

Safaris to the heart of all that jazz....

JoniMitchell.com 2014 Biography Series by Mark Scott, Part 6 of 16

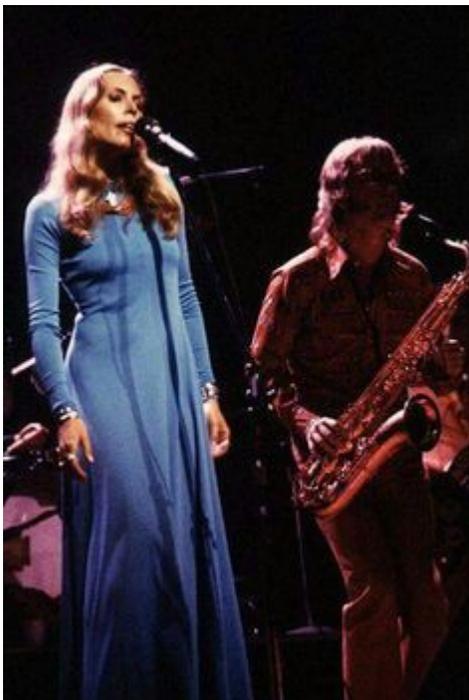
In January of 1974, Joni began an extensive tour of North America with the L.A. Express, wrapping up with three concerts at the New Victoria Theatre in London, England. The final concert at the New Victoria was videotaped and an edited version was broadcast on the BBC television program The Old Grey Whistle Test in November of 1974. Larry Carlton and Joe Sample were playing with The Crusaders at the time and both opted not to go on the road with Joni and the L.A. Express. Guitarist Robben Ford replaced Larry Carlton and Larry Nash filled in for Joe Sample on piano. In [a 2011 interview for JoniMitchell.com](#), Max Bennett said that although the pay was good for this tour, the musicians could have made more money playing gigs in L.A. and doing session work in the recording studios. Max said that the musicians loved the music, however, and that they were treated royally in every way throughout the tour. Excellent food, first class accommodations, limousines, private buses and private planes were all provided for the band's comfort. Max also made a point of mentioning the quality of the audiences that attended the concerts. Attention was focused on the performances so completely that practically complete silence reigned in the theaters and auditoriums until after the last note of any given song was performed. For Max Bennett, "As far as tours go - I've been on several tours - this was the epitome of any great tour I've ever been on. Everybody got along great, even the roadies... It was just great." This was Joni Mitchell's first time out on tour performing with an entire band backing her. The concerts began with about six instrumental numbers performed by the L.A. Express. Joni then joined the band for another group of songs after which the band would leave the stage and Joni would perform solo, accompanying herself on guitar, piano and dulcimer. Then the L.A. Express would rejoin her to wrap up the shows. Another North American tour with the same line-up of musicians took place in the summer of 1974. A collection of performances recorded live at the Universal Amphitheater in Universal City, California in August was released in November of 1974 as the double LP ['Miles of Aisles'](#).



Joni performing during 1974 tour

'Miles of Aisles' features beautifully rendered solo performances of songs from the 'Blue' and 'For the Roses' albums. The album also includes re-workings of 'Big Yellow Taxi', 'Rainy Night House', 'Woodstock', 'Carey' and 'You Turn Me On, I'm a Radio', utilizing the L.A. Express to create new jazz and blues shaded arrangements for these songs. The recording opens with an announcer expressing "our pleasure to introduce - Miss Joni Mitchell" followed by Joni's acoustic guitar playing a country flavored riff, leading into a laid back rendition of 'You Turn Me On, I'm a Radio'. Robben Ford plays sliding guitar lines at the end of the song that Joni mimics with her voice, using the top end of her vocal range. Her scatting vocal creates a stunning opener as she responds to and intertwines with Robben Ford's guitar. She gives a powerful rendition of 'Cold Blue Steel and Sweet Fire', forcefully strumming her guitar with Tom Scott playing a bluesy clarinet accompaniment behind her. She finishes the lyrics with the line

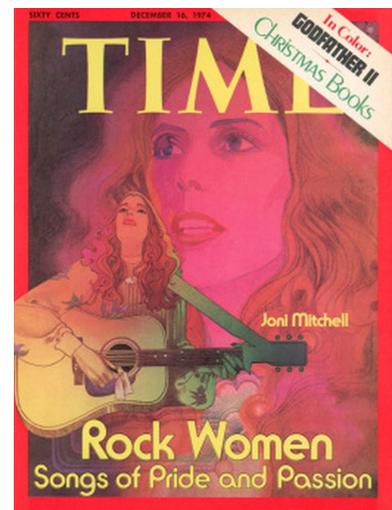
'Come with me I know the way she says, it's down, down, down, down, down...', her voice trailing off into silence as she sings the last repeated word 'down'. Joni's guitar and Tom Scott's clarinet finish out the song. Joni leads the audience in a sing-along during the choruses of 'The Circle Game', prefacing the song with a monologue about how performing music is different from the art of painting, concluding her analogy with "nobody ever said to Van Gogh 'Paint a Starry Night again, man!' You know. He painted it, that was it." During her performance of 'The Last Time I Saw Richard', Joni takes on the character of the cocktail waitress, speaking the line 'Drink up now, it's getting on time to close' in a nasally voice that gets a laugh from the audience. 'Both Sides Now' serves as representation of the 'Clouds' album and a performance of 'Cactus Tree' recorded at L.A. Music Center the previous March is included as an entry from 'Song to a Seagull'. Although several songs from 'Court and Spark' were performed during tours with the L.A. Express, 'Peoples' Parties' is the only one that appears on 'Miles of Aisles'. In a moment between songs, while Joni is tuning her guitar, a fan is heard calling out from the audience "Joni you have more class than Mick Jagger, Richard Nixon and Gomer Pyle combined together!" This remark gets a big laugh out of Joni. The crowd is obviously completely on Joni's wavelength and she uses their outpouring of affection to reward them with exquisite renderings of her music. Joni introduces the last two performances of the two record set, 'Jericho' and 'Love or Money' as new songs. According to Simon Montgomery, who compiled the Chronology of Appearances on the Jonimitchell.com website and served as one of the consultants for the the 2003 PBS American Masters program, 'Woman of Heart and Mind', these last two songs are not recordings from the 1974 summer tour. 'Jericho' and 'Love or Money' were actually recorded in a studio with audience reactions added to the mix to give them the sound of live recordings. Apparently, Joni wanted to include these songs on 'Miles of Aisles' and they do show up on the set lists of some of the 1974 summer concerts. Perhaps since these were two new songs that had not been released on any other of Joni's albums, a more controlled environment was wanted for their recorded debut.



Joni onstage with Tom Scott 1974

The artwork on the gatefold jacket for 'Miles of Aisles' is an interesting juxtaposition of photography and painting. In the lower left corner of the front cover, a rectangular piece of a photograph can be seen, taken by Joni Mitchell sitting in one of the rear seats of a large amphitheater. The photo extends a little over halfway across the front of the record jacket and about two thirds of the way up the left side. Down in the very bottom left corner of the front cover, the photographer's right knee, clad in blue denim, can be seen. Part of the wall to the right side of the stage is visible in the upper left. There are white rectangular panels suspended from the ceiling, probably hung for acoustic purposes, and a checkerboard pattern of square white panels stretches out across part of the venue's ceiling. To the right, below a girder that is part of the structure of the roof, the wall ends and there is a hazy glimpse of a wooded area, indicating that the venue is an outdoor amphitheater that is at least partially

covered by an open sided roof structure. The next section of seating to the right is seen and it has a bluish green color that closely matches the color of the photographer's knee and contrasts with the orange seat backs that are directly in front of the knee. The space to the right of the photograph takes up the image as a painting, showing a small section of the orange seats with the blue seats above and an artistic impression of the woodlands beyond. The orange and blue seats become dashes and dots of paint before dissolving completely into a featureless white space in the jacket's lower right corner. The painting is continued above the photo, showing the ceiling with another checkerboard pattern, painted in muted tones of orange and pale blue. In the upper right corner on a burnt orange space, the name JONI MITCHELL is painted in brown, outlined in turquoise blue with 'and THE L.A EXPRESS' painted in pale blue underneath. In larger, pale blue, sloping letters the title 'MILES OF AISLES' appears under the band's name. The back of the jacket is a continuation of both the photograph and the painting. Two feet wearing turquoise colored sandals, toenails painted bright red, are seen propped against the backs of the orange seats at the bottom of the photo. The rows of seats grow smaller and contract until they meet the edge of the stage. The set up of audio equipment can just barely be discerned on the stage. The dimensions of the photo are the same as they are on the front with the painted sections continuing around it so that by opening out the gatefold, the photo appears in its entirety, centered in the bottom of the painting. The left knee is painted in and there are a few orange and blue colored panels among the white on the ceiling. Max Bennett said in his interview with Dave Blackburn for JoniMitchell.com that the photograph was taken at the Pine Knob Amphitheater, now known as the DTE Energy Center in Independence Township, Michigan, located about forty miles northwest of Detroit. In the upper right corner, the track list for the record is printed by hand in orange paint or ink, slanted to fit into the rows of boards in the ceiling. In the bottom left corner is the Asylum Records insignia with the copyright 1974 and the Elektra/Asylum/Nonesuch Records name and address hand printed in dark blue ink underneath it. The package has the same design as the 'For the Roses' jacket with an extra page of cardboard inside when the gatefold is opened. On the back of the section that holds the first LP, a photograph of Joni Mitchell fills the entire space. She is seen against a black background, most certainly onstage, holding her guitar and wearing a black, sequined jacket. There is a broad grin on her face and her hair appears somewhat ruffled as if by a breeze. To the right of this photo on the extra page are the lyrics to 'Love or Money' and 'Jericho', hand printed on a black background in light blue ink or paint. Flipping the cardboard sheet over reveals a large photo of the L.A. Express standing in a row, all smiling with Joni standing on the far right side with another grin on her face. A dark brown rectangular space occupies about a third of the left page with the track list for each of the four sides of the two LP set and the album credits underneath, hand printed in orange. The cover photo and graphics are credited to Joni Mitchell.



December 16, 1974 issue of Time magazine

'Miles of Aisles' eventually peaked at number 2 on the US charts.

The cover of the December 16, 1974 issue of Time magazine is a brightly colored illustration of two different images of Joni Mitchell created by illustrator Bob Peak. The illustration in the lower left corner

shows Joni holding her guitar, head slightly tilted back with her long, luxuriant hair flowing in waves down over her shoulders. The illustration that appears behind this one and takes up most of magazine's cover is of Joni's face, mouth open, teeth in view, obviously singing with her hair once again framing her distinctive features. Joni's name appears in yellow lettering above the fretboard of her guitar. At the bottom, in large yellow lettering are the words 'Rock Women' with 'Songs of Pride and Passion' in smaller yellow letters beneath. The entire image is mostly colored in bright 1970s orange, pink and yellow. The magazine contains [an article titled 'Rock and Roll's Leading Lady'](#) which declares that Joni "is a creative force of unrivaled stature in the mercurial world of rock." Joni Mitchell was enjoying a higher level of success in the music business than she had ever attained. In 1974 she purchased a house in the upscale Bel Air section of Los Angeles and moved into it with L.A. Express drummer John Guerin. Their romantic relationship had become increasingly evident during the months they had toured together. It would prove to be an important relationship for Joni on both a personal and a professional level.

In the spring of 1975 Joni recorded a collection of demos of new material. She played guitar, piano and synthesizer on these tapes, augmenting the music on some cuts with overdubs of her own voice. Most of the songs she recorded would appear on her next album. A few months after cutting the demo tapes, Joni went into the studio to record her seventh studio album. The resulting collection of songs was given the singular title ['The Hissing of Summer Lawns'](#).

The artwork for the gatefold that 'The Hissing of Summer Lawns' first appeared in is an indicator that there had been a definite shift in Joni Mitchell's artistic direction. The top half of the front of the



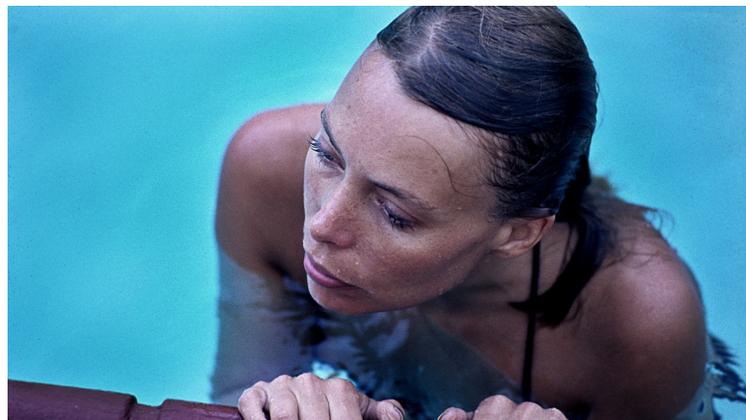
1975 National Geographic photo

cardboard jacket has a finely detailed dark grey line drawing of the skyscrapers and towers of a large modern metropolis rendered on a metallic silver-gray background. At the bottom of this cityscape are similar drawings of five modest looking houses, fitted into the picture and sized to give the appearance of a middle distance. The house on the extreme right has an aqua color on its walls and a car parked in front of it. The other four houses are drawn on the same background color as the depiction of the city skyline above them. The perspective is completed by the largest figures of the artwork appearing in the bottom right corner on an

otherwise featureless expanse of yellowish green. These are representations of human forms, all in a uniform dark brown color, faceless, mostly in silhouette with minimal outlines of limbs and hair in the same silver-gray used as the background color in the top of the picture. On the covers for the original pressings of 'The Hissing of Summer Lawns' these figures are embossed, creating slightly raised surfaces that suggest the contours of limbs and muscles. Most of these people are wearing silver headbands. Otherwise they appear to be mostly nude. Each holds a section of a huge silver snake that has brown

markings. The first figure on the right holds the snake's tail. The snake extends from the center of the front all the way to the left edge of the picture. Turning the jacket over reveals the snake's head with a rope around it. The end of the rope is held by one more figure whose back is depicted as it pulls the snake in the direction of one more silver-gray house that sits directly above its head. A church sits at a slight distance to the left of this house at the brink of a steep, nearly vertical drop-off in the green landscape. The city skyline has dwindled away and there are a few lines in the landscape on the left side, suggesting hills and a valley and in the bottom left corner there is another silver-grey space that serves as the background for a drawing of a compound or large mansion. On the left side of this structure is a small aqua colored space shaped like a swimming pool. The right half of the inside of the jacket is mostly taken up by a black and white photo of Joni Mitchell. She is in a pool of aqua tinted water, wearing a two piece bathing suit, her head in the bottom right corner, face above the water, right arm bent over her head and left arm extended to her side, swimming a backstroke. The lyrics and musician credits are printed on the left. Above Joni's photographic image on the right is a commentary and series of acknowledgments that begins with the sentence 'This record is a total work conceived graphically, musically, lyrically and accidentally – as a whole.' There is also a nod to National Geographic that almost certainly refers to the figures with the snake in the foreground which was adapted from a photograph of members of an indigenous Brazilian tribe that was published in a 1975 issue of that magazine. The list of people and places Joni thanks ends with 'and John Guerin for showing me the root of the chord and where 1 was.' Underneath Joni's head in the lower right hand corner are printed the words 'She could see the blue pools in the squinting sun and hear the hissing of summer lawns...'

Colorful paintings, photographs of natural landscapes or images of the artist that elicit specific feelings are absent from the album cover of 'The Hissing of Summer Lawns'. The minimal color palette and selection of images make up a complex statement of contrasts and symbols that provoke speculations about connections and meanings. The packaging is an appropriate indicator of the complexity of the work that it contains.



From Norman Seeff's photo shoot for inside of 'The Hissing of Summer Lawn's' album cover

With the exception of Tom Scott, the musicians that had made up the L A Express all played in various combinations on most of the songs recorded for 'The Hissing of Summer Lawns'. Both Larry Carlton and Robben Ford contributed and on one cut, Larry played electric guitar while Robben played dobro. Tom Scott's horn playing was replaced by Chuck Findlay while Bud Shank played saxophone and flute. Max Bennett was bassist on the majority of the the tracks. Wilton Felder played bass on two songs. The record also features vocal backing from Joni's faithful standbys, David Crosby, Graham Nash and James

Taylor on the album's opener and James plays guitar on the title song. There are also keyboard and percussion parts played by Victor Feldman on various cuts and a string arrangement by Dale Oehler for one song.

Whether it was because of the absence of Tom Scott, the influence of John Guerin, the musical choices of the players, Joni Mitchell pursuing a new musical vision or some combination of these elements, the sound of 'The Hissing of Summer Lawns' is distinctly different from that of 'Court and Spark'. Joni's demo tapes were somehow leaked and copies have made their way to members of her fan base. The songs recorded on these demos reveal that their arrangements on the finished album had already been mostly sketched out by Joni playing guitar and keyboards and using her voice to fill in the harmonic shadings of the additional instrumentation. Joni's guitar playing on the song 'Harry's House' is especially impressive on the demo. It is the only instrument she uses and it seems to contain most of the musical structure that is heard on the finished track. However, both Joni and Max Bennett have said that the recording sessions were looser and that the musicians were given more freedom to improvise. The chord structures and melodies combined with the shadings provided by the horns, percussion and keyboards move 'The Hissing of Summer Lawns' away from the pop idiom and further in the direction of jazz. Lyrically, there is also a shift away from the first person, confessional mode heard on 'Court and Spark' to a more observational tone and, in some songs, echoes of social criticism. The words to some of the songs are more akin to poetry than song lyrics. The careful choice and construction of words and phrases create a compact, condensed language that teases the brain with multiple possibilities of interpretation. Up to this point, the lyrics of Joni's recorded output had always been literate and exceptionally well crafted. For the most part, the words to her songs were fairly straightforward and direct in their description and storytelling. Some of the material on 'The Hissing of Summer Lawns' has a cryptic bent to it and uses metaphor and symbolic imagery in ways that far surpass anything Joni had put on record before.

The Hissing of Summer Lawns' starts off with an up-tempo romp into the high energy atmosphere of teenage rebellion called 'In France They Kiss on Main Street'. This is a song about the days Joni referred to on the 'For the Roses' track 'Let the Wind Carry Me' when she was 'living for that rock and roll dancing scene'. But here the kick-pleat skirts and green painted eyelids are replaced by 'tight dresses and rhinestone rings'. She sets the action downtown where 'the dance-halls and cafes feel so wild you could break somebody's heart just doing the latest dance craze' and where 'under neon signs a girl was in bloom'. At the same time 'a woman was fading in a suburban room'. Parents and other people who are outsiders to this mindset 'don't take chances, they seem so removed from romance, they've been broken in churches and schools and molded to middle-class circumstance' unlike the youthfully enlightened side of 'the war of independence' who are 'rolling, rolling, rock and rolling'. These lyrics set up several thematic elements that thread in and out of the songs that make up this 'total work conceived graphically, musically, lyrically and accidentally - as a whole.' Joni's upward vocal slide on the final



Nonesuch Records 1974 'Burundi: Music From the Heart of Africa'

word 'rolling' ends the song. The next sound on the record is the rumbling of what is credited in the liner notes as the warrior drums of Burundi. Joni had been listening to an album released by Nonesuch records in 1974 called ['Burundi: Music from the Heart of Africa'](#). She made a tape loop of what she called 'a Bo-Diddy figure' from a piece on this record titled 'Warriors of the Drum'. The loop repeats itself throughout the song 'The Jungle Line' accompanied by the very low-pitched, sustained notes of a Moog synthesizer. The combination of sounds propels the song's surrealistic lyrics over a dark undercurrent of pounding and throbbing rhythm. The lyrics combine tropical imagery with the 'i-bars and girders...the mathematic circuits' of a gritty, urban world. The painter Rousseau helps set up a scene for 'safaris to the heart of all that jazz'. He 'walks on trumpet paths' emanating from 'a five piece band' playing in a jazz club. He paints its cellar locale 'full of ferns and orchid vines'. Then he completes the scene by adding a moon which he 'hangs' above the band and 'up above the jungle line.' The Jungle Line cuts its way through the 'savage progress' that characterizes the contemporary metropolis. Behind its ferns and tropical flowers lurk 'cannibals of shuck and jive' and 'a poppy snake' that brings its 'poppy poison' into the dressing room of the night club. The 'downtown' of dance-halls, cafes, pool-halls and pinball arcades, so attractive to young rebels, also harbors the threat and peculiar allure of criminal activity and destructive, addictive drugs. In contrast, the album's title song and the song 'Harry's House' paint portraits of middle-class suburbia, a place that Joni portrays as being infested with less conspicuous but equally malignant social diseases of its own. 'Harry's House' is full of magnificently crafted imagery describing a man on a business trip to New York City. As he checks into his hotel room, a picture of his marriage begins to emerge. His wife is described as a woman who 'is lost in House and Gardens' and Harry is seen as a man 'caught up in chief of staff'. He is one man among 'battalions of paper-minded males' bound in emotionally repressed marriages to 'their paper wives and their paper kids' who 'paper their walls to keep their gut reactions hid'. This could easily be the man Joni addressed in the song 'The Arrangement' from 1970's 'Ladies of the Canyon' who 'could have been more than a name on the door on the thirty-third floor in the air', the man with the wife 'who keeps the keys...so pleased to be a part of the arrangement'. Joni perfectly positions a piece of 1950s jazz into the fine structure of 'Harry's House'. Just before the final lines of the song, she pays tribute once again to Lambert, Hendricks and Ross by performing their song ['Centerpiece'](#). A bluesy piano solo played by Joe Sample separates the two short verses that provide an ironic counterpoint of coupled bliss in 'a little cottage on the outskirts where we can really find release'. 'The Hissing of Summer Lawns' is a short but tellingly detailed picture of a suburban woman and the man who 'put her in a ranch house on a hill' and enclosed it in 'a barbed-wire fence to keep out the unknown'. The woman lives her life out in a dark world of 'no color, no contrast' but stays 'with a love of some kind' in her double-paned trophy case where she looks out at 'the blue pools in the squinting sun' and hears the hissing of water sprinklers on summer lawns. The song is the first on one of Joni's albums that is a collaborative effort. The liner notes list both Joni Mitchell and John Guerin as the song's writer and composer. Two songs on this record are additions to Joni's musical portrait gallery. 'Edith and the Kingpin' is set in a small town where a young woman is magnetically drawn to the town's 'big man'. This 'Kingpin', who is probably a small town racketeer, has set his sites on Edith. She hears the 'renegade stories' of 'his crimes and his glories'. In the end she brushes these stories aside and, in spite of his reputation for getting his sexual partners hooked on cocaine, she acquiesces to the force of the Kingpin's gravitational pull. 'Shades of Scarlett Conquering' is a character sketch of an ambitious, avaricious southern belle

type who emerges 'from the fire like Catholic saints' to proclaim her edict that 'a woman must have everything'. The one song on 'The Hissing of Summer Lawns' that bears some resemblance to the 'confessional' type of songs that Joni Mitchell wrote for previous albums is 'Don't Interrupt the Sorrow'. 'Don't Interrupt the Sorrow's' lyrics are written in the first person and are made up of strikingly poetic and sometimes cryptic language. The song is about an ugly argument between the singer and a lover. The man is obviously drunk and spouting chauvinistic remarks. The singer expresses what seems to be her interior monologue through most of the song. She decries the oppressive nature of patriarchal societies and religions that have contributed to the man's attitudes about women and sexual relationships.

