

Joni Mitchell's New Album Is Showcase of Sweet Songs

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Joni Mitchell is quite possibly the most gifted popular song-writer around today. Surely she is among the best lyricists, combining a very personal insight into life with good music sense.

A Canadian by birth, Joni first became known in these parts when Cambridge folk singer Tom Rush recorded several of her songs: "Urge for Going," "Tin Soldier," and "Circle Game." The popularity of Judy Collins' version of "Both Sides Now" increased her fame.

Her latest album, *For the Roses*, adds to her reputation as both a writer and a singer. It is a well-produced collection of some of the prettiest and most moving songs Miss Mitchell has written.

Many of the songs on the album are concerned with love and sexual relationships. For the *Roses* is probably the most personally specific work Joni has released, but it is to her credit as a song-writer that those who eschew searching her lyrics for references to James Taylor can take pleasure in the broader meanings of the tunes.

Different

Miss Mitchell is in a class of popular song-writers apart from most who pen rock tunes. She and such writers as James Taylor, Carol King and David Crosby are set apart by the personal nature



of their music and their perception of life. Mick Jagger may sing "Sympathy for the Devil" or "Gimme Shelter," but it is obvious that his reference is not to personal experience in any way. Harder rock groups have gotten away from describing personal experiences in favor of material which relates to specific group experiences. In a way this is a carry-over from the politicalization of music during the sixties.

For the *Roses* manages to describe very personal events without self-indulgence. Joni's voice treads gently over her lyrics, occasionally pausing to give special treatment to a special word or syllable. On several cuts the music's effect

is heightened by the woodwind arrangements of Tommy Scott. The reeds weave delicately through the songs, carefully avoiding conflict with Joni's voice.

Several songs highlight this album. "Turn me on I'm a Radio" is the closest thing to rock on the album, moving along on a witty play on radio-words like "reception" and "static." Graham Nash lends a sympathetic harmonica to the tune. "Cold Blue Steel and Sweet Fire" offers a chilling insight into heroin use — the yearning for the sweet fire flowing through cold blue steel. Scott's woodwinds help create the effect of the song.

Family

"Let the Wind Carry Me" is a look at family influences. A family where mother is always cleaning and envies her daughter's freedom, while the father is sympathetic to his daughter's hopes and sees his own freedom in terms of her. The song closes with a feeling of ambivalence. The speaker tells us at times she feels like settling and raising a child, "but it passes like the summer - let the wind carry me."

There's a lot to appreciate about *For the Roses* — words, music and design. Some listeners may find the record somber, but reflective is a better description. Quality is the trademark of Miss Mitchell's music and this album is certainly up to her high standard.