

zigzag 69

Feb. 1977

30p. \$1.50



KEITH RICHARD
Jackson Browne

Ry Cooder
Joni Mitchell
Steve Hillage

M. HARRISON NCA



ZIGZAG

YEOMAN COTTAGE
NORTH MARSTON
BUCKINGHAM MK18 3PH

editorial board
PETE FRAME
JOHN TOBLER
ANDY CHILDS
The Famous
MAC GARRY
PAUL KENDALL
KRIS NEEDS

advertising
JOHN TOBLER
Brookwood
(048 67) 5840

photographers
CHALKIE DAVIES
TOM CHEYENNE

layout
PETE FRAME
MAGENTA DE VINE

subscriptions
and back-issues
SUE ANDREWS

Those having the good sense and perception to desire advertising space in this publication should contact Richard Howell on 01-352-4239 or, in his absence, John Tobler on 048-67-5840 - either of whom will be happy to furnish all the requisite fax.

This periodical is neither registered at the GPO as a newspaper, nor has it the slightest connection, living or dead, with the Melody Maker. Any heinous reference to said journal is totally without malice, and is intended to be taken in the spirit of friendly rivalry... except where otherwise stated.

Theoretically, Zigzag "indisputably the most splendid and informative monthly rock music magazine published in Britain" hits the shops on the second Friday of each month, which is about a week after we manage to deliver it to the warehouse of Spotlight Publications, Ltd., our principal distributors. On occasion, due to circumstances entirely beyond the control of man, it comes out a week late.

Contents copyright Prestagate Ltd, 1977. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or part is forbidden unless you are a bonafide certified grade A1 goodbloke. Even so, you must first have sought and obtained the written consent of the publisher (which is not unreasonably withheld). Any rip-off artists who fail to satisfy these conditions can expect a visit from Tobler and the boys.

Established in April 1969, and motivated by the music, not the money.



It's all in a day's work for San de Gaulle.

Louise Pearson

SAYINGS OF THE MONTH

"I got the feeling in the courtroom that there was absolutely no understanding of the kind of life we lead. To them the things we come in contact with would be shocking, but they're as common to us in everyday life as the milkman coming to the door"...Keith Richard.

"I'm out to see Sir John Reid, and puke all over his face"...Malcolm McLaren.

"I wouldn't let Grace Slick blow me"...Marty Balin.

"I spend most of my time laughing my ass off"...Leo Kottke.

"They (Led Zeppelin) thought it was my fault Robert Plant had such a big cock"... Joe Massot (Director of 'The Song Remains The Same').

"The safety-pin kid in the bar is taking his attitudes straight out of the Sunday People, rather than thinking them up for himself"...Mick Farren.

"James Brown sucks"... David Hancock.

"Fairport Convention will go on until my knees go"... Dave Swarbrick.

"Kevin Coyne's lyrics make Bernie Taupin look like a graffiti artist"... Giovanni Daddomo.

"I am not, I fear, a television person"... John Peel.

"John Lodge has chosen 'Natural Avenue' as the title for his debut solo album - he feels that his whole life has been one natural avenue towards it"... Decca Records advertising hype.

"Nobody plays the blues any more - not unless they're black and old"... Mick Brown.

"Crosby Stills & Nash are back together. All the problems are over; we've patched everything up and we're staring all over again"... Graham Nash.

"Get sniffing kids. And don't stop till you hit the ceiling"... The Raver.

"I'd rather be on Southend seafront than Sunset Strip; there's much more going on"... Wilko Johnson.

"If I had one leg, I'd be staggering"... John Otway.

"Hey, I know more than three chords now! I know four and a half! I'm practising all the time ... the Blue Oyster Cult have shown me that rock'n'roll is hard work, it's harder than being in the army"... Patti Smith.

"When there's a tidal wave coming, you don't just sit and sip your coke and pretend everything's cool, you jump in your boat and go, dad"... Ted Nugent.

CONTENTS

STEVE HILLAGE: Gong nomad finds fame and worship as psychedelic solo star... page 7

JONI MITCHELL: Interview-shy songstress overcomes phobia and ruminates... page 11

RY COODER: Cult figure folkie sticks by his guns to leave the dark end of the street... page 16

KEITH RICHARD: The wheels of jurisprudence grind into action... page 22

JACKSON BROWNE: Four men ride out and only three ride back. Chinese restaurants in Winslow, Arizona... page 28.

JOHN WALTERS: Intrepid explorer journeys north to Panto in Palmers Green. Shock horror drama probe... page 33.

REVIEWS: Latest platters subjected to scrutiny by our panel of non-experts... page 37.

"I've spent my whole life in clouds at icy altitudes"



Los Angeles, California;
Sankey Phillips and Dave Wilson report.

