

# RECORDS

## Joni Mitchell Court and Spark (Asylum)

Trends. Trends are what make the music business and sometimes the music. Joni Mitchell has always managed to ignore the trends and make her own unique kind of music. *Court and Spark* has Joni's unmistakable mark on it, in the tradition started six albums ago — part of that tradition being that each new album becomes her best to date. Basically the same style, the same Joni, just better.

And so it is with this one. Part of the reason, of course, is its freshness. But this album is also the latest reflection of Joni Mitchell's constant expansion in all the facets of her music. Much more importantly, it's the first album in which she steps outside her own style. In fact, it seems as if Joni has been swayed, just slightly, by the outside music world.

There are two cuts on this record where Joni really tries on some new clothes: "Raised on Robbery" and "Twisted."

"Raised on Robbery" is the rock and roll song getting so much air play. Here lies the danger: it's so undeniably commercial (destined for the number one spot). It's also undeniably a great song. The music is tight and swinging, with Robbie Robertson there to give it that extra punch. The lyrics are by far the raunchiest she's ever written, and the slinky, slightly drunk vocal rendition fits in perfectly.

"I'm a pretty good cook, I'm sitting on my groceries

Come up to my kitchen, I'll show you my best recipe"

I wonder if all those AM stations know they're playing a song with the phrase "that son of a bitch" in it? Ah, well, I just hope I don't end up hating it from overplay.

"Twisted" is even more shocking. It's the first song she's recorded that she hasn't written herself. It's also a straight jazz tune. Joni has really done a superlative vocal here, proving she can scatdoodlyat with the best of them.

As for the rest of the album, the music is in the same mode we've come to recognize as only hers. Evidence of the refinement of her artistic ability is present everywhere. The musical structure of her songs and arrangements are more subtle and complex (watch out for the arrangement on "Down to You"). The ability to blend the mood of the lyrics with the music and vocal; the expertise on piano and guitar; the incredible vocal control of all her many voices (whether it's the high, breathless lady of "Help Me" or the low, melancholy woman in "People's Parties") — all of these talents are already polished to a brilliant sheen, but just slightly more dazzling.

And the lyrics. Songs of love and freedom, always her special field. At this point, it would be ridiculous to say her lyrics have improved, because they've always been excellent. Poetry in the realm of

everyone's experience. However, there are a few cuts on this one that literally chilled me to the bone ("The Same Situation" and "Down to You," to name a few). It's impossible for me to even single out a verse to quote here, because each song's fully beauty can only be appreciated as an integrated whole. In fact, the record itself works as an integrated whole — one song blends into the next so naturally, sometimes you don't even notice where one ends and the other begins.

There are hints on *Court and Spark* that Joni is moving in a new direction. It's not those two cuts that make me say this as much as the overall instrumentation. There are drums on virtually every



cut, and electric guitar on three or four. This is quite a change for her, and opens a wide area of speculation. Does it mean Joni is moving into the clutches of commercial music? Or is it only that she is finally beginning to branch out? As far as I can see, she has the situation under control as of now. After all this time, I am hopeful that she's strong enough and wise enough to resist the temptations of the "starmaker machine."

These questions will only be answered by her next album, which probably won't be out until next year. So for now, go down to the Record Co-op and treat yourself to *Court and Spark*. Guaranteed to flip even your jaded ears out. —Willa Bassen

## ATTENTION WOMEN

The deadline for handing in to the Curriculum Committee materials necessary for teaching Woman's Studies -fall semester is Friday March 1, at 5:00 p.m.

These materials include:

1. Course description for Catalog (please note if you have changed description from last semester)
2. Rationale
3. Present syllabus, for continuing courses.
4. Proposed syllabus for Fall.
5. Updated instructors vitae.

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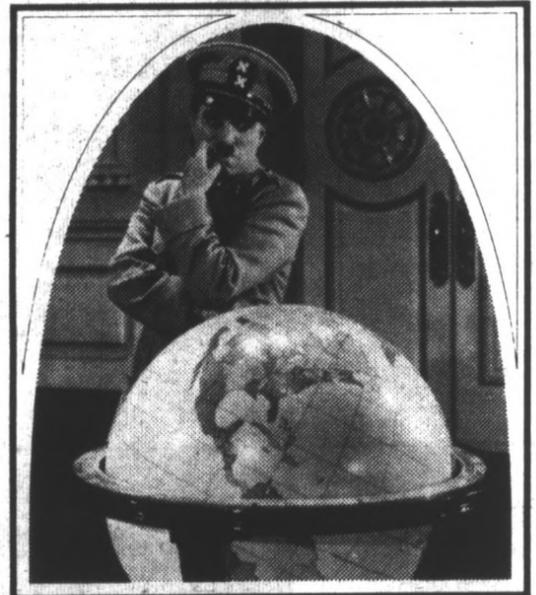
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