



'Puberty' by Edvard Munch

records

Joni: A moment of reflection

By ANN L. MATTES

Joni Mitchell's third album just has to be her best. Wisely, she's saved some of her favorite songs, composed as early as 1966, until she attained popularity not only as a song writer (for Judy Collins and others) but as a folk singer as well.

Like Leonard Cohen, Joni's first two albums appealed to folk enthusiasts who wanted to hear the "original", for reasons more academic than aesthetic. Surprisingly, both Canadian artists held up well after the short term acclaim that novelty brings. People continued to listen to the originals, and many preferred them.

Ladies of the Canyon includes "The Circle Game", which you will recognize immediately and may associate with Tom Rush, who first introduced her songs to the American folk audience. Also familiar is "Woodstock", the song by Crosby, Stills and Nash that covered the festival film. However, if you know Joni at all, the possibility is that you already know she composed them. In other words, she will have no one but herself to thank for the sale of this album.

A couple of years ago Joni

sang at Canterbury House. Her sets included some of the songs on this album. She may even have composed one of them at the Michigan Union, where she was staying. (I wish I could remember which one it was.)

In a coffee house atmosphere Joni has a hypnotic appeal. As she pours out her songs, her eyes rest on members of the audience in instant communication. Standing on stage, large, blue eyes unblinking, guitar held against her graceful but angular frame, she has the same penetrating appeal that Edvard Munch created in his portrait of a young girl, entitled "Puberty." Joni's presentation is a mixture of defiance and despair.

Each of her songs is about people she has met — situations she has experienced. Few are profound. Rather, she concentrates on the simple drama of the moment. And she introduces you to all sorts of interesting people: the clarinetist who plays for free, the refugee from a wealthy family, the priest wearing his father's tie, and many more. Her songs are not abstract speculations but straightforward accounts. Consider, for example, the lyrics to "For Free":

I slept last night in a good hotel
I went shopping today for jewels
The wind rushed around in the dirty town
And the children let out from the schools
I was standing on a noisy corner
Waiting for the walking green
Across the street he stood
And he played real good
On his clarinet, for free

Now me I play for fortune
And those velvet curtain calls
I've got a black limousine
And two gentlemen
Escorting me to the halls

And I play if you have the money
Or if you're a friend to me
But the one man band
By the quick lunch stand
He was playing real good, for free.

Nobody stopped to hear him
Though he played so sweet and high
They knew he had never
Been on their T.V.
So they passed his music by
I meant to go over and ask for a song
Maybe put on a harmony ...
I heard his refrain
As the signal changed
He was playing real good, for free.

In each song, Joni's love for people she is discussing comes out in the words and in the urgency of her voice. The control she exercises over the vocals are peculiar to her style alone, often switching from lower to upper range in a characteristic yodel.

Adapting her coffee house performance to the recording studio has been somewhat difficult for Joni. One of the shortcomings of her second album Clouds was that the songs tended to run into one another because of a lack of variety in the accompaniment. While the instrumentation in this album is still limited, basically unamplified piano and guitar, other instruments such as cello, sax

and percussion are introduced at intervals to provide counter-statements. Joni's piano and guitar arrangements are particularly complimentary to her voice. The music is always pushing forward, unhesitating except for moments of reflection.

When you consider that Joni designed the cover, composed and arranged the songs, sang and played the main instruments, you will only begin to estimate the artistry of this woman. The rest will come when you watch her perform.

The University of Michigan Philharmonica and Chamber Choir, conducted by Thomas Hilbish, will give a concert at 8 p.m. Tuesday, April 7 in Hill Aud.

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cinema

An Academy of mediocrity

By NEAL GABLER

It is quite fitting that the Academy Awards come smack dab in the middle of the basketball and hockey play-offs, because the Oscar telecast is really more of a spectator sport than an evening honoring Superior achievement in cinema? Helly Dolly? Someone has got to be kidding.

