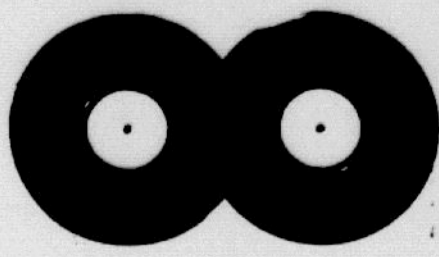


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Court and Spark
by Joni Mitchell
on Asylum Records

Saying that **Court and Spark** is Joni Mitchell's best album is not to slight her other records. They are all superb accomplishments—not only artistically, but technically as well.

The music itself is not what concerns me. It always accompanies her lyrics in an amenable manner with the two becoming inseparable.

She explores in her writing the implications of femininity, but not necessarily feminism. She interprets the external world through the eyes of a latter day Romantic constantly searching for truth, but at the same time knowing that it doesn't really exist.

The title song "Court and Spark" speaks of the child-like idea of a magical courtship but turns into concern over the "spark," i.e. what could become of a serious relationship with all its implicit problems.

Mitchell's best lines are always about the freedom of loneliness—an existential freedom that man is doomed to be alone. But, unlike the French existentialists, her philosophical dilemmas do not

dissolve into despair.

Instead, she discovers the surprises of love but realizes that no matter whom you share yourself with, the loneliness remains.

She writes of the conflicts of childhood in such an eloquent manner that one can guess—without any previous knowledge of her life—what her family was like, where she is from (Canada) and write almost a complete biography of her. But that is what she does so well.

It is a truism of novelists that every fiction work is autobiographical. It might also be true in music but, thus far, no artists I know of can make their material work for them in this way.

Maybe it is because her life revolves around pure art. Like Keats. Her life is art, so to speak.

The best line on her last album **For the Roses** was: "I look out across the ocean, love to see that green water in motion."

On this album, her best line is again about the sea: "Troubled child, breaking like the waves at Malibu." The ocean. That last place of reachable solitude. It is almost schizoid.

But somehow, Mitchell stays

above the water which is trying to overcome her. It is easy to fall into the trap of repression. But when you're so inescapably caught in the romantic ideal of love, it isn't hard to do.

Her writing is complicated and you shouldn't buy this record as an introduction to Mitchell. You should begin with her first album and work up. But every Joni Mitchell fan knows this. She commands a large following evidenced by the fact that her sales are in the millions of dollars. There is no one who takes her music casually; you can't do that with Joni; she becomes a part of you.

It proves that great artists don't have to rely on personal appearances (although she is coming to Hofheinz Pavilion Sunday, at last) and that there must still be some good taste among the trash permeating popular music.

This theme has concerned her, too. On "Free Man in Paris" she sings of grinding out pop music, "stroking the star-maker machinery behind the popular song."

Paris is a city which has obviously affected her deeply. On her fourth album **Blue** she sang about it and here, on what appears to be a curiously titled song, she tells that she felt free of the societal repression of women to the extent of reaching what she supposes is the freedom men can experience. Perhaps not quite true, but a nice idea.

J.C.M.



TOM SCOTT and the LA Express will be appearing as the opening act for Joni Mitchell's concert at 8 p.m. Sunday in Hofheinz Pavilion. Scott acted as consultant arranger and musician on Mitchell's current release, **Court and Spark**.

MAME—

(Continued from Page 8)
melt under your fingertips.

The bit with the up East family, the Upsons, and their finishing school daughter Gloria, caught perfectly by Doria Cook, says it all about upper suburbia. . . a swimming pool and a restricted deed are the keys to Eden.

And, I practically came unglued at Lucille Benson as the formidable South-shall-rise-again mama. In widow's weeds and with a face like a Pit Bulldog, she belches her distaste at "that Yankee girl" Mame from the porch of her South Hollywood Georgia plantation home.

This scene had the only good song in the show, the title song "Mame." In an unbelievable piece of choreography, a cast of thousands, togs out in hunt clothes and quarter-horses round a fountain.

Then, there's the tasteless bit about a pregnant nanny. . . I told you this movie had everything.

Sorry, but I fail to see the humor of that poor homely nanny—powdered, perfumed and done up in red taffeta by Mame and Vera. A remake that sends Nanny out into the world, to return two-watermelons-worth pregnant.

And, there's more.

But, like I said, the audience loved it. And, as long as the box office jingles and the rating is PG, what does Hollywood care?

If you haven't seen enough "Lucy" on TV and you love gorgeous costumes, go see "Mame." It opens April 6 at the Alabama.

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