



Joni Mitchell: concert was not one of her best, and the director (Miss Mitchell) doesn't know how to handle cameras or edit.

Joni's Superspecial: some brilliant flashes in the televised murk

BY PAUL McGRATH

JONI MITCHELL'S *Shadows and Light*, the CBC Superspecial on TV tomorrow at 8 p.m., is for long swatches of time little more than five cameras in search of a director. The director, Miss Mitchell herself, was in front of the cameras singing, so her input into the actual taping was negligible. The hour-long program is rough and entirely lacking in direction.

In an interview in Toronto more than a month ago, she admitted that a number of the cameras were

Borrowed film footage complements songs

doing the same thing at the same time for want of any clear instructions. As a result, she has had to tart up the presentation with found footage which, given the uninspired nature of many of the individual performances here, are by and large the most entertaining things in the hour. To complement some of her songs, she has borrowed footage from *Rebel Without a Cause*, *The Blackboard Jungle* and documentary footage of Ame-

lia Earhart (the last to accompany Amelia, one of the more drab vocal performances).

Judging from the barely adequate presentation of half the songs, it's clear that this concert, shot last year in the Santa Barbara Bowl, was not one of her best. She had with her a crackerjack set of musicians, including the ever-astounding Jaco Pastorius on bass, saxophonist Michael Brecker, guitarist Pat Metheny, and her current lover, Don Alias, on drums and percussion. Why they didn't mix up a more powerful sound is anybody's guess. There are flashes of brilliance from both Pastorius and Metheny but, over-all, the playing is businesslike, note-perfect and uninspiring.

Miss Mitchell has performed thousands of times in front of a live audience, but only extremely rarely has she committed any performances to tape for distribution. It appears that her knowledge of the permanent nature of this performance did not, as it should have, make her extend herself. Instead, she has kept herself tightly in check, most noticeably in jazz numbers which beg for improvisation.

Only during *Goodbye Pork Pie Hat*, an old Charlie Mingus tune to which she added lyrics for Mingus, her most recent studio album, does she let herself go with some success. Similarly jazzy, *The Drycleaner* from *Des Moines* is almost strangled by her lack of movement. Raised on *Robbery*, the oldest item on the program, is also the rockiest, and here finally the band starts to let loose, Pastorius in a superb bass pattern late in the song and Brecker in a high-energy solo.

The editing of the show, also by Miss Mitchell, is curious; it is an extension of the visual side of her work — some of it successful, some of it not. Amelia Earhart footage is

One bit is perfect, another an ugly mash

always fun to look at, since the filler is such a mysterious figure, and with a germane song in the background the item works quite well.

During her version of Frankie Lyman's *Why Do Fools Fall in Love*, there is footage of Lyman himself with *The Teenagers* and, at a crucial point in the Mitchell music, Lyman does the splits in spectacular fashion. That bit of editing is perfect. During *Black Crow* Miss Mitchell, skating in a cape that suggests crow's wings, is superimposed over an out-of-focus crowd shot; the entire thing becomes an ugly mash of eye-strain.

Elsewhere, she does her best with what must have been a poor crop from the cameras. Some of the stage shots pan slowly across empty stage areas while good solos are happening somewhere else; the cameras never find the right angle to include the keyboard player's hands; there are odd half-bodies hanging around the sides of shots. I'd hate to see the things that ended up on the editing-room floor.