Anima rising
Queen of queens
Wash my guilt of Eden
Wash and balance me

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Truth goes up in vapors
Steeple lean
Winds of change patriarchs
Snug in your Bible-belt dreams
God goes up the chimney
Like childhood Santa Claus
The good slaves love the Good Book
A rebel loves a cause

The song is a marked departure from any song about romantic relationships that Joni had previously recorded. There are also three songs that have a philosophical bent on 'The Hissing of Summer Lawns'. The hauntingly beautiful 'Sweet Bird' is a dreamy sounding rumination on aging and the passage of time. The image of 'the earth spinning and the sky forever rushing' from 'Sweet Bird' has a frenetic, disorienting quality to it, a characteristic that is not so evident in the revolutions of 'the carousel of time' that Joni had written about in 'The Circle Game' nine years before. The title of the 'The Boho Dance' and its thematic content are borrowed from Tom Wolfe's 1975 diatribe against the elitist world of Modern Art, ['The Painted Word'](#). Joni transplants Wolfe's view of Modernist painters as being disdainful of popular opinion and material success to the music world. She likens those who forswear any desire for the adulation and wealth of stardom to 'a priest with a pornographic watch looking and longing on the sly' and answers criticism of her own success with the conclusion: 'Nothing is capsulized in me on either side of town. The streets were never really mine, not mine these glamor gowns.' The last cut of the record is 'Shadows and Light'. Joni played an Arp Farfisa synthesizer and created the sound of a choir from overdubs of her own voice that give the song the sound of a church service anthem. The song is made up of three verses, each with a series of images that illustrate three contrasting concepts. The 'ever-present laws' that govern blindness and sight are ascribed to the Devil,

the 'everlasting laws' that govern day and night are God's while the 'ever-broken laws' of wrong and right are Man's.

The enormous success of 'Court and Spark' had generated a high level of anticipation for its follow-up. It also raised the level of expectation. Joni had been given carte blanche for the creation of 'The Hissing of Summer Lawns' from the production of the record to the added expense of the embossing on the album's cover. Asylum records was looking for another multimillion seller. Music critics were watching for something that would at least equal the exquisite design of 'Court and Spark'. The public who had embraced Joni Mitchell's music were expecting another collection of personalized songs that would again tap into the emotional context of their own lives.

What they got was a record that was difficult for any of them to wrap their heads around. Asylum did get decent sales figures as 'The Hissing of Summer Lawns', perhaps propelled by the momentum generated by 'Court and Spark' and 'Miles of Aisles', went to number four on the Billboard Album charts. The critics and the fans got something that was either misunderstood or did not meet the expectation of what they felt a Joni Mitchell album was supposed to be. Both the intimacy and the lovably eccentric melodies that pushed her voice to the extremes of its remarkable range seemed to be missing. Reviews of the album were mixed. [Rolling Stone's take](#) included the crass remark "Shadows and Light" suffers from too many vocal overdubs and a synthesizer that sounds like a long, solemn fart.' The publication later jokingly referred to the record's name as the worst album title of the year. Some of the people who bought the record were sufficiently intrigued to delve into its complexities and over the years 'The Hissing of Summer Lawns' has earned the respect it truly merits as a work that transcends the pop idiom and defies categorization. From the release of 'The Hissing of Summer Lawns' and beyond, labels would become increasingly difficult to pin on Joni Mitchell's music.

Around the same time that 'The Hissing of Summer Lawns' was released, Bob Dylan had put together a conglomeration of musicians that he named 'The Rolling Thunder Revue'. The acts he assembled went on an extensive road tour near the close of 1975. Joan Baez, who had been involved in a love affair with Bob Dylan and had also championed him as a performer in the beginning of his career, frequently bringing him onstage



at her own concerts, was one of the featured performers in Rolling Thunder. After Dylan's distancing himself from Baez professionally and the subsequent breakup of their romance, the two had not performed on the same stage together in nearly ten years. Their professional reunion generated a lot of publicity. Dylan employed a number of the musicians that had played on his soon to be released 1976 album 'Desire' and the performers in his revue included Roger McGuinn, Ramblin' Jack Elliott, T-Bone Burnett, actress and singer Ronee Blakley and Beat poet Allen Ginsberg. Joni joined up with Rolling

Thunder in November, performing in a series of concerts with the troupe in the northeastern United States and Canada. On December 8th, she joined Richie Havens, Roberta Flack and Robbie Robertson for a concert at Madison Square Garden to benefit Rubin 'Hurricane' Carter, a former boxer who had been convicted and imprisoned for murdering three people in a bar in Paterson, New York in 1966. Carter published a book about his ordeal in 1974. He sent a copy of his book to Bob Dylan who went to meet Carter in prison. Two witnesses that had been instrumental in Carter's conviction ended up recanting their testimony and stated that they had been bribed by authorities with money and leniency to implicate Rubin Carter. Dylan subsequently wrote the song 'Hurricane' which appeared on his 'Desire' album and began a campaign to right what he saw as a gross miscarriage of justice. Joni canceled a benefit she had scheduled in California in order to appear in 'The Night of the Hurricane', a concert that played to the Madison Square Garden audience for more than four hours.

In January of 1976, Joni began a tour of the U.S., once again accompanied by an L.A. Express that had a slightly different line-up from their previous tours with Joni. Tom Scott was not part of the band. Saxophonist David Luell played with the group and Victor Feldman played congas and electric piano. Bassist Max Bennett and guitar player Robben Ford were both on board again. With John Guerin's drumming completing the lineup, the L.A. Express opened the concerts on this tour, playing 40-45 minutes of their blend of jazz and rock music. Once Joni was onstage, she would usually open with 'Help Me' and perform a roster of songs that included a healthy sampling of titles from 'The Hissing of Summer Lawns'. mostly mixed with songs from 'Court and Spark' and 'For the Roses'. Several reviews and fan commentaries quoted in the Chronology section of JoniMitchell.com cite 'Cold Blue Steel and



Joni onstage with cigarette 1976?

with Joni coming out on stage with cigarette in hand to perform it.

Sweet Fire' as a highlight of these concerts. Joni's guitar playing and passionate vocal was complimented by David Luell who would appear onstage somewhere around the second verse of the song adding soulful embellishments with his clarinet. 'For Free' and 'Rainy Night House' seem to have been the chief representatives of her pre-'For the Roses' repertoire. She also performed four new songs in various sets, 'Coyote', 'Don Juan's Reckless Daughter', 'Talk to Me' and 'Furry Sings the Blues'. 'Twisted' is mentioned as the encore for a number of the concerts on this tour

This tour was originally planned as a world tour. The January 24, 1976 issue of Melody Maker reported that Joni and the L.A. Express would appear in Japan and Australia during April and early May and then begin a tour of Europe, beginning with a stop in Oslo Norway on May 14th. The first U.S. Stop on the tour was in Minneapolis at the University of Minnesota's Northrup Auditorium followed by a concert at Purdue University in West Lafayette Indiana where Neil Young showed up onstage for Joni's encore. The description given by one attendee of this concert in the website Chronology says that Neil walked onto a darkened stage and began to perform his song 'Helpless'. He was greeted by wild enthusiasm from the

audience and midway through the song, Joni came on stage to sing with him. The two performed 'Sugar Mountain' together and then Joni told the story of how she came to write 'The Circle Game' as her response to that song. The concert ended with Joni & Neil performing 'The Circle Game' as a memorable duet. The next leg of the tour swung down to St. Louis, then to Houston. Joni performed in the Houston Astrodome on January 25th as part of Bob Dylan's Rolling Thunder Revue for 'Night of the Hurricane II', another benefit for Rubin Carter. Dylan made a surprise guest appearance at Joni's concert on the 28th at the Municipal Auditorium in Austin. The pair duetted on 'Both Sides Now' and Dylan performed 'Girl From the North Country'.

Judging by the some of the reviews of various concerts, the overall vibe was not as felicitous during this tour as it had been for Joni Mitchell's previous outings with the L.A. Express. Some reviewers described Joni's demeanor as being removed and distant from her audiences and one or two mention that the crowds were not as quietly attentive as those that Max Bennett described for her 1974 concerts with the LA Express. There are reports of Joni playing with her back to the audience in some concerts, inviting comparison to one of her idols, Miles Davis. A [review in the Daily Cougar](#) of the show at Houston's Sam Houston Coliseum gives an account of a disgruntled Joni telling a restless audience "I guess you people want to boogie, don't you? ...Well we're gonna cut out half the show." The reviewer then goes on to say "After settling down a bit, Mitchell explained how difficult it is to sing softly with so much "turmoil" going on in the audience." After singing one song at the University of Maryland's Cole Fieldhouse in College Park, Maryland, Joni left the stage and was reportedly too ill with flu to perform any more. Nevertheless, she took the stage the next night in New Haven, Connecticut and performed an entire concert. The tour ended rather abruptly on February 29th with a show in Madison Wisconsin at the Dane County Coliseum. Melody Maker's March 20, 1976 issue carried a short piece stating that Joni Mitchell's European tour had been canceled due to Joni's state of extreme exhaustion. The article went on to say that doctors had 'ordered her to rest for five months.'

From my own experience of attending rock concerts during the mid 1970s in large arena type venues, I can't say that I remember an audience that kept quiet and entirely attentive during any of the performances I saw. Maybe the nature of audiences changed as the Me Decade got into full swing from what it had been in an earlier time. Alcohol consumption and drugs or the different types of drugs that were consumed probably played a part in this change. I remember that the music at most of those concerts was so loud that no-one would have known if the audiences were making noise or not while the musicians sang and played. It is clear that Joni Mitchell's fan base had been accustomed to performances of material that was of an intimate, personal nature delivered by an artist who was emotionally engaged in communicating that material. That type of performance had set up a different kind of relationship between the performer and her audience from the one that seems to have developed during at least some of the concerts on this tour. As she grew older and the circumstances of her life changed, the observational nature of her writing made it inevitable that Joni's songs would also change. Experience had wrought a shift in her point of view. Much of the innocence had dropped away and more mature, darker, sometimes even cynical tones had begun to emerge. Joni Mitchell was no longer the only musician onstage during her concerts and her song writing had evolved. However the music she was performing was not hard-core, full tilt boogie, rock and roll blasted at high volumes,

either. I suspect that there was some difference in the expectations of both the audience and the performer from what actually transpired during Joni's tour in January and February of 1976.

However, the volatile relationship between Joni & John Guerin has been cited as the most probable cause of the chief difficulties that occurred and the ultimate reason why the 1976 tour was cut short. In her [2013 CBC interview with Jian Ghomeshi](#), Joni talked about Guerin as a man she dearly loved but who was a philanderer. Joni has described herself as a serial monogamist so that any infidelity



John Guerin & Joni Mitchell

on Guerin's part would most probably have created emotional turbulence between the two. There has also been speculation, however, that Joni had a brief fling with the playwright and actor, Sam Shephard when she met Shephard during her stint with the Rolling Thunder Revue. Joni wrote the song 'Coyote' while she was with Rolling Thunder and the song's reference to the Bay of Fundy can be seen as a direct reference to Shephard who was living in Nova Scotia near the Bay of Fundy at that time. The performance of 'Coyote' during the the 1976 tour with the L.A. Express, a song that contains the explicit lyrics 'he's got a woman at home, he's got another woman down the hall, he seems to want me any' and 'Coyote's in the coffee shop, staring a hole in his scrambled eggs, he picks up my scent on his fingers while he's watching the waitresses legs', [may not have sat well with John Guerin](#). By all accounts, the relationship was reaching a breaking point by the time the 1976 tour came to its premature end.

Joni joined 'Rolling Thunder' again in May of 1976 for two shows in Texas. Joni has said that cocaine usage was rampant in the Rolling Thunder company and that she herself was using the drug during the time that she performed with the revue. She credits an encounter with the Tibetan Buddhist master Chögyam Trungpa with helping her break free of her dependence on the drug. Finding herself back in Los Angeles after her last two appearances with Rolling Thunder and faced with the aftermath of her break up with John Guerin, Joni was feeling at loose ends. She was sitting at the beach at Neil Young's house when two friends showed up who told her they were leaving on a road trip that would take them across the U.S. to New England. This seemed like an ideal opportunity for Joni to distance herself from the disarray her life had fallen into and she immediately decided to go with them.

The threesome drove from Los Angeles to Maine. When they reached the state of Maine, Joni departed solo and began a journey all on her own. She drove down the east coast, across the southern part of the U.S. and finally back to California. She has said that she did not have a driver's license with her at this time. She followed the trucks on the roads as much as possible, knowing that the drivers kept tabs on the whereabouts of the police via their CB radios and would send out signals when any law enforcement vehicles were nearby. As she made her way across the south, she discovered that she was not much recognized in this part of the country and began to enjoy the freedom that her anonymity allowed her.

She was able to meet and form relationships with people who had no knowledge or preconceived notions about who she was. As a human being, this must have been a liberating experience for Joni, to be able to connect with other humans who knew nothing of the specific milieu she inhabited in the music business and brought no expectations to their interactions with her. As a writer it was also an ideal opportunity to observe this broader world that the majority of Americans inhabited. Her perspective had gone out of synch with the world at large. As she traveled through and interacted with that larger sphere of existence, she began to regain her emotional balance. The whole experience became both a spiritual and a creative journey for Joni Mitchell. Eventually it contributed a large part to one of her most significant musical creations.

Joni's encounters and experiences on the road provided a multitude of story lines to choose from for lyrical content and new songs emerged as she traveled. In the summer of 1976 she recorded two of the songs she had introduced on her winter tour and seven new ones, mostly written on her solitary road trip, that would become the album ['Hejira'](#).

The word 'Hejira' derives from the Islamic faith. It is the the name given to the prophet Muhammad's flight from Mecca to Medina when he learned he was the target of an assassination plot. Joni chose the word as a title because she felt it represented her abrupt departure from L.A. as a 'running away with honor'. Most of the songs are about traveling or about people met and incidents that occurred during a journey. The music is entirely guitar based, in keeping with the theme of solitary travel by automobile. The lyrical lines tend to be long, emulating the long stretches of highway that a car rolls along over the course of an extended road trip. Joni describes both the external scenarios and the corresponding internal landscapes that reveal themselves along the way. Her genius for literary visualization is at its height in the songs that make up 'Hejira', a record that many fans and critics consider to be the peak of her musical career.

The first track of 'Hejira' sets the tone of travel, exploration and self examination. 'Coyote' is one of the songs Joni introduced in her concerts at the beginning of 1976. She assumes the role of a hitchhiker in this song who catches a ride with the title character. Joni contrasts the life Coyote lives on his ranch with the world of 'air conditioned cubicles' that she inhabits in Los Angeles. He is 'brushing out a brood mare's tail while the sun is ascending' while she is just 'getting home with my reel-to-reel'. There is a wild streak in him that will not be tamed and a sexual appetite that he feeds at will.

And the next thing I know
That coyote's at my door
He pins me in a corner and he won't take no
He drags me out on the dance floor
And we're dancing close and slow
Now he's got a woman at home
He's got another woman down the hall
He seems to want me anyway

But Joni does not see any deliberate intent to inflict harm in Coyote's motivations saying that he is 'not a hit and run driver....racing away'. He is merely following the dictates of his nature as she is following her own instincts, declaring that he 'just picked up a hitcher, a prisoner of the white lines on the freeway'. Some have suggested that those white lines refer to lines of white cocaine. Certainly, as she breaks down the word freeway into 'free free-way' at the end of the song, there is an ironic bent to the line. She has 'tried to run away myself, to run away and wrestle with my ego' but the escape has made her a 'prisoner of the fine white lines' of that 'free freeway'. There is perhaps room for an underlying double entendre here. The 'prisoner' could be addicted to a drug. It seems more likely that the word refers to the singer's inability to break out of her ego's inescapable need for autonomy and the need to forge ahead on that 'free freeway' of artistic and self discovery. Another sexual encounter brings out different thoughts and feelings as the singer describes 'A Strange Boy'. This time the male partner has the attitude of a Peter Pan. 'He still lives with his family, even the war and the Navy couldn't bring him to maturity.' Nevertheless, she recognizes a special quality in the perceptions of this man who weaves 'a course of grace and havoc' on a skateboard. He 'sees the cars as sets of waves, sequences of mass and space' and also 'sees the damage in my face'. Harkening back to the song 'A Case of You', she likens love to inebriation, singing 'we got high on travel and we got drunk on alcohol, and on love the strongest poison and medicine of all'. In spite of her frustration with the Strange Boy's refusal to grow up, she admits 'I gave him my warm body, I gave him power over me'. The other song on 'Hejira' that Joni had written before her road trip and had first performed on tour with the L.A. Express is 'Furry Sings the Blues'. This is a song that is drawn from an experience that Joni has described in several interviews over the years. During the 1976 winter tour, Joni and the L.A. Express had played a show in Memphis, Tennessee. The day after the concert, Joni made a visit to Furry Lewis, a blues guitarist who had played with W. C. Handy and had once been a part of the jazz and blues music scene that was centered around Memphis's Beale Street. Furry lived near Beale Street at the time Joni went to see him and was close to 83 years old. A photo of his grave marker gives the date of his birth as March 8, 1893. Just a few years later, the efforts of the Beale Street Development Corporation would succeed in saving the historic home of the 'Memphis Blues', but at the time Joni saw it, Beale Street had fallen into a state of urban



Furry Lewis

decay with many of its historic buildings boarded up 'waiting for the wrecker's beat'. Joni paints a picture of decline tempered with pathos. Furry Lewis is 'propped up in his bed with his dentures and his leg removed' while outside 'old Beale Street is coming down....faded out with ragtime blues'. When he performs, Joni hears it as 'mostly muttering now and sideshow spiel'. But just as she can sense the vitality that once informed Beale Street, 'Ghosts of the dark town society come right out of the bricks at

me...in their finery dancing it up and making deals', she catches a glimpse of the performing artist that Furry once was in 'one song he played that I could really feel'. Before leaving, Joni mentally addresses the statue of W. C. Handy that stands on Beale Street, 'W. C. Handy, I'm rich and I'm fey' and thinking about Furry Lewis she ponders 'Why should I expect that old guy to give it to me true? When he's fallen to hard luck and time and other thieves, while our limo is shining on his shanty street'. In a pair of interviews that Joni participated in during a celebration in honor of her 70th birthday at [Toronto's Luminato festival in June of 2013](#), Joni was asked to name one of her creations that she was especially proud of. In both interviews she cited the following lines from 'Furry Sings the Blues' as an example of something that had particularly excited her at the time of their creation:

Pawn shops glitter like gold tooth caps
In the grey decay
They chew the last few dollars off
Old Beale Street's carcass
Carrion and mercy
Blue and silver sparkling drums
Cheap guitars eye shades and guns
Aimed at the hot blood of being no one
Down and out in Memphis Tennessee
Old Furry sings the blues

The title track of 'Hejira' has the steady, repetitive rhythm of rolling wheels and passing scenery as a car threads its way over mile after mile of highway. As Joni's guitar pickings drive the song's momentum, the words spin threads of description coupled with reflective thoughts and emotions about her travels and state of mind. She pictures herself as 'a defector from the petty wars that shell-shock love away'. The lyrics are extraordinary in the aptness and originality of their imagery coupled with the depth and richness of their observations. The song is full of intensely personal observations that are also remarkable in their universality. It is difficult to pick out even a few lines that convey the scope and brilliance of this piece of music. In the 'comfort of melancholy when there's no need to explain', a state of mind that Joni describes as 'just as natural as the weather in this moody sky today'. Joni addresses her problematic love relationship 'in our possessive coupling so much could not be expressed' and the reason she left it 'so now I am returning to myself these things that you and I suppressed'. She describes the isolated state of being human 'I know no-one's gonna show me everything we all come and go unknown, each so deep and superficial between the forceps and the stone'. From there her thoughts flow into an observation of the finite nature of life and her attempt to leave behind something that will endure after her death 'Well I looked at the granite markers, those tributes to finality to Eternity and then I looked at myself here, chicken scratching for my immortality'. The flames and dripping wax of candles burning in a church become a metaphor for her dualistic view of life 'In the church they light the candles, and the wax rolls down like tears, there is the hope and the hopelessness, I've witnessed thirty years'. She is able to glimpse a view of human life as 'only particles of change orbiting around the sun' but wonders how she can sustain that concept of isolated, ever changing individuality 'when I'm always bound and tied to someone?'. Finally she acknowledges that her need for

connection and love will ultimately force her out of her isolation. She is only a 'defector from the petty wars until love sucks me back that way'. 'Song for Sharon' is a long open letter to Joni's childhood friend Sharon Bell Veer. What seems to be a long, rambling rumination is actually a linear train of thought that explains the persistent remnants of Joni's obsession with the romantic cultural notions of a committed relationship. She describes how 'when we were kids in Maidstone Sharon, I went to every wedding in that little town' and afterward 'walking home on the railroad tracks or swinging on the playground swing, love stimulated my illusions more than anything'. Even after experiencing the hurt and disappointment 'first you get the kisses and then you get the tears' she admits that 'the ceremony of the bells and lace still veils this reckless fool here'. The song begins with Joni describing a trip to Staten Island to buy a mandolin where she sees 'the long white dress of love on a store front mannequin' and in the last verse she describes how Sharon has 'a husband and a family and a farm, I've got the apple of temptation and a diamond snake around my arm'. In a phone [interview conducted by Debi Martin](#) and published on JoniMitchell.com in 1983, Joni explained 'But what it was was when we were kids, she (Sharon Bell Veer) was going to marry - she was into voice lessons and, you know, performed in adjudicated classical competitions, right? She was the singer. And I liked to be out in the country so I was going to marry a farmer and she was going to be a famous singer. And it was just so peculiar that fate had these childhood fantasies reversed.' In the song 'Amelia' Joni seems to be seeing the futility of her romantic illusions as she addresses the iconic aviator Amelia Earhart. Amelia's famous disappearance near Howland Island in the Pacific Ocean while attempting a round the world flight in 1937 have made her 'a ghost of aviation' who was 'swallowed by the sky or by the sea'. Joni describes her own travels, her love relationship, her 'dream to fly', and ends each verse by telling 'Amelia it was just a false alarm'. She questions her ability to love and sees how she has 'spent my whole life in clouds at icy altitudes'. This lofty, isolated state of mind became overwhelming when 'looking down on everything I crashed into his arms'. The frenetic rhythm and lyrics of 'Black Crow' describe a predilection for 'diving down to pick up on every shiny thing just like that black crow flying in a blue sky'. In this song Joni has been 'traveling so long' and wonders 'how'm I ever going to know my home when I see it again'. In contrast the mood is languid in the appropriately named 'Blue Motel Room'. Mid-way through her long journey in a 'blue motel room with a blue bedspread' in Savannah, Georgia, Joni's 'got the blues inside and outside my head'. There seem to be second thoughts about the break from her lover and she wonders 'will you still love me when I get back to town?' The final track of the album 'Refuge of the Roads' is Joni's summing up of her 'Hejira'. Muhammad may have traveled from Mecca to seek a refuge in the city of Medina but in Joni Mitchell's case, the travel itself became the refuge she sought. She begins with her meeting with Chögyam Trungpa and his prescription for her psychological and spiritual ailments:

I met a friend of spirit
He drank and womanized
And I sat before his sanity
I was holding back from crying
He saw my complications
And he mirrored me back simplified
And we laughed how our perfection

Would always be denied
"Heart and humor and humility"
He said "Will lighten up your heavy load"
I left him for the refuge of the roads

She meets a band of 'drifters cast up on a beach town', and sings that she 'wound up fixing dinner for them and Boston Jim'. There is a sense of simple enjoyment of 'spring along the ditches' and 'good times in the cities' that Joni expresses as 'radiant happiness...all so light and easy'. But eventually she realizes that the never-ending holiday spirit of this kind of life is not enough to sustain her. As she 'started analyzing...a thunderhead of judgment was gathering in my gaze'. There is a perceptible downside to 'what I was seeing in the refuge of the roads'. The last verse of the song finds her 'in a highway service station', looking at 'a photograph of the earth taken coming back from the moon'. As she contemplates this view of the earth from the remote height of outer space she makes the humbling observation 'you couldn't see a city on that marbled bowling ball or a forest or a highway or me here least of all'. Although she is still 'seeking refuge in the roads' her 'baggage overload' is 'westbound and rolling' and will eventually return to Los Angeles. She was a prisoner of the white lines on the free, freeway when she hitched a ride at the beginning of her journey. But now she views the road not as an obsession or an addiction she feels inescapably compelled to follow. The roads she traveled became a much needed refuge where she could find the prescribed 'heart and humor and humility'. Still with a 'baggage overload' but refreshed and with a restored balance, she is heading west, back to L.A. to continue her life's journey on the path she has chosen to follow.

