

This heart resisted Joni Mitchell's charms

By RAY BENNETT

Canadian folksinger Joni Mitchell preached to the converted at Detroit's Masonic Temple Auditorium Sunday night.

The long-blonde-haired singer with the light and wandering voice could do no wrong for a capacity crowd of dedicated and uncritical Joni Mitchell fans.

Backed by five young men called The L.A. Express, who kicked off the show with some middling jazz, she went through a selection of her most popular songs, most of which sparked immediate applause from the audience.

It was my first Joni Mitchell concert and I was less than impressed. The Saskatchewan singer trills a little too much for me. She attempts to use her voice as an instrument too frequently for her own good, often losing control and wavering unsteadily.

Done out in a cosy mixture of high-life and country — slinky backless dress with sequins and rusty rural colors — she fails to convince that she is the bitter-sweet singing lady her fans tell you she is.

Obviously this is a matter of personal taste but I'll take Melanie, even with her propensity for the cutes, or better still, Judy Collins, over Miss Mitchell any day of the week.

She has undisputed song-writing talent — Both Sides Now and Chelsea Morning are remarkable pieces of work — but many of her songs are far too busy and, beneath the literary embellishments, quite banal.

Perhaps I might have enjoyed Sunday's concert more if The L.A. Express hadn't played so loud. When Joni sat at her piano and sang simply she was quite effective. Too often, though, there was too

much accompaniment or other voices intruding.

My mood would also have been better if the show had gotten on the road on time. Pop music fans are by no means the most polite or punctual, but the attitude of concert promoters and performers is outrageous. Let them wait, they appear to say, even though it costs \$6.50 for the privilege.

Sunday's concert started more than 30 minutes late with no explanation or apology. Legitimate theatregoers wouldn't put up with it, nor would moviegoers. I wonder why pop fans do?

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