

Joni and LA Express

"Miles of Aisles"

A good live one

by Mike Bower

Belated reviews aren't worth very much unless they are about albums of fine quality and little recognition. Such is the case with "Miles of Aisles".

The first impulse is to not buy the record because it is a live album and because it's a two record set thereby costing upwards of eight dollars. But, put your fears aside, it is easily the best mixed and recorded live album I've ever heard. The clarity is unreal and there never is a breakdown in the sound which makes this set of the type that must be heard to be appreciated.

Of course what really justifies the expense is the performance both by Mitchell and the L.A. Express. The Express proved themselves as more than just a capable back-up band. Their musical excellence brought such standard Mitchell songs as "Woodstock", "Both Sides Now" and "Big Yellow Taxi" to a new life and rounded out the performance considerably. The group played on about half the songs of the album.

It should not be thought that

the group overshadowed Joni Mitchell in any way. Joni's freshly clear vocals soared through the performance and clearly established her as the focal point of the concert. The second and third sides of the album consist of Joni alternately accompanying herself on piano and guitar in the classic Joni Mitchell fashion. On these sides she proved herself as adept at playing as she was at singing and composing with such songs as "Circle Game" (in which she even got some audience participation), "Cactus Tree", "Blue", "All I Want" and "People's Parties".

As an added attraction, two new songs were introduced, "Jericho" and "Love or Money". The lyrics for these songs were included but unfortunately there weren't any for the others (you'll have to get her other albums for that).

There is something for everyone in this package. Joni Mitchell freaks get two new songs plus some old ones remade in interesting ways. The rest get a sampling of the career of a very talented lady.