All of us know it's gold-flocked, orchestrated, see-thru-pant-dress, tear-filled hokum. Nevertheless, each year we're all there from ten o'clock to God knows when, moaning with every rip of the envelope, "And the winner is..." Nine times out of ten, deep in our cinematic gut, we know the winner is wrong. I mean How Green Was My Valley just isn't a better film than Citizen Kane. Nor is In the Heat of the Night better than Bonnie and Clyde. And if Oliver is better than 2001, which wasn't even nominated, then I grieve for all art judged against the Great Aesthetic in the Sky.

Actually, the awards resemble a kind of ward-heeler politics. Most studios are represented somewhere in the nominations. So are different genres. Musical — Hello Dolly! Adventure — Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid. Pseudo-Shakespeare — Anne of the Thousand Days. And this year there is even a Foreign-intellectual — Z — which may become something like the Jewish seat on the Supreme Court.

There are also usually a black (Rupert Crosse), a youngster (Cathy Burns), some old-timers (John Wayne, Gig Young, Jean Simmons), and stars of the future (Jon Voight, Goldie Hawn). Everybody gets a piece of the action. The academy doesn't discriminate anything except quality.

This year's contest has a slightly different touch with the nomination of Z; it is almost

too good a film to be mixed up in this kind of thing. Anyway, it stands at one pole antipodal to Anne. Probably neither will win — Anne, because it is so dishonest and Z because it is fine window dressing but too intelligent for a moronic group who favors the innocuous.

Midnight Cowboy, on the other hand, straddles the spectrum. It is not so deep that it doesn't appeal to almost everyone who goes to see it, but it is not so obviously superficial either. As a matter of fact, with Dustin Hoffman groveling around the streets of New York, it looks rather profound. But in many ways it is like a former winner. In the Heat of the Night; they are both social pabulum. In these troubled times that equals an Oscar.

To say Midnight Cowboy will be best picture is also to say that John Schlesinger will be best director. I guess this is the Academy's stab at auteur theory. If I had my druthers, I'd pick Costa-Gavras for Z or Arthur Penn for Alice's Restaurant. But Schlesinger it will be.

In the category of Best Actor everyone just assumes John Wayne will take it. He'll be flanked by Bob Hope and Martha Rae and drowned out by a slappy ovation while the camera lights on some woman in the audience who looks as if she has girld trouble. After all, the Duke has been around for a long time, and who knows when another role will come along that would even remotely qualify him for consideration? There is a veneer of honesty.

But the Academy, though often predictable, is predictable in a Lyndon Johnson sort of way. LBJ wouldn't give Wayne the Oscar because everyone expects him to win it. Remember Ellsworth Bunker? I'll probably be caught with my glasses down,

but I think the Academy may fool us and give the statue to Peter O'Toole, and a few years later Wayne will get a special award for being a great humanitarian or something. Granted, this may be wishful thinking.

Best Actress is more difficult for the prognosticator. Genevieve Bujold can be eliminated; the Genevieve Bujolds never win. Maggie Smith seems a mite too obscure. That leaves Jane Fonda, Jean Simmons and Liza Minnelli, and to me it's a toss-up. But just so I don't appear to be shirking my duties, I'll give the nod to Liza Minnelli.

The supporting performers' awards are often used to reward some old workhorse of the industry who will never be nominated to Best Actor but who deserves some recognition for sticking it out. For Best Supporting Actress, Cathie Burns of Last Summer is far ahead of the rest of this field of fledglings that I can't imagine (really I can) anyone else winning. The Best Supporting Actor nominations are more true to the Academy form. Both Gig Young and Anthony Quayle are aging veterans of the back-lot. Young will win, but the industry owes something to Easy Rider and those of its ilk for bringing so much money into studio coffers. Besides, Nicholson deserves it.

It is very possible, and even probably, that once I have committed my predictions to print, I'll meet ignominious defeat. That is a chance all reviewers must take. One thing I'm sure of — if John Wayne wins, he'll thank this great country of ours. He's right, you know. It could only happen in America.

By the way, Cinema II is running Salesman Tuesday and Wednesday at 7 and 9:30 p.m.

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