

Dylan, Mitchell create new moods



During those sizzling 60's, rock music circles traditionally recognized a supreme triumvirate as leaders of a culture. The Beatles, the Rolling Stones and Bob Dylan were the gods of the times, and were held responsible for turning around the heads of an entire generation.

But as the 60's drew to an end, so did the Big Three: the Beatles ended that scene after grossing somewhere around \$100 million, and Bob Dylan threw away the mantle of folk prophet and went to Nashville for some love songs, leaving the Stones at the top for no other reason than that they were still around.

Now, in the directionless 70's, the winds bring rumors that a Beatles reconciliation is at hand. And lo and behold, Dylan himself has hit the road in one of the most talked about tours in a decade. Along with the tour an album was promised, and about a week ago, "Planet Waves" (Asylum 7E-1003), a collaboration with The Band, came out, and it seems pretty safe to say that Dylan is finally back.

The feeling one gets from "Planet Waves" is like familiarity, almost a *deja vu* effect. Dylan's voice is in fine form, and The Band's work is remarkable, bringing back the style of "Like a Rolling Stone" or "Positively 4th Street." The production is remarkably clear and tight, presen-



ting Dylan in his best light all the way through.

The songs themselves are a whole different matter. There seems to be a trace of every phase he's ever gone through lyrically — — — a lot of the love song style from his "New Morning" George Harrison period, a hint of the protest song, and a little bit of "John Wesley Harding."

The album opens with a slightly country tune, "On a Night Like This," just a light little romance, and from there goes down to a mournful "Going Going Gone." The song is punctuated by Robbie Robertson's slide guitar, which, like the rest of the instrumental tracks, is laid back low enough to be effective without taking a bit of the spotlight from the singer.

The total album is divided pretty evenly between a light-hearted Dylan



and a more pensive, almost saddened personality. It's the slower numbers that leave the biggest impression, for they contain the lyrics that call to mind the Dylan of '65.

"Dirge" contains the passage "I can't recall a useful thing you ever did for me, but pat me on the head one time when I was on my knees." His most biting lyric ever, "Positively 4th Street" is brought back, but the primal scream of that song is tempered here into a love song filled with a shocked sadness. In "Wedding Song," Dylan actually mentions his past words, saying with determination, "It's never been my duty to remake the world at large, nor is it my intention to sound the battlecharge."

And that is why this album is so important. Not only is it one hell of an album musically, but we finally have something to judge the Dylan of today with, and aside from a passing reference, Dylan seems to want that judgement based on today alone, with no thought of yesterday. For a man with so much power to start all over again is highly noble, and something we should respect. The man has given us the album we've been waiting for for years — maybe we can start again with him.

Like Dylan when he came on stage with an electric band in 1966, Joni Mitchell stands a very real chance of alienating a whole field of fans with her new effort, "Court and Spark" (Asylum 7E-1001). A logical extension of her last, "For the Roses," she has tried to make the transition of styles go a little easy. The change may be a little too radical for her followers to accept, even though the crowd reaction at her U of I concert a couple weeks ago was one of the best reactions I've ever seen for anything.

Like Dylan, she all of a sudden began working with a full rock band.

Though the first half of her concert was not as successful as it could have been, by the end the crowd loved it. Part of the reason may have been the prevalence of material off "Court and Spark," which no one had heard yet — however any doubts about that material were quickly dispelled after hearing the actual album.

"For the Roses" hinted at a classier Joni than the one who sang folk songs in Laurel Canyon a few years ago. A little flash in the arrangements, and the first drums ever heard with Joni Mitchell's voice were there. In light of "Roses," this album is the only possible follow-up. There may be cries of anguish from the purists, but actually, "Court and Spark" is an excellent album.

Her melancholy lyrics are still intact, although the traumatic love affairs that filled her past albums (Graham Nash, James Taylor) no longer dominate. Her powers as a poet come through without the emotional edge that shadowed her words: "Still I sent up my prayer, wondering where it had to go, with heaven full of astronauts and the Lord on death row..." she comments. And "Car On a Hill" is nothing less than total musical poetry, with a stunning arrangement.

The rock aspect isn't as overbearing in the studio as it was on stage, but the influence is there. A jazz-style drum fills out the background, with the addition of strings and woodwinds scattered about. An almost tired orchestration appears on "Down to You," but it grows into a beautiful theme that continues the flow of the album.

Two outstanding cuts — "Raised on Robbery" and "Twisted" present a new Joni Mitchell. On the former she just out and out rocks, and surprisingly it works. "Twisted" is a jazz tune with a sense of humour that ends the album with a flourish.

The only words to describe "Court and Spark" are superlatives: beautiful, stunning, perfection, and on and on. But maybe the words Joni Mitchell would suffice.

The records reviewed on this page were loaned to the Vidette by Student Stores, 115 North St., where they are currently available.

'Harry' cleans up

Magnum Force

Clint Eastwood** Hal Holbrook

Dirty Harry fans will be disappointed in Clint Eastwood's comeback in "Magnum Force." His latest film is supposed to be a sequel to the exceedingly popular "Dirty Harry." In that movie he was a good cop who was thwarted in his attempts to stop a psychotic killer by liberal laws that favor the criminal. The moral of the story: Police should have the freedom to use whatever means necessary to apprehend dangerous people; and we believed it.

Well, that sounded good a few years ago, but a lot has happened since then, including Watergate and the "plumbers" break-in of Dan Ellsberg's psychiatrists' office. Public opinion has turned full circle since that time and Dirty Harry's tactics are out of date. And we all know that it is the film medium that mirrors the public's morality and opinions. Question: How does Harry rectify his past? Solution: "Magnum Force."

Harry is back, but he is no longer dirty. The plot is simple: A right-wing police group decides laws are too liberal, so they decide to systematically murder hoods. Harry is called in to investigate the killings and finds the police are responsible. Bad news for extremist cops, Harry is a reformed peace officer.

The picture is based loosely on an actual right-wing police group called the Brazilian Death Squad. The recent reaction of the public has condemned this type of radical action, which left Eastwood's first character in a bad position. To correct the image and to appease the public they came up with "Magnum Force."

This version is also an action picture with plenty of chase scenes,

graphic murder and black humor. Sounds like the old Harry, right? Wrong. The only similarity is his famous unemotional reaction to any situation.

Unfortunately, the transformation from Dirty Harry to Clean Harry is almost embarrassing to view. The excitement generated by the old Harry stalking a killer is gone. "Magnum Force" is about as exciting as television's "Police Story."

So what is left? A skeleton of a film that attempts to substitute action and blood for a believable plot. And a new Callahan who wouldn't act illegally to save his life. The result; millions of people standing in line to see America's favorite hard-ass detective act like Mr. Clean.

Michael O'Brien

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