

Joni, P D Q, Jazz Lab and UNC Symphony

Musical highlights of the week:

Editor's note: This week saw a vast variety of musical performances in the area, the most significant of which are reviewed here.

Joni Mitchell and the L. A. Express, Feb. 7 at Duke's Cameron Indoor Stadium—reviewed by George Bacso

In a manner quite unexpected, Joni Mitchell demonstrated to a capacity crowd of 9,000 in Duke's Cameron Indoor Stadium Saturday just what talent alone can do for an artist of her calibre.

Joni usually so captivates her adoring audience that they are mesmerized by the mere sight of her on stage. Consequently, she can have an off-night and still receive a standing ovation and the lit matches which have become commonplace at rock concerts.

At Duke, however, Joni was most often at odds with her unruly audience, who continually called for "Woodstock" and other popular Mitchell classics. Joni wanted to play new material, much of her audience wanted to hear "Joni Mitchell's greatest hits," and there the problem remained, with

Joni unrelenting.

Although this confrontation may have created a lousy rapport between artist and audience, it did not seem to effect Joni's performance. In fact, in a somewhat sick way, it made Joni's singing and playing all the better. Stripped of superstar veneer, the former '60s folkie had to succeed on musical ability alone—and succeed she did.

Without any of the usual introductory formalities, Joni, looking very cosmopolitan in a three-piece suit and hat, joined the L. A. Express, who had played a good 45 minute opening set of jazz-rock, on stage and immediately lit into "Help Me," a roar erupting from the crowd at the first cascading verse. After quickly running through "For Love Or Money" and "Free Man in Paris," the Express left Joni alone on stage for five songs, later complimented by another five song solo set.

Joni's acoustic guitar numbers were excellent, although her solo rendition of "Centerpiece," which included some blues guitar, failed to live up to the group recording and jazz treatment found on her new album, "The Hissing of Summer Lawns." Her solo acoustic piano set, primarily material from the new L. P., did not come off as well.

The seldom-smiling Joni's performance with the Express was exceptionally tight and highlighted by "Just Like This Train" and "Raised on Robbery." The Express, though hurt by the departure of Tom Scott, is her perfect backup band. Subtle and not overpowering, they are content with providing Mitchell with letter-perfect accompaniment.

Although her 20 song, over two-and-one-half hour set was an excellent balance between soft, introspective ballads and loud, lighthearted rockers, Mitchell's performance lacked the vitality, warmth and enthusiasm one would and should expect from an artist

and talent as great as Joni. Without these necessary ingredients for a great concert, putting the Joni Mitchell who appeared at Duke on stage was little better than putting any of Joni Mitchell's fine albums on a turntable and looking at her picture on the album cover.

P D Q Back, Feb. 8 at Memorial Hall—reviewed by Lawrence Toppman

"Why did Back have 23 illegitimate children? Because his organ had no stops," a member of the audience at the P D Q Bach performance quipped. Alas, one of Johann Sebastian Bach's progeny was P D Q Bach (1897-1742), whose eminence has at last been revealed to the world of music by Professor Peter Schickele of the University of Southern North Dakota at Hoople.

Schickele's dream—to lecture on his find in Chapel Hill—was realized Sunday when he presented a most humorous concert in Memorial Hall with three other members of the Semi-Pro Musica Antiqua: John Ferranted (bargain-counter tenor), David Oei (keyboardist), and William Walters (stage manager and chorus). Schickele's work has yet to receive accreditation from the American Society of Chiroprody.

P D Q Bach is already believed to be the most prolific composer of March 1792. Few people know he received his inspiration from trips to the Munich Zoo, where he communed with an emperor penguin, which he believed to be the reincarnated spirit of Mozart.

From this period come the great "Erotica Variations," in which Professor Schickele demonstrated sprightly virtuosity on windbreaker (a series of mailing tubes), foghorn and balloons.

That brief moment of inspiration also produced the "Toot Suite in C minor" for calliope four hands, from which the profound "O. K. Chorale" is taken, and the opera Rossini labelled "the zenith of cacophony." Schickele's "Hansel and Gretel and Ted and Alice." Schickele's crew performed all these pieces with wild abandon and a harpsichord.

