

With Robb Baker

West Coast Rock Scene Busy -But Real Winner Is 'Hair'

SAN FRANCISCO—Maybe the rest of the country—certainly New York City and even Chicago—is catching up with San Francisco in the pop music race. At least my trip out here this year was not quite the rock odyssey that a vacation a year ago was.

There's still a great deal going on here—and as much or more in Los Angeles—but [and maybe it was just poor timing] there were very few acts I could really get enthusiastic about seeing. And several, like Little Richard and Big Mama Thornton, were people that I had seen too recently to want to catch again just yet.

Particular disappointments were the cancelation of the San Francisco appearance [people were talking about nothing else but the concert from the time I got off the plane] of Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young after the death of David Crosby's girl, and my missing [by two days] Laura Nyro's reportedly very successful date at the Troubadour in Los Angeles.

I did see the Sons of Champlain at Mandrake's in Berkeley and again was disappointed, finding their set disjointed and lacking in



Joni Mitchell

single word: "Hair." And whether you head to the Aquarius theater in Los Angeles or the Geary theater [home of the A. C. T.] in San Francisco, the show is great.

Both productions have a freshness and credibility missing in the present Broadway version, which tends instead to be cute and sloppy.

Some of the weaknesses of the script really get pretty ghastly the fifth time around [you'd think some one would do something about that awful opening speech of Wool, which no actor could possibly bring off], but other sequences that are bothersome in New York [particularly the silly let's-get-the-audience-with-us opening and the long history-of-Americans-at-war bit in the second act] are much, much better out here, especially in San Francisco.

That production [the newest, other than the Chicago one which opened Wednesday at the Shubert] is even better in most respects than the very good one in Los Angeles, tho most of the voices are better down south.

San Francisco's Eron Tabor [Claude] and Marsha Faye [Jeanie] are names to watch very closely during the next year or so, as are Los Angeles' Ben Vereen [Hud], Lynn Baker [Sheila], and Delores Hall [who makes "Aquarius," "Ain't Got No," "Dead End," and "White Boys" all her own].

But best of all were Joey Grant and Halle's Angele Shubert.

in L. A., and a tiny emotional and vocal power house named Soni Moreno, who stepped into the role of Crissy the night I saw the show in San Francisco and won my attention completely every time she walked on stage.

One other number which has never done much for me, the second act opener "Electric Blues," really works in San Francisco, sparked by the dancing of Danny Lawyer.

An interesting thing happened near the end of the show at the Geary. Tabor, as Claude, walked on stage wearing khaki and sporting his slicked-back hair. It's a powerful enough scene the way it's written, as the audience realizes "They really got him."

That night, from front and center in the full house, someone started clapping at just that moment—as if to say, "That's the first clean, decent American I've seen on stage yet."

There were a few hisses from the startled audience, and then Tabor, probably feeling the role more than he ever had, launched into the most powerful rendition of "The Flesh Failures" [the introduction to "Let the Sunshine In"] imaginable.

Nothing could have made the show's message any clearer or more powerful.

For "Hair" is a manifesto [not perfect—what manifesto ever is?] of a new breed of people who want to say yes, not no, to life: who can sing "What a Piece of Work Is Man" not in sarcasm, but in hope; who are not afraid of recognizing their great vulnerability in all this, to join in the chorus of Joni Mitchell's new "Woodstock" song: "Maybe it was the time of year/or just the time of man/I don't know who I am/but it's time for learning . . . We are stardust/we are golden/and we've got to get back to the garden."



Helen Pollack sings of "Frank Mills," a 'teeny-boppers' love lament, in "Hair" at the Shubert.



Mike Kellin co-stars with Jessica Tandy in "Tchin-Tchin," the dramatic love story starting its third week at the Ivanhoe.



Lake Bobbitt portrays the unhappy homosexual of "The Madness of Lady Bright" at the Los Angeles Coliseum on Wells.



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variety [the sins that are being created in the name of jazz-rock today . . .].

Much better were the concert of Joni Mitchell with the Los Angeles Philharmonic at U. C. L. A. and the lively [as usual] show by Delaney, Bonnie & Friends [we sat thru it twice; I dig her more and more all the time] at the Brass Ring in Los Angeles.

But the real winner out here can be summed up in a