

In Review

Democrat and Chronicle
Friday, February 8, 1974

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Joni Mitchell sings at the Dome

By TOM TEUBER

Joni Mitchell, who has never been afraid to expose her weaknesses through her songs, performed last night in the Dome Arena at the Monroe County Fairgrounds.

In the process, she exposed the weaknesses of that hockey rink turned concert hall.

Mitchell is one of North America's finest, most prolific, most sensitive songwriters. She writes and sings of love, of loneliness, of frustration and of sadness — all intimate subjects. Her songs are powerful on records; I know dozens of people who, in their moments of despair, listen to Joni Mitchell records, knowing someone shares their loneliness.

Having shared intimate thoughts with her, I and thousands of others looked forward to seeing her in person. But despite her crystal clear voice, more powerful than I had realized, and the continuing efforts to improve the dome's acoustics, many of her lyrics were lost amid feedback and reverberation.

It was especially frustrating during the new material from her latest album, "Court and Spark," with which most of the audience was not familiar. I spent the afternoon of the concert listening to the

album, following the printed lyrics, so I wasn't caught totally by surprise.

Audience reaction was clearly strongest for her familiar songs, such as "Both Sides Now" or "Big Yellow Taxi" — songs everyone could almost sing along with.

There's a line in one of her new songs, "Help Me," that sums up the continuing search for love which dominates Mitchell's compositions.

"We love our lovin,' but not like we love our freedom," she sings, and anyone who has struggled to balance personal desires with the demands of an intense relationship can respond to what Mitchell is saying.

Her weaknesses, after all, are our weaknesses. Her appeal stems largely from her ability to express herself better than any of us could ever hope to.

But Joni Mitchell's appeal also comes from her musicianship. She's equally at ease with guitar, piano or dulcimer. And she's the most sensuous performer I've seen since, as a college kid, I saw Mary Travers back in the days when Peter, Paul and Mary were the hippest thing around.

Mitchell was surrounded for

much of the evening by the same studio musicians who backed her on "Court and Spark"—Tom Scott's L.A. Express. They often overpowered her, and consequently, the six or eight tunes she played with her own accompaniment were the most enjoyable of the evening.

cal event in Rochester was ultimately a disappointment, due to the economics of the music business which force performers into larger and larger halls. Joni Mitchell should have played at the Eastman.

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