ANI DI FRANCO

GREEK THEATRE

07-06-01

The Significant Other and I escorted three post-grads to see Ani Difranco at the Greek Theatre on Friday. We had forgotten how voluble excited teens can be and it was hard keeping up with stream-of-consciousness discourse. And there was good reason to be excited, for the intimate outdoor Greek was jam-

packed from the pit up through the concrete steps and swelling over the grassy lip above even before the opening act took the stage.

Once the lights came up the place was SRO, with every single bench seat taken as well as every square inch of the grassy uplands taken to see this "lil' folksinger" who stands no more than 4'11" in her socks. Difranco, once the darling of the coffeehouse venue, playing solo with a single acoustic guitar, now has assembled a formidible talented band with drummer Daren Hahn, bassist Jason Mercer, trumpeter Shane Endsley, sax/flute/clarinet player Hans Teuber and Julie Wolf on keyboards and come out with a very tasty double CD set called "Revelling/Reckoning" that features some of the best funk-inflected jazz around.

And she still plays her old Alvarez Yari acoustic (seen in the photo above) as well as a *tambouritza*, a four-string tenor guitar. She has worked with saxophonist Maceo Parker, trumpeter Jon Hassel, pedal steel guitarist Lloyd Maines and, lately, He Who Would Now Be Named Prince. The critics are eating it up and the fans, as the Greek proved on Friday night, are screaming for joy.

Jazz covers a lot of territory, and the term doesn't begin to convey the high energy level of the crunching funk rhythms blasted out as she bent over backwards at times while pulling amazing tone from her amplified acoustics. The lady is amazingly talented, writing all of her own material, fronting and orchestrating the band, and founding an entire record label company, Righteous Babe Records, with which to promote the music of herself and others, such as opener Sekou Sundiata. And all the while her posture never drops below a firmly positive "hey, we're havin' a great party" attitude.

In a recent interview with *Guitar World*, something of her firm committment came out when she mentioned that she gets her characteristically crisp attack on the strings by supergluing plastic fingerpicks to her playing hand, and then binding the result with packing tape.