

Wrecord Wrap

Joni Mitchell Courts And Sparks

COURT AND SPARK is Joni Mitchell's latest release on Asylum Records. It's an amalgamation of the most ear-pleasing melodies and arrangements ever to come from the versatile Canadian songstress. The album is separated from its predecessors as a sophisticated collection of songs apt to be classified as "popular" rather than "folk". Even her picture inside the jacket radiates maturity as opposed to the freak or folky image. It could be that Ms. Mitchell has been influenced by the Hollywood circles that she's been reported socializing in. Wherever the change originates, it's considered by myself and several Joni Mitchell devotees whom I've spoken to that the result is refreshing.

"Help Me" is a relaxing song which everyone can identify with: "Help me, I think I'm falling in love too fast/it's got me hoping for the future and worrying about the past/'Cause I've seen some hot, hot blazes come down to smoke and ash/We love our lovin'/But not ~~the~~ we love our freedom..." The overlying vocal tracks are soothing and it sounds as if Joni knows what she's talking about. I could only guess Warren Beatty but I'm not Rona Barrett and I don't really care. Joni's reflection of those Hollywood circles is an easier thing to conclude after listening to "People's Parties." She certainly is trying to enjoy them but she admits, "I'm just living on nerves and feelings with a weak and lazy mind/And coming to people's parties fumbling deaf, dumb and blind."

"Car on the Hill" is this album's "You Turn Me On, I'm a Radio," but more mysterious. She's searching in the dark for something sweet and that's the message. In parts, it's a good rocker, but it is a moody tune.

When I first heard "Raised on Robbery" on the radio, I thought, "My God, she thinks she's Bette Midler." But, as an addition to the album, it fits and it's good. More importantly, it's Joni Mitchell, not

Bette Midler. I doubt that the "Divine Miss M" could ever spark a song the likes of the infinite Ms. M., for after all, Joni is a woman of heart and mind.

The idea of putting "Troubled Child" and "Twisted" back to back is sensational. "Twisted" is a jazzy, hopping song from 1965 with a bass run that needs no pause to refresh. Cheech and Chong's honors are short and sweet, literally. One thing about the song and a few other cuts on COURT AND SPARK is the addition of the nasal-stifling trumpet. It's a peculiar sound to rock and particularly innovating for this album.

Another good thing to mention about the album is the personnel. Robbie Robertson (the Band) and Wayne Perkins play guitar on it. Jose Feliciano, David

Crosby, Graham Nash and Larry Carlton add to the vocals. Joe Sample of the Crusaders settles into electric piano. No one overdoes their part and the album is decisively Joni's through and through. I usually get excited about a new Joni Mitchell album, but this one is honestly all one could ask for.

Bill Becker



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