

Joni Mitchell pleases audience at Le Hibou

By Bill Fox
Citizen special correspondent

Picture the ideal female folk singer — long blond hair, beautiful, witty, a good guitarist, and a clear soprano voice — the kind you believed didn't exist any more — this is Joni Mitchell.

Returning to Le Hibou Coffee House for a two-week engagement, Joni has come a long way from her early days as a performer and song writer.

Her songs have been recorded by established stars like Judy Collins, Buffy St. Marie and Ian and Sylvia.

TV appearances

She has appeared on television programs such as Let's Sing Out, Take 30 and The Way It Is.

Recently, she recorded an album of her own songs to be released in April on Frank Sinatra's Reprise label.

But most noticeably, to Canadian audiences, Joni wrote and sings the theme song for the CBC public affairs program, The Way It Is.

Appearing on stage in a rust-colored mini-dress, Joni opened the set with one of her more famous songs, Urge for Goin'.

Rare treat

She sings in a clear soprano voice, a rarity in this day of electronic music, accompanying herself on an acoustic guitar.

She easily switches from a ballad to a semi-rock protest song. Her voice is haunting at times, and at others, is like a young girl singing in a small-town music festival. The themes of her songs vary from love and the eternal triangle, to the sea, or war.

She smiles easily, resulting in an immediate rapport with the audience.

Between numbers, she tells the story behind some of her songs or relates an amusing incident connected with them.

But the best example of

her polished stage presentation occurred as Joni was preparing for the last number of the set.

As she was tuning her guitar for And So Once Again, one of the strings broke.

Undaunted, Joni set the guitar against a stool and sang the number, the story of a young man and his girl who break up when he goes off to war, without accompaniment, something a lesser performer would never have attempted.

Joni Mitchell, perhaps Canada's foremost female folksinger, seems to be well on the way to the big time.

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