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BIG YELLOW TAXI (2.16)

(Joni Mitchell)

Arranged by Joni Mitchell

RSLP 6376—Ladies of the Canyon

SIQUOMB PUBG.

JONI MITCHELL

Thomas Dolby's synthscapes soundtrack Ms Mitchell's raging broadsides against the Reagan era

45 RPM

RS.20906

RS.20906-A

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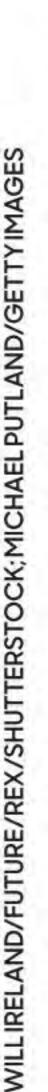
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...if you've heard this one before

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

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



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

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

ROBBENFORD

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..?"

Iremember 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 grownups! I always thought they were verykind to me...
I felt like they let me learn on their time and dime.
And Joni was super, super cool. •

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 ISHOULD 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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