

Mitchell at Pine Knob: The bands and the roadies

By RON LANGDON

Joni Mitchell came to Pine Knob last Thursday and Friday to turn in two sterling performances to capacity crowds. The audience had arrived, ready to receive a new queen of romantic song, and they were not disappointed.

Mitchell seemed to have come perfectly at terms with the regal role into which she has been cast, the worship and the pure nonsense. Her attitude towards the audience was a delicate balance between warmth and sensibility, in sharp contrast to last January's performance at Hill, where she seemed quite nervous and giddy.

She flowed gracefully around the stage in her loose-fitting silk pant-suits, moving between her piano, her guitars, her dulcimer, and the microphone. Her performance similarly travelled through a wide range of mu-

sical styles: country-folk, jazz, rock, and semi-classical, as well as a lot of casual conversation between songs, and sometimes during them.

Her back-up band, the L. A. Express, led by Tom Scott on woodwinds, turned in a performance that was as remarkable for its instrumental virtuosity as it was for its lack of balance and mix. Like at Hill, the band came on first alone, to assault the audience with half a set of snazzy, brassy, pointlessly cool uptown jazz played at near ear-splitting volume.

It struck me that the Knob's "music theatre" has an acoustic quality not unlike a high school gymnasium, and the L. A. Express could have been a marching band, for all the quality of the tone they were producing.

The audience was still rather favorable, however. To my

amazement, people cheered and applauded when they finished their numbers.

(It seems to have become a perennial question at concerts: Can all these people possibly have wax in their ears? Or is there some little known recessive chromosome that has placed my ears into another decibel rating? I asked several people around me point blank if they thought the music was too loud, and several gave me a "No . . ." and a questioning look.)

Until about a year ago, Tom Scott was chiefly a studio musician, known among music circles primarily for his work on television soundtracks and the like.

His relationship with the lady began one day when he dropped into the studio where she was recording *For the Roses*, and played for her his band's recording of "Woodstock."

Reportedly, Mitchell, who Scott says "does not even know the names of the notes on the piano," was very pleased by the arrangement. She asked Scott if he might arrange and play some backgrounds for the LP she was working on. They have stuck together ever since.

Her association with the L. A. jazz band has since come to comprise a radical new direction for this folk singer from Saskatoon. Mitchell and the group played several new numbers Thursday night, as yet unrecorded or released. In all of these, the lady abandoned her guitars to stand in front of the mike and croon, jazz style.

It appears that she may wish to be a folk singer no longer.

After about a half an hour of mildly abusive electronic jam by the back-up band, an unseen voice announced, "Ladies and gentlemen, Miss Joni Mitchell . . ." and the lady flowed out from behind the amplifiers, to a warm, healthy roar. She said nothing, but busied herself with her tuning for a minute, and then began her act with a rather jagged rendition of "Free Man in Paris."

After that she performed (with the band) a slower, more thoughtful version of her Top-40 proposition number from *For the Roses*, "You Turn Me On I'm a Radio."

I had completely forgotten about the politics of the evening at this point. I was genuinely surprised, then, when, after a shuffle of people on stage, she turned and smiled and spoke her first words to the audience: "The president has resigned."

The crowd went wild, in a relaxed sort of way. The band and the audience retired for a couple of minutes of joyous, formless celebration and relief.

Frisbees flew. Someone held up a little four inch Sony TV and showed it all around, so everyone could see our ex-president there, two inches tall, behind his podium with the Great Seal.

Her musical performance, for the most part, was somewhat casual and geared towards the lighter side. The emphasis was on entertaining. I find this a disappointment, maybe, but even when concealing her depth of feeling she is still tremendously talented. Her talent is all the more remarkable when one considers that it was not until after she was in her twenties, and married to folk singer Chuck Mitchell, that she began to pick up guitar.

She now plays guitar flawlessly, utilizing several of her own tunings, which she devised without any formal knowledge of chord structures.

Similarly, she plays piano

beautifully, and is a distinct songwriter, with a style all her own.

