

Joni Mitchell courts and sparks

Since 1964 and the arrival of Rock I suppose I have listened to approximately two to three thousand albums, singles, and tapes of numerous rock artists. There are, of course, many high points which I can reflect on such as listening to "Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club" or hearing Jethro Tull's "Thick as a Brick," but no album is more artistically, stylistically and musically satisfying than Joni Mitchell's new album, "Court and Spark." Her ability to confront questions of freedom and values in our modern society are unquestionably unique and refreshing in Rock today.

Many will argue that Rock has no form, no base, just a copy of simple rhythms and rhymes. I do not agree with this; I rather argue quite strongly against this and any other move to destroy Rock

as an art form. For it is my opinion that Rock is the most dynamic art form to appear in many years. It encompasses music, dance, and lyric ability of the artist all in one neat package. For many Rock is just something they listen to or a vehicle they use to express a feeling and communication.

For Joni Mitchell Rock is her vehicle for expression of feeling, emotion, and psychological development conflicts within herself and the outside world. Since her appearance on the Rock scene, she has been associated with "ice cream castles" and "soaring rainbows." Her last album, before "Court and Spark," called "Blue," certainly was just that, very blue. She spoke of very heartbreaking situations between her and her old man. She sung of heartbreaks and heartaches and her longing for a place



Montora Mike

Rockin' with the Faces

By Mike Montoro

Rod Stewart and the Faces - Coast to Coast
Overtures and Beginnings - Live

From the first time I witnessed Rod Stewart peaking out from behind the amplifiers of Jeff Beck, in 1969, he struck me as a rather shy, unassuming person. I don't think anyone could have predicted the kind of success that was destined to be his in 1971-Male Vocalist of the year. His voice is raspy, coarse and off key, sounding like his throat is coated with sandpaper. His offensive sound plus his rowdy attitude toward his music has made him one of the most arrogant of rock stars. He seems to want only one thing - a huge party (as shown by the insert in The Faces second album, a pictorial history of their tour of U.S.) booze, and ladies. The insert finally was removed by Warner Brothers; it was ruled obscene in some five states.

But Stewart's popularity operates on two levels. One is his way of creating instant empathy in his listeners, while still offending other singers, as witnessed by his vocal prowess on Tim Hardin's "Reason To Believe" off *Every Picture Tells a Story* or his fine remake of the Jimi Hendrix tune "Angel" from his last solo effort *Never a Dull Moment* - a rather... The second level of the Stewart popularity lies in his sheer power to be the ultimate showman. He moves like a cock strutting from one end of the stage to the other. He comes down in the tradition of English self-made super-stars, like Jagger, Daltrey, Elton John, Steve Marriott. They are men who dress, dance, and sing like they are Pied Pipers leading you into ecstasy. But after seeing Daltrey, Marriott and Elton John, my feeling is that Stewart stands alone next to Jagger as the world's number one showman.

This leaves us with one of the most puzzling questions in rock up until the release of this album. Why wasn't Rod Stewart, vocalist extraordinaire, able to do any good, exciting, and creative recording with The Faces (formerly The Small Faces)? Stewart was only up to par on his solo albums. When he and the Faces came together, the music was lifeless and rather repetitious. When Stewart and the Faces joined forces in early 1971 most of the rock world figured it wouldn't last. Stewart was looking for superstardom with a band who had just lost its lead guitarist - Steve Marriott, who went on to be

the moving force behind the formation of "Humble Pie." They released "Long Player" a fine album with its highlight being the remake of Paul McCartney's "Maybe I'm Amazed."

A rather strange problem arose from this formation. The Mercury-Stewart label wanted Stewart on his own, not with the Faces, seeing the superstar potential of Ron Wood and the rest of Faces, said either he join the Faces or that's it. It seemed like an impasse but Stewart kept recording solo and making fine albums while also recording with the Faces on their albums.

A strange thing was happening as the Stewart solo albums got better the Faces' got worse. This is exemplified by the distinguished "Ooh La La" LP, the Faces latest prior to "Coast to Coast." After "Ooh La La" was maligned and crushed by the snobbish world of rock reviewers, Stewart, the Faces, Mercury, and Warner Brothers finally decided to ease the tension and release a live LP in partnership with Mercury. What was produced is probably the best album from either Stewart or the Faces since 1971 and "Every Picture Tells a Story." It showcases Ron Wood on lead guitar several times. He performs as an impeccable musician. Kenny Jones on drums is fine as usual and Ian McLagan on the keyboard, fits is just right. The newest member of the Faces, Tetsu Yamauchi - former bassist for "Free" adds not only good bottom for the group, but a wealth of humor on this LP. And Stewart as usual is the driving, hoarse voiced showman.

This album features not only oldies but a few new tunes, such as a redone version of "I Wish It Would Rain" and a John Lennon tune called "Jealous Guy." The old favorites are where Stewart and the Faces truly shine, on such things as "Stay With Me," Borstal Bay, "Too Bad" and, one of my favorite Stewart tunes, "Cut Across Shorty." Wood emerges and takes his place among the best rock guitarists with the likes of Clapton, Harrison, and Mason. The Faces as a whole group perform with tight, competent efficiency behind the incomparable Stewart. What more could anyone ask?

There's even photos and action shots of the amazing Rod in complete dress: It's a look at the man who turned down many offers to play professional soccer, to be known as one of the last English Ravers.

of reconciliation. As in "California" she sings of love lost and love gained but she still longs for California, as a place of rest and a sort of repentance. The unfortunate aspect of "Blue" was that she described her plight but never found an answer, just a lady living in limbo. On her new album she deals with these questions and gives a direction of what she wants. But, it's rather a religious paradox she's in, as she gets closer to her want she becomes more disillusioned.

As in the tune "Free Man in Paris," which many feel is a description of herself, rather I feel this is a biographical look at a long-time friend, and now head of Elektra Asylum records, Joni's label, David Geffen. She describes the music business "I deal in dreamers and telephone screamers, they're all tryin' to be a good friend of mine" and then she tells us that she walked out the door, but for the business she's unable. So again a rather paradoxical relationship as she gets closer to her end as star, life becomes much more difficult for her. This theme of life at the top being difficult is a favorite topic of Joni's song, "Peoples' Parties," the tune following "Free Man in Paris," deals with the hypocrisy and lying that goes on in the minds of the smiling faces of people at parties. As she says, "People standing in the center trying to get something." Her ability to describe emotion or an emotional experience is another of her great attributes, for example in "Peoples' Parties" she describes "Laughing and crying, you know it's the same release" which is just beautiful.

The rest of the album is just as insightful, "Twisted," which talks of adolescent insanity and dealing with it, or maybe you'll like "Down to You," the most simplistic song on the album, but it confronts you with yourself. After one listening to it, you'll begin to confront yourself with the critical questions of life. You'll really begin to feel more and more fulfilled with yourself, and begin to realize that Joni Mitchell is probably the most productive, provocative, and creative artist to appear in the musical world since the Beatles.

That's why I wonder as I pass the Holiday I theater, where "The Exorcist" is shown, people who camp out all night to see what I term pure sensationalism would be the same people to put Joni in a category by herself, I think and I wonder where our values are going in art today.

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