Joni Mitchell rarely gives interviews these days - on the grounds that she doesn't see any point in them: "I don't have anything to say that would explain any of my works more clearly", she says. Well, that's a matter of opinion; if she were willing to comment on some of her songs, maybe we'd be spared some of the preposterous interpretations and observations by critics. What I find more interesting at this point in time, however, is not her output so much as her route to the stars...how she started out on that road which led her to that stratum of untouchable fantasyland where she no longer has to mix with mere mortals.

The stories behind the songs are her own business - and at this stage in the game, one can understand her desire to "keep her goldfish bowl as translucent as possible"...but she was quite prepared to discuss those early days in fairly specific terms - though her effusiveness faded rather swiftly when the conversation approached Mr. Crosby and Mr. Stills, those refugees from famous LA bands, who grew so much closer in her presence during 1968.

Since your editor is so obsessed with the need to supply as much background trivia as possible, let me just jot down some biographical details before the interview starts: Joni Mitchell was born Roberta Joan Anderson on November 7th 1943, which makes her 33 years old now. Her original intention was to become a successful commercial artist, but her studies at Alberta College of Art in Calgary were distracted by the plinking and plunking of guitar strings. Folk music. She learned to play with the aid of a Pete Seeger 'How to play guitar' record, and her paintbox began to gather dust. Her first gig was at a coffee house called the Depression. Now read on:

ZZ: I'm primarily interested in the early days - how you got started. How do you feel about a potted autobiography?

JM: Well, I was born in Fort McCloud, Alberta. I moved from there to a small town in Saskatchewan called Maidstone, then on to North Battleford and on to Saskatoon. I was always pressured by my mother to be involved in music; possibly

because my father played in bands when I was small - you know, marching bands and things like that. He played the trumpet.

I was always more interested in painting than anything else, though, and I went off to art college...and every summer, my cronies and I used to go up to the lake and sing around the campfire - you know, un-accompanied songs.

One summer I decided...Oh! I remember. I went to a coffeehouse to hear some jazz, because my friends were interested in jazz and I was kind of curious to find out what it was all about - I was still a rock and roller, teenybop go-to-the-dances-on-Saturday-night type. Any way, that night there was no jazz, there was this terrible folk singer. I didn't enjoy it at all, but I kept going down there...And I found there were some things I liked. I liked a group that was very Kingston Trio-ish; they were local, and they were very amusing - it was really funny to hear comedy in music. I wanted the leader to teach me how to play the guitar, but he wouldn't, so I went out and bought myself a ukelele, because my mother thought that guitar... she thought that guitar music was sort of associated with country and western, which was sort of hillbillyish - so she said "No guitar!"

ZZ: So you got a ukelele instead?

JM: That's right...and I plunked my way through most of that summer. Then, back at college, I started playing in a club with Peter Aibling - he and I became the house acts. That was in Calgary, Alberta, and it was the first professional gig either of us played. Peter went off and became Mycroft of the Times Square Two, and I began to struggle around the clubs, and I also moved to Toronto, where I got a part-time job. And it was at that time when I met my husband, Chuck.

ZZ: Do you remember when this was?

JM: That was in May of 1965. Well, Chuck and I moved to Detroit and worked as a duo for a while, and we stayed around there until Tom Rush came along and sort of encouraged us to get out of Michigan. So we went to New York and played the Gaslight; we didn't do all that well. We drew a few interesting people, but nothing really startling.

So we got out of Michigan and went down

to the Carolinas, and found out that South Carolina was too far south; I refused to work there any more. North Carolina was very nice: we met a lot of interesting people - very nice service people - which gave me a whole new point of view on the war. I know a lot of really nice, a lot of really tragic, and a lot of really gung-ho soldiers. A captain who owned my guitar before me wanted to give it to me, because he thought I was better than Peter, Paul and Mary. He used to come in every night and get drunk and say "Oh, you're better than Peter, Paul and Mary!". So I bought the guitar from him at a very, very, very good price. Love it dearly.

ZZ: When did you start working as a solo?

JM: Around the end of '66.

ZZ: And when did you start to write your own songs?

JM: Well, I wrote one song in Calgary; I don't remember what it was about, but I wrote it for Peter. I don't remember how it went, and I'm sure he doesn't either. The next one I wrote was 'Day After Day'. I wrote that when I went to the Mariposa folk festival in August 1964. Then I wrote 'What Will He Give Me' in November of 1964, and didn't write anything else until the following April when I wrote a song called 'Here Today And Gone Tomorrow'...and maybe one or two more; like I had one called 'The Student Song'. I guess I had written about five songs when I met Chuck.

ZZ: Was there any common theme?