But her strongest musical talent is her voice. She has got the most marvelous tone, range, and volume; and in particular, she does not merely haul a song out and sing it, but performs it with all the inflections she used in the recording, or that suit her mood at the time.

The audience was an affluent and respectable mixture of

gifts, and people (usually women) shouting, "We love you!" and twice people lept up on the stage to present her with a gift and a kiss.

The second time, a woman stood inches in front of her, waving her arms and frantically pleading out near tears some vital communication, as two stagehands tugged at her arms. Mitchell listened for a moment with an expression of deep concern and a gesture to the stagehands not to molest her, and

Michigan Daily

Arts

Records in review

STEVIE WONDER'S got a new album out. Of course, it's great.

It's called *Fulfillingness' First Finale*. (Tamla 332). It's not revolutionary — Stevie's approach hasn't changed too much since *Innervisions*. But it's no formula album, either. This is a masterpiece in its own right.

In the last few years Stevie Wonder has been creating his own musical world, doing all kinds of things no one ever expected from a one-time puppet of Motown. And he seems to do them more fluently with each album he turns out. *FFF* continues this happy trend.

Stevie's instrumental ingenuity breathes life into songs whose themes are far from new — "Please Don't Go" is a classic example. And his overwhelming human warmth makes his upbeat songs some of the most irresistible around.

The remarkable synthesizer work that marked Stevie's last three albums is still there, as playful and effective as ever. And Stevie's singing is liquid gold, as expressive as he's ever been.

Fulfillingness' First Finale is going to sell millions — and it deserves to. Stevie Wonder is a national resource.

—Tom Olson

"This is an album of songs and stories set to music performed for your dancing and dining pleasure by FZ and some of the people he likes to record with." (—from the jacket)

Once Frank Zappa was an artist fiercely concerned with shaking his audience out of their routine ways of experiencing. With the release of *Apostrophe (')* (Discreet, DS 2175), Zappa clearly seems now to be settling into a mellower state. There is no urgent message or sarcasm, or blatantly raunchy vocalization in this collection of "songs and stories."

But this album is still pure Zappa — with his outrageously imaginative lyrics, exciting guitar work; the fun he has with words. ("Language . . . is almost obsolete," Zappa has said. ". . . a by-product of the technological growth of civilization.")

FZ fans will find this to be a pleasant new extension of his work.

—Ron Langdon



Frank Zappa

CAN LIGHTNING strike twice in the same place? Hopefully,

Wendy Waldman can generate a large enough spark with her second album, *Gypsy Symphony* (Warner Bros. BS 2792), to ignite the audience that has recently made Maria Muldaur a star.

Waldman, like Muldaur, has been playing with jug bands in L.A. for the past five years. Her first album, *Love Has Got Me* released last year, received much critical acclaim, but not much public attention. Undaunted, she has perfected the flaws of the last album and has put together another great album.

Waldman combines the fire of Muldaur with the melody of Laura Nyro. Her music is a combination of show tunes, blues, and country-folk, but her style is her own — voice, guitar, piano, and dulcimer. The combination gives an album equal to the strength of Carole King's *Tapestry*.

Unlike King, Waldman generates a lot of emotion and depth in her songs: her version of "Mad Mad Me" surpasses that of Muldaur (who appears in the background vocals in this album). But she, like King, can be mellow, as in "The Road Song".

Gypsy Symphony, with a little help from her friends, should make it for Wendy Waldman.

—Viki Bankey

jet-setters and soft-core freaks. Behind me sat a grandmotherly woman with a group of young people, martini in hand. I did a double take when I noticed the boy next to her (who looked as if his mother could have just scrubbed him behind the ears before sending him off for the evening show) was drawing in on a joint, from a pair of tweezer roach clips.

The grandmother gave me a pleasantly numb smile, as only a grandmother can.

Like a visiting monarch, Mitchell was received with several

then the two women hugged.

"You know, you put me in a position that is very marvelous . . ." she said, looking up, shielding her eyes from the lights, ". . . but also kind of strange, calling out from the darkness, 'We love you!'"

