

death I was sorry to see him go.

The lovers certainly deserve most of the nudges, and the Egyptian court is beautifully evoked

Lighting effects the transitions between the two worlds, but imperial preoccupations take a definite second place. Brian Deacon's Caesar and his martial entourage lack the concentrated urgency needed to bring contemporary relevance to their antique concerns. However, an exaggerated dithering Lepidus from Stephen Lewis ensures plenty of laughs, and the barge scene goes with a swing.

The boozers provide their own music and the remaining sound effects are by Stephen Gilbert — an eerie, doom-ridden barrage of organ and percussion.

WEMBLEY

Mary Harron

Joni Mitchell



Joni Mitchell

WITH Joni Mitchell, the music and the life are inseparable. As a confessional songwriter the appeal is based on identification; with those of us who used to sit hunched by the record player, this performance offered a three-way meeting — between her memories, our memories, and the collec-

tive memory of the past 15 years.

Many of those memories are now acutely embarrassing, as are many of her early songs. On stage, however, those songs and the experiences they chronicled were set in context as stages of development in a life and a career: providing both a musical retrospective and a nice reconciliation with the past.

This was Mitchell's first world tour in almost a decade. She came on with slouched cap insouciance like an elegant Ricky Lee Jones, fronting her own rock 'n' roll band.

The band were a reminder that Mitchell has always had appalling taste in men, and her songs chronicled a string of liaisons with the West Coast's wettest rock stars. On stage she surrounds herself with efficient but unimaginative West Coast session men, with Michael Landau intruding clichés on lead guitar.

Public confession is a particular talent. It requires intense self-absorption, an obsession with the details of your own existence, and the innocence and confidence to carry it through. Both these last qualities still shine through in Joni Mitchell, just as the Saskatoon teenager still shows in the 40-year-old woman.

It is that honesty that makes her poetic affectations forgiveable: because all her affectations are sincerely held. And it explains why she has now followed the other LA superstars who locked themselves into their beach houses and belatedly tried to go "new wave." Her own route through jazz, may have led her into aimless tone poems, but has done wonders for her voice.

This performance had its longueurs, but the new resonance and control in her singing made for revelations. Even a solo version of For Free proved clear and touching, and the final encore of Woodstock, always a sentimental anthem to a discredited event, became a slow, brooding and sinister commentary on the delusions of her own past.