Although the artwork for 'Hejira's original cardboard album cover does not display any of Joni Mitchell's paintings, the credits show that she designed the cover and the combination of black and white photographs that appear are beautifully executed and carefully chosen to illustrate elements of the record's lyrical content. The photo on the front of the gatefold shows Joni from the waist up, draped in a dark fur coat. The coat has another image superimposed on it of a straight stretch of highway that tapers toward a horizon capped by white clouds. Her right elbow is bent upward and the hand holds a lit cigarette. The left hand is tucked into a pocket. A beret sits on top of Joni's head, slanting across her forehead from the top of her head on her right and covering most of the eyebrow on the left of her face. Her straight blonde hair is swept around the back of her head and flying out to her right as if blown by a strong wind. She gazes directly and unflinchingly into the camera. The lighting sets off Joni's fine cheekbones and the slight protrusion of the lower lip gives the otherwise expressionless face a sensual quality. She is standing in front of a backdrop of a large expanse of frozen water with a bank of ice and snow laden trees in the cover's upper right corner. 'Joni Mitchell Hejira' appears in a simple but elegant looking type in the center at the top. The back of the cover is taken up by a picture of a frozen lake. The Olympic ice skater Toller Cranston is on the ice in the middle distance on the left. He is dressed in a sequin accented performance costume, crouching on the ice with his body bent toward the right and his arms reaching toward the figure of a woman in a bridal gown and veil standing at a distance behind him with her hands clasped in front of her. The track list, in the same type as the album's title on the front, is directly under Cranston's skates. The frozen lake takes up the entire spread of the inside of the gatefold. The left side has a photo of Joni vigorously skating across the ice. Her arms are outstretched

and she is turned away from the camera, displaying a fur cape with tassels hanging from it that suggest black feathers. The lyrics and album credits are printed over the remaining three quarters of the inside of the jacket. The sleeve that the vinyl lp fits into also has a beautiful, semi-glossy black and white photo. This is a shot of Joni from the front, wearing the tasseled cape and a cloche style cap that is covered in black feathers. Her arms are once again stretched out to her sides and suggest bird's wings. There are dark clouds behind her in this picture. The horizon is at the bottom of the shot and the view below the clouds is completely dark and featureless. Joni's lips are slightly parted and there is a dreamy, almost beatific look on her face. The image with the clouds behind Joni's head and her draped arms outstretched like wings gives the impression that she is flying somewhere above the dark ground below her. According to an article from [Rock Photo's June 1985 issue](#), the cover design is actually a composite of 14 different photos that Joni used an instrument called a Camera Lucida to re-size and piece together. The photo of Joni skating was taken by Joel Bernstein on Lake Mendota in Wisconsin when Joni had performed the last date of her 1976 tour at Madison's Dane County Coliseum. Toller Cranston and the bride were photographed in a hockey arena. Norman Seeff took the photo of Joni that appears on the cover. Careful airbrushing helped smooth out the edges of the pieced together images that Joni took a single negative of to create one master shot.



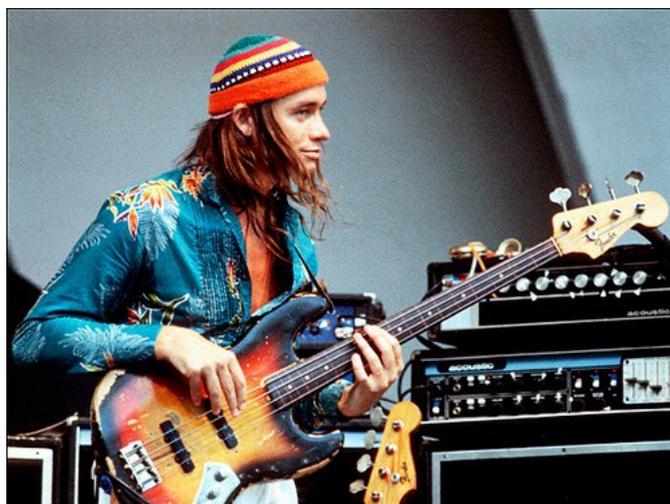
Joni skating on Lake Mendota in 1976 photographed by Joel Bernstein

Musically, 'Hejira' can be described as minimalist, particularly in comparison to the number of musicians that played on 'Court and Spark' and 'The Hissing of Summer Lawns'. The sound of several tracks is based on the interplay of Larry Carlton's guitar and Joni's rhythm guitar. Carlton's subtle, delicate playing is particularly effective on the contemplative 'Amelia' and in the wonderful harmonic shadings he adds to 'A Strange Boy'. There was at least a continuing professional relationship between Joni and John Guerin because Guerin played drums on four of 'Hejira's' songs. Max Bennett's bass playing is heard on two tracks. Chuck Domanico played bass and Joni played electric guitar on the bluesy 'Blue Motel Room'. Bobbye Hall played percussion on three songs. Victor Feldman played vibes on 'Amelia'

and Neil Young played harmonica on 'Furry Sings the Blues'. Abe Most's clarinet echoes the 'strains of Benny Goodman' on the album's title track. Chuck Findley and Tom Scott provided horn accents to 'Refuge of the Roads'. This was the roster of musicians that Joni utilized on the tracks that were created for 'Hejira' in the summer of 1976. But a lucky bit of circumstance was to provide one more element that would add a significant piece to 'Hejira's sound and would help elevate it to a level that few recordings of popular music have attained.

Although the flexibility of jazz musicians had helped Joni put together the arrangements she wanted for her songs, there were still sounds that she had been unable to induce any of the bass players she had worked with to attempt. Joni wanted the bass to take a more upfront part in her arrangements. But when she would suggest melodic lines, she would mostly get the response that what she wanted was not the root of the chord which was the part that most bass players were traditionally expected to play. Joni says that someone told her about a bass player in Miami who played for Phyllis Diller and Bob Hope who was highly unconventional in his approach and likely to be open enough to give her what she was looking for. By this time, Jaco Pastorius had already recorded with the jazz fusion group Weather Report. He played on two tracks from the group's 1976 release ['Black Market'](#). In 1977 Pastorius, as a full member of Weather Report, would play on all of the tracks for their most successful album ['Heavy Weather'](#). The tracks for 'Hejira' had already been recorded and mixed when Joni sent for Jaco and discovered that he had no inhibitions about how he played his instrument. Jaco Pastorius was the bassist Joni had been looking for. He played a fretless electric bass and his playing was added to 'Coyote', 'Hejira', 'Black Crow', and 'Refuge of the Roads'. The lines he played for 'Coyote' shade the music with distinctly audible tones that both underlie and interact with Joni and Larry Carlton's guitar work. On 'Hejira' his counter-melodies wrap around both Joni's guitar and voice in a way that is reminiscent of the subtle interplay of Lester Young's saxophone with Billie Holiday's voice on the recordings those two legends made in the 1930s. By overdubbing multiple tracks of the guitar and bass parts, Joni and her recording engineer Henry Lewy created full and expansive sounds from the sparse instrumentation used on 'Hejira' with Jaco's bass standing out as a major component of the tracks he played on. In the previously cited interview that Max Bennet did for [JoniMitchell.com](#), Max said that Joni did almost all of her own production work and planned where each piece of the music would fit into the whole, including overdubs. When asked if Joni had replaced any of his playing on 'Hejira' with Jaco's, [Max said that he wasn't aware of it if she had.](#)

'Hejira' was released in November of 1976 to mostly positive reviews. Many critics referred to the album as a 'return to form', which probably meant that Joni had gone back to more of the 'confessional' style in her lyrics and a more bare bones guitar based sound. Although it did not sell as well as 'Court and Spark' and 'The Hissing



of Summer Lawns', 'Hejira' peaked at 13 on Billboard's 200 pop album chart and became a certified Gold album. A single of 'Coyote' b/w 'Blue Motel Room' was released but it failed to register on any of the record sales charts. Like much of Joni Mitchell's post 'Court and Spark' output, 'Hejira's reputation has gained considerable ground in the intervening years and is now considered by many to be a uniquely innovative, classic piece of musical art. Joni has said that she believes nobody but herself could have created it.

Two days before the release of 'Hejira' on November 20, 1976, Joni Mitchell appeared with Jaco Pastorius and percussionist Bobbye Hall at Memorial Auditorium in Sacramento for a Save the Whales benefit concert titled 'California Celebrates the Whales'. The trio performed a set that was made up mostly of songs from 'Hejira' and 'The Hissing of Summer Lawns'. A bootleg recording of this concert has been in circulation for years and is now posted on YouTube. A highlight is a jazzy, laid back rendition of ['Shadows and Light'](#). The song 'Jericho' that was featured on the 'Miles of Aisles' album is also performed with an extended bass solo from Jaco added to the end. There is obviously a musical chemistry between the two performers as Joni's guitar and Jaco's bass play off one another throughout the set. Joni does play solo accompaniment on 'Song For Sharon', making the addition 'and the whales' to the lyric 'help the needy and the crippled'. The finale is a song called 'Dolphins' by Fred Neill with Joni singing harmony and backup vocal.

On November 25th, 1976, Thanksgiving Day in the U.S., Joni participated in a concert extravaganza at San Francisco's Winterland Arena that was The Band's farewell performance. Billed as 'The Last Waltz', the concert featured an impressive list of guest performers that included Bob Dylan, Eric Clapton, Neil Young, Dr. John, Van Morrison, Emmylou Harris, Neil Diamond and Muddy Waters. Joni performed 'Coyote', 'Furry Sings the Blues' with Neil Young joining her on harmonica and 'Shadows and Light'. She also provided a haunting descant and harmony backing vocal for Neil Young's performance of 'Helpless'. Joni was among the Canadians that Robbie Robertson called to come onstage to perform 'Acadian Driftwood' and she was also part of the ensemble of musicians and singers who joined Bob Dylan for 'I Shall Be Released'. The concert was filmed and released in 1978 as 'The Last Waltz', directed by Martin



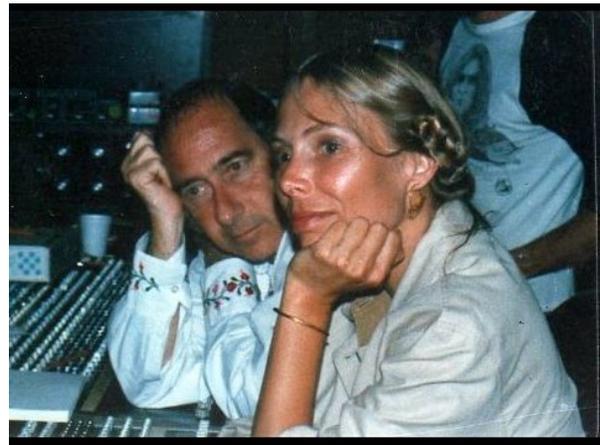
*Joni & Neil Young - The Last Waltz,
November 1976*

Scorsese and hailed as one of the greatest rockumentaries of all time. Unfortunately, ['Coyote'](#) was the only one of Joni's solo performances that made it into the film although footage of ['Furry Sings the Blues'](#) and ['Shadows and Light'](#) has surfaced. During Neil Young's 'Helpless', Joni is shown in the film in silhouette delivering her vocal into a microphone backstage. Joni is mostly unseen during Young's performance of the song, giving her vocal a haunting, disembodied effect as if memories of that 'town in north Ontario' are calling out to Neil from some far off corner of time and space.

Joni was nominated for a Grammy award for Best Female Pop Vocal performance of 1976. The ceremony was held in February of 1977 with Linda Rondstadt winning the award for her album 'Hasten Down the Wind'. Joni was scheduled to go on tour in the

summer of 1977 but the tour had to be canceled when Joni was hospitalized for a month with abscessed ovaries. The experience could have been the beginning of an aversion to modern western medicine that persisted for many years. This battle with a serious health problem also prompted Joni to turn back to her first medium of artistic expression. In the catalog for an exhibition of her paintings in 2000 at the Mendel Art Gallery in Saskatoon she wrote, "In the early '70s, I was given a camera by (singer) Graham Nash, a good camera -- a Leicaflex....After that I put down the sketchbook and photographed everything in sight -- even the cross fades in movies. I didn't paint again until 1977 when a serious illness put me in the hospital for about a month and predatory doctors threatened to take out some things that I really needed. In protest, I ordered art supplies to be sent to my hospital room and I painted a series of works I call The Delirium Paintings ... some of which I don't quite understand."

Her illness kept Joni out of commission for most of the year. At some point, however, she felt well enough to get out of bed and sit down at her piano. She has spoken of this moment in interviews several times in the intervening years. Every time she has said that she 'couldn't hit a wrong note' and called Henry Lewy to insist that the two of them had to get into a recording studio. She convinced Henry, who was suffering from bursitis at the time, and the two of them made four separate recordings of Joni playing improvisations on the piano. Each of the four



Henry Lewy & Joni Mitchell

recordings was approximately thirty minutes long. From the tapes of these four pieces of improvisation, Joni & Henry Lewy edited and spliced together one ten minute long passage of Joni playing piano. In her [Times Talks interview at the 2013 Luminato Festival in Toronto](#), Joni said that these recording and editing sessions took place in January. In August she wrote a song comprised roughly of three verses. The ten minute piano piece was inserted between the second and third verses. Later, a tag was recorded for the end of the piece that consisted of Joni playing a heavily percussive series of piano chords. Michael Gibbs, a Rhodesian born composer and musician who was composer-in-residence and tutor at Berklee College of Music in Boston at the time was then called on to add orchestration. Gibbs is credited with having composed string arrangements for two tracks on Jaco Pastorius's 1976 [debut solo album 'Jaco Pastorius'](#). 'Jaco Pastorius' was recorded in 1975 which predates Gibbs's work with Joni Mitchell by a couple of years. However, in an [interview with Gibbs conducted by Dave Blackburn](#) for JoniMitchell.com, Mike said that his understanding was that Jaco Pastorius had heard some of his orchestral music and recommended Gibbs to Joni to compose the orchestration. Gibbs is also quoted as saying "I also understand that her inspiration to do this piano extemporization had come from something Jaco had shown her: some harmonic techniques which were 'liberating.'" The orchestral piece of this musical mosaic was recorded in New York. Gibbs said he was aware of Joni's music before he took the assignment and greatly admired her compositional ability. He praised her ability to write lyrics as well. According to Mike Gibbs, 'Her words, for a start, demand hearing; it's impossible not to hear them.' Gibbs was given very minimal instructions on how to score the piece. Joni



Mike Gibbs

& Henry Lewy both gave him a few ideas “about looking for a sound that was 'red hot' and suggestive of Plains, as in American flat land plains - perhaps sort of Aaron Copland-ish. Joni loved that I didn't talk in technical musical terms and she said to Henry something like "this is the right guy," and off to work I went.” The final touch was recorded in England with Jaco Pastorius's bass and John Guerin's drumming added to the tag along with a lyrical saxophone improvisation played over the ensemble by renowned jazz musician Wayne Shorter. Shorter had played with jazz great Miles Davis as part of his Second Great Quintet and was one of the founding members of Weather Report. His contribution was the first of many appearances he would make on Joni Mitchell's records. Wayne has played on various cuts on every subsequent studio album that Joni has recorded with the single exception of the latest title in her catalogue.

Upon completion, all the pieces of this remarkable sixteen minutes and nineteen seconds of music formed a cohesive whole that was given the title 'Paprika Plains'. Joni had never attempted anything of this scope before and 'Paprika Plains' stands as perhaps the most ambitious and complex piece of her musical output. 'Paprika Plains' became one side of her next studio release, a double vinyl LP called ['Don Juan's Reckless Daughter'](#).

Up until the mid 1960s, the release of album packages that contained two vinyl LPs was a practice of record labels that was usually reserved for classical music or for particularly prestigious popular artists. The format was often used for recordings of live performances. With the release of Bob Dylan's 'Blonde on Blonde' in 1966 and the Beatles' 'White Album' in 1968, the double album became a vehicle for top selling artists in pop music to broaden the range of the music they could put into one new release. The 1970s saw a number of two record releases from music industry heavy hitters. Stevie Wonder released the double album 'Songs in the Key of Life' in 1976 which is considered to be one of his finest achievements. Elton John's two record set 'Goodbye Yellow Brick Road' appeared in 1973 and became one of his best selling albums. Many artists used the double album format to stretch themselves and experiment with their music. Todd Rundgren's 'Something/Anything' released in 1972 is considered to be a springboard for his exploration of progressive rock. Prog rock bands used the format to create extended tracks of music. Each of the four sides of 'Tales From Topographic Oceans', the 1973 release from the progressive rock band Yes is comprised of one track of continuous music, each track clocking in at around twenty minutes in length. Fleetwood Mac, whose 'Rumors' album is one of the best-selling record albums of all time, followed that album up with the release of their double album 'Tusk' in 1979. 'Tusk' was a departure for Fleetwood Mac largely due to the experimental production techniques employed by Lindsey Buckingham.

[According to the biography that Wally Breese](#), the original creator of JoniMitchell.com compiled, Joni's contract with Asylum was close to its completion. In reference to 'Don Juan's Reckless Daughter', Joni is quoted as saying "This record followed on the tail of persecution, it's experimental, and it didn't really matter what I did, I just had to fulfill my contract". The length of 'Paprika Plains' is somewhat shy of the usual length of one side of a vinyl LP. But it is hard to imagine a song preceding or following 'Paprika Plains'. The flow of the music and lyrics from the piano intro to the piece's coda comprises a stand-alone work. The only logical way to put this recording on an album was to give it one full side of an LP. It became the centerpiece of Joni's 'experimental' record. Joni recorded two of the songs she had introduced on her tour with The L A Express in January and February of 1976. The title track of the new album, 'Don Juan's Reckless Daughter' had been performed during the tour as a companion piece to 'Coyote'. The other song first heard on the 1976 tour was 'Talk To Me'. One of the songs that Joni had recorded on the demos she had made before 'The Hissing of Summer Lawns' sessions, 'Dreamland', was included and the song 'Jericho', first heard in performance during the 'Miles of Aisles' tour was given a more polished studio treatment. There were four more songs that Joni composed for 'Don Juan's Reckless Daughter' plus a nearly seven minute percussion piece with a call and response vocal led by Puerto Rican born percussionist Manolo Badrena with Joni Mitchell, drummer Don Alias, singer Chaka Khan and Peruvian born percussionist Alejandro Acuna providing the chant like response parts. The resulting musical patchwork made up a total running time of slightly less than one hour. Putting this amount of recorded music onto two LPs was a bit of a stretch. However, the songs that make up the three sides that come before and after 'Paprika Plains' are grouped and sequenced so that each side almost tells a story. Lyrically, 'Paprika Plains' contains thematic elements and settings that are somewhat tangential to the rest of the songs on 'Don Juan's Reckless Daughter'.