The surprise of the evening was the unveiling of the lost "Diverse Ayres on Sundrie Notions," composed during P D Q Bach's tenure as a salesman of patent medicines. These tunes revealed him to be the originator of the singing commercial and are sure to make him famous as a man capable of soothing



Staff photos by Howard Shepherd (lower left and upper right), Margaret Aurr (upper left) and George Bacso (lower right).

This week offered music lovers a wide variety of performances, including the Scholarship Benefit Concert featuring the UNC Symphony and violinists Kay Tuttle and Penny Schwarze

(upper left), the Jazz Lab Band and drummer Scott McLaughlin (upper right), P D Q Bach (lower left) and Joni Mitchell (lower right).

stomachs as well as making them queasy.

Schickele has said he will never cease to proclaim the greatness of P D Q Bach till the least famous son's picture hangs beside his father's in the Klopsberg Beer Gardens. We wish him luck.

Scholarship Benefit Concert featuring the UNC Symphony, Feb. 10 at Hill Hall—reviewed by Lawrence Toppman

Many readers tend to devalue negative reviews of student productions by saying, "You can't be too hard on them. Remember, they're only students." After the Scholarship Benefit Concert Tuesday night by the UNC Symphony and five of the music department's top soloists, that excuse won't hold water.

I was most pleasantly startled by the orchestra, which responded eagerly to David Serrins' tart, quick direction. The lushness of the strings and the crisp biting tone of the reeds kept the ensemble sections from ever becoming dry or dull. Though there was an occasional difficulty in integrating the orchestra's components—the horns blared dominantly at the wrong moments—Serrins and the orchestra generally stayed in their place, allowing the soloists to show what

they could do.

Each soloist opted for a piece full of rich tone coloring and bravura: piano concertos by MacDowell and Prokofiev, a trumpet solo by Arutunian, and light opera by Massenet, Charpentier and Gounod. While these had the freshness of coming to us almost new, the effect was rather numbing as they piled one upon another.

The lack of variety is a minor point, however. When these students and the orchestra add a bit of versatility and polish to the broad base of their competence, they will be a rare treat to hear. Though they are "only students," these musicians need no excuses.

UNC Jazz Lab Band, Feb. 8 at Hill Hall—reviewed by George Bacso

The UNC Jazz Lab Band primarily plays contemporary jazz, combining a modern-day rhythm section, consisting of electric piano, electric guitar, bass guitar, drums and percussion, with the traditional brass of the stage band.

Last Sunday's concert consisted chiefly of tunes by David Teague and Les Hooper, two lesser-known but competent contemporary composers. Teague's work made up most of the first half of the program, "Spring Morning," a Chick Corea-like piece, featured Lee Davis on trumpet. Davis' extended solo, mainly scalar runs with lots of drops, was one of the better solos of the afternoon.

"Renee," a light, uptempo tune with a Latin feel, saw trumpeter Clay Sims provide a sassy melody which enabled several other horn players to improvise greatly on his changes. "If" featured Andy Ratoff on alto sax, soloing during this slow ballad with great feeling and excellent phrasing.

The Jazz Lab Band ended the first half of its concert with a new arrangement of "When the Saints..." Sounding like a modern Stan Kenton chart, this version was full of time changes and volatility—the listener almost had to strain to recognize the familiar melody of this high volume piece.

Despite a weak introduction and a bit of hidden Dixieland, "Blue Orleans" turned into a good funk tune. Hooper's "Softness" was a marked contrast, with Dave Robinson playing a muted trumpet, backed by a chorus of five flugel horns.

After a few more numbers, the Band concluded its show with Hooper's "Skin Tone," an uptempo piece arranged as a showcase for the band's new drummer Scott McLaughlin. Called back for an encore, the group performed another Teague composition, "Ruth."

The Jazz Lab Band not only produces good, modern stage band jazz, but is a delight to watch as well as hear. Director John Harding's verbal give-and-take with members of the band results in a warm, relaxed atmosphere which is fully transmitted to the audience in the group's music. Harding and the band obviously enjoy performing almost as much as their audience enjoys hearing them play.

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