



**Joni Mitchell: The once and future singer**

By **TINA CLARKE**  
*Free Press Social Writer*

Joni Mitchell was a vision of stunning sophistication at her concert Saturday evening at Pine Knob. Dressed in a taupe designer suit and dark green stiletto heels, she seemed more like a Vogue model than the former queen of the L.A. folk-rock scene. And her great looks matched the show.

Not too long ago Miss Mitchell, who wrote "The Circle Game" and "Both Sides Now," was frequenting the same circles as Crosby, Stills and Nash. Her willowly blond appearance, piercing soprano and confessional lyrics made her the toast of the Woodstock generation. But in recent years, Miss Mitchell has been exploring new musical frontiers.

"Pigeonholes all seem funny to me. I feel like one of those iller-educational types that just keep going for letters after their name. I want the full hyphenate, folk-rock-country-jazz-classics," she says.

During the last three years her work has been greatly influenced by jazz and her most recent recording, "Mingus," is certainly her most curious and ambitious effort to date. This record, a collaboration with jazz bass guitarist and legend, Charles Mingus, is a collection of songs written for Miss Mitchell to which she has added lyrics. Because Mingus died before the album was completed, it is as much an eulogy as it is a collaborative work.

**FOR HER** Pine Knob appearance, Miss Mitchell was accompanied by some of the musicians who played with her on the "Mingus" album. Most notable was Weather Report bass guitarist, Jaco Pastorius, who has been working with Miss Mitchell for a number of years.

Playing the rich haunting tones that have become an integral part of Miss Mitchell's music, Pastorius commanded the stage with almost demonic power. One of the world's finest bass guitarists, he exerts a creative dynamic over the musicians he plays with, in much the same way Mingus did. Perhaps this is why Miss Mitchell chose him to play in Mingus' place.

It was once said that when Mingus thought the band had become too facile, just swinging along, he would destroy the ambience, pushing the music into unexplored areas, challenging rather than merely supporting the soloist. Pastorius also uses that tactic. He is an acrobat — using his body and the stage as resonators and, at times Saturday evening, it seemed as though Miss Mitchell was struggling for instrumental control.

However, Miss Mitchell's voice cut and caressed each line. Her vocals, stronger and more versatile than ever, remained at the helm. Accompanying her with Pastorius were Don Alias on percussion, Michael Brecker on sax, Pat Metheny on guitar and Lyle Mays on keyboards.

**ALTHOUGH** Miss Mitchell stayed close to the present, playing music mostly from her 1976 album, "Hejira," the evening was highlighted by a few real surprises.

An a capella group, the Persuasions, joined Miss Mitchell on stage for a particularly soulful rendition of "Shadows and Light." For her encore, she enlisted them to sing the doo-wap chorus of Frankie and the Teenagers rock 'n' roll anthem, "Why Do Fools Fall in Love?" She closed with her own classic, "Woodstock." As she drifted off stage while playing the last few chords of the song, she was a chilling reminder of the Joni Mitchell of the past. But the tone of the evening — particularly her Mingus material — had already given an enticing look at the present and perhaps a glimpse at the future as well.

Joni Mitchell: Stiletto heels and designer suits.

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