The lyrics of 'Paprika Plains' begin with a description of a rainstorm as it hits a crowded bar. Joni gives a vivid sense of the atmosphere just by describing the combination of smells: 'In the washroom women tracked the rain up to the makeup mirror, liquid soap and grass and Jungle Gardenia crash on Pine-Sol and beer'. The close atmosphere of the bar drives the singer outside to get some air where the rain evokes memories of childhood in a small prairie town where 'sky-oriented people geared to changing weather' 'would have cleared the floor just to watch the rain come down'. She falls into a reverie as she's 'floating off in time'. Images of Canadian aboriginal people coming into one of the small towns Joni lived in as a young child emerge from her thoughts. She pictures these people 'with their tasseled teams...all in their beaded leathers' and describes how her young imagination was stimulated by their appearance: 'I would tie on colored feathers and I'd beat the drum like war'. But 'when the church got through, they traded their beads for bottles, smashed on Railway Avenue'. The alcohol exacerbates the despair and anger generated by long years of oppression. Divided from their heritage, 'they cut off their braids and lost some link with nature'. The memories remove her further from the reality of the moment as Joni finds herself 'floating into dreams'. Her dream state engenders a vision of 'Paprika plains, vast and bleak and God forsaken, Paprika plains and a turquoise river snaking'. At this point the orchestrated piano interlude begins and there is no singing for the duration of this section of the track. However, inserted into the printed lyrics on the inside of the record's gatefold jacket and enclosed in parentheses is a description of an extended dream sequence, written in verse as if intended as an unsung piece of the song. These Paprika plains are a dream-scape 'far from the digits of business hours'

where 'all time is stripped away'. They comprise a barren, desolate place with no 'sprout or egg to measure loss or gain'. The only life to be seen is 'a little band of Indian men' that the dreamer observes from a helicopter. One of these men 'like a phoenix up from ashes...springs with a fist raised up to turquoise skies.' The mushroom cloud of a bomb rises from the horizon and 'to it like a golfer's tee' a giant pink and yellow beach ball appears. Joni dreams that the ball becomes 'the blues and greens of earth from space probe photographs'. She floats out of the helicopter, 'naked as infancy' and falls against the ball to 'suckle at my mother's breast' and 'embrace my mother earth'. But, comparing herself to the biblical Eve who 'succumbed to reckless curiosity', she punctures the globe with her 'sharpest fingernail' and is once again left with a view of 'vast Paprika plains and the snake the river traces and a little band of Indian men with no expressions on their faces'. As the instrumental section ends the sung lyrics pick up back at the bar where 'the rain retreats like troops to fall on other fields and streets'. The singer walks back toward the dance floor where she spots the companion she is with 'through the smoke with your eyes on fire from J&B and coke'. The band begins to play, the disco ball starts to 'sputter lights and spin, dizzy on the dancers geared to changing rhythms' and the lyrical part of 'Paprika Plains' concludes with 'No matter what you do I'm floating back, I'm floating back to you'. There is the pause of a beat and then the piano pounds out the first chords of the musical tag which ends with Jaco Pastorius playing drawn out, bending electric bass notes over the sustained sounds of the orchestra's string section.

Sequentially, 'Paprika Plains' was placed on the second side of the first of the two vinyl records that made up the original release of 'Don Juan's Reckless Daughter'. The opening track on the first side is an instrumental and choral 'Overture'. Joni's over-dubbed voice sings wordless close harmony phrasings over the interplay of her guitar and Jaco Pastorius's multifaceted bass lines. The sounds produced spark the listener's curiosity in a sonically engaging, seemingly random musical abstraction that finally settles into the first rhythmic chords that lead into the song 'Cotton Avenue'. 'Cotton Avenue' is a celebration of a favorite dance spot that perhaps takes the listener to the bar described in 'Paprika Plains'. There is a 'summer storm brewing in the southern sky' and the singer anticipates 'dancing high and dry to rhythm and blues' by the time it hits. The next song, 'Talk To Me' finds the singer desperately trying to entice a man she is attracted to into a conversation. She sings 'I didn't know I drank such a lot' and laments 'oh I talk too loose, again I talk too open and free' while 'Mr. Mystery', the object of her interest 'spends every sentence as if it was marked currency'. 'Talk to Me' is full of humor and clever turns of phrase pouring out of a mind that 'picks up all these pictures' and 'can still get my feet up to dance even though it's covered with keyholes from the slings and arrows of outrageous romance', a line she admits she stole from 'Willie the Shake'. The third and final song on the first quarter of 'Don Juan's Reckless Daughter' is 'Jericho', the song that Joni introduced as a hopeful, new song on the live 'Miles of Aisles' album. The song is Joni's 'promise that I made to love when it was new' to make an honest effort to stay open to a new romantic partner. She wants to find 'the way to keep the good feelings alive', engage in the 'rich exchange' of emotional support and shared time and 'just like Jericho, let these walls come tumbling down'.

Joni has been quoted as saying about the album 'Don Juan's Reckless Daughter': 'Basically it has to do with turning your back on America and heading into the Third World.' The three tracks on the third side

of the record (first side of the second LP) sketch out a progression, starting in Miami where Joni sets 'Otis and Marlana'. Otis and Marlana are two snow bird vacationers from somewhere up north who have come to Miami 'for fun and sun while Muslims stick up Washington'. This phrase is repeated at the end of all three verses of the song and is a reference to an incident from March of 1977 known as the Hanafi Siege. Twelve gunmen who were members of the Hanafi Movement, an organization that had split away from the Nation of Islam, took control of three buildings in Washington DC (the District Building or city hall, now called the John A. Wilson Building, B'nai B'rith headquarters, and the Islamic Center of Washington), held 149 people as hostages and killed one radio journalist. The repetition of the phrase in the song seems to be a commentary on the obliviousness of the mostly elderly people who flock to Florida in the winter months. Joni gives an acrimonious portrayal, describing the Miami Royal hotel that Otis and Marlana check into as 'that celebrated dump' and 'her royal travesty'. She describes 'fluorescent fossil yards' where 'freckled hands are shuffling cards' and paints the scathing verbal image of 'the grand parades of cellulite jiggling to her golden pools'. After the final 'Muslims hold up Washington' the music seems to slip into another dream state with percussion instruments percolating up, a few sustained piano chords played by Michel Colombier and Joni's voice mixed into the background singing eerie sounding notes that resolve into the two words 'dream on'. There is no break in the sound as the music forms a bridge into 'The Tenth World', a six minute and 45 second percussion interlude of congas played by American jazz percussionist Don Alias, Puerto Rican born percussionist Manolo Badrena who played for Weather Report, and Peruvian drummer Alejandro Acuna, another member of Weather Report. Don Alias also played claves, Manolo Bradrena doubled up on coffee cans and Alejandro Acuna added the sound of a cowbell. The ensemble is rounded out by Brazillian jazz drummer Airto Moreira on surdo (bass drum) and Jaco Pastorius playing bongos. Vocals were also recorded and set in the back of the mix. These vocals consist of a call and response in a northern South American or Caribbean dialect of Spanish. Manolo Badrena sings the lead part with Joni Mitchell, Don Alias, Chaka Khan and Alejandro Acuna singing the responses. There is [an approximation of the English wording of these lyrics on JoniMitchell.com translated by Wally Kairuz](#), an Argentinian academic and long time fan of Joni Mitchell. Badrena is exhorting his listeners to 'dance to my rumba' and take pleasure in the dance. 'The Tenth World' takes the listener out of the artificial, materialistic, decadent, somewhat surreal, circus-like atmosphere of the American resort city of Miami that Joni described in 'Otis and Marlana' and into what she referred to as the Third World. The term Third World has its origins in the Cold War and was coined as a reference to nations that were neither aligned with NATO (the First World) nor with what was known as the Communist Bloc which was comprised of the USSR, China and Cuba at that time (the Second World). The Third World encompassed a large number of nations in Africa, Latin America and Asia that had been colonies of mostly European powers. Later the term became more generalized and took on the connotation of economically underdeveloped countries. On 'Don Juan's Reckless Daughter', the song 'Dreamland' follows 'The Tenth



Don Alias

World' and closes the third side of the album. 'Dreamland' was one of the songs on the demo tapes that Joni recorded before making 'The Hissing of Summer Lawns'. Joni had actually given the song to Roger McGuinn who recorded it on his 1976 album ['Cardiff Rose'](#). 'Dreamland' is described as 'a long, long way from Canada, a long way from snow chains' where 'donkey vendors slicing coconut' have 'no parkas to their name'. There is a reference to the European imperialism that colonized and exploited much of the Americas in the 15th & 16th centuries 'Walter Raleigh and Chris Columbus come marching out of the waves and claim the beach and all concessions in the name of the sun tan slaves'. There is also a sense of underlying racially induced tension as Joni pictures 'Tar Baby and the Great White Wonder talking over a glass of rum burning on the inside with the knowledge of things to come'. But the singer takes the standard from Raleigh and Columbus and describes how 'I wrap that flag around me like a Dorothy Lamour sarong and I lay down thinking national with Dreamland coming on'. The tourists have obviously come for the party atmosphere, carrying their decadent self-abandonment out of the gateway city of Miami to the Caribbean or perhaps to the South American continent. 'Good Time Mary and a fortune hunter' are 'all dressed up to follow the drum, Mary in a feather hula-hoop, Miss Fortune with a rose on her big game gun'. After all the 'gambling out on the terrace and midnight rambling on the lawn' is over it is time to pack up and leave: 'On a plane flying back to winter in shoes full of tropic sand, a lady in a foreign flag on the arm of her Marlboro Man'. With the knowledge of the weather report of 'six foot drifts on Myrtle's lawn' the travelers 'push the recline buttons down with Dreamland coming on'.

The final side of 'Don Juan's Reckless Daughter' is another triptych of songs beginning with the album's title track. Don Juan could be a deliberately cliched reference to the Spanish fictional character from the 17th century, famous for his seductive way with women. It is also possible that the Don Juan of the title is a reference to Don Juan Matus, the Native American Yaqui 'man of knowledge' whom anthropologist author Carlos Castaneda claimed instructed him in the magical practices of shamanism. [Castaneda described this training in a series of books, the first of which he titled 'The Teachings of Don Juan'](#). There is a sense of the mystical in the line 'out on the vast and subtle plains of mystery a split-tongued spirit talks' and the lyrics contain multiple references to 'the eagle and the serpent', animals that appear in Castaneda's books as symbolic images. Toward the beginning of the song Joni declares 'I come from open prairie' and describes the dual nature of her character as 'given some wisdom and a lot of jive'. The promise of an open, nurturing, relationship described in 'Jericho' seems to have been illusory as she sings 'last night the ghost of my old ideals reran on channel five'. Instead of open communion with her lover, there emerges what seems to be a constant battle between honesty and deception, courage and cowardice, temperance and hedonism, fidelity and indulgence in sexual curiosity. The lyrical content of 'Don Juan's Reckless Daughter' is crammed with contrasting images that depict negative and positive aspects of human nature and how they affect American culture and sexual relationships. She uses the eagle and serpent imagery 'coils around feathers and talons on scales', to imply that these characteristics are inextricably intertwined in both sexes leading to the conclusion that she and her lover 'are twins of spirit no matter which route home we take or what we forsake'. Her critical eye is turned on the USA as she indicts 'here in Good Old God save America the home of the brave and the free we are all hopelessly oppressed cowards of some duality, of restless multiplicity'. Joni describes the national character as restless and constantly vacillating between the reckless decadence of 'streets and

honky tonks' and the morally sanctioned safety of 'home and routine'. The pervasive restlessness 'sweeps like fire and rain over virgin wilderness, it prowls like hookers and thieves through bolt locked tenements'. Joni once again admits her own conflicted sensibility, hidden 'behind my bolt locked door' where 'the eagle and the serpent are at war in me, the serpent fighting for blind desire, the eagle for clarity'. She knows that inevitably she and her lover are 'going to come up to the eyes of clarity and we'll go down to the beads of guile' coming to the dualistic conclusion that 'there is danger and education in living out such a reckless lifestyle'. Each partner is a composite of both sinner and saint as the song concludes:

Man to woman
Scales to feathers
You and I
Eagles in the sky
You and I
Snakes in the grass
You and I
Crawl and fly
You and I

The background vocal sings 'By the dawn's early light' before the final 'You and I', once again referencing the US. In an article titled ['The Education of Joni Mitchell'](#) by Stewart Brand in Co-Evolution Quarterly from June of 1976, Joni is quoted:

'The Castaneda books, are a magnificent synthesis of Eastern and Western philosophies. Through them I have been able to understand and apply (in some areas) the concept of believing and not believing simultaneously. My Christian heritage tends to polarize concepts; faith and God - doubt and the Devil - it creates dualities which in turn create guilt which impedes freedom.'

As an interesting side-note to the symbolism Joni attached to the eagle and the serpent in 'Don Juan's Reckless Daughter', Nietzsche, a philosopher whom Joni has admired since she first read his work, also used the two animals in 'Thus Spoke Zarathustra'. But in 'Zarathustra', [Nietzsche portrays the eagle as the representation of human pride and the serpent as the symbol of wisdom.](#)

'Off Night Back Street' follows 'Don Juan's Reckless Daughter' and it is a description of a relationship that has degenerated into sexual infidelity and mistrust. Joni warns that 'loving without trusting you get frostbite and sunstroke'. Her lover has found a new partner who has moved in with him 'keeping your house neat and your sheets sweet'. But the sexual and emotional ties are not yet broken and now the former partner has become the man's 'off-night back street'. The singer tells him 'I can feel your fingers feeling my face, there are some lines you put there and some you erased'. The love affair has been both corrosive and healing. As the song ends, suspicion and jealousy seem to have the last word:

You give me such pleasure
You bring me such pain

Who left her long black hair
In our bathtub drain?

The final song on 'Don Juan's Reckless Daughter' interweaves traditional folk song lyrics with Joni's words into a fabric of disillusion with romantic love. The words to 'The Silky Veils of Ardor' are mostly adapted from the American folk songs '[The Wayfaring Stranger](#)' and '[Come All You Fair and Tender Ladies](#)'. Joni casts herself as the 'poor wayfaring stranger traveling through this world of woe' who warns 'all you fair and tender school girls' to

Be careful now when you court young men
They are like the stars
On a summer morning
They sparkle up the night
And they're gone again
Daybreak gone again

In the lyrics of the album's title song, Joni wrote 'our serpents love the....romance of the crime'. In this final song she laments 'what a killing crime this love can be'. She longs for 'the wings of Noah's pretty little white dove so I could fly this raging river to reach the one I love'. But in this final summing up of the difficulties and imperfections of love relationships, there is no way to fly above the rough waters and she concludes 'we're going to have to row a little harder now, it's just in dreams we fly, in my dreams we fly'.

The positive and negative aspects of romantic relationships, the flawed aspects of human nature, especially in the USA's cultural atmosphere of 1977, and the dubious, uneasy mixing of indigenous peoples in the Americas with the descendants of their European conquerors all contribute to the broad thematic scope of 'Don Juan's Reckless Daughter'. Dream states serve as links from one musical progression to the next. As Joni says of Marlena as she sits on her tenth floor balcony in the Miami Royal, 'it's all a dream she has awake'. These elements are all concentrated in and perhaps spin out of 'Paprika Plains'. In this way Joni stitches the various themes of her 'experimental' album together.

Musically, 'Don Juan's Reckless Daughter' relies heavily on the interplay of Joni's guitar and Jaco Pastorius's bass. Jaco was the sole bass player on the album and played bass on all but four tracks. His role as a lead player comes into full bloom on 'Don Juan's Reckless Daughter'. [Henry Lewy said Jaco's playing was often double-tracked](#) to give the bass an even fuller sound on the record. The bass is prominent in the mix where it is heard, adding lines that are often primary to the musical foundation. Jaco and Joni are the only players on 'Talk To Me' providing a musical counterpoint and metaphor for the song's lyrics as the bass and guitar engage in a musical conversation of their own. John Guerin once again is the drummer on the majority of the album's tracks. Larry Carlton plays guitar on 'Otis and Marlena'. Alejandro (Alex) Acuna described how Joni asked him to go on tour in [a 2013 interview conducted by Dave Blackburn](#) for JoniMitchell.com. The sound of ankle bells Acuna wore to perform a Peruvian dance was recorded as part of the mix for the song 'Don Juan's Reckless Daughter'. Joni wanted Alex to perform the dance as a feature of the performances on the tour. Acuna declined the

offer, citing his large family and increased demand for session work in Los Angeles as the reasons for his decision. Don Alias who had played with Miles Davis, Weather Report and Carlos Santana played bongos on 'Jericho' in addition to his work on 'The Tenth World' and played shaker on the album's title track. Airto Moreira continues to add the sound of the surdo to the Latin American rhythms of 'Dreamland' along with Monolo Badrena on congas, Jaco Pastorius on cowbells, Alejandro Acuna playing shakers, Don Alias doubling up on snaredrum and sandpaper blocks with Chaka Khan providing background vocals. Besides the tag for 'Paprika Plains', Wayne Shorter also played on 'Jericho' and Mike Gibbs added another orchestration to 'Off Night Back Street' with Don Henley and J.D Souther singing backup vocals for that particular track. The low pitched voice heard deep in the mix of 'Don Juan's Reckless Daughter' as The Split Toned Spirit is credited on the record's jacket to El Bwyd. According to McGill music professor Lloyd Whitesell's book, 'The Music of Joni Mitchell', El Bwyd is artist Boyd Elder. Boyd Elder created album cover art for The Eagles and several other artists in the 70s. He also ran a graphic design company called El Bwyd de Valentine M.F.S. Joni accompanies herself solo on guitar for the album's closer, 'The Silky Veils of Ardor'.

Besides the 'delirium paintings' that Joni created during her illness, in 1977 she also painted a large canvas (60 X 72 inches) in oil and latex called 'Axilar Moonrise'.



Like her music, the painting is an amalgam of styles. The caption for the image of ['Axilar Moonrise'](#) on [JoniMitchell.com](#) describes the piece as Abstracted Realism. There are recognizable figurative images in the painting but they are depicted and combined in such a way that blurs the line between the realistic and the abstract. One of the texts that accompany the painting on the website is from a book published in 1978 called 'California Rock California Sound' by Anthony Fawcett and actually gives the painting's title as 'Don Juan's Reckless Daughter'. Joni is quoted in the text and she points out several images that

are direct references to the album. The painting may not have been completed in time to be used as the album's cover or maybe it was never intended or considered for that purpose. In retrospect, it seems like it would be the ideal choice. The compact disk and more recently the rise of digital formats for the marketing of recorded music have nearly made the creative packaging used for vinyl LPs a lost art, although audiophiles who maintain that digital reproduction does not match the degree of sound quality of the vinyl LP have sparked somewhat of a comeback of the product, prompting many artists to release vinyl pressings of their new releases. There have been coffee table books published of the vast array of designs for record jackets that have been created over the history of the LP and 'Axilar Moonrise' would have made a striking addition to any of those collections. Instead, a collage of black and white

photographs was arranged on a background of featureless, paprika colored ground with a turquoise sky topping it off. As with the 'Hejira' cover, the Camera Lucida machine was used again to position and blend the images. However, with 'Don Juan's Reckless Daughter' the choice of images and their relationship to the content of the records is not always as clear as it was with the more obvious symbolism on the 'Hejira' cover. According to Rock Photo, Norman Seeff did a photo shoot for the 'Don Juan's Reckless Daughter' cover. Seeff photographed Joni in several different dresses while she danced and moved around. The front of the album has Joni standing with her arms outstretched, mouth wide open showing a broad expanse of teeth as if she is singing and dancing in some kind of joyous abandonment. She is wearing a shiny top hat and an ankle length dress made of some gauzy material with kimono-like sleeves. The dress has images of Mickey Mouse balloons superimposed across the bottoms of the sleeves and the base of the plunging neckline. A picture of a dove in flight is placed over the waist and it covers the head of a nude woman that appears on the dress below it. There is one balloon that is colored red to the left of the woman's right breast. Doves seem to be flying out of the bottom of the dress and there are a few more balloons floating up behind the woman. A profile photo of an adolescent boy in a tuxedo is on the far right side of the cover, placed so that it appears to be just in front of Joni, blocking out all but the fingertips of her left hand. On the left side of the tableau is the most prominent figure, a picture of a flamboyantly dressed black man. He wears a hat with a band of black and white feathers. A plume of black feathers rises from the band and is splayed across the front of the hat's crown. His smiling set of teeth are showing under a mustache and his Afro-styled hair sits above a pair of large eye shades. He wears a white jacket with broad lapels over a white vest. Under the vest is a shirt that is open at the neck. There is a long dark scarf that goes around his neck under the collar of the shirt and is tied just at the point where the shirt is buttoned. It hangs down below the vest, obscuring the man's left hand. There is also what appears to be a striped ribbon around his neck with a medallion hanging from it. The man's right arm is bent at the elbow with the forearm across his chest. The fingers of his right hand are bent downward. They hold the medallion and the stub end of a cigarette is clutched between the index and middle finger. A ring with a large rectangular setting is prominently displayed on the ring finger. The largest of the doves is positioned in front of the figure and its wings spread across the front of the man's left leg over to the front of Joni's dress so that the dove appears to be in front of all the other images. The three human figures are arranged so that the tops of their heads make a diagonal line that slopes downward from left to right. Similarly, the up sloping curve of the large dove's wings is picked up in the curve of the bottom of the left sleeve of Joni's dress. Looking closely at the teeth and facial structure of the man, there is a marked similarity to the blonde figure standing next to him. In fact, these are both photos of Joni Mitchell who donned dark makeup, hair and mustache to transform herself for Norman Seeff's camera. Joni had attended a Halloween party in 1976, disguised in a similar get up and had managed to make



Joni as Art Nouveau

herself unrecognizable to the other party guests. She eventually named this character Art Nouveau. Joni is quoted in the [Rock Photo article](#): 'In the song, Don Juan is really the art of the tongue, it's rapping - coffee house poet talk.' A small dialogue box appears to the right of the black man's hat with a line leading down toward his head with 'Don Juan's Reckless Daughter' printed inside. 'Joni Mitchell' is printed in capital letters in the top right corner. On the right edge of the back of the album's jacket there is a picture of the young Roberta Joan Anderson with a blanket wrapped around her. She is wearing a headband with long false braids attached to it and two feathers protruding up from the top of her head. Her left hand holds a toy drum that hangs below it at an angle. The right hand holds the drum's mallet, poised as if she is about to strike the drum's head. Another dialogue box is positioned to the left of her head with the word 'How' printed inside. In the the upper left corner is one more dove in the turquoise sky and the album's track list is printed on the paprika colored ground underneath it. The inside of the gatefold jacket has the same color scheme with more doves in the sky and the lyrics and credits printed on the brownish orange ground. There are also sleeves for each of the two records in the set made from glossy paper with the same color scheme as the cardboard jacket. One sleeve has another photo of Joni in the costume of her Art Nouveau character minus his jacket. This is another black and white photo except that the shirt is the same shade of red as the single colored balloon on the cover. The cuffs of the shirt are unbuttoned and the sleeves pushed back. Platform shoes with what look to be about six inch heels are on the feet and the figure is leaning backward toward the left. Another dialogue box is to the left of his head with the words 'Mooslems, Moooslems! Heh, Heh, Heh' inside of it. To the right is another picture of Joni in the same dress she wears on the cover without any images superimposed on it and she is not wearing the top hat. Her blonde hair has been curled at the ends and her eyes are closed. Her right arm is extended to the side and the left bent at the elbow with the left hand either on her waist or at the level of her waist. She has her own dialogue box that reads 'Baila Mi Rumba' which is the response that Joni, Don Alias, Chaka Khan and Alejandro Acuna sang to Manolo Badrena on 'The Tenth World'. This picture is smaller than the Art Nouveau image so that Joni appears to be standing at a distance behind him. The sleeve for the second record has a third photo of Joni in the dress on the left side. Joni has her back to the camera in this picture, her arms raised on either side. Her sling back high heels are clearly visible in this shot with one foot in front of and at a right angle to the other. She is obviously dancing and her dialogue bubble for this shot reads 'In My Dweems We Fwy'. At the top on the left the red Mickey Mouse balloon is seen trailing a string as it floats away into the turquoise-blue sky.

