SUZANNE VEGA
At Wellesley College, Alumnae Hall. Sunday, April 26.

By SIDHU BANERJEE

Suzanne Vega, with a new album and tour, brought her unique brand of music to Wellesley's Spring Weekend last Sunday. She achieved an intimacy and friendship in her show, which was marked by fluid, imaginative and gritty uptempo songs. She developed a friendly rapport with the audience, and in no small part from her experience in the intimate Greenwich Village coffeehouse performances that launched her career.

She critically acclaimed 1985 first album, "Suzanne Vega," established her as a 1980s folk singer. Alternating between introspective images of love and sensuality and a matter-of-fact account of the funny and gritty side of New York, her songs are rich with eloquent imagery. Whether about "Neighborhood Girls" or hurt love in "Knight Moves," every song had emotional impact. The new album "Solitude Standing" is a natural continuation of her first. Although some songs are freshly written, several date from the same time period of the first album.

Vega's love songs, especially "Knight Moves" and "Small Blue Thing," were delivered with an intensity and intimacy that belied the large size of Alumnae Hall. In "Small Blue Thing" she sings:

Today I am a small blue thing
Like a marble or an eye
With my knees against my mouth
I am perfectly round
I am cold against your skin
You are perfectly reflected
I am lost inside your pocket
I am lost against your fingers.

She describes the eloquence of unadorned love in "Language," if language were liquid. She would be rushing in. Instead we are in a silence more elegant than any word could be.

The band provided strong backing on the more aggressive numbers, but there seemed to be a tension that prevented the members from lasting long and jamming. They finally did let loose, on a raucous and enjoyable version of "Neighborhood Girls." Stephan Ferrera on percussion lent a gritty edge to the song with complicated rhythms and fresh sounds. All the musicians gave this and other songs a jazzy touch.

One of the most enjoyable aspects of the show, however, was not the music but the casual, friendly rapport that developed between Vega and the audience. The crowd, in large part not far removed in age or background from Vega, quickly made her comfortable on stage. Vega, for her part, was at ease and open, explaining the inspiration for many of her songs with interesting and humorous anecdotes. As a teenage camp counselor, she fell for a British anarchist who counseled at a nearby camp, and a gift wrote "Gypsies," a delicate and passionate love song for him. "I wrote him this song as a gift," she said, "and he in return gave me his bandana." The crowd laughed appreciatively.

Commenting on the lack of the word "love" in her love songs, she mused, "Today I am a small blue thing. If you were to say that to your boyfriend, he might be a bit confused."

After several encores and when the concert ended, the audience left, feeling that they had met a good friend. Suzanne Vega is a talented all-around performer with songs that are uplifting and exciting. The concert was a big success.

Howard Jones and entourage: Jingles Jhangoree (bass and guitar), Roy Jones (keyboards), Jed Holste (mime), Trevor Morris (drums), and Afrodizak.

HOWARD JONES
In concert at Brandeis University, Saturday, April 25.

By JULIAN WEST

My friend Paul, who worries about these things, once asked me to name a singer who exemplified the 1980s style. I suggested Howard Jones, the young technopop wizard whose witty, socially relevant lyrics are backed with a dance beat. The combination of show and substance places his messages firmly atop the dance beat. The combination of show and substance places his messages firmly atop the dance beat. The combination of show and substance places his messages firmly atop the dance beat. The combination of show and substance places his messages firmly atop the dance beat. The combination of show and substance places his messages firmly atop the dance beat.

Whatever else he did at Brandeis on Saturday, including pleasing his old fans and launching into "Don't Want to Fight," the audience, overjoyed to hear the singer/songwriter, who worries about these things, once asked me to name a singer who exemplified the 1980s style. I suggested Howard Jones, the young technopop wizard whose witty, socially relevant lyrics are backed with a dance beat. The combination of show and substance places his messages firmly atop the dance beat.

The concert began in silence under the glow of an ultraviolet light. Jones and launched into "Don't Want to Fight," the audience, overjoyed to hear the singer/songwriter, who worries about these things, once asked me to name a singer who exemplified the 1980s style. I suggested Howard Jones, the young technopop wizard whose witty, socially relevant lyrics are backed with a dance beat. The combination of show and substance places his messages firmly atop the dance beat.

Jed Hoile (mime), Trevor Morais (drums), and Afrodizak.