JM: In the early ones. Love Lost. I met a wandering Australian who really did me in. As a matter of fact he continued to be the theme for a lot of songs that I wrote. I used to find it really difficult to write Love Found songs! My earliest 'real true love found' song was 'Dawn Treader'... but Love Found songs were difficult to write, primarily because they really take a lot of confidence, not only that you are in love, but that the other person is in love with you. Otherwise you're afraid to say all the things that you want to say. It's a standard thing. You don't want to look foolish and commit yourself to all these things. So I didn't, at that time, have very much...the way my head was working I didn't have very much to write about.

I was sort of relatively contented.

ZZ: It was Tom Rush who eventually drew the folk audiences to your songs when he recorded 'The Circle Game' and 'The Urge For Going'... can you tell us about those?

JM: I wrote 'The Circle Game' about Neil Young, who was a friend of mine at the time. He was lamenting lost youth at 21! He had decided that all the groovy things to do were behind him now, he was too old to do them; suddenly he was an adult with all the responsibilities. He had been told all his life that all the things he wanted to do, they said "Wait 'til you're older". Now he was older, and he didn't want to do those things any more. So that was the idea for one song.

'The Urge For Going' I wrote after the second Mariposa I ever went to...

ZZ: What exactly was 'The Mariposa'?

JM: A folk festival which was held in Ontario every summer. The first one I went to, I went solely to watch... but the second time I went, I was a performer. That was the first year I was married, and that was a very bad year... it seemed to be full of drunks and people looking for action rather than music - so I was pretty unprepared.

I wanted to do all my own material; I didn't have much variety. I wasn't very good, and I had a lot of trouble with the audience booing and hissing and saying "Take your clothes off, sweetheart!". Things like that really shook me up because I didn't know how to counter or how to act. I thought I'd bombed; I wanted to quit and I was really desperate. On the way back, in the car I wrote a line that said "It's like running for a train that left the station hours ago/I've got the urge for going but there's no place left to go!". What I really meant was that the folk movement had died at that point, and that the music I loved had no audience left... it was futile and it was silly, and I may as well quit.

So then I forgot about the line, and then one day I was cleaning out my guitar case, which is usually full of scrap songs, lyrics I've started - and I came across that piece of paper. I used to clean the case out every so often, and read all the notes over - and I would sometimes find something where I couldn't even remember what the original thought was... but the line would stir up a whole fresh idea, completely new. That's what happened with 'Urge For Going'. I wrote that in August, and the next thing I knew it was September, and then October. I was really cold, and I was saying "I hate winter and I really have the urge for going someplace warm", and I remembered that line. So I wrote 'Urge For Going' from that.

ZZ: And Tom Rush happened to pick up on it?

JM: Actually, Dave van Ronk was the first. I met Dave and Patrick Sky in Winnipeg in September or October - I had just written it, so it must have been October. They were doing a Canadian television show called 'Sing Out', and I thought that once again... it was sort of following Mariposa, I was shaky and thought I was awful and amateurish and I wasn't growing fast enough. And I could feel how good my peers were; I could feel how amateurish I was, and I really needed encouragement. They didn't give me any as far as I could see. Van Ronk was saying things like "Joni, you've really got groovy taste in clothes, why don't you become a fashion model?" And Patrick Sky was saying "It sucks". But Dave did like 'Urge For Going' and he asked me for it, I remember. I wondered what ulterior motive he had in mind after saying all those dreadful things to me. "He must just want to laugh at it or something". I was that insecure about my writing. I really thought it was awful.

ZZ: (As far as I know, Van Ronk didn't record it until his Polydor album in 1972.) But Tom Rush recorded it first, didn't he?

JM: Well, when Tommy took it, he had Judy Collins in mind. He took it to her and she apparently didn't like it, it just didn't

excite her enough to do. So he didn't know what to do, and he learned it in the meantime. And I got a letter from him one day saying I'm going to do 'The Urge For Going' I don't think it's my kind of song, but I'm going to try it anyway. And he had beautiful success with it.

So then, Tommy really started it. He opened doors. The Philadelphia circuit... I probably never would have... I was running out of clubs to play, and there wasn't very much money where I was playing and everything. And the only way I did work was through Tom. He'd go into a club and he'd stand up there and sing my song, and build me up and people would get curious, you see. So he really opened up a whole circuit for me. That's where I grew and through experience got some other ideas, lived some other things.

ZZ: And then the ball started rolling... all sorts of people began to record your songs - all before your first album...

JM: Right. Buffy Sainte Marie did 'Circle Game' and 'Song To A Seagull'; Ian & Sylvia did 'Circle Game'; Judy Collins did 'Michael From Mountains' and 'Both Sides Now' - and they were also being done in England by people like Fairport Convention and Julie Felix. She was doing quite a few of my songs, not very common ones, but peculiar ones I'd forgotten... she got them off old lead sheets and tapes.

