

Hot rocks

New style, new Mitchell

Everyone changed, you, me, the guy down the street or upstairs. In 1965 Dylan went electric at Newport and was roundly and soundly booed. In 1974, Joni Mitchell went electric and has improved. Mitchell has not done a thing since *For The Roses*, in which she was pretty much in the same vein as *Blue* and her previous albums: a soft acoustic folkie style, emphasizing her desire to "get back to nature and the roots" like everyone else wanted to do. How organic and neat! Now we have a rejuvenated Joni Mitchell who looks upon this period with disdain and speaks of it with sarcasm. In changing her lifestyle she also changed musical styles and has come up with a fresh new approach that incorporates a back up band in her sensitive and moving songs. Many artists have tried this and a lot, like Neil Young have failed. Young forgot what Mitchell remembered... that electric doesn't mean loud and showy, but maybe quiet and reserved. Whereas the best part of Young's dismal concert was the acoustic set, the entire evening of Joni Mitchell was a uniquely invigorating concert.

Her back-up band, Tom Scott and the L.A. Express added a night-club feel to her music while at the same time maintaining the appeal that Mitchell has cultivated. Scott, the lead guitarist, is a most versatile musician, moving freely between guitar and woodwind instruments.

John Garnett provided competent drumming and showed it off in a brief drum solo. The only drawback was the organist, who's attacking of the organ was contrived and forced, there being no room for a Keith Emerson in a Joni Mitchell.

The fact that this was not the Joni Mitchell of old was hard to adjust to, but upon adjustment it worked for the most part.

Joni appeared not in the expected jeans, but rather, a flowing pink and mauve gown. The audience was stunned and surprised. Where was the Joni Mitchell of *Ladies of the Canyon*? The earthy Joni Mitchell of old was gone, she explained in the intro to "For the Roses", saying that she had given up knitting and sewing in a cabin. It seemed that she had not really changed, but mellowed. She is humble, and feels she is overrated in Canada because she is a Canadian.

"Big Yellow Taxis" worked the best of the new material in the new format. It seemed to lend itself to the style, with its bouncy beat and simple melody structure. This was the one problem with the new structure; often old songs didn't lend themselves to it. "Woodstock" was a particular example. Though not really a failure, it was strange and it was hard to adjust to it after the slow, almost dirge-like original that we are more accustomed to. New material was better and it seemed to take on a jazz feel.

She concentrated on the guitar for most of the night, moving to the piano only infrequently and playing the dulcimer on only two songs. At the end of the concert she was more at ease with both the band and the audience, entering into banter with members of the audience and at one point telling one poor waif who kept informing everyone that he liked Melanie, that there was one in every crowd. She was more aware of the audience and her stage presence was far warmer towards the end of the evening.

It was the first concert in the Athletic Complex, and hopefully conditions will be improved for the next one. Many of the seats had obstructed views because of the speaker towers and the sound got pretty bad towards the back. Some said that the only time they saw Mitchell was when she walked on and off the stage. The Complex is not as well suited to a concert as the T.A., but it's use will be expected if we are to have any big-money groups here as the revenue from a full-house in the T.A. will not pay for them.

It was an extremely well paced and organized concert, starting at 8:35 and finishing at 11:30. The sound system was only fair, and when she played the dulcimer, she really didn't have to, for all we could hear it. But, what can you expect from a basically quiet artist in a tin barn?

It was good to see the change in Joni Mitchell, refreshing and



photo by Rooke

Joni Mitchell left her old style in her return to the stage.

pleasing could best describe it. When she becomes more comfortable with it, it will be as good as her original form. From every indication it certainly will be a

success. Hopefully, however, if she should return, we will be able to find a better place for her to play.

Kathy Ryndak & Fred Youngs

Another Michna Pontification

Paper Chase: a shady success for Bridges

The inexorable road to scholastic achievement rarely provides picnic areas to ponder and reflect the direction of the road, its origins and ultimate conclusion. Nor unfortunately, do the casualties become anything more than victims to be glanced at and passed by.

