



Joni In Germany

by Dieter Paul Rudolph

Obviously Joni Mitchell doesn't have a close relationship with Germany. She knows our fabulous wines ("Seventeen glasses Rhine wine, milk of the Madonna Clandestine" from 'Don't Interrupt The Sorrow') and famous diseases ("Tell those girls that you've got German measles" from 'Blue Hotel Room'), and that's about all there is relating to Germany in her songs. But, the other way round: What does Germany know about Joni Mitchell?

Some weeks ago, I was offering a 12 page JM story to the editor of *Good Times*, a German magazine celebrating the music of the 60s and 70s. The editor liked the story, but... he was sorry: "Joni Mitchell isn't one of the readership's 200(!) favourite artists!" What a shame, I thought. So I wrote a two page story called "The Forgotten Joni", asking for the reasons of Joni's non-popularity here in Germany.

Of course, she has her fans. In 1975, *The Hissing Of Summer Lawns* won the 'German Record Award' and her latest, *Turbulent Indigo*, had a very warm welcome by critics. *Spex* called it "Joni's best album for 17 years". *Musikwoche* praised Joni "the most exceptional singer/songwriter". And turning on your German radio, there might be 'Big Yellow Taxi' in the air.

But there's a barrier between Joni and the German music lovers. A barrier called "language". For an ordinary German, Joni's lyrics are some kind of a riddle. What are "Magdalene Laundries"? What

exactly does "Through stand-in boys and extra players" mean? Unfortunately Ms Mitchell doesn't always use the words we learned in school ("He is a beefeater. He is a vegetarian." and so on). But for me, Joni's magic has its roots in the perfect combination of music and words. As a German, you have to hear it with your dictionary on your knees. A hard job for an easy listening boy.

Well, many Germans didn't understand what Mick or Syd sang, too. But The Stones or Pink Floyd were wild boys or psychedelic boys, and so their words must have been wild or psychedelic, whether you understood or not. In the late 60s and early 70s the German youth appreciated songwriters like Dylan because they were "protest singers", very political. Joni never was one in this sense. And she never had a hit here. "Woodstock" became a small hit - but in the Matthews Southern Comfort version.

Curiously, none of Joni's songs has a German cover version (excepting a MUZAK-version of 'The Circle Game' which I heard in a clothes store. I didn't buy anything, of course.) That would have made it. In the early 70s, a German singer named Juliane Werding covered a song by Joan Baez (originally by The Band), 'The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down'. It was terrible (the German title was 'Die Nacht Als Conny Kramer Starb.' - 'The Night Conny Kramer Died', about drug abuse) but it became a huge hit and, as a

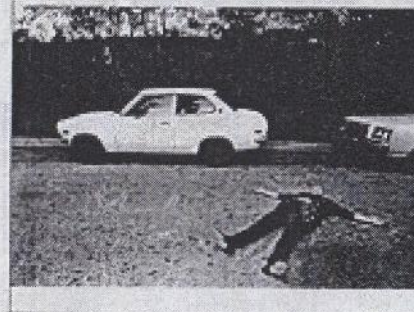
consequence, helped Ms Baez to become the one and only female folksinger Germany was listening to. What if Ms Werding had covered 'Big Yellow Taxi'? Well... it would have been much more terrible, I think, but could have been the

beginning of a big career for Joni in Germany.

So please don't worry talking about Joni to a German. "Johnny Mitchell? The guy who played with Jimi Hendrix?!"

joni mitchell

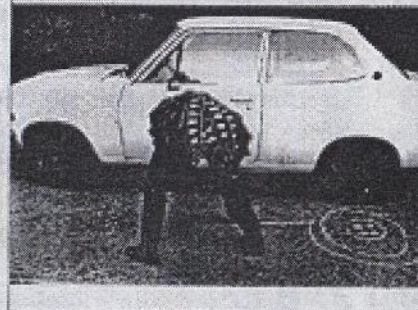
joni mitchell hits



joni mitchell releases her first ever anthologies.

as the title suggests, *hits* features popular favourites, while *misses* highlights more challenging, yet equally influential work.

joni mitchell misses



both albums represent a wealth of material from an unparalleled career.