

JAZZ

Shadows and Light

Joni Mitchell

Asylum 2XBB-704

This double-album in-concert set, like Mitchell's Miles of Aisles before it, is a kind of stock taking — a point in the singer's on-going brave travels in and out of the mainstream of pop music where she weighs what has gone before and what's to come. The songs here are highlights of her LPs since *The Hissing of Summer Lawns*, with *Free Man in Paris* and *Woodstock* added; her band is an all-star fusion outfit with the likes of Pat Metheny, Jaco Pastorius and Mike Brecker, who neither help nor hinder her performances, but don't do very much for themselves. Mitchell is often left sounding quite reflective in such a loose context.

Words remain central to her art of communication; as she moved more and more into jazz, culminating with last year's Mingus album, there were other musical considerations which, as an intuitive singer, she handled reasonably well. But *Shadows and Light* offers a second look at her leanings toward jazz, and it's evident from the overlaps with Mingus that she has absorbed the style effectively without, however, making a complete transition. She still conceives the music in relation to the words.

The Persuasions, the great male quartet, appear on three tunes, one of which is *Why Do Fools Fall in Love* recreated in 50s style with Mitchell singing whiny lead and Mike Brecker adding the yakkity sax. Old as it is, for Mitchell it's the only thing new here. Perhaps it's a sign of what's to come?

Mark Miller