

## Joni and 'Hejira'

In the past three years Joni Mitchell has made a chameleon transition in her musical style. It has been a change which has revealed her not as the "filigree and vine" weaver she termed herself in "Ladies of the Canyon" but, as a woman with a tensile strength.

Just released, "Hejira" is a musical travelogue which shows Mitchell's continuing and expanding devotion to jazz. It is a deep retrospective look at her own Canadian background.

Mitchell's voice is a chilling instrument which can change octaves with the smoothness that a Jaguar can handle sharp corners and never lose speed. As lyricist Mitchell ranks favorably with Dylan, Sondheim, Simon and other superb word merchants.

Playing almost as major a role in the total production as Mitchell herself are jazz musicians such as Jaco Pastorius, Larry Carlton, and Victor Feldman, who provide an excellent tandem musical layer to the texturized vocals.

In each song there is something unsettling. "Amelia" stands out as a mystery song. The sparse guitar supplied by Carlton and drifting words pay an eerie tribute to Amelia Earhart.

"Where some have found their paradise  
others just come to harm  
Amelia, it was just a false alarm  
Like Icarus ascending  
on beautiful foolish arms  
Amelia, it was just a false alarm  
"Amelia," Joni Mitchell

"Furry Sings the Blues" is a strange loving portrait of Memphis bluesman Furry Lewis. Neil Young supplies a mournful harmonica which adds just the proper touch to "make Beale street and Furry come alive."

The title tune "Hejira" is a strange coupling of the bass of Jaco Pastorius and the tidelike voice of Mitchell. The album is certainly the most "Canadian" influenced album which she has released.

It's been nearly five years since the turning point "Blue" album which took Mitchell away from the standard acoustic guitar. Though she no longer writes statements such as "The Last Time I Saw Richard" Mitchell seems to be able to spin stories that combine fact and fiction and make a final message. "Hejira" does that, and it is one of the best albums of 1976.