

JAZZTIMES

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Joni Mitchell, 64, and Herbie Hancock, 67, have known each other for at least 30 years and recently the jazz great (this would be Hancock) released a wonderful re-recording, the Grammy-nominated *River: The Joni Letters*, of refreshing interpretations of (mostly) Mitchell songs, some with vocal accompaniment, others not.

In the article Music and Lyrics, writer Geoffrey Himes brings the duo together for a chat about their respective long and winding roads and the mutual admiration society that's developed along the way. Mitchell buffs, especially those with a penchant for her songs from the 60s and 70s, have long been taken with her lyrics. It's a bit of a surprise then to hear Hancock say he didn't pay any attention to the Canadian's words until last year when Verve Records suggested he prepare an album of her songs with Mitchell's ex-husband, Larry Klein, as producer. The music's always come first for Hancock,



even with an earlier song-oriented tribute CD, *Gershwin's World*, which featured vocals by Mitchell.

In fact, Hancock confesses, in the years since he started playing piano at age 7, "there was only one song where I paid attention to the lyrics and that was because for years everyone was talking about how great the lyric was." The song was Billy Strayhorn's *Lush Life*.