro and a bright print garment to kneel silently before John's table.

Goaded by Laticia, John reverts more and more rapidly to his former self; soon he is in a rage, finally turning his fury onto Uncle Sam himself, the puppeteer behind the whole obscene set. Sam pulls a gun and wounds John with a point-blank hit; during the ensuing confusion Ms. Bowen rises from her prostrate position, seizes Sam's gun, and blows him to bits. She then turns her piece on the whole crew of degenerate and sends them into sheer terror as she drags the fallen hero off the set to safety and the final curtain.

Since playwright Scott provides for the necessary suspension of disbelief with his carefully ridiculous characters and costumes, the allegorical action is clear and logical in its progression and completely credible in its conclusion, making for an exciting, emotionally and intellectually stimulating dramatic experience. Theatre lovers should check this one out—highly recommended.

—John Sinclair

The Detroit Historical Museum has mounted an impressive and inspirational show in Detroit photographer J. Edward Bailey's "Living Legends in Black."

A full-scale exhibition of photographic portraits of "people who to battle like hell to open the doors" to positions of power and influence for black Americans. Featured are architects, engineers, politicians, scientists, educators, publishers, writers, doctors, researchers, artists, business leaders, directors, and creative forces in many areas of life throughout the country over 150 black-and-white portraits ranging from 20X24" to 30X40" in size, displaying faces which glow with intensity from the experiences of their lives, so masterfully captured and preserved by the artists and his camera.

The exhibit was coordinated and assembled by Bailey as a contribution to the Bicentennial from the Black community, "to highlight some of the things we have done in the last 30 to 50

J. Edward Bailey "Living Legends in Black"

years as a nation, and to insure that some of these things would not go unnoticed." Bailey started the project in 1972 by sending out some 19,000 letters, seeking to identify and locate distinguished Black women and men in the U.S. By 1973 he had received more than 34,000 responses, and in 1974, supported by a grant from the Ford Motor Company and sponsorship by the Detroit Historical Society, the Detroit Bicentennial Commission, and the Detroit Historical Commission, Ed Bailey began his travels across the country to photograph 225 prominent Black people for this show.

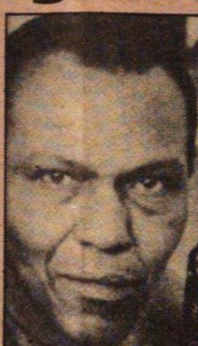
Bailey took great care in composing his portraits to set his subjects into



their natural work environments; consequently the compositions delve beyond the subjects' bodies with a depth of field that portrays their lives with great clarity and fullness. Each person's pains, achievements, and joys are reflected amidst their life environments so precisely that one feels part of their space, hearing the roar of the symphony or the silence of a relaxed living room, the rustle of papers in an office, or the clamor of machines in a factory.

The presentation at the Historical Museum, directed by Bailey himself, further intensifies the spirit and depth of his photos. Grouped closely together—but not cluttered—the photos complement one another and multiply the magnitude of each person's accomplishments. The soft yellow-orange lighting shed onto the photographs intensifies their three-dimensional quality and creates a bronze-like human tone which gives the portraits an immediacy and an intimate familiarity rarely seen.

The photos of what Bailey calls "role models



—Barbara Weinberg

ARTS