

risk. A psychiatrist and psycho- get the young runaway, the lost

THE RECORD RACK

BY WILBUR

It's so refreshing to hear a really great album once again, and Joni Mitchell's third release, **Ladies Of The Canyon** (Warner Bros. Reprise), is like a breath of springtime sweeping across her native Saskatchewan plains.

In a way, Joni's latest record is even more enjoyable than either **Clouds** or **Song To A Seagull**. She still, of course, retains her beautiful voice and her uncanny ability to personalize every song. **Ladies Of The Canyon** lacks a lot of the syrupy backup and overdubbing of her first two records, and this makes the album even more personal, more pure, and more Joni.

Only one thing disappointed me, personally, about the record, and that was the absence of a song she wrote last November and debuted several weeks thereafter shortly before her concert at the University of Hartford. The song told of how she was waiting for winter and for a frozen stream she could

skate away on; it was a preface to her retirement from the performing circuit for awhile. The song, one of the most moving creations to ever come from this lovely Canadian lady, is not on the new album. But the album is a springtime, not a winter, release, and perhaps she will record it someday.

It took her four years to record her most famous song, **Circle Game**," and her version on **Ladies Of The Canyon**, though not as moody or as mellow as Tom Rush's great interpretation, is one of the friendliest tunes ever. She's accompanied by The Lookout Mountain United Downstairs Choir, and her guitar.

When she's not joined by a bop vocal choir, The Saskatunes, Joni is alone and the record featur more piano than guitar. Joni's incredible range and twisted harmonics are increased with a piano and in the absence of backup. With her guitar, she used to retune for every song. With her piano, she now weaves complex, discordant tapestries of sheer delight.

Undoubtedly the best song and one she sprung last summer at Newport is "For Free," the sad, bittersweet tale of an

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lows: Mary Jane Ceresale, Sandy Chagnon, Candy Orsini, Carol Rouleau, Sally Chabot, Debbie Morse, Bette Hazlett, Madeline Timms, Ginger Lev- esque, Paula Kwiatkowski, and Janet Czekus.

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anonymous clarinetist playing on a street corner in New York while she's about to be chauffeured to a concert. The song, like all of Joni's songs are taken from personal experiences, and are presented with conviction and sincerity.

Joni's personalizing can occasionally get too personal. I would like to know more about "Willy," about the boy with whom she experienced "Rainy Night House," and particularly "The Priest." There is enough feeling in these songs to convince you the stories are true, but not enough detail to let you know what her point is. All you know is that Joni keeps meeting beautiful people.

She has some fun songs, too. "Big Yellow Taxi," though trite in its message, is cute — about how the view from the Hawaiian hotel where she was staying featured a flattop of asphalt. "They paved Paradise and put up a parking lot," she whines. How sadly true.

The album also includes "Woodstock," which Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young are currently making into a hit, and another version of "Conversation." "Chelsea Morning" is replaced with "Morning Morgantown."

At Hartford, Joni held an audience captive on the floor of a gym for two hours. On **Ladies Of The Canyon** Joni, sounding more and more like Laura Nyro, will hold you spell bound for about 45 minutes. Not quite as good as a concert, but certainly the best recording of hers yet.

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