Paper Chase, adapted and directed by James Bridges, cannot really do justice to the novel written by John Jay Osborn Jr. Osborn's work depicted a maniacal year at Harvard Law School as a device (rather than an edifice) to provide insights into the hustling go-getting character of American life. His novel, by spanning a semester at the school of Babbity, furnishes the mind with a perplexing view of the prevalent currents in American life. It is a thankless, if not hapless task to try to capture a way of life in a filmed essay. The weight and material is too unwieldy to put into an effective and impactful movie.

Bridges traces the journey from enrolment to completion of the first year at Harvard Law School of a resourceful student, Hart (Timothy Bottoms). The limitations of the movie become even more evident as the movie focusses just on Hart's success in one phase of his year, namely, Contractual Law.

Hart finds himself literally confronted by an arrogant professor named Kingsfield. Kingsfield (portrayed brilliantly by Stratford Connecticut theatre founder John Hauseman) is a man driven by an onerous sense of scholastic contempt. Vivesecting whatever fledgling self-assurance there is in his students, Kingsfield is at once drill sergeant and secret police interrogator. He is the type of man who would force you to sign a confession of crimes you didn't

commit, only to alleviate his oppressing demeanour.

The classroom scenes are handled with subtle intelligence, knowledgeably, systematically, seizing the inherent tension of an inherently anxious atmosphere. The students feel the pressure of having to succeed; he also feels Kingsfield's debilitating omnipotence. It is as though Kingsfield's rendered judgements bear sufficient import to determine salvation or damnation. As it is, when one considers the importance attached to success, Kingsfield is that powerful. Kingsfield is God.

The question that arises is whether Hart shall actually overcome. Meanwhile, Hart has fallen for Kingsfield's daughter (Lindsey Wagner). She in turn exemplifies the first stage of what then becomes elementary: Hart's success. Noting Hart's conflict between academic achievement and spiritual stability, Susan says that Hart is the type who will make it. He is a hustler, an overachiever, a person who can function within the framework of American idealism.

From this fundamental point arises the dissatisfying aspect of the movie. At one point, Hart notes that no one is really smarter than anyone else. Yet some succeed while others do not. How can one define the lust for marks, numerals on pieces of newsprint substantiating, or at least representing achievement and success? Does the document actually realize or prove success? How and why does the American ethic incorporate and indeed condone this masturbatory way of life? The answers to these questions, the movie cannot provide.

One never learns where Hart has

learned the competitive way of life. One does not even begin to gain any useful insights into the ambition that drives him. Even though the cruelty and oppression is prevalent, we still wonder why.

Nearly every student stereotype is observed in the movie. The attempted suicide of a friend is but another example of the resultant frustration and sense of failure. The hysterical, last minute cramming breaks down even the toughest and mightiest students. Delirium runs rampant and kidneys play games. All for that nebulously valued paper.

But the final scene is probably the most infuriating. Hart gets his marks, doesn't open the envelope and throws it into the sea, we know he gets his 93 percent. We know he has matched Kingsfield. Yet he throws his results away without seeing them.

Hart has become the American success archetype. Despite real suffering around him, Hart has grimacedly endured and survived. Everything has pointed towards his epitomization of the American model. Every character trait, nuance of expression and personal habit invariably earmarked him as the shining Golden Boy. However, in a supposed bravado display of independence he disposed of the evidence. Why didn't he do it when it really meant something? It took no courage to discard something that merely reiterated a fait accompli. In reality, Hart succumbed. He actually admired his caustic mentor. Not as a person, but as a professional. Hart proved nothing more than a link in a perpetual chain of dispiriting bondage. Hart was moulded into Kingsfield Jr.

Who is to blame? Well, if Hart can be considered a success for earning his diploma, then Bridges

has failed. Enough possibilities aren't explored in order to properly distribute the guilt and responsibility of the system. If Hart has failed the system but succeeded in asserting himself,

Bridges has neglected to show how. Whichever way one views it, Bridges has failed his system as a filmmaker of social perception.

Success had many parents, but failure is an orphan.

by Stan Michna



At some moment I did answer yes to Someone or Something, and at that hour I was certain that existence is meaningful and that my life in self-surrender had a goal. — Dag Hammarskjöld

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