

Joni Mitchell 10/30/98

Big Yellow Taxi
Just Like This Train
Night Ride Home
The Crazy Cries Of Love
Free Man in Paris
Harry's House
Black Crow
Amelia
Hejira
Don Juan's Reckless Daughter
Face Lift
Sex Kills
The Magdalene Laundries
Moon At the Window
Trouble Man
Comes Love
Woodstock



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She walked on stage at 8:30, her face and hair glowing. Was that a swagger I saw or merely the complacent strut of an artist imbued with confidence - no longer the blonde in the bleachers but the main event, taming the tiger? She looked tremendously poised, confident and comfortable, reminding me of my yoga teacher - I just hoped the audience was open to her evolutionary set, from old to new and back again. Opening the show with Big Yellow Taxi was a brilliant way to capture the audience's attention. While the jmdler in me would have preferred a stirring version of The Judgement of the Moon and Stars or A Case of You, the fan in me loved the way this song played to non-Joni fans, bringing them to her, sucking them in to her aura. Once they're there, she can, like Miss Liberty, shine on them the light of her music, poetry and vision. [Oh, how I wish she had played Song For Sharon!]. The levity and humour of singing a verse in Dylan's voice is a good trick, too - she's a barker at the midway employing a ruse to lure the unsuspecting audience out on the vast and subtle plains of her mystery. Big Yellow Taxi was welcomed with screams of approval. As the reviewer for the Ottawa Sun said, "however, as was to be the case all night, Mitchell gave the tune a slap on the butt with jazzy and even hip-hopish tinges creeping into the delivery." It was magic and she cast a spell that lasted long into Dylan's raucous set.

Just Like This Train was soulful, full of feeling. I didn't catch the reaction of the crowd, however, as I was overtaken by I'm not much of a photographer and wasn't even using my own camera this night - I had 2 songs, maybe 10 minutes to something which even experienced photographers classify as tricky and difficult. I had been coached a bit, so I set the fiddled with it a bit, and hoped it did its job, because I've got to say, I was not really thinking down there in the pit. Despite my hopes for a close encounter with Joni as has occurred for other jmdlers on this tour, I never got close. I eve rehearsed what I would say and remembered what my friend said : "Tell her you love Hejira - tell her to come to Calgary I can't travel - tell her you love her." I didn't get to say those things to her or get her to sign my cd booklets from Hejir Turbulent Indigo (which I carried around with me for two full days - just in case), but I got pretty close. I was in the pit the stage with a couple other newspaper photographers - 10 feet away, with a telephoto lens. Her face brightly lit, a m the window, was right there - amazing! There was a time when I didn't want to get close to Joni, when, for me, only t mattered and I feared that knowledge of her, her life, her foibles, her wrinkles would destroy the magical creation my m invented over the years. Now, I wanted to see her. I did, and it was so cool. Seeing her smile as she introduced her ban as a guy in a white suit and a white top hat (yes, same guy who had been in Toronto the night before) bowed and del a bouquet of roses and then concentrate as she prepared to play Night Ride Home was a special moment that I won't s forget. When she sang "I love the man beside me", I thought: " I love this woman above me", and time stood still. Thro two songs, the end of which I understood only by the tug of the security guy on my sleeve, I only managed to shoot a photos, and I remember shooting only about 5 of them. This was all too overwhelming for me. Someone with less tend emotion and abstraction should have been where I was. But I wouldn't have traded it for anything. I remember one other thing from my time in the pit - Brian Blade's smile. I think he may have been as happy as I was to close to Joni - there was a spark and a joy that could light up a room - really impressive. For me, the rest was denouement. I missed Free Man in Paris and Harry's House as I was escorted out by the arena staf took my camera back to the car (wasn't allowed to keep it at my seat). I came back for Black Crow - what a great song. I did not notice in Vancouver that she has changed the lyrics somewha of "In search of love and music/My whole life has been/Illumination . . .", she sings "In search of truth and beauty/My has been" - the reference to Keats a seeming acknowledgement of the shift in her point of view and her present inclina compare herself with history's great artists. Black Crow was fantastic - the band rocked, Joni danced, and the crowd che Amelia and Hejira were atmospheric. I'm still not sure whether I actually heard her play them and heard how she played simply heard them the way I always do, internally, metaphysically - the message different each time depending on the c and circumstances. One thing that struck me was how much more authoritative she sounded on the subjects of those t masterpieces. I once heard Robertson Davies say that one should read the great books 3 times: once at a young age, o the age the author wrote the work, and once later in life when experience has had a chance to give one the perspectiv necessary to either understand or determine whether the author understood. The same must apply to poets (please fo I don't accede to her recent I've-always-been-a-painter-first pretensions; to my mind, Joni's a poet and a musician who a paints and, like all of us, does many other things with more or less success) playing their music, for her serenity and poise these two songs really seemed to embody and emote the words, images, ideas and thoughts of these two songs. She understands what she probably only felt or suspected intuitively in her thirties when they were written. Love's longings deceptions and all the rest are deeply felt and passionately delivered.

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