

## 2 Joni Mitchells – on TV and album – are both worthwhile

BY RAY MARK RINALDI  
*Of the Post-Dispatch*

There are two Joni Mitchells out there these days. One that's secure, satisfied and serious.

The other, well, you don't want to mess with her.

Meet the gentle Joni tonight during "Painting With Words and Music," the legendary artist's interesting foray into the world of Pay-Per-View TV. Or dance with the dark Joni on "Taming the Tiger," her new, and 19th, album. Both are rare offerings from an artist who has been something of a recluse in recent years.

And both are pleasing efforts — though one can get a little angry. With "Taming the Tiger" Mitchell (after three decades of performing) shows some new sides. She actually gets sentimental on "Man From Mars," and she offers an unusual instrumental number with "Tiger Bones."

But what stands out is Mitchell's venting. She's always been famous for protest songs (remember "Big Yellow Taxi," the song mixed into Janet Jackson's last hit?). But this time there's an edge. She takes on the power brokers in "No Apologies," a song that contends lawyers are "laying America to waste."

In the title track she pummels the hypocritical music business where "one false move and you're a goner." As for new records, they stink ("every disc/a poker chip," she sings) As for successful new artists, they can stink, too ("Formula Music/Girlie guile/Genuine a Junkfood/Juvenile").

Who can blame Joni for being bitter? For the last 20 years, she's put out amazing material and

scored Grammy victories. Still, she's locked into the public consciousness as the aging hippie who sang "Circle Game" in 1969. Critics pine for the old stuff, or worse, ignore her, all the while dubbing every new female "the next Joni Mitchell." Radio wouldn't touch her and she hardly registers in the on-going pop culture discussion we all seem to be having.



Mitchell

But let her steam. It's good for the rest of us. "Taming the Tiger" is full of little masterpieces. Mitchell does the producing, a return to the glory days of "Hejira" and "Court and Spark." The result is an honest and daring album. The highlights: the exotic "Harlem in Havana," the sexy "Crazy Cries of Love" and a cynicism-free cover of the Sons of the Pioneer's "My Best to You."

Optimism prevails as well on the TV show, a charming evening spent with a relaxed pro. Mitchell designed the set, herself in the center and her audience around her on sofas.

With ex-husband Larry Klein playing bass, she pulls out favorites like "Woodstock" and "Taxi" and performs four songs from the revered "Hejira." She covers Billie Holiday's "Comes Love" and Marvin Gaye's "Trouble Man."

Her guitar playing and her singing have never been better, and the arrangements add new tricks to familiar material. This is a fan-friendly show that lets Mitchell hold the line creatively while remaining accessible to those who only know the old stuff.

Joni Mitchell's television special, "Painting With Words and Music," airs at 8 tonight on Pay-Per-View. Check with your local cable company for availability.