

THE ULTIMATE MUSIC GUIDE

JONI MITCHELL

UPDATED
DELUXE
EDITION

EVERY ALBUM
REVIEWED

CLASSIC
ENCOUNTERS,
REDISCOVERED

A Case Of You
JONI MITCHELL
THE FULL STORY

ARCHIVES
VOL 1:
THE VERDICT

HER 30
GREATEST
SONGS

THE 2020
COMEBACK

FROM THE MAKERS OF **UNCUT**

contents

6 “She wanted to be a big deal” **CLASSIC INTERVIEW** Half a century on, the story of a singer-songwriter’s remarkable rise

18 **SONG TO A SEAGULL** **ALBUM FEATURE** A fêted 23-year-old songwriter steps into the spotlight, with a maverick ex-Byrd producing

22 **CLOUDS** **ALBUM FEATURE** The world-weary ingénue embraces her own contradictions with soon-to-be-standard songs

26 **LADIES OF THE CANYON** **ALBUM FEATURE** Fame beckons as we hear Mitchell “cracking out of her chrysalis and beginning to soar”

30 “I want my music to get more sophisticated” **CLASSIC INTERVIEW** Joni visits the UK, leaving her public and our correspondent awestruck

34 **BLUE** **ALBUM FEATURE** Romantic upheaval and restless travel fuel a timeless classic

38 **FOR THE ROSES** **ALBUM FEATURE** A retreat to Canada produces a more impressionistic fifth album

42 **COURT AND SPARK** **ALBUM FEATURE**

Backed by the LA Express, a bigger, bolder Mitchell sound is born, with hints of jazzier experiments to come

46 “They say I’ve changed... Yes, I have!” **CLASSIC INTERVIEW** Back in London, Joni isn’t talking, but she still reveals some secrets

52 **THE HISSING OF SUMMER LAWNS** **ALBUM FEATURE** Subtle sounds and suburban musings: an underrated (at the time) gem

56 **HEJIRA** **ALBUM FEATURE** Fearless women and open roads inspire an expansive, experimental journey

60 **DON JUAN’S RECKLESS DAUGHTER** **ALBUM FEATURE** Inching further into jazz with a bold double album

64 **MINGUS** **ALBUM FEATURE** A dying mentor inspires a meeting of minds like no other

68 **WILD THINGS RUN FAST** **ALBUM FEATURE** The Police, Lionel Richie and a new beau help usher Joni into a brash new decade



72 **DOG EAT DOG** **ALBUM FEATURE** Thomas Dolby’s synthscapes soundtrack Ms Mitchell’s raging broadsides against the Reagan era

76 “You’re going to get me into my apocalyptic vision...” **CLASSIC INTERVIEW** The newlywed holds forth on censorship, Live Aid and her synth-heavy new LP

98 **TAMING THE TIGER** **ALBUM FEATURE** A new guitar sound, a rediscovered daughter and... a last hurrah?

102 **BOTH SIDES NOW** **ALBUM FEATURE** The legend finds a new voice, via vintage covers and a couple of her own old favourites

106 **TRAVELOGUE** **ALBUM FEATURE** Mitchell delves further into her back catalogue, in playfully revisionist mood

110 **SHINE** **ALBUM FEATURE** A ballet soundtrack is a surprise final encore to a peerless singer-songwriting career

114 **Joni Mitchell’s 30 Greatest Songs** **CLASSIC INTERVIEW** Friends, fans and bandmates take their pick

126 “I’m a fighter, that’s what I do” **CLASSIC INTERVIEW** Joni gathers her strength since her aneurysm in 2015

138 **LIVES AND COMPILATIONS** **ALBUM FEATURE** Bootlegs, outtakes, concert recordings and more

142 **MISCELLANY** **ALBUM FEATURE** Singles, DVDs, paintings, guest appearances... and those guitar tunings in full

146 **STOP ME** **ALBUM FEATURE** LA Express guitarist Robben Ford tells of his journey with Joni



Joni at 75: a birthday celebration at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, LA, November 7, 2018



86 **CHALK MARK IN A RAIN STORM** **ALBUM FEATURE** Celebrity guests add stardust to a glossy late-'80s outing

90 **NIGHT RIDE HOME** **ALBUM FEATURE** A new decade heralds a return to intimate, introspective concerns

94 **TURBULENT INDIGO** **ALBUM FEATURE** As a Van Gogh homage adorns the cover, a tortured artist vents her spleen between the grooves within



Stop Me

...if you've heard this one before

1974: In the studio with Joni Mitchell! Guitarist **ROBBEN FORD recalls that "she was like a little girl with crayons"**

