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Joni Mitchell Sings At Kiel Auditorium

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Joni Mitchell, free-form folk singer who has finally come into her own as a recording star, attracted 5100 partisans to Kiel Auditorium last night. The concert was remarkable in the stillness of the crowd, during and between numbers.

The quiet is readily understood once a person becomes aware that Mitchell fans are lyric freaks. Her voice is loud enough for a person to hear each of the words. However, there are times when she slurs or when her voice flattens out so that if a listener is not paying strict attention, he'll miss what is being sung.

Then, too, Joni has a rather stoic presentation. The non-emotion that she shows gives no hint to the strength of her poetry.

She performed many of the songs from her smash album, "Hissing of Summer Lawns," including "Harry's House," "Shadows and Light," "In France They Kiss On Main Street" and "The Jungle Line," which may be the most exciting song she has ever cut.

There were a few new songs as well. One called "Talk to Me," which has a beat that is slightly Latin, was performed with her playing acoustic guitar and Victor Feldman on the congas.

The song concerns a girl begging a reticent chap for a little conversation. She is incessant in her coaxing, never to figure out that the uncommunicative young man is probably a tongue-tied dumb-bell.

What was disappointing was that she didn't perform



RECORDING STAR Joni Mitchell performing at Kiel Auditorium last night. (Post-Dispatch Photo by Karen Elshout)

"Both Sides Now" or "You Turn Me On, I'm a Radio."

Well, one cannot have everything. Again, she brought with her a quintet of Los Angeles's finest studio musicians, a group called the L.A. Express.

The L.A. Express was with her last year in her two concerts in the St. Louis area. Then Tom Scott, a premier reed man, was leading the group, and Roger Kellaway was on keyboard.

The new group features

David Louell on reeds, Robin Ford on electric guitar, John Guerin on drums, Max Bennett on Fender bass and Victor Feldman on electric piano and congas.

Feldman as a boy played drums with the Glenn Miller Orchestra when Miller was in London in World War II. He has since gone on to play in many of the big bands and to record for numerous artists and in scores of motion pictures.

The L.A. Express opened

the concert with 40 minutes of great jazz/rock and then played back-up for Joni. That jazz-flavored rock behind her folk singing created some unusual imagery on "Raised on Robbery." It gave the impression that the folk were out honky-tonkin' sampling life away from the hills of home. Just when they were learning to cope with it, the evening ended.

And that pretty much sums up the latest Joni Mitchell box office foray into St. Louis.