

# Melanie Is a Complete Delight at Bottom Line

By JOHN ROCKWELL

Melanie is now 29 years old, and she's been around since before Woodstock. She has her fans, but she is hardly a big star; for most rock enthusiasts especially, she is tacitly taken as a symbol of gosh-oh-gee sentimental excess, and tales of her devotees bearing candles to her concerts as if to Lourdes hardly helped her image. She's been putting out records fairly steadily, but people with closed ears didn't listen, and even if they did, they would have found much misconceived production and uneven material.

But to this observer's complete surprise—he had always managed to miss Melanie's concerts—her late show Thursday at the Bottom Line was a complete delight. She's there through tomorrow, with no opening act, and she's most definitely worth catching.

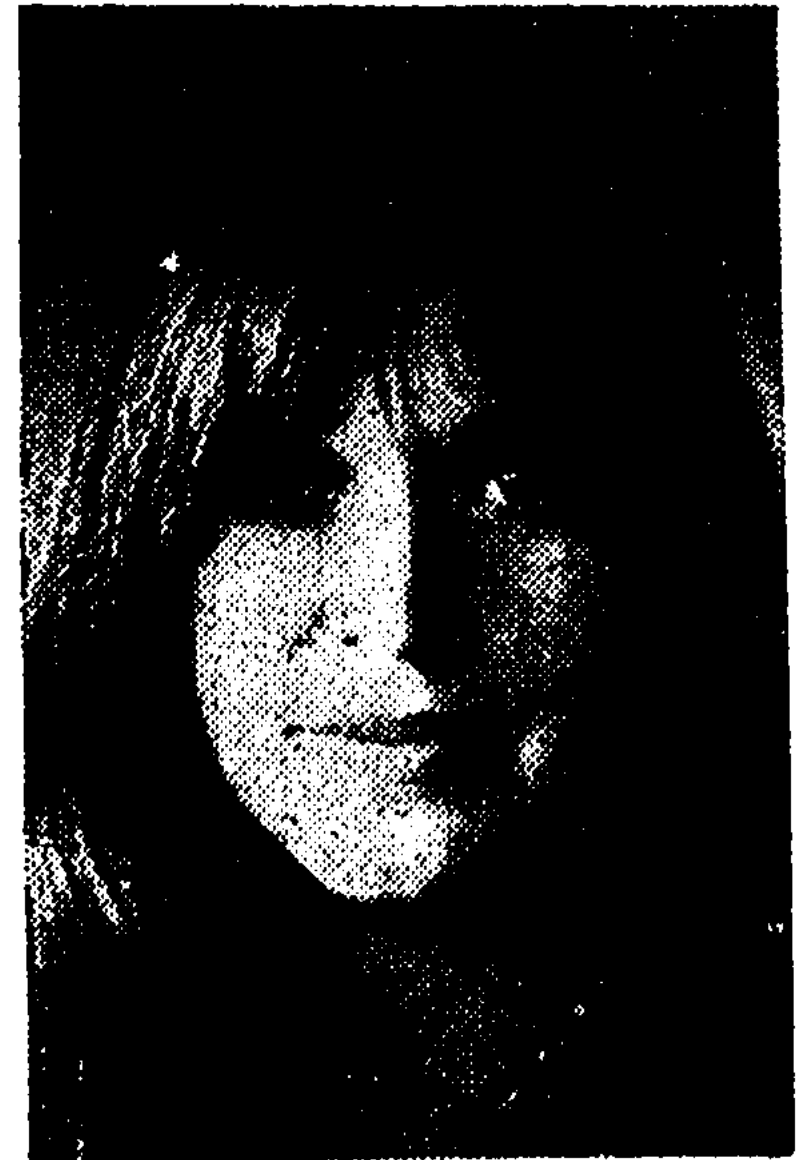
Melanie (her maiden name was Safka and she's married now to a man named Peter Schekeryk, but both last names are vestigial) has always had two incontestable virtues: her voice and her onstage personality. Both were intact at the Bottom Line. The voice is a quick-quivering mezzo, akin to, but less tortured and exaggerated

than, that of Buffy Sainte-Marie. It's strong and driving for uptempo numbers and its slightly frayed qualities work to suggest vulnerability in ballads. And her personality exudes so much warmth that she could probably read computer print-outs and still win our hearts.

But what surprised this observer was the sheer musicality of her phrasing and the quality of her songs. All fine singers have a way with the musical line that transcends the ordinary, and Melanie's instincts for the weight and flow of a phrase are simply superb. In addition, her new songs—she sang most of her new album, "Photograph," at the late show—reveal her as one of the most fascinating songwriters before the public today.



Some of the too naïve innocence peers through, still. But this album makes overt the links between 1960's folkies and 1970's cabaret stylists as persuasive as anyone—Paul Simon, Janis Ian—has yet achieved. Her best new songs grow and build organically, shifting musical moods in response to the poetic imagery. The imagery, in turn, is expressed with a fresh



**Melanie**

*Definitely worth seeing*

directness and the music blends styles in a way that never seems diffuse. These are adult songs for adult audiences, and the audiences would be well advised to listen.

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