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Joni Mitchell's voice as sweet as ever

By John Spitzer

Ought to be middle-aged. We're middle-aged. And my child is a teenager.

Joni Mitchell sensed these lines from "This Side" on her latest album, to express her estrangement from the world and from the generation of the 60s.

Yet at the Stanley Theater last night Joni Mitchell commemorated effectively and successfully with a crowd of 2,000 people, the majority of them younger than she is, some of them probably her daughter's age.

She didn't seem to be joining in the crowd with comfortable arrangements of greatest hits. Nor did she do it by offering a "middle-aged" Mitchell commemorated directly with her audience with a combination of stinging misanthropy and personal insight.

Mitchell's voice was as strong, as sweet and as flexible as ever and she moved it around with imaginative daring the achieved her most concentrated rapport with the audience when the

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song solo, accompanying herself on guitar, piano or Appalachian dulcimer. When she sang with her four-piece band her voice was caught up in the intricate harmonic and rhythmic interplay. Yet she once always asserted its right to make itself heard, and the lyrics, or at least the message, never got lost in the instrumental texture.

Mitchell sang two autobiographical songs ranging from "You Turn Me On, I'm a Radio" to "Big Yellow Taxi" to "Wild Things Run Free" and "Sold Low" from her latest album. The sequence of songs was designed to provide constant variety, with simple songs providing relief after edgier ones, rockers followed ballads. Each song had enough space to reach itself clearly and distinctly was the consequence of the crowd.

The band, for its part, was first rate. Vince Chinello played drums with a control of volume and timbre and an appreciation for cross-rhythmic possibilities. Mike Landau's lead guitar were appropriate and effective in the rocking numbers, but his playing was most beautiful in slow, pure counterpoint on the vocal line, as in "Lone." Mitchell's heretofore interpretation of 2 Corinthians 13 Russell Furze filled in harmonic gaps on piano and synthesizer. Larry Klein, Mitchell's husband, pushed the band along with agile, open bass lines, and his fine solo in "Old Man Be a Booger Man" paid tribute to Charlie Mingus, the great jazz bassist and Mitchell's one-time collaborator.

Mitchell's arrangements were careful, almost fanatical. Instruments and voice had room to explore without crowding one another. To make how thick the texture or how complex the rhythms, she sang rhythm exercises with all their subtleties. "Cotton Avenue" with its vocal

lyrics led over a smoking beat, and "You're So Square Baby I Don't Care" for Luther and Luther classic, were particularly imaginative in their reworking of basic rock 'n' roll chording and rhythms.

Beyond these matters of musical technique, Mitchell projected an integrity and a masterful fact victory in her lyrics and her delivery that gave on the audience as the evening went on. "Sweet Bird" with its wailing guitar, and "Foot of the Road" with its dissonance and allusive lyrics, both seemed to be carried along by the strength of the performer's will. And in "Road Rock" Mitchell's hard and final cover, she held the audience spellbound with three after three of understated rhythmic guitar.

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Nostalgia at the CLO

(Continued from Page 9)

If what is necessary for a student to perfect his performance so that he can compete. Very often the cast becomes involved in the process of singing and not be aware of what it takes to go out and get the job.

These days, Cass is most active in opera, and he sang the leads in the Cleveland Opera productions of "Falstaff" and "Carmen" last year. In the New York City Opera, he has roles in musicals in "Follies," he plays Dimitri Kirovman.

Charles Schroeder is an unlikely entertainer. He makes optical instruments for a living, and on the side, he has performed with the Pittsburgh Symphony and the Pittsburgh Opera. He also worked in television and radio, and made several local nightclub appearances.

"I've never wanted to do it [perform] full time. It's too much. I started late. I had a very good life, and I wanted the same for my kids. I think the great thing about the CLO is that they are using local people."

Walter Miller O'Brien and Marjorie Eastman have scored the world together doing industrial shows for Eastman's company, Hartman-Eastman Studios. Miller is a regular with CLO and a lead part of the Pittsburgh revue scene. Eastman got her start playing the mellophone in George Harnsey's "Night of the Living Dead," which she helped to produce, and is also a CLO regular.

"I think what's going on is that there are people like me who've worked so hard in their lives, and it pays them of attending things that are professional. I think that after you've paid your dues, you deserve to get paid. That's what makes CLO so exceptional — it's professional, the people are good and all, the best working facility for actors," says Miller.

"I still have travel scars on my chest from when my rotten daughter did me in." Eastman quips of her role in Romero's film. Now busy running her company, writes, produces and acts in industrial shows and commercials.

"For working with a cast, this is the best experience I've had at CLO. They're all apes from all backgrounds, the mix is really wonderful. All. There doesn't seem to be any competition among the performers. Some of these people are the ones from whom I've drawn my characters. There won't be as much acting in this show as there will be revelation of real people."

Follies, starring Ron Zandy and Katherine Hays, continues through July 17. For information, call 221-2972.

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