

C 10 THE LOUISVILLE TIMES, THURSDAY, AUGUST 1, 1974

Joni Mitchell's singing (or was it her music?) sets the audience afire

By TERESA MORRIS
Louisville Times Critic

a review

"Hey man," the young guy protested as police tried to make him move out of the aisle near the front of the stage. "That woman lights a fire in the heart of every man in the world. She's beautiful!"

He was probably talking about the way Joni Mitchell looked, her statuesque form swaying with the music, as the colored lights caught in her shiny hair and shimmered in the folds of her satin outfit.

But just as appropriately, he could have been talking about her music, because that is what really kindled a "fire in the heart" for a near sell-out crowd that came to hear her last night at Convention Center.

It was a fine concert, probably one of the best that we've seen here for quite a while. Visually and musically, it was sophisticated and striking, and a welcome event in a city that seems to get for concerts only one hot and nasty rock group after another.

Has a unique style

Joni Mitchell is an extraordinarily good songwriter with a unique singing style. Hers are sensitive songs that often express ideas and situations that most people can only feel.

The concert relied heavily on her latest album, "Court and Spark," which contains what are probably her most listenable songs, and certainly the lightest in mood. She opened with "Free Man in Paris," and closed with "Twisted," and worked five more from the album in between.

She broke three guitar strings trying to tune up for "Help Me," and joked about the concert being "a half hour of singing and an hour and a half of tuning."

Her performance included songs, however, that spanned her career, reaching all the way back to "Both Sides Now," through "For Free," "Big Yellow Taxi,"

"Woodstock," "Blue," "Pretty Lies," to the more recent "For the Roses" and "Barangril."

A few couples danced

It was a diverse group, ranging from swinging ("Raised on Robbery" prompted a few couples to get up and dance) to somberly introspective. Changing colored lights helped mold the mood.

The high points came when Ms. Mitchell was on the stage alone, at the piano or guitar, under a single spotlight, and when she seemed to warm up to the crowd and talk a little before a song.

For the most part, though, she moved silently and quickly from one song right into the next.

It was a concert that really didn't have any low points, except perhaps when her back-up band, the L.A. Express, opened the show with an instrumental set. They're a good back-up band, and they still sound like one when playing alone.

And it didn't seem to matter that Ms. Mitchell seemed distant and detached on a personal level, because her music communicated all that the audience needed.

At times there were distractions — people walking around, yelling at the wrong time — but for most of the show, her performance demanded attention and got it. The audience responded with standing ovations and a pounding, stomping demand for an encore—but always respectfully, seeming almost too much in awe of Joni Mitchell to try to get too close.

In return, they got a lot of pleasure.
