

SOUNDS

Bare-bottomed Joni and mournful Melanie



JONI MITCHELL



MELANIE SAFRA

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JONI MITCHELL is well used to baring her soul for the sake of art.

On her new album, "For The Roses," she goes one step further — by baring her bottom. The inside sleeve of the Asylum L.P. is a rear view of the blonde Canadian singer standing naked on the seashore.

Joni, whose lively love life has never quite overshadowed her music, is an altogether uninhibited young lady — though her record company is more reserved. One four-letter word is replaced by a series of dots in the lyrics printed on the album cover.

As always, it's the words that count on her albums. She is the voice of a generation in North America, expressing all the hopes, frustrations, furies and fads of young people in songs like "Woodstock".

"For The Roses" consists of frank reflections on her own emotions and

**By Phillip
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ambitions, coupled with more general treatment of topics like drugs, pollution and social inequality.

It must be said that the poetry — and her writing does amount to that — is often better than the music, which mainly comprises the predictable combination of piercingly clear vocals, piano and guitar.

It tends to come alive with a little help from her famous friends, a retinue which over the years has included Neil Young, Al Kooper and James Taylor. Here there are musical contributions from Graham Nash, Stephen Stills and James Burton, who plays brilliant electric guitar on "Cold Blue Steel and Sweet Fire."

No songs on this fine album come near the stan-

dard of "Both Sides Now" or "Big Yellow Taxi," but the Burton track, plus "Women Of Heart and Mind", "Blonde In The Bleachers" and "Banquet" alone would repay anybody's investment.

"Stoneground Words," Melanie's first album on her own Neighbourhood label, is a sad study in self-centred loneliness.

Her cracked, little girl's voice brings out all the pathos of her own plight, though not everybody will summon up sympathy for a 25-year-old New York girl who has managed to make so much money in the past five years.

Apart from plumbing her own emotions, Miss Safra's songs have no other depths, but the musical backing, including organ and saxophone, is often inventive, with excellent effect on numbers like "Song Of The South" and "Night Song".

One grouse — why was it necessary to parcel it all up in such elaborate, expensive packaging?