

# Joni Mitchell returns to Toronto to captivate a packed Massey Hall

By BRUCE KIRKLAND  
Star staff writer

Canadian folksinger Joni Mitchell, now 29 and on a North American tour after two years of searching for privacy, returned to Toronto last night as the grand lady of folk.

With her silken hair cascading down over her back, guitar in hand, she captivated a sold-out audience of 2,765 in Massey Hall with the lush beauty of her songs, the quiet, refined dignity of her presence.

It's been two years since she last performed in public in Toronto, at the summer Mariposa Folk Festival on the Islands, and three years since she performed solo, at Bernie Fiedler's Riverboat.

The long wait enhanced the value of the concert, which became a rare occasion—so much more than just another folk concert.

The audience's reaction reflected the mood of enchantment that Miss Mitchell created. When she quietly glided on stage before the first song, there was the strong applause of respect. As each of her songs filled the air, everyone warmed, clapping harder out of admiration.

By the end, when she sang *Clouds*, the applause was prolonged, overwhelming. And the climax carried its force through an encore, *My Old Man*, and after she left the stage again in her unassuming little-girl fashion, hands clasped behind her back.

## With her friends

So she came out again to sing *The Circle Game* with six of her friends, including Jackson Browne, who opened the concert, and Toronto folksinger Murray McLauchlan, on stage to sing the chorus. The house lights were flashed on and everyone else joined in the singing with her.

During the long concert Miss Mitchell was superb in painting her delicate word pictures, all based on her own experiences. There was the song *Carey*, written about a trip to Crete with a friend from Ottawa;

the song *A Case of You*, written about her love.

All of her words seem rooted in the freedom and some time loneliness of Alberta, where she was born (in McLeod) as Roberta Joan Anderson. Looking for a career as a commercial artist she attended the Alberta College of Art in Calgary, but she found words and songs could communicate more and she came east to Toronto and Yorkville coffee-houses.

She kept wandering, to Detroit, New York and finally to California where she settled.

## Exquisite picking

Through the years her instrumental work has become stronger. Last night her guitar picking was exquisite; her long supple fingers wove a complicated tapestry of sound that mixed with that crystal clear voice for musical magic. She was equally appealing on piano and even on the dulcimer for *All I Want*.

The two-year absence from the concert hall has also added new songs to her repertoire. The quiet brilliance of *The Ballad of Cold Blue Steel* and *Sweet Fire* and the joy of *Oh Honey You Turn Me On, I'm a Radio* made the concert a treat even before the familiar songs such as *Woodstock* and *Big Yellow Taxi*.

Los Angeles native Jackson Browne was a fascinating prelude to Miss Mitchell. The 23-year-old folksinger also works alone on stage with his acoustic guitar or piano.

Last night he was an appropriate touch to the whole evening, especially on a beautiful song called *Jamaica Say You Will* and a composition he wrote for a dead friend, *Song for Adam*.

His melodic, smooth voice and strong guitar styling brought him a deserved encore. The same appeal lies in his new album (*Asylum—SD-5051*) which was released as he started the tour with Miss Mitchell. His obvious talent should carry him much farther than a position as a warm-up artist.



—Star photo

FOLKSINGER JONI MITCHELL  
A mood of enchantment for a rare occasion