

New York, N.Y.

By DAVID McGEE

■ "He told you what!"

Rickie Lee Jones moved to the edge of her chair in her room at the Essex House, her blond hair disheveled, her disposition ruffled, as dispositions tend to be in Manhattan on rainy Mondays. At the early hour it was a tossup as to who was sleepier, the reporter or his subject, but a seemingly innocuous remark related to Jones about how a record retailer had compared her to **Joni Mitchell** set the artist abuzz. "I'd like to meet whoever said that to you," she says sternly, her tone suggesting that she can do more than sing and write. Like punch. Hard. With her fists. "I would say," she continues, "that anyone who says I'm like someone else who's out there is somebody who ought to be in the retail record business. Joni Mitchell and I have absolutely nothing in common, except that we both have big mouths and long, blond hair. She writes introspective diaries and puts them to music. I write songs. And vocally I'm a jazz singer and Joni Mitchell's a folk singer."

She has a point there. Outside of the rather arty cover shot of Jones, wherein she is seen in a beret and lighting a Sherman, nothing much on her stunning, and hit, debut album for Warner Bros. suggests Joni Mitchell. If anything (treading on thin ice here) there's a bit of **Van Morrison** in the phrasing, a bit of **Tom Waits** in the lyrical style and a bit of **Laura Nyro** in the color of the vocals. But the most telling sign is the sheer originality of vision and expression displayed here: It recalls no one so much as Rickie Lee Jones. That much the artist herself is sure of. "My art is already well-defined," she says. "I'm confident it's not like anyone else's. People can compare me to anyone they want and it doesn't really bother me if they need to do that for themselves. But I'm always surprised when I hear Joni Mitchell, because she seems furthest away from what I do artistically."

Jones was born and raised in Chicago. Her father was a songwriter, her grandfather was in vaudeville; as a result, she says, it was hardly news to her parents that she aspired to be a musician. "Most children have to fight to be musicians. It was just more accepted in my family, and encouraged." Eventually she drifted to Los Angeles ("I went the long way to L.A.," she says in a way that lets you know the distance travelled was in something other than miles. "There were lots of stops in-between.") and was spotted by an alert club owner who helped get her signed to Warners. Then the first album. "I'm very pleased with it," admits Jones. "When we finished it I said, My God, I don't know if this is going to sell. We might be the only people who buy it. But we did it."

Asked what she set out to accomplish first time around, Jones laughs a knowing laugh. "I don't think your article is going to be long enough for me to answer that question. Some of it I can't even put into words. Had no preconceived notion, except that I wanted the succession of tunes to tell a story, represent a character and a story and a whole mood. Like a little audio movie. And it did that to some extent."

Although her music is engaging both lyrically and melodically, as the heavy airplay it's received on both sides of the dial attests, Jones feels somewhat out of sorts with the trend of the times. Not that she worries about her role in the whole scheme of things. "There's always room for—I hate to say it—but the state of the art is so low—here I go—that the people I feel are great stand out in their own categories as novelties, and they don't sell as many records as other, more conventional artists do. There are people from the late '60s who are falling out of their little stalls now, and making room for new artists. You just have to remember it's your show, and only you can screw it up."

SPRINGSTEEN NEWS: **Bruce Springsteen** has reportedly been offered the chance to perform on worldwide television by the producer of the British TV music show, "Old Grey Whistle Test."

The producer, Mike Appleton, who coordinated last fall's international broadcast of a **Jethro Tull** concert from Madison Square Garden, wants Springsteen to do the concert from Asbury Park. Appleton has already discussed the show with Springsteen's manager, Jon Landau, but no decision has been made yet. Springsteen is currently preparing to record his fifth album. Appleton wants to broadcast on Columbus Day, by the way.

A FRIEND IN NEED INDEED: Nothing is quite so heartwarming as an artist who remembers from whence he came. So it is with **Martin Mull**,

(Continued on page 34)

Poco Gets Gold



MCA recording artists **Poco** were honored with a gold record for their album "Legend," during their recent engagement at the Roxy. Pictured at the Roxy festivities (from left) are: (standing) **Sandi Lifson**, national secondary promotion director for MCA, **Lorine Mendell**, MCA trades liaison; **John Hartmann**, Poco co-manager; **Denny Rosenkrantz**, MCA vice president of a&r; **Gene Froelich**, vice president of MCA, Inc.; **Harlan Goodman**, co-manager of Poco; **Paul Cotton**, Poco; **Steve Chapman**, Poco; **Kim Bullard**, Poco; **Charlie Harrison**, Poco; **Rusty Young**, Poco; **Larry King**, MCA vice president of promotion; **Stan Layton**, MCA vice president of marketing; **Russ Shaw**, MCA vice president of artist development; and (kneeling) **Beth Rosengard**, national album promotion director for MCA; **Santo Russo**, MCA vice president of product development, and **David Jackson**, MCA vice president of business affairs.

CBS Names Marra Local Adv. Dir.

■ **NEW YORK**—**Roselind Blanch**, managing director, marketing administration, CBS Records has announced the appointment of **Ina Marra** to the position of director, local advertising, CBS Records.

Marra will direct the production of all local advertising material for all CBS labels and its delivery to the CBS Records field organization, coordinating her efforts with Columbia and E/P/A merchandising departments.

Marra joined CBS in 1970 and she established the local advertising department in 1971. She was named associate director, local advertising material in 1976.

ECM Release Set

■ **NEW YORK**—**ECM Records** has announced a special schedule of releases, in two parts, set for shipment in May. In the first section of releases, six albums by primarily European artists will be made available in this country for the first time, including works by the **Arild Andersen Quartet**, **Manfred School Quartet**, **Om** with **Dom Um Ramao** and a special **Percussion Profiles** album featuring **Jack DeJohnette**, **Dom Um Ramao** and others.

The second section of ECM's special May release features 55 albums that will be made available as imports. Warner Bros. will distribute albums by artists such as **Paul Bley**, **Jan Garbarek**, **Terje Rypdal**, **Gary Burton**, **Steve Kuhn** and others on the ECM and Japo labels.

Windsong Signs Blind Date



Al Teller, president of **Windsong Records**, has announced the signing of the rock group **Blind Date** to an exclusive worldwide recording contract. Currently recording at **Axis Studios** in Atlanta, with producer **Jeff Glixman** (of Kansas fame) at the helm, **Blind Date's** debut album is scheduled for a June release. Pictured following the signing, from left, are: **Pinky Chablis** of **Blind Date**; **Greg Nelson**, manager; **Arnie Badde** of **Blind Date**; **Al Teller**; **Dane Bramage** and **Brad Billion** of **Blind Date**.