

... There's kind of a seal there."

... rhythms, and become more of a band than just three brothers," Barry said at the time.

"The music comes first."

# Joni Mitchell's album fascinating

By JOHN ROOMWELL  
c. N.Y. Times

NEW YORK — Joni Mitchell's new two-disk album, "Don Juan's Reckless Daughter," is not likely to appeal to the "You Light Up My Life" crowd. It may not even appeal to the broader critical and public audience that ended Miss Mitchell's "Court and Spark" and "Hejira" albums. But these are still a fascinating pair of records.

The reasons some people may hesitate is why Miss Mitchell seems even less concerned here with commercial obviousness and even more self-involved than usual. In that respect the new set is more like her "Hissing of Summer Lawns" than her other recent disks. But it is still mightily interesting.

The interest starts with the cover and inner-sleeve art, designed as usual by Miss Mitchell. The artwork contains several motifs: basically flat horizon, doves, a young boy, cartoon balloons and Miss Mitchell in three guises: as a black dandy, a Stevie Nicksish blonde and a small girl in Indian costume.

Most of these themes are picked up in the verse. As ever, her principal concerns are love and her own painful efforts to reach deeply into others. Mixed in are memories of her childhood and her continued fascination for black people, with several of the songs skating back and forth between a smoky, sophisticated present and her innocent, dreaming past.

The musical idiom finds Miss Mitchell once again pursuing her interest in jazz and third-world rhythms. On "Summer Lawns" there is a section of African drumming, and here there is a Latin percussion jam.

The jazz is more clever and admirable than that which she used to get from Tom Kott, et al., and makes use of several members of Weather Report — above all Jaco Pastorius, who was on "Hejira." There is also a long song called "Paprika Plains," which takes up a whole side and uses a full symphony orchestra in effectively Coplandesque fashion.

Perhaps extensive critical acclaim and chart-topping sales will result from all of this, but what makes it interesting and honorable is that that doesn't really matter. Miss Mitchell has so much force of artistic personality that she brings her musical collaborators into her own style of what might be called folk-jazz.

Rick Danko was the first member of the Band to sing a solo record contract and, along with Levon Helm, the first to put out a solo disk. Helm will be at the Palladium on New Year's Eve with his newband, and Danko has been booked into the Bottom Line next Tuesday and Wednesday.

All the songs on Danko's album were written entirely or in part by him, and he explained the other day from Nashville that that meant he had composed all the music and that his collaborators had helped him with the words.

A few Danko songs cropped up on early Band albums, but in recent ones they've all been by Robbie Robertson, and Robertson will provide the material for the coming new Band studio album that the old group will record after the turn of the year.

"I've been writing songs all my life, but I've never tried to force them on anyone," Danko said. "Bob

Dylan and Bobby Charles were the first people to like my material, and make me feel confident about it. The Band went through a lot of changes in its music after the 'Big Pink' album. I thought I did more writing than I got credit for, so I just stopped, totally, and figured out how to make some other kind of contribution.

"The Band really is five people. It's not just one person, which is what most people don't understand. When I put my music together and bring people in to play it, it goes down twice as quick, because we're not dealing with five different egos. With the Band, everybody makes a contribution to the writing and the arrangements."

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