

## ROCK MUSIC

by GARRY RAFFAELE

# THE PERCEPTIVE JONI MITCHELL

**COURT AND SPARK.** *Joni Mitchell, Asylum (WEA).*

ONE OF her previous lovers has said of Joni Mitchell that her lyrics were embarrassingly autobiographical.

Such gossip-column snippets rarely mean much. But, in the case of Miss Mitchell, they are revealing. For she has shown herself, over four or five albums to be the most dazzling lyricist, writer of her generation.

Her music continues to be a summation of the trends which ebb and flow across the popular music map.

And her writing is deeply personal. Here she sings of freedom in Paris before

self-knowledge are her strengths, lyrically.

If that were all, it would be close to enough, to be the magnificent writer of words. But it is not all.

Miss Mitchell is three parts — lyricist, melody writer and performer. And she rates as high with melody and performance as she does with words.

Melodically, she is far ahead of her contemporaries, creating lines which rarely rely on that most vacuous of attractions, comfort and memorability; that is, Joni Mitchell's melodies are not meant to be whistled — they are too complex by far.

But she orchestrates that complexity with a brilliant, almost showy control so that all flows with a limpid, glistening beauty.

she joined the "star-maker machine", before success caught up with her. It is a deep-dark lament, savage in its commitment.

In her words, she has the same sense of incisive awareness expected of a major writer of, say, novels. I say that because we are in the age of the throw-away . . . and she the pop lyric, in the main, is good for a day, then throw away.

More with Joni Mitchell than anyone else in her field, this is not true. This is durable stuff — of love, of confrontation, of need; it is of people. 'People's Parties', a track echoing the worst party you have ever been to, "Photo beauty gets attention. Then her eye paint's running down".

Perception and pitiless

Miss Mitchell is a tripartite performer — guitarist, pianist, singer. Of the three I prefer the singer because, here, she carries on the melodic fluidity, stretching and bending her music like a stream. Her phrasing is never confined by the obvious — it flows into the crannies and nooks which her own writing opens up.

The guitar is chordal and direct, but never brash. The piano is similar.

'Court and Spark' is all of this. It has as much to recall as did "Blue" and that was her best album.

Another joy about the lady is that not often does a single track drop below her best standard. Along with her other attractions, the lady is so, so consistent . . . and toweringly superb.

self-knowledge are her