

CIRCUS

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RAVES

JUNE 1974 75¢

slade's

AMERICAN TRIUMPH —
'STOMP YOUR HANDS,
CLAP YOUR FEET'

joni mitchell's

SEARCH FOR
SATISFACTION —
'COURT AND SPARK'

elton john's

HUNT FOR
STUDIO HEAVEN

jan akkerman

CELEBRATES
STARDOM WITH
'TABERNAKEL'

dr. john

SMASHES THE
EVIL VOODOO WITH
'DESITIVELY BONNAROO'

plus

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MARTHA VELEZ
LEO SAYER

CONCERT GUIDE
YES ON TOUR
MOTT IS BACK

HOW TO
GET A ROCK
HAIRCUT
LIKE
BOWIE,
FARNER &
MIDLER

THE
ROCK & ROLL
SEXINDEX —
MORE
FOUR LETTER
WORDS YOU
DIDN'T
KNOW WERE
DIRTY!

SLADE'S
NODDY HOLDER

CIRCUS

RAVES

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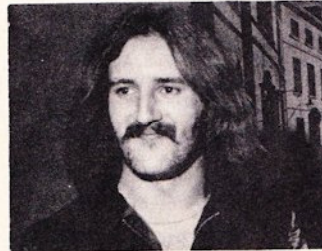


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After the glaring spotlights dim, and the crowds leave the London concert hall, Joni Mitchell disguises her little-girl bangs under a battered black beret and prowls the empty bars of Piccadilly alone with her notebook of half-finished poems. On its empty pages, she sketches the pathetic portraits of the lost and confused men she meets and befriends — sometimes for only a night.

Three years have passed since Joni turned her back on the star scene to go into this tragic self-imposed exile. During this period, she has continued to compose her soul-searching and autobiographical songs. But she has heartlessly scorned the press and cut herself off from Hollywood acquaintances with a rude defiance uncommon to her vulnerable nature. "She won't talk to anyone," the press agent from Asylum Records explained. "She wants to be alone."

Like the mysterious Greta Garbo of the twenties, Joni rapidly grew disillusioned with the superficiality of stardom. "I have in my time been very misunderstood," she confided to one reporter. "All people seemed interested in was the music and the gossip — I felt then that the music spoke for itself and the gossip was unimportant." She reacted by selling her home in the glamorous Los Angeles suburb, Larel Canyon, ("It was just an address," she has said), and returning to her native Canada. "I thought I'd lead a kind of 'Heidi'-like existence, you know — with goats and an orchard."

But with the recent release of her sixth LP, *Court and Spark*, (Asylum Records), rumors have begun to percolate about the re-emergence of Joni Mitchell. She had been seen at a four-star Hollywood party mingling with Jack Nicholson, Kris Kristofferson, the Fifth Dimension and David Cassidy. And she had even

made the scene at a Warhol premiere. In addition, she has committed herself to a rigorous touring schedule, and produced as well as composed and recorded this latest LP which continues her intense groping for her own identity by searching through the lives of others.

Second entrance: But although she has given all the cues for a second entrance onto the music scene, Joni has changed in the act. On the surface, she comes off like the same All-American-looking china doll Canadian with that melancholy soprano and wispy, long blonde hair. But looks are often deceiving, and Joni indicates that she has undergone a painful transition since she abandoned her career. "I'm older and wiser now," she said soberly. "I gained a strange perspective on performing. I had a bad attitude about it, you know. I felt like what I was writing was too personal to be applauded; I even thought that maybe the thing to do was to present the songs some different way — like a play or a classical performance where you play everything and then run off stage and let them do whatever they want, applaud or walk out."

The possibility of rejection always did terrify her. But as her fame spread, her fears multiplied. Every concert, recording session and interview loomed in her mind as a test of her own worth. She questioned the sincerity of any and all praise, and she shrugged off most of it as mere flattery from people who wanted to get ahead. "You ask yourself a lot of questions," she's explained. And the star system denied her the right to answers. "You tailor-make your dreams to 'it'll be this way' and when it isn't. . ." Her

slanted blue eyes suddenly fill with a painful and distant expression. "I was too close to my own work."

Depression and retrospect: It took her two years to arrive at a safe psychological distance. "A couple of years ago I got very, very depressed — to the point where I thought it was no longer a problem to burden my friends with." In desperation, she took to the psychiatrist's couch and poured out the residue of confusion and unhappiness which she had silently stored inside for so long. "I was practically catatonic," she's said in retrospect. But the slick psychiatrist didn't give her the helping hand she needed. Instead he asked her if she felt suicidal. The option had never entered her mind. "So he handed me his card and said, 'Listen — call me again sometimes when you feel suicidal.' And I went out into the street."

Joni had no direction in which to turn. The confusion which had originally led her to the couch now completely boggled her mind, for she had taken the doctor's smug professionalism as yet another rejection. She looked around herself. Though she was clearly one of the world's most adulated singers, she had no one with whom she could share her thoughts and dreams. "So many priests and psychiatrists miss the whole point of getting right to the heart of the person," she signed. Alone, Joni Mitchell packed her suitcases to seek inner peace.

