

A watered-down Joni Mitchell

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Thunder, lightning and whipping rain set the tone for the concert of Joni Mitchell and Tom Scott and the L.A. Express at Tanglewood this week.

Extra police were called to watch the supposedly unmanageable crowd of 5000 whose whistles drowned the opening chords of the L.A. Express' first number. An hour later, even tense, silver-jacketed Joni Mitchell could not quiet the soaked, restless crowd that had been left waiting in the rain for an hour by a woefully unprepared management.

To add insult to injury, Tom Scott and the L.A. Express, a West Coast rock



Joni Mitchell had reason for dour look at Lenox.

quintet, were a poor back-up choice. They swamped Joni's silvery, clear voice throughout the first set. Over-amplification shattered her poetry, and both Joni and the Express were better off by themselves.

Her fourth song, "The

Same Situation" from her latest album, finally gave her voice a chance to come through, but the noise and confusion on the floor forced her to stop halfway through to ask for quiet.

Lights were turned off as the second set began, the police retreated into dark corners and people sat listening as she worked her way backwards, with songs like "Rainy Day," "Woodstock," "Sweet Fire" and "Both Sides Now," accompanying herself on the piano and guitar, partly backed by a blessedly subdued L.A. Express.

Playing the dulcimer for "Lonely Road" she finally struck the chord the audience had been waiting for. This was the Joni Mitchell of her albums. A relationship was established and she put down her dulcimer to further explore it:

"Now that Watergate is over and we all settle down to work, are there any revolutions going on that I should be involved in?" she asked.

"United Farmworkers' strike," someone yelled. "Coalition of Labor Union Women," called another.

Ms. Mitchell did not pick up the lead, but recalled instead how she moved to Canada a year ago to "grow things and get into handicrafts" — only to discover that she was homesick for the "star-making monster and the curtain call." It was this discovery that led her to write "Farewell to Showbusiness No. 1."

"There is always the conflict between the poet and the performer," she said; a conflict clearly felt throughout the concert, and which she characterized by changing into a simple blue dress, with a silver cross for the last set. She toned down the bright lights and backing for an intense, moving journey into earlier albums.

But her last song put the evening's problems into focus: "Raised on Poverty" came out as a jazzed-up, rocky wail—a commercialized protest against commercialization.

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