

Joni Mitchell's 'Mingus'

Folk-rock singer Joni Mitchell's flirtation with jazz has blossomed into a full-blown love affair. But it's not a totally satisfying experience. For all of her considerable gifts, "Mingus (Asylum 5E-505)" reveals that Mitchell is just not a jazz singer. She tries mightily throughout this intriguing album but, frankly, I can't help but wonder how exquisite it would have sounded to have had a real jazz singer like Jane Lambert at the microphone. However, Mitchell is to be commended for taking on this project and for pulling it off with an uncompromisingly artistic stance. The album is a tribute to jazz bassist Charles Mingus. In it are sev-

eral tunes Mingus wrote for Mitchell before he died of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis in 1978. Mitchell has added lyrics that paint an appealing word picture of Mingus. Interspersed between selections are short interviews with Mingus. The cover carries several portraits by Mitchell. Jazz buffs will be most excited by the new setting for Mingus' haunting "Goodbye, Porkpie Hat," even though Mitchell's vocal is tenuous and strained. She is much more at home on such original or collaborative works as "God Must Be a Boogie Man," "A Choir in the Sky," "The Wolf Lives in Lindsey," "Sweet Sucker Dance".

