## Freedom beckons on Mitchell's 'Hejira'

By BILL BRIENZA State News Reviewer JONI MITCHELL: Heiira (Asylum 7E-1807)

Poor Joni. She's gifted: intelligent, sensitive, a fine songwriter with a beautiful voice, a "success." She is also a woman And for Mitchell, who seems to many women a public voice for what they privately feel, this uncertain status is almost enough to devalue all the gifts.

Mitchell has wrestled with the dilemma for a long time for a woman, freedom is not love, love is not freedom. Art, creativity and a career are freedom - and love wins. Even now must being a woman mean being an appendage of a male? Does loving a man mean permitting him to define the woman who does?

Mitchell has cried out, "Help me, I think I'm falling in love again," falling into another affair she knows will end bitterly because "we love our lovin'/ but not like we love our freedom." She has felt "tethered to a ringing telephone/in a roomful of mirrors," and even more emphatically, "caught in my struggle for higher achievement/and my search for love that don't seem to cease." "Court and Spark" was a cruel-

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ly ironic title for the album which contained such sentiments.

With "Hejira," Mitchell makes her clearest statement about the dilemma, "Heijra" means flight. It was the name given to Mohammed's flight from persecution to success in restrictions are waived in favor of words.

The guitarwork of Mitchell and Larry Carlton is light and elusive; it suggests flight and is the underpinning of most of the songs. Jaco Pastorious' hass (with its jazz influences) is the standout individual work, tak-



establishing the Islamic religion. Mitchell has chosen an interesting parallel for her love stories.

The album's music is secondary, even more so than usual with Mitchell. There are no hummable, accessible songs like "Big Yellow Taxi" or "Help Me" and no catchy hooks or standard bridges. Structural

ing the lead and matching the surprising tonality of Mitchell's vocals.

Mitchell's musical highpoint is as a jazz singer on "Blue Motel Room," reminiscent of "Harry's House/Centerpiece," from "Hissing of Summer Lawns" and "Twisted" from "Court." It leaves you wanting much more, maybe a whole

album of these some day.

But one must come back to the words before beginning to think about the music. Mitchell is direct with us and honest with herself. Men and women will have to cringe at the powerful indicting light she turns on crippling bondage that poses as relationships.

In "Song for Sharon" and the title cut Mitchell is most precise. As "Hejira" begins, Mitchell is a "defector from the petty wars/that shell shock love away" trying to explain why. "In our possessive coupling/so much could not be expressed/so now I am returning to myself/these things that you and I suppressed." Despite "star" status, she sees everyone as "particles of change" in a vast universe with lives of

simultaneous "hope and hopelessness."

She finally capitulates: in the end "a defector from the petty wars/until love sucks me back that way."

On the eight-minute "Song for Sharon," Mitchell examines at length the mythology of marriage and the traditional woman's life Mitchell is missing out on (and longing for, just a little).

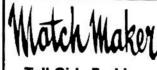
She sees a "long white dress of love/a storefront mannequin" and knows "some girl's going to see that dress and crave that day like crazy." Mitchell says, "the ceremony of the bells and lace/still veils this reckless fool here."

Still, "love's a repetitious danger" and she's in flight from "the dream's malfunction."

Despite her friend's expousement of "a wide wide world of noble causes/and lovely landscapes to discover," all Mitchell really wants is "find another lover!"

Speaking to a friend Sharon. who has a husband, family and farm, Mitchell cannot commit herself to landscapes or lovers. saying only, "I'll walk green pastures by and by," There is admirable strength in facing confusion.

When a woman allows her feet bound (in ancient Chinese tradition) to keep her from flight, men are her masters. It seems an awesome responsibility to be looked on by a woman with the heart and mind of a Mitchell, as her master . . . for man, the most subtle bondage of all, perhaps.



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