

# Joni's again fleeing down that lonely highway



new notes

By MIKE DALY and PAUL SPZELMAN

LIKE some latter-day Greta Garbo, the face of Joni Mitchell stares out from the album cover, her imperious face framed under a dark fur beret and long, blonde hair swept aside, falling across a fur-caped shoulder.

And superimposed below her is that recurrent lonely two-lane highway, stretching into the distance.

**Hejira** (Asylum 7E-1087) is the new Joni Mitchell album. The word is Arabic, for Mahomet's flight from Mecca to Medina in AD622 and the beginning of the Moslem era. The meaning: flight or exodus.

Sure enough, Joni's suffering from the old fidgety feet again. Still travelling on from one relationship to the next. But despite her contin-

uing lack of a distinctive melody this is a much better album than her last. The hissing of summer lawns, reviewed almost exactly a year ago.

Her songs are once more inner-directed, as opposed to the objective cynicism of "hissing", and there is a return to the warmth of her earlier work.

These days most of Joni's songs sound the same: the words separate them. However, there are some very distinctive tracks among the nine new offerings.

Amelia is inspired by famed U.S. woman aviation pioneer Amelia Earhart and boasts some more of Joni's effective road imagery:

*"I pulled into the Cactus Tree Motel  
To shower off my dust,  
And I slept on the strange pillows of my wanderlust.*

*I dreamed of 747s  
Over geometric frames.  
Dreams, Amelia,  
dreams and false alarms."*

Furry sings the blues describes her visit to ancient bluesman Furry Lewis, in Memphis, Tennessee — home of the blues. Joni's vocals are enhanced by the plaintive harmonica of old friend Neil Young, and by the wonderfully expressive electric bass of Jaco Pastorius.

Jaco, currently with Weather Report, almost plays lead on all his four tracks on Joni's album. His tone and style is much like German bassist Eberhard Weber, but more fluent.

The third track we'd select would be **Blue Motel Room**, for its slow blues feel and Joni's welcome change of vocal style.

Hejira, a far from memorable album, is a welcome return to the old Joni Mitchell of the strong, warm lyrics and a move further away from the Tom Scott influence. (Although he does pipe up on one track, **Refuge of the roads**).

**AVALANCHE** is a solid, professional Australian group with a record of the same name (Bootleg BLA 059) that doesn't appear to be charting. We don't know why, except that his is the silly, schmaltz season and the wrong time to launch a solid rock group, even on the oat-tails of a \$50,000 U.S. record deal.

The four musos have all paid their dues (as they say) and perhaps that's the trouble. The punks may have edged out for the moment, but **Avalanche** could well be another another sleeper.

THERE'S little doubt that, musically and visually, Queen is one of the most exciting bands around.

We say that without reservation, even if it did take until the next day for our ears to pop after one night at the opera with this British quartet.

But that is probably the only criticism the excessive volume played absolute havoc with their fine instrumental and vocal harmonies.

There's no such criticism after spending a **Day At The Races** (Elektra 6E 101) — Freddie Mercury, Brian May, Roger Taylor and John Deacon, as hosts, are as impeccable at the races as they were at the opera.

And who could fail to have a good day (or night) guided by the theatrical vocals of Freddie Mercury or the explosive lead guitar breaks of Brian May?

This pair's prowess is aptly demonstrated in the hit single **Somebody to Love**, a little opus which almost emulates the operatic flair of **Bohemian Rhapsody**.

If Queen have a problem, it is the brilliance of Mercury — after all, it is his touch (as a composer or vocalist) which



provides the highlights: **You Take My Breath Away**, **The Millionaire Waltz**, **Somebody to Love** and **Good Old-Fashioned Lover Boy**.

Probably the only challenge to Mercury's dominance is May's **Teo Torriatte (Let Us Cling Together)**, a gentle little Japanese sing-song that can't fail to charm.

But while they stay together, let's say once again, Hail to His Majesty Freddie and his Queen.

AND while talking about the Queen, the **Goodies** (of TV fame) provide a royal treat on their first, self-titled album (Island Records L36134).

Endorsed with a little "unsuitable for children" tag, the album has run into some censor trouble, not because of naughty words but mainly because of its subject matter.

All right, it does poke fun at the Royals (**Elizabeth Rules — UK**) and it does take the wind out of certain sails.

But it explodes a million musical cliches and manages to entertain at the same time.

So all we can do is to quote the chorus from **The Policeman's Opera** and say, "Hello, Hello, Hello" to the **Goodies** and their brand of humor.

Joni Mitchell, as she appears on the album cover.

The record is a welcome return to the old Joni Mitchell of warm, strong lyrics.

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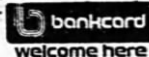
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