

June 14  
to 20  
1968

Issue  
No.  
56



# INKERY

Weekly Review of the Los Angeles Renaissance

- ACID, ROCK AND REVOLUTION p.3
- WHEN IS A REVOLUTION A WHORE? p.4
- JONI MITCHELL ~ LEONARD COHEN p.5
- TWO VIEWS OF ASSASSINATION p.16

**15¢**

25¢  
Outside  
L.A.

NOI-4560  
© 1968



# A POET NAMED JONI MITCHELL



by JOHN BRYAN

About 10 years ago it seemed pathetically clear to those of us who loved poetry and continued to print small magazines full of it (only a few copies, given away mostly to friends) that the American educational system had managed to bore so many kids with so much ball-less rhymed drivel that poetry, as a popular art, was dead.

Then came a poetry revival which none of us word freaks had expected and a few even failed to comprehend at the time.

Some of these lovers of obscure but finely-bound volumes were even a bit put out about it. After all, they ranted, what right had these FOLK singers to create such fantastically concise, mind shatteringly imagistic, undeniably American poetry?

Poor fools, they forgot that the first poems were sung,

that the whole structure of meter and rhyme was designed to weave into a song.

The folk revival of the early 60's extended itself into folk rock. Balladeers also appeared on the scene whose style could not be neatly typed.

The only name which really makes much sense in trying to describe them is that of poet. Poet. Nothing else. Certainly Simon and Garfunkel, Buffy Ste. Marie, Judy Collins, Leonard Cohen and Joni Mitchell fit this description.

A few evenings ago at the Troubadour I found two of this era's finest musician/poets together...and apparently very much in love.

Joni Mitchell was (and is) performing there. Leonard Cohen had come from New York to spend some time...and exchange some of the most deft and beautiful language I've ever heard...with her.

I listened to two sets (all her own musical and lyrical compositions) then interviewed Joni and Leonard briefly.

The sets confirmed what I'd gathered listening to Joni's first album ("Joni Mitchell" on Warner Brothers-Reprie). That in voice and temperament, she seems a good deal like Joan Baez and Judy Collins.

But when it gets down to the songs themselves (once you've forgotten the similarities presented by a gentle nature and the extremely deft use of the guitar) Joni Mitchell is entirely her own creature.

Her song-poems are products of an extremely sensitive, sometimes wry and ironic eye. They show a fantastic ability to describe complex moods and experiences in only a few perfectly chosen and often surreal words.

Her mid-range soprano voice is extremely flexible, capable of piercing, shrill passages in the higher registers alternating with crooning, husky-voiced stanzas which sound rich and ballsy.

It's obviously a carefully trained voice. Her guitar work is varied and extremely imaginative. She achieves some really weird effects by re-tuning half-a dozen times each set, changing the instrument's range and coloration to fit the song she's doing.

After the first set (which included a song called "Rose is Blue" about the increasing reliance on mysticism in hip society) I went to interview Joni, found Leonard Cohen there, saw their beautiful scene together and cut the interruption just as short as possible.

We talked about the subject of "Rose," - mysticism, the fascination of many hip 20th Century Americans with omens, the occult, astrology, tarot cards, ouija boards, divination and instinct.

Said Joni (who is, by the way, a 24-year-old native of Saskatchewan):

"I believe in omens, I see lots of them, although I don't know what they mean. But I see some absurd things happening among my friends.

"One communal group I know tries to predict every good and bad hour of their lives before they do anything. Needless to say, they don't get much done. And they do everything they can to prevent any kind of organization...although they're some of the most creative people I know.

"I was over there one night and I met this astrologer who is very big with them and he really offended me. Perhaps this is an example of what I talk about in 'Rose is Blue.'

"He sat there listening over in a corner while I talked to

my friends for a couple of hours. He overheard everything.

"Then he had the nerve to come over to me and tell me - as though it were some kind of revelation - that I'd had a tragedy in my family in the past two years. I'd been talking about that and he'd simply overheard.

"I saw what he was...and he exercises great power over my friends...he's just a man with a lust to control people by any means or trick he can come up with. I think that's a lot of what's going on in this kind of situation.

"Right now in my life I'm just relaxing. I've just moved into a house in Laurel Canyon. I love it there and many of my friends live in that area.

"I'm not worried about earthquakes or asteroids. I AM worried about riots but I seem to have this fatalistic feeling about it all...what will be will be."

Said Leonard Cohen:

"I just can't live my life on a apocalyptic level. Certainly there's a great deal going on that we don't understand. We can find a bridge to understanding it through acid and music, art and discipline.

"There are always mysteries...but I live my life as calmly as possible. I avoid the irrational and the unnatural... I don't find fault with those who utilize the mystic disciplines. But I have neither the skill nor the aptitude for them.

"I think that it is a great mystery having breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

"If I had a special instinct for divination, I guess I'd divine. But actually, infinity comes to you when you're making love or eating or working.

"Since my work has begun to succeed, I see more clearly than before. I appear no longer hungry and yet I may be more truly hungry than before.

"I find this is a time in my life for privacy, for getting into myself.

"About the political scene...It may indeed be a time for rebellion. It may be the right time to seize bread and power and the television networks. If they can do it, let them do it.

"But let's not just endlessly DISCUSS seizing them. Let's seize them if we have the courage to do it.

"If we don't, let's return into our private lives where we at least treat each other well. Let's not continue the cowardice of talking endlessly about something we'll never do.

"Let's live with another kind of courage.

"Let's do what the Romans called 'corpe diem.' Let us seize the day."

About his role as one of the most influential artists of his generation:

"When I stand on a hill wearing a red cape, I flatter myself...or tyrannize myself...with the fantasy that I'm



affecting my generation...But actually what I'm doing most is just trying to keep my day straight.

"I've lied a lot in my work...not because I intended to lie but because I just didn't know a lot of things.

"It's just like a conversation or a book or a song. It's just a matter of being truthful...

"If I write songs again...and I say IF because that time may never come again. It's a favor to be granted the ability to have this special form of creation...it does not always come and it may never come again...IF I write again I will hope I will have more luck in discovering the lies in my work and eliminating them.

"But first we must take the pressure off ourselves...If we discover that we're not really witches and warlocks and gurus...let's face up to it...if amulets don't work, let's just call them necklaces."



