

Strangers no more

The Globe and Mail

The Globe and Mail (1936-Current); Apr 12, 1997; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Globe and Mail
pg. C2

Strangers no more

The Globe and Mail

Joni Mitchell told the world years ago about the child she gave up for adoption — but her fans were mostly too distracted by the romantic agonies in her profoundly confessional songs to dwell on the lyrics about birth and babies.

Canada's premier singer-songwriter was reunited with her daughter, Kilauren Gibb of Toronto, last month in Los Angeles after an almost 32-year hiatus.

Mitchell, now 53, conceived Gibb in Calgary while a 20-year-old art school student, and gave birth to her in Toronto in the spring of 1965. After two months of marriage to the American folk singer Chuck Mitchell (he was not the father; Toronto photographer Bradley McMath, now 56, was), Mitchell arranged for the baby to be adopted. Mitchell, who was born Roberta Joan Anderson, named her daughter Kelly Dale Anderson.

That Mitchell had a child in the 1960s has been known for at least five years, and was the subject of rumour and speculation for several years before that. Fuelling — and, retrospectively, confirming — the speculation was the occasional lyric in her songs.

Yet most fans chose to focus on the depictions of longing, loss and heterosexual love found in Mitchell's songs — and on her relationships with such famous musicians as James Taylor, Graham Nash, Stephen Stills, John Guerin and Don Alias.



Joni Mitchell, centre, with grandson Marlin and daughter Kilauren Gibb in Los Angeles.

(MARK LIPSON/Los Angeles Times Sunday)

Mitchell remarried in the early 1980s, to her long-time bassist and producer Larry Klein. They divorced in 1995 and Mitchell now lives with Saskatoon singer-songwriter Donald Freed in Los Angeles. Gibb, meanwhile, has her own child, a boy named Marlin, 3, and, following stints as a model and actor, is currently enrolled in a publishing course at Toronto's George Brown University.

Here is an excerpt of lyrics from *Little Green*, written in 1968 and published in 1971 (Siquomb Music): *Born with the moon in Cancer/Choose her a name she will answer to/Call her green and the winters cannot fade her/Call her green for the children who have made her/Little green, be a gypsy dancer...*

Child with a child pretending/Wear of lies you are sending home/So you sign all the papers in the family

name/You're sad and you're sorry, but you're not ashamed/Little green, have a happy ending.

Chinese Café was published in 1982 (Crazy Crow Music): *Caught in the middle, Carol,/We're middle class; we're middle aged/We were wild in the old days/Birth of rock 'n' roll days/Now your kids are coming up straight/And my child's a stranger/I bore her/But I could not raise her/Nothing lasts for long...*

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.