'Don Juan's Reckless Daughter' was released in December of 1977 to mixed reviews. Some reviewers questioned whether the amount of material merited the release of a double album with the inference that it was a marketing ploy to drive up the price. Some critics lauded the experimental nature of the album while others dismissed it as Joni Mitchell opportunistically using her status to foist her musical experiments off on her fans. In retrospect, the record was underrated by the music press and for the most part its innovative and inventive sounds were either overlooked or minimized. The album peaked at number 25 on the Billboard 200 chart. Although it was certified gold by the RIAA within three months of its release, the chart position seemed to indicate a downward trend in Joni's record sales.

Although John Guerin played drums on most of the tracks for 'Don Juan's Reckless Daughter', his romantic relationship with Joni had definitely concluded its final act sometime before the record's release. In an [interview published in The Washington Post in August of 1979](#) titled 'The New Joni Mitchell', Joni indicated that she had been living with Don Alias for the previous two years. In this interview she also said there was the possibility that the two musicians would get married and there was even speculation about the couple having children. Joni had entered into another relationship with a man with whom she was obviously deeply in love.

Joni's renewed interest in painting was perhaps responsible for a kind of pilgrimage she made sometime around the time of the release of 'Don Juan's Reckless Daughter'. Joni and a friend drove to New Mexico to meet the artist Georgia O'Keeffe. O'Keeffe had been painting the desert landscapes of northern New Mexico since 1929 and had been living there permanently since 1949. Joni greatly admired the artist's work, known for its exquisite use of color in depicting the expansive and endlessly varied landscapes of the southwestern American desert. O'Keeffe also created imaginative visions of large, precisely delineated, close-ups of flowers and animal bones suspended over her sweeping landscapes and expansive blue desert skies. In 1976 a finely executed coffee table book was published of prints of O'Keeffe's paintings accompanied by her commentary about them. Reproductions of the posters for The Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival that had featured O'Keeffe's artwork since 1972 had also begun to appear in bookstores and gift shops throughout the US. Joni was fascinated with O'Keeffe's paintings when she and her friend drove to New Mexico with the intention of finding Georgia's home. O'Keeffe was living in an old hacienda she had purchased in 1945 near Abiquiú, a small village about 50-60 miles northwest of Santa Fe. En route to this remote location, Joni and her friend stopped in Santa Fe and sat talking in a place that Joni said 'promised to be a jazz club'. There were people in the bar who apparently recognized Joni Mitchell and came up to the table to talk to her. Joni began to feel annoyed by the repeated interruptions of her quiet talk with her friend and during an exchange with one fan who said she 'had to' approach Joni, a conversation ensued. Joni understood the



Georgia O'Keeffe

girl's need to take advantage of an opportunity to make contact but felt that it would have been more appropriate for the girl to send a note or find another way to communicate her admiration rather than interrupt Joni's conversation with her friend. The incident set Joni's thought process about her own desire for privacy in motion and she began to get cold feet about invading the sanctuary of Georgia O'Keeffe's home since she had never met the reclusive painter. The two drove to Georgia's property and initially Joni slipped a package under the gate and was ready to leave. But her friend persuaded her to go up to the house. She walked around to the side of the house and saw O'Keeffe in her kitchen. "She looked at me, our eyes engaged from about forty feet, she tossed her head back and stormed out of the room. I knew exactly how she felt." There was an interesting coda to this incident. As Joni tells

it, "When I got home there was a copy of Art News with Georgia O'Keeffe on the cover. I opened it up and in the article, in enlarged print under a photograph was: 'Georgia, if you come back in another life, what would you come back as,' and without missing a beat it said, 'I would come back as a blonde with a high soprano voice that could sing clear notes without fear.' There it is, I thought, I didn't have to see her, there's something star-crossed about us." Although this journey to New Mexico was unsuccessful as a foray into O'Keeffe's private world, Joni eventually met the iconic artist and the two formed a tentative friendship. In a [2014 interview for Maclean's Online](#) Joni recalled her relationship with the great painter:

"She was a testy old bird. She reminded me of my grandmother. When I first visited her, I left her a book of my drawings. She didn't like that and threw her head back like, "Oh for God's sake" and left the room. Months later, I was reading an interview with Georgia and she was saying, "In another life, I would come back as a blond soprano who could sing high, clear notes without fear." I visited her many times afterwards. She confided in me, "I would have liked to have been a musician too but you can't do both." I said, "Oh yes you can," and she leaned in, like a little kid, and said, "Really?" They gave her a hard enough time as it was as a woman painter! She told me that the men said she couldn't paint New York City and she did anyway. "

In early 1978, Joni got word that Charles Mingus was trying to contact her to discuss a collaborative project that he had in mind. Charles Mingus is considered to have been one of the foremost bass players of the jazz world. An admirer of Duke Ellington in his youth, Mingus played trombone and cello in his childhood. But the world of classical music in the 1930s was not one that was likely to provide employment for a young man of color no matter how well he played. Mingus switched instruments from the cello to the double bass. In the 1930s he studied bass with Red Callender, a jazz bassist who went on to play with many of the premiere jazz artists of the 1940s and 50s. Later he studied for five years with Herman Reinshagen, principal bassist of the New York Philharmonic, and he learned compositional techniques from Lloyd Reese, a highly respected educator in jazz composition. Over the course of his impressive career he composed many critically acclaimed pieces of music, became a band leader and made his mark as an innovator and maverick who combined many different styles of jazz along with gospel music and modern classical music. Working with Charles Mingus meant more than using jazz musicians to flesh out the music that Joni Mitchell had been composing for pop and rock audiences up to this time. Mingus was straight up jazz and Joni's management did not want her moving into what they saw as this less than lucrative direction. That was the message management conveyed to Joni in an effort to discourage her from communicating with Mingus. However Mingus eventually succeeded in getting Joni on the telephone. He had been diagnosed with ALS, also known as Lou Gehrig's disease, in 1977. Aware that he was afflicted with a terminal illness, Mingus had sought spiritual advice from a friend who had suggested that he read T. S. Eliot's 'Four Quartets'. Eliot's poetry failed to connect with Mingus who turned to his wife, Sue Graham Mingus, to try and put the verse to him into plain spoken language. Charles wanted Joni to work with him on a project wherein Eliot's poetry would be read out loud in sections followed by Joni reciting a paraphrased, condensed version of the text while playing acoustic guitar. Joni read 'Four Quartets' and didn't feel that she was up to the task of translating Eliot's poetry into vernacular speech. She told Mingus she could more easily condense the

Bible than 'Four Quartets'. Mingus said he could dig it, he understood Joni's thinking, and the project was dropped. But apparently there was something about Joni Mitchell that had engaged Charles Mingus's interest. Perhaps it was one innovator's recognition of the maverick spirit of another. Mingus phoned Joni again and dangled some tantalizing bait in front of her. He told her he had composed six new melodies with the working titles Joni I, Joni II, Joni III, etc. In an [August 1979 review by John Rockwell in the Milwaukee Journal](#) of the record that became the end product of this collaboration between Joni Mitchell and Charles Mingus, Joni is quoted:

"Later I heard again he wanted to see me. He had written six melodies for me to set words to. By then Charles was paralyzed. He sang them into a tape recorder, and a piano-player friend of his fleshed them out into a voice piece of music. The tape presented to me was a piano with a metronome. It nearly drove me crazy, this tape. I took it out to the beach at Malibu and the second day I woke up in bed with my foot ticking back and forth under the covers, to the rhythm of this metronome."

Whatever her reaction may have been to the material on this tape, Joni was sufficiently intrigued to fly to New York to meet with Charles Mingus. In the [TimesTalks interview](#) done at Massey Hall for the Luminato Festival in June of 2013, Joni said that Sue Mingus remembers hearing her husband say 'You're that skinny ass folksinger' when Joni first walked through the door of the Mingus's apartment. Joni's memory is that Mingus's first words to her were 'The strings on "Paprika Plains" are out of tune'. Joni had noticed this when she first listened to the finished recording. The track had been pieced together and the various sections recorded at different times. Consequently, the section of the piece that was set to lyrics and the coda that was recorded later were played at different times on pianos that had not been tuned to match the tuning of the orchestration. Mike Gibbs' orchestral arrangements had been recorded at another time and place as accompaniment to the piano interlude that Joni and Henry Lewy had spliced together to form the inspirational kernel that the piece had germinated from. The tunings of piano and orchestra were in and out of sync across the different movements of 'Paprika Plains'. When Joni had brought this to Mike Gibbs' attention, her observation was pretty much dismissed as a figment of her imagination. Charles Mingus, however, had the same finely calibrated sense of intonation that Joni had and was able to hear what she did. A bond began to form between the two musicians and some time after their meeting, work began on Joni's first major collaborative effort with another artist. She was about to commit herself to a project that would push her into the world of pure jazz and become a watershed in her musical journey.

Her illness derailed Joni from touring as well as any kind of public performance during all of 1977. She didn't appear onstage again until July of 1978 when she performed with Crosby, Stills and Nash at Madison Square Garden, providing an additional vocal to the harmonies of the group's encore. In September, along with jazz pianist Herbie Hancock, she took the stage of the Greek Theater in Berkeley, California for the annual Labor Day weekend [Bread and Roses](#) Festival of Music. Folksinger Mimi Farina founded the Bread and Roses organization in 1974 to provide, according to the organization's mission statement, "free, live, quality entertainment to people who live in institutions or are otherwise isolated from society". According to BAM (Bay Area Music), this was the first public pairing of Joni Mitchell and Herbie Hancock. During the Saturday night lineup, Joni accompanied herself solo on acoustic guitar to

perform 'Furry Sings the Blues' followed by her a cappella debut of a song from her upcoming collaboration with Charles Mingus titled 'The Dry Cleaner from Des Moines'. Herbie then accompanied Joni, playing acoustic piano for another song that Joni and Mingus had created together, 'Chair in the Sky'. As an introduction to 'The Wolf That Lives in Lindsey', Joni told a brief version of how she obtained a tape of wolves howling that would eventually be used in the recording of the song. A recording of these performances has been posted on [YouTube](#) on which Joni can be heard howling at the beginning of the song while she tunes her guitar and the barely audible tape seems to be playing behind her. The sound of the recording of the wolves becomes more evident as she sings the lyric 'the cops don't seem to care for derelicts or ladies of the night'. The BAM article says 'The Circle Game' was the second encore of the Sunday performance. It was performed with a grouping of 'out of tune voices' joining in the choruses which, according to BAM, consisted of the Persuasions, Tim Hardin, Tom Paxton and Odetta, and what sounds like a recorder being played along with Joni's guitar and Herbie's piano. BAM also stated that Joni performed 'Coyote' and another Mingus collaboration, 'Goodbye Pork Pie Hat' on Saturday night but these songs are not included in the recording on YouTube. Joni's rendition of 'Furry Sings the Blues' comes off as the strongest song of the set. She seems less confident singing 'The Dry Cleaner From Des Moines', fumbling a lyric in one spot and having some issues with pitch although it must be said that, given the tempo and the twists and turns of Mingus's melody, it was a gutsy choice to perform the song a cappella. There are also signs that she was not entirely comfortable with the other two songs that would appear on the upcoming Mingus collaboration. BAM reported that Herbie and Joni were added to the Sunday night performances as an unsuccessful attempt to boost ticket sales for the event. According to a comment added by an attendee at this concert on the Chronology of Appearances section of [JoniMitchell.com](#), Joni appeared "dressed in military tight kaki pants and coat, with a military cap on and her hair pushed up underneath, and dark sunglasses". Photographs from that evening's performance bear this observation out, showing Joni lending her voice to performances by both Hoyt Axton and Odetta.



On March 28th of 1979, an equipment malfunction and resulting false readings of coolant levels at the [Three Mile Island Nuclear Generating Station](#), a nuclear power plant in Dauphin County, Pennsylvania caused damage to the core of one of the plant's nuclear reactors. This caused an exposure of the reactor's core and resulted in the melting of the cladding or protective covering of the fuel rod and damage to the fuel pellets inside the fuel rod. Enormous amounts of radioactively contaminated coolant were released into the plant's containment station causing high levels of radioactivity in the containment facility. A potential explosion that would have released large scale amounts of radioactive material was averted and the Environmental Protection Agency later confirmed that no potentially harmful radioactive contamination had occurred outside of the facility.

This incident prompted widespread anxiety in the United States and increased awareness of the potential threats posed by the use of nuclear energy and the containment of the radioactive waste that nuclear reactors produce. On May 6, 1979, Joni Mitchell joined forces with two of her former lovers, Graham Nash and Jackson Browne in Washington D.C. in what may have been the first of the many anti-nuclear demonstrations that would follow. The event, sponsored by what was called the May 6 Coalition, featured musical performances and speeches from a roster that included Jane Fonda, John Hall, Dan Fogelberg, John Sebastian and Jerry Brown who was Governor of the state of California at that time. Police estimates gave a figure of 65-70,000 people in attendance although event organizers put the number at closer to 125,000. Joni performed 'The Circle Game', 'Woodstock' and 'Big Yellow Taxi'. An article about the rally published in the Los Angeles Times has a quote from Joni concerning a song that Jackson Browne performed, 'The Crow on the Cradle:'

“'The Crow on the Cradle,' she points out, naming the song sung at the afternoon's rally, "comes from the ban the bomb movement. Since that time, I think that everybody, either consciously or subconsciously, has been disturbed about potential destruction...”

It is interesting to note that 'The Crow on the Cradle' was a song that Joni herself had performed in her early 1960s coffee house sets. In her 2009 book ['Will You Take Me As I Am? Joni Mitchell's Blue Period'](#), music critic and author Michelle Mercer wrote “In a rare recording of Joni performing....at Toronto's Half Beat Club in October of 1964...she covers....a version of [Sydney Carter's](#) 'Crow On The Cradle'...” In October of 1964, Joni was four to five months pregnant with the daughter she would later give up for adoption which gives an underlying poignancy to the performance of Sydney Carter's macabre lyrics:

The sheep's in the meadow, the cow's in the corn,
Now is the time for a child to be born.
He'll laugh at the moon and he'll cry for the sun,
And if he's a boy he will carry a gun,
Sang the crow on the cradle.

And if it should be that this baby's a girl,
O never you mind if her hair doesn't curl.
With rings on her fingers and bells on her toes,
And a bomber above her wherever she goes,
Sang the crow on the cradle.

The crow on the cradle, the black and the white,
O somebody's baby is born for a fight.
The crow on the cradle, the white and the black,
O somebody's baby is not coming back,
Sang the crow on the cradle.

Your mother and father, they'll sweat and they'll save;
To build you a coffin and dig you a grave.
Hushabye, little one, never you weep?

For we've got a toy that will put you to sleep,
Sang the crow on the cradle.

Bring me a gun and I'll shoot that bird dead,
That's what your mother and father once said.
The crow on the cradle, what shall we do?
This is the thing that I leave up to you.

Sang the crow on the cradle

[Circus Weekly's June 12, 1979 article](#) about the event says that Joni “updated her 'parking lot' lyrics of one tune to sing: 'They paved Paradise and put up a nuclear hot-spot.’”

Material from Joni's upcoming release was also showcased at the May 27th Berkley Jazz Festival at the Greek Theater in Berkley, California. She was a featured performer along with Jaco Pastorius, Don Alias, Herbie Hancock and Tony Williams in a special tribute to Charles Mingus. The [Chronology of Appearances](#) on JoniMitchell.com has a commentary posted by an attendee of this festival that gives the set list as follows:

- 1 Coyote
- 2 Goodbye Pork Pie Hat
- 3 God Must Be a Boogie Man
- 4 Chair in the Sky
- 5 Black Crow
- 6 Dry Cleaner from Des Moines
- 7 Woodstock
- 8 Twisted

There are also links in the Chronology to recordings of the performances of ['Black Crow'](#), ['The Dry Cleaner From Des Moines'](#), ['God Must Be a Boogie Man'](#) and ['Twisted'](#). Judging from these three recordings, this was a tight, polished set. Joni's increased familiarity with the song coupled with the excellence of the musicians that backed her here contributed to a nearly flawless performance of 'The Dry Cleaner From Des Moines.' Her comfort level and confidence had come a long way from the 1978 Bread and Roses a cappella rendition of the song.

Work with Charles Mingus had progressed well and the two musicians developed an amiable working relationship. Joni has described this period of collaborative creation as one with a steep learning curve which had to be accelerated because of the rapid decline in Mingus's health. In an interview Joni did with [Cameron Crowe for Rolling Stone in July of 1979](#), she described one scenario that illustrates the challenging nature of what she had taken on and also the mischievous side of Charles Mingus's personality:

“Charles put on this one record, and just before he played it, he said, “Now this song has five melodies going all at once.” I said, “Yeah, I bet you want me to write five different sets of words for each one of the melodies, right?” And he grinned and said, “Right.” He put on the record, and it was the fastest, smokingest thing you ever heard, with all these melodies going on together.”

Piecing this record together and shaping it into a work that would be a testament to the genius of Charles Mingus and would also bear the evidence of an equally important contribution from Joni Mitchell was turning into a race with the rapidly diminishing grains of sand that were inexorably seeping through the hourglass of Charles Mingus's life. In a [1979 interview with Leonard Feather](#) for the Los Angeles Times, Joni gave a description of trying to finish the process before the inevitable end of Charles's life:

“Then, because he had become very seriously ill, he and his wife Sue went to Mexico, to a faith healer, and during that time I spent 10 days with them. At that point his speech had deteriorated severely. Every night he would say to me, ‘I want to talk to you about the music,’ and every day it would be too difficult. So some of what he had to tell me remained a mystery.”

As a side note, it was on the return trip from this sojourn in Mexico that Joni stopped in Abiquiú New Mexico and finally made the acquaintance of Georgia O’Keeffe.

Another difficulty in making the record was that, in spite of the fact that Mingus is considered to be a great innovator, he was also a die-hard purist when it came to using acoustic instruments in the creation of classical jazz. Because of his stature, Joni was able to record finished takes of some of the songs that she and Mingus created using a roster of A-list jazz musicians. Various reviewers of the finished album pointed out the list of musicians that Joni thanked in the liner notes who did not play on the tracks that were released. Apparently there were at least three different versions of the Mingus songs that were recorded. The first ensemble of musicians included jazz heavy hitters such as Eddie Gomez, a double bass player who had worked with legendary players such as Miles Davis, Dizzy Gillespie and John Coltrane, baritone saxophonist Gerry Mulligan who had played with the likes of Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Dave Brubeck and two of Joni's idols, Annie Ross and Billie Holiday and Dannie Richmond, a drummer who was a regular in the various bands that Charles Mingus had put together over the years. There is little doubt that there was some phenomenal jazz created during these recording sessions and Joni's fans have waited years for a box set that would include the music from the unused Mingus tapes. But Joni was not satisfied with the traditional, retro style of the music, a style in which the players viewed vocalists as ornamental and superfluous. The drummer Tony Williams, another musician who had worked with Miles Davis and who was considered a pioneer of jazz fusion played in another ensemble that produced a second round of sessions along with electric guitarist ‘Mahavishnu’ John McLaughlin, another fusion player who combined jazz with rock, Indian classical music and western classical music, Stanley Clark, electric and double bass player and another member of The Mahavishnu Orchestra, and keyboard player Jan Hammer. But Joni has said that Tony Williams was in a bad space at the time and couldn't seem to come out of himself to give the sessions the energy they needed and once again she was not satisfied with the outcome. When she discussed the difficulties she was encountering with Jaco Pastorius he asked her why she was wasting time with music that was not as

progressive as her own. Hearing this from Jaco, Joni was delighted to find out that he considered her work progressive. A concept was formulated for the record that would incorporate the vocal as another instrument woven into the musical whole. Going against Mingus's aversion to electric instruments, the two put together an ensemble that included keyboardist Herbie Hancock who had played with The Miles Davis Quintet and played electric piano on the 'Mingus' recordings, drummer Peter Erskine, who played with Weather Report, Wayne Shorter on soprano sax, Don Alias on congas and percussionist Emil Richards who had played with a variety of diverse artists including Charles Mingus, Frank Sinatra, Judy Garland, Sarah Vaughan and Frank Zappa. Joni played guitar while Jaco took over as bassist and provided a horn arrangement for 'The Dry Cleaner from Des Moines'.

The end product of this process of experimentation and exploration contains only three songs that are based on the six melodies that Charles Mingus composed to be completed by the addition of Joni Mitchell's lyrics. Joni's vocalese version of Mingus's 'Goodbye Pork Pie Hat' is also included. The rest of the album '[Mingus](#)', Joni Mitchell's tenth studio album released in June of 1979, is comprised of two songs that Joni composed and wrote. 'God Must Be a Boogie Man' is based on the first four pages of Mingus's autobiographical book '[Beneath the Underdog](#)'. It paraphrases Charles's literary rendition of a conversation with his psychiatrist as he explains two sides of his personality, seemingly always at odds with one another, and a third that Joni's lyric describes as "waiting to show what he sees to the other two". This was the last song to be added to the lineup and the liner notes state that it was the only song from the album that Mingus did not get to hear. Charles Mingus's time on this planet came to an end on January 5th of 1979 at the age of 56 and, per Joni's notes, "That same day 56 sperm whales beached themselves on the Mexican coastline and were removed by fire." The other song is a Joni Mitchell original titled 'The Wolf That Lives in Lindsey'. Joni and Don Alias had worked out a complex, spontaneous, duet between her guitar and his congas with numerous rhythmic shifts. The result is an eerie, atmospheric setting for the lyric about a sinister character who 'loved the ways of darkness beyond belief'. When the basic track had been recorded, Joni told her recording engineer, Henry Lewy, that it needed water gongs and the sound of wolves howling to enhance the mood of chilling menace that had been created. The song was recorded the week before Joni was set to appear at the Bread and Roses festival. She also had company coming from both Texas and Canada and ended up moving them all up to the Bay area for the weekend. In the meantime, Henry Lewy's assignment was to search through the A&M Records library for a sound effects recording of wolves howling. Joni had made arrangements to meet up with an old friend, folksinger Tim Hardin, at her hotel in San Francisco and left a dinner with the entourage of people that she had brought with her to meet up with Tim. While trying to get a reluctant hotel clerk to give her Tim's room, a drunken man singing 'Why Do Fools Fall in Love' caught her attention from across the hotel lobby. She was drawn to him and the couple were joined by two other men who turned out to be members of the a cappella vocal group, [The Persuasions](#). The ensemble entertained the lobby with a spontaneous rendition of 'Why Do Fools Fall in Love?' It turned out that Tim Hardin was in the hotel bar and after meeting him there, Joni and Tim discovered that there was a party happening on the third floor of the hotel. The pair headed up and, after joining in the festivities, Joni encountered the inebriated singing man from the lobby again. For no apparent reason this man told her that he had a tape of some wolves. In fact this man had a whole box of tapes of African animal sounds. The last tape in the box was a tape of wolves. According to Joni:

“...the thing was looped about four times. Well, the first time I did "The Wolf That Lives In Lindsay," I just hit the button right at the beginning, picked up the guitar, and uncannily, it was the perfect key. The way the loop was designed, if you started it at the top of the tape and went all the way to the end, it fit the structure perfectly.”