ZZ: What, to you, is the trademark of your growth? What is the change in your writing that indicates to you that you're writing better songs now than you were before?

JM: Now, better is a point of view. My mother and a lot of relatives will think I'm more ambiguous. I think I'm a better poet now, and my melodies are much more complex. The music is, and this is a dirty word to use, much more intellectual. It's more complicated, it has more meat to it. So things like 'Carnival In Kenora', which is just a pretty little courtship song that people like - I'm not writing any more like that. I get halfway through them and I realize they're not saying anything, and I throw them aside. I have more philosophy in my songs; it's not really protest, it's more contemporary. If a historian read into it, he would see more of our time in my music now.

Before it could have been anything. While I was married to Chuck, what topics did I have to write about? I was limited in writing short stories, character sketches of people in love, for fear that people would say "Listen to that song, there must be something wrong between them"... you know what I mean. You have to be very careful not to give the opinion that you're running around. At least, I always did, and now I have no-one to answer to, no-one to be afraid of offending.

My songs are very honest, they are very personal, extremely personal. Sometimes they really hurt to sing. Some nights you really get into them, and they really take a lot out of me, which is something music never did before.

ZZ: You do seem to make heavy use of "symbolism" in your music. I've noticed that every once in a while a symbol will recur.

JM: What?

ZZ: Dreams, for instance.

JM: Are you talking about early stuff or later stuff?

ZZ: Earlier stuff... and wasn't there a bird symbol that recurs?

JM: Seagull. The first album was called 'Song To A Seagull' and I used that as a continuity. I found that 'Song To A Seagull' was a summary of all the songs I'd ever written.

ZZ: Do you work consciously with symbols, or do you become aware of them afterwards?

JM: I think you do afterwards, I think it is subconscious. Just as a songwriter steals from his own melody. Like, if you want to get technical, Kurt Weill's stuff... you can pull 'Mack The Knife' out of almost

any melody of his. It repeats itself. Like, Donovan got hung up and used a really strange thing. It wasn't really a symbol, just a word. He used "silver bicycles" in two songs. That's a very strange image to use in two songs, and I think when you put it in, you're not really aware... maybe he was.

There's a friend of mine who uses doves a lot, Mark Spoelstra, he uses doves and gun images a lot, negative gun images. I use dreams a lot; I thought I could say certain things in dream images that I couldn't say in factual things... but now I'm writing more as a narrator, more matter-of-factly.

ZZ: When did you make that transition? After the first album?

JM: Well, 'Both Sides Now' was probably the first song of that new phase... and then I went through a period when I got into stories - like I remember I wrote a song called 'The Gift Of The Magi', which was just one of O'Henry's short stories done as a poem and set to music... and 'The Pirate Of Penance' was just a story.

ZZ: Well, are they just stories, or are they personal?

JM: Which?

ZZ: The songs you're talking about... the ones on your first album.

JM: Well, 'I Had A King In A Tenement Castle' was a very true story from my own life, but I did it in the form of a fairytale. I guess you could say that my songs from that period were usually personal if they were in the first person.

ZZ: What about 'Nathan La Freener' - that is a song which always intrigued me.

JM: He was a New York cab driver; he really existed. He drove me to the airport one day. (NY cabbies have to display their name and photograph prominently on the cab) I wrote most of that song on the plane. It relates to my feelings that day... just exactly my trip from the door to the airport.

ZZ: Do you find it easier to write about relationships from a distance; like a guy becomes inspiration for a song only after he's gone?

JM: That depends.

ZZ: On what?

JM: (Silence) You spend any time with a person and you soak up some of them - but generally it doesn't come out until after you've left them... it's just a sort of delayed reaction. Often I don't feel their presence or what they've given me until a long while later... until all the confusion of leaving them is gone.

ZZ: Were you always a Dylan fan?

JM: I was what was known as a "late Dylan fan". At one time I was almost anti-Dylan, and I made a lot of enemies going around saying... I thought he was putting me on, I couldn't accept him. It's a trait of mine. I used to more outspoken; now I'm more noncommittal until I really figure out what they are saying. The thing was I shared no experience with Dylan at that time, so the thing was, I thought that a lot of his stuff... the things I thought were ambiguous and were not written honestly, I find out now were just the things I had no idea of at the time. So as I experience some of his experiences, or bring some of my experiences to his music... it's like I always thought Shakespeare was really wordy and weird, right until I went to Stratford and saw a man who recited Shakespeare like it was really 20th century. It lost all that super-drama stuff that really turned me off, and it flowed like 20th century English, and I understood it. So it's the same thing with Dylan; now every time I listen to him, the things that I thought were just words for word's sake make sense to me.

