



JONI MITCHELL
Don Juan's
Reckless Daughter
(Asylum)

Joni Mitchell is one of a handful of performers in popular music who take chances. As a result, she never stops growing. She views each of her albums, not as a new piece of product, not as something to tour behind but, rather as an artistic expression—something that she does because it's in her and it has to get out. Each album exhibits a higher level of artistic and technical accomplishment from the one before.

Don Juan's Reckless Daughter is no exception, being, as it is, Joni's first double studio album. It is also probably her most ambitious work to date. Still flirting with jazz, the basic studio band consists of Jaco Pastorius on bass, Wayne Shorter on soprano sax (both from Weather Report) and John Guerin on drums (from the L.A. Express). Joni plays guitar or piano on every track but two.

Those two, "The Tenth World" and "Dreamland," articulate a growing interest in rhythm / drums / percussion that has been manifesting itself since 1976's *The Hissing Of Summer Lawns*. "The Tenth World" is an instrumental with some antiphonal vocals functioning as additional instrumentation. It was co-written by all the players, and is basically a Latin-jazz workout featuring coffee cans, claves, congas, a surdo (played by Airtio) and bongos. A man by the name of Manola Badrena takes the "lead" vocal with Joni, Chaka Khan (of Rufus fame) and two others backing him up. "Dreamland" is the song Roger McGuinn got from Joni on the Rolling Thunder tour that appeared on his *Cardiff Rose* album. Joni's version uses the same instrumentation as "The Tenth World," no melodic instrument of any sort. It is impressive.

Two other cuts need to be mentioned, the side-long "Paprika Plains" and "Off Night Backstreet." Both feature harsh, insistent orchestrations by Mike Gibbs that perfectly compliment Joni's strident piano playing and vocals. The former is perhaps the most important piece of music she's ever recorded. It certainly is the most ambitious. □

—Robert Bowman