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Joni Mitchell Sizzles At Garden State Arts Center

By DAN JONES

The night had to be one of the hottest this summer, but the steamy lady from the cold country of Canada got the crowd to pour out its warmth in return for hers.

Joni Mitchell was not even on stage yet when the audience became aroused despite the stifling heat bearing down last Saturday night on the Garden State Arts Center in Holmdel.

Walking out to center stage, she was greeted with thunderous applause from the packed house before starting in with the familiar "Coyote," one of her more recent hits emphasizing travel and fleeting love. Next, to settle the crowd in even more, she turned to an earlier hit, "Free Man in Paris," and quickly had the audience in her spell.

She mixed new and old songs well, and traced her

career from some of her free-flowing song-poems from the album, "For the Roses," to some of her latest jazz-pop pieces.

The hot, rhythmic beat of "Cotton Avenue," which she described as a song about your favorite dance hall somewhere in "the city's steamy night," let the audience know she hadn't forgotten how to rock 'n roll.

Switching gears, both in displaying her various styles and in her range of voices within any given song, is her trademark. As quickly as she had jumped into rock, she slid into the jazzy, "Edith and the King Pin," from "The Hissing of Summer Lawns."

That album, so

appropriate for nights like last Saturday, had signaled her departure from first-person narrative pieces to a sleek jazz impressionism.

"You Turn Me On, I'm a Radio," from the "For the Roses" album took the audience back to the early years of Mitchell's career as a folk singer. The familiar pop tune delighted the audience; perfect delivery made the song sound as if it were being sung for the first time.

This song, with its classic changes back and forth from a deep resonant voice to one of dancing high notes, cemented the connection between the artist and audience. The lines were open.

Before taking a break to cool down and towel off, she got the whole crowd clapping to a whimsical, jazzy song with the sing-along chorus, "God Must Be a Boogeyman."

Mitchell cooled down the audience before her break with a blues piece, "Real Good For Free," about a down and out clarinetist playing on a Manhattan street corner to the honking of car horns. Judging from the reaction of the crowd, she would have done well to perform a few more piano pieces; this song was excellent.

She came back with "Paved Paradise" and a song she called her version of "Hit Me With Your Best Shot," a folk piece entitled, "I Could Drink a Case of You and Still Be On My Feet."

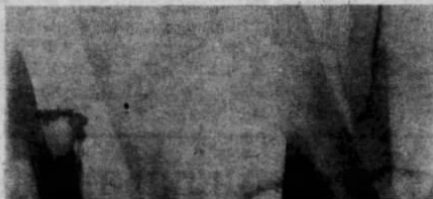
She blew the crowd away with the hard-driving guitar and singing of "Raised on Robbery," showing one of her best recipes for a hit rock

song. Sprinkled in between familiar hits were songs from her latest album, "Wild Things Run Fast," a career summary similar in scope to the live album, "Shadows and Light," but with all new material.

She enchanted the audience, which by this time was clapping and swaying as if moved by strings, with her biggest

hit, "Help Me," and came out for two encores, playing a marvelous rendition of Marvin Gaye's "Heard It Through the Grapevine" and a stirring performance of "Stardust," her own composition.

For that last song, she strummed her guitar and walked along the front of the stage, sharing smiles with front row audience members.



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