

## Joni Mitchell's Charlotte Gig Gets Praise From Robeson Fan

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JONI MITCHELL and boyfriend, John Guerin, drummer for the "L.A. Express."

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By SUSAN PREVATTE, Robesonian Staff Writer

CHARLOTTE — Joni Mitchell stepped out on stage recently at the Charlotte Coliseum to face adoration and judgment, not trying to avoid it but once again seeking it out . . . needing it for various reasons.

She opened her set with "Help Me," a top 40 hit, but Joni hasn't exactly sold out. Her new LP, "The Hissing of Summer Lawns," proves that. During the evening she performed several of the most philosophically ambitious selections from it.

She floated around with impossible grace, an angelic and sophisticated vision, spilling out her songs in an ethereal voice, hitting seemingly impossible highs and lows and all ranges in between, simultaneously playing guitar in her own unique fashion.

Joni's band, the jazzy L. A. Express, was minus Tom Scott and his magic saxophone; his replacement was weaker, and the music a little more blaring, but the band still made it at times, molting with that incredible voice.

Joni cast some sultry glances, smiled frequently, and closed her eyes when she hit it strong. She also gave an ardent fan — this reviewer, sitting on the floor in front of the stage with mouth hanging open — an understanding look.

One couldn't repress the notion, although the concert was sold out, and people screamed "We love you, Joni, you're beautiful!" and such as that, that she's still underrated in the hip rock press and elsewhere: Just because she's who she is, a woman, and the majority of male rockstars are chauvinistic, arrogant, even boorish to an extreme.

Some are wary and resentful of her genius and cut her down with their sharp-edged scorn. To illustrate this, Joni sang, "Oh the power and the glory just when you're getting the taste for worship they start bringing out the jammers and the boards and the milt." She wrote it for James Taylor, but it equally applies to her.

She's had her share of worship and found it almost as devastating as the vitriol. Some critics and fans would elevate her to an altitude so lofty she would suffocate in her own ego. She acknowledged this in a new song, "Coyote," in a line which referred to the occasional swollen state of her ego.

During Joni's recent experiences on stage with Bob Dylan in his Rolling Thunder Review she had a close view of that and saw what it's done to him. Sometimes he has to pinch himself to make sure he's real.

If you don't dig Joni's music, one should at least credit her for having an artist's courage to express herself. On the other hand, why call her a goddess, when being called an artist is praise enough?

The pain of awareness and maturity shone in her eyes, trembled in her voice. Multiplicity filtered through a subtle, refined consciousness and transformed into art.

A girl, clutching a fancy camera, imperiously commanded Joni to smile. "Come on, Joni, give me a smile."

Joni's not one to give out fake smiles and strike an artificial pose. Nevertheless she did expose her teeth, but the girl was fiddling with her camera, missed it, and demanded an encore.

Joni Mitchell shrugged, lifted an eyebrow, and said, "You take what you can get when you can get it."

That would seem true enough. She looked so fragile, though her voice was so strong. She must have to guard against those would take everything she has and clamor for more.

Joni Mitchell gave a lot during that concert. She sang some old songs and some new ones, mixing disenchantment and cynicism with a sort of gallant, romantic hope. She danced some and flung a far bo around her neck and flooded around and laughed. She cleared her throat sometimes. She shook a few hands. She came out for the encore smoking a cigarette. She was real.

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