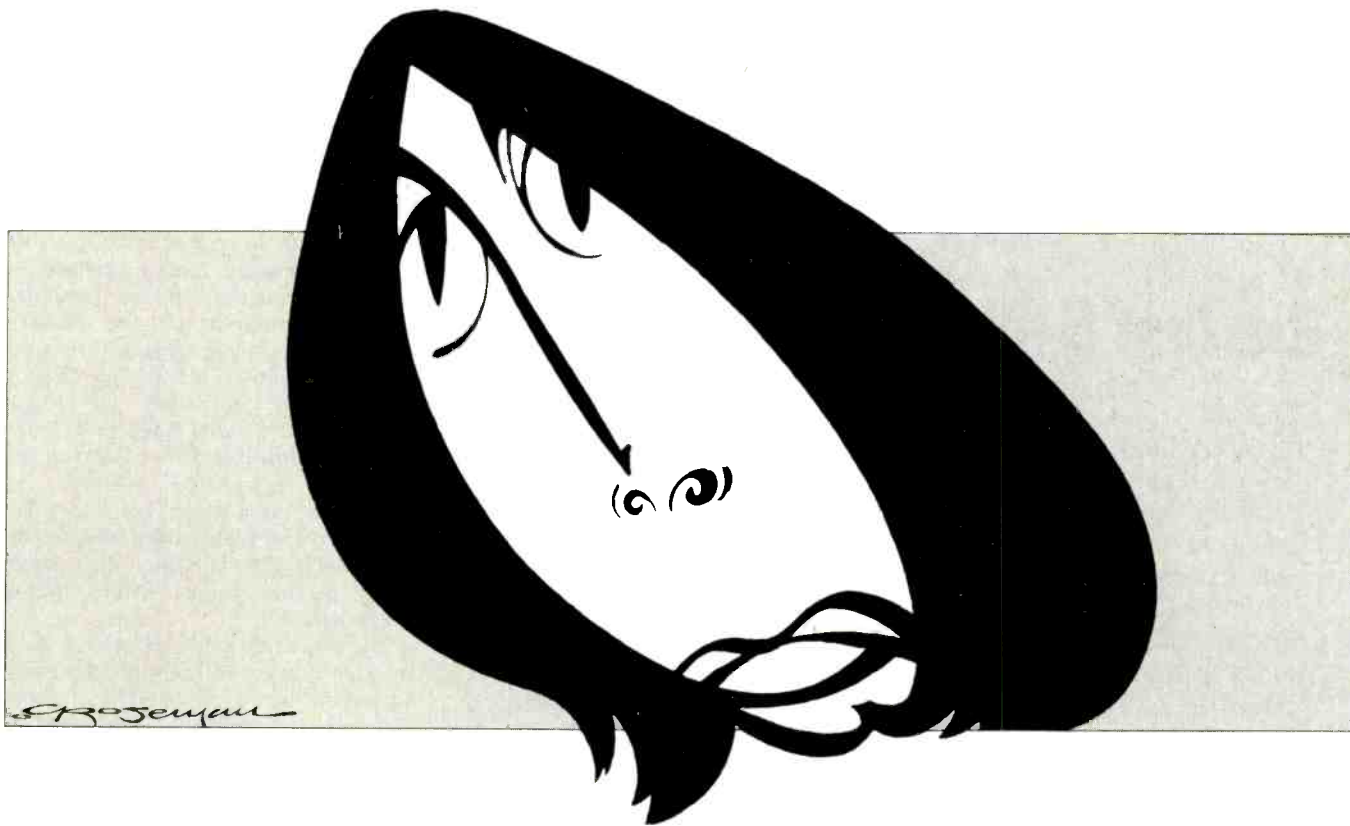


Michael Tearson

Jon Tiven

The column



Running on Empty: Jackson Browne
Asylum 6E-113, stereo, \$7.98.

Running on Empty was recorded live and on the run. It includes performances live on stage, in hotel rooms, in a rehearsal hall, even rolling along on the bus. One, Danny O'Keefe's *The Road*, combines hotel, first verse up to the built-in pause in the melody when crickets appear and it segues to the stage at the same point in the song. Only the altered texture of the sounds and ambience signals the switch. The pause in the second verse yields a magical moment when the crowd cheers apparently for the crickets singing along.

In fact, the album is remarkably well recorded for a live in the field recording. It has terrific presence and personality. By itself **Running on Empty** defines audio *verité* as a medium. Special kudos go to engineer Greg Ladanyi.

