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# Joni's New Album A Personal Statement

By AL RUDIS  
(c) 1971, Chicago Sun-Times  
Joni Mitchell has given up songwriting on her new album, "Blue" (Reprise-Ampex Tapes).

In place of songs, there are intensely personal lyric statements through which are woven threads of music. The thin melodies shade and fill out the lyrics, but nowhere do words and music combine into great songs as they did on "Joni Mitchell," "Clouds" or "Ladies of the Canyon" (all Reprise-Ampex Tapes).

Those who hope to find things like "For Free," "Night in the City," "Both Sides, Now," "Song to a Seagull," "Woodstock" or "Chelsea Morning" will be disappointed in "Blue." But the album is far from second-rate.

In four albums, Joni Mitchell has gone from sparkling newcomer to larger-than-life superstar in the fast-moving whirl of pop music. Thus, like John Lennon, she can now lay her soul bare and expect us to be interested.

Her songs have always been deeply personal, but until now they've been veiled in metaphor and generalized, like James Taylor's. But on "Blue" she takes a cue from Lennon and gets down to specifics.

**THE STYLE** of the statements is light and airy, yet with an insistent rhythm. Odd little wispy pieces seem stuck on, yet at the same time they are a solid part of the backbone. It often seems like Dionne Warwick's versions of the more intricate Bacharach David songs.

Yet bringing in Lennon, Taylor and Warwick doesn't help in describing Joni's unique vocal style, and this album is just that style carried farther than ever before.

One more performer does come to mind, and while he is worlds apart in voice, style and background, Van Morrison does come close to the feel of "Blue" in his earlier "Astral Weeks" (Warner Bros.-Ampex Tapes). Although slightly heavier, his agonies flow along as relentlessly as Joni's delicate dark clouds float by.

Neither album is anything hummable that can become a big hit for other singers, but both have a powerful cumulative impact that will shake you if you are able to get into the artist's soul.

Of course, Van Morrison's album is very masculine, and Joni Mitchell's is thoroughly feminine, in the pre-women's lib sense.

Although she is certainly beyond sexist victimization, her perspective on love and sorrow is the traditional one. Basically, "Blue" is Joni's own blues in her own fancy, frilly forms, but from the same depths as any woman's blues.

Kris Kristofferson sings his blues within a more rigid framework, that of country music, but his creativity hasn't suffered. In fact, he is probably the greatest songwriter in America today in the traditional sense.

For Kristofferson is not a performer who writes to keep himself supplied with fresh material. He hails back to the breed of Tin Pan Alley and Music City Row songwriters whose

masterpieces are written for anyone and everyone who would listen. The goal is to get as many singers to record the song as possible and live off the writer's royalties. This Kris has achieved.

But today the myth reigns that a songwriter is the best interpreter of his own material. This has led to more than one disaster, but although Kristofferson is not comfortable as a performer, he does well by his dark, melancholy songs.

If you have trouble finding Kris' first album,

"Kristofferson" (Monument), don't give up. Due to some record-company politics, it disappeared from the shelves not long after it was released last year, but it should be back soon now.

You'll be hard put to find a single miss on it.

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