"I feel like I am out in space up here — I can't see you. I feel like I am on a planet with two moons, a blue one and a pink one," she said, referring to the two spotlights. "Then every so often somebody lights a cigarette, and I think it is :

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Daily Photo by STUART HOLLANDER

Joni croons

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star burning out."

Since he rapped at Hill, however, Mitchell seems to adjusted very well to this hero worship. Unlike most pop performers, she makes no attempt to be anything more than a human being. It must be a strange feat, standing blindly there on a lighted platform in front of 3000 people who seem to love every move you make.

Her manner was quite casual, though still very poised, as she talked to the audience at length. She wanted to talk to the audience so much she even tried to stop the band when they were already five bars into "Bar and Grill," but they just ignored her waving arms, or they were already too intent. Undaunted, she walked up to the mike and began to talk anyway.

When she was preparing to perform "All I Want," sitting down with her dulcimer, somebody croaked out, as was common throughout the show, "What is it?" From another sector of the crowd came the reply, "It's a dulcimer," and Mitchell looked up and smiled, and made the "You got it!" sign with her hand.

"Everybody who becomes successful has to adjust to it," she said later. "They all do. People are always thinking 'Success spoils people,' so the first thing you do when you become successful is you say to yourself, 'I'm not going to let it! I'm not going to allow myself to change in any way. I will not change!' But of course, you have to change. Everything in your environment is changing."

It was a long concert — nearly 3½ hours. Near the end, before the encore, we left our seats in the pavilion and climbed up and back, to the very edge of the theatre, in the corner. The lights went down again, and Mitchell came out to the piano to play "The Last Time I Saw Richard," ("... was Detroit in '68") — a collection of reflections on the death of Richard Farina.

Surveying the scene from up there, I too felt like I was out in space — on the very edge of the solar system, or a nebulae. The bowl shape of the seats gave the audience an appearance of being in orbit around the stage, from which irradiated light and serenely flowing piano notes. Then way down at

the bottom of this bowl, with spotlights streaming down, sat this woman in white, at a piano.

Then the lights came up a little and she and the band finished off the evening with a rendition of "Twisted." She went into a long, cheerful rap in the middle of it about the joys of admitting you are crazy. "We are all crazy!" she said, gesturing about herself and the band. "Are you crazy?" (Audience: "Yes!")

"Is there anyone out there who is not crazy?" (Audience: "No!")

She may be right, of course. Still, I was left with two nagging questions:

How it is that a true artist, who has gradually become respected and famous by pouring out her blood and soul into her creations — how does she reckon with the entertainment business?

And — What is it like to return to a city like this, where you have kicked around coffee shops, unknown, and create a 1500 car traffic jam?

On our way out, I noticed ominous spirits had commandeered the loudspeaker system. A WXYZ DJ actually had the bogus audacity to do a commercial.

Then a new voice came on to reassure us that no matter which way we went from the entrance, we would end up on I-75.

Joni Mitchell is definitely changing. As I sit here typing and listening to *Blue*, I realize what an awful lot she has changed since then. Her lyrics are roughly the same, but her voice has become more aggressive, her melodies more conventional, and her arrangements are another thing entirely now, and not so much her own.

I was not pleased with *Court and Spark*, for reasons along these lines, but I understand that it took off commercially like nothing she has ever done before, and like nothing anyone expected. From a personal standpoint, I can understand and appreciate her stardom. "Love is touching souls," she sings, "well surely you touched mine!" And surely, she has touched quite a few herself.

But popular folk music is losing a very sensitive and talented musician. And I, for one, am going to miss her.

Chavez continues fight against Teamster union

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were being overcome. He insists the UFW's troubles stem mainly from a grower-Teamster "conspiracy," an allegation denied by both groups.

Growers say Teamster pacts are attractive because they do not require establishment of union-administered hiring halls. Instead of using the workers dispatched by the union, a grower can hire whomever he wants as long as he joins the Teamsters in 10 days. Chavez says this has resulted in growers bringing illegal Mexican immigrants who often work for less than American farm hands. Growers deny the allegation.

Growers who switched to the Teamsters branded the UFW hiring hall a failure because workers weren't dispatched efficiently when needed.

