

# Joni Mitchell

## She Finds Womanhood on New Album

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JONI MITCHELL HEJIRA

'Hejira,' by Joni Mitchell. Asylum 7E-1087.

The Joni Mitchell who stares out at you from the exquisite black and white cover of her new album "Hejira" looks a great deal different from the Joni Mitchell who stared out at you from the cover of "For the Roses" in 1972.

Back then, she appeared much more the girl than the woman. And her songs, while still extraordinary and unique in their compositions, reflected that difference.

"For the Roses" featured Joni in her cutesy and commercial stage, containing songs like "You Turn Me On, I'm a Radio," and "Electricity."

Her catchy commercialism continued into "Court and Spark" in early 1974 as she offered up her big hit "Help Me" along with "Free Man in Paris" and "Raised on Robbery." It was an album easy to enjoy — maybe too easy.

The following year brought us a stark reversal with "The Hissing of Summer Lawns," as uncommercial an album as she's ever done. Its complicated, sometimes awkward, music and lyrics were difficult to understand and enjoy. Of her six albums to that point, it was probably the worst because it simply didn't work.

A delightful live album, "Miles of Aisles," which also served as a "Best of" collection, helped to make up for the void last year.



On "Hejira," Joni uses the more complex songwriting style she first employed on "Hissing of Summer Lawns," but this time it works — magnificently.

Her songs are smooth and sophisticated, clever and classy and incredibly well written. Her reputation as the absolute queen of female songwriters will only be enhanced by "Hejira." Actually, most of the nine long songs are not songs at all, but poems with musical backup rather than sharply defined melody lines.

"Hejira" is an album full of highlights, with brilliant couplets and phrasings bursting out all over. For example:

On the title song, she sings how "We all come and go unknown; each so deep and superficial; between the forceps and the stone."

On "Song for Sharon," there are these lines among the eight-and-a-half minutes of poetic sculpture: "Dora says 'Have children!'"

Mama and Betsy say 'Find yourself a charity.

Help the needy and the crippled

Or put some time into ecology'

Well there's a wide wide world of noble causes

And lovely landscapes to discover

But all I really want to do right now

Is . . . find another lover."

And on "A Strange Boy," another in her long series of songs to real or mythical lovers, Joni writes, "We got high on travel; and we got drunk on alcohol; and on love — the strangest poison and medicine of all."

There is nothing commercially oriented about this album and, if you are not already a committed Joni Mitchell fan, you might find "Hejira" a little tough to swallow. Like many of the fine things in life, Joni Mitchell's songwriting and singing is a bit of an acquired taste — something you need to be exposed to a few times before you're hooked.

For those already hooked on her remarkable poetry and songwriting, "Hejira" may prove to be the best Joni Mitchell album yet.

Personal favorites include "Furry Sings the Blues," "Song for Sharon," "Refuge of the Road" and "Amelia."

There seems little doubt that on "Hejira," Joni Mitchell has crossed that imaginary line from girlhood to womanhood in her songwriting. You can read it in her words. You can hear it in her voice. And, on the album's striking cover, you can see it in her face.



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