

# On the flip side

## Joni Mitchell balances 'Night Ride' with profound, precise music

In the course of her (more than) two-decade career, Joni Mitchell has constantly walked a fine line between the profound and the precious. At one time or another she has tumbled off on either side. With "Night Ride Home" (Geffen) she does both.

The title cut is a dizzying ride through surreal country with insects clicking in an odd land- and people-scape and Mitchell's voice rasping and growling out the richness of its 47 years.

Others, such as "Passion Play (When All The Slaves Are Free)" and "The Windfall (Everything For Nothing)" display Mitchell's remarkable ability to juxtapose strident, biting lyrics with luxuriant chords and melodies in ways that provoke the mind and soothe the ears.

But Mitchell just can't stop the cleverness before it becomes cloying, and she bubbles over into cuteness on songs like the dreary "Ray's Dad's Cadillac." And not content with cute, she defaces W.B. Yeats on "Slouching Towards Bethlehem" with a sing-songy country-folk sound that thoroughly dilutes the poet's somber and threatening portents of Armageddon.

"Night Ride Home" is hardly a Joni Mitchell album to end all worlds. But it is, for the most part, a nice cruise.

— By Harry Sumrall,  
Knight-Ridder

**LATINO LATINO**, Various artists; **AN AFRICAN TAPESTRY**, David Hewitt; **THE BEST OF WORLD MUSIC**, Various artists — These releases represent the first issue from Rhythm Safari, a new label dedicated to music from around the world. Judging by this



Joseph Shabala of Black Mambazo; Joni Mitchell expands music

trio of discs, the enterprise is off to a rousing start.

The Latin music compilation, featuring eight tracks by some of Los Angeles' spiciest salsa bands, is especially exciting. Bobby Matos and the Heritage Ensemble, whose "Tracion" is one of the disc's most compelling numbers, and Orquesta Siva are fixtures on what may be the city's true underground music scene.

Another fiery workout is the flute and violin-driven "Steamy" by Bongo Logic, a band that will have its own release on the label soon. "Latino Latino" makes a great introduction to this rich and accessible music.



Youssou N'Dour ensure "The Best of World Music" lives up to its title. The only drawback is the lack of Zairean soukous, currently the most popular form of international dance music.

— By Fred Shuster,  
Los Angeles Daily News

**MORRISSEY**, "Kill Uncle" (Sire/Reprise) — What's become of the Mother Country? These days, the youth of Britain dress themselves up in black, moan about the Meaninglessness of It All and gush with apathy.

Morrissey does it better than most. That's why he's such a hero there.

"Kill Uncle" is a thoroughly depressing affair with its pitiable characters ("Mute Witness") and dreary relationships ("Our Frank"). Its one moment of aspiration, a vague hope of love on "Found Found Found," is adrift in ambiguity, with our hero mumbling in his emotionally monochromatic way.

"Asian Rut" is a chilling tale of racial hatred, with a cabaret musical background that gives the song a garish contemporary feel, sort of Kurt Weill by way of Johnny Rotten. "Driving Your Girlfriend Home" is a paean to romantic boredom, arguably the first composition in history to make a whining woman seem somehow alluring. At least Morrissey makes her seem like she is alluring, to him.

Such apathy is a remarkable thing, particularly when it is expressed with such fervor. And Morrissey cares less more expressively and pointedly than the rest.

— By Harry Sumrall,  
Knight-Ridder