

# Singer Joni Mitchell blazing new trail in musical career

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DALLAS — Singer Joni Mitchell's current tour, her first since 1979, may be the spark that ignites her next wave of music.

"This is the most concentrated period of music I've been in for three years," she said recently prior to playing Dallas' Reunion Arena. "My music's changing. I've got a lot of new ideas."

From her folk music start playing New York coffee houses in the late '60s, Miss Mitchell's style has evolved through pop, some rock and roll and even jazz.

Now, she's being drawn to electronic music.

"We started messing around with electronic keyboards and I'm real curious about them," she said. "The same one-note line that would be boring on a piano sounds like a concert when you can add so many tonalities and chords through the keyboard."

But her electronic phase is in its infancy. Her current show, which also plays Houston and Austin this week, draws from her 3-month-old album, "Wild Things Run Fast" — her first studio album in three years.

"It's more jazz-oriented, but it isn't jazz," says. "I've been exploring the jazz cellars for some time now and I've since come to feel that the best traditional jazz has already been made."

Miss Mitchell's earliest musical background, symphonic and classical works played in her small Saskatchewan hometown, have become more dominant in her new album and in her road show as well.

She's backed up by her husband, bassist Larry Klein, and three other sidemen playing keyboards, drums and guitar. Her group began touring in February, visiting Asia for five weeks, then played western Europe. Her U.S. tour, which began in early June, continues through the summer.

"The musicians I'm with do a lot of modern chords," she said. "There are periods of structure and free space so there's a lot of improvisation. Harmonically, we're not as primary colored as rock and roll — our ranges are broader."

It's no accident when Miss Mitchell alludes to graphic arts. She was an art student in Calgary when she first made the coffee house scene and she has designed and produced many of her 13 album covers and continues to devote time to painting.

Whether on canvas, in music or in the words of her songs, Miss Mitchell's creativity reflects her special sensitivity to her surroundings, her relationships and her feelings.

She became a folk legend in the '60s by writing the song "Woodstock," popularized by Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young and adopted as the anthem of the flower children.

"I was the kid who couldn't go," she said about the famous Woodstock music festival in August 1979. "We came into the airport, but it had started raining and I had a Dick Cavett television show to do the next day and we decided we couldn't get out there and back in time."

"I watched it on TV with tears in my eyes, but it gave me a different perspective — not being there," she said. "I don't think I would have written the song if I had gone."

Stimulated by the band's constant efforts to improve the show, Miss Mitchell is moving back to songwriting, her first success.

"I've had insomnia the last couple of nights and I've been scribbling some notes," she said. "I don't know what will come out of it."