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Music notes

By JIM BOHEN

WILD THING: Like more than a few fans at the Garden State Arts Center last week, I'd been waiting all my life to see Joni Mitchell. Fortunately, the one I got to see didn't

disappoint. What with her infrequent tours and long silences between albums, it's a different Joni Mitchell each time out. I'm sorry I missed her previous incarnations, but at least they're documented on her two live

albums, **MILES OF AISLES** (with Tom Scott and the L.A. Express) and **SHADOWS AND LIGHT** (with Pat Metheny, Jaco Pastorius and Michael Brecker).

The current Mitchell is a rock and roller with a taste for jazz phrasing and harmony. Her new band — four veterans of her most recent album, **WILD THINGS RUN FAST**, with Mitchell herself providing electric

rhythm guitar on most songs — played loud but clean. The instrumental sound was physically moving, but you could still hear all the words.

The set was weighted with songs from the new album, most of them hitting harder than on record. The reggae beat and lush guitar chords of "Solid Love" showed the influence of the Police; "Underneath the

Streetlight" was a rush of giddy enthusiasm; and even "Love," her rather ungainly crib from the Bible, sounded more graceful in this rendition.

On "God Must Be a Boogie Man," her song for and about the late jazz composer Charles Mingus, Mitchell played with the phrasing, let the audience answer each refrain, and then left bassist Larry Klein and

drummer Vinnie Colaiuta to carry the song out with an extended improvisation.

She reappeared alone at the piano for "For Free," adding some new images to that portrait of a street musician ("They knew that he'd never been on MTV") and four new lines at the end of each verse. She strummed a hollow-bodied electric guitar on "Big Yellow Taxi" (much improved over the piggish original) and plucked an Appalachian dulcimer on the ravishing "A Case of You."

Back with the band after an intermission, she allowed guitarist Michael Landau a screaming solo on "Wild Things Run Fast," and offered a beat-heavy rock version of the metaphorically political "Banquet" (done with just piano and voice on FOR THE ROSES).

Russell Ferrante's Jerry Lee Lewis-style piano intro turned into a wild "Raised on Robbery." A few songs later Mitchell playfully mimicked Elvis Presley on "You're So Square) Baby I Don't Care."

Her first encore, "I Heard It through the Grapevine," rocked hard and sounded great. Her third and last was a solo "Woodstock," during which she walked around the rim of

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Music Notes

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the stage, then drifted into the wings, still playing her electric guitar.

HOW SWEET IT IS: Marvin Gaye has a reputation for on-stage eccentricity, and the mood before his show at the Meadowlands Arena last week was one of uneasy anticipation. As it turned out, the show was a little eccentric, but still worthy of one of our very greatest singers.

The sound of Gaye's 23-member orchestra — including seven horn players, three keyboardists and four percussionists — was wasted in the echoing expanses of the half-filled arena. The louder dance numbers, even "I Heard It through the Grapevine" and "Let's Get It On," came across more on the strength of Gaye's bump-and-grind dancing than on their musical values.

The ballads sounded much better,

beginning with "God Is Love," which Gaye sang at the piano in gospel falsetto to introduce a couple of tunes from his classic 1971 album **WHAT'S GOING ON**. He seemed to warm up during these songs, even venturing a lengthy jazz piano solo during "Inner City Blues."

But the show's highlight was a long segment devoted to songs he'd sung as duets with female singers like Mary Wells and the late Tammi Terrell. On "Ain't Nothing Like the Real Thing" Gaye took the song through several presumably improvised changes of mood, tempo and phrasing.

He used the same technique to illuminate "Once Upon a Time." By the time he brought one of his backup singers forward for a more conventional duet on "If I Could Build My Whole World Around You," it was anticlimactic.

During a penultimate instrumental, Gaye ducked backstage, returning in robe and pajamas for "Sexual Healing," a song so gloriously percussive it might have gone on forever. He made it the occasion for a brief strip tease, then capped it with a disclaimer about how despite his preoccupation with sex, "I do love Jesus and I love God." By that point no apologies were necessary.

BITS AND PIECES: Marshall Crenshaw, whose album **FIELD DAY** has been roundly criticized for its echo-laden production by Steve Lillywhite, says that's exactly the sound he wanted. "If anyone thinks I was led down the path by Lillywhite, they're wrong," he said. "If they don't like it, don't buy it." ... Recent non-album B sides of note (with the A sides in parentheses): The Police's "Murder by Numbers" ("Every Breath You Take"), Stevie Nicks's "Garbo" ("Stand Back"), U2's "End-

less Deep" ("Two Hearts Beat as One"), Eddy Grant's "Time Warp" ("Electric Avenue"), the Kinks' "Noise" ("Come Dancing"), Men at Work's "Till the Money Runs Out" ("Overkill"), Prince's "How Come U Don't Call Me Anymore" ("1999") and the Hollies' "Musical Pictures" ("Stop in the Name of Love"). ... New albums on the way or already here: Neil Young's 50s-influenced **EVERYBODY'S ROCKIN'**, Elvis Costello's **PUNCH THE CLOCK**, Graham Parker's **THE REAL MACKAW**, Jackson Browne's **LAWYERS IN LOVE**, Asia's **ALPHA** (the cassette version includes an extra song, "Daylight," also the B side of the first single, "Don't Cry"), Billy Joel's **AN INNOCENT MAN**, the Motels' **LITTLE ROBBERS**, Robert Plant's **THE PRINCIPLE OF MOMENTS**, the Tom Tom Club's **CLOSE TO THE BONE**, and a solo disc from Kinks guitarist Dave Davies, **CHOSEN PEOPLE**.

Television