

# Are liberated women leading the way in songwriting?

HOLLYWOOD (AP) — In another era, they might be singing lullabies. But not now.

In tune with the seventies, a flock of liberated women are restyling the sound of music that sells records—and challenging the long-time male dominance of the field.

Their sound has been called “soft rock”, a switch from the hard rock blare of the sixties.

The queen of the movement, Carole King, stunned the industry with her album *Tapestry*, which has sold five million copies. Her compositions, notably *You've Got a Friend* and *It's Too Late*, have been recorded by virtually every major artist.

Big hitmakers include Canadian-born **Joni Mitchell** with *Both Sides Now* and *Woodstock*, *Laura Nyro* with *Stony End*, *When I Die*, and *Wedding Bell Blues*; *Carly Simon* with *That's the Way I've Always Heard It Should Be* and *Anticipation*; and *Dory Previn* with *Come Saturday Morning* and the album *Mythical Kings and Iguanas*.

The list of successful woman writer-singers also includes *Joan Baez*, *Janis Ian*, *Buffy Sainte-Marie*, a Canadian Indian, and more.

“The female singer-songwri-



Joan Baez



Buffy Sainte-Marie



Joni Mitchell

ters are leading the way,” says one music critic. “They at least let us know that the seasons are indeed changing.”

**Joni Mitchell**, 28, a native of Fort Macleod, Alta., was educated in Saskatoon and Calgary, and played in the Calgary coffee house, *The Depression*, and in church basements and YMCA halls in Toronto. She was only 21 when she met and married *Chuck Mitchell* in Detroit. They performed as a duo around Michigan, then split up, and she moved to New York.

*Buffy Sainte-Marie*, who will be 31 on Feb. 20, was born on the *Pia Pot Cree* reserve north of Regina and adopted at an early age by a Micmac couple who took her to live with them in Maine. She majored in Oriental philosophy at the University of Massachusetts.

The women perform, too. But it's their words and music that stand out—sensitive but city-slick with the uncompromising outlook of women who are sure their time has come.

“I deal in essences,” says

*Laura Nyro*, 25. “I can't do things my girl friends can do, like drive a car or cook a dinner, but I have the ability to see what is at the centre of things.”

*Miss King*, 29, refuses interviews—“she doesn't want the superstar trip,” says a press agent—but has talked of her past battles to make it in a man's songwriting world. “The only way for me to get my songs heard was to sing them myself,” she said of her decision to start performing in the late sixties.

Since then, King hits have included *It's Too Late*, *I Feel the Earth Move*, *Where You Lead*, and the haunting *You've Got a Friend*.

*Carly Simon*, 26, a recent arrival to star status with two hit albums, says, “I come from a family of very strong women; the trait is inherited.” It took that strength, she says, to overcome music business reverse snobbery concerning her background: her father is the *Simon of Simon* and *Schuster* book publishers.

*Dory Previn*, whose lyrics have been published as poetry, also insists that without music her words wouldn't matter.

“In songs,” she says, “the music is the metaphor. The two units make a whole.”

Among women in music, *Dory Previn* is a veteran. She wrote film scores in the late 1950s, trying to find her own niche in the pop music field. “I was told that I was writing poetry and it was not commercial.”

“People would get embarrassed back then with what I was saying. I was very subjective.”

Times changed. Last year, she won accolades for an album of “subjective” confessional songs alluding to the breakup of her marriage to composer *Andre Previn* and her subsequent mental breakdown.