

Joni Mitchell Concert Touching, Flawless

By David Proctor
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Joni Mitchell is generally considered to be the most important female songwriter in popular music. Saturday night she appeared at the Highland High School Auditorium and not only reasserted her claim to that honor, but proved she can put on an unforgettable concert as well.

The entire program was flawless. Everything from the lighting to the warmup band was perfect. Miss. Mitchell is a talent of major proportions and it was gratifying to see a concert produced in a manner that would allow her to display that talent in the best possible light.

Tom Scott and the L.A. Express opened the show and also served as the backing band for much of Joni's material. It is a five-piece jazz group of outstanding versatility and talent. Their set included both light, rhythmic jazz tunes and the more adventurous changes of a John Coltrane composition.

At the end of their sixth tune, there was a rustle of curtains at stage left and before any announcement was made, the applause began to swell. Tom Scott made the brief introduction and Joni walked into the spotlight, picked up her guitar and started her set.

She was marvelous. She does not give very many concerts, but she seemed to enjoy every minute in the spotlight. And the audience — well, they just couldn't get enough of her. The first several songs were greeted by standing ovations but soon every one just settled back and let the songs carry them where they would.

Joni chose songs from throughout her writing career. They were as old as the classic "Both Sides Now" and as new as "Help Me" and "Free Man In Paris," from her new album. Some were immediately recognized and were greeted with cheers, others were less so and applauded afterward.