

# Joni Mitchell

and the L.A. Express At Hill Auditorium, Friday, February 27th

Joni Mitchell performed a low-key but enjoyable set at Ann Arbor's Hill Auditorium February 27th. Backed by the revamped version of the L.A. Express, minus saxophonist Tom Scott, Ms. Mitchell's hour-and-a-half set centered on her latest album release, *The Hissing of Summer Lawns*. Only three or four tunes dated back beyond her Court and Spark fame, and the new material revealed a very tough, show biz-jaded Joni Mitchell, a stance which failed to elicit a warm response from an audience of die-hard fans—many of



whom had waited overnight in the miserable Michigan weather to get tickets for the show. Joni Mitchell's last visit to Ann Arbor two years ago was during the period when she first began to blossom as a stage performer, and she was moving in a myriad of musical directions. This time she appeared somewhat less inspired and much less interested in "putting on a show." Her stage presence was aloof and less than satisfying, and she did nothing to dispel her public image as "Phony Joni." She appeared to be experimenting with the order of songs throughout the set, and at times the continuity was hopelessly lost. The warmth of many of her most enchanting songs just didn't come across.

One of the few golden oldies she did perform, "Big Yellow Taxi," was lackluster and feeble in its effect, showing that something is missing in this folk singer-turned-popstar. The highlight of the evening was the delicate "For Free" from the *Ladies of the Canyon* album, one of the two pieces Ms. Mitchell performed from the piano. She followed this tune with a haunting tale about the origins of the song in which she immortalized a faceless street musician. Ms. Mitchell explained that the clarinetist had had his instrument stolen and that she, feeling guilty about her success compared with the problems of the struggling young artist, had it replaced. The next day she found that he was handing out the same story again. "I gave you the romance," she wailed emotionally, "now I've given you the reality."

Ms. Mitchell's musicianship has matured, and her rapport with the L.A. Express was easy and

thorough. Her distinctive guitar style has been refined, yet she seems to have deleted the use of the dulcimer—once a much-favored tool—from her show. Unfortunately the reality of her performance showed little of the romance for which she has become known.

—Joel Seigel

# Dynamic Superiors

At the 20 Grand

Playing before SRO crowds for two week-ends at the 20 Grand, the Dynamic Superiors didn't take long to gain complete control over their audience. Non-stop hand-clapping started things off with a pulsating "On and On," and at the set's midway point the Superiors dipped into the classic bag for their impressions of the Marceels' "Blue Moon," Lloyd Price's "Mr. Personality," the Chantels' "Maybe," and others. Tony Washington, the faletto lead of the group, was in excellent form, adding sprinkles of spoken humor to his dynamic interpretations of the group's material throughout the show. His brother Maurice, the man with the deceeep deep voice, sent tremors through the room, while the other members of the five-man unit did equally well while sharing the leads. The group's choreography, rivaled only by more time and perfection, shows that the Superiors have been doing their homework for some time, and their rendi-



The Dynamic Superiors

tions of hit numbers "Shoe Shoe Shine," "Leave It Alone," and "Deception" turned the crowd into a bunch of jumpin' jacks as well. We can only offer our sympathy to those male groups who may have to share the same stage with the Dynamic Superiors—they've got it!

—Gerald Clark

# Count Basie vs. Super Sax

At Detroit Light Guard Armory Friday, February 27

The music of Count Basie is coercive, subver-

sive, and happy as a crow in a cornfield. It coerces tired feet into movement and subverts a pittance into a relaxed smile. It is also the perfect music to be cabaretin' to on a chilly Detroit evening at the Light Guard Armory.

From the opening "uh-doo-dee-dab-dwee" the Basie band swung and swung even harder till you thought they'd never come back. The riffs were singing and the bones were growling, the trumpets spit their sassy licks across the hall and the Count, restrained and ambassadorial, played minimally but soulfully in the background.

Native Detroitier Al Grey, still in the Count's trombone section after all these years, strutted to the fore, plunger in hand, to engage the attentive audience in a conversation-sermoning-solo on "I Don't Get Around Much Anymore." If you weren't looking you'd swear someone was up there laughing and scolding, crying and dying with a rhythmic vocabulary unknown to most players. And if that wasn't enough, tenor magician Jimmy Forrest stretched out on "Body and Soul" in an unaccompanied cadenza that told the history of soul in three fiery minutes.

Butch Miles, boy-wonder of the big-band skins, played with a sureness and excitement mindful of his predecessor. Sonny Payne, a tough pair of shoes to fill, Freddie Green still brandishes a near-lethal rhythm guitar and a Buddha-like facial expression that reads "I've seen and heard it all before." And when he wasn't smiling and waving to an admirer on the floor, trombonist Curtis Fuller was adding his strong and person-

al blowing to the affair, especially on a relaxed "I Can't Stop Loving You." As if all this wasn't enough, Superax was on hand trading off sets with the Count and bringing back the steam, jump and hop of Charlie Parker. It's a little like looking at a faded photograph of Bird: Superax plays unison transcriptions of his solos. And while one is ever mindful that nobody really plays like the man himself, they are all skilled musicians in their own right.

Warne Marsh surfaced with the band and played so hard he had to keep his tenor on dry ice between sets. "Scrapple From the Apple" was done swingingly and featured pianist Lou Levy sounding like Bird's own Do-do Marmarosa.

The concert was a presentation of "The Men Who Dare," some committed folks who turn the proceeds into scholarship funds for those in need. We was swingin' for a cause, if you can get next to that. Sweet labour.

—David Weiss



Count Basie

# PERFORMANCE

## Keith Jarrett

And At The Power Center Saturday, February 14

Keith Jarrett appeared at Ann Arbor's Hill Auditorium on St. Valentine's day and revealed his heart in song. Appearing with his hand of some years—Charlie Haden, bass; Paul Motian, drums; and Dewey Redman, saxophones—Jarrett created some complex and intriguing music. The first half of the program was devoted, predominantly, to new material, except for a short take from the recent *Death and the Flower* album. Although somewhat conservative compared to his previous performances, the compositions were quite colorful and Jarrett displayed his ever-growing ability to play the soprano sax, playing melodic lines in unison with Redman as the rhythm section provided a tight foundation.

After a brief intermission Jarrett returned alone on stage, performing a half hour piano solo. This was what many folks in the audience had come to hear, and they were not let down as Jarrett exhibited magnificently the gifts he was blessed with, continually weaving colors and moods in what appeared to be a spontaneous outburst of creative emotion. It is in this vein that he reveals his true genius, and for many it was the most moving portion of the program.

The rest of the band rejoined him and they finished what was more than two hours of inspired music. Along the way they performed "Le Mural" from the *Treasure Island* album, showing increased ability to manipulate old material in new and vital ways. It was while playing this familiar material that the individual band members, Haden especially, felt confident enough to wail. For an encore the quartet performed

the delicate "Introduction" and "Yaqui Indian Folk Song" off the same album.

A note of thanks should be paid to the Eclipse Jazz staff. They are mostly young and "less experienced" but were able to book a great show in a great hall and pull it off with few hitches. The Eclipse people were responsible for bringing McCoy Tyner to town during the fall, and promise Cecil Taylor for an April 15th date at the Power Center—some great music for a town that has long been denied.

—Joel Seigel

## David Bowie

At Olympia Stadium, Feb. 2

The unexpected storm in Detroit only seemed to heighten the excitement at Olympia Stadium, where David Bowie waded of 10,000 people into the second night at the giant ice arena, paired king of glitter rock and roll in 1976, touring company to the Max out glitter or glam, but it seemed a difference to his many fans as he dressed in casual wear, with a white necktie and a hit record

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