

## Joni Mitchell's songs of the road

A generally uneventful year in pop music has been given a strong boost by four pre-Christmas album releases. New records by Joni Mitchell, Jackson Browne and George Harrison, and a swan song live disc by the now-defunct Allman Brothers add considerable luster to the careers of these musicians.

By JACK GARNER  
D&C Features Editor

**HEJIRA**, by Joni Mitchell, on Asylum Records, 7E-1087.

A musician spends lots of his life on the road, so it is not surprising that many artists (especially the autobiographic writer types) sing about life on the road. Seldom, however, has the road been so eloquently described, on such a personal level, as it is in "Hejira."

Seven of the nine tunes in this album refer directly to "the road" and the other two are vignettes which take place in two cities in which Joni Mitchell is a visitor.

Mitchell is one of the best poet-singers, and this album finds her lyrics in fine form (easily as good as those on "Court and Spark" and much better than the disappointing "Hissing of Summer Lawns").

She's at her best when creating mood through descriptions of the world around her.

"The Refuge of the Roads" describes the escapist element in

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constant travelers, "Black Crow" concerns using the road to search "for love and music," and "Amelia" shows the solitude and deep thought possible on the endless highway. There's also the element of loneliness and insecurity on the road, as described in "Blue Motel Room":

"I've got road maps  
"From two dozen states  
"I've got coast to coast just to contemplate

"Will you still love me  
"When I get back to town . . ."

Yet another aspect of being on the road is described in "Hejira":

"I'm traveling in some vehicle  
"I'm sitting in some cafe  
"A defector from the petty wars  
"That shell shock love away  
"There's comfort in melancholy  
"When there's no need to explain . . ."

This is a lovely, graceful and moving album, tastefully produced and tastefully performed. Mitchell uses a small but talented cadre of musicians, including jazz bassist Jaco Pastorius and guitarist Larry Carlton, to achieve her unique folk-jazz musical blend.

Like Gordon Lightfoot, Joni Mitchell doesn't display an incredible range in writing melodies to go

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