

# Joni Mitchell jazzes up her act in concert

By R.S. Groberg  
Staff Writer

Some came to hear the Joni Mitchell whom Crosby, Stills Nash & Young discovered in the Sixties — singing soft ballads and strumming her folk guitar. Others wanted her to play the more upbeat rock-and-roll tunes that brought her popular acclaim in the mid-Seventies with albums like "Court And Spark." And still others expected to hear the new dimensions in jazz that Mitchell has been exploring, most recently with the late jazz bassist Charles Mingus on her latest release, "Mingus."

What the near-capacity crowd at Forest Hills Stadium in Queens actually heard from Joni Mitchell on Saturday night was all of this and then some.

During her two-hour performance under the lights and in the warm summer air, Mitchell varied the mood and tempo as often as the changing tides of her career. Nevertheless, with the assistance of five renowned jazz musicians, Mitchell seemed to make everyone happy.

The Persuasions, a five-man a cappella group, opened the show. They are superb at mixing harmonies, but the audience had come strictly to hear Mitchell and her band and didn't appreciate the Persuasions' Philadelphia bebop style.

## A new meaning

The audience got what it wanted from Mitchell, though. She seemed to be stoking her own star-maker machinery with her band of Don Alias on drums and congos, Michael Brecker on saxophone, Pat Metheny on lead guitar, Lyle Mays on keyboards, and Jaco Pastorius on bass.

Just as Mitchell's newest inspiration, Mingus, helped pave the way for jazz improvisation in the Forties and Fifties, she and the band brought new meaning to many of her early hits, including "Big Yellow Taxi," "Just Like This Train," and "Coyote."

Metheny and Mays, both of The Pat Metheny Group, a well-known jazz fusion band, complemented Mitchell's soft-rangy voice and provided some interesting interpretations to her music.

Pastorius, best-known for his innovative solo work with the jazz-rock band Weather Report, also showed he could blend well with Mitchell. Pastorius also did some remarkable dual-tracked soloing — a real tribute to the work of Mingus, who was one of the first musicians to utilize the bass guitar as more than just a rhythm instrument.

Brecker, of The Brecker Brothers, and Alias, predominantly a studio drummer, also provided some excellent soloing reminiscent of the earliest roots of jazz.

Mitchell managed to step back on stage before the solos became too monotonous, providing a myriad of sounds that included her jazz-transfused hits, some more from "Mingus," some sounds from the West Indies, and the folk hits that attracted her to Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young.

It seemed only fitting that Mitchell closed the concert with two songs at the very essence of her discovery, accompanying herself on piano for "Pretty Lies" and hollow-body electric guitar of "Woodstock," a song that Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young made famous.