

Arts & Films

REVIEW / MUSIC

Joni Mitchell bewitches

JONI MITCHELL — In concert with Pat Metheny, guitar; Jaco Pastorius, bass; Michael Brecker, saxophones; Lyle Mays, Don Alias, percussion. At Tanglewood, Tuesday night.

By Ernie Santosuosso
Globe Staff

LENOX — The folk boom, if nothing else, often spawned a mixup in its among three of its participants. Beating their guitars and pianos into ploughshares were Joan (Baez) and Judy (Collins) while singing more of love than war was Joni (Mitchell).

Mitchell has always been the singer supreme of this formidable trinity, an artist in search of a hook. Her format has been schizoid, indeed, as she has ventured into rock, jazz, as well as folk. But ever the singer supreme.

On Tuesday night at Tanglewood, she set the season's house record with 12,143 attendance. (Poor Joan Baez suffered a case of the OPEC blues with only 4,999 persons on hand.)

Greeted with a whooping standing ovation, Mitchell gave as good as she got. For two hours her alabaster soprano rang out over the concert Shed and the picnicking lawns (they weren't hissing this night). While she sang some tracks from her current "Mingus" album, she didn't exploit it. For that matter, her lyrics set to the late bassist-composer's music sometimes seemed alien to the ears of the predominantly young audience.

However, rare was the song performance that didn't detonate unanimous standing ovations, beginning with her feisty "Big Yellow Taxi" from "Ladies of the Canyon." She dipped into "Hejira," "Court and Spark" and "The Hissing of Summer Lawns" and the reaction was the same. Ironically, while the Mingus music may have seemed foreign to many in the audience, you could not deny the show-stopping impact of "The Dry Cleaner from Des Moines." The song opened with a flamboyant, sometimes extravagant solo by bassist Jaco Pastorius who riddled the stage with a fusillade of blue notes before fleshing out with long figures and then flailing out with a virile, Mingus-like passage of dissonance. The matinee-idol of the Fender bass slapped the sounding board several times after which he laid the guitar on the floor and strummed chime-like effects. It would have been terribly *deja vu* had he ended up by torching the instrument. Although showy, it proved an appropriate lead-in for Mitchell's marvelous solo, reflecting her jazz indoctrination by Lambert, Hendricks, & Ross. She swept the high range with ease and her articulation attained levels of Wedgwood clarity. Also credit the smok-



Joni Mitchell at Tanglewood
(Photo by Richard Carpenter)

ing tenor solo by Michael Brecker and relentless stoking by drummer Don Alias.

Alias held the spotlight with a conga exercise that preceded "Hejira" while Pat Metheny, probably the hottest thing on guitar since the late Jimi Hendrix' match, wove a limpidly beautiful solo on the ballad, "Amelia." At all other times, Metheny and pianist Lyle Mays sustained the melodic structure of the 19 Mitchell pieces.

For the record, she also sang "This Train," "In France," "Coyote," "Edith and the Kingpin," "Freeman in Paris," "Good-by, Pork Pie Hat," "Dreamland," "Black Crow," "Furry Sang the Blues," "God Must Be a Boogie Man" and "Raised on Robbery." She returned with the Persuasions to "Shadows and Light" before en-coring with "Last Time I Saw Richard," the Frankie Lyman hit "Why Do Fools Fall in Love" and, most appropriately, "Woodstock." Only the switching on of the house lights was able to still the thunder that followed.

The Persuasions, foremost a cappella exponents, opened with an eclectic set. First, they did the Presley-ish "Return to Sender" followed by the old McGuire Sisters record success, "Sincerely" and the Kingston Trio winner, "Tom Dooley." Dooley was a crowd pleaser because of the recruitment of audience members to sing the lead.

It was a Joni Mitchell audience, all right, but the Persuasions were no throwaway act and talk about a finish. They chose "Get on Board," cruised the aisles and eventually choo-chooed off into the sunset.