

# Tunes flow from woman of the heart and mind

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It is unlikely that anyone writing music today throws more of his or her own soul into the creation of a song than Joni Mitchell, whose musical confessions sometimes have the ring of excerpts from the personal diary of an intensely emotional, deeply feeling woman.

If Joni Mitchell is limited as a creative composer, there are clearly no limits to the string of passionately forged life encounters that are chronicled so vividly in each new Joni Mitchell album.

The newest Mitchell LP is titled "Hejira" (Asylum Records), and it is filled with more of the same that we have come to expect from this gifted singer-songwriter. Right away, it is clear that the latest batch of Mitchell songs are structured in that familiar, stark pattern, accounting for the sense of sameness that runs through so much of her music — past and present.

Yet if one feels a touch of momentary impatience with Miss Mitchell's shortage of creative flexibility, one is also sucked into the compelling lyrical web she weaves with such raw openness.

Joni Mitchell is — we must assume on the basis of her music — a free-wheeling woman who plows recklessly through life with an open mind and an equally receptive heart. But for all of her liberated instincts and her no-holds-barred encounters, there is a vulnerability that sends her crashing down into emotional pits time after time.

The conflict of strength and weakness is painfully stressed throughout the new album. In the title song, "Hejira," for instance, she tells of being a "defector from petty wars. . ." until she is pulled back down again by a fresh bout with love.

In "Song for Sharon," Mitchell compares her visions and goals. "I can keep my cool at poker. . . But



JONI MITCHELL

I'm a fool when love's at stake, because I can't control emotion. . . All I really want right now is to find another lover."

In her songs, Mitchell can come down hard on former lovers, but she can also be unflinchingly self-deprecating, which is clear in the message of the song "Amelia:"

"Maybe I've never really loved. . . I guess that is the truth. . . I've spent my whole life in clouds of icy altitudes. . . And looking down on everything I crashed into his arms. . . Amelia, it was just a false alarm."

The darkly textured beauty of these songs are set off strikingly by a return to the more basic approach to instrumental background support. For the most part, Mitchell's acoustic guitar and piano accompaniment is augmented only by strong electric guitar and bass. And the results are stunningly effective.