



JONI MITCHELL AT THE RIVERBOAT
Positive poetry and imagery set to music



Nightclubs
by
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Joni Mitchell: One of the few remaining pockets of musicality

DURING HER second set last night at the Riverboat, Joni Mitchell got to reminiscing briefly about her first job as a professional singer, at a coffeehouse in Calgary called The Depression. She placed the year by saying it was just about the time the Beatle skyrocket was taking off.

What had prompted Miss Mitchell's little bout of nostalgia was her introduction to a song, The Circle Game, which she described as her only singalong song. "Gee, whatever happened to the good old days of folksinging," she said, "when people in the audience sang so loud they drowned out the singer on stage?"

It was, of course, a rhetorical question, asked half-jokingly, somewhat wistfully, but it prompted another question in my mind:

"GEE, WHATEVER happened to the good old days when any kind of popular music was the product of a positive, optimistic process, rather than an offshoot of the social and political negativism that flourishes today?"

There was a time when the voice of reason prevailed in music, overlaid with emotion, to be sure, because no song worth its salt attempts to be totally motive for its existence: love and kindred emotions.

Now, love is a word that is bandied about a good deal today, so much so that it has lost all semblance of the meaning it had even so short a time ago, relatively speaking, as the dawning of the Beatle age referred to by Miss Mitchell. The sort of love that many young people speak of today is the sort of totally unreasonable, cynical, intolerant emotion that says, in effect: "I'll

love you, baby, as long as you do things my way."

Well, that particular attitude has crept, nay barged, into most popular music today, and it doesn't seem to leave much room for the Joni Mitchells of this world.

One might even say that popular music has left the Joni Mitchells behind, but that would be a totally subjective statement, implying that popular music has made some sort of advance on a very broad front, to put it into military terms. But, I prefer to use a different sort of totally subjective statement about the whole music scene today and say instead that it has turned in its tracks and now is in the process of retreating madly, away from all reason, away from all good emotions, away from all beauty, away from all artistry, trampling almost everybody in the process and leaving only a few isolated pockets of resistance.

Whether these pockets can hold out remains to be seen, but the vast retreat goes on all around them, spurred by the musical anarchists and nihilists who have become leaders by default and only because they out-gimmick and out-shout everybody else.

IT WASN'T UNTIL I heard Miss Mitchell last night that I realized just how good our music used to be and just how headlong the retreat has become.

At any rate, this week and next, you'll find one of those little pockets of resistance at the Riverboat, manned single-handedly by a singer with a beautiful voice and a lot of thoughtful, honestly emotional and, above all, positive poetry and imagery set to music.