

Joni Mitchell Sings Her Sad Songs on New Album

By JACK LLOYD
Of The Inquirer Staff

With all of the recent fuss over such singer-songwriter ladies as Carole King, Carly Simon and Helen Reddy, Joni Mitchell was generally left on the sidelines, despite her steady creative out-put over the past four years or so.

Upon her arrival several years ago — a time when female "folksingers" were supposed to deliver strong, slashing statements, angrily chastise the audience and occasionally stomp their feet to emphasize disapproval — Joni Mitchell settled comfortably into a gentle image.

It was often chic to dismiss her music as sweet trifles.

All of this changes dramatically with "For the Roses" — Joni Mitchell's first album for her new record company, Asylum Records. Now that gained a position of due respect in contemporary music circles, Miss Mitchell has produced a session of potentially unsettling music.

In listening to "For the Roses" — and recalling past albums — one gets the impression that Joni Mitchell has been hurt deeply for the first time in her life and that she has completely bared her soul. She sounds as naked and alone as she appears on a rocky shore in the stunning centerfold viewed when the album cover is opened.

There is no beating around the bush. Miss Mitchell is quite specific about the object of her misery. Those who follow the rock gossip news will instantly identify the scoun-



JONI MITCHELL
... naked and alone

drel. The sentiment expressed in one of the songs, "Blonde in the Bleachers," pops up throughout the album:

"You can't hold the hand of a rock 'n' roll man ... Or count on your plans with a rock 'n' roll man ... Compete with the fans for your rock 'n' roll man ... The girls and the bands and the rock 'n' roll man."

Much of the content is so scorchingly personal that one almost feels guilty of invasion of privacy.

The hurt and anger are just barely contained in "Woman of Heart and Mind." One line even includes THAT four-letter work, yet it is delivered in that classic, calculatingly cool manner of the woman who IS NOT going to lose her temper.

Despite this dominant theme, the album's best moment comes when she momentarily strays into other matters. "Cold Blue Steel and Sweet Fire" is a street song masterpiece. Hauntingly beau-

tiful, dark and ominous, the scarey as hell. The lines ooze the pain of our times:

"A wristwatch, a ring, a downstairs screamer ... Edgy-black cracks of the sky/pin, cushion prick/free this poor bad dreamer ... Concrete concentration camp-bashin' in veins for peace ... Sweet fire ... Lady Relief."

"For the Roses" is not an album you will easily forget.

* * *

"GOOD GOD" (Atlantic Records): The promise displayed by this Philadelphia-based jazz-rock group's local appearances has been completely fulfilled on Good God's debut album, which was produced here at Sigma Sound Studios by Dennis Wilen, Skip Drinkwater and Jay Mark.

The album is among the finer recent examples of what can be accomplished when the best elements of various forms are fused into a total sound. With the exception of two songs — one by John McLaughlin and the other by Frank Zappa — the material is original and quite adequate for Good God's purpose. Here the musicians are the showcase — not the music.

One interesting discovery was that after hearing Good God perform live, the immediate impulse was to keep the record volume low, feeling that the group's live thunder was far beyond reason. But this is a mistake. Crank up the volume and let the music blow out. It makes more sense that way.

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