

Joni's Inward Journeys

BY LYNN VAN MATRE

● **FIRST OFF**, I've got to say I've never been a card-carrying, dues-paying member of the Joni Mitchell cult. A fellow traveler, maybe, caught like everybody else on the carousel of time of her "Circle Game." With her, seeing life "From Both Sides Now." Sympathizing with her "Urge for Going" or appreciating the guy who "Played Real Good For Free." But when Joni Mitchell's songs leave the concrete streets and realities, however



Jackson Browne: Searching

Music

nebulous, of life and head up the canyons of her mind on increasingly personal and less empathetic paths, following them has always seemed like more trouble than it's worth.

In the last year or so Joni Mitchell's songs have become more and more introspective, it seems, their delicate and contrived imagery, coming as usual, in the helter-skelter phrasing that only she seems to be able to come up with—and, it must be said, carry it off. Last night at Arie Crown, her wide-ranging, everchanging voice skittered like a butterfly over her mercurial melodies, somehow making all the words fit in around her piano, dulcimer, or guitar chords. And if they won't fit in, well, just make the line a little longer. It is a distinctive style, one that somehow suits her, and turns the lack of discipline into an asset.

Joni Mitchell's other assets are numerous: Physically attractive, she has a kind of fragile blond beauty that fits into blue denim as well as the velvet she chose last night, and a beautiful stage presence as well.

● **IT** is the fragility of expression in her music, however, that many seem to find so appealing. She skimmed thru some of her old material, but not enough of the

"Chelsea Morning" or "Urge for Going" variety to suit me. Instead, she had some new songs to sing, things with ambiguous titles and more ambiguous messages. The finale, however, was far more down to earth. With Steve Goodman hustled up from ringside, concert-opener Jackson Browne back on stage along with a couple of her roadie crew, Joni and the audience—all standing now, and the house lights on—joined in "Circle Game," the song everyone had been asking for all night. We got it, and it was a nice ending. And if Joni Mitchell leaves the canyons of my mind empty with her travels into her own, it was still good to see so many people following her on her inward journeys and, perhaps, ending up somewhere they wanted to be.

● **JACKSON** Browne, like his fellow California singer-composer Joni Mitchell, also is one looking into his life for the truth that is his own, but his keys to the truth are more skeleton—at least, they seem to fit more doors. His songs, almost entirely folk oriented, and accompanied by piano or guitar, reflect yearnings and the search for self. But his quests seem more readily understood, his melodies the kind that keep

on running thru your mind. At first I found Browne's songs predictable; now that I know what is coming with each song, they have simply taken on more meaning. It's been a long time since any songwriter's made me want to listen, really listen, to what he's saying. Jackson Browne does.

● **THE MAHAVISHNU** Orchestra, featuring guitarist John McLaughlin, has been booked for an appearance March 1 at Northwestern University's Cahn Auditorium, 600 Emerson, Evanston. Tickets for the concert, which begins at 8 p. m., will be available at the door or in advance from the Student Activities Office on campus.

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