Hesse in focus: She found it — but in a most unexpected way. Hardly a reader, she accidentally picked up a book by the German novelist Hermann Hesse whose fiction is filled with inner journeys in search of the self. As she skimmed the book "Narcissus and Goldmund," she ran across a passage in which Narcissus the priest does not reproach Goldmund for his lack of insight into himself. Instead he ad-

by Barbara Gail Rowes

joni mitchell's

'COURT AND SPARK'

SEARCH FOR

SATISFACTION

With a newly-found sense of artistic detachment she's becoming as much an entertainer as a confessional writer. Can the seductive 'Court And Spark' knock Carly off the throne?

vises him to get his life in focus. "Kind of 'you're out of focus — get yourself in focus,'" Joni summarizes. His message struck Joni in the heart.

For the next two years, beginning in 1970, she strived to become acquainted with herself. She became sensitive to her own reactions and moods, and interested in her own observations. As time passed, and she travelled through Hawaii and Crete, she looked less to others for approval, and more to her own judgment about things. "I wanted more than a release," she said. "I wanted some wisdom, some kind of counsel and direction." After years of circling the globe she found it through herself.

Womb by the sea: As her confidence increased, the Canadian songstress became less dependent upon her music and the Hollywood scene. A freedom from them developed, so that she was no longer bound by the judgments of others. "But freedom implies a lot of loneliness, you know, a lot of unfulfillment," she sighed. When the outward journey finally began to exhaust her, she retired into her native womb of Canada where she built a house in Vancouver by the sea. "The land has a rich melancholy about it," she said. "Not in summer because it's usually very clear. But in the spring and winter it's very brooding and it's conducive to a certain kind of thinking."

In this retreat, she began writing new songs. "I find if I just sit around and meditate and mope about it all then there's no release at all. I just get deeper and deeper into it. Whereas in the act of creating — when the song is born and you've made something beautiful — it's a release valve." She was writing and singing now as a means of bringing satisfaction to herself. Before she had done it to be accepted and loved by others. "Now I've gained a pers-

pective, a distance on most of my songs. So that now I can feel them when I perform them, but I do have a certain detachment from the reality of the story."

In *Court and Spark* the message is the same as that in her five earlier LPs. There are the portraits of her one night lovers, such as "Free Man In Paris" in which she captures the conflict between freedom and career through her extraordinary sympathy with another man's soul. Also, there are the scenarios of doomed love affairs. "The more he talked to me, the more he reached me," Joni wrote in the song "Court and Spark." "But I couldn't let go of LA, the City of Fallen Angels." In most of the songs though, the guy doesn't have half a chance with her. In "Help Me," she quickly reveals her recognition that she is falling in love with a bum. And in "The Same Situation," she registers disgust in the midst of her involvement when she sends up a prayer to "send me somebody/Who's strong and somewhat sincere."

Entertainer vs. registrar: No new heavy insights or resolutions distinguish this album, although in the final song, "Twisted," Joni abandons her autobiographical disposition to swing and sway through a Lambert, Hendrix and Ross forties number. It's better than the Bette Midler version, for the phrasing is impeccably clear despite its rapid pace. With no trace of Joni's lost child manner throughout the number, she has switched off the search for self to throw her talent into pure performance. Perhaps this is the most striking revelation of her confessed maturity: she emerges as a talented entertainer, rather than the emotional registrar of experiences.

"I had felt so pressured, but I don't feel pressured by it now," she's revealed. "I feel personally unaffected. I feel my creativity in one form or another is very strong and will continue." She has come to terms with her own talent — and its place in her life. It is not her whole life — nor even a definition of it. "I feel like I've come through," she said, "having had a small taste of success, and having seen the consequences of what it gives you and what it takes away, in terms of what you think it's going to give you."

She's back again, but this time as the woman version of the child star who abandoned a career to find herself. She can state the fact that she's "very lonely" now, without embarrassment or fear of censure. "I don't have a large circle of friends. I have a few very close friends and then there's a whole lot of people I'm sort of indifferent to." Years ago she couldn't accept this state of things, but today she faces it with confidence and even optimism. "Yes, it has to do with my experiences," she'll concede. "I feel I want to go in all directions right now, like a mad thing."

Her journey into self has given her a freedom to move around the outside world without fear of rejection. Joni Mitchell's songs may continue to pursue the theme of search. But the singer herself has found the most valuable rainbow's end. "No, I don't feel trapped now," she's said. She has gained freedom inside her own head. And as Kristofferson already pointed out in a line from another song: "Freedom's just another way of nothing left to lose." Joni Mitchell is back again — with everything to gain. ♣

Joni Mitchell: A former student at the Alberta (Canada) College of Art, she drew the watercolor for the new album herself.



