

# Today's Writer-Performer Is Old Hat in Pop Field

By FRANCES MILLER

When Roger Miller sang "King of the Road," the news was two-fold — it was the biggest pop song of the year and the same person wrote the lyrics and tune and sang it.

The do-it-all-yourself writer and performer is no longer news in pop music. Today, that's where it's at.

Two representative new albums are Phil Ochs, and Joni Mitchell — doing all their own Hartford — doing all their own writing and singing and in some cases adding instrumental accompaniment.

Phil Ochs pronounced Oaks, 28, from El Paso, has been around awhile. He's listed, under folk, in the Schwann catalog with three LPs on Elektra, the

## RECORDS



first in 1964, and one, out this January, on A & M.

His second LP for A & M, "Tape from California," has just been released.

What Ochs does now can't really be called folk any more. It's topical and politically "new left."

Side one of the "Tape from California" is the more interesting of this "now" album. The first song, "Tape from California," sticks in your mind though all its stream of consciousness words won't stick much like Ochs' earlier song, "Small Circle of Friends." Stream of consciousness, used here a couple more times, is supposed to bring the song into the listener's mind at least partly by feeling rather than intellectually.

Ochs is a master of vignette

descriptions. One line will describe something so clearly that the picture is complete; the next line can be about something different. In the title song, for example, there's a line, "a poster of a movie star walked by." No other word are needed.

Ochs is outspokenly antiwar and has sung at antiwar rallies. The new album includes "White Boots Marching in a Yellow Land" and "The War Is Over." The former has some of those graphic one-liners. "The War Is Over" contains the most shocking line on the album — a statement toying with treason.

Ochs uses the traditional folk verse and chorus form. This and the theme of "John Hill" and the tune used — "John Henry" — make it sound a lot like a Woody Guthrie song. Ochs' singing is clearer here than on any other song, although he is reasonably easy to understand all the way through.

Joni Mitchell, 24, from Canada, has her first album out, "Joni Mitchell," on Reprise. There's not a bad song on it. Her best-known composition, "Both Sides Now," isn't on the LP. "Night in the City," which also is being heard around and about, is. Miss Mitchell plays piano and guitar and designed the album's psychedelic art cover.

Miss Mitchell's concerns are

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love and personal things. She has a lot of insights to share, but she doesn't shove them at the listener.

She sounds much like Judy Collins. But in "Night in the City" her voice is ready at any instant to take off in a Swiss yodel. It's a very individualistic, memorable delivery.



The Top Ten: (national poll)

1. Lady Willpower, Gary Puckett and Union Gap
2. Grazing in the Grass, Masekela
3. Jumpin' Jack Flash, Rolling Stones
4. Hurdy Gurdy Man, Donovan
5. Classical Gas, Williams
6. Hello I Love You, Doors
7. Stoned Soul Picnic, 5th Dimension
8. Turn Around, Look at Me, Vogues
9. Indian Lake, Cowsills
10. People Got To Be Free, Rascals.

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