"WE CAN'T be at the mercy of union dispatch hall people, and management has to have the right to get its own workers," said John Giumarra of Delano, general counsel for the state's largest table grape grower.

Some ex-UFW workers claimed the hiring hall dispatchers played favorites. Others were irritated at signup procedures that sometimes split families with only one car among different ranches.

In an interview Chavez acknowledged there were some "administrative problems" with the hiring halls but said they were being overcome as the union passed through the "growing pains" phases of development.

HE CONSIDERS the hiring hall a must.

"It gives workers the right to determine by their own democratic process the rules and regulations about how they get hired and the conditions of their work," he explained.

Chavez contends the growers, still spiteful at the UFW for unionizing farm workers, are using the hiring hall issue to cover a conspiracy with the Teamsters to destroy the UFW.

"IF THERE were no Teamsters, we'd easily have a \$3 base pay scale instead of \$2.50," Chavez said, "and our union would have 100,000 workers organized in the state."

"Don't forget that the Teamsters don't organize workers—they organize growers. They sign sweetheart deals with the growers and tell the workers they now belong to a union."

Teamsters President Frank Fitzsimmons says the Teamsters have worked hard for the workers—"for the first time there is a strong union of farm workers of their own choosing," he explained.

SEVERAL growers say they prefer working with the "pros" of the Teamsters to the "angry young men" of the UFW.

Fitzsimmons earlier this month officially chartered an agricultural workers local—Local 1973—which is being headquartered in Salinas. The states covered by it are California, Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, Colorado, Wyoming, Idaho, Oregon, Washington, Montana, Hawaii, Utah and Alaska.

Whether California's 300,000 farm labor force wants the Teamsters, the UFW—or no union—has never been accurately determined. There are no

secret ballot union representation elections for farm workers.

Many workers in the state's grape, vegetable and fruit areas—agriculture is still California's No. 1 money-maker—have carried cards from both unions, showing whichever is recognized at a given ranch.

"I don't care what union comes in or if none does," one field hand said. "All I want is to be able to work."

At Keene Larson's 160-acre Coachella Valley vineyard—one of the first to sign with Chavez in 1970—workers voted 2 to 1 not to affiliate with either union. The UFW accused Larson of rigging the election.

Still, although nonunion sentiments are shared by him and other growers, Larson later negotiated a contract with the Teamsters. Most growers have been told by their brokers that publicity has made it almost impossible to sell grapes that have not been picked by some union.

There are more than 130,000 known lepers in Brazil, the majority of them in the western region of the country's Amazon rain Forest.

Patrick's debut

LONDON (AP) — Patrick McCarthy, a 23-year-old student at the London Opera Center, staged an unexpected debut at the Royal Albert Hall.

McCarthy had only intended to listen last Wednesday night, until baritone Thomas Allen collapsed after the start of Carl Orff's "Carmina Burana."

The young singer knew the role, so he volunteered and conductor Andre Previn waved him onto the stage. The packed audience gave the young performer a standing ovation.

Daily Official Bulletin

Wednesday, August 14

Day Calendar
 WUOM: Stephen Banker, NPR, interviews James McCord, former FBI agent & convicted Watergate burglar, 10:00 am.
 Amer Assoc Critical-Care Nurses: Russel Smith, "Hospital Management of Substance Problem," Rm. 4, Ground Fl., St. Joseph Hosp., 7:30 pm.
 Music Sch.: Steven Kane, organ, Hill Aud.; James Dawson, saxophone Doctoral, Recital Hall; both at 8 pm.

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MIKLOS JANSKO'S 1965

THE ROUND-UP

This fine film, directed by a man considered to be the best director to emerge from Eastern Europe, concerns a "round-up" of suspected Hungarian freedom fighters in the aftermath of an attempted revolution by Kossuth in 1868. "The movie is so full of cruelty and grief that it is made bearable only by the eloquence of its images." — Vincent Canby, N.Y. TIMES

Fri.: Truffaut's JULES AND JIM
Sat.: Ford's THE WHOLE TOWN'S TALKING and Hawks' HIS GIRL FRIDAY


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