

REVIEWS

Joni Mitchell & The L. A. Express

Miles of Aisles

Asylum Records Double Album

THIS is one of those rare records that you would buy without having heard it. Joni Mitchell belongs to that elite group of singer/songwriters that have impeccable voices, poetic songs and to whom music is a way of life. But she has the edge over others of her calibre (like her cousin Judy Collins and Joan Baez) because she can establish a personal relationship with her audience.

Of course there's no substitute for seeing the lady live, but this live recording comes awful close. Its complete with Joni's chats to the audience and their rapturous responses. She sails through all her very best songs with practised ease, adding little personal interjections here and there, with what

is undoubtedly one of the most sweet and relaxing voices that you'll ever have the pleasure of hearing this side of Heaven.

One of the drawbacks of live double albums is that they are usually put out by established musicians who have also released collections of their greatest hits (Bob Dylan, the Beach Boys etc.) But Joni has not, and even if you have the songs done here on her other albums, they are not being done with the backing of the L.A. Express. This group, one of the best to come out of America recently, add what can best be described as a jazz-orchestrated folk backing. (God, you should hear the piano.) They provide such a consistent, swinging back-up that Joni

can use her voice to emphasise emotion rather than melody.

One of Joni's unique talents is that she can recount very painful personal experiences in such a romantic framework and with such a bitter-sweet voice that you envy her even her heartaches. For this reason I prefer to listen to her over headphones while sitting smoking in the dark. But the backing of the L.A. Express gives even the saddest songs ("Last Time I Saw Richard", "Real Good For Free") such an energetic beat that the people in the "Beaver" office were rocking round the floor.

All that and it's got some new songs and excellent pictures of the lovely lady too. Amazing stuff.

J.B.