I WAS living in LA, playing guitar with Jimmy Witherspoon, the blues singer. I'd been with 'Spoon for about two years and I decided to go off on my own. In June 1973, I'd played at an event called the Guitar Explosion at the Hollywood Bowl. Max Bennett, the bassist for the LA Express, who played on *Court And Spark*, saw me there, so did Roger Kellaway, who was the pianist on the first tour I did with Joni. They both recommended me to Tom Scott and John Guerin as a possible guitarist for the group. The day I was leaving Jimmy Witherspoon, I was waiting in the office of the management company we were both signed to – I'd been called in – and I got a call from Tom Scott, asking me if I wanted a job. I said no – I wanted to do my own thing – but Tom said, "Why don't I just bring the records by? Check 'em out, let's see what you think." So

he brought over copies of *Court And Spark* and the first LA Express album, we listened to them and then Tom said, "We're at A&M tomorrow. Why don't you come over and just play with the band?" I was very headstrong about jazz at this point, and I wasn't really familiar with Joni's music or any of the musicians. All the same, the next day I went over to the studio. They asked me to go on tour with Joni and the LA Express and I wound up saying yes.

Joni was an absolute goddess, she was beautiful! She and John Guerin, the drummer, had pretty recently connected. They were obviously in love and having a ball together, so it couldn't have been a more cheerful scene. Everyone was very happy. They were all successful studio musicians, all very accomplished, and Joni loved having these guys around. In the past, she had a rolling group of very close associates working with her, guys like Stills or Crosby or whoever, but this was the first time she'd got a ready-made band around her.

When I first joined the group, *Court And Spark* was done, so initially I was brought in strictly to do the tour. We rehearsed for two weeks in Los Angeles, and then we went on the road for the most part of nine months all over the States. A live album came out of the tour, *Miles Of Aisles*.

My first experience working with Joni in the studio was on *The Hissing Of Summer Lawns* – and again



LA Express live with Joni Mitchell, London, April 1974: (l-r) Tom Scott, Victor Feldman and Robben Ford

the vibe was always very good and professional. She would ask you to do things that weren't necessarily your instincts. I remember when we were recording the opening song, "In France They Kiss On Main Street". Honestly? I was still new to recording, very young and inexperienced. I had my guitar plugged into an amp in the studio, with the microphones on it, I had headphones on and I started playing. Then Joni said, "Hey, Robben? I'd like to try something. Plug the electric guitar into a fuzz tone, into the console." To me, that was the most foreign request I could have imagined. I said, "What? You gotta be kidding me!" But anyway, we plugged it in. Literally everyone was sitting around

the console, and I'm in the middle, riffing on my guitar and it sounded very cool; it turned out different and unique. But Joni wasn't looking for the ordinary. She was always reaching for something new and she was always very gentle about the way she suggested things. Her demeanour was never stressed, never rushed. There was never any attitude, it was always, "Why don't we just try it..?"

I remember visiting her later in the studio when she was recording *Don Juan's Reckless Daughter*. She was playing some synthesised keyboard overdubs on one of the songs. She was sitting in a chair that was quite high up off the ground, and as she was playing, underneath her legs were swinging in the air! She was like a little girl with crayons, she just had that freedom. At the same time, she has a brilliant mind – she is not afraid to go anywhere with her music.

I was 22 when I toured with Joni, and then I had my 23rd birthday on the road with George Harrison. It was really overwhelming for me because I'm from a very small town, and I was broke and a struggling musician in Los Angeles. Suddenly I was hurled into this very high situation, hanging around with these sophisticated grown-ups! I always thought they were very kind to me... I felt like they let me learn on their time and dime. And Joni was super, super cool. ●

"She was always very gentle... There was never any attitude"

ROBBEN FORD

JONI MITCHELL

“Everything comes and goes...” As she curates her legacy with her *Archives* set, the full story of Joni Mitchell: lady of the canyon and singer-songwriter supreme



Including...

“STUNNINGLY GOOD, RIGHT OFF THE BAT”

David Crosby is amazed by the arrival of a major new talent

“MY WORK SHOULD HAVE VITALITY – I FELT I SHOULD WRITE IN MY OWN BLOOD”

In mid-career, Joni reflects on her achievements

“SHE SUGGESTED A SERIES OF JAM SESSIONS. IT FELT LIKE AN ELABORATE PRANK!”

Herbie Hancock, Chaka Khan and Joni’s return to music, 2020

ARCHIVE INTERVIEWS AND IN-DEPTH REVIEWS
OF EVERY JONI MITCHELL ALBUM FROM
SONG TO A SEAGULL TO SHINE

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