

riffs



THE AUDIENCE had begun clapping a slow, insistent start-the-show beat. Then, cheers for the band coming on, dimmed lights, and the announcement that "Miss Joplin would like to dedicate the entire set to the New York Jets for their victory over Kansas City tomorrow." Kind of like a bullfighter dedicating the ears and tail. Then she was running onstage right into "Raise Your Hand." And we did indeed raise up our hands.

Madison Square Garden is no place for rock and roll. In spite of that, Janis Joplin made emotional contact with a sell-out crowd there last Friday night and caused a near-riot. During the last half of her concert the floor shook alarmingly but the Garden cops assured her manager that it was nothing: "You should see it when the elephants come off!"

Johnny Winter had said backstage that he's been home practicing for three months. When Janis brought him on stage to join her it showed. He played better than I'd ever heard him, really soaring and sweet. He was really playing for Janis and with the pent-upness of months of woodshedding. She was improvising a blues about how bad Texas treated them both. Toward the end Butterfield suddenly appeared and made it a trio of blues voices and guitar answering each other. The audience was wild for Winter but stayed anchored to their seats.

Singing on an acoustic guitar, she did a fleeting Dylan imitation ("This is for you, Bob") and began picking out a folk song, "Bobby McGee" ("about someone I was in love with

once"): The band came in softly and stayed in the background until the screaming finale—a "Hey Jude"-style repetition of the name Bobby McGee. "Summertime" was pure beauty with organist Rich Kermode coming out for a flute solo at the beginning.

Guitarist John Till makes a big difference in the band, playing some really tasteful stuff. But as a whole the push wasn't there and they really sagged in places. "Piece of My Heart" was especially uninspired compared to Janis's dynamite delivery up front. Individually they're excellent but it wasn't showing.

There were a lot of technical problems that Janis seemed to be fighting all the way. Things like stubborn mikes and lost picks slowed down the show but there's no doubt about who won.

She has the power to move you over almost any obstacle and she did. Hearing her makes you feel better about yourself.

Janis has really grown since she played the Anderson Theatre two years ago in her first New York appearance. It is clear that she is in a state of flux and more growth is to come. She is learning how to control her voice and the concept of style is broadening. I feel she has yet to reach her peak.

"Try" was good and "Kozmis Blues" was great but it really started happening in the middle of a vocal by baritone-saxist Snooky Flowers on "Can't Turn You Loose." Janis paused from prancing and dancing all over the stage to say, "It would be illegal for me to say 'Why don't you get up and dance' because it would be illegal for you to do it. So

Continued on next page

riffs

Continued from preceding page

don't think I'm suggesting anything like that, but I don't know what the fuck you're doing sitting down—this is rock and roll! Ain't nothing complicated about that, it's just rock and roll."

Before she could finish they started pouring into the aisles and up to the front of the stage. The cops made a futile attempt to push back the surging crowd while colored spots played over them, but quickly switched their efforts to throwing the climbers off the stage and carrying out fainting teenyboppers. Before the song ended, she had the entire

crowd on its feet. It was then that the main floor began shaking.

"Piece of My Heart" was magic that set a sea of bodies bobbing and throbbing. "Ball and Chain" was the tour de force with the band packing up and going off while Janis stayed on singing and rapping alternately about being lonely. When she finished they cheered her off but knew better than to ask for more—she'd given it all.

—Johanna Schier