

RECORDS

Blue — Joni Mitchell (Reprise MS 2038)

I remember the first time I saw Joni Mitchell perform. It was at the Troubadour in Los Angeles a little over three years ago. She seemed shy and nervous before the small, appreciative audience that night, even though everyone there was aware that they were seeing a girl who would soon be recognized as a truly remarkable singer and songwriter. Joni's songs have a way of grabbing on and enveloping the listener. The intense involvement that she has with her songs makes you involved in them too. And that's what songs should do.

I've welcomed each Joni Mitchell album into my collection with special care, and given them all time to sink in far enough so that they won't ever leave my head. After a few weeks with *Blue*, I must say that I think it's her best album yet, and certainly one of the best records of the year.

Blue is so vastly different from Joni's previous work that some people might be turned off by it. Gone is most of the close-knit structuring of songs. Real images have replaced visual symbols. Musically, Joni's genius has grown so that she is pursuing new sounds and tones. She plays dulcimer on three of the ten tunes, piano on four and guitar on only three. And each instrument is perfect for each individual song.



"All I Want," the opening track, gives indications of Joni's new style. Her dulcimer and James Taylor's guitar weave a highly rhythmic rug on which the vocal seems to glide. Her singing is much freer than it's ever been and her poetry is looser and has an unbelievably natural, conversation-like quality to it ("I want to knit you a sweater/want to write you a love letter/I want to make you feel better/want to make you feel free").

"Carey," with Steve Stills on guitar and bass, is a nice, fast number. When the chorus comes and Joni sings, "Carey get out your cane," you feel a back-up chorus answering her, and, sure enough, they do. When she sings of buying rounds of wine for everyone at the cafe, you feel the spirit of the evening in her voice.

"California" is another bright song with some very tasteful playing by Joni on dulcimer, Taylor on guitar, Russ Kunkel on drums and Sneaky Pete of the Berritos on pedal steel. Each time she sings, "Oh, it gets so lonely, the steel guitar slides in beautifully." And there's a great line, "Will you take me as I am, strung out on another man?"

"This Flight Tonight" again has that rhythmic feel to it. Joni sings, "Got the headphones on high, can't numb you out of my mind," and the raunchy sound of a rock band (Joni, Kunkel and Sneaky) fades in and quickly out and the song continues. "A Case of You" is a beautiful love song probably written for Taylor. "You're in my blood like holy wine/You taste so bitter and so sweet. Oh I could drink a case of you darling/and I would still be on my feet."

"Little Green" is a pretty tune, but somehow seems out of place on the album. It sounds a lot like some of her earlier songs and the guitar is vaguely reminiscent of "Circle Game," yet it has that delicate touch that so many of her songs have. "Call her green and the winters cannot fade her/Call her green for the children who have made her."

"River," originally chosen as the title track, is a terribly haunting song. She did it at Kleinhans in December of '69, right in the middle of "Willy." I guess she figured that having both songs together in one album just wouldn't fit. This song is about her breakup with Graham Nash, and she plainly states that it was her fault. "I'm so hard to handle/I'm selfish and I'm sad/Now I've gone and lost the best baby that I ever had/I wish I had a river I could skate away on." At the beginning and end of the song, she plays the first few bars of "Jingle Bells" (the song was written around Christmas time) in ascending minor keys, and it takes a few listenings to realize what song it is, so well does it fit in with the mood of "River."

"Blue" is another terribly sad song, about trying to get through heavy changes in a world dominated by "Acid, booze and ass/needles, guns and grass. Blue, here is a shell for you. Inside you'll hear a sigh, a foggy lullaby." Again, there is that tension set up by the piano and voice. It's the type of song that keeps you awake just as you think you're falling asleep.

This album has a great many sides and forms to it, and you really have to concentrate on it to understand its beauty. Joni Mitchell is one of the few artists who continue to grow even after enjoying success. Just a fantastic record.

—Billy Altman



—Snios

Alfa-Romeo, Team McLaren are winners at Watkins Glen

by Steve Serafin
Spectrum Staff Writer

The Alfa-Romeo T33/3 of Andrea de Adamich and Ronnie Peterson scored an upset win over the John Wyer Porsche 917s Saturday at Watkins Glen. The race closed out the 11-race World Manufacturers' Championship Series which has already been won by Porsche with eight wins to the Alfas' three. The small, three-liter Alfas outdistanced the bigger-engined 917s of Jo Siffert-Gijs von Lennep (No. 1) and Derek Bell-Richard Attwood (No. 2), completing 279 laps to the runner-up's 277.

Pole-winner Mark Donohue led the six-hour race for 54 laps until the front-upright on his 512M Sunoco-Ferrari broke under the tremendous strain imposed by the bumpy, 2,428 mile course. Jacky Ickx in the three-liter Ferrari 312P also was forced to retire due to a faulty ignition system. The Donohue-David Hobbs car and that of Ickx and Mario Andretti, the third place qualifier, were rapidly pulling away from the rest of the field until they dropped out.

Dynamic duo

But in endurance racing, drivers must pace their cars and themselves so both may survive the grueling test, and once the hotshoes left the race, the Alfas and Porsches inherited the front spots.

The five-liter Porsches held the advantage in speed but the Alfas with their smaller engines could go longer without pitting. This, coupled with tire damage being continually suffered by the No. 1 Porsche, enabled the three Alfas and their four-liter sister to keep up with and ahead of the blue and orange Gulf cars.

As the race progressed, the Siffert-von Lennep Porsche would take the lead only to drop back for a pit stop. Then it would take

a bit to repass the Alfas only to have to pull back into the pits. The No. 2 Porsche stalled at the Start-Finish line and after a bit of climbing around the engine compartment, Bell was able to get it back into the pits, but it had lost considerable time before it was again running properly.

New entry plans

At about 4 p.m. it began to sprinkle lightly and a half hour later the skies opened up. When everybody was shod in rain tires, the Alfas held a clear advantage and the Porsches never again went into the lead. But by this time the two slower Alfas had already had a few shunts and were out of the race. About 15 minutes before the end of the race (5:45 p.m.), the Vic Elford-Rolf Stommelen Alfa crashed and was classified as a non-finisher. Fourth place was taken by the Alain Cadenets-Lothar Molsenbacher Ferrari 512M nearly 100 miles behind the first three finishers.

The race signalled the end of the five-liter Ferraris and Porsches in the Manufacturers' Series. Next year will see the three liter prototypes of Ferrari, Alfa-Romeo and Matra, a firm which didn't show at the race Saturday. The Porsche factory has not announced plans to enter a three-liter prototype but others may enter updated 908s and, given the normal secrecy among manufacturers regarding new efforts, Porsche may very well try to extend its streak of world titles.

* * *

Team McLaren made it two in a row and three out of four as New Yorker Peter Revson sped his 494 cu. in. McLaren to an easy

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