Musically **Empty** is Jackson Browne's most entertaining album ever. It is thematically bound up in the theme of the road experience; all the

songs describe what happens or how you feel out there. The new ones are distinctively Jackson's. They feel it. But Jackson has been lazy with his melodies. Both of the rockers, the title song and *You've Got the Thunder*, cop the main riff of *Take It Easy*. *The Load Out* is very close to *The Pretender* which itself reminds me of *For Everyman*. *Rosie* brings *Ready or Not* back to mind. As obvious as it is Jackson's self-thievery really doesn't matter within the good feelings of the album. Surely it is both the happiest and most optimistic album Browne has recorded. The emotional turmoil of **The Pretender** and **Late for the Sky** clearly is just not the concern of **Running on Empty**. The unrest has led to a fresh and fertile new period.

Running on Empty is both highly cinematic and thoroughly thought out. That cover is what his stage set looked like on the tour during which the album was recorded. The picture book inside is lavish, provocative, and enlightening as well. Every detail has been covered, all the way down to

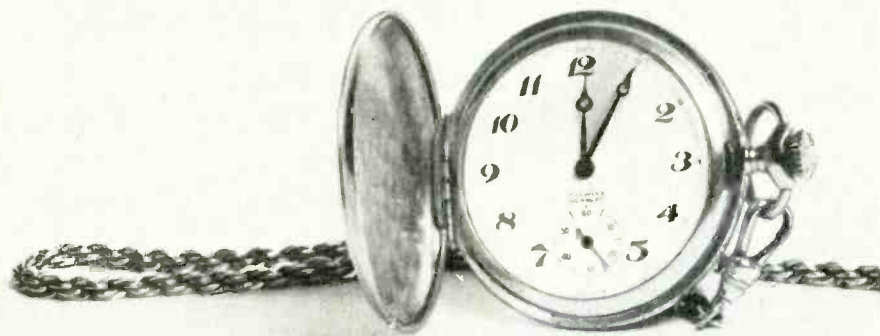
superior sequencing of selections. Call this a rave review. M.T.

Sound: A+ Performance: A+

Don Juan's Reckless Daughter: Joni Mitchell

Asylum BB-101, stereo, \$12.98.

Don Juan's Reckless Daughter elaborates stylistically on its two predecessors **Hejira** and **The Hissing of Summer Lawns**. The cover art is even quite reminiscent of **Hissing's**. The snake image which has been central to Ms. Mitchell's writing on these recent collections is consistent on **Daughter** and seems to frame the three albums into a trilogy. Indeed **Daughter** contains some leftover songs that never made it to the earlier ones. The song *Jericho* has appeared before in a somewhat embryonic form on the live **Miles of Aisles** collection. Two others, the title song and *Talk to Me*, have been in her concert performances since at least February 76, before reaching vinyl.



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Musically **Don Juan's Reckless Daughter** is ambitious even for the restless Ms. Mitchell. The pop threads of **Court and Spark** appear to be entirely forsaken for starker, more suggestive rhythms, a style almost designed to ward off excessive mass acceptance.

Two of the four sides are side-long excursions. *Paprika Plains* rambles meditatively and seemingly autobiographically through an elaborate orchestral setting by the English composer Michael Gibbs. Side three opens on *Otis and Marlena*, contrasting O & M's fun & sun vacation with the Hanafi Moslem terrorism of Washington, D.C., last summer. It segues into *The 10th World*, a lengthy and ultimately indulgent percussion dream sequence set in the minds of the Hanafis perhaps. This in turn segues into a peculiar percussive version of *Dreamland*, earlier recorded by Roger McGuinn on **Cardiff Rose** in a much more straightforward rock and roll setting. The percussion heightens to nightmare irony such lines as "Tar Baby and the great white wonder sitting over a glass of rum." This whole side might have been titled "Wanderlust."

The other two sides include songs in song format, yet still related to the omnipresent theme of wanderlust, both physical and spiritual. The opening gambit *Cotton Avenue* opines "If you got a place to go/You just got to go there/If you got no place special/Then you just go no place special," and sets the tone for all that is to come. It is a prophetic thought. *Talk to Me* and *Jericho* look heads and tails fashion at the difficulties in making personal connection; *Talk to Me* neurotic, nervous chatter, and *Jericho* pensive and a bit bitter.

Opening the final side, the title song is the album's centerpiece relating as well to **Hissing** and **Hejira**. She joins the snake to the eagle, amplifying their personal meanings, "The eagle and the snake are at war in me/The serpent fighting for blind desire/The eagle for clarity." The final statement *The Silky Veils of Ardor* harkens to her folk music roots. The song has only acoustic guitar backing and lyrics borrowed and bent from *Come All Ye Fair and Tender Ladies*, *Poor Wayfaring Stranger*, and *Dink's Song*, traditional songs all woven into a credo on the pain of love and the power of dreams.

