

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH



Joni Mitchell singing some of her own songs last night at the Mississippi River Music Festival at Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville. (Post-Dispatch Photograph by Lynn T. Spence)

Two Folk Singers Share Spotlight at Festival

By HARPER BARNES

Two original and talented young performers shared the spotlight last night at the Mississippi River Festival. For different reasons, each was well received by an audience of about 3500.

Arlo Guthrie and Joni Mitchell nominally are folk singers, but there the resemblance ends. Guthrie's forte is a dry, hip humor that emerges in long monologues between and in the middle of his songs. Miss Mitchell sings long narrative poems that she has set to harmonically ambitious music.

Guthrie is the son of the late Woody Guthrie, the balladeer of the dust bowl and the labor movement. His style owes quite a bit to the "talking blues" identified with his father. Guthrie was on stage for an hour last night and sang a half dozen songs.

The rest of the time, he rambled on wittily about the Los Angeles police department, the coming Apocalypse and a mildly hallucinogenic plant that many young persons are said to roll into cigarettes and smoke.

From time to time, the audience shouted for him to do "Alice's Restaurant," his best known number. He did not comply. Singing a three-minute-long song several nights a week for a year is one thing; repeating a 20-minute song and monologue such as "Alice" a couple of hundred times is quite another.

It is inevitable to compare Joni Mitchell with Judy Collins, who sings many of Miss Mitchell's songs. The best known of these is "Both Sides Now" ("Clouds"). Miss Collins's version was in the top 40 for several months.

Judy Collins has a stronger, surer voice. However, Miss Mitchell's delivery has a wild, sweet quality that is compelling. Her songs are rich in metaphor. They also are difficult to sing, involving sudden swoops up the scale. Therefore, she can be forgiven if occasionally she loses her harmonic path.

Miss Mitchell's songs bear about the same relationship to the traditional folk ballad that

the music of Thelonious Monk does to Dixieland.

Last night's performances were filmed by a crew from National Educational Television. The house lights were left on for the benefit of cameras, diminishing the sense of intimacy that would have complemented Miss Mitchell's low-key, gentle performance.

At 8:30 p.m. Thursday, the Iron Butterfly will appear at the festival on the campus of Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville.

Little Symphony Concert Friday

The fourth in a series of six Little Symphony concerts will be given Friday at 8:45 p.m. at the Washington University Quadrangle.

The concert will feature Joseph Kalichstein, young pianist. Kalichstein, 23 years old, is the 1969 winner of the Leventritt piano concert competition and a former student of the Juilliard School of Music in New York. He will play Bach's "Concerto for Piano and String Orchestra in D Minor" and Haydn's "Concerto for Piano and Orchestra in D Major."

Amerigo Marino will conduct the Little Symphony Orchestra.

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