



Chuck Mitchell Sings Folk and Country Fare

Chuck Mitchell, like most wines, keeps improving with age.

But at a time when almost any kid with half a voice and a handful of original songs finds little trouble landing a recording contract (the theory being that you never know when the next James Taylor might wander into your office), Mitchell, who has musical talent to spare, wound up financing and producing his own album in order to get said what he wanted to without having to compromise his values.

At the Ice House in Pasadena, where he is appearing through Sunday, Mitchell presented a 50-minute program which was a study in taste, intelligence and sheer musical enjoyment.

Boasting a strong, controlled baritone (whose bottom notes evoke memories of the young Fred Neil) and a marvelous feel for folk and country-flavored material, Mitchell offered compelling versions of songs written by Kris Kristofferson ("Me And

Bobby McGhee"), John Stewart ("July, You're a Woman," the finest reading we've heard) and Jerry Jeff Walker ("Gypsy Song Man") among others.

A warm, sincere and refreshingly-understated artist whose between-song comments are subtle and always to the point, Mitchell exudes an authority and integrity (born of dedication and experience) which lends added weight to everything he does.

Whether singing a wistful, world-weary tune like "Gypsy Song Man" (which pretty much sums up where he has been for the last seven years) or a raunchy "Stagolee," Mitchell's believability and sense of personal commitment to his material is pervasive and never open to question.

—MICHAEL SHERMAN