The unbilled musical co-star of **Don Juan** is Weather Report's bass player Jaco Pastorius. His eloquent, startling bass lines capture an inordinate amount of the musical attention. His collaborations with Joni, begun on **He-**

jira, seem to inspire her into ever more distant uncharted regions. Other notables include John Guerin on percussion, Larry Carlton on guitar, and Weather Report's Wayne Shorter on sax. The sound has been crafted by Henry Lewy, who has worked on every Joni Mitchell album from *Clouds* (her second) on. As usual, he has done a brilliant job, especially on the special effects and Jaco's bass.

Don Juan's Reckless Daughter has its full share of excess and failed ambition, plus wandering and occasionally vague melodies, but it is an exciting and fascinating document nonetheless. It is a far cry from my favorite Mitchell, but it is insistent and disturbingly attractive.

One other serious flaw is in the total time of the set. The four sides sum to 59:30, safely under an hour. The \$12.98 list price is pretty steep for that little music. Could there not have been one or two more hidden songs that fit, or a dollar or two less at the counter? *M.T.*

Sound: A Performance: B-

Never Mind the Bollocks, Here's The Sex Pistols

Warner Brothers BSK 3147, stereo, \$7.98.

First off, this critic would like to state that I love all the Sex Pistols singles and am not significantly influenced by the fact that they do not play all their own instruments (Chris Spedding, guitar; Paul Thompson, drums; John Wetton, bass). I must say, though, that had I never bought any of their 45 rpm records, this album might well have kicked me in the teeth.

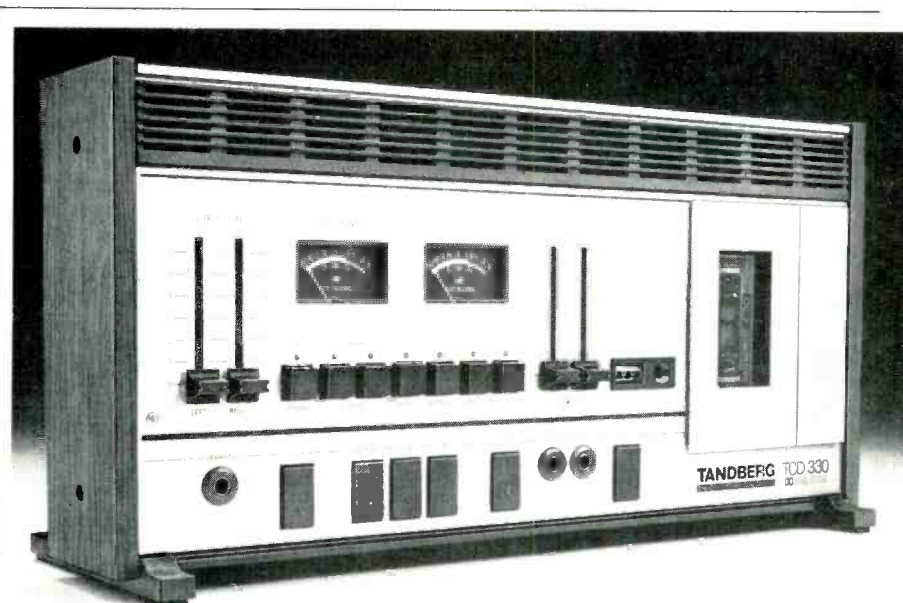
Unfortunately, however, aside from the singles there are only three cuts which move me, the horrific *Bodies* which deals with the subject of abortion in an undelicate manner, their dismissal of their roots with the nasty *New York*, and the famed pointed finger at their former record label(s), *E.M.I.* Of the four singles, three are very good but there is a marked decline in innovation from one single to its successor in chronological order. *Anarchy* is the definitive statement, *God Save the Queen* is a successful followup without the same potency, *Pretty Vacant* is true to the Pistols mold but not exactly captivating to the last, and *Holidays in the Sun* somehow is uninspiring from start to finish, complete with a riff nicked from the Jam's *In the City*.

The rest is pure filler, both lyrically and musically—they would be better off including the flip sides to the singles which were at times as good as the A-sides. Chris Thomas' production

is very good and aids tremendously in making the Pistols musical. However, this should not be overestimated—a recent Kiss cover of *Anyway You Want It* made me pull out my **Dave Clark Five's Greatest Hits** album and the sound on those tracks is far more explosive than the bulk of this record. Thomas is good, but the Pistols don't yet have the depth to hold the listener's attention for more than three minutes with any one song, and the challenge for the rest of the Seventies is to do just that. When they come up

with six minutes of lyrics, dynamics, and melodies which grab me by the seat of my pants and don't let go for a second, then they can be legitimately acknowledged as more than just a political singles band. Lord knows Britain's given America tons of singles bands, some of which take and some of which don't—but why bother putting out an album if the bulk of it is already available on singles, and the rest is forgettable? *J.T.*

Sound: B+ Performance: B



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