Sue Graham Mingus and Charles Mingus

The six tracks that make up the whole of 'Mingus' are interspersed with recordings of Charles Mingus in conversation with other musicians and friends, generously provided for Joni's inclusion on the album by Charles's wife, Sue Graham-Mingus. Joni chose these snippets of repartee to “...add a pertinent resonance. They preserve fragments of a large and colorful soul. “

The first sounds heard on the 'Mingus' album are a single piano chord followed by voices saying 'Ready?' 'Alright!'. The piano proceeds to accompany a mixture of voices singing 'Happy Birthday to You'. The album cover of the vinyl LP has the spoken words printed for all of the 'Raps' that are shown in the record's track list to identify the recordings of Mingus's voice that are inserted between the musical tracks. At the time the album was recorded the word rap had a different connotation with regard to spoken language than it does now. Rapping meant free flowing conversation between intimates in the 1970s as opposed to the solo recitation of rhythmic poetry that it denotes now. A woman's voice, identified as 'Sue', Charles Mingus's wife, is insisting that the piano player 'play that weird minor chord'. Mingus is obviously playing the piano as he leads the vocal into the second verse 'How old are you you?' and gives the in-your-face answer 'Fifty-four mother fucker'. As the group laughs, Sue Graham Mingus, ignoring her husband's raucous humor, corrects him saying 'Fifty-three, Charles' and insists that Mingus has added a year to his age while making his jibe. After Sue's final 'He's fifty-three' there is a pause and then the sound of Joni picking four notes in repetition on acoustic guitar. She then plays a series of abbreviated chords with some picking between them as Jaco's bass comes in, punctuating and playing under her. Jaco plays a few notes of the song's chorus and after a bit of Joni's picking hits two deep notes that almost sound like semi-trailer truck horns and then Joni begins to sing 'God Must Be A Boogie Man'. The poetic distillation of Mingus's writing describes the seemingly incongruous parts of his personality as Joni's guitar and Jaco's bass alternate and intertwine with one another. 'One's so sweet so overly loving and gentle, he lets people into his innermost sacred temple/Blind faith to care, blind rage to kill'. In a review of the album published in the Chicago Tribune on August 26, 1979, Joni is quoted, "Mingus was a nice guy who was so nice that he was violent. It sounds contradictory, but it's really true. He was so sweet natured that the hurt ... Well, a lot of times what the world gave him in return for what he had to offer wasn't a fair trade." Mingus was known to have a violent temper that could erupt at any time, even during performances. He played as a

substitute bassist for a short time in the 1950s in his childhood idol, Duke Ellington's band and is known to be one of the few musicians that Ellington fired after an onstage fight broke out between Mingus and another musician. Each verse of the song concludes that this contradiction in the 'divine plan' can only mean that 'God must be a boogie man!'. After Joni sings that phrase, it is repeated by what Rolling Stone described as "the kind of raucous chorus (of voices) Mingus himself used". Throughout the song, Jaco's bass wraps itself around and compliments Joni's vocal. The second of the recorded conversations follows 'God Must Be A Boogie Man', this time between Mingus and his friend Swede as they discuss what kind of funeral will follow Mingus's death. Swede insists that Mingus will 'get a big funeral in this country – and they'll play your music for two days.' Mingus, on the other hand is adamant that he will be buried in India by the [Vedanta Society](#), a denomination of the Hindu religion. According to Sue Graham Mingus, "He believed in reincarnation. And he was fond of the Hindu religion, because it accepted all religions. It was not intolerant. It accepted Hindu, Buddhists, Jews, Christians, everybody. He liked its openness." Mingus taunts Swede, saying 'You want me to hurry up man!' which Swede denies. Finally Mingus concludes that Duke Ellington lived to be seventy-seven years old and boasts that 'I'm going to cut Duke!' The next song, set to a melody that Mingus told Joni is about 'the things I'm gonna miss', is titled 'A Chair in the Sky'. It is a moody, reflective piece that begins with a brief, tender solo from Herbie Hancock on the upper end of his keyboard. Jaco comes in underneath him while Wayne Shorter plays embellishments and Peter Erskine plays subtle accents on snare drum and cymbal. As Joni comes in, singing about how 'the rain slammed hard as bars', catching Charles 'by surprise', the instruments improvise and play around her vocal line rather than produce an underlying accompaniment. The line that follows, 'Mutts of the planet' is perhaps a reference to Mingus's genetic heritage. His ancestry included German American, African American, Native American, Chinese and British forebears. Joni's lyric has Mingus 'waiting for the keeper to release me/debating this sentence/biding my time/in memories /of old friends of mine'. He recalls 'things I wish I'd done/some friends I'm gonna miss /beautiful lovers/I never got the chance to kiss' and indulges in 'daydreams of rebirth' where he sees his 'soul on fire/raking in what I'm worth'. But in the meantime, he is confined to a wheelchair, looking out at New York City:

But now Manhattan holds me
To a chair in the sky
With the bird in my ears
And boats in my eyes
Going by

Although Joni Mitchell's earlier work displays melodies that are distinctive and contain choices of movement that surprise the listener's ears, this melody is clearly from a different musical idiom altogether with tonal progressions that are markedly different from hers. Her voice beautifully navigates its way through, perfectly pitched to make every leap and round every curve this melodic line takes. She scats between the verses and succeeds in becoming another instrument in the ensemble rather than the out front 'chirp' that jazz musicians have been known to dislike. The ensemble builds to crescendos under the choruses and after the last of these, plays a ride-out that Joni scats along with, ending on a high note. There is no spoken recording between 'A Chair in the Sky' and the final track of

the first side of the 'Mingus' vinyl LP. 'The Wolf That Lives in Lindsey' begins with a faint, eerie sound that could be the far off sound of a lone wolf. This is followed by two acoustic guitar chords with light, rapid tapping on the congas between them and then the recognizable sound of a wolf howling. Joni plays abrupt, low-pitched notes followed by alternating low and high notes that are plucked with a sharp, stinging intensity. There is no mention in the album's credits of the water gong. However, in a later compilation of recordings that includes 'The Wolf That Lives in Lindsey', Emil Richards, who is credited with 'Percussion' in the 'Mingus' album credits, is listed as playing water gongs on the track. A water gong is "a tam-tam or gong that, upon being struck, should be immediately immersed in water halfway down. The water causes the pitch to slide down and create a glissando effect". That is the description given in 'Encyclopedia of Percussion' a book edited by John Beck, Professor Emeritus at the Eastman School of Music and described as 'an extensive guide to percussion organized for research as well as general knowledge'. Beck's encyclopedia also lists Emil Richards as the inventor of the water chimes which Beck describes as similar to the water gong. The sound of these gongs with the eerie effect of their downwardly sliding pitch is scattered throughout 'The Wolf That Lives In Lindsey'. Don Alias's congas answer Joni's guitar as they engage in a back and forth exchange with short segments of the sound of howling wolves woven into the mix. Joni's vocal begins with the ominous lines 'Of the darkness in men's minds/what can you say/that wasn't marked by history/or the TV news today'. 'He gets away with murder' she says of the title character, Lindsey, and later describes him as someone who 'loved the ways of darkness beyond belief'. Melody Maker's review of the 'Mingus' album makes the call that Lindsey is a pimp and states that Mingus worked as a pimp from time to time. Although Mingus did write about having been a pimp for a period of time in his life in 'Beneath The Underdog', the book contains what seem like blatant exaggerations about his sexual exploits and it has never been confirmed that he ever actually was a pimp. Lindsey 'raids and runs/through the hills of Hollywood/and the downtown slums' while 'the blizzards come and go/the stab and glare and buckshot/of the heavy, heavy snow', possibly a drug reference or a description of the onset of Lindsey's psychotic episodes, striking out of the darkness and into the glare of city lights to stab or shoot. Part of the lyric suggests that Lindsey may be a Jack the Ripper type of predatory killer, who picks his prey from 'derelicts or ladies of the night' that 'the cops don't seem to care for' and regard as 'weeds for yanking out of sight'. Joni's lyric implies a sense of Karma in store for Lindsey, even if he does manage to evade capture and punishment for his crimes:

If you're smart or rich or lucky
Maybe you'll beat the laws of man
But the inner laws of spirit
And the outer laws of nature
No man can
No, no man can

Joni's voice hits a high note as she sings the end of the last chorus 'the stab and glare and buckshot of the heavy, heavy snow', reaching into her upper register again with 'it come and goes' and falling off with one last repetition of 'it comes and goes'. The vocal is followed by vigorous strumming of the lower strings of Joni's guitar that gains momentum with intervals of sharply plucked, stabbing high notes

interjected that emulate 'the stab and glare and buckshot of the heavy, heavy snow' as they erupt out of the turbulent disturbances in Lindsey's mind which are evoked by the rumbling low notes. Finally the instrumentation comes to an end and the chilling sound of the wolves howling finishes out the track.

He is three. The first one has the clarity of mind to describe the other two and hold up a mirror to both of them. The second, now mellowed by a debilitating illness, gently and lovingly recalls missing friends and lovers and also thinks about others, still present in his life, that he will miss. He imagines an afterlife where he will be justly compensated for what he has to offer. Possibly the last persona is assigned a character with a different name and fictional circumstances because Joni intuited that Mingus would not want the world to see him as a man with a violent nature that is capable of manifesting a "blind rage to kill". It is more likely that the sequencing of the songs has nothing to do with this speculative observation.

The second side of the original 'Mingus' LP begins with a brief recording of Joni and Charles Mingus in a playful mood singing what is shown on the track listing as "I's A Muggin'". This short 'rap' consists of that single phrase, "I's a muggin'", sung twice, each time followed by some scat-like vocalizations and ends with a final repetition of "I's a muggin'". The excerpt is very short, but this seems to be Joni and Charles having a bit of fun with swing era jazz violinist Stuff Smith's song "[I'se A Muggin'](#)". Stuff Smith and His Onyx Club Boys recorded the song in 1936 and [Django Reinhardt](#) also recorded a version the same year that featured Stephane Grapelli on violin. According to '[Cab Calloway's Hepster's Dictionary: Language of Jive](#)', first published by the flamboyant band leader in 1939, in the parlance of 'jive talk', which developed in the 1930s and 40s world of jazz and swing music, the word "muggin'" means "making 'em laugh, putting on the jive." In this instance, the muggin' succeeds as Joni is heard laughing followed by the sounds of the electric piano as Herbie plays the intro to 'Sweet Sucker Dance'. He plays under Joni as she begins a slow, carefully phrased vocal about doubt creeping into a love relationship.

I almost closed the door
Canceled on everything we'd opened up for
Tonight the shadows had their say
Their sad notions of the way
Things really are

Jaco comes in under Herbie and Joni's musical duet and Joni concludes the song's intro with a kind of denial of the pitfalls of romantic love.

Damn these blues!
They'd turn my heart against you
Since I was fool enough
To find romance
I'm trying to convince myself
This is just a dance

The music settles into an easy, slow dance rhythm as Wayne Shorter comes in with some sustained notes from his sax and Peter Erskine's drums set the relaxed pace. Joni's words call up the dance metaphor.

We move in measures
Through love's changing paces
Needy and nonchalant
Greedy and gracious
Through petty dismissals
And grand embraces
Like it was only a dance

Once again she is seeing the up and down sides of love relationships, knowing the need for them but questioning the cost.

Love
We can't live without it
Why do we go out and get it
Just to turn around and doubt it
Like we're scared to care
It's hard to talk about it
Aw it's only a dance
Tonight the shadows had their say
There's a sucker born a day
I heard them say
Born to lose
Am I a sucker to love you?

She seems to have an underlying positive feeling as she sings:

Time passes gracefully
Living can be such a pleasure
You make it easy to take it in measures
Like it was only a dance

Finally she concludes that the paces love puts its dancers through leave some kind of imprint that can nourish or wound. But the dance, or at least, the pretense of the dance goes on:

We are survivors
Some get broken
Some get mended
Some can't surrender
They're too well defended
Some get lucky

Some are blessed
And some pretend
It's only a dance!

Of all the tracks on the Mingus album, 'Sweet Sucker Dance' seems to be the most successful at creating the ensemble relationship of the singer as one of the players that Joni and the musicians were aiming for. Joni's vocal blends into the mix and often can be heard as an instrument, playing notes that complete the chords and structures played by her fellow musicians. She quietly scats, her voice free and comfortable, between some of the verses. Joni sings the final words of the song and Jaco's bass sets up a rhythmic pattern as Wayne Shorter's sax plays sustained notes, Peter Erskine adds his drum licks and Herbie Hancock plays rippling piano notes to finish out the dance. There is a brief rap before the next song which is a recording of Charles Mingus saying that he has been fortunate in his life, always having 'had some dollars in my pocket' even though he was evicted from at least one apartment in New York City for non-payment of rent in 1966 as shown in a 1968 documentary film called 'Mingus: Charlie Mingus 1968'. The rap is followed by some rapid notes on Jaco's bass followed by a brief burst of brass as Joni begins to sing the opening lyrics of 'The Dry Cleaner From Des Moines'. Jaco and Peter Erskine set up the closest thing to a traditional jazz rhythm section heard on the record as Joni sings the first verse about a 'cat from Des Moines' who 'said he ran a cleaning plant' and is having an unprecedented lucky streak on the Las Vegas Strip. The song is uptempo with a melody that seems to jump around all over the musical scale and some rhythmic phrases that require rapid-fire lyrical constructions. Joni laments that she is 'down to a roll of dimes' while the dry cleaner keeps 'ringing bells, nothing to it', racking up 'three oranges, three cherries, three lemons, three plums' on the fickle one-armed bandits. He is 'Midas in a polyester suit' and 'it's all luck, it's just luck' that allows the player to 'make a little money'. Wayne Shorter intones a few notes on his soprano sax with the horn section punctuating the interlude between the first and second verses. The second verse has Jaco and Peter again, playing under Joni's vocal as she follows the seemingly invincible dry cleaner down the strip to the Circus Circus casino where he garners 'Dinos and Pooh Bears and lions pink and blue there'. Joni scats a bit and repeats the mantra 'It's all luck, it's just luck'. The horn section begins to assert itself as Joni heads into the third verse, describing how the cat from Des Moines was 'raking off the tables, ringing the bandits bells' while she 'lost every dime I layed on the line/ But the cleaner from Des Moines could put a coin in the door of a john and get twenty for one.' There follows an extended rideout with Wayne's playing threading it's way through the increasingly aggressive big band be-bop horn arrangement that Jaco created for the song as Jaco and Peter Eskine are keeping up the rhythmic foundation. Joni sings 'Lucky, lucky, so lucky, really lucky' and then the band seems to be singing in unison with the horns the repeated phrase 'that cat's got luck'. Joni interjects the word 'lucky', sung up in the top end of her register, repeating it at various placements and levels in the mix. After the last 'lucky', Jaco's bass climbs up an ascending series of notes leading to one final flourish from the horn section.

There is one more brief rap before the last song of the 'Mingus' album. Charles Mingus speaks in an offhand way, saying he was lucky in his life and was blessed by God. The rap is followed by some tapping and brushing cymbal riffs from Peter Eskine before Jaco and Wayne begin an exchange of brief phrasings that kick off the introduction to 'Goodbye Port Pie Hat'.

'Goodbye Pork Pie Hat' is the one Mingus title on this record that he had not composed specifically for Joni Mitchell. The piece first appeared on the Charles Mingus album ['Mingus Ah Um'](#) in 1959. The theme that became the melody Joni created lyrics for was played by alto saxophonist, John Handy and and tenor saxophonist, Booker Ervin. Except for a solo break, the two musicians play in unison on the recording with a short section in the last movement of the piece where they play the same notes but an octave apart. There is minimal instrumentation under this theme from Mingus on bass, Horace Parton on piano and Dannie Richmond playing drums. Mingus composed 'Goodbye Pork Pie Hat' as a tribute to [Lester Young](#) who had died two months before the track was recorded. Young was known for wearing the type of short, wide brimmed 'pork pie' hat that the title refers to. Lester Young is considered to be one of the most influential players among the many great jazz musicians who took up the tenor sax. He developed a light, lyrical style in an era when most jazz saxophonists were playing in big, full tones that complimented the boisterous music popular during the Swing Era. His playing was considered to be uncool at first and he was even fired from Fletcher Henderson's band in 1934 after he was hired to replace Coleman Hawkins who was known for his big, full-bodied sound. Eventually, however, Lester became recognized as a great innovator and he is cited as an influence for a wide variety of renowned tenor saxophone players including Gerry Mulligan, Charlie Parker and John Coltrane. As a young man he toured with his family's band on the Vaudeville circuit. But the dates that the African American Young family played in the American south brought Lester face to face with racial bigotry and segregation and in 1927, having had his fill of the blatant racism the Young family was made to endure in the South, he refused to tour with them again. He played with a couple of iterations of Walter Page's Blue Devils in the early 1930s. A [biography of Lester by Lewis Porter](#) published in 1985, relates a story from 1933 when Lester was playing in West Virginia with The Thirteen Original Blue Devils. Black musicians did not fare well playing bookings in southern states and the band was reduced to living on credit by the time they reached the town of Beckley, West Virginia, where they had been promised a steady job in a white night club with a fixed salary. But when they arrived at the gig, the Blue Devils discovered they would be playing for a percentage of the house receipts which amounted to next to nothing. The musicians rode taxis on credit to the club every night but when they couldn't pay up, the cab company had their instruments impounded. The Beckley police released the instruments each night to enable the players to try and work off their debt and then they were returned to the police after each performance. Finally the band was thrown out of their hotel and, according to Lester, escorted to the place where the hobos hopped the freight trains and told to leave town. Before his short-lived gig with Fletcher Henderson, Young worked with Count Basie's band and rejoined them in 1936. It was during this time that Lester made a group of recordings with pianist Teddy Wilson and the great jazz vocalist, Billie Holiday. Lester's playing was the perfect compliment to Billie's voice and vocal style. These small group recordings have been



Lester Young - How to Make a Pork Pie Hat

become legendary in the history of recorded music . The combination of Teddy Wilson's deft piano work and Lester's light but soulful playing that perfectly wraps itself around the exquisite vocals of the legendary Billie Holiday make each two to three minute recording a small work of musical art. It is said that Lester was the first to call Billie by the name Lady and that she gave him the title of President of Tenor Sax Players, shortened to 'Pres'. The two shared a unique musical relationship and were very close friends but they were never romantically involved. Lewis Porter's book gives accounts of two Caucasian women that Lester was married to during his lifetime. In 1930 he married a white Jewish woman named Bess Cooper. Lester and Bess had a daughter named Beverly but Bess died sometime not long after Beverly was born. By 1937, Lester had a second wife, an Italian American woman named Mary. Lester and Mary moved into the Woodside Hotel in Harlem around this time where many members of the Basie band lived. Lester was inducted into the army in 1944. Most white musicians that were drafted into the military during WWII were put into band units but Lester was put into the regular army where he was not allowed to play the saxophone. He was based in Ft. McClellan, Alabama where marijuana and barbiturates were allegedly found in his possession. It has also been rumored but unsubstantiated that a photo of his white wife, Mary, was found among his possessions which would not have helped his case in the deep southern state of Alabama. He faced a court-martial and did not dispute the charges. Lester spent nearly a year in a detention barracks, which must have been a harrowing experience for him, and was dishonorably discharged in December of 1945. Although Lester Young enjoyed considerable success in his career after the war, the whole experience of the court-martial seems to have damaged him emotionally and he became increasingly dependent on alcohol. He was known as an odd, very shy, character, who spoke a kind of lingo that he apparently invented for himself that few outside of his circle could fully comprehend. Suffering from liver disease and malnutrition, Lester Young died on March 15, 1959. The 'Mingus Ah Um' tracks were recorded in May of 1959. As a side note, Billie Holiday followed closely on Lester's heels, dying of pulmonary edema and heart failure caused by cirrhosis of the liver on July 17th of 1959.

'Goodbye Pork Pie Hat' was Joni's first and, to date, only attempt at vocalese. As opposed to writing lyrics to melodies that had been specifically composed by Charles Mingus for that purpose, Joni would be setting lyrics to an instrumental work of classic jazz that was already well-known and revered. Mingus recorded 'Goodbye Pork Pie Hat' more than once, calling it 'Theme for Lester Young' on his ['Mingus Mingus Mingus Mingus Mingus'](#) LP that was recorded in 1963. Yet another version had been recorded as late as 1977 on Charles Mingus's album ['Three or Four Shades of Blue'](#). In 1986 [Joni was interviewed by author Joe Smith](#) for a book he was writing, 'Off The Record: An Oral History of Popular Music'. In that interview she told Smith that Mingus played several versions of 'Goodbye Pork Pie Hat' for her and asked her to pick the one she liked best. According to Joni, Mingus played a version of the piece for which one of Joni's 'teenage heroes', Jon Hendricks, who is also one of the best vocalese lyricists in jazz, had written lyrics. She said Mingus watched for her reaction while she listened and then said 'It's awful, isn't it? It's awful'. Joni said the lyrics were surprisingly disappointing . She described them as maudlin and that they portrayed Lester as a victim, "the poor black guy on the chittlin's circuit". Unfortunately, an internet search failed to bring up these lyrics by Jon Hendricks that Joni alluded to in this interview. Eventually she chose a version of the piece that had some triple tonguing and particularly rapid melodic twists in the solo section and then said to Mingus

"Well, I like this one the best but I suppose you want me to set lyrics to this section, too." He says, "Yeah."

