

Joni Mitchell sings and plays at Place des Arts

By DANE LANKEN

Joni Mitchell gave her long-awaited concert in the Salle Wilfrid Pelletier of Place des Arts before a relatively small but appreciative audience last night. In the twelve months or so since Miss Mitchell last appeared in Montreal, for a week's engagement at the now-defunct New Penelope Coffee House, a lot has happened to her.

Folk music alive at the Doors

Jesse Winchester will be making a return engagement at the Back Door Coffee House, corner Sherbrooke and McTavish, this week.

Winchester is a composer as well as a singer-guitarist. Meanwhile, at the Yellow

Door Coffee House, 3625 Avilmer, Steve Fincham, a folk-blues singer and guitarist holds forth tonight through Wednesday.

Penny Lang and her back-up band will appear Thursday through Saturday nights.

Chiefly, she was catapulted to international fame by the success of Judy Collins' hit recording of one of her songs, Both Sides Now. She also appeared on network TV, opposite Bob Dylan on the Johnnie Cash Show, and her two LPs both have sales over the 100,000 mark.

In a phrase, Joni Mitchell has made it. Last night's audience, made up almost entirely of young,

long-haired people but sprinkled with an occasional straight or parent, accorded Miss Mitchell star treatment: lots of applause as soon as she appeared on stage, whenever they recognized a song, if she said something funny and, of course, at the end of every number.

Though the audience was with her, the Place des Arts P.A. system was not. Her high notes often came through as shrieks, though the middle and lower registers were at all times all right. This problem was compounded, probably for Miss Mitchell as well as the audience, by the silly location of the P.A. system speakers: on the ceiling of

the hall, out over the audience, away from the stage. Surely in the case of a solo artist appearing on the stage, these problems could be remedied by simply using a couple of speaker columns on the stage beside the artist.

Nonetheless, all this was not enough to cool the audience's enthusiasm for Miss Mitchell, born of her fame and their familiarity with her records. Moreover, Miss Mitchell's stage demeanor is one of the warmest, most infectious imaginable; she could win friends simply by smiling or joking while searching for the right guitar tuning.

Miss Mitchell is hampered

sometimes by her own material. A couple of numbers at last night's concert were no doubt very meaningful to herself, but audience seemed to find her words mystifying, without their being sufficiently lyrical so that individuals might construct their own meanings. And it seemed that in these instances, Miss Mitchell's style of a slow-paced delivery, though often offset by a rhythmic guitar, didn't help.

In the majority of her songs, however, Miss Mitchell

has combined rich imagery and or narrative with a poet's heart and a minstrel's careful soul. Her guitaristry, the inventiveness of her playing style, added to these creations and the results were rewarding.

Both Sides Now, as well as being her most famous song, is possibly her best. It is, all at once, pretty, poetic and deeply meaningful.

The only pity of the evening is that more people were not there to appreciate Joni Mitchell.

First time in Montreal after it's successful preview at Place des Arts

FOR ALL

