

Mitchell's gig a mishmash

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First, Joni Mitchell was a folk songstress.

Next came the "blue" period. Next, pop.

She piqued this writer's interest when she branched out into jazz in 1975 and released a brilliant LP, "The Hissing of Summer Lawns," which took the upper middle class to task for spiritually bankrupting the nation.

She collaborated with Charles Mingus in 1978, just prior to his death, and showed even broader talents as a jazz vocalist. This was a Joni Mitchell I came to adore.

Well, friends, with "Wild Things Run Fast," her latest Geffen release, we find Mitchell has moved away from jazz and is punching up rock and roll as background for her narratives. It doesn't work too well, save for a lingering piece called "Chinese Cafe," incorporating the frustrations of former school chums reflecting on their current lots and Al Hibbler's soulful "Unchained Melody."

It appears Mitchell can be easily influenced. She's married to bassist Larry Klein, a man who seems more at home in the rock idiom than anywhere else. I wouldn't be surprised if he handpicked the musicians who are appearing with her on a current nationwide tour, a tour that brought the Mitchell aggregation to Concord Pavilion last Sunday night.

The capacity audience seemed to adore each and every song, about two dozen in all, despite the fact that the sound system for the entire first half reduced Mitchell's lyrics to mush.

The rock 'n roll emphasis throughout did not suit Mitchell. And who knows why she chose to include a Jerry Leiber/Mike Stoller pop tune once recorded by Elvis Presley, "(You're So Square) Baby I Don't Care?" That's even on the new LP and has been

released as a single. Oh, well, there's no accounting for taste.

"A Case of You" done to dulcimer and a solo encore of "Woodstock" were program highlights, as was the Mingus tribute, "God Must Be A Boogie Man."

But I'll take the jazzier Mitchell and a sound system that doesn't reduce mishmash to mush.

A Saxon invasion is planned for the United States! One of England's premiere hard rockin' groups, Saxon, joins Iron Maiden for a summer tour, stopping off at San Francisco's Cow Palace on July 2.

The Michael Spears Band, Winterhawk and Tourist stage a hard rock show at the Phoenix Theater in Petaluma next Friday night.

Some tickets remain for the VSOP II concert at the Robert Mondavi Winery Sunday at 7 p.m., featuring Herbie Hancock and the Remarkable Marsalis brothers. Tickets are \$20 at the door.

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