She went on to elaborate on the dilemma this presented for her:

'Well, it's humanly impossible, you know. So not only was it hard to - it was hard to memorize that melody. It was like an aria. It was very complex, that solo. And then to parquer it - and the way I am about it, I'm a stickler for the word being married to the melody without messing with English inflection. So if a word has a certain emphasis on a certain syllable, the melody has to, too. So between the difficulty of the melody to begin with and this standard to my craft, it was a nightmare, this thing.'

Mingus had told Joni dozens of stories about Lester Young but she didn't feel that she could write a purely historical lyric and make it feel authentic. She solved the problem by starting her narrative with Mingus's view : 'When Charlie speaks of Lester you know someone great has gone'. This placed Charles Mingus and Joni herself in the context of the lyrics. She gives a few of the details of Lester's life that Mingus had passed on to her, including the lines 'When Lester took him a wife, arm in arm went black and white, and some saw red, and drove them from their hotel bed'. This was another piece of the story behind this song that I could not find a specific reference for after searching through available material from a couple of different biographies of Lester Young. There were references to two different wives that were both white but I couldn't find any description of either couple having been evicted from a hotel because of their interracial marriage although, given the extreme racial prejudice in the U.S. during the time period that Lester Young's life encompassed, the story is more than likely true. Joni herself was involved with the black percussionist Don Alias at the time the 'Mingus' album was recorded and in an interview from 1979 told her good friend [Malka Marom](#), the Canadian journalist , radio documentarian and folksinger the following : "Now Lester Young, on the other hand, was married to a white woman, and he played a concert someplace in the South and they loved him at the concert, but then as soon as he got back to his hotel with his wife, they ran them out of town violently." She doesn't cite a source for this story. Presumably it was one of the stories that Mingus had told her about Lester Young. The story does seem to echo the incident described in Lewis Porter's biography of Lester Young from 1933 when Lester and the The Thirteen Original Blue Devils were evicted from their hotel in Beckley, West Virginia and told to leave town. At any rate, the cultural shift in attitudes about interracial couples brings the narrative back to the present with the lyrics 'Now we are black and white embracing out in the lunatic New York night, It's very unlikely we'll be driven out of town or be hung in a tree, That's unlikely'. She had written about this much of the lyric and had come to the section that she described as being particularly challenging to put words to that would fit the rapid tempo and extreme changes in pitch of the solo section. For a time she was at a loss as to how to write through this section and put the last verse to the song. Then one night, Joni and Don Alias decided to take a subway trip to an uptown section of New York City. When they emerged from the subterranean subway station, they spotted a crowd of men a couple of blocks ahead that Joni assumed from their style of dress were pimps. This group appeared to be watching something on the sidewalk. Joni and Don approached this gathering and saw that they were watching two young black boys of about 9 and 12 years of age, dancing, "doing all this robot action" which was a type of dance that had not yet come into the mainstream of American culture. Then and there, Joni got the inspiration for the last verse of 'Goodbye

Pork Pie Hat'. As the couple turned to leave, Joni glanced up to see the words 'Pork Pie Hat Bar' on the awning of the bar in front of which the two youngsters were performing. Some time later, she talked Alias into taking her back to this bar which was located in a rather rough section of New York. There were more 'pimps', as Joni described them, throughout the bar, black and white posters of Lester young all around the place and a man tap dancing to one of Lester Young's recordings that was playing on the jukebox. So the final verse of the song became a description of Don and Joni as they 'came up from the subway on the music midnight makes' and found the two 'little dancers, dancing outside a black bar' with 'a sign up on the awning' that 'says Pork Pie Hat Bar'. Joni brought the lyrical story of Lester Young into the present day with a promise that his musical legacy would continue into the future.

The musical setting for 'Goodbye Pork Pie Hat' seems to mirror Joni's lyrical concept for the song. After the barely audible cymbal work from Peter Erskine at the very beginning, Jaco Pastorius' bass takes on the role of Charles Mingus, musically communicating his stories of Lester Young to Joni who translates them into words as she sings her lyrics set to the main theme of Mingus's original piece.

When Charlie speaks of Lester
You know someone great has gone
The sweetest swinging music man
Had a Porky Pig hat on

Wayne Shorter projects the shade of Lester Young as he interjects the voicings of his saxophone. Joni acknowledges Young's genius and then touches on the hardships he endured, struggling through the snares set for black musicians during the 1930s, 40s and 50s.

A bright star in a dark age
When the bandstands had a thousand ways
Of refusing a black man admission
Black musician
In those days they put him in an underdog position
Cellars and chittlins'

Jaco strikes a deep, ominous sounding note that repeats several times as Joni begins the piece of Lester's story that Mingus was privy to about Lester and his Caucasian wife causing a furor among some who 'saw red and drove them from their hotel bed'. Herbie Hancock and Peter Erskine are mostly given the task of augmenting and filling in spaces during the first part of the song as Jaco Pastorius's mostly rumbling and occasionally restless bass notes dominate the instrumental setting for Joni's vocal. Their playing becomes more evident, however as Joni moves into the solo interval that she described as being so difficult to sing and set to lyrics. Jaco echoes the triple tonguing of the original sax solo, triple picking the notes on his bass as Joni begins the lyrics 'Tonight these crowds are happy and loud' and then begins singing the most intricate part of the melody and rhythmic structure.

Children are up dancing in the streets
In the sticky middle of the night summer serenade
Of taxi horns and fun arcades

Where right or wrong
Under neon
Every feeling goes on
For you and me the sidewalk is a history book
And a circus
Dangerous clowns
Balancing dreadful and wonderful perceptions
That have been handed day by day
Generations on down

As Joni executes her vocal and lyrical balancing act, demonstrating her ultimate success at creating provocative and meaningful lyrics whose inflections match up with the challenging convolutions of the music, Herbie Hancock's and Peter Erskine's playing become more prominent. The musicians play a brief instrumental interlude that Joni scats through, building to a high, sustained note before falling back down into an easy, reflective tone. Finally, all of the musicians are featured in more or less equal roles in the ensemble that makes up the last verse of the song in which Joni relates the story of how she and Don Alias came upon the young dancers in front of the Pork Pie Hat Bar in New York.

Perhaps because of the nature of the source material for 'Goodbye Pork Pie Hat', it is the least successful of the five collaborations between Joni Mitchell and Charles Mingus on the 'Mingus' album at tying the vocal in as an integral piece of the musical ensemble. The original recording on the 'Mingus Ah Um' LP sets a distinctive theme that is repeated four times over minimal instrumentation that is more of an accompaniment for the two saxophonists than it is part of a true ensemble piece. Joni's vocal is given the upfront melodic line of the music just as it was positioned in the original recording on 'Mingus Ah Um'. The instrumental interlude before the final verse where Joni scats is the most successful at blending the voice with the instruments which makes perfect sense since the wordless vocal technique of scat singing is intended to make the human voice imitate the sound of a musical instrument. Overall, the success of the artistic vision that was set for 'Mingus' is hit and miss. The sound of the record is mostly reflective with a touch of melancholy that frequently has a stately beauty to it. The obvious exceptions are the two more upbeat songs, 'God Must Be a Boogie Man' and 'The Dry Cleaner From Des Moines'. There is a clear indication of an honest and skillfully executed attempt to create an original but respectful amalgamation of Mingus's classical jazz with a more contemporary treatment that strives for a common ground between his sensibility and Joni Mitchell's. Ultimately, when its release came so closely on the heels of Mingus's death, it was inevitable that the album would also take on the nature of a memorial to the man who continues to hold a unique and important place in the history of jazz music.

The packaging for the 'Mingus' LP displays the most mature examples of Joni's painting that had appeared on one of her album covers up until that time. There are four of her original oil paintings reproduced that show Joni Mitchell's growth as a painter. While engaging in explorations of new musical territory during the second half of the 1970s, she was also in pursuit of an individual form of visual expression. The front cover of the 'Mingus' jacket has an abstract figurative work positioned inside a background of plain white. It is a colorful painting, displaying primary colors yellow and blue as

well as shades of green and orange. On the left side of this image a seated figure can be made out. There is a suggestion of long blonde hair that swoops upward from the right side of the head into a field of mostly yellow paint. There is another figure seated to the right that occupies the center of the painting. This one has what appears to be the mouthpiece of some kind of musical instrument in its mouth with hands wrapped around the instrument itself. The right leg of this figure is stretched down into the lower right corner of the painting while the left leg is bent upward behind it. Up in the top right corner are strokes of mostly white paint that flow down from a narrow field of blue along the top and drape along most of the right edge, almost like a curtain. The title of the painting is given in the liner notes as 'Sweet Sucker Dance (Abundance and Decline)'. 'JONI MITCHELL' printed in brown capital letters appears above the top left corner of the image with 'MINGUS', also in brown capital letters printed directly underneath the bottom right corner. Like the 'For the Roses' jacket, the cover for 'Mingus' is a gatefold design with an extra sheet of cardboard inserted between the front and back pieces. The inside of the first section of the open jacket contains Joni's printed liner notes on the left side in which she states "These sessions satisfy me. They are musical paintings." She also gives a brief description of how Sue Mingus took Charles Mingus's ashes to India and scattered them near the source of the Ganges River. Joni concludes with a brief bit of verse:

Sue and the holy river
Will send you to the saints of jazz -
To Duke and Bird and Fats -
And any other saints you have.

A transcription of the 'Happy Birthday' Rap comes after followed by the lyrics of 'God Must Be A Boogie Man' and then the first part of the second Rap. On the right is the extra sheet that is completely covered by the reproduction of a painting titled 'Chair In The Sky'. This is a powerful Expressionistic depiction of Charles Mingus, presumably seated in his wheelchair, rendered in shades of deep indigo, white, and rusty brown. Mingus's head is turned to the left of the painting in three quarter profile and his eyes are cast downward in a pensive, melancholy expression. The face is painted in a deep blue color with black, brown and white highlights used to delineate the facial features. He is dressed in a white garment with black stripes and his hands are resting on his knees or possibly the arms of his wheelchair. Above his shoulder in the upper left corner of the painting is the suggestion of what may be the face of someone standing at a slight distance behind him. In the space to the right of Mingus and above his head are white splotches, suggestive of city lights, perhaps made indistinct by heavy rainfall. The white dots above Charles's head are set against a deep indigo background and are rimmed with the rust brown color. In the upper right corner, the rust color seems to wash away, streaking down and forming a shape that looks a bit like a bird's or an angel's wings. Below this shape, a muted aqua color overtakes the deep purplish blue of the background and the dots of light lose their rusty outlines. On the flip side of the center sheet, the transcriptions of the Raps and the printed song lyrics continue followed by the list of the musicians that played on the finished recording. On the opposite sheet is another painting centered on a white background. This is a playful image titled 'I's A Muggin'. Charles Mingus's face is once again depicted in shades of deep purplish blue but in this painting he has a fun, mischievous, almost devilish look on his face. His head is tilted slightly to the left and his eyes look up

toward a face in the upper right corner that is obviously Joni Mitchell's even though the only feature that Joni has painted in is the reddish orange lips of her mouth, open in a broad smile. The face has some shading on the lower right that delineates her distinctive cheekbones and a diagonal line created



Joni & Charles - I's A-Muggin'

by a slight change in color that suggests a nose. The method Joni chose to paint her own face puts me in mind of Post-Impressionist painter Vanessa Bell's portrait of her sister, Virginia Woolf, sitting in a chair knitting wherein only the outline of the nose and lower lip are painted with faint shadings to suggest the other features. In spite of the minimal visual information given, the face is instantly recognizable to anyone who knows the face of Virginia Woolf. In 'I's A Muggin', if you know what Joni Mitchell looked like in the late 1970s, you can readily identify her in the painting. There

is a white, amorphous shape that seems to lie over Mingus's shoulders and what looks like some kind of patterned fabric in the lower right corner directly under the image of Joni's face. The painting is either an artistic modification of a photograph taken by Sue Mingus or based on another photograph taken at the same time that reveals a white blanket draped across Mingus's shoulders with another patterned covering that is wrapped around his back and around the lower part of his body. The main difference between this photograph and Joni's painting is that Joni's face is on the left side of the image in the photograph and Charles's face is mostly in profile, looking off to the left. Information containing the locations where 'Mingus' was recorded and production credits are printed underneath the painting. Joni, Henry Lewy and Steve Katz are credited with mixing the recordings and Bernie Grundman with mastering them. There is no producer listed in these credits. There is one final painting on the back cover of the 'Mingus' LP titled 'Charlie Down In Mexico'. This painting has a feeling of serenity to it and is rendered mostly in blues and greens. A purplish pink colored pillar runs through the image just slightly to the left of its center almost completely dividing the painting in two. On the left side of the pillar is Charles Mingus seen from the rear, seated in a wheelchair and wearing a yellowish sombrero. He seems to be sitting in the shade of a large veranda or portico with flagstones or pavers of some kind beneath his wheelchair. To the right of the pillar, the grounds of the building it belongs to are pictured. A large expanse of green lawn nearly encloses a horseshoe shaped pool that has a paved walkway around its curved end and steps leading up to a raised ledge across the back. Lush foliage and blue sky are seen behind the pool in the upper right corner of the painting. Like the painting on the front cover of the album's jacket, 'Charlie Down In Mexico' is centered in an otherwise plain white square. Over the top of the left corner, just above Mingus's head is printed in capital letters 'IN MEMORY OF CHARLES MINGUS' with the dates '1922-1979' printed beneath. The album's track list is printed underneath the bottom right corner, below the wheels of Charles's wheelchair. Coinciding with the release of the Mingus LP, a book that compiled a collection of celebrity artwork was published by photographer Debby

Chesher in 1979 which featured several paintings by Joni Mitchell. The book was titled 'Starart' and included commentary about the artworks from the people who created them. ['Charlie Down In Mexico' was included in the book](#) and Joni wrote the following about this particular painting:

“'Charlie Down In Mexico' was done from a photograph taken by Sue Graham. The study itself in shadows and shapes was interesting to me and that big sombrero on Charlie added an air of festivity to it. Even though he was paralyzed and given to moodiness, he was still capable of enjoying things to a tremendous fullness. So I was compelled to paint this to balance out the other vision of him that contains the wrestling with fear and death.”

The cover of the July 26th 1979 issue of Rolling Stone magazine featured a full page photograph of Joni Mitchell's face accented by curly hair, red lipstick and blue eyeshadow. 'Joni Mitchell – Her First Interview in Ten Years' is printed directly under the publication's masthead as the edition's lead article. Titled ['Joni Mitchell, The Rolling Stone Interview'](#), the piece starts off with an introduction written by Ben Fong-Torres who was a senior editor at Rolling Stone at the time. He begins by quoting interviewer Cameron Crowe telling how he had crossed paths with Joni for seven years and had 'pestered' her for an interview for seven years with no luck. Fong-Torres then gives a brief reference to a previous yearend awards issue of Rolling Stone that had called Joni a 'groupie' as a probable reason why Joni had not spoken to the magazine for such a relatively long period of time. He then goes on to say:



“But shortly after Mitchell finished Mingus, her collaboration with the jazz bassist Charles Mingus, Crowe got a call from her manager. "He said she wanted to talk and wanted to talk to me and she didn't care who for." Crowe called Rolling Stone. And although Mitchell had hit her commercial peak with the 1974 album, Court and Spark, and had been moving for several years into jazz—that is, away from her mass audience—there was no question. We wanted to hear from her.”

It seems clear that it was of paramount importance to Joni Mitchell that the story behind the conception of the 'Mingus' album and of its creation was sent out to as large a segment of the record buying public as possible. There have been stories circulated about Joni's aversion to Rolling Stone for decades after the magazine had dubbed her 'Old Lady of the Year' in their February 4, 1971 awards issue, supplementing that title with a diagram or list of the men she had allegedly been involved with. Cameron Crowe referred to this item during the course of his interview and Joni was somewhat dismissive of it, saying that the Rolling Stone's review of 'The Hissing of Summer Lawns' was more hurtful than the 'simplistic' slam about her love life. However, Joni was willing to call a truce with her old mass media nemesis to get her message out about the upcoming release of 'Mingus'. The interview is fairly comprehensive and well thought out with a nice balance of intelligence and human interest content to make it appealing to Joni Mitchell's fan base. Crowe gives Joni ample opportunity to explain

the artistic path that seemed to have inevitably led her to record 'Mingus'. He also included just the right amount of questions that are of a more personal but not overtly gossipy nature.

'Mingus' was released on June 13, 1979 to a critical reception that was not entirely negative even though Joni has often said over the intervening years that the record was responsible for her 'excommunication from the airwaves' meaning that radio airplay of her music dwindled away to next to nothing after its release. Many of the reviews were positive on the whole but most could not quite give it a full out critical rave without some reservations. Some reviews contradicted others. [Down Beat](#) stated "that Joni Mitchell can perform as a credible, and here excellent, jazz singer" while Melody Maker in a review titled '[Joni...er... um](#)' complained "that her voice, although a sweet and flexible instrument, is not really that of a jazz singer." This latter review written by Michael Watts goes on to make the absurd assertion that "she even uses the slightly risible device of having her musicians imitate wolf-howls as the track fades out" in reference to 'The Wolf That Lives In Lindsey'. 'Lindsey' gets a very different take from [Paul McGrath in the Toronto Globe and Mail](#) who wrote "The prettiest, most unassuming piece is The Wolf That Lives in Lindsey; it stands out because it takes her full circle back to recognizable sounds from her first album." One can only wonder how closely these reviewers listened to 'Mingus' or if they even bothered to listen to the entire album at all. There is only one review that I came across in the JoniMitchell.com library that was entirely dismissive of the album [written by Sandy Robertson for Sounds Magazine](#), a British publication that styled itself as the alternative magazine to Melody Maker and NME, the leading magazines for music journalism in the UK. Robertson states that "The liner notes reveal how much Joni held Mingus to be some kind of mystical, black saint-figure; the typical dizzy white people's view of black people, the stupid idea that they're privy to some inner secrets that us poor honkies will never understand." He also makes this swipe towards the end of the piece, seemingly aimed at Joni Mitchell, Charles Mingus and T.S. Eliot: "Thankfully, Mitchell and Mingus never got round to their proposed musical version of the work of that arch wanker TS Eliot." Rolling Stone's review was written by Ariel Swartley and was somewhat disparagingly titled '[The Babe in Bopperland and the Great Jazz Composer](#)'. The implication of this title is clearly evident at the very beginning of the piece where Swartley gives a concise description of how the record was packaged and designed:

"The package Joni Mitchell's MINGUS comes in is deceptively serene with its cool white and iridescent blues - misleadingly neat, as though Mitchell had the answers all wrapped up. Inside's where the loose ends are. There, the whole apparatus - one explanatory text, four paintings, five documentary fragments - may be necessary to shore up Mitchell's huge thrusts and steel ambitions. Look, the foundations haven't even been laid yet, and she's trying to build skyscrapers, playing jazz."

The somewhat ambiguous conclusion she draws at the end of the review is "she doesn't so much come on as an outsider, but as a habitual non-expert. She's the babe in bopperland, the novice at the slot machines, the tourist, the hitcher. She's someone who has to ask. Which doesn't mean she follows orders or even listens to directions. But when you're lost in the mystery and the maps don't mean a thing, it's nice to be with someone who rolls down the windows and hollers."

Leonard Feather was one of the most revered and renowned jazz music journalists of all time. He was also a pianist, composer and record producer who wrote liner notes for countless records over the course of his journalistic career. He was writing for the Los Angeles Times when 'Mingus' was released. Although he did not review the album he did conduct an interview with Joni Mitchell which was published in Down Beat in September of 1979 titled '[Joni Mitchell Makes Mingus Sing](#)'. He writes that the interview took place a few days after the album was previewed at a private party in April of 1979. He leads off the interview with a reference to the album's cover paintings which includes an unequivocal compliment to the record's content: "I like what you put outside the album almost as much as what you put in . . . it's a beautiful cover." At another point further into the piece, Joni states the goal of making the vocal into an essential piece of the whole in the sound of 'Mingus'.

"I think that's quite unique, even among the great jazz vocalists. They tend to be fronting a track; whereas in this music, we're all mimicking each other, we're shading the tail end of a phrase the way a tone... the tone has breath, people play breathy, even the percussion instruments seem to become breathy. If you look at it you'll see how entwined we are, and that, I thought, was a beautiful accomplishment and something special. "

And Leonard Feather replies:

"I got some of that feeling on my first listen; but I want to listen again. I don't know how many people listening for the first time will get the full impact. "

Feather's speculation about the number of people who would be drawn into the musical fabric that 'Mingus' attempted to weave was justified. Although the album peaked at number 17 on the US charts, it has never been certified gold by the RIAA. 'Mingus' was the first of Joni Mitchell's albums since her debut album, 'Song To A Seagull', to fall short of the 500,000 units sold to qualify as gold. Many of Joni's fans who do not appreciate jazz have expressed dislike for the album although they may respect the artistic bravado of Joni's foray into that genre. On the flip side, many jazz aficionados dismiss 'Mingus' as the work of a folk/pop singer making a dilettantish and perhaps even sacrilegious attempt at shoehorning the music of Charles Mingus into a more contemporary, jazz fusion form of music. Whether or not 'Mingus' was truly responsible for Joni's 'excommunication from the airwaves', it is, perhaps, the least understood record in her catalogue.

Joni Mitchell was featured in another jazz event on June 15, 1979, the Playboy Jazz Festival at the Hollywood Bowl in Hollywood, California. The various acts that performed at this festival played on a revolving stage. Just prior to Joni's appearance, Sue Mingus introduced a legacy ensemble of musicians that had performed with her husband over the years, formed to "preserve the spirit of his music." Once this group had finished their set, the revolving stage revealed Joni with musicians Herbie Hancock (piano), Gene Perla (bass), Don Alias (drums) and Michael Brecker (saxophone). They performed a combination of Joni Mitchell's music and songs from the 'Mingus' album:

Coyote

A Chair in The Sky

Dreamland
Black Crow
Goodbye Pork Pie Hat
[The Dry Cleaner From Des Moines](#)

Later in 1979, a group of alumni from various Mingus projects called Mingus Dynasty released an album titled '[Chair in the Sky](#)'. The record included acoustic instrumental versions of 'A Chair In The Sky', 'Sweet Sucker Dance', 'The Dry Cleaner From Des Moines' and 'Good Bye Pork Pie Hat' as well as two of Mingus's compositions that were not part of his collaborative project with Joni Mitchell. Mingus Dynasty was the first of a line of Charles Mingus legacy bands. The most current version, the Mingus Big Band is performing and touring to this day with Sue Mingus as its artistic director.

Plans began to take shape for a Joni Mitchell tour that would feature material from 'Mingus' as well as songs from 'Hejira', 'The Hissing of Summer Lawns' and 'Court and Spark'. Joni worked with Jaco Pastorius to engineer a bill that would feature Weather Report as the opener. Similar to her tours with the LA Express, Weather Report would play a set at the beginning of each concert and then serve as backing band for Joni Mitchell as the headliner. Austrian-born keyboard player Joe Zawinul had formed Weather report along with Wayne Shorter and Czech bassist Miroslav Vitouš in the early 1970s. But Vitouš left the band and Jaco Pastorius was Weather Report's bass player in 1979. Wayne Shorter and Peter Erskine were also members of that band. So it seemed like a natural fit for these musicians that, with the exception of Zawinul, had all worked on the creation of the 'Mingus' album, to accompany Joni on tour. But it seems that Zawinul, who was by this time the leader of Weather Report, known as one of the premier fusion bands of the day, was unwilling to accept the position of an opening act or allow the



*Weather Report 1978 - Jaco Pastorius, Peter Erskine,
Joe Zawinul, Wayne Shorter*

rest of his musicians to embark on a tour to play back up for Joni Mitchell. In Peter Erskine's book '[No Beethoven: An Autobiography and Chronicle of Weather Report](#)' (see Chapter 28) Erskine wrote that he received a phone call from Joe Zawinul telling him that the tour with Joni Mitchell was off. According to Erskine, Zawinul went on: "I told Jaco that he can do it because of his long association with her, but I don't want Wayne or you to do it." "What happened?" I (Erskine) asked. Zawinul's response: "I just told her we ain't no fucking L.A. Express." When Alex Acuna, who was also a drummer/percussionist for Weather

Report and had worked on Joni's 'Don Juan's Reckless Daughter' album was asked about this incident in [an interview conducted by Dave Blackburn](#) for jonimitchell.com in 2013, Alex responded that he never heard Zawinul make any remarks about Joni Mitchell, negative or otherwise.

By this time, Joni was sharing a loft apartment in New York City with Don Alias. Alias was a highly respected percussionist and also more than capable of manning a drum kit so he was slated as the drummer for the upcoming tour. Guitarist [Pat Metheny](#) was also added to the roster. Metheny

attended the University of Miami at the same time as Jaco Pastorius and the two became friends as both musicians were seeking to expand the possibilities of the instruments they played. According to Metheny, "Jaco and I were both really on a mission to find a way to play and find a way to present our instruments in an improvisational environment that expressed our dissatisfaction with the status quo at the time." The Pat Metheny Group was months away from the release of their breakout album ['American Garage'](#) which went to number one on Billboard's Jazz Album chart and reached number fifty-three on Billboard's Pop Albums chart. Metheny's chief collaborator was the keyboardist for the Pat Metheny Group, [Lyle Mays](#). Probably because of his friendship with Jaco Pastorius, although Pat Metheny was a rising star in his own right in the jazz world, both he and Lyle Mays signed on for Joni Mitchell's summer tour. Metheny would play lead guitar for most of the songs while Joni would play electric rhythm guitar behind him. Since Joe Zawinul had nixed Wayne Shorter from joining Joni's tour band, the tenor saxophonist [Michael Brecker](#) was hired for the job. Michael Brecker and Don Alias had both played on Jaco Pastorius's eponymous solo LP from 1976. Brecker was another bright light in the jazz world who had also worked on one of Charles Mingus's last projects ['Me, Myself An Eye'](#). Mingus was too ill from ALS to play the bass at the time the album was recorded so Eddie Gomez played bass on 'Me, Myself An Eye'. Credits for the album say that the compositions were arranged and orchestrated by Jack Walrath using tapes and piano sketches although [Walrath did write to Down Beat magazine](#) that he had done most of the composing on one track and was not given sufficient recognition for the compositional work he did on some of the other tracks. Perhaps because of that serendipitous encounter in the hotel lobby the night before the 1978 Bread and Roses Festival, the Persuasions were signed on as the opening act.

Joni Mitchell and Jaco Pastorius had assembled what has often been referred to as a 'dream band' that began rehearsals in late July for the upcoming tour. They hit the road sometime in late July or early August for their first stop at the Zoo Amphitheatre in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma on August 3, 1979.

Reviews from the various stops that the tour made are almost unanimously favorable with a few exceptions that are mostly concerned with either the behavior of the audiences that attended the concerts or Joni's demeanor onstage. A [letter to the editor](#) of the Oklahoma City Times complained of "the incessant roar of the crowd" at the Zoo Amphitheatre concert, "With half the theater shouting at the other half, who shouted back to either 'sit down' or 'shut up,' even Joni succumbed to the obvious 'importance' of the issue and incorporated those exact 'lyrics' into many of her songs. She finally had to stop her music altogether, long enough to chide the audience for forcing her to play above their tumultuous protests, and ultimately suggested everyone 'both sit down and shut up!'" In another [review of the concert at the Memorial Coliseum in Portland, Oregon](#) on September 3, 1979, Karyl Serverson wrote in the Oregon Journal: "There are some performers whose audiences think they own them. Unfortunately, Joni Mitchell is one of those artists. For nearly two hours Monday night, in a concert that was marred only by the severe lack of the crowd's self-discipline, Ms. Mitchell played music almost exclusively from her most recent four albums....The audiences' demands seem to grow more overbearing and frantic with each new tour, and it must be difficult for her and her company to tolerate many nights such as that." However, a fan who attended this concert wrote in the [Commentaries in Jonimitchell.com's Chronology of Appearances](#), "We were unaware of anything described in the

associated press article, we simply ate up every moment.” In his [write up of the August 16th concert at Alpine Valley Music Theater](#) in East Troy, Wisconsin, reviewer Lennox Samuels complained in the Milwaukee Sentinel that “...the evening was marred by Ms. Mitchell's overdone reticence. The star said not a word to her audience all night...The show sagged noticeably in the last third of the set, largely because of a lack of rapport between the audience and Ms. Mitchell. Perhaps if the singer were a little more forthcoming, her concerts would be the unqualified successes they should be.” This review prompted a response in the form of a letter to the editor from an attendee of the concert published in the Milwaukee Journal a week after Mr. Samuels' review: “True, Joni Mitchell didn't talk to the crowd; she SANG to them and established her rapport in that manner. She didn't waste time with idle chatter the way too many performers do, but with a blend of sensitive, honest and entertaining songs. I thought the audience responded to her enthusiastically though not in the way a crowd might react to a raucous band.” There was a second concert scheduled for the Alpine Valley Music Theater. However, a particularly powerful thunderstorm nearly turned the outdoor theater into a large pool of water and mud. The combination of excessive rain and the proximity of the lightning strikes finally prompted Joni to announce that the concert was canceled after maybe a half hour's worth of music. [The Toronto Star](#) gives an account of Elliott Roberts nervously hovering around Joni in the dressing room of the Blossom Music Centre in Cuyahoga Falls, OH when the tour stopped to perform there on August 14. In reference to the Rolling Thunder review, Joni let fall the remark ““I only came along as a spectator and got kind of sucked up into it, I wasn't that directly involved; I was more of a foot-soldier. Personally, I thought Hurricane Carter was a bit of a jerk.” Elliot was none too happy with this apparent slur against Rubin 'Hurricane' Carter whose cause Bob Dylan had championed and he reminds Joni "Can't you see what they're doing? They've got pads. They're writing things down.”

[The Vancouver Sun's review](#) of the tour's stop in Vancouver B.C. at the Pacific Coliseum on September 2nd quotes Joni's explanation of how the Persuasions came to be Joni's opening act.

"We were both playing the Berkeley folk festival. One night at the hotel this drunk staggered through the lobby singing Why Do Fools Fall In Love? I started singing, and so did the Persuasions. The next day at the festival they did Circle Game on stage with me. Afterward they said if you're ever touring and need an opening act..."

The Persuasions are an all male a cappella vocal group that, in 1979, were made up of five singers, Jerry Lawson, Jimmy Hayes, Joe Russell, Jayotis Washington and Taubo Rhoads (Taubo Rhoads passed away in 1988). Their act first came together on the street corners of Brooklyn in the early 1960s where they took up and refined their classic doo-wop harmonies. Frank Zappa discovered them and brought them to



The Persuasions - cover photo for their 1972 album 'Street Corner Symphony'

Los Angeles in 1970 to record their first album, 'A Cappella,' on Zappa's "Straight" label. They went on to record for several labels, applying their vocal harmonies to an eclectic mix of material ranging from gospel to show tunes to songs from Frank Sinatra's repertoire to a Grateful Dead tribute album. Their latest recording teamed the Persuasions up with the Canadian band Bare Naked Ladies for the 2017 release 'Ladies and Gentlemen: Bare Naked Ladies and the Persuasions'. Reviews cite 'Return to Sender', 'Chain Gang', 'Handyman', 'Cloud Nine' and 'Freedom Train' as songs the group performed in a set of about 45-60 minutes in length to open Joni Mitchell's shows. In its review of the August 28th concert at Robin Hood Dell West in Philadelphia (now The Mann Center for the Performing Arts), the [Freehold News Transcript](#) describes the group holding a talent contest, bringing people from the audience to the stage to sing 'Hang Down Your Head Tom Dooley'. In nearly every review of the tour that critiques them, the Persuasions' are given high marks for their performances although one or two reviewers wrote that their act was better suited to more intimate venues than the outdoor amphitheaters and large auditoriums that Joni's tour played.

Nearly every write up of the 1979 tour gives 'Big Yellow Taxi' as the opener for each concert, followed by several songs selected from the 'Court and Spark', 'The Hissing of Summer Lawns' and 'Hejira' albums. Joni took off her guitar while the band accompanied her performances of 'Goodbye Pork Pie Hat' and 'The Dry Cleaner From Des Moines'. Jaco Pastorius favored the crowds with an extended bass solo after 'Dry Cleaner' according to the [write-up in the Vancouver Sun](#) of the Pacific Coliseum show in Vancouver B.C. 'God Must Be a Boogie Man' rounded out the material from the 'Mingus' album. [The Milwaukee Sentinel](#) described "some excellent, expressionistic picking in an interlude between the songs 'Amelia' and 'Hejira'" from Pat Metheny while Lyle Mays played "subtle keyboard work" behind him. Don Alias took the spotlight with a solo on the congas that settled into a steady rhythm and led into the song 'Dreamland' while the rest of the band played various percussion instruments. During the final act of the shows, the Persuasions joined Joni to lend a gospel flavored vocal back up to 'Shadows and Light' and put their best doo-wop vocals to work as Joni channeled 1950s rock and roll singer Frankie Lymon on the Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers 1956 hit 'Why Do Fools Fall in Love'. Several reviews mention 'The Last Time I Saw Richard' as an encore, which was the only song in any of the shows accompanied by Joni at the piano. As a final encore, Joni paid tribute to the tenth anniversary of the Woodstock festival. She came back onstage alone with her electric guitar to perform the song she wrote for the festival and recorded on 'Ladies of the Canyon'. 'Woodstock' finished with Joni walking offstage, continuing to play her guitar for a short space of time after she had disappeared from the audience's view.

On September 9, 1979, the tour played the Santa Barbara County Bowl in Santa Barbara California before moving on to its final stop in L.A. for five consecutive nights at the Greek Theatre. The Santa Barbara concert was videotaped and later edited into a special program for the Showtime cable television channel. The review in the [Santa Barbara News Press](#) mentions that the cameras and other equipment were set up after the end of the Persuasions' set and that Joni's movements during her performance had obviously been blocked for the taping. The review also states that "...it would have taken a great deal more than minor distractions to cool the ardor of her fans. She was obviously adored by her audience..." There was also an audio recording made of the Santa Barbara concert that would eventually become the double LP, 'Shadows and Light'.

Although the 'Shadows and Light' concert album was not released until September of 1980, it affords a taste of what the 1979 concerts sounded like, albeit a carefully edited one, and also provides a bookend to what is frequently referred to as the 'jazz period' of Joni Mitchell's music. 'Big Yellow Taxi', which most reviews cited as the opener of the 1979 shows, does not appear anywhere on this record. Instead, the first LP begins with an introduction that cannot be fully appreciated without the visual information that would eventually become available in the Showtime program, also titled 'Shadows and Light'. The first sounds from the recording are those of Lyle Mays playing sustained notes on his keyboard that are a bit reminiscent of the very first notes of the theme from the original 1960s Star Trek television series. Joni's voice comes in singing the first lines of the song 'Shadows and Light' – 'Every picture has its shadows and it has some source of light'. The Persuasions harmonize with her on the words 'blindness, blindness and sight'. Lyle Mays continues to play and then trails off as a snippet of dialogue from the film 'Rebel Without a Cause' is heard. Jim Backus is emphatically telling James Dean 'You can't be idealistic all your life, nobody thanks you for it!' while Dean mutters 'Except to yourself', repeating the words, mostly to himself. Finally he yells the phrase at Backus who shouts back 'Wait a minute !' Dean concludes with one more muttered 'Except to yourself.' Then Joni and Lyle Mays come back in again with the lines 'Compelled by prescribed standards or our own ideals we fight' and again the Persuasions harmonize with Joni on 'for wrong, wrong and right'. Once more, we are taken out of the live performance to a recording of Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers singing '.....No, no, no, I'm not a juvenile delinquent' with a bit of their doo-wop harmony backup vocals heard at the end. The sound of the Santa Barbara audience applauding and shouting is then heard as Joni's rhythm guitar begins to play an intro to 'In France They Kiss On Man on Main Street'. Jaco Pastorius's bass comes in and right away the song is given a pulsing heartbeat that was missing from the much dryer sound of the studio recording from the 'The Hissing of Summer Lawns' album. As Pat Metheny contributes his nimble fingering on the upper notes of his electric guitar, it becomes clear that this group of musicians have



Pat Metheny & Joni Mitchell 1979

added a new spark and punch to Joni's material that creates an exciting and engaging experience for live performance. 'Edith and the Kingpin' slackens the pace with Jaco adding a few pronounced notes under Joni's guitar intro. The band adds a repetitive chugging to the lines 'the band sounds like typewriters' that gives an impression of the sound of the now obsolete IBM Selectric typewriters that has long since vanished with the advent of the much quieter tapping of today's desktop computer keyboards. Joni ends the song by inserting a slight break between the words 'look' and 'away', taking the last word down, singing in a trailing-off breathy tone instead of maintaining the sustained high note that ends 'The Hissing of Summer Lawns' version. She follows up with the words 'They don't look away, no', sung with a world weariness that gives a haunting sense of tragedy to the story of Edith's ruin at the hands of the Kingpin. Metheny again adds some additional spark to 'Coyote' as Don Alias taps out intricate rhythms on his congas that pick the pace up again. Michael Brecker represents

for Lester Young as his saxophone plays out a tastefully understated introduction to 'Good Bye Pork Pie Hat'. He continues to lay back until just before the last verse of the song where he plays a rapidly fingered solo on his horn. The second side of the first of the vinyl LPs begins with Joni singing 'The Dry Cleaner from Des Moines', hitting the notes with spot on accuracy, now completely comfortable and confident with the intricate melody, performing the first verse with only the sounds of Don Alias's drums behind her. Alias and Pastorius accompany Michael Brecker as he blows out a smoking be-bop flavored solo after the last verse of the song. The mood turns quiet and reflective as Joni plays the first notes of 'Amelia'. She plays solo up until Metheny comes in behind the fifth verse of the song that starts with the words 'A ghost of aviation, she was swallowed by the sky'. Pat starts by playing ethereal, haunting sounds that could be the stirring of Amelia Earhart's ghost. As the song progresses his guitar gradually becomes the sound of Amelia's plane, heard in the distance. After Joni finishes the last words of her beautifully rendered vocal, 'dreams, Amelia, dreams and false alarms' Metheny's guitar takes off, playing a solo that soars into the clouds where it climbs, loops the loop, floats and dives. Lyle Mays's "subtle keyboard work" provides the rarefied atmosphere that Metheny flies through, carried on the wings of his inspired guitar work. The finish of 'Pat 's Solo' segues into Joni's guitar intro to the song 'Hejira'. Jaco plays his harmonic, bending notes under her as Don Alias taps out rhythms on his congas. 'Strains of Benny Goodman' becomes 'strains of Michael Brecker' as Brecker provides a brief flourish from his saxophone. He continues to add embellishments to the mix until the end when he plays a lovely rideout with Jaco and Don playing underneath him. The sound of the audience's shouts, whistles and applause concludes the first LP of the set. The second LP begins with 'Black Crow". Lyle Mays punctuates the ends of the song's verses with a keyboard riff that emulates the sound of a flute and Michael Brecker lets loose some pyrotechnics from his saxophone in the middle of song that pushes its frenetic energy up a notch or two. Jaco Pastorius provides a steady, rhythmic, but melodic pulse throughout that comes to the forefront as he winds things up at the end. Don Alias moves to the forefront next for 'Don's Solo'. His rapid, precise tappings make his congas sing as he moves swiftly between different pitches and rhythms. Ultimately he settles into a pattern that leads into the song 'Dreamland'. As Joni's vocal

progresses, the other musicians can be heard playing various percussion instruments and joining in the singing of the 'Dreamland, Dreamland' choruses. Alias returns to the drum kit in full rock and roll mode as the band kicks into a rousing version of 'Free Man in Paris'. Again, Jaco Pastorius's bass adds a new, propulsive energy to the song and Michael Brecker provides some invigorating breaks on his saxophone. Joni introduces the band 'before these guys sneak off' and then begins an expressive rendition of 'Furry Sings the Blues'. She emulates the blues man's



Michael Brecker with Joni in background

gravelly voice, replacing 'Old Furry's got nobody' from the studio version on 'Hejira' with 'I've got a

woman on Monday, she shines up my shoes, my Tuesday woman gives me pleasure and the blu-ues' Her normal tone of voice takes the last word 'blues' into a crescendo that leads into an emphatic reading of 'There's a double-bill murder at the new Daisy.' Pat Metheny adds some eerie notes in the background that shade, accent and create phantom impressions of Furry's heyday as Joni paints her more concrete images of Beale Street as she saw it, in crumbling decay. As Joni finishes the song, Metheny plays a line of evocative, sustained, high notes that fall down to a lower register to end the first side of the second LP. The final side of the two record set begins with Joni calling for the Persuasions to come back out on stage. After a short pause she tells the crowd with some relish, 'We'd like to, uh, rock and roll ya now!' Michael Brecker launches into an infectiously swinging sax intro and the Persuasions start to cook up a classic doo-wop 'oo-wah, oo-wah' backup vocal. Joni takes her upper register into a very apt impression of Frankie Lymon's falsetto to lead the ensemble in a fun rendition of The Teenagers' hit, 'Why Do Fools Fall In Love?'. Brecker rocks out again in the break between the first and second verses of the song. The audience eats it up and is heard cheering and applauding loudly. When the applause begin to die down, the keyboard figure heard at the very beginning of the first LP is heard again. Joni once again begins to sing the first line of 'Shadows and Light' with the Persuasions joining her on the choruses. Most of the song is sung a cappella and the Persuasions lend a definite gospel flavor to the chorus with their close harmonies while Lyle Mays's keyboard adds a church organ sound whenever he plays behind the singers. The final 'wrong and right' of the last verse ends the song with a dissonant chord, underscoring the clash of the concepts illustrated in the lyrics and the ultimately taut balance that is struck between them. The mood changes as Joni and Jaco begin a gently swinging exchange between her guitar and his bass. Jaco plays the melody to the line 'God must be a Boogie Man'. A few people in the audience can be heard singing the words after Jaco plays them. The band repeats the line after Joni sings the first and second verses. The crowd repeats it after Jaco plays the notes in the instrumental break between the second and third verses and the band takes the final 'God must be a Boogie Man' in the final verse of the song. After the audience's appreciation subsides, Joni's solo guitar is heard and she begins a slow, thoughtful rendition of 'Woodstock'. Although her voice rises on the word 'golden' to a pitch and emphasis that is reminiscent of her original 'Ladies of the Canyon' take on the song, the feeling of reverence and awe has been replaced by a sense of looking back that is not nostalgic but more analytic. The dream of bombers turning into butterflies has not become reality and there is a regretful sense of the Woodstock generation's failure to get its soul free and get themselves back to the garden, or 'to some semblance of a garden' as Joni sings after the last chorus of the song. Still there is that reminder that 'we're stardust' coupled with the emphatic reminder 'we're golden'. The reality may be that a three day music festival was not enough to change the world, but the seed, the golden stardust is still in the make up of the human race and ten years was not nearly enough time to move the world 'back to some semblance of a garden'. Joni carries the message forward as she continues her guitar playing for another twenty seconds or so. Finally, the guitar and the audience's reaction fade out to end the record.

It is a bit of a disappointment that 'The Last Time I Saw Richard' wasn't included on 'Shadows and Light'. But given the nature of the music and the sequence of Joni's albums that are represented on this recording, it makes sense not to include the song, even if it was performed in the Santa Barbara concert. Joni presented herself as a guitarist and a vocalist on the record, fronting a band that was an ideal

vehicle for the material from the five albums that made up the bulk of the songs performed. Singing a song from 'Blue' accompanied by her piano playing would probably have been incongruous with the record's overall sound and concept. 'Woodstock' was the single throwback to her pre-Court and Spark albums but it was done as a nod to the historic festival's tenth anniversary and she performed it in a way that blended well with the rest of the album. Omitting 'Richard', if she did indeed perform it, may have been a valid artistic choice, but, for myself, it makes me curious about how she would have performed the song in the context of the rest of those concerts. It also makes me envious of the people who were lucky enough to be present when she did perform it.

In a piece titled ['Joni Mitchell Has Her Mojo Working'](#) that was published in the Los Angeles Times in June of 1979, referring to her collaboration with Charles Mingus, Leonard Feather asked Joni if she would "undertake anything else along comparable lines? "

"'I'm not sure," said Joni Mitchell slowly. "Eventually, if not in the next album, I'd like to experiment more with rhythm. I might do a completely acoustic album, almost like a folk album, but harmonically it would be different from folk music.

"You know, pigeonholes all seem funny to me. I feel like one of those lifer-educational types that just keep going for letters after their name. I want the full hyphenate - folk-rock-country-jazz-classic.....so finally, when you get all the hyphens in, maybe they'll drop them all and get down to just some American music."